

COMMITMENT TO CHANGE IN THE WORK OF MICHEL BUTOR

Angus A. Inglis

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## ABSTRACT

Michel Butor is one of the most prolific writers of post-war French literature. The size of his production is equalled only by its diversity. Originally a novelist, Butor has developed into an author of "open works", opera, poetry, dream texts and children's books. This study is a search for unity in the midst of this diversity. Taking as our starting point Butor's adoption of Rimbaud's famous assertion "Il faut changer la vie", we elaborate a perspective of commitment to change in both writing and reality which we apply to the four most developed areas of Butor's production: the novels, the experimental texts, the Illustrations series and the Matière de Rêves series. Devoting one section of the thesis to each of these four areas, we examine the parallel between the formal evolution of Butor's production, the change that can be seen in his writing, and the thematic evolution, the change that he would like to see in reality. In the novel section we discuss Butor's treatment of the myth of imperial dominance as the expression of modern western man's existential outlook and its implications for the reader of novels together with Butor's own, different existential outlook and his consequent abandonment of the novel genre. In the second section we examine Butor's conception of the relationship between man and place together with his experimental attempts to solve the problems raised by the novel form, the solution finally appearing in the thought behind the "open work". The Illustrations section contains a study of Butor's collaboration with the art world, his development of the corporate text and the elaboration of the concept of collage reality, a concept designed to replace the imperial organisation criticised in the novels. Finally in the Matière de Rêves section we analyse Butor's method of using his own literary career as an example of the re-integration, re-organisation and attitude required for the construction and maintenance of the new, collage reality.

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Having with me, therefore, this Fair Book, I did nothing else day nor night but study upon it, understanding very well all the operations that it showed, but not knowing with what Matter I should begin, which made me very heavy and solitary, and caused me to fetch many a sigh.

Nicholas Flammel

## ABBREVIATIONS

D	<u>Degrés</u>
ET	<u>L'Emploi du Temps</u>
HE	<u>Histoire Extraordinaire</u>
I	<u>Illustrations</u>
LII	<u>Illustrations II</u>
LIII	<u>Illustrations III</u>
LIV	<u>Illustrations IV</u>
LM	<u>La Modification</u>
M	<u>Mobile</u>
MR	<u>Matière de Rêves</u>
N	<u>6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde</u>
PA	<u>Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe</u>
QF	<u>Quadruple Fond</u>
R	<u>Répertoire</u>
RII	<u>Répertoire II</u>
RV	<u>Répertoire V</u>
RA	<u>Réseau Aérien</u>
RS	<u>Résistances</u>
SM	<u>Description de San Marco</u>
SS	<u>Second sous-sol</u>
TA	<u>Travaux d'Approche</u>
TD	<u>Troisième Dessous</u>
ES	<u>Entretiens avec Michel Butor</u>

## INTRODUCTION

In 1957 Michel Butor published his third novel, La Modification. In his 1971 "État présent of Butor Studies" Michael Spencer called for a "precise and detailed study of the rôle of phenomenology"<sup>1</sup> in Butor's writing, pointing to the potential for an application of the concept of intentionality to La Modification. In 1980, some twenty-three years after the publication of the novel, Lois Oppenheim answered Spencer's call in her work Intentionality and Intersubjectivity: A Phenomenological Study of Butor's La Modification.<sup>3</sup>

The long gap in time between the publication of the novel and the appearance of a critical work whose perspective not only elucidates the phenomenological aspects of Léon Delmont's modification, but also reveals itself to be sufficiently flexible to encompass all the major themes of the novel, is indicative of the problems posed by Butor's work to the body of critical opinion. To borrow from the terminology of phenomenology, Butor's work appears to the critic as flight. We are forever trying to catch up.

Since the publication of Passage de Milan in 1954 Butor has produced over forty major works in thirty years. The fact that certain of these volumes are collections of texts originally published separately only serves to underline the problems posed by the author's phenomenal productivity. The problem of quantity is further compounded by one of diversity. The

critic would find matters much easier if all Butor's published works were novels, poems or, indeed, dream texts. Until 1961 Butor's work could be generally divided between novels and critical essays, but, even at this early stage in his career, a jarring note was introduced by the appearance in 1958 of Le Génie du Lieu. With the publication in 1962 of Mobile, matters became increasingly complicated. Since then the critic and the reading public have been besieged by a flood of works covering almost every area of literature from opera to children's book.

Of course, the picture is not all bleak from the critic's point of view. Certain areas of Butor's production fall easily into series under the general headings of Répertoire, Le Génie du Lieu, Illustrations or Matière de Rêves. There is also a case for making groups out of both the novels and the four experimental texts from Mobile to 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. Butor himself attempts to help us in this respect by stating that none of the series will extend beyond five members.<sup>3</sup> Such information is, however, double-edged: the appearance of Illustrations V, for which Butor ominously tells us he already has the material,<sup>4</sup> may imply the end of that series but does not preclude a new departure into yet another form. Indeed, Butor does not even wait for the end of one series before beginning a different one: Envois is a case in point.

The organisational possibilities offered by the series or groups also leave considerable gaps: do we insert Votre Faust into the group of experimental works, keep it aside for consideration along with other musical works such as Centre d'Écoute and Dialogue avec 33 variations de Ludwig van Beethoven sur une valse de Diabelli, or examine the versions of the opera which appear in Quadruple Fond of the Matière de Rêves series? What are we to do with Les Mots dans la Peinture, Intervalle, La Rose des

Vents? The list seems endless. Furthermore, within the series themselves appear certain factors which transcend the borders of the individual group: the second and third volumes of the series Le Génie du Lieu have the same size and format as three of the experimental texts. Do we consider all five under the general heading of "place"? Is the poetry of Travaux d'Approche and Oï to be examined under the same light as that of the Illustrations series? Organisation seems only to lead back to diversity.

Butor's work, then, presents itself to us in the form of a type of chaos which seems to cry out for order and a unifying thread to bring us out of the labyrinth. It is our contention that unity can indeed be found in the diversity of Butor's production and that this unity is not prejudiced by the various formal transformations which his work has undergone. In order to demonstrate this unity we intend to make a broadly chronological study of Butor's development from the novels to the series Matière de Rêves. Such a study requires a perspective which is strong enough to provide a sense of direction and supple enough to encapsulate Butor's attitude to both reality and writing, to his subject matter and his method of organisation. In order to find such a perspective we feel it is necessary to return to beginnings, to the genesis of the work of art.

Georges Charbonnier. - Michel Butor, par rapport au monde, d'une part, et par rapport à son <<oeuvre>>, à la <<création>> - je suppose qu'il y a un des deux mots que vous aimerez un autre que vous n'aimerez pas; ...

Michel Butor. - Vous avez raison d'employer le mot <<création>> avec des guillemets. C'est un mot qui me gêne beaucoup.

G.C. - Il faut bien un mot pour désigner l'opération d'élaboration...



M.B. - J'aime bien mieux <<élaboration>>, parce que, quand on dit <<élaboration>>, on sait qu'on ne part pas de rien. On part toujours de quelque chose, on est toujours dans quelque chose.

Si on s'appuyait sur des gens comme Maurice Blanchot, on pourrait réussir à donner un sens à ce mot <<rien>>, on pourrait essayer de montrer en quoi effectivement il y a, dans l'origine de l'oeuvre d'art, une sorte de trou, une sorte de distance, qui se fait à l'intérieur de la réalité. (ES, 35-36)

The origins of the work of art are of a mysterious nature. No one, not even the artist, can say exactly how a work of art comes into being. What can be said is that, before the work of art, there was the artist who was in the world, in reality. The work of art is, therefore, by the presence of the artist, intimately connected to the reality anterior to its coming into being. The work of art does not arise from nothing: "On part toujours de quelque chose". Why then does Butor, following Blanchot, call this something "nothing", a "hole" in reality? How can something be nothing and what is a hole in reality?

Pendant l'élaboration d'un texte, je crois que le spectacle est d'abord éprouvé comme très obscur. A l'origine de l'invention littéraire, il y a un malaise, il y a une nuit, il y a quelque chose que l'on ne comprend pas, il y a une indignation ... (ES, 67)

If something cannot be understood, then it is nothing, a dark region in our perception of reality. In our perception of phenomena there appears a no-thing, a hole in the fabric of reality. The work of art arises out of a feeling of protest at this black hole. Something can be nothing, a void; the paradox is solved, but again, what is a hole in reality?

Il y a dès l'origine une certaine clarté, mais le fait que c'est une origine, implique de l'obscurité. Prenons le spectacle, la réalité qui nous entoure. Dans cette réalité, il y a des choses

que nous voyons d'une façon assez claire, des objets que nous utilisons, chaque jour, et qui ne posent pas de problème pour nous. Il y a toutes sortes de choses qui fonctionnent, disons. Et puis, au milieu de ces choses qui fonctionnent, il y a quelque chose qui, pour moi, se met à fonctionner mal. (ES, 69)

A hole in reality is something which is not working, the perception of which is troubling and gives rise to protest. The writer, for Butor, is thus someone who writes to protest. Is literature, however, the best way to make a protest?

Two events in Butor's life would appear to demand a negative reply to this last question. During the Algerian War Butor was one of the signatories to the document, "La Déclaration des 121" which protested against the use of torture in Algeria. In May 1968 he took part in the peaceful occupation of the Hôtel de Massa which resulted in the foundation of "L'Union des Écrivains". It would appear that when Butor really wants to protest he takes direct action. Yet his own comments on the "Déclaration" reveal that these events were exceptional:

Je le reconnais, dans la plupart des cas il vaut mieux tenacement poursuivre le travail en cours, et laisser à des spécialistes choisis les problèmes politiques de l'instant, mais qui voyant ce qui s'est passé depuis, ce qui se passe encore, qui oserait dire que cette fois il n'était pas temps, grand temps d'intervenir? Ah, que pourraient se reprocher les auteurs et les signataires (c'est tout un), si ce n'est d'avoir trop tardé? (RII, 126)

In certain cases the hole in reality is so big and the protest so urgently required that the writer has to forsake his normal rôle and take more direct action. In general, however, it is better to continue with "le travail en cours". What is this work and how does it take account of "smaller" holes in reality?

The hole in reality corresponds to a hole in what is said about

reality:

Je vois qu'il y a quelque chose dont on ne parle pas, et dont on devrait parler. Si les choses sont assez profondes on peut arriver jusqu'à dire que si on n'en parle pas c'est parce qu'on ne sait pas comment en parler. Il y a quelque chose qui manque. (ES, 69)

The function of the writer is to speak about things which are not being spoken about, to analyse why they are not being spoken about and to devise ways of overcoming this silence. In other words, the task of the writer is a double one: he must write to fill holes in reality and he must work on the methods of writing themselves:

Il y a une région de la réalité, qui se révèle comme troublante, dont il faudrait parler mais dont on ne sait pas encore comment parler, et, d'autre part, il y a une région du langage qui se révèle comme inemployé. On se dit: <<On devrait pouvoir dire telles choses en utilisant telle ou telle forme.>> (ES, 71)

The perception of a hole in reality comes about through the encounter of the subject with the reality around him. The perception of a hole in the use of language arises, according to Butor, from the encounter between the subject and the books around him. Any reader becomes conscious of certain forms utilised in any book he reads: "L'écrivain va pousser cette conscience plus loin. La lecture d'un livre va lui donner, comme on dit, des idées" (ES, 70). The writer is at first a reading subject, an extension of the ordinary reader, who not only perceives certain forms but who also perceives how these forms might be otherwise utilised, or how gaps between forms might be utilised: "entre tel roman de Balzac et puis tel roman de Zola, il pourrait y avoir une forme intermédiaire" (ES, 71). We are once again faced with the apparent paradox of the perception of something which is nothing. The origin of a work of art can now be seen as a

double one:

Il y a dans ce qu'on appelle <<l'inspiration>>, il y a toujours le besoin de rencontre entre deux domaines, ou, si vous voulez, entre deux indignations. L'indignation du sujet ... il y a quelque chose dont on ne parle pas et dont on devrait parler ...

D'autre part il y a indignation du côté de l'instrument. On se dit: <<Voilà, nous avons des instruments qui sont merveilleux, qui sont admirables et qu'on n'utilise pas. Et l'oeuvre commence à naître lorsqu'on se rend compte d'abord d'une façon confuse que certains instruments inemployés pourraient peut-être s'appliquer à telle région tue, à telle région inexplorée. (ES, 71)

There is a double indignation, a double protest.

The notion of a hole in reality is refined in the above extract. The perception of a hole is the perception of an area, a broad entity which is being passed over. The perception is not of one region, but of a plurality of regions, each one of which is different from the others. To this plurality of regions Butor proposes a plurality of forms, each of which brings clarity in a dynamic process;

C'est la merveille de l'écriture, ou de n'importe quelle discipline artistique: effectivement, en utilisant des formes, en les faisant évoluer, on voit apparaître la réalité autrement, la réalité se met véritablement à parler sous nos yeux ou sous notre plume. (ES, 73)

By working on his own instruments, by varying the forms he uses to suit the regions of reality he is exploring, Butor hopes to bring clarity to these regions. The strategy is one of attack: "On force la réalité à se dévoiler. Il y a une sorte de combat" (ES, 72). The work on form obliges reality to reveal itself, to come out of obscurity, but in a different manner. What is meant by this word "autrement"? Surely reality is neither clear nor obscure but simply there?

The answer to these questions lies in the notion of sight or vision:

"On voit apparaître la réalité autrement". It is not so much reality which is obscure as our view of it:

la plupart du temps nous sommes dans l'état de quelqu'un d'extrêmement myope, qui a de très mauvaises lunettes; alors il voit tout flou. Il y a même des choses qu'il ne voit pas du tout. Si on lui change ses lunettes, eh bien il va acquérir une efficacité extraordinaire.<sup>5</sup>

The writer brings clarity to reality by bringing into focus the eyes of those who perceive reality. In this way, the obscure, the blurred, becomes clear and the invisible becomes visible. This is what is meant by the word "autrement". If Butor wishes reality to be seen, this is not the final aim. In seeing reality, we see also the holes in reality, what is not working in reality. To reveal or draw attention to something which does not work is to demand that it be made to work or, alternatively, to demand that it be replaced by something else. In either case a change in reality is envisaged. Change is the objective of the strategy of improving vision.

To the double indignation Butor proposes a single reply. By working on the instruments of his writing Butor hopes to improve his reader's vision, to change him: "on lui change ses lunettes". In turn, the reader, with his enhanced vision, will be able to operate change in reality. These two steps, the change in the reader and the change in reality, are viewed by Butor as inseparable:

Si l'on transforme le langage, on va du même coup transformer la façon dont on pourra voir la réalité, les choses. Donc travailler sur le langage change la réalité par le seul fait que cela change la façon dont nous voyons la réalité.<sup>6</sup>

In varying his forms, in working on his language, Butor aims simultaneously at the transformation of his own art and at the transformation of reality.

<<Il faut changer la vie>>. Toute littérature qui ne nous aide pas dans ce dessein, ne serait-ce que malgré son auteur, est à plus ou moins grande échéance (et la pression des événements, l'urgence est telle, la maladie du monde est devenue si aiguë que j'ai de plus en plus tendance à croire que c'est à très brève échéance) inéluctablement condamnée. (R, 262)

Butor aspires to the transformation of reality. Furthermore, it is imperative that he should do so; "<<Il faut changer la vie>>". Butor's assessment of the state of the world is so negative that any work which does not share his aspirations is very forcefully condemned, with the result that the rôle he assigns to himself is clearly defined and assumes in his eyes great importance. With the instruments he has at his disposal Butor feels he has the opportunity of improving our perception of reality, of acting at the most fundamental level of our presence to the world. Butor accepts the responsibility of grasping this opportunity. His statement is an act of commitment.

"<<Il faut changer la vie>>"; the statement is at once vague and disturbing, particularly when it is allied to the notion of commitment. We immediately and naturally begin to think in terms of political ideologies, dogmas and propaganda. We think of "engagement", of writers who propound in their works the same ideas which are evinced in another sphere by political parties, usually on the left of the spectrum. In reading Butor are we about to submit ourselves to a political lesson based on some already given party doctrine? On certain occasions Butor himself seems to imply that this might indeed be the case:

j'aimerais bien être considéré comme un artiste révolutionnaire, que l'on dise cela de moi, parce que la société telle qu'elle est maintenant ne me convient nullement, et que je fais tout ce qu'elle peut pour qu'elle change ... (RS, 82)

On the other hand, if Butor is a revolutionary, then he is a revolutionary without a party, "Je ne suis inscrit à aucun parti",<sup>7</sup> without a programme, "Je n'ai pas du tout l'intention de proposer un programme de gouvernement",<sup>8</sup> and whose revolution has no short-term political ambitions, "nous ne cherchons plus une efficacité politique immédiate" (RS, 122)! What are we to make of these apparently self-contradictory remarks?

The problem lies essentially with language and the connotations which surround words such as "revolution":

nous n'arriverons à être véritablement révolutionnaires au sens exaltant qui nous a été légué par les Américains, les Français et les Russes que dans la mesure où nous aurons été capables de trouver un autre mot. Tant qu'on patauge dans ce mot usé, tant qu'on n'aura pas mis bien en évidence toutes les attaches qui relient ses faces, on pataugera dans les faits. (RS, 24-25)

The same principle holds true for the more everyday terms we use to designate political affiliations:

A toutes sortes d'égards, évidemment, je suis un homme de gauche puisque j'insiste tellement sur la transformation, sur le fait qu'il faut que cela change. Bon. Donc on me considère comme un homme de gauche et cela me plaît. Ceci dit, les expressions habituelles dont on se sert dans les journaux <<droite>> et <<gauche>> ne sont évidemment pas satisfaisantes. Ce vocabulaire est en grande partie périmé et il faudrait en trouver un beaucoup plus précis.<sup>9</sup>

Butor's dissatisfaction extends beyond political labels to the contents of political speech:

Le drame, c'est que les discussions entre chefs d'État, les discours politiques, les discours électoraux, etc., les discours de propagande à l'intérieur des partis - même les mieux intentionnés - utilisent un vocabulaire qui ne marche pas. Tant qu'on utilisera ces mots-là et qu'on restera à l'intérieur de telles ou telles oppositions, il n'y aura pas moyen d'en sortir. Le seul moyen, c'est d'apporter des mots nouveaux à ces discussions. Je ne parle pas de néologismes - au besoin il peut y en avoir -

mais d'éliminer de certaines discussions certains termes qui sont utilisés aujourd'hui et qui n'apportent que des malentendus, qui n'apportent que la guerre. Alors que d'autres mots peuvent être utilisés qui seront plus utiles.<sup>10</sup>

For Butor the language of politics leads not to transformation but to old oppositions and is too restrictive for him. It is in this sense that his lack of adherence to any party is to be understood, in this sense that "Aucun ne peut me laisser la possibilité d'agir en lui".<sup>11</sup> Without a party, Butor has no party line to follow, no given truth to which he adheres or tries to express in his writing. Although he may have views on certain everyday political questions, he is not a committed writer in the normal sense of the word;

Sur tous les points pratiques, chaque fois qu'un problème concret se pose, je me trouve en gros à gauche, et je le manifeste aussi nettement que je puis, mais ceci ne me permet absolument pas un engagement au sens sartrien du terme.<sup>12</sup>

With no commitment to something pre-existent, with no political axe to grind, Butor has no lesson for us to digest and reproduce:

Mes textes ne sont pas des textes d'enseignement, au sens habituel du terme, c'est-à-dire qu'ils ne transmettent pas un savoir comme résultat. Ils creusent un désir de savoir.<sup>13</sup>

Butor does not see himself as the teacher who speaks while we, the readers, listen. On the contrary, he wishes to incite us, to incite everyone, to speak for themselves:

On a tout le temps parlé pour eux. Eh bien, moi, si vous voulez, je parle pour qu'ils parlent, pour qu'ils me parlent, mais je ne veux pas parler à leur place. Je ne suis pas un porte-parole. Je suis un porte non-parole.<sup>14</sup>

Butor's desire is not to impose the world he wants on us but rather to incite us to construct the world we want for ourselves:



Je sais que je me trouve mal dans le monde où je suis maintenant, tout en étant heureux quand même. J'ai de la chance, mais le monde tel qu'il est ne me convient pas. La société où je suis me semble marcher très très mal. Je suis sûr qu'elle pourrait aller beaucoup mieux. Bien sûr, il est relativement facile de dire ce qui va mal. Il est beaucoup plus difficile de montrer comment cela pourrait aller mieux. Sauf dans des cas particuliers. Et ce n'est que peu à peu que ces images particulières peuvent se relier, se combiner dans une image un peu plus vaste. En résumé, je ne peux pas du tout vous faire un tableau de la société dans laquelle je serais heureux de vivre. Ce que je m'efforce de faire dans mes livres, c'est de montrer que certains aspects de la société où nous sommes nous rendent inévitablement malheureux et que nous ne sommes pas condamnés à cela. Qu'il est possible de trouver autre chose.<sup>15</sup>

Essentially, Butor's lesson is a modest one: he wishes to show us that there exist holes in reality and that these holes need not be there. He then leaves us to our own devices, having implanted the desire to find out how these holes may be filled.

We should, then, have no fear of this writer who would like to be called "un artiste révolutionnaire". We will not be forced to swallow dogma nor will we find ourselves obliged to accept his ideas at gunpoint. If Butor is a revolutionary, it is, as Madeleine Santschi says, as "révolutionnaire sans fusil, révolutionnaire heureux"<sup>16</sup> that we should see him. However, although Butor is happy, he is not happy enough. He has made a certain analysis of reality: "Oui, ce monde est beau, oui, cette société a toutes sortes de qualités, mais il n'est pas assez beau" (ES, 43).<sup>17</sup> It is his intent to make of his writing an instrument for changing this situation:

Il y a certes un roman naïf et une consommation naïve du roman, comme délassement ou divertissement, ce qui permet de passer une heure ou deux, de <<tuer le temps>>, et toutes les grandes oeuvres, les plus savantes, les plus ambitieuses, les plus austères, sont nécessairement en communication avec le contenu de cette énorme rêverie, de cette mythologie, de cet innombrable commerce, mais elles jouent aussi un rôle tout autre et absolument décisif: elles transforment la façon dont nous voyons

et racontons le monde, et par conséquent transforment le monde.  
Un tel <<engagement>> ne vaut-il pas tous les efforts? (RII, 90)

Writing in 1964, Butor understandably puts the word "engagement" in inverted commas. If, following Butor's example, we will henceforth consider the word "révolutionnaire" as "périmé", we will nonetheless keep the word "committed", always bearing in mind that we are dealing not with a committed writer, but with a writer committed to change. In the eighties we must be able to remove the inverted commas and state without fear of misinterpretation that the fundamental strategy of all of Butor's production is one of commitment to change.

We are not the first to talk of Butor's work in terms of change or transformation. In 1971 Michael Spencer noted the lack of full-length book studies on Butor, particularly in English, and took his own steps to remedy that situation. Since then, Dean McWilliams, Jennifer Walters and Mary Lydon have added their own contributions. All four writers have drawn attention in some form to the notion of change in Butor's writing, particularly in either the introduction or conclusion to their studies. Spencer believes that "the notion of literature as contestation" is what provides the unity in the diversity of Butor's production, a production "based on a violent personal reaction to what he sees as the malaise of the Western world".<sup>18</sup> Jennifer Walters feels that, for Butor, "the writer has a social responsibility"<sup>19</sup> and that, in his work, "a chain reaction can be established where the author provokes change in the reader who modifies his world because of his changing perceptions".<sup>20</sup> Mary Lydon contends that Butor believes in the power of art to "explain and teach, to reveal men and the world to themselves and to each other, and, by doing so, to change

them for the better".<sup>21</sup> In the broadly historical perspective which he adopts, Dean McWilliams argues that Butor excavates the past in order to understand the present, the final aim being "the preparation of a better future".<sup>22</sup> Despite minor reservations, we would be in general agreement with all of these claims. However, it seems to us that what is lacking in these writers' analyses of individual texts is precisely the application of these views. This discrepancy is particularly evident in areas of the work of McWilliams whose perspective is the closest of the four to our own. If Butor explores the past to understand the present it is surely to trace the origins of the holes which he has perceived in reality and to remove the cause of these holes? In other words, transformation implies to us a certain, although not complete, rejection, whether it be of the past or the present. For McWilliams, transformation seems to imply a blanket acceptance of the past, a re-discovery of the past which will then form the basis of the future.<sup>23</sup> In our opinion this is self-contradictory - the future is the past - and we cannot agree with such ideas. The aim of our perspective will be to ascertain through its application what Butor desires to change, why this is so and how he proposes to fill the holes in reality. It is not enough to say that Butor desires change, we must investigate what change he desires.

Toute évangile qu'on prend pour  
l'évangile est un apocryphe, foyer  
d'un massacre. Indispensable alors  
de violer ce cercueil scellé  
delétère, de décoller ses pages,  
d'écorcher ce cadavre, déchirer,  
remettre en pièces méthodiquement  
ce caillot, d'y faire circuler à  
nouveau son air natal, de la  
profaner pieusement. (RII, 240)

We are forever trying to catch up. If the perspective we have

elaborated is valid for the totality of Butor's production, then, strictly speaking, it ought to be applied to all of his work. This, however, is impossible on two counts. There can be no comparison between the scope of Butor's work and that of any one critical work. It is simply too large. Secondly, not all Butor's work is at the same stage of development. We only have three texts in the "Dialogues" series. We know there will be others. Nor can we be sure that there will not be further texts along the lines of Intervalle or La Rose des Vents. At some future date Butor may even re-work these texts as he has done with Votre Faust in Quadruple Fond. It would be unreasonable at this stage to accord a definite place within Butor's production to such texts.

The main body of Butor's work, setting aside his critical essays, can be divided into five principal regions, two groups, the novels and experimental texts, and three series, Le Génie du Lieu, Illustrations and Matière de Rêves. At present, the series Le Génie du Lieu numbers only three members while the others number four. Since each successive volume in each series brings with it its own refinements to the series, we can safely say that the series Le Génie du Lieu is less developed than the others. Although there is a considerable difference between Le Génie du Lieu and Où, the form and organisation of the latter may be considered as an extension of procedures begun in Mobile, Description de San Marco and 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. Furthermore, it seems to us that an adequate insight into Butor's relationship with place can be gained from reference to other works, notably Réseau Aérien and Illustrations III. A study of the series will not add significantly to what we can learn from the other four regions. Accordingly, while we will have occasion to refer to Où, a detailed analysis of the series Le Génie du Lieu will not be undertaken.

For similar reasons we will not examine Butor's first novel, Passage de Milan. As Butor himself has pointed out (ES, 48), he tried to put everything into this novel. This resulted in a certain confusion in the novel: "il reste flou" (ES, 48). If this novel contains a confusion of the seeds of Butor's production, it is the clarity contained in the fruit which will be of most use to us. The clarification of Butor's ideas begins, in our opinion, in his second novel, L'Emploi du Temps. We shall, therefore, restrict the application of our perspective to the last three novels, the experimental texts and the two series Illustrations and Matière de Rêves. This will enable us to study Butor's production "dans son mouvement général" (R, 80).

FOOTNOTES

1. Michael Spencer, 'État présent of Butor studies', Australian Journal of French Studies, 8 (1971), 84-97 (p. 97).
2. Lois Oppenheim, Intentionality and Intersubjectivity: A Phenomenological Study of Butor's La Modification, French Forum, 1980.
3. Robert Melançon, 'Entretien avec Michel Butor', Études Françaises, 11, no. 1 (February 1975), 67-92 (p. 89).
4. Melançon, pp. 88-89.
5. Madeleine Santschi, Voyage avec Michel Butor, L'Age d'Homme, 1983, p. 55.
6. Santschi, p. 55.
7. Butor: Colloque de Cerisy, U.G.E., 1974, p. 440.
8. Santschi, p. 65.
9. Santschi, p. 46.
10. Santschi, p. 47.
11. Colloque de Cerisy, p. 440.
12. Colloque de Cerisy, p. 440.
13. Santschi, p. 193.
14. Santschi, p. 168.
15. Santschi, p. 65.

16. Santeschi, p. 214.
17. The emphasis is Butor's.
18. Michael Spencer, Michel Butor, Twayne, 1974, p. 16.
19. Jennifer Walters, Michel Butor, Sono Nis, 1977, p. 20.
20. Walters, p. 139.
21. Mary Lydon, Perpetuum Mobile: A Study of the Novels and Aesthetics of Michel Butor, University of Alberta Press, 1980, p. 79.
22. Dean McWilliams, The Narratives of Michel Butor: The Writer as Janus, Ohio University Press, 1978, p. 10.
23. See in particular McWilliams' chapter on L'Emploi du Temps (pp. 22-31) where Bleston's links with a certain imperial past are viewed as a positive factor, as something to be accepted.

SECTION ONE

THE NOVELS



## CHAPTER ONE

### L'Emploi du Temps and La Modification: The Myth of Imperial Dominance

#### INTRODUCTION

In the course of his literary career since the publication of Degrés in 1960 Michel Butor has changed the form of his writing several times: the experimental works which followed the novels gave way to the poetry of the Illustrations series which has, in turn, been succeeded by the dream texts of the Matière de Rêves series. These changes cannot, however, compare with the radical break from the novel form which came with the appearance of Mobile in 1962. The three series of experimental works, Illustrations and Matière de Rêves have all at one time or another been contemporaneous and the appearance of a new series did not immediately imply the rejection of the form of the old one. Until 1962 Butor had concentrated exclusively on the novel form and his subsequent rejection of it in favour of other forms remains the most spectacular and enigmatic modification within his work.

In 1959, the year before the publication of Degrés, Butor was proclaiming his commitment to the novel form in his "Intervention à Royaumont": "Il n'y a pas pour le moment de forme littéraire dont le pouvoir soit aussi grand que celui du roman" (R, 272). Three years later, at the end of the second volume of Répertoire, he was saying something quite different:

Tout ce que je vais répondre pourra s'ajouter à mon intervention de 1959 à Royaumont; ce sera une intervention de 1962 à Tel Quel. Ce qui m'apparaît en premier, c'est qu'en 1959 le mot <<roman>> me suffisait pour définir mon activité, tout le reste, mes anciens poèmes, mes essais, pouvant se subordonner à la suite des quatres livres: Passage de Milan, L'Emploi du Temps, La Modification, Degrés. Aujourd'hui je suis obligé de considérer le roman comme un simple cas particulier; il faut que j'en restreigne la définition. (RJI, 293)

In the space of three years and with the publication of only one fictional work, Degrés, in the intervening time, the emphasis in Butor's writing had radically moved away from the novel.

As the only work of fiction produced between 1959 and 1962, Degrés appears as a work of great importance for the student of Butor. Indeed, the majority of critics are agreed that this last novel is a pivotal work in Butor's development, a work already pregnant with the seeds of Mobile. This consensus of agreement has resulted in a tendency to emphasise the links between Degrés and the later, experimental works rather than its links with the three previous novels, although the latter have not been completely neglected. Mary Lydon sees in the movement from La Modification to Degrés a possible reaction on Butor's part to the view held in some quarters that the former work was a "classic French bourgeois novel".<sup>1</sup> According to Lydon, Butor removes from Degrés certain traditional novelistic elements which may have obscured the real nature of his work in earlier novels, the movement being essentially from epic to didactic. Dean McWilliams, on the other hand, argues that all Butor's novels are openly didactic but that the death of Pierre Vernier in Degrés "reveals Butor's disenchantment with the notion of the author who, through a narrator-surrogate, delivers us a neat lesson".<sup>2</sup> McWilliams' idea parallels those of Georges Raillard who has gone further than any other critic in

attempting to explain Butor's break with the novel form. According to Raillard, "la question (<<Qui parle?>>) posée à la fin de Degrés, conclut une part de l'oeuvre en annonçant la nécessité d'un type nouveau de narration".<sup>3</sup> Raillard gives a tantalising hint of a progression from the "Je <<innocent>>"<sup>4</sup> of L'Emploi du Temps to the "hésitation du Je"<sup>5</sup> of Degrés, this hesitation corresponding to the breakdown of the myth of the centre in western civilisation. The novel, Raillard argues, must take account of this breakdown: "Au récit <<centré>> doit faire place un récit <<décentré>>".<sup>6</sup>

It will be the aim of this study of Butor's novels to expand on the ideas of McWilliams and Raillard. We will attempt to show that Degrés does indeed contain the announcement of the need for a new type of writing and that it therefore explains the break with the novel form. We shall also argue that Degrés represents the culmination of a process begun in L'Emploi du Temps and continued in La Modification, in which the myth of the centre is evidence of a certain kind of relationship between man and reality which Butor desires to change. In the first part of our study we shall deal with L'Emploi du Temps and La Modification, examining Butor's conception of the nature of reality and man's rôle in it. In the second part we shall consider the consequences of Butor's ontological view for the reader and writer of novels as they are expressed in Degrés, consequences which, in our view, demand Butor's abandonment of the novel form for a new kind of writing.

Butor's conception of reality and man's rôle in it can be elucidated from an examination of the situation of the protagonists of L'Emploi du Temps and La Modification in the reality in which they find themselves, their attempts to come to terms with that reality and the inherent contradictions in these attempts. Let us first of all consider the situation of Jacques Revel in L'Emploi du Temps.

The action of L'Emploi du Temps takes place in the fictional town of Bleston in which certain features of the industrial north of England are clearly recognisable.<sup>7</sup> The scope of the novel is however much wider than England or the English:

Une ville industrielle anglaise devait m'apprendre quelque chose de très important sur ce que sont les villes industrielles en général et par conséquent sur la civilisation occidentale actuelle. (ES, 97)

Butor views modern western society as essentially industrial and Bleston is designed to be representative of industrial towns all over the western world. Bleston is at the centre of a vast and apparently endless urban conglomeration which Revel finds impossible to leave (ET, 35). For Revel during the year of his stay Bleston represents the sum total of reality.

As a character Jacques Revel himself is equally representative. Although he is a mature Frenchman and therefore someone with a clearly defined past, we learn virtually nothing about his existence prior to his year in Bleston during the course of the novel. His arrival in Bleston has cut him off completely from his previous existence and his previous self:

tout d'un coup, j'ai été pris comme de vertige à l'idée que depuis mon arrivée dans cette ville, depuis quatre semaines, moi si grand liseur auparavant, je n'avais pas ouvert un livre, je me suis senti tout contaminé de brume gourde, abandonné loin de moi-même, loin de celui que j'avais été avant de débarquer ici, et qui s'effaçait dans une immense distance. (ET, 55)

In practice, Revel has no background and no given character. His French nationality does not serve to establish a certain cultural identity but to emphasise his essential condition in Bleston: he is a foreigner, a complete stranger to the reality into which he finds himself precipitated. He is almost like a newborn baby suddenly pitched into existence. The nature of both Bleston and Revel suggest that his experience in the town should be viewed in ontological terms. During the course of his stay his character develops in a certain way and it becomes possible to analyse the motivations for his actions in psychological terms. In our opinion, however, any psychological interpretation of his actions only exists within a wider ontological framework.

As a stranger to the reality represented by Bleston Revel's basic problem is one of orientation, both physical and mental. In response to the physical aspect of the problem Revel buys a plan of the town in October. With the help of the plan Revel becomes more and more familiar with the geography of the town until he feels he could quite easily do without it. Five months later, however, in April, he finds himself in unfamiliar surroundings as he walks home from Plaisance Gardens (ET, 201-202). He is forced to admit he is lost and consult the plan. Confronted with his obvious dependance on the plan, Revel promptly goes home and burns it in a fit of rage. The very next day he has to buy a replacement. Revel regards his action as more than merely stupid, he describes it as "insensé" (ET, 199) and as having taken place "dans un long, très long

moment de déraison" (ET, 201). Nor is it just the burning of a simple piece of paper: what he has destroyed is "l'image de cette ville" (ET, 203) and he has done so "en grand secret, presque en grande cérémonie" (ET, 201). He has destroyed the effigy of an enemy, an act of some significance in rites of magic. There are three things we should note about the burning of the plan: it is symptomatic of a certain mental disorientation; it is a symbolic act in terms of certain superstitious beliefs; it is carried out using a particular method, fire. What has led Revel to perceive the town as an enemy and to his recourse to superstition and fire? How has he attempted to come to terms with the reality of the town?

Revel's status as a foreigner results in an impression of being excluded from the social life of the town. He has problems with the language and, initially, has little human contact. It is not until the third weekend in October, when he is invited to the Jenkins' home, that Revel begins to feel more accepted into the life of the town. On his way home, however, he notices the Saturday afternoon queues at the cinemas which he cannot join because he has not yet been paid. He is acutely aware of the fragility of his acceptance into the town and feels as if he is being personally victimised:

Je sentais en Bleston une puissance que m'était hostile, mais ma visite heureuse chez les Jenkins me faisait croire qu'il était possible de l'amadouer; c'est pourquoi je suis entré chez Philibert's, dans l'intention d'y acheter une sorte de talisman, un objet fait à Bleston et dans la matière de Bleston, que je pourrais porter sur moi comme signe protecteur, un mouchoir de coton que j'ai toujours. (ET, 53)

Faced with what he regards as a hostile entity Revel reacts in a superstitious manner. Superstition also plays an important part in his

second reaction to the town when he buys the detective novel Le Meurtre de Bleston. He is attracted to the ambiguity of the title after seeing a newspaper headline carrying the same words and announcing a "fait-divers" (ET, 56) and seeks in the novel the same kind of aid as he expected from the talisman:

Je cherchais dans l'auteur, ce J.-C. Hamilton, non seulement un amuseur, mais sur la foi de son titre, un complice contre la ville, un sorcier habitué à ce genre de périls, qui pût me munir de charmes assez puissants pour me permettre de les défier. (ET, 57)

Superstition dates from pre-history and Revel's initial reactions to the hostility of the town can be seen as instinctive, ones which would be made by primitive man.

From superstition Revel graduates to aspects of pagan and Christian myth. Chance, in the form of a summons to the nearby police station, brings Revel to the Fine Arts Museum and its eighteen tapestries recounting the legend of Theseus. The most striking aspects of the tapestries are blood, murder and the destruction of Athens by fire. Of equal importance is an identification which Revel makes between a figure in the tapestries, Ariadne, and someone who is a part of his life in Bleston, Ann Bailey. He makes this identification "sans qu'il y eût, je le sais bien, de ressemblance vraiment frappante pour un esprit moins préparé" (ET, 158). Revel is influenced in making this connection by the image of Mrs Jenkins which he sees in the figure of Botany in the New Cathedral (ET, 158). Mrs Jenkins is the daughter of the sculptor and her mother was the model for the statue. Her relationship with the statue goes even further:

j' imagine que, faisant de son père le véritable Pygmalion, elle s'est lentement appropriée dès son enfance tout ce qu'elle a pu de ces regards, de ces courbes, de ces élégances qu'il avait taillés dans la pierre, qui se sont réunis et incarnés en elle. (ET, 168)

Mrs Jenkins has modelled herself on the statues. Under the influence of a real identification he has made Revel proceeds to make a fictitious one and demonstrates in so doing his susceptibility to models to which he can compare his situation in the town.

The opening pages of Hamilton's novel then lead Revel to the Old Cathedral and its stained-glass window depicting the Biblical story of Cain and the murder of Abel. Blood is a dominant feature of the murder and almost seems to flow from the window (ET, 73). Fire, too, is present in the form of Cain's offering to God and in the lightning which burns his forehead and gives him the mark of indestructibility. The artists of the windows have situated the descendants of Cain in a 16th century representation of Bleston itself and it is in the image of the Old Cathedral, with its towers dominating the town, that the motifs of blood and fire come together in the evening light: "Ils étincelaient, semblables à des barques d'or dans le ciel rougeoyant, frappés par un des derniers rayons de ce jour et de cette année" (ET, 74-75). It is as if the town were on fire like Athens in the tapestries.

The thoughts of murder and fire implanted in Revel's mind by the two myths remain uppermost through Guy Fawkes' Day and a visit to the cinema when images of Rome burning in the film merge with those of Bleston in the Old Cathedral. As he leaves the cinema the buildings of the town seem "destinées à la flamme" (ET, 228). That same night Revel and Lucien discuss Le Meurtre de Bleston and the next day Revel lights his first fire, burning the zoo ticket.

This act, Revel tells us, prefigures the destruction of the plan (ET, 230) and happens at a time when Revel has reached the low point of



his stay in Bleston. He is kept going only by a feeling of hatred "qu'il me fallait rendre solide par un acte, ma haine qui cherchait déjà à se soulager par cette infime destruction, qui s'est un peu soulagée quand j'ai brûlé le plan de Bleston" (ET, 227). Revel destroys the ticket ostensibly because all the tickets are handed back at the exit and subsequently burned: this one had escaped its natural fate. However, the ticket bears the inscription "Remember Plaisance Gardens" with the word "Remember" on one side of the ticket. It is this exhortation to remember that Revel wishes to destroy. At this point Revel wishes to forget Bleston and what has happened to him there. The destruction of the plan is an amplification of his desire to forget and of his hatred, a hatred for which the town itself is responsible, which is "un effet de sa contamination" (ET, 38).

In the succession of events which leads to the destruction of the plan, Revel appears in an essentially passive rôle:

Une affiche de journal m'avait mené vers le roman policier de J.-C. Hamilton <<Le Meurtre de Bleston>>, et la lecture de celui-ci vers le vitrail du Meurtrier qui, lui-même, avait provoqué cette conversation dont les derniers mots me conseillaient d'aller vers la nouvelle Cathédrale; c'était comme une piste tracée à mon intention, une piste où à chaque étape on me dévoilait les termes de la suivante. (ET, 81-82)

The trail leads to the destruction of the plan, an act to which Revel seems fated. This act is not carried out as the result of a conscious decision but is determined by the influences of the town. His decision-making process is eroded by the town to the extent that he reacts initially in a defensive, instinctive way and then takes the offensive in response to external mythological stimuli which now hold him in their power. Revel is so alienated by the reality of Bleston that he is in danger

of losing his independent self. He has become a stranger to the conscious being who arrived at Hamilton Station, a conscious being who, within the framework of Bleston, has effectively ceased to exist.

From the outset Jacques Revel is a protagonist who is placed at a disadvantage. A complete stranger to the reality represented by Bleston, he literally has nothing, not even himself. In contrast, Léon Delmont, the protagonist of La Modification, seems to have everything he needs. He lives in his own native environment, Paris, is married with a family and has a good job. Yet, he is essentially dissatisfied with his life which he describes as "cette horrible caricature d'existence" (LM, 42). His dissatisfaction with an existence denied to Jacques Revel extends to both the domestic and professional sides of his life. He regards his job as no more than a game (LM, 54) in which he takes little interest and his marriage is described as "cette comédie" (LM, 79). We learn little about the day to day business in which Delmont is involved and the principal reasons for his dissatisfaction concern his relations with his wife and family. In response to his problems Delmont has taken a mistress in Rome and the stimuli for his decision to take active steps to find her a job in Paris and his subsequent desire to tell her of his success in person by travelling to Rome both stem from incidents in his domestic life.

The first involves his children with whom he has difficulty communicating, ostensibly because they are at a difficult age (LM, 80). The problem is further compounded by the doubts left in their minds by an earlier visit by his mistress to their home in the guise of a colleague:

ils sont devenus pour vous de petits étrangers sauvages, audacieux et complices, qui se doutent fort bien que quelque chose ne va pas entre leur mère et vous, qui s'ils n'en parlent pas entre eux, non, cela vous étonnerait, doivent y réfléchir, qui savent qu'on leur ment, qui n'osent plus venir vous interroger. (LM, 80)

It is precisely when his youngest daughter dares to ask about Cécile that an unpleasant scene ensues (LM, 83-84), a scene which leaves Delmont's mind in turmoil and leads to his making enquiries for a job for Cécile (LM, 35-36).

The second incident is his birthday party on the following day. Until then he had intended to inform Cécile of the job by letter. It is the scene which greets him as he enters the dining-room which changes his mind:

vous avez eu l'impression qu'ils s'étaient tous entendus pour vous tendre un piège, que ces cadeaux sur votre assiette étaient un appât, que tout ce repas avait été soigneusement composé pour vous séduire, ... tout combiné pour bien vous persuader que vous étiez désormais un homme âgé, rangé, dompté ... (LM, 38)

Delmont considers Henriette, with her "sourire triomphant" (LM, 38) to be responsible for the orchestration of this scene and identifies the origins of the break between them: "jamais vraiment elle n'avait eu confiance en vous, ou tout au moins depuis très longtemps elle ne l'avait plus" (LM, 37). It is from this scene of his domestic life, "cette asphyxie menaçante" (LM, 38), that Delmont feels he must flee, toward Rome and Cécile.

What are we to make of Delmont's presentation of his life in Paris? It is noticeable that he firmly attributes all blame for his marital problems on his wife and her lack of confidence in him, while, in

describing his children, he resorts to a rather common cliché of their being at a difficult age. He portrays himself, on the other hand, as a self-confident, decisive and successful man, a portrayal which is, however, undermined by the very lengths to which he goes in order to convince himself of its accuracy and by the inherent contradictions which the reader can discern in it.

As he sits in the train compartment he compares his own life to that of a fellow traveller whom he imagines to be a teacher. He establishes his own superiority to this man in material terms only to discover that his attempt to demonstrate his professional success shows its failure in terms of pleasure and satisfaction (LM, 55). He tries to counterbalance this failure with his money and the freedom it gives him to prove his youthfulness. Both these notions are undermined as he attempts to develop them:

Vous n'avez pas tout à fait assez d'argent, vous n'avez pas assez de liberté en face de l'argent, sinon vous seriez en première et cela serait encore mieux, mais on peut considérer les choses d'une autre façon et dire que justement cet inconfort de la troisième classe, vous ne l'avez nullement craint, que vous avez gardé suffisamment d'esprit sportif pour ne pas même faire entrer en ligne de compte un inconvénient aussi léger. Vous vous sentez maintenant au plus haut point éveillé, vivant, et vainqueur.

Votre cigarette vous brûle les doigts; elle s'est consumée seule. (LM, 55)

For someone who is so awake and alive he is curiously inattentive to the burning cigarette. Far from convincing us of the accuracy of his self-portrayal such passages reveal someone who is vacillating and lacking in self-confidence. His attempts to prove the contrary, to resist the reality of his situation, indicate that he cannot entirely be trusted.

Our lack of trust in Delmont leads us to question his depiction of

his domestic situation. Is the birthday party really a trap set for him by a malicious and scornful woman or is it not one more attempt on Henriette's part to please a man for whom she still feels affection? Is it really the children who have become strangers to Delmont or is it that he has distanced himself from them in his need for secrecy over his affair? If we re-examine Delmont's situation at work and at home, one common denominator becomes apparent: his own lack of involvement. He takes no interest in his work, makes little attempt to communicate with his children and cuts off all Henriette's attempts to communicate with him. It is Delmont who has become the stranger.

A similar lack of involvement can be seen in Delmont's relationship to his surroundings, to Paris. When he is in Rome Cécile acts as his guide, but when Cécile comes to Paris he is unable to perform adequately the reciprocal task:

Il y avait tant de monde sur le trottoir qu'il vous a fallu attendre le taxi un certain temps. Comme cela était différent de cet accueil joyeux d'une ville, de votre ville, de cette ville dont elle surtout attendait tant, qu'elle désirait tant revoir encore une fois, dont vous étiez pour elle l'ambassadeur et presque le prince, de telle sorte qu'elle ne pouvait s'empêcher d'éprouver de la déception à vous y voir perdu soudain dans la foule, aux prises avec ses minimes désagréments, si insupportables à la longue, dont elle espérait que votre seule présence la protégerait. (LM, 165)

As Delmont goes home after this episode he is suddenly prey to feelings which sum up his situation in Paris: "c'était comme si vous débarquiez dans une ville étrangère où vous n'auriez connu personne" (LM, 166). It is as if he were a stranger in his own town and his feelings mirror remarkably the situation of Jacques Revel in Bleston. His lack of contact with Paris is as great as that with his job and his family. While Delmont's life is without question unsatisfactory he himself must shoulder

the blame for this state of affairs because of his unwillingness to become involved in it. We can describe his overall relationship to his Parisian life as one of absence, an absence underlined in physical terms by his frequent trips to Rome.

We can see, then, that both Jacques Revel and Léon Delmont are alienated from their respective environments in the same specific way: both lack a true awareness of the reality in which they find themselves. The reasons for this alienation differ, however. While Revel's actions are determined by the influences of Bleston upon him, Delmont appears to have made a deliberate choice in which he rejects the environment of Paris for that of Rome. His choice is based on a view of his Parisian life which appears not merely as misguided but as dishonest. We might accuse him of representing a certain "mauvaise foi" in man's relationship to reality. He deliberately rejects the reality of his situation in Paris if it fails to conform to his image of himself. Thus, although Delmont appears, unlike Revel, as a conscious being, both share the same problem and their common struggle will be for a true consciousness of the nature of the reality in which they find themselves.

It is now time for us to examine Jacques Revel's attempts to cope with the reality of Bleston after the destruction of the plan and the contradictions implied in these attempts. Faced with the futility of the burning of the plan Revel realises that it is impossible for him to forget and that, on the contrary, an effort of memory is required. He therefore decides to write. The decision to write is the first action during Revel's stay which cannot be related to extraneous deterministic

influences and is an act of conscious choice. However, the mere decision to write does not immediately enable Revel to grasp the true nature of the reality of the town and the influence of myth is apparent in the writing project itself which he describes as "un fil d'Ariane parce que je suis dans un labyrinthe, parce que j'écris pour m'y retrouver" (ET, 187). The comparison of the reality of Bleston to a labyrinth, a common enough image, might appear quite innocent if we had not already discerned the influence of the Theseus myth in the destruction of the plan. Revel's assimilation of the myth has gone much further than the general details of blood, fire and murder; eleven days after beginning the diary he tells us that he now sees himself as Theseus while Rose Bailey is represented by Phaedra (ET, 173). In becoming a labyrinth the reality of Bleston is posed as an enigma to be solved, the solution implying a murder. In comparing Bleston to a labyrinth Revel assumes that reality as a whole is reducible to a model. Why should this model be the Theseus myth? The answer lies in the parallels to the myth which are to be found in the detective novel.

The link between the Theseus myth and the detective novel is formed through the intermediary of Oedipus who, Revel realises, can readily be compared to Theseus:

Que de similarités, en effet, rapprochent les destinées de ces deux enfants trompés sur leur naissance et sur leur race, élevés loin de leur ville natale, tous deux tuant les monstres qui en infestaient les abords, tous deux résolvant des énigmes, libérant la voie, tous deux meurtriers de leur père (Thésée, non par le fer, mais par la négligence ...) tous deux obtenant ainsi une royauté précaire, tous les deux chassés finalement de leur trône, assistant à l'embrasement de leur ville, mourant loin d'elle, incapables de lui porter secours. (ET, 173-174)

It is then George Burton who draws Revel's attention to the parallel

between Oedipus and the detective. In Burton's opinion the detective novel is based upon two murders: the initial crime committed by the murderer and his subsequent unmasking by the detective "qui le met à mort ... par l'explosion de la vérité" (ET, 147). It is this second murder which links the detective to Oedipus:

Le détective est le fils du meurtrier, Oedipe, non seulement parce qu'il résout un énigme, mais aussi parce qu'il tue celui à qui il doit son titre, celui sans lequel il n'existerait pas comme tel (sans crimes, sans crimes obscurs, comment apparaîtrait-il?), parce que ce meurtre lui a été prédit dès sa naissance, ou, si vous préférez, qu'il est inscrit dans sa nature, que par lui seul il devient roi, vraiment lui-même, avec ce pouvoir supérieur à ceux que nous octroie la vie commune. (ET, 148)

The detective becomes king because of the nature of the relationship with reality created by the unmasking of the murderer: he transforms reality by purifying it (ET, 147). At the moment of the "death" of the murderer the detective is in control of reality. Oedipus and Theseus become king in a more conventional manner but they too are in control of their reality, their cities, Athens and Thebes, insofar as they hold the ultimate authority over all that takes place there.

To become Theseus is, then, to attain a position of dominance over reality. If Revel is to become king like Theseus, taking control of reality, he must commit murder by negligence in accordance with the myth. Does he in fact attempt to do so and if so, how, and to what extent is he successful?

In July George Burton is badly injured by a hit-and-run driver. Revel rejects the official accident theory, believing that it was an attempt on Burton's life. The reasons for this belief concern his revelation



of the secret assumed name under which Burton has written the novel Le Meurtre de Bleston. Revel gives away this secret on two occasions: once to James Jenkins, in whom he knows Burton has an enemy, at the fair on the last day of May and again the following evening to the Bailey sisters, opening the way for this information to reach Richard Tenn. He regards his action as a betrayal responsible for the attempt on Burton's life and feels that he has almost killed him "par négligence" (ET, 175).

The motivations for this betrayal are complex. In August Revel writes that Rose had not really seduced Burton's name from him as he had suggested in June (ET, 66). The real reason concerns an incident in October when he was knocked over by a young girl he imagined to be Rose outside the Old Cathedral and fell in the mud:

je craignais de plus en plus qu'elle était bien Rose Bailey; et je craignais de plus en plus qu'elle n'ait gardé quelque trace de cette lamentable rencontre, qu'elle ne m'ait finalement identifié ... avec cet homme couvert de boue, immonde, pitoyable comme un épileptique dans sa transe, qui avait provoqué chez elle cette répulsion instinctive qui l'avait fait fuir, ce dont l'idée m'était intolérable, ce qu'il fallait à tout prix neutraliser par quelque action, quelque parole qui me donnât du prestige à ses yeux.

Aussi dans la conversation, le soir, quand je l'ai vue si excitée à propos du roman de J.-C. Hamilton, je n'ai pas pu laisser échapper cette occasion de briller devant elle, je me suis arrangé, je le vois bien maintenant, pour me faire extorquer mon secret. (ET, 198)

Now, if Rose is Phaedra, it is necessary that Revel should appear capable of solving an enigma and as a kingly figure. The picture he imagines Rose to have of him is of a piteous figure who has fallen. Immediately prior to the incident at the Cathedral Revel has visited the Jenkins' house where he has seen a drawing representing "je ne sais quel roi déchu, s'enfuyant, drapé dans son manteau, couronne en tête, à travers une

épaisse forêt" (ET, 52). This drawing is linked to the last tapestry in the museum, examined by Revel in December and depicting the fallen Theseus: "chassé de sa ville en flammes, de l'autre côté de la mer, vieilli, blanchi, sa robe d'or en lambeaux, il gisait près de l'épave de son navire sur le rivage d'une île" (ET, 158). In Revel's mind Rose has an image of him as a "fallen" king, a fallen Theseus. In delivering Burton's secret he attempts to re-establish himself in her eyes as Theseus in all his glory, solving the enigma of the author's identity. He does so, as we shall see, in the hope of avoiding the fate of Theseus and the fallen king. He becomes at this point the king of a small piece of reality and, at the same time, sets in motion the events which, in his mind, will confirm him as Theseus, murderer by negligence.

The question now arises as to why it should be Burton that Revel feels impelled to murder by his betrayal. The solution of an enigma is only one part of the Theseus myth: the murder also has to be a patricide. By the time Revel begins his diary he has gained an intimate knowledge of Burton's novel and has spent his evenings reading from the Jenkins' huge collection of detective novels (ET, 89). In addition to reading detective novels Revel also has conversations on the subject of the genre with Burton.

The conversations begin on the 11th of May and continue on the 18th and 25th. During the first two weeks of his writing Revel recounts the beginning of his stay in a straightforward, factual manner. On the 15th of May he begins to write in a way derived from detective novels. Relating Horace Buck's description of Bleston as an evil town, Revel writes: "J'ai bien essayé de tenir compte de cette mise en garde, de me défendre, mais pas assez: la gigantesque sorcellerie de Bleston m'a

envahi et envoûté, m'a égaré loin de moi-même dans un désert de fumées" (ET, 31). Revel introduces to his narrative an element of suspense. We are forced to ask ourselves what has happened to him and how. We read on, eagerly awaiting the answers to our questions. A similar technique can be seen in the entry for the 19th of May in which we are introduced to the character of Ann Bailey. Needing a newspaper to help him find lodgings, Revel asks Jenkins where he can find one:

- Il y a une tres bonne papetterie un peu plus loin dans Tower Street, dont je connais la vendeuse. Ce soir, si vous voulez ...>>

C'est ainsi que j'ai rencontré Ann Bailey. (ET, 39)

By tailing off Jenkins' reply and using the words "C'est ainsi" Revel transforms the introduction of the character into an event of great portent, into an episode crucial to the narrative, without the reader knowing why. The suspense is heightened by the fact that Revel stops the narrative here without describing the meeting with Ann. When he does so, in the next entry, the meeting seems banal in the extreme and the suspicion of a love-interest only leaves the reader gasping for more information. Suspense is created by the delay in imparting information just as, in the detective novel, the reader is given scraps of information in the search for the culprit. The introduction of this style of writing can be seen as the result of Revel's conversations with Burton.

Burton's influence on Revel's writing extends to the form of his diary. Revel deliberately draws attention to the formal similarities between his diary and Burton's conception of the detective novel. Burton remarks that the detective novel begins with the murder and then moves backwards in time exploring events prior to the crime. Revel then writes:

Ainsi moi-même je me suis efforcé de retrouver tout ce qui avait pu m'amener à livrer le véritable nom de J.-C. Hamilton à Ann et Rose, donc à leurs cousins et aux amis de leurs cousins, m'amener à ma trahison. (ET, 171)

Burton refines his thoughts to point out that the novel superimposes two time scales: the enquiry, which begins with the crime, and the drama leading up to it, the former constituting present time and the latter the reverse movement through the past. Again Revel compares this to his diary: "Ainsi moi-même, c'est tout en notant ce qui me paraissait essentiel dans les semaines présentes, et tout en continuant à raconter l'automne, que je suis parvenu jusqu'à ce dernier dimanche du mois de mai" (ET, 171-172). It is clear from both these passages that the crime in Revel's mind is his betrayal of Burton and that he has introduced his account of the month of May in reverse chronological order as a "retour en arrière", as an examination of the drama leading up to the betrayal of the 1st of June. His account of June and July, which begins with the betrayal, thus becomes the time scale of the enquiry. Now, Revel's diary does not begin with a murder and, therefore, at the point in time when Revel first comes into contact with Burton's ideas, it does not conform formally to them. The introduction of the time scale of June, with the betrayal, is Revel's belated attempt to conform to these ideas.

Before we draw any conclusions about the relationship between Revel and Burton one final, crucial incident remains to be examined. Just before the betrayal of Burton's identity at the Baileys' Ann returns to Revel his original copy of Le Meurtre de Bleston. His reaction is one of complete stupefaction and confusion. Why should this be so? We learn in July that Revel had put his name on this copy, that it was "marqué de mon nom" (ET, 184). In view of the ambiguity of the title, already recognised by Revel

in May, the return of this signed copy confronts Revel once again with his symbolic murder of the town in exactly the same fashion as the new plan. This is what provokes Revel's reaction. What happens next shows that the effort of memory apparent in the decision to write is still being eroded by the power of the desire to forget: Revel deflects the attention of the Baileys, and his own, from the book to the author, from one murder to another, grasping the opportunity presented by the similarity between Tenn's house and that in the novel and betraying Burton.

Revel accomplishes several things at once with this act of betrayal: he deflects the murder of the town from his memory, constitutes Burton as his "father" and transforms himself into a detective. Burton becomes his father, "le véritable Pygmalion", as the model for the way in which his diary is both written and constructed; he needs a murder for the diary to be a detective novel and he needs a detective novel in order to become the detective-king who so resembles Oedipus/Theseus.

There are, of course, enormous contradictions in Revel's behaviour in this episode and it is in these contradictions that Revel's attempt to be king and the applicability of the Theseus myth begin to collapse. As we have pointed out, Revel's diary does not begin with a murder and, in the account of the autumn months, contains a third time scale which does not conform to Burton's conception of the detective novel. In the comparison he makes between his diary and Burton's ideas Revel passes over this discrepancy in an attempt to divert attention from his murder of Bleston. However, the very processes he has introduced into his diary undermine this attempt at diversion. His reverse account of May takes him right back to the end of April when he burned the plan. Similarly, his account of the present inexorably leads him to describe the visit of the

newly-engaged Lucien and Rose, to the loss of Phaedra, a highly ironic proof of Burton's dictum that, "dans la réalité, ce travail de l'esprit tourné vers le passé s'accomplit dans le temps pendant que d'autres événements s'accumulent" (ET, 171).

The second important contradiction involves Revel's attitude to Burton. Even at the moment of betrayal he describes him as "un homme qui m'est cher" (ET, 67). He is impelled to murder someone whom he simply does not want to murder. The first break in the hold of the myth over him occurs when he discovers the negative of the photograph taken of Burton at the fair. Instead of burning it as he feels impelled to do, and therefore of burning the image of Burton as he did that of Bleston, he keeps it and puts it inside the second copy of the novel. This takes place on the 1st of July, before the accident, and prefigures Burton's escape from death. Yet, for Revel, even though Burton is not killed, it is necessary that there should have been at least an attempt to murder him if he is to retain his status as detective-king. He goes to some lengths to discover the culprit but his suspicions, which fall first on Tenn and then on James Jenkins, prove groundless. Revel imagines that Burton, too, suspects a murder attempt and the author subsequently tells him that, for a time, this was indeed the case:

il m'a raconté, avec son rire, qu'il avait bâti tout un roman à propos de cette affaire, qu'il s'était imaginé qu'il avait échappé à un meurtre, qu'il avait même cru découvrir le coupable, jouant pour une fois ce personnage du détective, héros central de ses écrits, mais que, vérifications faites, toute la belle construction s'était effondrée d'un seul coup sans qu'il en restât rien, telles étaient les chimères auxquelles l'exposait sa profession. (ET, 247)

There has been no murder attempt and the "raison d'être" for Revel's rôle as detective-king is removed. Revel, however, fails to draw any lesson

from this failure parallel to his own and, as we shall see, continues to attempt to play this rôle until the very end of his stay in Bleston.

The final contradiction is one which destroys Revel's affective life in Bleston and very nearly destroys him completely. His love life is based on the mythical identification of Ann and Rose Bailey with Ariadne and Phaedra. In the myth Theseus abandons Ariadne for Phaedra who betrays him when he is king. Revel's account of his love life tends to suggest that he really loved Ann and that only the power of the myth led him to Rose. He goes to great lengths to prove this, declaring that he had "abandoned" Ann for Rose and that he had loved Ann all the time (ET, 268).

There can be no doubt that he does abandon Ann for Rose in accordance with the myth. He wants to avoid a passionate involvement with Rose (ET, 117), not to love her, but to seduce her (ET, 195). These odd details are explained by his reaction to Lucien and Rose's engagement when he says that Rose "ne m'a même pas trahi parce que je ne me suis même pas déclaré" (ET, 189). Phaedra's betrayal of Theseus contributed directly to his fall. By not declaring his passion, by merely seducing her, Revel hopes to appear as Theseus without risking the fall, the destructive consequences of the myth. His distress at the engagement is not at losing Rose, but Phaedra, and the proof of his identity as Theseus.

After Rose's engagement Revel tries to go back to Ann but, as his description of the film on Athens he sees in August demonstrates, he is really trying to recapture Ariadne:

Ann, Ariane, dont il me semblait que les pieds passaient sous le ciel athénien plongeant, se prolongeant dans celui de la Crête, votre véritable patrie, vos pieds que je n'ai jamais vus découverts, chaussés samedi dans ces bas de fil de la même couleur que le pavé de Tower Street, passaient nus et nourris de soleil, massés par les

beaux chemins pavés de cailloux de marbre, massés par l'herbe vive et le sable, derrière les bases du portique de l'Erechtheion, pour moi non point celui d'un temple, mais celui d'un de ces palais qui bordent, sur les tapisseries du Musée, la place où Thésée devient roi. (ET, 245)

The image of Ann as she really is, in her English clothes, is superseded by one of Ann as Ariadne at the square where Theseus was confirmed as king. The return to Ann is Revel's last desperate attempt to re-assume the rôle of Theseus, to be king. This attempt fails at the Oriental Bamboo where he had often taken her during the winter and which has now been destroyed by Revel's own weapon, fire, by the flames "qui sont parties de mes mains" (ET, 242). The failure of the proposed dinner and Ann's subsequent engagement to James Jenkins very nearly lead Revel to burn his diary "ce qui en apparence aurait bien refermé cet autre cercle se traçant depuis le soir d'avril où j'ai détruit ton plan, Bleston, dans cette chambre" (ET, 258).

The burning of the diary would be the ultimate consequence of his burning of the plan. Now, the flames which destroyed the plan are not the last lit by Revel and it is clear from his description of his writing project that his hatred for the town has not evaporated with the decision to write (ET, 227). The burning of the plan is seen as the beginning of the destruction, "cette déclaration de guerre" (ET, 264). His writing is seen as the rampart (ET, 199) from which he launches attacks on the town, just as Horace Buck is the vehicle for the fires which periodically destroy parts of Bleston and which Revel admits are "parties de ma main". His text is a continuation of his attempt to murder the town under the influence of the myth. Revel has failed to realise, even when he begins to write, that his own existence is inextricably linked to that of Bleston. The town is a microcosm of modern industrial society and, as we have seen, the only reality Revel knows within the terms of his stay. Just as the detective



depends on the murderer, so Bleston is the condition sine qua non of Revel's existence. In destroying the town he would necessarily destroy himself. This very nearly happens when he is tempted to destroy the diary. The diary is a veritable lifeline for Revel, his Ariadne's thread, not to the labyrinth of Bleston as he imagines, but to the labyrinth of the myth. The long hours he spends writing prevent him from taking possession of either Ann or Rose and save him from the consequences of the myth. Revel mistakenly regards this as "ma perte" (ET, 258). If he destroyed the diary he would nullify his effort of memory and lose the means of returning along the thread of consciousness, lose the chance of rediscovering himself as a conscious being. He would fall definitively like Theseus. Ironically, Revel could only truly become Theseus by burning his diary and destroying himself.

Revel has been impelled to come to terms with the reality of Bleston by adopting the myth of Theseus as a model, a myth which implies the destruction of that very reality and, therefore, his own demise. George Burton's rejection of the murder theory shows clearly that mythical models cannot be applied to reality. The final part of L'Emploi du Temps will cast doubt on the extent to which Revel has become conscious of this fact.

In L'Emploi du Temps the whole "belle construction" of the Theseus myth collapses with the engagement of Ann to James Jenkins and the realisation that Revel does not love Ann for herself. It is the reader, of course, rather than Revel, who realises this. In La Modification, however, it is Delmont himself who comes to the same conclusion about his love for Cécile:

il est maintenant certain que vous n'aimez véritablement Cécile que dans la mesure où elle est pour vous le visage de Rome, sa voix et son invitation, que vous ne l'aimez pas sans Rome et en dehors de Rome, que vous ne l'aimez qu'à cause de Rome, parce qu'elle y a été, dans une grande mesure, qu'elle y est toujours votre introductrice, la porte de Rome, comme on dit de Marie dans les litanies catholiques qu'elle est la porte du ciel. (LM, 237-238)

Delmont only loves Cécile as the incarnation of the Roman myth, "un retour à la pax romana, à une organisation impériale du monde autour d'une ville capitale" (LM, 277), which loses its power outside of Rome as Cécile's disastrous visit to Paris demonstrates. It is made quite clear in La Modification that Cécile is less of a woman than the incarnation of a myth. What is perhaps less clear, and what is hinted at by the description of Cécile as the invitation of Rome, is that the city of Rome is comparable to a female body.

Throughout the novel Delmont appears attracted to a certain sensuality encapsulated by Neronian Rome. This first becomes apparent on his visit to the Louvre where he cannot take his eyes off Roman women from the time of Nero (LM, 73). His susceptibility to sensuality continues almost to the end of the train journey during which he becomes attracted to the woman next to him in his compartment:

les doigts de cette femme ..., dont vous voudriez mordre doucement le cou et qu'elle retourne la tête, sans se réveiller, pour vous donner ses lèvres, et la serrer tandis que votre main pénétrerait dans son corsage. (LM, 259)

It is precisely this kind of sensuality which Delmont finds in Cécile and which seems to be lacking in Henriette. On their first meeting in the train Delmont spends the night in Cécile's compartment and watches her awaken in the morning:

Vous songiez aux traits tirés qu'avait Henriette dans votre lit le matin d'avant avec ses cheveux en désordre, tandis qu'elle, sa tresse noire qu'elle n'avait pas défaits, presque intacte, simplement un peu relâchée par les mouvements de la nuit, par les frottements sur le dossier, splendide dans la lumière nouvelle, lui entourait le front, les joues comme une auréole de l'ombre la plus voluptueuse et la plus riche, faisant comme vibrer l'éclat de soie à peine froissée de sa peau, de ses lèvres, de ses yeux ... (LM, 112)

The sensuality of this description of Cécile is closely followed by a paragraph in which it becomes clear, even at this initial stage in their relationship, that Cécile and Rome are intimately connected in Delmont's mind:

Elle ne vous avait pas dit son nom; elle ignorait le vôtre; vous n'aviez point parlé de vous revoir, mais comme le chauffeur vous ramenait vers la via Nazionale jusqu'à l'Albergo Quirinale, vous aviez déjà la certitude qu'un jour ou l'autre vous la retrouveriez, que l'aventure ne pouvait se terminer là, et qu'alors vous échangeriez officiellement vos identités et vos adresses, que vous conviendriez d'un lieu pour vous revoir, que bientôt elle vous ferait pénétrer non seulement dans cette haute maison romaine où elle était entrée, mais encore dans tout ce quartier, dans toute une partie de Rome qui vous était encore cachée. (LM, 113-114)

Delmont's obvious physical attraction to Cécile expressed in the first paragraph and the use of the word "pénétrer" in the second suggest that Delmont considers Rome as a sexual object which he can attain through Cécile. This is a view shared by R.-M. Albérès:

Delmont ne parcourt pas, en amoureux, le corps ou l'âme de Cécile, il parcourt les rues de Rome, au long d'itinéraires familiers ... Si une image 'voluptueuse' revient dans ses pensées, ce n'est pas tellement celle de la chambre où il rejoindra Cécile, mais celle de la Piazza Navona, de San Agnese in Agona avec la façade courbe de Borromini et la fontaine des Fleurs au centre de la place ... - au point que son amour pour Cécile (qui n'est jamais décrit) devient un guide Touristique et familier de Rome qui, elle, est longuement, amoureusement décrite en connaisseur, comme si, au corps féminin, Delmont, par une sensualité un peu cérébrale, préférerait l'embrassement de l'âme d'une ville.

Albérès rather misses the point of what he has said. Delmont's sensuality is not cerebral and he does not prefer the town to the woman. Rather, it is through the body of Cécile, who guides him around the city, that Delmont takes possession of the reality of Rome. Cécile's character is deliberately effaced - we learn very little about her - in order to emphasise the contact between Delmont and Rome. In seducing and conquering Cécile, it may be said that Delmont is aiming at a position of dominance over Rome, taking control of its reality in similar fashion to Revel-Theseus, and at the establishment of himself, not as king, but as emperor.

The character of Henriette is effaced in the same way as that of Cécile. All that we know about her concerns her relationship, or the lack of one, with Delmont. There are strong indications that all sexual contact between them has ceased (LM, 43). In this respect Henriette is as representative of Paris as Cécile is of Rome. What Delmont does not enjoy in his Parisian life is a position of dominance over the reality of Paris. He cannot even guide Cécile around the city. What he seeks to establish in Paris by the transposition onto its reality of Cécile, whom he has conquered, is exactly this position of dominance and possession. We can see in Delmont's experience what precisely is meant in the Theseus myth by taking control of reality. Revel is at an earlier stage in the mythical process: his relationship with Ann and Rose can be interpreted as attempts to take possession of the myth which in turn will enable him to dominate Bleston as king. Delmont has already taken possession of the myth in the person of Cécile and feels that he dominates Rome like the emperors of old.

However, the myth of Rome, of the dominating imperial centre, is revealed in its essential weakness when Cécile visits Delmont's apartment.

The two women appear to join forces against Delmont:

Vous vous êtes rendu compte peu à peu qu'il n'y avait pas seulement de l'habilité dans cette conversation, du déguisement dans ces sourires, de la politique dans cet intérêt qu'elles se marquaient l'une à l'autre, qu'en effet elle ne se haïssaient point, étant en présence, que ces deux adversaires s'appréciaient et que, ce qui transparaissait maintenant dans leurs regards, c'était une sincère estime réciproque, n'ayant d'autre raison de se détester que vous-même, quasi paralysé dans votre angoisse et votre mutisme, si bien que peu à peu leur attention se détournait de vous, leurs pensées s'éloignaient de vous, se rapprochant toutes les deux, formant un accord, une alliance contre vous. (LM, 186)

The two women combine to reduce Delmont to a subordinate position in which he cannot dominate either of them. What he had expected of Henriette, "qu'elle cédât du terrain, reconnût sa défaite" (LM, 186-187), fails to materialise. Nor does Cécile bask in her superior beauty and youthfulness. Delmont is confronted with his own inability to dominate reality. In this episode the two women should be viewed in their representative rôles. The interest and respect they show towards each other, the absence of any desire on the part of one to dominate the other, prefigure Delmont's final conclusion concerning the geographical relationship between Rome and Paris:

Ne vaudrait-il pas mieux conserver entre ces deux villes leur distance, toutes ces gares, tous ces paysages qui les séparent? Mais en plus des communications normales par lesquelles chacun pourrait se rendre de l'une à l'autre quand il voudrait, il y aurait un certain nombre de points de contact, de passages instantanés qui s'ouvriraient à certains moments déterminés par des lois que l'on ne parviendrait à connaître que peu à peu. (LM, 280)

In this conception Paris and Rome remain apart but find points of contact by which they can communicate. One does not try to impose itself on the other. This is precisely what is demonstrated by Henriette and Cécile.

In their alliance against Delmont the emperor, they confront him not only with their opposition to the imperial myth but with its total irrelevance to their relationship. Delmont himself eventually comes to the same conclusion:

Une des grandes vagues de l'histoire s'achève ainsi dans vos consciences, celle où le monde avait un centre, qui n'était pas seulement la terre au milieu des sphères de Ptolomée, mais Rome au centre de la terre, un centre qui s'est déplacé, qui a cherché à se fixer après l'écroulement de Rome à Byzance, puis beaucoup plus tard dans le Paris impérial, l'étoile noire des chemins de fer sur la France étant comme l'ombre de l'étoile des voies romaines.

Si puissant pendant tant de siècles sur tous les rêves européens, le souvenir de l'Empire est maintenant une figure insuffisante pour désigner l'avenir de ce monde, devenu pour chacun de nous beaucoup plus vaste et tout autrement distribué.  
(LM, 277)

Reality has outstripped the notion of Empire which, like Delmont, is reduced to a subordinate position.

In addition to its irrelevance, the imperial myth is also seen to be self-destructive like the Theseus myth in L'Emploi du Temps. Contrary to what he imagines, Delmont is not truly in control of the reality of Rome, since he rejects the myth in its Christian form: the spiritual dominance symbolised by the Roman Catholic Pope. He refers to the Vatican as "cette cité depuis si longtemps pourrissante" (LM, 61). In its organisation the Roman Catholic Church resembles the Roman Empire and the Pope fulfils essentially the same function as the old emperors. Delmont wishes to dominate like an emperor but refuses to be dominated by a Pope. He is essentially opposed to what he himself wishes to stand for. This contradiction shows that Delmont would inevitably encounter opposition in his attempts to dominate as did the Fascists, to whom he was so attracted, in the second world war. The imperial myth backfired on them just as the

Theseus myth backfired on Revel and very nearly destroyed him. Delmont is spared this destruction in La Modification. He turns his back on the imperial myth and any attempt to dominate and possess reality. This, however, as we shall see, is not the final stage of his modification.

To become king or emperor is to attain a position of dominance over reality. Both novels demonstrate, however, that reality cannot be dominated. Nor is it an enigma which can be solved like a murder in a detective novel. What then is the essential nature of reality and the rôle of man in it? To what extent do Revel and Delmont become aware of this?

Both Revel and Delmont reduce reality to models from the past: the labyrinth of Minos, the Athenian egocentric city-state and the larger, but equally self-centred, Roman Empire. In his discussion of the detective novel, George Burton draws attention to the way in which the detective transforms reality by purification:

Il purge ce fragment du monde de cette faute qui n'est pas tant le meurtre lui-même ... que la salissure qui l'accompagne, la tache de sang et l'ombre qu'elle répand autour d'elle, et, en même temps, de ce malentendu profond, ancien, qui s'incarne dans le criminel à partir du moment où celui-ci, par son acte, en a révélé la présence, réveillant de grandes régions enfouies qui viennent troubler l'ordre admis jusqu'alors et en dénoncer la fragilité. (ET, 147-148)

It is immediately apparent that the detective's transformation of reality is in fact a return to the status quo. Burton's views on the New Cathedral show his opposition to all divergences from the "ordre admis". Burton's opposition to change and his predilection for the status quo explain his attraction to the detective novel where the "murder" of the criminal gives

to the story "l'aspect final, l'aspect fixe" (ET, 161). The confusion of the drama and the enquiry is replaced by clarity with the unmasking of the culprit - we know what really happened. The story and the reality which it portrays take on a fixed and immutable character. The Theseus myth is also a type of story while the Roman Empire is a part of history. Both could be re-interpreted from a modern standpoint but both Revel and Delmont attempt to use them as if their meaning were fixed and no longer susceptible to change. In so doing, they imply that reality itself has the same characteristics. Reality appears static, as if time had stood still through the centuries.

In his attempt to recapture Ann, Revel, as we have seen, takes her to the Oriental Bamboo where they met during the winter. He is attempting to turn back the clock to a period when they were very close. However, the passage of time has taken its toll, destroying the Oriental Bamboo and bringing Ann and James Jenkins together. The fire at the Oriental Bamboo is evidence of temporal movement.

The full significance of this fact does not become apparent until La Modification where Butor places his protagonist in a train, in something which moves. As Delmont realises at the end of his journey, the train is not the only thing in the novel which moves:

Le mieux, sans doute, serait ... de tenter de faire revivre sur le mode de la lecture cet épisode crucial de votre aventure, le mouvement qui s'est produit dans votre esprit accompagnant le déplacement de votre corps d'une gare à l'autre à travers tous les paysages intermédiaires. (LM, 283)

Delmont's modification is a movement of consciousness which parallels exactly his movement in the train, not only through space, but through time. In phenomenology time is not rigidly separated into past, present



and future but is posited as a continuous present. It is precisely this concept of time, Lois Oppenheim argues, which is exemplified in La Modification. Butor fuses past memories and future projections into the present of the train journey. Delmont's decision to visit Cécile is undermined by the future projections of his return to Paris and subsequent interrogation by Henriette in four passages beginning with the words "Mardi prochain" (LM, 161-163). Oppenheim comments:

Through each of these imagined conversations the certainty of Cécile's coming to Paris wanes. From the lie that this voyage did not differ from the others, to the concrete explanation of the development of his relationship with Cécile, to the need to comfort a sobbing Henriette, to a confession of the original purpose of the journey with the implication of the change in plans, Delmont's resolve dissipates. Butor shows this progression entirely through the projection of future scenes thus demonstrating the temporality of the 'modification'. The use of the pluperfect tense in the fourth example ... furthermore offers an additional temporal relation - the telling in the future of the past purpose of the voyage which is no longer the present intention of Delmont. We see, therefore, that time in La Modification is phenomenological: the approximately twenty-two hours of travel encompasses the past decision and the future understanding and the whole is expressed as a continuous present.<sup>9</sup>

Butor's adherence to the phenomenological concept of time as continuous present has immediate consequences for the attempts of Revel and Delmont to impose a temporal model on reality. The continuous present of Delmont's modification is essentially a continuous movement from past to present and from present to future,<sup>10</sup> a movement which Butor presents as a process of transformation. The past is not static but is constantly transformed by the movement of the continuous present. Each of Delmont's memories of past events is transformed by what he now knows about the preceding one.

This is precisely the experience of Jacques Revel in L'Emploi du Temps, an experience neatly summed up by Burton in one of his comments on

the detective novel;

il saluait l'apparition à l'intérieur du roman comme d'une nouvelle dimension, nous expliquant que ce ne sont plus seulement les personnages et leurs relations qui se transforment sous les yeux du lecteur, mais ce que l'on sait de ces relations et même de leur histoire ... de telle sorte que le récit n'est plus la simple projection plane d'une série d'événements, mais la restitution de leur architecture, de leur espace, puisqu'ils se présentent différemment selon la position qu'occupe par rapport à eux le détective ou le narrateur ... (ET, 161)

Revel begins his diary with the intention of recounting the events of the first seven months of his story, of recounting the past. He imagines he can fix the past by recounting it as a series of events. However, the introduction of the reverse time-scale of May leads him to re-read what he has written about the past months. He discovers gaps in his account brought about either by lapses of memory or attempts to deceive himself - the reasons for his betrayal of Burton are a good example of this. In this way his account of the past is either completed or transformed totally as a result of the movement of time. The past cannot be fixed and this is the significance of the gap at the end of the novel concerning the 29th of February.

In the fifth part of the novel Revel appears to cling to the notion of enigma. While admitting that his suspicions regarding Tenn and Jenkins were illusions he nevertheless insists that there had been a murder attempt. This time the guilty party is seen as Bleston itself, using the driver as its agent. Similarly, he presents the 29th of February as an enigma: "je n'ai même plus le temps de noter ce qui s'était passé le soir du 29 février ... ce qui me paraissait si important à propos du 29 février" (ET, 299). It seems that whatever happened on that day will somehow explain everything, that a vital part of information is lacking for the solution

of the enigma of Bleston. The circumstances in which the gap arises give the lie to this presentation. Like Delmont's journey, Revel's diary only comes to a close with the end of time, the end of his stay in Bleston: "la grande aiguille est devenu verticale, et ... maintenant mon départ termine cette dernière phrase" (ET, 299). It is only with the end of his stay that his experience in Bleston becomes fixed. The end of time is equivalent to death. As long as time continues then the past cannot be static. Whatever the events of the 29th of February were, they could only transform our view of Revel's stay in Bleston if time were to continue but could never fix it. The events of the 29th of February are not enigmatic but evidence of the movement of time. Revel does not appear to realise this.

Both novels demonstrate clearly that reality is essentially temporal and therefore in constant flux. In addition, the temporal movement which characterises reality is one of transformation. This transformational aspect of temporal movement can be seen not only in the change in Revel's attitude to Bleston and the reversal of Delmont's original intention, but also in the way in which the meaning of the respective myths alters during the course of each novel.

In L'Emploi du Temps Butor fuses the past and present into a continuous present by the introduction of the various time-scales, the absence of the future emphasising the equation to be made between the end of the diary and the end of time. It is not only Revel's personal past in the town which is incorporated into a continuous present but also the universal past of antiquity, as is demonstrated by the treatment of the Cain window. Under the influence of Burton's views on the detective novel Revel uses the Cain window as a red herring. He strongly suggests that the

motivations for his betrayal of Burton are linked to a visit he made to the Old Cathedral on the afternoon of the day he visits the Baileys. The blood from Abel's wounds seems to flow down onto Cain's tunic and from there onto Revel's hands, "comme si j'étais condamné au meurtre" (ET, 197). The murder of Abel is a fratricide and Revel provides us with clues establishing Burton as his "brother". Burton's novel, in which the Cain window plays an important part, is also the story of a fratricide. There is a coincidence between the events of the novel and Revel's first meeting with Burton at the Oriental Bamboo in February:

à cette table dont il est question dans les premières pages du <<Meurtre de Bleston>>, où celui qui sera le détective, Barnaby Morton, déjeune avec celui qui sera la victime, le joueur de cricket Johnny Winn. (ET, 287)

Burton is the victim and Revel the detective, a rôle which he does adopt after the hit-and-run accident. They are brought closer together in the reader's mind by the waiter's impression: "<<Il a cru que nous étions ensemble>>" (ET, 289). The hatred which they share for Bleston and the fact that, by the end of May, they have become fellow-writers induce the reader to identify them as brothers, one of whom is established as the victim. By murdering his brother Revel will obtain the mark of Cain's indestructibility. All of which seems perfectly plausible until we remember that the visit to the Old Cathedral takes place after the initial betrayal of Burton's identity to James Jenkins at the fair where Revel is seen to be providing the solution to an enigma. The intervention of the Cain window between the two acts of betrayal is another attempt on Revel's part to divert attention from the Theseus myth and the memory of his murder of the town.

This theory is borne out by the way in which the Cain window is

situated in the Old Cathedral. Instead of being on the left, "le côté de la réprobation" (ET, 77), the Cain window is situated on the right of the Lord of Celestial Jerusalem. The priest's explanation is that the windows were never finished but this does not convince Revel:

Les explications qu'il me donnait, loin de dissiper l'étrangeté, ne faisaient que la préciser et l'approfondir. Quelle ambiguïté dans la disposition que ces verriers d'antan avaient donnée à leurs sujets, comme s'ils avaient voulu montrer, à travers l'illustration même de la lecture officielle de la Bible, qu'eux y découvraient autre chose. (ET, 79)

The clue to the reason for this unorthodoxy lies in the temporal situation of the artists: "<<Il faut vous rappeler que c'est une oeuvre de la Renaissance, l'artiste honorait en Cain le père de tous les arts ...>>" (ET, 76). At the time of the Renaissance the official view of Cain as cursed had given way to one of Cain as blessed. The Cain legend is not fixed: it can be, and was, interpreted differently. The cursed Cain and "les villes maudites depuis celle de Caïn" (ET, 77) are regarded by the artists as blessed; here we can see the true significance of the name Bleston, not "Belli civitas" but "blessed town". Revel, however, concentrates on the murder aspect of the window, influenced by his hatred and Burton's novel. He is induced by the power of the Theseus myth to use it as a red herring before the movement of time destroys the myth and brings him to view the window as the "signe majeure" (ET, 295) of his stay and to concentrate on Cain as "fondateur de la première ville" (ET, 295), as a builder. Here again, as in the case of the notion of enigma, Revel has rather missed the point. He exchanges one model, Cain the murderer, for another, Cain the builder. The real importance of the window lies in the fact that it shows the movement from one interpretation to another. Cain and his window are symbols of temporal movement and transformation.

It is noticeable in L'Emploi du Temps that the Theseus myth, which is essentially the myth of imperial domination, is not presented as being susceptible to transformation. In La Modification, however, the myth of Rome undergoes the same treatment as the Cain legend. From being the essence of the imperial order the myth of Rome is transformed through the medium of the Sistine Chapel and Michelangelo's frescoes. As Dean McWilliams observes, the apparent synthesis of the classical and the Christian is, in effect, heavily biased towards the Christian: "the classical is clearly subservient to the Christian".<sup>11</sup> The frescoes demonstrate, not a synthesis between the two, but the movement from one to the other, the rejection of the classical in favour of the Christian. Similarly, the Da Ponte family, whose tolerance, according to Sturrock, makes of them a "moral ideal"<sup>12</sup> are less "bridge-builders" than bridges, something over which we move from one place to another. Their tolerance still contains certain Catholic elements: "Ils savent tout sur notre compte et ils bénissent tout" (LM, 153). The da Pontes are moving away from rigid Catholicism to a more liberal stance but they have not arrived yet. From an imperial centre, Rome has become a high place of temporal movement and transformation, the very symbol of modification.

The models which Revel and Delmont attempt to impose on reality are no longer applicable, not only because reality has changed, but also because the myths themselves have changed as a result of the continuous transformational movement of time. In turning to Cain at the end of L'Emploi du Temps Revel fails to grasp the fact that models are not atemporal but are subject to the fundamental temporal and transformational nature of reality. We shall discuss Delmont's awareness of this together with his understanding of the rôle of man in reality.

A reading of L'Emploi du Temps suggests that the basic rôle of man in reality is to ensure that the temporal movement of reality should not be hindered. Thus Revel's return to the Oriental Bamboo with Ann is literally an attempt to turn back the clock, to reverse the temporal movement. George Burton also attempts to do this by diverting attention in his novel from the New Cathedral to the Old. The New Cathedral is an unfinished dream and it is noticeable in Revel's own dream that it has not only taken on life but movement as well; "ses murs ayant rompu leurs amarres, ... s'approchaient de nous comme d'énormes vagues; ... tous les animaux sur les chapiteaux étaient doués maintenant de mouvement et de regard" (ET, 277). As it moves, its place is taken "par un bâtiment tout nouveau" (ET, 277-278). Revel's task, as it appears to the reader, is to build on the reality of Bleston, to continue the transformational movement evident in his dream of the New Cathedral. It is in this sense that he receives the mark of Cain's indestructibility, "sentant au milieu de mon front comme la pointe d'un cautère s'enfonçant" (ET, 257). This basic task is, however, based on a vision of the future, a future which remains a dream. In the reality of Bleston which Revel experiences during his stay the Theseus myth still appears dominant enough to induce man to follow its ways. It is for this reason that, in the pact made between Revel and the town, the latter evinces a desire to be cleansed (ET, 264) and cured (ET, 269). Reality needs to be cleansed of the Theseus myth which has hindered the transformational movement of time for so long. Before Revel can continue this movement it has first of all to be re-established. Reality has to be changed in this way before it can, as it were, get back on course.

In the novel Revel's task is expressed in alchemical terms;

Il y avait une rainure entre deux briques sur un mur  
 ruisselant, et j'ai bu à cet oeil entrouvert de ton or  
 une gorgée de larmes si mélangée de poisons que j'ai sans  
 doute précipité ma décrépitude, que des tourments  
 m'attendent, que mon visage se marquera d'une étoile de  
 lèpre; mais c'était le philtre des fantômes, l'élixir  
 d'immortalité, son goût amer ne pouvait me laisser aucun  
 doute. (ET, 297)

Although Revel's task appears to be an onerous one, he appears decidedly unheroic. Elsewhere he refers to himself as "dérisoire alchimiste" (ET, 271). Delmont suffers a similar fate in the dream sequence of La Modification where he is ironically compared to Aeneas, the true hero. With the collapse of the Theseus or imperial myth there are no longer any kings, any heroes, since to be a hero implies a position of dominance over reality. What, then, is the relationship of man to reality which will enable him to carry out the rôle outlined above?

Revel's "prise de conscience" of the reality of Bleston, as opposed to the illusion, has three stages: first, he begins to write but, as we have seen, remains in the power of the myth and amnesia; second, he begins to re-read and remembers much more but is still in the hands of the myth, as his attempted return to Ann has indicated. Both these conscious actions come as the result of shock, at the destruction of the plan on one hand and at the engagement of Rose to Lucien on the other. The third stage is also instituted by shock, at the engagement of Ann to James, and illuminates the first two.

It seems until then that either writing or memory are, in themselves, consciousness of reality. The night of Ann and James' engagement Revel has what almost seems like a mystical experience in which he hears the voice of Bleston:



j'ai pu écrire sur une page toute blanche ces trois mots qui ne sont pas venus de moi, mais que j'ai lus au travers de ma fenêtre sur certains reliefs du mur de brique à gauche de moi, de l'autre côté de Copper Street, soulignés par l'éclairage frisant, ces trois mots dont je sentais qu'ils résumaient tout ce qui m'était adressé dans une sorte de bruissement qu'il me fallait entendre, ces mots que je n'ai fait qu'enregistrer:

<<Nous sommes quittes>>. (ET, 257)

The voice of Bleston is later described as "une sorte d'imploration" (ET, 263) which leads Revel to conclude "ce pacte" (ET, 263) with the town, the pact which brings him into an indissoluble relationship with the town, expressed in the switch to the "tu" form. Under the shock of the engagement and with the power of the myth broken, Revel comes to understand, correctly, the secret desire of Bleston to be cleansed and transformed. The difficulty concerns the fact that Revel's understanding appears to be the result of the projection of the town onto him rather than his own intentional projection onto reality, an intentional projection which is expressed in Delmont's case by the use of the second person pronoun:

If the first and third person pronouns intervene to provide relief through objectivation, externalisation, and the stability which accompanies resolution and decision, then the second person 'vous', relating the continuous movement and flux of our internal experience of the world, may be seen as ontological projection. The intentional 'vous' reveals a 'sujet parlant' faltering and confused in his journey toward self-realisation and epiphany.<sup>13</sup>

In L'Emploi du Temps the sign of intentional projection, the "vous" pronoun, is not available to the reader. Delmont's modification is made possible by the contact of his consciousness with the objects and people in the compartment which sets off the flow of memories. This contact is a primordial one:

The visual apprehension of the object is emphasised by Butor not for the purpose of describing the object but to reveal the primordial aspect of the perception, the original focus on the object and the absence of any preliminary knowledge - whether intuitive or intellectual - of the object.<sup>14</sup>

In emphasising the primordial aspect of Delmont's perception of objects and people in the compartment, Butor is drawing attention to the fundamental relationship between man and reality:

The first condition of our existence in the world is that we exist in the presence of other beings (human and non-human). 'Presence' defines man's primal relationship to man and to object - a relationship which is ontologically pre-reflexive and unalterable.<sup>15</sup>

If visual perception in La Modification is the manner in which Delmont's presence to objects and people is revealed, then memory is the medium through which he becomes present to himself, through which he becomes aware of the reality of his situation, at the pre-reflexive level, the level of spontaneous "lived experience". It is in the writing of the book, the "intentional reproduction"<sup>16</sup> of the "lived experience" of the train journey that Delmont will become aware of the reality of his situation at the level of reflexive consciousness. It is in the absence of reflexive consciousness in Delmont during the train journey that the experience of Revel on the night of the engagement may be understood.

The absence of reflexive consciousness, expressed by the use of the "vous" pronoun, is indicative of "the original focus on the object of perception". It appears that Butor intends Revel's experience to be understood in the following way: the destruction of the Theseus myth and therefore of all preliminary knowledge of Bleston produces in Revel the same absence of reflexive consciousness seen in Delmont and enables him to become present to the town, to hear its voice and become aware of the reality of its desire to be cleansed. What is lacking, however, is the feeling that Revel is focusing on the object of Bleston, the object of perception, in the way that Delmont focuses on the objects and people in

the compartment. Nor is it clear whether Revel hears the voice of the town at the level of lived experience or that of reflexive consciousness. Although Revel comes to understand correctly his rôle in reality, the reader might be excused for feeling that Revel has exchanged the determinism of the myth for another unspecified determinism which makes of him the agent of the town for its own use. Also unclear, as we have seen, is the extent of Revel's understanding of the nature of reality. He remains attached to the notion of enigma and also to that of dominance over reality insofar as, in accepting the pact, he will remain a prince of the town (ET, 261). Revel appears to feel that he has snatched victory out of the jaws of defeat.

No such ambiguities are to be found in La Modification where the relationship of mutual interdependence between Revel and Bleston at the end of L'Emploi du Temps is much more clearly defined as one of presence. The primordial relationship of man to reality is one of presence but this is natural and unalterable. It is in his intention to write the book that Delmont demonstrates his understanding of both the nature of reality and his rôle in it. It is in recuperating the lived experience of the train journey in this book that Delmont will become aware of the need for presence to reality at the reflexive level. He will become consciously aware of the nature of reality and the need to abandon the imperial myth in order to re-establish the temporal movement of transformation. That his understanding will be complete is shown by his promise to return to Rome with Henriette (LM, 282). Delmont recognises the symbolic value of Rome as a high place of temporal movement, as an example from which he can learn.

At the end of L'Emploi du Temps it is not clear what the future holds

for Jacques Revel, indeed it is not clear that he has a future at all: just as his arrival in Bleston appeared very much like a birth into reality, so his departure at the end of his time there appears like death, like an exit from time. Léon Delmont clearly has a future but the return to Paris and Henriette, to the stultifying life from which he had hoped to escape, does not seem optimistic: "Il vous faudrait donc gâcher ces deux ou trois jours pendant lesquels vous espériez néanmoins profiter d'elle, de cette liberté à la conquête de laquelle vous étiez parti" (LM, 244). The freedom which is lost on this level is gained, however, on another. Through the medium of Cécile Delmont attempted to conquer freedom as he attempted to conquer reality. At the end of the work he has undergone a fundamental ontological change, from an absence to reality expressed in his lack of involvement in his Parisian life to a presence to reality, an awareness of his true situation. The modification has given him another freedom, an existential freedom which he will assume and comprehend when he writes the book. His presence to reality, his graduation to reflexive awareness, will provide him with the freedom to change reality. The life to which he returns has already been transformed by the temporal movement of the modification. It remains for Delmont to assume this transformation.

Delmont will assume freedom as an individual but the hope expressed by La Modification is that this will prepare the way for a more generalised freedom:

Donc, préparer, permettre, par exemple au moyen d'un livre,  
à cette liberté future hors de notre portée, lui permettre dans  
une mesure si infime soit-elle de se constituer, de s'établir ...  
(LM, 274)

For Delmont, as for Revel, the forces of myth in reality remain sufficiently

strong to delay for some time the total freedom of man but Butor demonstrates, in the opportunity given to Delmont, his basic optimism and his faith that this will one day come to be.

We are now in a position to make certain initial conclusions concerning Butor's commitment to change. In terms of what we might call political realities Butor clearly aligns himself in these two novels against "une organisation impériale du monde", an organisation which implies the dominance of one political entity over another. This must change in favour of a relationship of mutual interdependence and understanding. There are two reasons why we should resist the temptation at this point to categorise Butor as an "anti-imperialistic" writer; first of all, we would be falling into the trap of employing a type of language which Butor himself regards as "périmé"; secondly, the imperial organisation of the world in political terms is, for Butor, merely a manifestation of something much more profound in the human character, the attitude of man to reality. Butor seeks to change the belief that reality can in some way be dominated, that the world exists to be controlled by man. Reality is simply there and so is man. Man exists within reality and his survival depends on treating reality with respect and understanding, a relationship exemplified by the pact between Revel and Bleston. The secret desire of Bleston to be cleansed and transformed shows that reality is not essentially hostile to man. Reality as we know it today suffers from man's illusions as to its nature and his rôle in it and only a change in the attitude of man can re-establish the natural transformational movement of time. Armed with these conclusions we can now proceed to Degrés and examine the consequences of Butor's ontological views for the writer and reader of novels.

FOOTNOTES

1. Mary Lydon, Perpetuum Mobile, University of Alberta Press, 1980, p. 123.
2. Dean McWilliams, The Writer as Janus, University of Ohio Press, 1978, p. 55.
3. Georges Raillard, Michel Butor, Gallimard, 1968, p. 146.
4. Raillard, p. 147.
5. Raillard, p. 148.
6. Raillard, pp. 146 - 147.
7. For particular details see: J. B. Howitt, 'Michel Butor and Manchester', Nottingham French Studies, 12 (1973), 74 - 85; F. Whitehead, 'Blestone: or Manchester Transformed', Journal of the Lancashire Dialect Society, 18 (1969), 2 - 4.
8. R.-M. Albérès, Michel Butor, Éditions Universitaires, 1964, pp. 74 - 75.
9. Lois Oppenheim, Intentionality and Intersubjectivity, French Forum, 1980, p. 150.
10. The terms, past, present and future are here being used to denote the three dimensions of the temporal continuum, of the continuous present. See Oppenheim, p. 141.
11. McWilliams, p. 36.
12. La Modification, edited by John Sturrock, Methuen, 1971, p. 238 (note to p. 116).

13. Oppenheim, p. 69.
14. Oppenheim, p. 47.
15. Oppenheim, p. 16.
16. Oppenheim, p. 146.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Degrés: The Abandonment of the Novel Form

This part of our study of Butor's novels falls into two halves. In the first we shall discuss the three principal thematic areas of Degrés, education, imperialism and writing, and their connection to Pierre Vernier and his writing project in an effort to understand the theory behind Butor's abandonment of the novel form. In the second half we shall examine the extent to which this theory is already put into practice in Degrés itself and compare it in this respect with the two earlier novels, L'Emploi du Temps and La Modification.

The avowed intention of Pierre Vernier in Degrés is to write a description of his nephew's class which will, in later years, aid the young boy in the organisation of his life. Vernier's description will act as a reference book to Pierre Eller's past and so illuminate his present. The efficacy of Vernier's text will depend on his ability to stimulate Eller's memory and he therefore chooses to construct it around one special day which, he feels, is bound to remain in his nephew's mind, his fifteenth birthday, the 12th of October 1954. This is also Columbus Day and Vernier resolves to make it even more memorable by giving Pierre and his classmates



an extra-curricular lesson on the discovery of America, an event described by Vernier as "ce changement du visage du monde" (D, 34) and "cette multiplication par deux soudainement des dimensions de l'univers" (D, 66).

In this lesson and elsewhere Vernier presents the pupils and the reader with the image of a Europe determined to cling to its own conception of itself as the centre of the world, whether it be in terms of wealth or civilisation. Through the medium of Montaigne, Vernier shows how the Europeans exploited the inhabitants of the new continent:

<< ... Au rebours, nous nous sommes servis de leur ignorance et inexpérience à les plier plus facilement vers la trahison, luxure, avarice et vers toute sorte d'inhumanité et cruauté, à l'exemple et patron de nos mœurs.>> (D, 287)

The Europeans destroyed, butchered and enslaved in their relentless search for gold and silver. In this exploitation of the resources of the New World Vernier sees the foundation of modern-day European prosperity:

... la conquête de l'Amérique, les ruses de Cortès contre Montézuma, la trahison de Pizarre à Cuzco, l'organisation du travail forcé dans les mines, le début de la traite des noirs, l'afflux de l'or en Espagne, le développement des banques dans toute l'Europe. (D, 16)

Europe's reaction to the doubling of the world's dimensions was to make of the New World its empire, enslaving the people and removing the gold, thereby safeguarding its own dominant position in the world as the centre of wealth and power. Twentieth century Europe is criticised for continuing this imperialistic tradition in a different way:

cette exclusivité de la civilisation qu'elle continue à s'arroger en dépit de toutes les preuves qu'elle a elle-même déterrées, et qu'elle continue elle-même à chercher et produire, nourrissant cette contradiction, cette grande fissure, ce grand mensonge qui la mine. (D, 91)

Having discovered other civilisations, Europe attempts to ignore their existence, to deny the evidence before its very eyes, evidence encapsulated by the presence in Pierre's class of Maurice Tangala, black and Caribbean-born. Unable to deny completely the existence of other civilisations, Europe deforms their importance in key areas of our perception of the world:

notre représentation habituelle de ce qui se passe dans le monde contemporain, et de l'histoire universelle, est constamment faussée par la prééminence dans nos esprits de la projection cylindrique dite projection de Mercator ... qui a la particularité de majorer considérablement les surfaces des pays des zones tempérées et polaires au détriment de ceux de la zone équatoriale. (D, 56)

These comments, which Vernier makes as he writes his text, lend added significance to the apparently innocent details concerning the Greenwich meridian and the weights and measures standards located near Paris. More subtle than at the time of the conquistadores, modern Europe seems to use any means to cling to the notion of its own importance in the world.

Vernier leaves the reader in no doubt as to the image of Europe he wishes to convey. Much less evident to the reader is his objective in so doing. Why should Vernier be so anxious to impress on his nephew this particular aspect of Europe? The answer is, apparently, to be found in a link between the discovery of America and Pierre's fifteenth birthday, a link which can be established through the personage of Denis Régnier.

One week after the special lesson on America, Vernier gives a related lesson on the subject of slavery, using an illustration from the history manual of the Potosi mines from which gold and silver were shipped to Europe. The picture makes Denis think of something which he had learned

the previous week:

la phrase de Rabelais qu'il avait lue la semaine précédente lui trotta dans la mémoire comme un refrain dont on ne parvient pas à se débarrasser:

<<tous les métaux cachés au ventre des abîmes>>,

et il songeait à ses timbres de Bolivie, aux pièces de cent francs dans son porte-monnaie. (D, 112)

The Potosi mines were situated in Bolivia and the stamps form a link between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, a link which ends with the money in his wallet. It is as if the money had travelled directly from the mines into his wallet. We have an illustration of Vernier's claim that European wealth was founded on the gold of the New World. The money in his wallet is, of course, his pocket-money and it is here that the connection between Europe and Pierre becomes clear. On his fifteenth birthday Pierre first has the right to pocket-money. He receives modest riches at the age of fifteen just as Europe gained immense wealth when it was approximately fifteen hundred years old. Pierre, too, is on the threshold of a "new world".

The parallel is clear and the reader does not have to delve too deeply in order to find it. Yet it hardly seems a satisfactory answer to our question since we can scarcely compare Pierre with the brutal conquistadores. Although he is naturally proud of the symbol of his accession to manhood, there is nothing in the novel to suggest that Pierre is unduly attached to money nor that he is of a particularly unpleasant nature. It is difficult for the reader to see what lesson Vernier wishes Pierre to draw from his presentation of Europe.

The theme of European exploitation of the New World is placed in a

privileged position in the novel, appearing in the lesson which forms the backbone, or structural pivot of the work. Its presence is strongly felt by the reader. On the other hand, the themes of education and writing are equally prominent and, it could certainly be argued, occupy a larger area in the novel. These two themes also seem much more closely connected with one another since both concern the problems of coping with large amounts of information. The critique of Europe as an imperialistic centre seems out of place in the general scheme of things. We have, however, come to expect a close thematic interrelation in Butor's novels and, in an effort to demonstrate just such an interrelation in Degrés, we shall now undertake a closer examination of the way in which the reader perceives Pierre Vernier and the writing project which claims his nephew as its beneficiary.

In the first part of the novel, when Vernier is speaking in his own name, his project appears as altruistic and highly commendable in the way in which it is destined for Pierre as a means of helping him in the future:

ces notes que je te destine, que je destine à celui que tu seras devenu dans quelques années, qui aura oublié tout cela, mais à qui tout cela, et mille autres choses, reviendra en mémoire par cette lecture, dans un certain ordre et selon certaines formes et organisations qui te permettront de le saisir et de le fixer, de le situer et apprécier, ce dont pour l'instant tu es incapable, manquant de ce système de références que l'on cherche à te faire acquérir,

de telle sorte qu'en toi pourra naître une nouvelle conscience, et que tu deviendras apte à ressaisir justement cette énorme masse d'informations qui circule, à l'intérieur de laquelle, comme dans un fleuve boueux et tourbillonnant, tu te meus ignorant, emporté,

qui glisse sur toi, qui se gâche, se perd, et se contredit, qui glisse sur nous tous, sur tous tes camarades et tous tes maîtres qui s'ignorent mutuellement,

qui glisse entre nous et autour de nous. (D, 82)

Vernier paints a picture of a situation which is not only Pierre's, but that of all men: he universalises Pierre's experience with the introduction of the word "nous", making Pierre a representative figure in a similar fashion to Jacques Revel in L'Emploi du Temps. In this picture man is lost in a disconcerting mass of information with no means of making sense of it. Suitably, Vernier broadens the aim of his project to include all men, anyone who has ever had contact in whatever way with secondary education (D, 99). Describing the French lesson of the 26th of October, he makes a final definition of the aim of his work:

Je voudrais pouvoir te remettre en mémoire ce moment, cette heure ... (pour) t'aider à te représenter ce que tu as été toi-même, donc d'où tu viens, donc dans quelle direction tu vas, quel est le vecteur de ton présent ... (D, 118)

The notes, as a description of Pierre's past, will stimulate his memory, helping him to orientate himself in his present and to decide the shape of his future. There are definite similarities with the diary of Jacques Revel in these definitions of Vernier's project and the reader cannot help but be impressed by the honourable intentions expressed in this part of the novel.

Vernier introduces Pierre as the narrator of the second part of the text in which Pierre gives an account of the beginnings of the collaboration between uncle and nephew:

Tu désirais évidemment éviter toute méprise, il ne s'agirait nullement d'espionnage ou de cafardage, et tu t'engageais à ne faire aucun usage scolaire des informations que je te fournirais. Pour m'enlever toute scrupule, tu as insisté sur le fait que je pourrais retarder autant que je voudrais tel ou tel renseignement. Il s'agissait seulement de te rapporter, disons, les petits événements de la classe, de te permettre de consulter régulièrement mon cahier de textes, et de te donner mes impressions sur mes camarades, ou sur tes collègues. (D, 150)

There is no desire on Vernier's part to make improper use of the information he receives and, indeed, there is no evidence in the novel to suggest that he ever does. Pierre accepts his part in the enterprise as a kind of secret mission and enters into it willingly, although feeling that it might prove risky. There is no suggestion, therefore, that Vernier coerces Pierre into cooperation. Vernier's good faith is once again affirmed in the eyes of the reader.

Yet, despite his good intentions, the collaboration with Pierre breaks down after only three months duration. Pierre's classmates, especially Michel Daval, suspect him precisely of "espionnage" and "cafardage". On the 8th of December Daval tells Pierre that he suspects him of knowing the exam topics in advance, on the 15th he tells him that he is too curious and on the 21st he shows him the transcript of a conversation he has overheard between Bailly and Hutter which constitutes for him irrefutable evidence that Vernier is using Pierre "comme indicateur" (D, 382). The pressure exerted on Pierre by his classmates is compounded by the punishments imposed upon him by Vernier for the liberties he has begun to take with class discipline in obtaining information for his uncle. It is such an occasion which brings the collaboration to an end on the 11th of January, Pierre rushing from the class in distress and confusion. (D, 382)

The reader becomes aware of the breakdown in the collaboration at the end of the second part of the novel but it is not actually described until the third part when Jouret has become the narrator. The breakdown is paralleled by a change in the way Vernier is portrayed, a change begun in Part two, but which reaches a height of intensity in Part three. Pierre makes a comparison between Vernier and Cassius in Julius Caesar (D, 182,

322, 379) by applying to him the line "A lean and hungry look". At first, the comparison seems of little importance, but when, in part three, it is expanded to include the werewolf from "Fiction" magazine and the unsightly, threatening North African (D, 379), the reader realises it cannot be ignored. Since the comparison is a literary one, the reader is moved to re-examine the large number of quotations which, at first sight, seemed only a part of the realism of Vernier's description of the class. Pierre associates Vernier with Cassius by virtue of the look in his eyes, juxtaposing the fictional with the real. By adopting the same technique of juxtaposition, the reader is able to find a whole range of associations which radically alter his perception of Vernier and his writing project.

Shakespeare's Julius Caesar provides the reader with the most sustained parallel with the characters' situations in the novel. The associations shift from one character to another depending on the point reached in the novel. In the first quotation from the play, in the first part of the novel, it is not Vernier but Michel Daval who is linked to Cassius in his jealousy at the imminent deification of Caesar (D, 47). The quotation is followed by an illustration: "<<la mort de César, d'après Rochegrosse>>" (D, 47). This prefigures Daval's treatment of Pierre and his jealousy of what, in his eyes, has become Pierre's privileged position in the class. In the second part of the novel Cassius is twice associated with Pierre (D, 132, 182) as well as with Vernier. The explanation for this lies in the link between Vernier and Caesar.

Vernier becomes associated with Caesar in section five of part three when the latter's epileptic fit is cited: "<<Cassius: But soft, I pray you: what! did Caesar swoond? Casca: He fell down in the market place, and foamed at mouth, and was speechless ...>>" (D, 360). It is Caesar's

inability to speak which provides the connection with Vernier who is unable to write and is taken to hospital at the end of the same section. Vernier also becomes Caesar since the emperor was killed by Brutus, "son fils adoptif" (D, 343). Vernier is killed, as it were, by Pierre when he brings the collaboration to an end. Pierre becomes Cassius since the latter once saved Caesar's life:

c'est Brutus qui parle à Cassius et Cassius lui raconte  
que César était en train de noyer, en train de se noyer et qu'il  
lui a crié: <<aide-moi Cassius, ou je sombre>>,  
et cet homme, dit-il, cet homme est maintenant devenu un  
dieu! (D, 346)

Pierre comes to Vernier's rescue in accepting the pact between them but suffers in class from Vernier's punishment of his efforts to help him. Vernier has an almost divine power over him and he feels the injustice of this.

The double identification of Vernier with Caesar and Cassius is also illuminated by a parallel in the quotations from the Aeneid in which Pierre appears as Aeneas (D, 132) who abandoned Dido, while Vernier represents both Dido and her sister Anna. The quotations concern the passion of Dido for Aeneas and the rôle played by her sister, who has great ambitions for the glory of Carthage, in the encouragement of this relationship: "(Quelle ville, ma soeur, tu verras celle-ci ...)" (D, 356). While Dido represents the love in Vernier's relationship with Pierre, Anna incarnates a desire for glory. We can see, then, in the double identification of Vernier with Caesar and Cassius, a desire for glory on the one hand, and the inevitable destruction it brings on the other. Cassius represents the self-destructive side of Vernier's project, a project in which he is beginning to appear as a self-seeking glory hunter.



Ambition and a desire for personal glory were also hallmarks of Macbeth, a character at first associated with René Bailly and his declarations to Claire. Banquo's reaction to the fulfilment of the first of the witches' prophecies, "Quoi, le démon peut-il dire vrai?", is quoted four times in the novel (D, 29, 130, 279, 342). In part one the reply casts doubt on Bailly's truthfulness to Claire, a doubt confirmed by the announcement at the end of part two that he will not marry her, having dabbled too much "aux royaumes de l'or" (D, 283). Claire is not the first woman to whom Bailly has made such declarations.

In part two, however, Banquo's reply is placed in a wider context and becomes applicable to Vernier. When Macbeth asked for more information concerning his fate the witches simply vanished into thin air (D, 129, 179). Macbeth obtains only a part of the prophecy and acts upon it without having the information relative to his own downfall just as Vernier's project fails, in part, due to a lack of information. The identification of Vernier with Macbeth and the latter's treachery to Banquo combine to make of Vernier the "démon" and cast doubt on his honesty. In the final quotation of the response the "démon" motif continues and connects Macbeth with Mephistopheles in Faust, "gravure sur bois représentant Faust et Mephistophélès" (D, 342-343), the implication being that Vernier has purchased Pierre's soul.

The identification of Vernier with two royal or imperial figures in the second half of the novel allows the reader to make a re-evaluation of certain quotations contained in the first half. The novel begins with Vernier taking the roll-call of Pierre's class at 3 p.m. on the 12th of October. We learn that Jouret is studying Saint-Simon at the same time. The second section concerns the history class of the previous day when

Vernier is questioning his pupils on their lessons. Again Jouret is working with Saint-Simon and, more particularly, with the death of the Dauphin. This time a brief passage is cited: "J'y trouvai tout Versailles rassemblée" (D, 10). The word "rassemblée" makes us think of the roll-call and the questioning of the pupils. The assembly of Vernier's class becomes associated with that of Versailles and Vernier seems to be "holding court" like the king.

The apparently innocent quotations from Marco Polo can be similarly transformed. The first quotation described Kubla Khan's bamboo palace (D, 91). At the beginning of part two a second quotation gives us more detail about this palace: "<parce qu'en raison de la légèreté du bambou, le vent le jetterait par terre. Et vous dis que le grand Can demeure là trois mois de l'année ...>>" (D, 125). Three months is also the duration of the collaboration between Vernier and Pierre, a collaboration which is revealed to be as fragile as the bamboo palace. Contrasted with the bamboo palace is one constructed in marble which is associated with the school (D, 140) and then with Vernier's writing in a conversation with Micheline Pavin in which his writing is also compared to a prison (D, 320). The palaces represent two sides of the project: on the one hand the fragility of the collaboration and on the other the prison his writing has become for him. In both cases Vernier is identified with the "grand Can".

Both these examples illustrate the manner in which the good intentions of Vernier in writing the description are undermined by the retroactive power of the later images and motifs.

The same process of association enables the reader to apply the quotations from Montaigne, not to the conquistadores, but to Vernier. The

chain begins with the identification of Vernier with Nero, yet another imperial figure, in Racine's Britannicus. Like Pierre, Britannicus is fifteen years old (D, 359) and is, of course, destroyed by Nero. In his preface to the tragedy, Racine describes Nero as "un monstre naissant" (D, 373). This brings to mind the twice-quoted line from Boileau's Art Poétique: "<<Il n'est point de serpent ni de monstre odieux, Qui par l'art imité ne puisse plaire aux yeux>>" (D, 118, 303). We are forced to conclude that Vernier, in the description of his project, has deliberately obscured its less commendable aspects in order to appear "pleasing" to the reader and that it does indeed conceal some ambitious project.

The monstrous nature of Nero/Vernier recalls the "monstrous" behaviour of the Europeans in South America, especially since Vernier is associated with so many imperial figures. The quotation from the Essai sur les Coches which opens part three of the novel, "Au rebours, nous nous sommes servis de leur ignorance et inexpérience à les plier plus facilement vers la trahison..." (D, 287), brings to mind another part of Pierre's account of the agreement between himself and his uncle:

Avant de sortir, nous avions scellé une sorte de pacte. Ainsi doté d'un rôle et comme d'un regard nouveau, c'est alors que j'ai vraiment eu l'impression d'avoir quinze ans, d'avoir franchi un seuil. Il y avait eu les cadeaux, cette première mensualité de cinq cents francs que l'on m'avait donnée; il y avait maintenant cette entrée dans une aventure singulière à laquelle je ne comprenais grand'chose, sinon que tu lui attachais beaucoup d'importance et que, grâce à elle, tu te mettais à m'attacher une importance toute nouvelle. (D, 150)

We have the impression that Vernier is exploiting Pierre's youth and inexperience, deceiving him with increased attention and virtually reducing him to slavery like the natives in the Potosi mines. Vernier appears as a self-seeking, imperial monster.

What are we to make of this reversal of the way in which we view Vernier and his description? Are we to disbelieve Vernier's own presentation of the facts and place our trust in the quotations and the associations they provide? In what way is Vernier's project an imperial one?

The quotations appear to the reader through the eyes of not one, but three different narrator-protagonists. The first part of the novel is written with Vernier himself appearing as the first-person narrator and it is in this part that his project is presented as altruistic and laudable. There are no quotations in this part directly linking Vernier to an imperial figure. We have only been able to interpret them as such armed with the knowledge gained from parts two and three. It is in part two, written by Vernier but with Pierre as narrator, that a link is directly established between Vernier and Cassius and it is not until part three, when Jouret is first narrator and then actual author, that the full significance of this becomes apparent and Vernier appears most forcefully condemned. Jouret is the only one of the three protagonists who is not involved in the collaboration and not only is the representation of both Vernier and Pierre noticeably less intimate, but the Bailly intrigue, the details of which are known to both Vernier and Pierre (through Alain Mouron) but not to Jouret, is almost totally absent. Despite the fact that it is Vernier who actually writes all of part two and most of part three, there is a recognisable, though subtle, change in perspective.

In the second part of his text Vernier takes as narrator someone with whom he shares an intimate relationship in the first part: Pierre and

Vernier use the "tu" form when they address each other. Not only does Pierre not write the text but it is not even the fifteen-year old Pierre who is speaking:

tu ne te doutais pas encore en m'attendant, rue du Canivet, ce mardi 12 octobre 1954, que tu allais m'y introduire de cette façon, te servant de moi comme narrateur, et ceci en faisant écrire non point le Pierre Eller que j'étais ce jour-là, qui certes n'aurait aucunement pu s'exprimer de cette façon, mais celui que je serai peut-être dans ces quelques années. (D, 150)

In place of the fifteen-year old Pierre, we have Vernier's conception of a future Pierre who, as narrator, is made to write in the same way as Vernier the author and is indistinguishable from Vernier himself. The events recounted by Pierre thus do not appear from a truly different point of view.<sup>1</sup> The only change evident to the reader is that Vernier is now addressed as "tu" instead of appearing as "je". The narrator thus appears as an author-surrogate whose freedom is extremely limited. Not only does Pierre the narrator rebel against this situation, describing Vernier's use of him as a fraud (D, 254), but so does Pierre the future reader of the text:

si tu veux que je te lise, si tu veux que je ne sois pas repoussé dès les premières pages, il est indispensable que tu mettes les phrases dans une autre bouche que la mienne, pour qu'elles m'atteignent et me convainquent. (D, 277)

In order to appreciate fully the rebellion of Pierre the reader, it is necessary to examine more closely the multiplicity of relationships which exist between uncle and nephew in the novel.

The initial relationship is one of teacher to pupil and can be placed in the wider context of education in the school and the manner in which knowledge is transmitted. Education in the school takes the form of the

swamping of the pupils' minds with vast amounts of information, a process which leads to confusion, as Alain Mournon's dream admirably demonstrates (D, 346-347). The task which the pupils are set is a Gargantuan one and it seems as if the system is bent on making of each pupil "un abîme de science". They are constantly overburdened with homework and are often to be found in one class revising for an examination in another because they do not have time to prepare adequately out of school.

The weight of the programme is such that, even when the pupils are stimulated by the lessons - a rare occurrence - their active participation is actually discouraged by their teachers. During the Physics lesson of the 12th of October Michel Daval's interest is aroused by the word "iridié" which M. Hubert has not explained. The natural thing would be for Michel to ask the teacher for help but he does not do so "parce que M. Hubert ne les avait jamais encouragés à lui adresser la parole" (D, 37). In fact, at no point in the novel do we find pupils asking questions or giving their opinions on what they have learned. Their participation is limited to note-taking and replying to teachers' questions on the facts they have been given. They are simply provided with these facts which are presented as incontrovertible and then asked to reproduce them faithfully in the periodic tests. On the one side are the teachers who possess the knowledge and on the other the pupils who are there to receive it passively.

The implication is that the education system has set itself up as the unquestionable and sole purveyor of knowledge as a fixed entity which will form the pupils into replicas of their teachers. The process is summed up by Mary Lydon:

One is led to ask what the famous culture that the "lycée" inculcates really amounts to. The answer is implied in an

advertisement that Eller reads in the magazine "Fiction", touting a brochure entitled: "On vous jugera sur votre culture ... passionnante brochure illustrée gratuite N° 1428 sur simple demande à l'institut culturel français" (D, 371). Culture has become a commodity, a consumer good.<sup>2</sup>

The education system gives knowledge to the pupils who are not encouraged to think about what they are receiving. The demand of the education system for an exclusivity to knowledge can be compared to Europe's demand for an exclusivity to wealth, power and civilisation in the same way that the organisation of the Catholic Church can be compared to that of the Roman Empire in La Modification.

The relationship of teacher to pupil in which Vernier and Pierre are engaged is compounded by one of author to reader:

Ce texte, tu me l'adressais, tu l'écrivais dans l'intention de me le faire lire, une fois qu'il sera achevé, une fois que je serais en état d'en comprendre l'intérêt et tous les mots, que j'aurais fini de gravir cette échelle qu'est l'enseignement secondaire ... (D, 150)

As we have seen, Vernier conceives of this future Pierre, this future reader, as being virtually indistinguishable from himself, the present author. Pierre himself points to the presumptuousness of this conception when he uses the word "peut-être" in the phrase "celui que je serai peut-être dans ces quelques années" (D, 150). Vernier might be accused of assuming that Pierre's situation will be as he has described it and that Pierre as a person will be very similar to himself. His book is intended as a guide for Pierre, that is, it contains a message for his future behaviour, but it is a guide written on Vernier's terms, a description of Pierre's past as he sees it. As such it is open to the accusation that it is an attempt to form or educate Pierre, and to form him in Vernier's image, as if Vernier were divine like Caesar. It is a project which involves a

transmission of knowledge which Vernier feels Pierre does not possess at the present, and such is the scope of his work that it implies the totality of universal history, a totality of knowledge which, in assimilating the programme of Pierre's class and the information given to him by Pierre and the other teachers, Vernier arrogates to himself. Like the education system, Vernier instals himself as Pierre's sole source of knowledge and attempts to keep for himself the exclusivity to knowledge. It is in this sense that Vernier's project might be described as an imperial one.

Vernier is aware from the very beginning that he does not himself command an exclusivity to knowledge about the class and institutes the collaboration with Pierre so that he will be provided with the information he lacks. Vernier thus finds himself in the rather contradictory position of learning from one of his pupils. It must be remembered that Vernier learns from Pierre in his capacity as author and that Pierre is the future reader of the text. In this context Butor's ideas on the notion of symmetry between reading and writing are of particular interest:

J'ai depuis longtemps attaqué cette idée de symétrie entre l'auteur et le lecteur, donc entre l'opération d'inscription et celle de lecture. On peut illustrer cela par le mythe de l'auteur - professeur: il se trouve que nombre d'écrivains, dans le second tiers du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, ont dû, par suite de la mauvaise organisation de la librairie française, gagner leur vie comme professeurs, certaines habitudes ou facilités de l'école sont ainsi passés dans leurs livres. D'où l'impression qu'il y a d'un côté de la salle, assis sur une chaire, l'écrivain-professeur qui donne un cours, d'autre part des lecteurs-élèves qui l'absorbent... Étant moi-même passé par ce moulin, je suis sans doute particulièrement sensible à ces formules de leçon d'agrégation qui déparent certains textes contemporains par ailleurs si bien venus.

L'auteur est dans la salle parmi ses lecteurs. Le texte ne va pas de l'auteur-professeur au lecteur-auditeur-élève, il naît du dialogue des élèves entre eux. L'auteur est l'instrument de la stabilisation transformatrice d'un récit qui est déjà là. Cette nature dont je parle, antérieure même au premier jet, s'exerce sur un brouillon que je ne puis absolument pas déclarer mon oeuvre ou ma propriété, sur un brouillon atmosphérique.<sup>3</sup>



The text is not to be conceived of as a lesson given by teacher to pupil since it is not the property of the author in the first place but stems from the dialogue between all readers, from the "brouillon atmosphérique" which we might compare to the vague feeling of "indignation" (ES, 67) which Butor estimates to be at the origins of the work of art. The author, in fact, learns from the readers and it is therefore essential to the writer's text that there should be a dialogue between the readers, that there should be, in other words, a relationship between the author and the reader.

Now, as we have seen, there is, in the context of the school, no participation by the pupils in the classes and no kind of contact between pupils and teachers. In educational terms we might say that the teachers receive no feedback from the pupils which would provide them with information valuable to an assessment of the pupils' educational needs. In this sense the teachers do not learn from the pupils. During the collaboration, Vernier, as teacher-author, learns from Pierre, the pupil-reader, and it may appear, in view of the above quotation, that they enjoy an ideal author/reader relationship. However, the nature of Vernier's project compromises Pierre's relationship with his fellow pupils. Like Pierre, all the members of his class are future readers of Vernier's text. In their eyes, Pierre is a spy for Vernier, an extension of the teacher in their midst. Pierre loses his identity as an independent pupil and, therefore, as an independent reader as well. Vernier's manner of writing lays him open to the risk that his project may be perceived as an attempt to impose a lesson on the reader, making of Pierre the passive receptacle of his message, an extension of the author among his fellow readers. The dialogue between readers breaks down; Pierre is caught between the hostility

of his fellow readers and the tyranny of the author and is unable to pursue the collaboration. Vernier's project, like the witches' prophecy to Macbeth, contains the seeds of its own destruction and he does not learn from Pierre after the breakdown of the collaboration. The information necessary to his task is denied to him. We can see in this information a metaphor for the "brouillon atmosphérique" referred to by Butor. The rebellion of Pierre the reader is essentially the same as that of Pierre the narrator: both lack sufficient freedom.

The way in which the collaboration breaks down underlines the importance of recognising the differences in perspective in the novel. It is clear that Pierre is not guilty of "espionnage" and "cafardage" in the way that his classmates imagine and that he does not benefit scholastically from the collaboration. His classmates, however, do not possess the same knowledge as the reader and from their point of view it appears that way. From the perspective they have of affairs there can only be one conclusion. The collaboration breaks down because of a misunderstanding.

The intentions behind Vernier's project are open to precisely the same kind of misunderstanding. Having first of all spoken in his own name and then employed an author-surrogate, Vernier chooses Henri Jouret to continue the narration. In so doing, Vernier employs someone with whom he has had a third-person relationship in the first part of the novel: he refers to Jouret as "il". Jouret is essentially an outsider, someone who sees the project from the exterior and is too far removed from Vernier's original intentions to record them accurately. He sees only the fruit which the project bears, the effect of the collaboration on Pierre. It is Jouret who comforts Pierre after he has rushed from Vernier's class on the

11th of January (D, 388) and it is in this third section that Vernier turns into a monster like Nero. Jouret's narration gives a distorted view of both Vernier and his project. He represents the view another writer might have of Vernier's project, who witnesses the passive rôle to which the reader is reduced and condemns it as an independent judge according to the information at his disposal. From Jouret's perspective it appears that Vernier's project is an imperial one. The quotations of the third section and the associations they provide reveal, not the truth about Vernier, but the way in which his original good intentions might be misinterpreted.

Jouret's rôle in the novel is a dual one: as well as being an independent judge he also represents the third-person protagonist to whom Vernier gives speech, allowing him to say "je". In this rôle he reveals the essential dilemma faced by the writer in the novel form as Butor sees it. Butor's purpose in writing is the same as Vernier's: he wishes to help the reader. He has a message for the reader which he hopes will enable him to cope more easily with certain aspects of life identified as problematic. If, however, in the novel form, the author speaks in his own name then the message risks appearing very much like a lesson emanating from a quasi-divine teacher, a kind of Caesar figure. The author appears to set himself up as someone in possession of a piece of knowledge which his reader does not have. The objective then becomes to impart this knowledge to the reader who will, as a result, come to have the same view as the author. The reader loses his independent identity because he learns the author's message as if it were an incontrovertible fact and he becomes, in effect, a clone of the author. This approach leads the author into a closed circle since, for the genesis of his writing, it is necessary

for him to learn from the reader. He cannot learn from the reader if the reader only knows what he himself has taught him. The productive relationship between the writer and reader depends on the existence of the latter as an independent and free entity. If the author presents himself as a quasi-divine figure the reader will be alienated from him and the bond between them destroyed.

The author cannot solve this problem by the introduction of a first-person narrator. As section two of the novel shows, such a narrator appears inevitably as an author-surrogate, an extension of the author who does not enjoy sufficient freedom to exist independently of the author. He is too readily identifiable with the author himself. The only other alternative is the use of a third-person protagonist, like Jouret. There are two problems involved with the use of such a protagonist. The first is that the author cannot exert sufficient control over him: where Pierre the narrator was denied independence in part two, Jouret takes on a life of his own in part three. Despite the fact that Vernier writes most of part three himself we cannot identify the narrator-protagonist Jouret with Vernier because of the different way in which he presents Vernier and his project. He gives a distorted view of events. The bias toward the author has shifted from being too much to too little and risks the appearance of a different author, just as Vernier gives way to Jouret. The distance between author and protagonist risks the misrepresentation of the author's intentions and views and the line of communication between author and reader is once again disrupted.

Now, it might be thought that Butor's denial of freedom to a third-person protagonist, to a character, is rather odd in view of his desire to grant freedom to the reader. One could argue that the independent view of

a character like Jouret could be used in a positive way, as someone who questions or casts doubt on the intentions of the author, to encourage the reader to participate actively and take an independent stance himself. However, if the character questions the author, who is to question the character? In Degrés, if he were not extremely alert, the reader could be swayed by Jouret's presentation of the facts and come to believe that Vernier's project really is an imperial one. We know that Jouret's presentation of the facts is an innocent one, a result of perspective, but it is possible to imagine a novel in which the reader is swayed by the opinions of a character of whose intentions and motivations he knows absolutely nothing. In other words the reader risks exchanging the tyranny of an author-teacher for that of a character-teacher, a fact alluded to by Jouret's profession in Degrés: he, too, is a teacher. The reader is caught in a never-ending process: another character would be needed to check on the first character and so on. The freedom of the reader cannot be helped by granting additional freedom to a character; on the contrary it brings the reader back to the same problem he faces with the author. In this respect, the character and the author, like Jouret, are the same.

Butor, then, in his desire both to communicate a message to the reader and to preserve the freedom of the reader, is faced in Degrés with the failure of all three narrative techniques, a failure which implies that the solution to his problem must inevitably lie outside the realm of the novel form.

We are now in a position to answer our original question as to the relevance of the theme of European imperialism in the novel. Pierre Vernier, as the true writer of the vast part of the book, is an author

besieged by self-doubt and the fear that his project may be interpreted as an imperialistic enterprise, as an attempt to dominate Pierre, his future reader. Despite the failure of the three individual narrative techniques, Vernier's work as a whole cannot be viewed as a failure in the sense that his message survives. Jouret himself senses this when he actually takes over the writing:

dans l'édification de cette tour d'où l'on devait voir l'Amérique, s'est formé quelque chose qui devait la faire exploser; il n'a pu élever que quelques pans de murs, et s'est produite cette conflagration qui non seulement a suspendu tous les travaux, mais a miné le sol sur lequel ils se dressent, et c'est pourquoi tout ce qu'il me reste à faire devant ce vestige d'une conscience et d'une musique future, c'est de l'étayer quelque peu, pour que puisse en souffrir le passant, pour que les choses autour, pour que cet état d'inachèvement, de ruine lui deviennent insupportables, car dans ces poutres tordues, dans cet échafaudage déchiqueté, le soleil change la rouille en or, et le vent ... (D, 385)

The ruin of Vernier's text offers a glimpse of America, of a new world, and most importantly shows that imperialism, the myth of dominance, is not the way to get there. Pierre will receive a message clearly warning him of the dangers of imperialism and this is why his uncle is so keen to impress upon him this aspect of Europe. Vernier is an author who is aware of the problems he faces but to whom no solution is given. While the critique of Western society may or may not stand on its own, depending on the point of view of the reader, the real rôle of the theme of imperialism is as the unifying factor in the three areas of education, history and writing with the emphasis firmly falling on the latter. In Degrés Butor is concerned with the question of the freedom of the reader and the overall relationship between writer and reader. The implied solution is the rejection of the novel form, but before we turn our attention to Butor's post-novel production, we must examine the extent to which he attempts to increase the freedom of the reader in Degrés itself and discuss its

relationship in this respect with L'Emploi du Temps and La Modification.

In this part of our study of L'Emploi du Temps, La Modification and Degrés we wish to pose the following questions. Do the two earlier novels involve the reader in the text in predetermined ways which deprive him of certain freedoms and to what extent is Butor aware of this problem as he writes these novels? Does Degrés overcome this problem in such a way as to increase the active participation of the reader in the text and can this solution be seen as the culmination of a process begun in the earlier novels? Finally, can we see in Degrés the emergence of a type of reader participation which announces a new kind of writing and leads Butor to abandon the novel form? In order to answer these questions we shall examine Butor's use in all three novels of the traditional elements of the genre, namely plot and character, as well as the technical possibilities offered by language. We shall begin by discussing the devices used in L'Emploi du Temps to draw the reader into a close involvement in the text: the evocation of atmosphere, sympathy for the protagonist and plot.

The atmosphere of Bleston and Revel's position in the town is conveyed in L'Emploi du Temps by the sustained use of a type of imagery which makes a direct and immediate appeal to the reader's senses. As soon as Revel steps off the train the reader is plunged into the atmosphere of an industrial and polluted town: "... j'ai pris une longue aspiration et l'air m'a paru amer, acide, charbonneux, lourd comme si un grain de limaille lestait chaque gouttelette de son brouillard" (ET, 10). By the use of an image evoking weight, something which is normally formless is rendered

solid. The metallic element of the image expands the description of the adjectives to produce a sensation of specific taste, a taste which is repellent. The image becomes more concrete: we feel we are being made to breathe something which we could not even swallow, as if we were being choked or asphyxiated.

Tactile imagery is commonly used to lend greater life and substantiality to objects. Flowers are described in terms of living animals: "Lanes Park ... fleuri alors de chrysanthèmes aux toisons de bœliers et de chèvres" (ET, 49). We can feel the flowers pulsating under our hands and the natural lightness and fragility of what is being described is transformed by the animal hides and replaced by an impression of weight. Moisture is solidified in like manner: "le jardin des fougères ... couvert ... des frondes rousses recroquevillées de ses grand-aigles, comme d'une épaisse toison de bison baveuse et frisée" (ET, 95). The water dripping from the fronds, which would normally slip through our fingers, becomes a wider, more solid expanse of damp hide over which our hands can range. The dampness of the climate is made accessible to our touch in other ways: "les haillons du ciel qui s'effiloçaient comme de vieilles wassingues" (ET, 54). The clouds, which are normally out of reach, are brought within range of our hands only for us to recoil at the unpleasant feeling of old, damp dish-cloths. The use of such sensuous imagery brings the reader into physical contact with the natural environment of the town and produces in him the same feelings of disgust and oppression experienced by Revel. The combination of the tactile with the animal makes us feel in the presence of a living organism wherever we go, just as Revel describes himself as being inside a living cell (ET, 44).

Imagery also has a rôle to play in the evocation of the cultural and



mythical environment in which Revel finds himself. A large amount of alchemical, fire and blood imagery<sup>4</sup> is used which has a thematic link with the Cain window and the Theseus tapestries. Much of this imagery is visual in its appeal. When Horace Buck is first introduced into the diary his voice is described as "grave et rouillée" (ET, 25). Here something which is normally heard and without substance is rendered visible and solid in the association with the degradation of metal which is indicative of the poverty of Buck's mental state. Buck is also rapidly associated with fire: "Toujours debout, il a levé dans sa main droite sombre son verre brûlant où la transparence allumait une flamme fumeuse" (ET, 29). Buck is tainted with alchemical imagery which stems from the figure of Tubalcain in the Cain legend and with fire which has its source in both the Cain window and the Theseus myth. Blood, too, is characteristic of both these influences and even stains the physical environment of the town: "le jardin des saules, dont les osiers nus ... jetaient comme des éclaboussures de sang sur le plumage de faisane encore éparpillé parmi les os calcinés des branches" (ET, 51). Revel, of course, writes all these descriptions after the ritual burning of the plan and images of fire and blood form part of the psychological realism of Butor's text. The reader, however, comes into contact with such imagery in the early part of the novel before the burning of the plan is recounted and before Revel's first visits to the Old Cathedral and the museum are described. The reader is plunged into a certain mental atmosphere which he does not at first understand just as Revel is a prey to cultural influences beyond his comprehension. The reader does not only see the influence of the myths on Revel through his actions but is made to feel that influence through the language which Revel employs. The reader is not left outside the text observing Revel from a distance but is drawn into it by the sensuous appeal

of the imagery and is made to experience the same emotions as the protagonist.

The second way in which the reader is drawn into the text concerns the sympathy he feels for the protagonist. Jacques Revel is, at first sight, a protagonist with whom it is difficult to identify. He is a shadowy figure about whom we know very little and who is difficult to categorise with any degree of certainty. However, Revel's situation - a lonely foreigner in a strange land - is one which will be familiar to many of the novel's readers and readily imaginable for others. In fact, the very lack of established character traits makes Revel all the more sympathetic as a protagonist. In Chapter One we drew attention to Revel's arrival in Bleston, comparing it to a birth into existence. In this respect Revel appears almost totally defenceless against the apparent hostility of the strange environment. We tend to look upon him as we would a new-born baby struggling to make sense of everything happening around him. We make an emotional response to his plight, and, in so doing, become involved in the plot of the novel which is essentially Revel's attempt to survive in and overcome an apparently hostile environment. We actually wish for Revel to find acceptable lodgings, make friends and, if possible, take a lover. We long for an end to the kind of doleful litany which accompanies Roses' engagement to Lucien:

A quoi bon retrouver ce bistrot de nègres, où Horace Buck m'a conduit le dernier soir de l'année, où j'ai bu avec lui comme jamais je n'avais bu à Bleston, comme jamais je n'ai bu depuis, où il a rencontré la fille avec laquelle il partage sa chambre pour le moment, à quoi bon?

J'ai envie de boire; il n'est pas encore dix heures et demie; je puis aller boire. (ET, 190)

If we do not already feel sympathy for the man the image of the rejected

lover about to embark on a solitary drinking bout is hard to resist. We succumb to Revel as a personality because he appears so unable to cope with difficult human situations where one needs all one's strength. We want him to overcome these situations and we are interested in how he will go about this. We are prepared to suffer with him in the hope that everything will work out in the end. We become pre-disposed to sharing his emotions.

We are even more deeply drawn into the text by the existence of a second level of plot, by the creation of enigmas. Revel is both weighed down by the oppressive nature of Bleston's physical environment and led astray by its mythical influences. Oppression and deception are the basic characteristics of the town. Due to the reader's sympathy for Revel and the narrowness of perspective in the novel, the fact that the reader is dependent on Revel for information, the reader, on an initial reading, is exposed to the effects of any narrative devices Revel may choose to employ. As we have seen in the preceding chapter the reader is very quickly aware that he is being confronted with a kind of detective novel. Not only is this a familiar genre in which the reader conventionally identifies with the detective but he has no reason at this point to question Revel's self-assumed rôle as detective. The impression is heightened in the second part of the diary with the introduction of the account of Revel's betrayal of George Burton to the Bailey sisters. Revel's insistence on the potential dangers of his action convince the reader that repercussions are inevitable. When the accident duly occurs we then await with eager anticipation and in a state of suspense the revelation of the guilty party. In the process of detection we are dependent on Revel for clues and like him first suspect the shadowy Richard Tenn and then James Jenkins. With the elimination of

Jenkins as a suspect we eagerly await the surprise packet, someone we had never suspected, but it never arrives and the murder plot is revealed as an illusion. In the meantime we have become aware of a second enigma, Bleston itself, and anticipate its solution. The pact Revel concludes with the town at the beginning of part five in no way diminishes our belief in the notion of enigma since the Burton murder plot is not revealed as an illusion until afterwards. Our belief in the enigma of Bleston carries us over the letdown of the Burton plot and keeps us in suspense until the end of the novel when it, too, is revealed as an illusion. The great Theseus clue which we eagerly seized upon is revealed as a fraud. We realise we have been duped, and, shocked, we begin a process of re-reading just like Revel.

In order to dupe the reader for so long it is necessary that a certain technique be employed in the writing of the diary. The imparting of information crucial to the solution of the mystery must be delayed as long as possible, keeping the reader in a perpetual state of suspense, and then communicated piece by piece at just the right time so that the reader feels he is slowly but surely getting closer to the truth. This is exactly what happens in the diary - the revelation of the reasons for the betrayal of Burton are a good example. This is the basic technique involved in any detective story. What is demonstrated in L'Emploi du Temps is that the technique of creating suspense through delay can be perverted. The final element in the Burton intrigue is the description of the first meeting between Revel and Burton at the Oriental Bamboo. This is described on the 19th of September, very near the end of the novel, and places the responsibility for the betrayal back on the Cain legend rather than on the Theseus myth. The reader is once again in danger of being led astray.

If the technique of delay were limited to the imparting of information concerning the events of the novel it might reasonably be expected that the reader should become aware of what is happening to him. However, the technique is extended to cover the way in which these events are described, to the very structure of the sentences. It is extremely rare to find a paragraph in the novel which contains more than one sentence, with the result that the sentences are characterised by great length and heaviness of construction. This creates a considerable delay in the imparting of the information contained in them and sets up a hypnotic rhythm which diverts the reader's attention from that information. In order to highlight this phenomenon we shall examine a passage which carries these techniques to an extreme.

The passage extends over two entries in the diary, those for the 26th and 27th of August (ET, 241-245). The passage would comprise one unbroken sentence were it not for the change from one day to the next. The entries concern Revel's visit to the cinema on the evening of the 25th of August and are written at a time when he is obsessed with the failure of the return to Ann, just after the aborted dinner at the Oriental Bamboo on the previous Saturday, the 23rd of August. The first section of the passage is composed of one unbroken sentence-paragraph extending over two pages while the second section comprises one sentence-paragraph divided into five sub-paragraphs separated by commas and also covering two pages.

The opening lines of the passage are as follows: "Intervenaien dans cette représentation, non seulement les images qui défilaient devant mes yeux, mais celles affleurantes d'autres ruines plus lointaines encore du centre attisé ...". The placing of the verb at the beginning of the

sentence, rather than the subject, opens the way for a description of the successive images of different ruins intruding on the film of Rome Revel is watching. However, Revel is diverted from the description of the ruins into successive parentheses occasioned by the associations they provoke in his mind.

He begins with a description of Petra but the burn mark left on the cliff of the ruins of the town leads Revel into a parenthesis, in brackets, concerning a fire in Bleston. By the end of the parenthesis his train of thought is losing its track and it is necessary to re-state "intervenaient d'autres images" in order to re-establish the direction of the sentence.

Passing to the ruins of Timgad Revel is again diverted by the image of the two lovers kissing and led into another parenthesis, again in brackets, concerning Ann. Here his state of mind is revealed by the repetition of the obsessive "mais ce n'est qu'un retard sans importance", which, in the context of this passage, provides an ironic commentary on the technique being employed, and which originates from the entry for the 25th of August. This time the repetition of two phrases, "en voyant les amoureux s'embrasser longuement dans un des thermes" and "les images du quadrillage de Timgad", is necessary to bring Revel back on course.

He is immediately sidetracked into a bitter parenthesis on Lucien and Rose. This time there are no brackets: the parenthesis is beginning to take control of the sentence. The phrase "les images du quadrillage de Timgad" is repeated again but is followed by a final parenthesis concerning Burton. Here the memory associations are so great that the sentence does not return to the description of the ruins but ends with the account of Revel's feelings of exclusion from the Easter festivities in April.

The effect of this on the reader, who necessarily follows the sentence structure, is to divert his attention from the ruins to such an extent that the memory associations appear as the real subject matter of the sentence and he is quite prepared to accept the sentence ending with the description of Easter. There are two reasons for this: the constant diversion into parentheses creates an extraordinarily long sentence which is grammatically unwieldy and heavy - the reader is glad to get out of such a labyrinthine structure; the constant repetition of certain phrases creates a hypnotic rhythm: just when the reader expects the end and a falling tone the sentence picks up again and carries him along with it, subjecting him to a constant rising and falling rhythm which mesmerises him and takes him wherever the sentence wants him to go. The language has the reader in its grip.

Butor picks up the sentence again at the beginning of the next section, repeating the phrase "Intervenaient dans cette représentation". The shattering events of the previous Saturday are now one day further behind Revel and he is able to concentrate on the description of the ruins, with the result that the only repetitions are those of the word "intervenaient" at the beginning of each sub-paragraph. The sentence and the train of thought proceed without diversion until the image of Bleston is introduced into the account and linked to the cities of antiquity. These cities, Petra, Balbeck, Timgad, Athens and Rome were all at one time imperial centres and in the images of their ruins is symbolised the destruction of empire, "le pourrissement fatal du centre". In the novel it is not Bleston but Revel who sets himself up as a centre and, in linking Bleston to the ruins, he provides himself with an opportunity of recognising the inevitable destruction of the image of himself as king, as Theseus. The myth of the imperial centre is destroyed before his very eyes.

Revel, however, transforms the meaning of the phrase "le pourrissement fatal du centre" into an image of his own inevitable and destructive triumph over Bleston, reinforcing rather than destroying the image of himself as Theseus. The introduction of Bleston into the images revives Revel's hatred of the town, especially as regards his failure to reach Ann on the previous Saturday. He is diverted into a final parenthesis in which Ann and his hatred of Bleston dominate. The delay in following through the description of the ruins, the diversions into parentheses, cause Revel to miss the point of what he has seen and the reader of what he has read. The emphasis in the final two sub-paragraphs has so shifted away from the idea of the centre to the possibility of recapturing Ann that the idea appears almost as an unimportant appendix to the passage. The reader does not have time to stop and reflect on the passage since he is immediately picked up and carried along by the repetition of the word "Ann", which originates from the fourth and fifth sub-paragraphs, at the beginning of the next paragraph in which Revel goes on to re-establish himself firmly as Theseus.

Revel's experience in the cinema forms a crucial point of his stay in Bleston and the passage which describes it a crucial point for the reader of the novel. Just as Revel is on the point of making connections which would shatter the power of the myth over him, the myth re-asserts itself by producing in him emotions which blind him to the significance of what he has seen. This ensures the continued hold of the myth over him, in the form of his belief in himself as Theseus and in the notion of enigma, into the final month of his stay, a hold which, as we have seen, does not seem entirely broken at the end of his stay in Bleston. Now, in the reader's case, it might seem at first glance that it is not the power of the myth



but the power of language which creates the optical illusion. However, although the language is that of the author of the novel, Butor, it is attributable in the context of the novel to the protagonist, Revel, who is in the power of the myth. In his diary Revel records his experience in the cinema, an experience which we share in reading his account. In experiencing the power of the language to oppress and deceive us, we experience the power of the myth itself. This ensures our continued belief in the plot of the novel: we continue to believe that Revel will triumph over Bleston and that Revel, as detective-king, will solve the enigma of the "murder" attempt. It is not until the end of the novel, when these notions are revealed as illusions, that we realise our mistake.

The link between the power of language and the power of the imperial myth shows that in L'Emploi du Temps Butor is already beginning to address himself to a problem which will become the principal theme of Degrés: the problem of the relationship between author and reader. Language and the traditional elements of the novel can be used by the author to control the reader in the same way that the imperial myth controls Revel. Sympathy for the protagonist, plot, imagery, perspective and sentence structure all conspire together in L'Emploi du Temps to draw the reader into a close involvement with the text. The reader is oppressed by the text to a point where he is unaware of its workings upon him and is deceived by it. The novel genre, Butor is saying, presents the author with the possibility of dominating his reader in a fashion designated as imperial. In L'Emploi du Temps Butor deliberately takes this opportunity with the express intention of shocking the reader at the end of the novel. Just as Revel's "prise de conscience" is initiated by successive shocks so the reader is shocked into the realisation that he has been duped and is prompted into re-reading. While the reader may gradually begin to feel that all is not as he had

imagined in the novel and may even be ahead of Revel in some respects, just as we are often ahead of the detective in the crime novel, it is the final shock which prompts him into action. As the reader reads the novel for the first time he is in the power of the language, in the grip of the text, and his active participation in it is consequently greatly reduced. In a sense, active participation does not really begin until after he has read the text for the first time.

We can see, then, that in L'Emploi du Temps Butor has already embarked on the trail which leads to Degrés. He has employed the full range of technical possibilities afforded by the novel genre in order to demonstrate how they can be used to work against the interests of the reader. He has also connected these possibilities with the imperial myth itself. He has not, however, elucidated his reasons for so doing. As readers, we are aware that the novel can, as it were, be bad for our health but we are not sure why. We are left with the impression that more is to come. A first step has been taken and we must progress to La Modification to see if Butor takes action in accordance with the thoughts expressed in L'Emploi du Temps.

At first glance, Léon Delmont seems to be a much more readily identifiable character than Jacques Revel. We can see in him almost a stereotyped image of the middle-class businessman fast approaching middle-age and experiencing the problems of what we refer to as the "male menopause". He is a more universal character than the shadowy Revel and we might expect our sympathy for him to be all the more readily aroused. However, while our sympathy for Revel is immediately aroused at the beginning of L'Emploi du Temps by the image of the lonely figure at Hamilton Station, we are simply

confronted at the beginning of La Modification with an unknown figure boarding a train. We are not sure what to make of him. We have to read further before we learn anything about the man and his situation. Our increasing knowledge about Delmont is, however, accompanied by an equally increasing feeling that there is an element of bad faith in his character. The indecisive way in which he describes his situation encourages us to be wary of him and he appears less and less deserving of our sympathy. In addition, the further we progress in the text, the more questions are raised in our minds concerning the plot. The plot apparently consists of a classic love triangle in which Delmont is struggling to choose between Henriette and Cécile. The interest ought to lie in which of the two women Delmont will choose and the reader would normally be expected to take sides. Neither of these women, however, are described in sufficient detail to enable the reader to do so. We learn more about Rome than about Cécile, and Henriette not only remains very much in the background but the way in which she is described is clearly a result of Delmont's bad faith. We are faced with a plot in which the principal protagonist appears rather unsympathetic and in which the objects of his choice are too vaguely drawn to be recognisable as people with definite character traits. Furthermore, the action of the novel takes place entirely in Delmont's consciousness and we find ourselves reading about the mental struggle of a man to make a choice which, as it seems to the reader, lacks interest and hardly appears to matter at all. We struggle through Delmont's waverings without really wanting him to choose either way. Now, there are two sides to this phenomenon: on the one hand, the device which we would normally expect to sustain our interest in the novel, plot, seems in imminent danger of collapse; on the other hand, this very device was seen in L'Emploi du Temps to enable the author to control the reader to the latter's disadvantage and in this respect its

demise would appear to be a positive factor.

Of course, La Modification is not the story of a classic love triangle and the interest of the reader is sustained throughout the novel. The real subject of the novel is the modification itself and the success of the novel lies in Butor's ability to sustain the reader's interest in it. How does he do this with a reduced plot and what effect does this have on the reader's active participation in the novel? To what extent is the reader aware of the way in which the modification takes place?

In La Modification the relationship between Delmont and his Parisian life is essentially the same as that between Revel and Bleston. However, while the "prise de conscience" of Revel in L'Emploi du Temps plays a secondary role to the exposition of that relationship, in La Modification the emphasis falls on the movement of Delmont's consciousness toward a true awareness of his situation. We might therefore expect that the relationship between the reader and the text should be characterised by a similar awareness of the workings of the text upon him. At the end of the novel, however, Delmont's modification is not yet complete. As we have seen in the preceding chapter he still has to write the book which will be evidence of the movement from lived experience to reflexive awareness. At the end of the novel Delmont feels that the modification has arrived in a manner outwith his control:

Vous vous dites: s'il n'y avait pas eu ces gens, s'il n'y avait pas eu ces objets et ces images auxquels se sont accrochées mes pensées de telle sorte qu'une machine mentale s'est constituée, faisant glisser l'une sur l'autre les régions de mon existence au cours de ce voyage différent des autres, détaché de la séquence habituelle de mes journées et de mes actes, me déchiquetant,

s'il n'y avait pas eu cet ensemble de circonstances, cette donne du jeu, peut-être cette fissure béante en ma personne ne se serait-elle pas produite cette nuit, mes illusions auraient-elles pu tenir encore quelques temps. (LM, 274)

It appears to Delmont that what has happened to him has been determined by external factors, by the presence of certain people and objects which have triggered off the irresistible flow of memories. Of course, it is the movement of his consciousness toward the objects of perception, his presence to the objects and people and not the presence of the objects and people, which is responsible for the modification. While Delmont understands why it has occurred he is still too closely involved in the lived experience to understand how.

Just as Delmont is involved in the lived experience of the modification so the reader is similarly involved in the text of the novel. The reader is initially drawn into the text by the use of the second-person plural pronoun. The first word encountered by the reader in the novel is "vous" in the phrase "Vous avez mis le pied gauche sur la rainure de cuivre" (LM, 9). The reader is immediately surprised and his initial reaction is to await the arrival of a first-person narrator observing the actions of the protagonist. When such a narrator fails to appear the reader's surprise is only increased. Accustomed to novels in which the protagonist is designated either by the first or third-person pronoun the reader is shocked out of his normal reading habits. He is gripped by the novelty of the "vous" pronoun.

The use of this pronoun throughout the novel subjects the reader to a kind of magnetic attraction. The first-person pronoun, as an interiorisation, implies a subject of which we are not part and there is a resultant movement away from the text. It is not the "je" of L'Emploi du Temps which

involves the reader in the text. The "vous" pronoun, however, objectifies the subject. We normally use the pronoun when we are addressing another person, as a means of communication whereby we project ourselves toward the other. When we read "vous" in the novel we are inexorably drawn away from ourselves toward the protagonist and toward the text.

A similar effect is produced by frequent use of the demonstrative adjective which has a greater power of actualisation than the definite article. The contrast between them can be seen in an early passage as Delmont's train pulls out of the station:

L'espace extérieur s'agrandit brusquement; c'est une locomotive minuscule qui s'approche et qui disparaît sur un sol zébré d'aiguillages; votre regard n'a pu la suivre qu'un instant comme le dos lépreux de ces grands immeubles que vous connaissez si bien, ces poutrelles de fer qui se croisent, ce grand pont sur lequel s'engage un camion de laitier, ces signaux, ces caténaires, leurs poteaux et leurs bifurcations, cette rue que vous apercevez dans l'enfilade avec un bicycliste qui vire à l'angle, celle-ci qui suit la voie n'en étant séparée que par cette fragile palissade et cette étroite bande d'herbe hirsute et fanée, ce café dont le rideaux de fer se relève, ce coiffeur qui possède encore comme enseigne une queue de cheval pendue à une boule dorée, cette épicerie aux grosses lettres peintes de carmin, cette première gare de banlieue avec son peuple en attente d'un autre train, ces grands donjons de fer où l'on thésaurise le gaz, ces ateliers aux vitres peintes en bleu, cette grande cheminée lézardée, cette réserve de vieux pneus, ces petits jardins avec leurs échelas et leur cabanes, ces petites villas de meulière dans leurs enclos avec leurs antennes de télévision.

La hauteur des maisons diminue, le désordre de leur disposition s'accroît, les accrocs dans le tissu urbain se multiplient, les buissons au bord de la route, les arbres qui se dépouillent de leurs feuilles, les premières plaques de boue, les premiers morceaux de campagne déjà presque plus verte sous le ciel bas, devant la ligne de collines qui se devine à l'horizon avec ses bois.

Ici, dans ce compartiment ... (LM, 14-15)

The degree of concentration of visual perception to which the reader is called in the first paragraph is extremely high. The demonstrative increases the focusing power of the single narrative perspective to the extent where

the medium of the reader's perception, namely Delmont's eyes, is virtually effaced and the reader is in direct contact with the objects of perception. The effect is magnetic: the reader feels almost drawn through the compartment window. The power of the demonstrative is compounded by the sheer accumulation of the objects of perception and the acceleration of their appearance as the train picks up speed, with the result that the effort of concentration becomes almost unbearable. A respite is required and it comes in the next paragraph in the form of the definite articles. The reader relaxes and the presence of the objects of perception is correspondingly decreased. The reader is not permitted to relax for long, however, and his attention is seized once again by the use of the demonstrative in the opening line of the next paragraph (LM, 15). The reader is drawn in to the closed world of the compartment, "ce compartiment", and asked to focus his attention, to concentrate on all that it contains. The reader is being subjected to a continuous alternately rising and falling rhythm of concentration over which he has no control. At the same time he is made to experience the same feelings as Delmont, heightened awareness within a framework of fatigue. The effort required overburdens the reader to the extent where he is being pulled by the text just as Delmont is pulled by the train.

The reader now finds himself obliged to follow whatever direction the text chooses to take. Like L'Emploi du Temps, La Modification is characterised by single-sentence paragraphs and a heaviness of grammatical construction created by the accumulation of complements and epithets. The longer of these sentences provide the reader with a miniature of the way in which Delmont's decision to bring Cécile to Paris is overturned. Early in the novel Delmont considers the train timetable which he has brought with him: "Il était comme le talisman, la clé, le gage de votre issue,

d'une arrivée dans une Rome lumineuse, de cette cure de jouvence dont le caractère clandestin accentue l'aspect magique ..." (LM, 41-43). The remainder of this long sentence, comprising seven sub-paragraphs, undermines the secret nature of Delmont's journey and the association of the timetable with "cette liberté, cette audace, cette décision". The timetable becomes a mark of Delmont's cowardice and lack of freedom in his relationship with his wife and his firm:

... secret parce que chez Scabelli sur le Corso, personne ne sait que vous serez à Rome de samedi matin à lundi soir, et que personne ne doit s'en apercevoir quand vous y serez, ce qui vous obligera à prendre quelques précautions de peur de risquer d'être reconnu par quelqu'un de ces employés si complaisants, si empressés, si familiers ... (LM, 43)

Delmont is inexorably led on by the associations involved in "gage" and "clandestin" which the reader experiences linguistically in the large amount of repetitions of words such as "parce que, de, sans, de telle sorte que, vers". The reader cannot get off the track of the sentence which is consistently kept on course by the repetition of "le gage de cette décision, le gage de votre secret, secret parce que, secret". The sentence is like a train diverted onto branch lines, but heading inevitably for its destination. Nothing upsets the continuity of its movement. Delmont regains his audacity and liberty at the very end of the sentence by introducing Cécile, but the cumulative effect of this type of undermining will gradually provoke the modification. In this type of sentence we can see how the text emphasises the deterministic flow of associations while the instigating factor, Delmont's presence to the timetable, tends to be overlooked. The reader is carried along in the flow of language experiencing the text rather than reflecting upon it. Like Delmont, the reader is permitted to understand the reasons for the modification but not the way



in which it happens. The reader's "modification" is completed by reflexive thought after it has been experienced. During the initial reading of the novel the language controls the reader and his active participation is greatly reduced, as it was in L'Emploi du Temps.

For the reader, then, the end result of La Modification is the same as that of L'Emploi du Temps. Despite the reduction in character portrayal and the apparent collapse of plot, his active participation in the text remains minimal. We can see here that the same devices which sustain the reader's interest also draw him into the text and reduce his active participation. The power of actualisation of the "vous" pronoun and the demonstrative adjective demands from the reader such a high degree of concentration that he is led to focus his attention on the text as object, in the same way that Delmont's attention is focused on the objects of perception in the compartment. In other words, the reader's attention is riveted on what he is actually reading, namely the memories and future projections which undermine Delmont's original decision, and not on the notions of plot and character. His interest in the undermining of the decision is not allowed to wane: he wants to know not what will happen but why it will happen. It is not the choice which Delmont will make which appears to the reader to matter but the reasons for that choice. In this respect plot, sympathy for the character and character portrayal are of no importance; they are not needed to sustain the reader's interest. Nor, on the other hand, are they needed to draw the reader into the text. Once the reader's concentration is focused on the text he becomes powerless to resist the linguistic "associations" which it triggers off. The reader remains in the power of the text. The reduction of the use of plot and character is double-edged.

Butor is attempting to demonstrate two things in La Modification.

First of all, by reducing plot to no more than bare outlines he is showing that it has no rôle to play in his concept of the novel. In order to do so, however, he still needs to include a plot in La Modification and although he can sustain the reader's interest with only a minimal plot his use of plot still appears problematic. There are two possible objections: first the reader's attention is so diverted away from plot that he may not notice that it is being treated in this way; second, it might be argued that Butor has simply shifted the emphasis from one aspect of the plot to another: the reasons for Delmont's choice are indissolubly linked to the choice itself. At the end of the novel it is important that Delmont choose Henriette rather than Cécile, simply because of what each woman symbolises. When the "fissure" in Delmont's life is linked to the "fissure historique" (LM, 274) plot suddenly rears its head again. It is not the simple plot we had imagined, the choice between two women, but a more complex choice between Paris and Rome. At the end of the novel the choice, and not the mechanics of the choice, appears as the more important element. We are left wondering just exactly what the status of plot is in the novel. Butor seems to have inadvertently conferred value on something he wished to criticise.

The second thing that Butor wishes to demonstrate, and this he does successfully, is that he does not need plot and character to control the reader. He can do so by simply using the power of language. The power of the language of La Modification lies in its irresistible movement. The reader is forced to follow the movement wherever it goes and is never allowed to descend, as it were, from the train. The language simply never stops moving. In contrast, plot appears as discontinuous, disappearing only to reappear, and it is not the plot which involves the reader in the

text. Continuity now appears as the prime factor in the author's ability to control the reader. Furthermore, by using the continuous movement of language to sustain the reader's interest in La Modification, Butor is posing the following question: in which area of a text should the interest of the reader lie? It is to this question and the notion of continuity that Butor turns his attention in Degrés.

Both L'Emploi du Temps and La Modification exert a magnetic influence on the reader who is drawn into, and then carried along by a textual machine, the continuity of which is never disrupted. Degrés, on the other hand, is characterised by the fragmentation of its text. Where the sentence structure of the earlier novels was lengthy and heavy, that of Degrés is short and light. For the first time we encounter large numbers of paragraphs composed of more than one sentence:

Médusé par la phrase même qu'il venait d'écrire, il s'est redressé, l'a cachée avec sa main, car son voisin, Alain Mouron, tournait la tête vers lui comme pour la lire. Il l'a soigneusement raturée, puis tout son texte jusqu'au haut de la page. Il a posé son stylo, considéré longuement ces lignes noires. (D, 153)

We have three sentences all describing actions carried out by the same subject, Francis Hutter. They could quite conceivably be linked together by conjunctions to form one longer sentence. The first sentence, in fact, is just beginning to become long and a little heavy when it is brought to a close. This prevents the build-up of any textual rhythm which might affect the reader's consciousness. Instead, we are left with a brief non-affective description of successive actions. Nor is there any psychological interest to draw the reader into the text at this point: there is

no mystery, we know what Francis has written and understand his embarrassment which we are not made to feel. We are involved with neither the character nor the text. We remain on the surface of the text rather than being drawn into its depth.

Long sentence-paragraphs are also present in Degrés but they are consistently fragmented:

L'oncle Henri préparait ses classes de l'après-midi, une heure de grec, de deux à trois, avec nous, pour laquelle il nous avait donné à préparer les vingt-trois premiers vers du chant VI de l'Odyssée, ce pourquoi il s'est plongé dans la traduction de Bérard:

<<or, tandis que là-bas, le héros d'endurance, Ulysse ...>>, jusqu'à

<<... elle avait pris les traits d'une amie de son âge, tendrement aimée d'elle, la fille de Dymas, le célèbre armateur>>,

et le dictionnaire de Bailly pour les indispensables vérifications,

une heure de français avec nous, de trois à quatre, pour laquelle nous devions préparer le passage de Rabelais:

<<l'étude de Gargantua selon la discipline de ses professeurs sophistes>>,

ce pourquoi il a relu en entier le chapitre XXI du premier livre, s'amusant évidemment de ce qui avait été censuré par l'auteur des textes choisis à l'usage des classes,

confrontant les notes des deux éditions, ce qui lui a pris assez longtemps, de telle sorte qu'il n'a pu du tout préparer sa troisième heure de l'après-midi, de quatre à cinq, avec les première moderne, pendant laquelle il devait leur faire lire un passage de l'Antigone de Sophocle en traduction, se fiant donc à sa mémoire,

car il a entendu ses enfants rentrant de leurs divers lycées, Claude et François accompagnés par Gérard, et tante Rose achevait de mettre le couvert. (D, 226-227)

The sentence is composed of five sub-paragraphs but all are extremely short.

Two of them are fragmented by the introduction of quotations which form no part of the structure of the sentence. They are phrases or sentences which

have their own structure and appear in apposition to the main sentence.

They break up the rhythm of the sentence but not to the extent where it

becomes necessary to repeat certain phrases or words. Thus, while complements

such as "et, ce pourquoi, confrontant, car" are used to re-establish the direction of the sentence, the construction never becomes heavy enough to be oppressive. The reader does not have the impression that the text is running away with him but feels quite in control of the language.

Essentially, what has happened in Degrés is that the rôle of evoking particular emotions in the reader has been taken out of the hands of language itself. Imagery, the poetic or lyrical aspect of prose, has completely disappeared from the novel, thereby removing one method of appealing to the reader's senses. The linguistic devices of the second-person pronoun and the demonstrative adjective with their mesmeric repetition have also disappeared. Sentence structure is no longer being used to control the reader. The feeling which is aroused in the reader by the novel is one of confusion. However, the reader is not confused by the sentence structure but by the increasing amount of information supplied and the lack of an adequate reference system in the passages of time from one hour, or one day, to the next, into which the information can be organised. In other words, confusion is created by the way in which blocks of text, simple in themselves, are organised, juxtaposed, without an adequate system of identification for each block. Confusion is created by wider structural considerations than those pertaining to the language itself.

The feelings aroused in the reader do not draw him into the text. He is very soon confused by the rapid time changes and obliged to adopt a reference system not totally given in the novel: he is forced to begin dating the strophes by using a combination of the times and dates supplied and the associations provided by similarity of place or lesson content. The reader moves out of the text rather than into it, at the same time

disrupting its continuity. He is obliged to project his own system, and therefore himself, onto the text.

The reasons for this shift in responsibility concern the movement away from the single protagonist in conflict with reality. In both L'Emploi du Temps and La Modification the reader is taken inside a single consciousness involved in a problematic relationship with reality and is never allowed to leave that consciousness during the course of the novel. The experience of reality is that of one individual and the reader's experience is commensurate with, and conditioned by it. In the case of Pierre Vernier our involvement is greatly reduced since we are never placed inside his consciousness. We know that he has problems but we are not made to feel them - the accelerated rhythm of part three is evidence of desperation but we do not feel desperation - since the problems Vernier describes are not emotional but technical. By the time he is actually ill the point of view has become that of Jouret and the illness is recounted from the outside. Vernier is describing less his own experience of reality than the actions in reality of a large group of people. In conversation with Georges Charbonnier Butor comments:

Après avoir raconté les aventures individuelles qui étaient liées à l'ensemble de la réalité, liées à l'histoire universelle, j'ai voulu trouver un moyen de raconter des aventures qui ne soient plus des aventures individuelles, raconter des masses d'aventures, des organisations d'aventures à l'intérieur desquelles chaque aventure individuelle puisse être considérée comme un détail, et donc de faire des livres dont certains détails puissent être comparable à des romans, comme ceux que je faisais auparavant. Je crois que c'est très clair dans Degrés.

Dans Degrés, il y a un chapitre du livre qui, à cause de la structure de l'ensemble, retrouve une structure linéaire du roman français classique, et même tellement classique que c'est, comme par hasard, une histoire d'adultère, comme dans La Modification. (ES, 13)

We can see from the first paragraph of this extract that in L'Emploi du Temps and La Modification, Butor, has, in effect, killed two birds with one stone. Both novels are concerned with the relationship of the individual, of man, to reality in its entirety. Butor needs to deal with the consciousness of a single protagonist and he needs to induce the reader to share that protagonist's experience in order to make his point. We need to feel the oppression of the Theseus myth in L'Emploi du Temps in order to reject it. In La Modification we need to experience the deterministic flow of language in order to understand fully the modification. Butor needs to draw the reader into the text and therefore to involve himself in the traditional elements of the novel. However, at the same time he takes the opportunity to show how these elements can be used against the reader. Once the exposition of the relationship of man to reality has been satisfactorily brought to a conclusion Butor can move out of the single consciousness and reduce his dependence on these traditional elements. We shall return to the consequences of this movement away from the individual consciousness for the active participation of the reader in the text.

In the second paragraph of the extract Butor is, of course, referring to the Bailly intrigue and it is interesting to note that the move away from the single protagonist has consequences for the treatment of plot.

In Degrés there is no one principal plot. The main interest in the novel centres around Vernier's attempt to describe the class. We are made aware of the problems he encounters but his struggle, in the first two parts of the novel, is not described. It does not form a story-line recounted by him or anyone else. We learn of his difficulties from the comments he makes in his intrusions into the description in part one and from those made by his rebellious narrator who intrudes into part two. It is not until the third

part, when Jouret has become the narrator, that Vernier's struggle becomes a plot and the reader becomes eager to know the outcome.

In this third part of the novel the Bailly intrigue is barely mentioned, for the reasons outlined in the first half of this chapter. It forms the plot of the second part of the novel. Overall, however, the intrigue forms only a kind of sub-plot of which there are several, all having their genesis in the first part of the novel. All are connected with family relationships and are at various stages of development: Mme Fage and her lover (more a potential than actual sub-plot, it hardly gets off the ground), Denis Régnier's relationship with his father, the illness of Mme Bonnini and the Bailly triangle. The rôle of these sub-plots is to prevent the reader from feeling that nothing is really happening, that he is being presented with a collection of neutral facts which are so excessively banal as to have no import and precious little interest. They form a collection of privileged events which can be linked into small stories in which the reader can take an interest: he wants to know what will happen. All are noticeably extra-curricular, as it were, for the reason that there is no plot involved in the events of the class. The relationship of Pierre with his classmates appears only briefly in the second part of the novel and emerges as a plot in the third part. As far as the scholastic area of the class is concerned, the questions of whether Denis Régnier will succeed this time around or who will be top in History do not arise.

These sub-plots are not developed enough to draw the reader into close contact with the text and the Bailly triangle is no exception in this respect. It is only the bare outline of a plot which might form the subject of a novel, as it did, in a certain way, in La Modification, but it does keep the reader interested and in a certain degree of suspense: will Bailly obtain a divorce



or not? The characters, however, are not drawn in sufficient detail to involve the reader closely: we are not taken inside their consciousness and made to share their emotions. We watch events from the outside, interested but not involved. Nor is our interest sustained over a long period since all the sub-plots come to an end long before the end of the novel. The Bailly intrigue serves as a parallel to the situation of Vernier: Bailly, too, is bored with his life but seeks an escape in illicit sexual encounters whereas Vernier chooses to write. However, the real reason for the intrigue's greater development is to prop up Vernier's faltering description at a time when he has already lost the collaboration of Pierre.<sup>5</sup> The continuity of the story-line gives the illusion that all is going well and possibly even better than in the first part. Plot has become something to which the writer clings when he is in difficulty, its continuity a means of deceiving the reader. It diverts the reader's attention from the text itself, the workings of which are the real interest in the novel, the relationship between the author and his text on the one hand and the reader on the other. In the third part plot is also seen to work against the author, deforming his intentions, Vernier's project appearing as a kind of "plot" to enslave Pierre. In fragmenting plot in Degrés into a succession of sub-plots Butor has dealt more effectively with the problem of plot than he did in La Modification. Not only can the reader see that plot can be used both against him and against the author, but he can see that the continuity of plot, the reason for which is to sustain the reader's interest, is for Butor, in fact, a means of diverting the reader's interest from what he really wants him to see. The status of plot in Degrés is quite clear to the reader.

The status of plot in Degrés implies that Butor does not want to use it at all. It is something which gets in his way, which prevents him from establishing the relationship he wants between text and reader. In

La Modification Léon Delmont was stripped of all the comforting habits which masked his true relationship to reality. The reader of Degrés finds himself in a similar position: Butor presents him with the bare bones of a novel in which imagery and atmosphere have disappeared and only sub-plots and outlines of character portrayal remain, relegated to the status of unimportant facets. The novel has become transparent: there is nothing left to divert the reader's attention and interest from the workings of the text itself which is precisely what Butor wants him to see. The reader is confronted with the presence of the text and is encouraged to become present to it, as Delmont became present to reality.

It is in becoming present to the text that the reader finds his active participation increased. In L'Emploi du Temps the reader is told that Revel is Theseus, that Ann is Ariadne and so on. We are also told that the Cain window has been the "signe majeur" of Revel's year in Bleston. We do not deduce these facts for ourselves. We do, of course, have to deduce for ourselves why the Theseus myth goes wrong and in what way Cain is a more acceptable symbol but we go along with the idea of Bleston as a labyrinth until the end of the novel. This is a consequence of Butor's concern with the relationship between the individual consciousness and reality. It would not be sufficient for Revel to be seen to adopt behaviour in accordance with the myth since then only the reader would know he was doing so. The vital link of Revel's own consciousness and the effect of the myth upon it would be missing. Revel has to say that he sees himself as Theseus and the reader has to be told. Similarly, in La Modification we are told that Empire is no longer a suitable means of organising reality because Delmont has to be seen to realise this. The same fact might be conveyed by his decision not to visit Cécile and the reader could deduce that he has realised the significance of his modification. The point, however, is not to show that he has realised

this, but that he is realising it, thus demonstrating the mechanics of consciousness and man's presence to reality. The active participation of the reader has to be reduced.

In Degrés the identification of Vernier with imperial figures is not given to the reader: he is not told that Vernier is to be compared with Caesar. The reader is given a clue in the form of Pierre's comparison of Vernier to Cassius. This, however, is less of a clue to Vernier's imperial identity than to the method of using the quotations. Butor supplies the quotations as the raw material for interpreting the novel but the reader has to apply these himself and draw his own conclusions. In L'Emploi du Temps and La Modification the reader had to answer the question: why? In Degrés he has to find out both who and why. His activity is increased. The same thing can be said of the text itself: the reader is not oppressed or controlled by the workings of the text upon him, it is simply there. It is, of course, there in a certain fashion, organised by the author, but the reader is encouraged to become present to it, to see how it is there. The fragmented nature of the text takes the reader out of a close involvement in it and he finds himself piecing it together, constructing it, as the author had done before him. His active participation is greatly increased. It is no longer necessary for the reader to be subjected to the same influences as the protagonist and continuity can be dispensed with.

As we saw in the first part of this chapter Degrés is as instructive a novel as its predecessors. Butor still has a message for his readers. The message, however, is not given to the reader, is not handed down as if from a quasi-imperial teacher to a pupil. The reader is invited to project himself onto the text and actively seek out himself the message which has been placed within it. The fragmentation of the text, the reduction to a minimum of plot and other traditional elements, result in a corresponding

reduction in the presence of the author who can no longer be accused of being an imperialist dictating from the centre.

In Dégres there is no "prise de conscience" on the part of the protagonist-narrator. Vernier never comes to an understanding of the problems his writing involves and, indeed, is dying in the attempt to do so. It is the reader who achieves this "prise de conscience". The narrator is eclipsed and the novel delivered to the reader, a delivery for which the reader has been prepared in the two earlier novels. The increase in the freedom of the reader in Dégres is, indeed, the result of a process begun in L'Emploi du Temps and continued in La Modification. In order for the text to be delivered to the reader it has still been necessary for Butor to write a novel, to use devices such as plot and character, if only to show what he sees as their deficiencies. However, these devices have been so reduced that, if Butor goes any further, and the status of plot in Dégres implies that this is precisely what he wants to do, then there will be nothing of the novel left. In all three novels Butor has used the traditional elements of the novel form to expose what he regards as their drawbacks. He has now exhausted this subject and the genre appears to have nothing left to offer him. The type of reader participation envisaged in Dégres implies a further fragmentation of the text which Butor does not feel able to accomplish in the genre. It does indeed appear necessary for Butor at this stage in his career to abandon the novel form.

FOOTNOTES

1. The change in perspective alluded to earlier is the result of Pierre's rebellion against this situation.
2. Mary Lydon, Perpetuum Mobile, University of Alberta Press, 1980, p. 130.
3. Anne Fabre-Luce, Georges Raillard, 'Du mouvement en littérature: Entretien avec Michel Butor', Cahiers du 20<sup>e</sup> Siècle, 1 (1973), 7-23 (p. 9).
4. For a precise location of elemental imagery in L'Emploi du Temps see: Michael Spencer, 'The Unfinished Cathedral: Michel Butor's L'Emploi du Temps', Essays in French Literature, no. 6 (1969), 81-101 (p. 101, note 37).
5. Most of the Parisian part of the intrigue is, in fact, invented by Vernier. While Alain Mouron is a witness at Saint-Cornély he is not a party to the intimate details concerning drawers and keys in the Paris flat. Vernier is not a confidant of Bailly and he imagines these goings-on, based on the facts of Saint-Cornély, to prop up his description.

SECTION TWO

THE EXPERIMENTAL WORKS

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Mobile and Réseau Aérien: America and Place

#### MOBILE

Michel Butor first visited the United States of America at the beginning of 1960 after he had completed work on Degrés. Two years later there appeared a work which was strikingly different from his previous publications and which caused a scandal<sup>1</sup> in French literary circles: Mobile. Butor had gone to America to teach but was fully aware of the possibilities which America might offer for his literary production and, indeed, aware that a book on America would be expected of him: "j'étais absolument certain qu'à mon retour en France, on me poserait la question: qu'est-ce que vous pensez des États-Unis?" (ES, 155). With a view to writing his own impression of America he studied the accounts of fellow contemporary writers and came to the following conclusions:

Or, j'avais constaté que dans la plupart de ces livres, l'information passait très très mal. Bien sûr, ce que ces auteurs disaient était exact, les anecdotes qu'ils racontaient on ne pouvait pas les contester, ils avaient effectivement vécu ces aventures, mais ces anecdotes n'étaient pas dans leur lumière véritable, c'est-à-dire qu'on ne pouvait pas, véritablement, en tirer des conclusions sérieuses. Cela n'était pas dans l'espace américain. (ES, 155-156)

Butor's primary concern during his stay therefore became "l'espace américain" and the way in which it could be faithfully evoked. Even at this stage a work as radically different as Mobile was far from his intentions:

Je pensais qu'à mon retour, je pourrais écrire un ou deux textes un peu du même genre que ce que j'avais fait dans le premier Génie du Lieu ... Mais plus mon séjour s'est prolongé, plus je me suis rendu compte que les outils qui fonctionnaient très bien pour les villes de la Méditerranée ne me permettaient pas de parler avec justesse des États-Unis. C'est pourquoi j'ai élaboré peu à peu les instruments grammaticaux,<sup>2</sup> au sens général du terme grammaire, d'un livre comme Mobile.

Mobile is, therefore, a work written directly in reaction to the environment in which Butor found himself, a product not only of reflection on the means of expressing that environment but also of the chance which took him there. Degrés demonstrates clearly that Butor was ready to leave the novel genre, but the final form of Mobile is something which not even Butor, at the beginning of 1960, could possibly have imagined.

The form of Mobile is such that the reader could be forgiven for imagining that its author had taken a large number of words and distributed them over the pages in a completely haphazard way. It is, however, like the novels before it, a highly structured work. Each chapter of Mobile represents one of the fifty states of the United States which appear in alphabetical order but with the French version of their names. Thus North Carolina appears much nearer the beginning of the alphabet as "Caroline du Nord". Each chapter is divided into "cells" (ES, 157) headed by the name of a town. Within each cell is material regarded as characteristic either of the town, the state or America as a whole. In most cases an individual cell will contain a combination of all three types of material. Butor uses only those town names which have homonyms in geographically adjacent states with the result that the content of each state-chapter is not confined to material belonging only to that state. He divides the page into four margins, the first being reserved for town-cells belonging to the "home" state, for example, Milford, Indiana (M, 80). The second margin contains cells from an



immediately neighbouring state, Milford, Ohio (M, 81) and the third margin cells from its immediate neighbour, Milford, Pennsylvania (M, 81). The fourth margin contains cells from states up to six times removed from the home state. Thus with Washington, Iowa in the first margin (M, 85) we eventually reach Washington, New Jersey (M, 86), five states away, in the fourth margin. Each home state<sup>3</sup> therefore contains parts of several of its neighbours. This gives rise to a phenomenon of wholesale juxtaposition in which the material contained in one cell may complement or contradict the material contained in another.

Mobile contains a mass of material and covers an extremely wide range of themes: racism, commercialism, religion, the decline of the Indian, and many others. It is not within the scope of this study to examine in detail all of these themes. We shall cover what appear to us to be the major themes of the work placing emphasis on the way in which these themes are presented to the reader and the motives for this method of presentation. In this discussion of Mobile we shall attempt to answer two major questions: in view of the break with the novel form, is the main thrust of Butor's work still concerned with changing reality? Secondly, to what extent does Butor tackle the problem of the freedom of the reader which he himself raised in Degrés? We shall begin our study by examining the ways in which the white man treated the Indian, the original inhabitant of the continent, and the negro, whom he introduced to this New World.

In Butor's presentation of America in Mobile the root of all America's problems is seen as the problematic relationship between man and place, between the European settlers and the continent of America itself.<sup>4</sup> This leads Butor to examine psychological rather than economic

or political motivations. Both the reasons for the destruction of the Indian and the enslavement of the negro are attributed by Butor to the white man's reaction to the very land of America: "ce continent qui nous accueillait mais nous effrayait" (M, 99). America inspired fear in the white man and although people came from all over Europe, they did not come, in Butor's view, to settle permanently: "Ils ne cherchaient point à le connaître ce pays, ils ne désiraient point s'y installer. Ils se contentaient d'habitations provisoires. Ils ne désiraient que survivre et s'enrichir pour pouvoir retourner ..." (M, 98). Driven from Europe by religious and financial tyranny (M, 90-91), they hoped to return, powerful with the riches of the New World, to take their revenge on their former oppressors (M, 92). The fear and insecurity inspired in them by the land and its people paradoxically induced the settlers to create around them memories of the Europe where they had been so badly treated. This nostalgia and the need for security is most apparent in the choice of names for their towns: Glasgow, Manchester, Cordoba, Berlin, Osceola, etc. These names are now spread throughout the United States but in the early days of settlement the focal point of this nostalgia was the north-eastern seaboard, an area still known as New England. In Mobile this mentality receives its fullest expression in the large calligram listing a number of European names all with the prefix "New" (M, 99).

When the New Europe was revealed as no better than the old one (M, 101) the Europeans swept westwards destroying the Indian, the hostile face of this hostile land, and his food supply: "Les Européens ont épucé la prairie de ses bisons et de ses Indiens" (M, 60). Too proud to work voluntarily for the white man, the Indian was also too terrifying to be subdued into doing so: "... plutôt que de tenter de domestiquer

l'Indien, on préféra importer de faux indigènes ..." (M, 107). The Africans had the advantage over the Indians, as far as the white man was concerned, of not being connected to the power of the land:

ils étaient entièrement démunis, purs de toute connivence avec ces nouveaux fleuves, ces nouveaux oiseaux; ils étaient plus depaysés encore que nous; la domination sur eux était des plus simples; on pouvait en faire des inférieurs absolus, l'image même de cette inégalité dont nous rêvions qu'elle se rétablît en notre faveur en Europe ... (M, 108)

The easy domination of the negro led to his being regarded by the white man as racially inferior, and this even by the most intelligent and civilised men of the time.

Butor demonstrates this point by quoting from the works of Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and a President of the United States. The sequence of extracts from Jefferson's writings begins with the famous lines of the Declaration: "... nous tenons pour évidentes ces vérités: que tous les hommes ont été créés égaux ..." (M, 41). The extracts from his Notes on the State of Virginia of 1781-82 which follow this quotation demonstrate the discrepancy between the words of the Declaration and Jefferson's personal views. In these notes Jefferson compares blacks and whites in almost every conceivable way, from love-making to literature, concluding that blacks are by nature (M, 310) inferior to whites. He even compares blacks to Ancient Roman slaves, deciding that the latter were more culturally advanced simply because they were white (M, 310). Apparently shocked by his own conclusions he tries to present them at the end as a mere hypothesis (M, 313) which he would like examined by scientific methods and which he feels scientists would excuse:

Dès lors un amoureux de l'histoire naturelle, celui qui voit les gradations dans toutes les races d'animaux avec l'oeil de la philosophie, n'excusera-t-il pas cet effort pour conserver celles qui existent dans le domaine de l'humanité aussi distinctes que la nature les a faites. (M, 314)

It is precisely in his call for scientific enquiry that Jefferson's profound belief in the natural racial inferiority of blacks can be seen.

The quotations from the Notes are juxtaposed by Butor with other writings and actions of Jefferson. One thread describes the architectural delights of the dream house he built for himself at Monticello which demonstrates the high degree of his culture and civilization. He also designed and was the founding father of Virginia University and it is for these things and for the Declaration that he is remembered. However, the last entry concerning the dream house reveals one of its lesser known aspects:

Thomas Jefferson,

à Monticello fit installer les logements de ses esclaves sous la terrasse du Sud, de telle sorte que leurs allées et venues ne gênassent point les regards. (M, 314)

Architectural considerations were not the only ones he had in mind when he built the house. The Jefferson thread is completed by extracts from a letter to an Italian friend in which he asks for musicians who could double as gardeners and servants. Although this is an ingenious idea, it is not at all clear that Jefferson intended to pay these people for carrying out two jobs.

By juxtaposing these various extracts, Butor reveals an extraordinary and complex character: on the one hand highly intelligent and cultivated, on the other racially prejudiced and apparently willing to

exploit his fellow man. Jefferson appears to be someone whom we should criticise, particularly in the Notes which today would seem almost like a manifesto of racism. Therein, however, lies the problem. Butor's presentation of Jefferson appears to tempt us to criticise an eighteenth century figure from our own twentieth century standpoint. This, we feel, is surely a trap to be avoided and we must now look elsewhere in order to understand what lies behind Butor's method of presentation.

The juxtaposition of the Declaration of Independence with the Notes on the State of Virginia revealed a contradiction between the public and the private Jefferson. A similar contradiction characterises the behaviour of the white man toward the Indian. The first treaty between the two parties was made in 1682 by the Quaker leader William Penn with the Delaware Indians. Desirous of peaceful co-existence, Penn wrote:

j'ai l'intention d'ordonner toutes choses en telle manière que nous puissions tous vivre en amour et paix les uns avec les autres, ce que je l'espère, le grand Dieu nous inclinera à faire vous et moi ... (M, 77)

A hundred years later the same Delaware Indians had to be removed by the missionaries from Pennsylvania to Ohio for their own safety. Returning, as they had been given permission to do, to harvest their old crops, they fell foul of the Pennsylvania militia: "qui les désarmerent, les ligotèrent et les exterminèrent à coups de haches et de gourdins, car ils voulaient économiser leurs munitions" (M, 79). We are given this information only two cells after the quotation from Penn and so the lie is given to the treaty, despite the sincerity of the original Quaker settlers. A similar fate was reserved for every treaty made between white and red man. All the references in Mobile to

the demise of all the other Indian tribes and the enumeration of every single reservation expose and condemn the contradiction underlying the words of Penn's treaty.

For the descendants of the survivors of this slaughter, to be an Indian nowadays is to be an object of wonder for the eager eye of the tourist, American or otherwise. The degradation of the Indian into a commercial object can be seen most clearly in the quotation from the prospectus of the Chapel Lake Indian Ceremonials in Michigan, near the Great Lakes: "Troupe géante de véritables Indiens d'Amérique du Nord! Authentique! Mystérieux! Dramatique!" (M, 82). Ironically placed just before this extract are the words of Tecumseh, chief of the Pawnees, about to make their last stand against the invader:

Aujourd'hui, [les Blancs] non contents de leurs propres terres, sont venus chez nous et nous ont chassés des régions côtières jusqu'aux grands lacs, mais d'ici nous ne reculerons plus ...

(M, 81)

The Indians are still at the Great Lakes but in the form of touristic collector's items: "Jouissez du plus excitant délassément nocturne, du plus excitant délice photographique jamais présenté pour la famille entière" (M, 93). Repugnant as this may be, tourism is one thing which provides the Indians with a means of support. On the Seminole reservations in Florida, "les femmes tissent des vêtements à rayures de couleurs vives et confectionnent des souvenirs pour les touristes" (M, 283). In New Mexico the Navajo's products are keenly sought after by the tourist but their revival, which makes of them the only glimmer of hope in the work as far as the red man is concerned, is due to revenue from mineral deposits on their land which is made the collective property of the tribe. Even this does not prevent the majority from being extremely poor.

Clearly, much more is required if the Navajos and the other surviving tribes are to be saved from abject poverty. Yet, now that there is no Indian menace and they are all safely "parked" (M, 9) on reservations, does anyone really care? Are the reservations something which people really notice nowadays? Not every reservation in Mobile is expressly designated as such: "la réserve des Indiens Osage" (M, 157) is often reduced to "... des Indiens Tama" (M, 158) or even further to "... de la rivière du Vent" (M, 158). The mention of reservations or Indians is either suppressed by guilt and an unwillingness to recognise the problem or simply forgotten. Indians are as noticeable as a river or a mountain, just part of the scenery which flashes by as the cars criss-cross the country. In the pace of American life they are left behind. This can also affect the reader who can pass over the reservations either, initially, not realising the Indians are there or having forgotten that this device is being used. The reader, and the Americans, ought to continually remind themselves that the Indians are there.

It is this tendency to forget which Butor wishes to highlight in his presentation of America. Racial fragmentation is not restricted to white, black and red men. Modern America is a nation of immigrants drawn from all over the world and not simply Europe. All these different groups seem determined to hold on to their separate national identities: they read newspapers in their own languages: "A Lincoln, les Allemands lisent toutes les semaines <<Die Welt Post>> (M, 60); they open restaurants selling their national foods and the airways of New York throb with the sound of many different languages: "WHOM, émissions ukrainiennes" (M, 319). Clearly, the "New European" mentality still persists, even if people have settled permanently in America, and has expanded to include Chinese, Arabs and other non-Europeans. It seems that no-one wants to be an American. This is, in part, a result of the

nature of American history.

Almost every town in America was founded on killing, usually Indians: "Ce sont les Européens qui, en tuant les Indiens, sont devenus Américains".<sup>5</sup> A man was initiated into becoming an American through the ritual of murder. American history, from the day the first pilgrims landed to the end of the nineteenth century, is one uninterrupted slaughter of Indians, Negroes, natural life and white men themselves, outbreaks of which still occur in the twentieth century. It is a terrible tradition and one which people are not encouraged to remember, one which surfaces only as a kind of nightmare:

Si seulement il était possible de tout reprendre dès le début, si seulement la frontière était encore ouverte et que l'on pût fuir cette nouvelle Europe, et instituer autrement de nouvelles villes. Il faudra que je me taise devant mes collègues et mes patrons. Ils penseraient que ... Ils me soupçonneraient de ... J'ai une femme et des enfants ... Je rêve de bisons, de troupeaux de chevaux, des Indiens de la prairie, des Saints du Dernier Jour et de leur marche à travers les États, des nouvelles terres ... Mais je leur dirai, même à ma femme je dirai que je rêve d'avoir de l'argent. (M, 157)

The nightmare says that America is not Eden, that a great mistake has been made, that it is still only a New Europe, but such thoughts do not correspond to the all-American dream. The past should be forgotten and we should dream of a rich future. Perhaps it is in recognition of this nightmare disturbing its citizens that America has built its Freedomland. Here, according to the prospectus, history is on view and one can walk in the midst of it. Freedomland is a gigantic amusement park in which all reality has been taken out of history which appears as a game to be played. In this park we can see the cliché image of the Indian: "Dans le nord-ouest de Freedomland des mannequins d'Indiens cachés dans les buissons tirent des coups de feu inoffensifs et lancent des flèches



téleguideés ..." (M, 202). This television image of the Indian here disproves the very existence of the real Indian and part of the nightmare can disappear.

In Freedomland history has lost any element of terror or horror. The prospectus urges us to be at the Chicago fire or the San Francisco earthquake, no doubt the last place the people of those cities wanted to be at the time. The Chicago fire bursts into life every few minutes making it a spectacle to be enjoyed, a thrill to be experienced, "un frisson que vous n'oublierez pas!" (M, 251), rather than the tragedy it was. Freedomland is the place to go if one wants to be reassured about, or proud of one's history. But it is a history which has been transformed into myth, where reality is overlooked. One can then go home and completely forget about the past, leaving it safely chained up and tamed in an amusement park; Freedomland is the reservation of American history, a denial of the American past, a refusal to think about it. Small wonder, then, that the various peoples hang on to their separate identities, for they are the only ones they have. America refuses to give its peoples a past, a tradition into which they can sink their roots. America refuses to be American, denies its own reality.

This denial of reality is what lies behind Butor's presentation of Jefferson. In showing the complexities of Jefferson's character, Butor is not so much holding him up to be criticised but to be seen for what he really was and not as he is generally considered to have been. Butor gives us the reality of the man and not the Mount Rushmore image. Jefferson should be accepted as a man who had doubtful views on race as well as being the author of the Declaration of Independence. Similarly, terrible things have been done to the Indians but it is time to accept

openly that they were done and stop drawing a veil over the past. Butor wants to present the Americans with their past and their present, to take their reality out of the shadows of "l'oubli historique qui est à la base des États-Unis" (ES, 228).

The reality which Butor sees in America and which he wishes the Americans to accept is essentially a paradox arising from the interplay between variety and repetition and results from a view of the natural world of America different from that taken by the Americans. In Butor's presentation it is the human aspects of America which we experience as repetitious. We see the same town names, the same adverts, the same petrol signs and, through the medium of the Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogues, the same objects in people's homes. These catalogues offer an enormous variety of items, yet, since they are a nationwide concern, every home has one and buys from it, with the result that a multiplicity of identical objects finds its way into homes across the country. Variety is transformed into repetition on a grand scale and we have the impression that everything is the same and nothing ever changes.

It is in the juxtaposition of objects from the catalogues and natural objects that the attitude of Americans to nature is revealed. Like the other constituent parts of Mobile, the extracts from the catalogues are presented in a discontinuous fashion with the result that an extract will often begin with the word "ou": "La rivière Iowa supérieure, affluent du père des fleuves, - les lacs d'Argent et des cinq Iles, - ou la stupéfiante autoharpe, << si facile, si amusante pour tout le monde >>" (M, 61). These three lines form the beginning of a

prose paragraph all in the same kind of type. This encourages the reader to run together what are three separate elements, the final connection being made by the word "ou". This type of juxtaposition works both ways: the autoharp appears to be part of the countryside, something one sees when driving past; the river and the two lakes appear to be objects for sale in the catalogue, the idea of consumption being transferred from man-made to natural objects.

This device of transference is highlighted by the use made of petrol stations in the work. America is criss-crossed by travellers whose destinations are never revealed to us and which always seem to be many hours driving away. The only points of reference on these journeys are the petrol stations, designated by the name of the brand, so much so that people seem to be driving from one station to the next rather than from town A to town B. These petrol brands always occur at the beginning of a prose section and are immediately followed by natural objects related to water: "Flying Service, - les lacs de l'Ile-Perdu, de l'Oie, du Cygne" (M, 61). The full effect of these juxtapositions can be seen when rivers are involved: "Caltex, - la rivière Monongahela (qui après sa jonction à Pittsburgh avec la rivière Allegheny devient la rivière Ohio) et ses affluents: la rivière Youghiogheny et le ruisseau des Dix Miles" (M, 80). With various rivers running into each other, this extract expresses the continuous flowing motion of water. Petrol seems to flow with the same continuity, one brand running into another, B.P. into Caltex, and American rivers seem to be full of petrol rather than water. The passage from one cell to another and the discontinuity of theme in the work creates an impression of speed. We change theme with every revolution of the car wheels, as it were. Natural objects seem to slip past without really

being noticed by the drivers. Simply enumerated, no attention is paid to the detail of their appearance. They are associated with fast motion while the petrol brands are associated with stopping. This results in a halt in the flow of water and the rivers or lakes become like the petrol stations where the motorists fill up, water and petrol both being sources of power. The rivers and lakes are thus consumed in the petrol tanks of the cars. Nature is not something to be looked at but something to be used by man to further his own interests, consumed like objects in a catalogue or petrol at a filling-station. Man has begun to dwarf nature and his billboards are more noticeable than the natural features, especially when we remember that the average driver is unlikely to know the names of all the features Butor presents us with. To him a hill will be just another object he can see almost everywhere. Even for the reader, who is given the names, the individuality of each natural feature is reduced by the association with catalogue objects and petrol brands. On the other hand the identity of each billboard screams at both driver and reader: "Vous avez soif? Buvez Coca-Cola!" (M, 63). In the pace of American life, nature, like the Indian, is left behind.

Butor's own reaction to the natural life of America is quite different with the emphasis firmly placed on variety. In the many rivers and lakes, in the mountains and nature reserves, lives a great variety of birds and flowers and in the sea a mass of marine life is to be found. All these natural elements are immediately opposed to the human world in the way in which they are presented: all are poeticised into small calligrams containing lists of birds, plants, trees, stones, minerals and marine life. By far the most numerous of these calligrams contain birds and marine life. There are just over three hundred species of birds

recorded. Some are repeated but not enough to take away from the overall effect of variety. All the bird calligrams and most of the sea calligrams consist of the simple enumeration of species providing a beautiful and varied contrast with the commercial objects and sombre themes of other parts of the work:

La mer,	
coquilles ailes de faucon,	conque de combat,
coquilles ailes de dindon,	arches pesantes,
	conques à la reine. ( <u>M</u> , 17)

There is a simplicity and serenity about such calligrams which provides relief from the turbulence of the human world. The rôle of certain sea calligrams in Mobile extends, however, beyond mere contrast with the human world and in these calligrams lies the key to the emphasis placed by Butor on the variety of the natural world of America.

Certain of the sea calligrams contain lists of rubbish to be found on the beaches of New York and New Jersey (M, 175). Just before we reach the polluted beaches there begins a series of calligrams the theme of which is purification by the sea:

La mer,	
	lave,
rinçe,	
	relave,
rinçe,	délivre. ( <u>M</u> , 170)

In the second calligram of the series (M, 171) the rinsing and rewashing motion seems to indicate that it is the sand on the beach which wishes to be cleansed, especially in view of the ensuing theme of rubbish and contamination which mingles with that of purification:

La mer,	que la mer me débarrasse
de toute cette boue,	de toute cette graisse,
de toute cette suie,	de tout ce sucre. (M, 173)

By the fourth calligram, however, it becomes more difficult to associate the sand with whatever is being personified:

La mer,	la grande lessive de la mer,
que la mer me frappe,	que la mer me pénètre,
que la mer me guérisse,	que la mer m'ouvre les yeux. (M, 177)

The five calligrams of this series all occur in Massachusetts cells and are juxtaposed with extracts from the prospectus for a jam-making monastery and Cotton Mather's account of the Salem witch trials. These two sources show past and present faces of religion in America, the first demonstrating the alliance between religion and commerce in modern times and the second the intolerance and fanaticism of the late seventeenth century Puritans.

The monks' prospectus reads very much like the mail-order catalogues and the extraordinary flavours, "ananas-menthe" (M, 176), can be compared to the Howard Johnson ice-cream flavours and recall the lengths gone to in the catalogues to make the colours of objects attractive to the consumer. An intermediary link between the catalogues and the monks' prospectus can be found when the names of churches replace petrol stations in circumstances similar to those discussed above: "L'église de l'assemblée de Dieu, - les monts Washington et Lincoln, - le lac d'Argent, - ou une chevalière talisman, page 692, pierre synthétique et deux diamants taillés en rose" (M, 177). One can choose from the great variety of religions in

America just as one buys an object from the catalogues. The ultimate expression of this alliance between religion and commerce can be seen in the prospectus for Clifton's Cafeteria in Los Angeles.

The objective of the Salem witch-trials was to purify the country of devil-worship and even the devil himself. In this light, the voice of the sea calligrams becomes that of America itself, wishing to purify itself, not of devils and witches, but of precisely those kind of things embodied in the trials and in the monks' prospectus. Intolerance and commercialism are, as it were, part of America's dirty washing which Butor hangs out for all to see. America wishes its eyes to be opened, to be cured and changed by the symbolic power of the cleansing sea. In the final calligram of this series America wishes to be engulfed by the waters of the sea, as if calling for a deluge like that in the Bible:

La mer,	
que la mer se venge de moi,	que la mer me prenne,
qu'il n'y ait plus trace de moi;	que la mer m'engloutisse,
	que la mer me noie. (M, 208)

America is crying out for its own purification and renewal.

The occasional mingling of the sea and bird calligrams points the way toward an understanding of the symbolism of the sea in the work. This mingling can result in a transfer of colour from the birds to the human objects on the beach:

la mer,	sarcelles à ailes vertes,
	sandaes vertes,
	sternes couleur de suie,
chevilles,	sandaes couleur de suie,
talons,	foulques noires,

aigrettes neigeuses,

sandales neigeuses. (M, 188)

We can imagine the sandals sprouting wings and taking off, transforming their occupants into winged messengers like Mercury. Two elements, the natural and the human, which are placed in stark contrast elsewhere, are here joined together to produce something startlingly new and different. This type of imagery mixture returns later wholly within the sea calligrams themselves:

La mer,

un aigle d'écume,

un éventail de sel,

un paon de gouttes,

une rose de verre,

une crinière de bruit. (M, 260)

The peacock, eagle, fan and mane all give an impression of a spreading out, or a fanning out, of spray and spume, the mane also evoking the roar of the water, perhaps in a storm. All four words imply gracefulness, as does the glass rose which also evokes delicacy and fragility. Graceful, delicate and spreading out endlessly before us as when calm, the sea can be as fierce as a lion when moved to action by the wind. Constantly in flux, the sea is forever one or other of these two things, a symbol of constantly changing permanence. The sea's infinite variety lies in this constant change which prevents stagnation and brings a sharpness and vitality wherever it is to be found in the work. The sea is like a breath of fresh air blowing over America and startling it into self-awareness. America, too, can be a land of infinite variety and vitality, and therefore a land of constant change, and this is why it calls upon the sea to cleanse it from its stagnation, the stagnation of repetition and lack of change. Butor sees in America a land of constantly changing permanence.



The final series of sea calligrams expresses Butor's hope for America. The catalyst for this series is provided by fish scales. Starting off in their natural silver colour (M, 264), they progress through gold, purple, green and sapphire to the colour of volcanic glass. All the elements in this series progress away from normal colours to "cobalt, lapis, onyx, menthe, obsidienne, jais, houille, encre fraîche, palissandre". This recalls the colours in the catalogues, "poussière d'étoiles taupe, bois de pin vinyl" (M, 176), and indeed many of the objects could be from these catalogues: beds, floral designs, materials. The "plaines d'encre fraîche" (M, 268) are readily recognisable as the plains of America upon which the New Europeans drew right angles as they cut up the land into their ideal forms. As well as ink, this calligram contains two other references to the colour black, "houille" and "obsidienne". The word "palissandre" also has connotations of the colour red and the calligram almost seems to contain the themes of the red and the black man with which it is juxtaposed (M, 268), both couched in a different kind of language. The colours and objects are not quite the same as those in the catalogues: words like "palissandre" and "obsidienne" may be extraordinary but they express something natural unlike the ultimately meaningless colours in the catalogues and create a sensation of colour which adds something to our normal experience of it. The human objects and the natural ones are here described in the same kind of language, unified in a new and vital imagery. Black and red are described in a different way: the old colours and the problems which accompany them seem to sink below the sea with its new spectrum. Butor hopes that new colours will replace the old ones in a sea of change which sweeps aside old problems and differences, giving rise to a country where men live in unity with one another and nature, a true Eden.

At the end of Mobile we find a kind of hymn to America, not so much a celebration of what it is, but of what it might become: an America "renversée" (M, 327), an America "méconnaissable enfin reconnaissable" (M, 328). The idea of America has not yet arrived, it is not yet the Eden the last few pages would like so much for it to be. America is not a New World, but nothing more than a New Europe where all the problems of the old continent re-appear on a grander scale. Yet, paradoxically, it is in this very fact, which seems to be the greatest criticism we can make of America, that optimism in Mobile lies. As we have seen America is not America in that it draws a mask over the reality of its past and present; for this very reason, however, America has a great chance of becoming America. America is a country which, like the New Cathedral of Bleston in L'Emploi du Temps, is essentially unfinished. Butor presents us, not with an ordered whole, but with a fragmentation, a discontinuity of parts which might one day make up America. Mobile is sub-titled "Étude pour une Représentation des États-Unis" and the point is not so much that the work is not a representation of America but that America cannot yet be represented. These considerations lead us directly to the question of how we read Mobile.

The fragmentation of America in Mobile can be given another name, one more closely linked to water and the sea, and, therefore, to the major theme of the work:

L'Amérique a certainement une action de dissolvant sur l'individualité. Les individualités anciennes étaient liées à des structures sociales européennes. A son arrivée, l'émigrant va se trouver soumis à un nombre de processus de dissolution extraordinaire. Mais à partir de là, à partir du moment où cette dissolution a eu lieu, à partir du moment où les éléments

qui le composent se trouvent en suspension, il lui est naturellement possible de recomposer tout cela en une individualité plus forte, une individualité neuve, une individualité qui implique une conscience de la réalité plus vaste. C'est cela, en particulier, que l'Amérique peut nous apprendre, à nous. (ES, 198 - 199)

The discontinuous style of Mobile dissolves the great mass of America into its constituent parts in an action which can be compared to that of the sea on the New England coastline. Mobile is a far more fluid text than its fragmentary nature might at first indicate. Water is an ever-present feature in the text, be it in the form of rivers, lakes or the sea, and we have already seen how different elements run together in our reading of the text. In combining different types of text, lists, calligrams, long and short prose paragraphs, Butor has been extremely successful in creating a feeling of space, exemplified in the blank, white parts of the page. We have the impression of reading a flotsam of words against a background of a sea of white. There is also a great feeling of variety in the typographical layout - no two pages of the work look alike. It is the fluidity and variety of the text that make of dissolution a positive value. Dissolution does not appear permanent but as a prerequisite for a more solid construction or recomposition.

If Mobile as a whole can be likened to the patchwork quilts of the Shelburne Museum (M, 181),<sup>6</sup> then it is a quilt in which we see quite clearly each individual thread, be it racism, commercialism or religious intolerance. We have seen above that Butor presents American historical characters in such a way that they can be seen for what they are, that the reality of the American past and present be clearly seen. In this presentation the question of speed is of great importance. We noted that the Indian and the natural life of America were left behind by the pace of American life. This impression of speed, generated by

cars criss-crossing the country is counterbalanced by the discontinuous presentation of the work's major themes in their extracts from various sources. Butor's comments on his quotation of Jefferson are revealing in this respect:

Ce texte je l'ai découpé en morceaux, comme d'autres, mais c'est celui qui est découpé dans le plus grand nombre de morceaux, c'est celui je crois qui est cité le plus longuement; ce découpage est fait d'abord pour des raisons d'équilibre général entre les différents éléments, mais surtout pour obliger le lecteur à une lecture lente.

Il y a des quantités de choses qui peuvent passer inaperçues lorsqu'on lit les pages entières; lorsqu'on vous distribue le même texte paragraphe par paragraphe, on ne peut pas ne pas voir certaines choses, surtout lorsqu'on les a dans un contexte qui va souligner tel ou tel mot. Au cours du livre on va voir le personnage de Jefferson changer de visage. A la seule lecture ralentie de ce texte, on va voir un masque tomber peu à peu du visage de Jefferson. (ES, 210 - 211)

The discontinuous presentation of the Jefferson thread elongates its presence in the text - taken together it would cover only a few pages - and expands and slows down the time we take to read it in the hope that a deeper reflection on the character of Jefferson will take place. Butor is making a plea to America to slow down and take the time to consider itself properly. Like the Jefferson extracts all the major themes of the work unfold gradually in an effort to oblige the reader to see the reality of America. In this "lecture lente" we can see the beginnings of a technique which will be used at greater length and to greater effect in both 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde and the Matière de Rêves series.

Behind this method of presentation lies the desire that, having once seen and reflected upon their past and present, Americans should

choose their future.<sup>7</sup> They should accept or reject certain of the threads which make up the quilt and re-compose their country. This notion of choice is connected to the freedom of the reader in Mobile. The presence of the author is reduced to a minimum in the work and the absence of the conventions of continuity which we discussed in relation to the novels in the preceding chapter means that the reader does not find himself in the power of the text. Nor are we obliged to read the text in a strictly linear fashion. In practical terms, the method of reading which we adopt in Mobile is one of juxtaposition. The author places before us the various aspects of Jefferson's character and it is then up to us to compare them and make our own conclusions. We are given parts and asked to make the whole ourselves. This is reminiscent of what we are asked to do with the quotations in Degrés. A first reading of Mobile may give an impression of chaos - it is not at all obvious at first sight that the town names form a highly structured cell system - but we soon learn to piece bits together. It is this initial impression of chaos which seems to us to mark the essential difference between Mobile and Degrés. In that novel we were also asked to piece things together, gleaning information from each hour of class. However, we were greatly aided in this task by the provision of the basis of the reference system of dates, class hours and subjects studied. In Mobile the cell structure does not provide a reference system for the contents of each cell and we are obliged to make one for ourselves. It is this lack of points of reference which produces an impression of chaos. Following on from Degrés, the work expected of the reader is once again increased. It is in this notion of work or active participation that the freedom of the reader lies. The author provides the materials, the bricks, while the reader builds the house. In working we become

creators or constructors ourselves.

There is, then, a greater degree of active reader participation in Mobile than in Degrés. However, this increase in the freedom of the reader appears to us to be more the practical consequence of the form of the work than of a clearly worked-out theory. Despite the fact that we are not obliged to read in a linear fashion it is clear from our discussion of the Jefferson extracts and the sea calligrams that themes unfold in a linear way. It therefore makes little sense, for example, to begin reading the Jefferson thread in Virginia. Mobile is designed to be read from beginning to end. Butor does nothing to dissuade the reader from making a linear reading. In fact, everything seems to encourage us to do precisely that. It is, for example, possible for us to choose to follow the Indian thread or the sea calligrams. However, we would then find ourselves in opposition to the idea of, and the effect desired from, the "lecture lente". In addition, Mobile is a highly informative work: on every page we find fascinating details about America and fascinating stories in miniature, regarding individual Indians for example. In short, there is no incentive not to read everything and not to read everything in the order in which we find it. In this all-inclusive reading tendency there is a discrepancy with the reaction of choice expected from the Americans in re-composing their country. There are certain threads, such as racism and intolerance, which are clearly meant to be rejected, paths which Butor would not like the American to follow. The task demanded of the Americans is the re-assembly, in part, of their country while the task demanded of the reader is the re-assembly, in full, of Mobile. We are forced to ask whether the notion of choice comes over strongly enough in the form of a work in which there is no particular reason for rejecting anything.

This is a theoretical objection which is of little practical consequence on the success of the work but it does highlight the absence in Mobile of one theme which is present both in the novels and the later works: that of writing itself. This theme is central to both Description de San Marco and 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. In the latter the reader will be denied a conventional linear reading and will be obliged to move more freely around the text. The task expected of the reader will correspond more accurately to the form of the work. It is not until these later works that Butor addresses himself explicitly to the question of the freedom of the reader. In Mobile the increase in the freedom of the reader is a by-product of the form of the work, of Butor's sensitive reaction to the reality of America. This points to a greater crisis in the break with the novel form than the success of Mobile would tend to indicate, a fact which will be borne out by a reading of Matière de Rêves.

The discontinuity of Mobile clearly has its roots in Degrés. The process of fragmentation has, however, been carried much further and in its physical appearance the text has come to resemble a collage with its various parts stuck together in a particular way. This collage-like aspect together with the reader's action of re-composition and the creation of order out of apparent chaos will in later works, such as the Illustrations and Matière de Rêves series, reveal themselves to be central to Butor's thought and world view. Mobile reveals a Butor still totally committed to change but, above all, it is a work which looks forward to the refinements of his later production.

## RÉSEAU AÉRIEN

Commissioned by French radio, Réseau Aérien was first broadcast on the 15th of June 1962, a few months after the publication of Mobile. In terms of critical attention Réseau Aérien has always been overshadowed by Mobile and to date only Michael Spencer has seen fit to examine the work in any detail.<sup>8</sup> Réseau Aérien has generally been seen as a precursor of the stereophonic 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde which is regarded as a more profound and more successful exploitation of the radio medium. Today the work appears as something of an oddity in Butor's production, a work whose themes have not been fully explored and one which has never been properly situated. The objective of this study is to fill these gaps in our knowledge and to demonstrate that Réseau Aérien fully deserves its place in any serious examination, not only of Butor's work of the early sixties, but of Butor's production in general. In Réseau Aérien, as in Mobile, the problem of reader participation is not directly tackled by Butor and, in order to avoid duplication of our comments on Mobile, we shall temporarily leave this aspect, returning to it in our discussion of Description de San Marco and 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. The focus of our analysis of Réseau Aérien will, therefore, be thematic, dealing with the relationship of man to place.

At the beginning of Réseau Aérien two planes take off from Orly for Noumea in New Caledonia. The first takes the eastern route by way of Athens, Teheran, Karachi, Bangkok and Saigon. The second flies west



with stops at Montreal, Los Angeles and Honolulu. At each of these eight intermediary stages a plane takes off in the direction of Paris. In planes one and two a couple descends at each stop, only one couple in each plane going on to Noumea, while in the other planes<sup>9</sup> a couple is added at each intermediary stage. The text is divided into sections of dialogue between couples in each of the ten planes.<sup>10</sup> Each individual section of dialogue consists of three remarks and three replies all of which are generally short, rarely extending beyond one sentence. These dialogues reveal the different relationships of the various couples to the places they are either going to or flying over. We shall begin our study by examining the relationship of the first couple of plane two, A and i, to Noumea and to the islands over which they fly.

A and i have lived in Noumea for a long time, the husband working in the nickel mines, and are quite used to travelling there. Normally, however, they take the eastern route followed by plane one and are, in fact, taking the western route for the first time. On this route only one night is spent on the plane due to the crossing of the International Date Line but this night is longer than usual since they are flying away from the sun. This exasperates the couple and they regret taking this route at this particular time (RA, 42). The route takes them over vast expanses of empty ocean during which time their only companion is the moon. Although the moon provides them with enough light to see the natural features below them, it becomes a symbol of the darkness which prevents the appearance of the new day:

A            Ah vivement qu'elle nous dépasse, que cette lune  
              nous dépasse, et baisse et s'enfuie.

i            Que ce lundi interminable arrive enfin à son  
              minuit. (RA, 57-58)

Their route also takes them over the Phoenix Islands where, in his youth, the man imagined the phoenix actually lived (RA, 68). The phoenix becomes for them the natural symbol of the sun (RA, 87), harbinger of the new-born day which they so earnestly desire. In turn, sunrise becomes for them a symbol of rebirth.

It would be natural for the reader to expect the arrival of sunrise to be greeted by the couple with great joy. However, sunrise is described in a flat, colourless tone as if the sun were merely one more geographical feature on their route:

A           Phénix  
          i       Le soleil phénix.  
                  L'archipel des Tokelau.  
                  Droit vers le sud. (RA, 87)

Their flight through the night has been characterised by great monotony (RA, 73) and the arrival of daylight does nothing to break this monotony, as is suggested by the repetition of empty phrases:

          i       Les îles de Noirs.  
A           Le noir des îles, les mines des îles, les huiles  
                  des îles.  
                  La sueur des îles, le suint des îles, la suie  
                  des îles ... (RA, 87)

The predominant colour, despite the daylight, is once again black: they are still travelling through an endless night and their reaction to arrival at Noumea is one of resignation:

          i       Demain les odeurs de l'usine.  
A           La poussière du minéral, le bruit.  
                  L'odeur des rues de Nouméa. (RA, 115)

Their predominant mood has not been changed by the sun, the symbol of rebirth.

The long Pacific night through which they have just travelled is likened to a mine shaft (RA, 74, 80) and it is in the man's profession that the explanation for their mood of resignation may be found. When he was younger the man had a dream of far distant mines:

A           Et quand j'ai fait l'École des mines, c'était à des  
             mines très lointaines que je songeais toujours.  
i           Des mines dans les îles.  
             J'aurais voulu des hauts fourneaux en pleine mer.  
             Leurs flammes réfléchies par les lagunes.  
             Les ailes des oiseaux habitués s'empourprant.  
             Une fabrique de phénix. (RA, 71)

In other words, the man hoped that life in Noumea would be a new life, a form of rebirth for himself and his wife. This has not been the case and they wait for the day when he will be sent back definitively to Paris. As they fly across the Phoenix Islands the old hopes are for a time rekindled and give rise to a yearning for a rebirth they have yet to experience. As the islands recede the phoenix is seen to be inactive:

A           Adieu Phénix!  
i           Sombre phénix en cendres. (RA, 80)

Dawn, at this point, becomes associated with nickel (RA, 81), the colour of the moonlight, rather than with the more usual gold, and sunrise itself is an anti-climax.

If nickel is associated with the symbol of darkness it is also the metal mined at Noumea. The man's Paris-based company is exploiting the mineral resources of New Caledonia for the purposes of profit. We have here an echo of the European miners of South America so heavily criticised in Degrés. In this work the scene has simply shifted to the Far East, to New Caledonia, another part of the "new world" colonised by the Europeans. Noumea is a symbol of western man's exploitation of the new world.

The significance of A and i's relationship to Noumea can be seen in the shape of their counterparts in plane ten, couple E and j, who take off from Bangkok. This couple are on their final trip home to Paris and may be regarded as an older equivalent of the miner and his wife. The man has spent a long part of his life working in Saigon, has become very rich and is now consumed by guilt at his exploitation of Vietnam:

E Je suis allé à Saïgon pour être riche. Ne le  
savais-tu pas? Ne le voulais-tu pas?  
j Je le savais. Je le voulais.  
Tu es riche, nous sommes riches. Nous quittons ce  
pays, nous l'oublions, tout est fini.  
Il ne nous quitte pas, nous ne l'oublions pas, tu  
n'en auras jamais fini. (RA, 95-96)

The man would very much like to forget what he has done in Saigon and is obsessed with the idea of putting distance between himself and Vietnam (RA, 90). However, he can neither forget Saigon nor escape from the East as the voice of his wife, very often that of his conscience (RA, 106), points out (RA, 91). Devoured by guilt, he feels pursued by judgment:

E Les plus épais sommeils, les plus épaisses foules de  
dormeurs, la plus grouillante armée de dieux dor-  
meurs et rêveurs et se réveillant furieux.  
j Tous ligüés contre toi, tous se moquant de toi!  
(RA, 89-90)

These sleeping gods which he has awakened are reminiscent of the old imperial gods roused by Léon Delmont in La Modification. In that novel Delmont was condemned by the gods for trying to establish Paris as a new imperial centre. The crime of E has been in similar vein, the exploitation of Saigon in the name of Paris. This motivation for going to Saigon, this attitude to the place that is Saigon, has a particular effect:

E Une ville une seule ville hantera toute ville pour  
moi, toutes les Athènes et tous les Paris.

j Interdite à jamais, à nous, par nous, interdite  
à jamais Saïgon. (RA, 116-117)

Because of what he has done Saigon becomes forbidden territory to the man. By treating Saigon as something to be exploited the man has destroyed any relationship between himself and Saigon as a place. The memory of Saigon also threatens to break down any possible relationship with other places. The man has become a virtual stranger on his own planet. The same fate appears to lie in wait for the miner of Noumea.

It is not yet clear what precisely is meant by the relationship between man and place nor in what way commercial exploitation is detrimental to this relationship. For clarification of these points we must turn first of all to the other three couples of plane two, B and h, C and g, D and f. These couples are going to three different parts of the American continent: Canada, mainland U.S.A. and Hawaii. These couples have never met before boarding the plane and none of the men has ever seen America before. They are full of enthusiasm for their trip and ply the women with questions about America. It is at this point that the significance of the organisation of the text into couples becomes apparent. It is soon noticeable that the questions posed by the men are as much aimed at entering into a relationship with the women as at gaining information about the new places they are going to visit. Agreements are made to spend time together at these places:

D C'est pour un stage.  
f Vous resterez combien de temps?  
Six mois, en principe.  
Six mois à Montréal?  
Je viendrai vous voir à Québec. Vous parlez  
anglais? Il faut que je fasse de l'anglais.  
Avec vous j'aimerais mieux parler français. (RA, 23-24)

Even more revealing is the willingness of the women to act as guides for the men:

B           Directement à Los Angeles?  
           h           Je n'ai pas un jour de plus.  
                   J'aurais presque envie, vous savez ...  
                   De retarder votre retour? Mais oui!  
                   J'enverrai un télégramme.  
                   Je vous ferai faire quelques promenades ... (RA, 20)

In the dialogues between these couples the exploration of place is inextricably linked with the exploration of the female. The relationship between man and place is being posited in terms of sexuality.

The connection between place and sexuality is even more marked in the way in which Orly, and through it Paris, is presented in the work. If Orly and Paris remain the dream of the miner and his wife arriving in Noumea then they become the reality of the couples in the eight planes making the return journey from the various stages of the two routes to New Caledonia. The woman in the second couple of plane eight has a dream in which "transparaissait peu à peu Paris" (RA, 99). The same can be said of Réseau Aérien: the further planes one and two get from Paris the more planes take off for Paris, picking up en route more and more passengers whose primary concern is arrival at Orly. For nearly all of these people Paris and France mean home. This gives rise to a feeling of anticipation and excitement which increases gradually during the latter half of the work. It is a particular kind of excitement. As the work progresses there is a large increase in the number of all-female couples, centred on planes eight and ten. By the end of the work there are six such couples, four of which are entirely preoccupied by the subject of men they will see at Orly or in Paris, whether it be husbands, boyfriends or men in general:

g Les yeux que m'évitaient  
 h De temps en temps des yeux dans la foule qui  
 me chercheront.  
 Les yeux qui soudain se fixaient sur moi comme  
 affolés.  
 Yeux dont je me détournerai.  
 Avec un sourire soudain qui s'y dessinait, un  
 sourire qui me suppliait.  
 Et puis je me retournerai, cherchant les yeux,  
 ces yeux qui auront disparu. (RA, 100-101)

These couples also look forward to all the goods which they will be able to buy at the airport as a foretaste of Paris itself. Orly is a kind of mini-Paris and its goods and the places where they are sold also have a seductive attraction, so much so that at times it is difficult to tell precisely what the women are referring to:

f Tous les plaisirs des bars.  
 j Tous les secrets des restaurants.  
 Toutes les séductions des boutiques.  
 La fumée âcre et douce entêtante, irrespirable  
 et irrésistible de leurs tabacs.  
 Tout l'éventail de leurs liqueurs.  
 Tous les parfums dont ils nous tentent. (RA, 107)

Desire for men and desire for consumer goods become inseparable and there is mounting sexual tension and excitement as planes nine and ten approach Orly. Preoccupation with food and drink (RA, 111, 114) emphasises the consumer side of Paris. An atmosphere of heady exhilaration pervades planes nine and ten, increasing until a shattering crescendo of sexual climax is achieved just before final touchdown (RA, 118) as the ground rushes up to meet the planes. The process begins with the splitting of the word "Orly" into the two sounds "or" and "lit", attention being drawn to the possible sexual connotations of the word. The sexual imagery continues in short, tense, one-word utterances:

j Dors.  
 f Nu.  
 Nouveux.

Noué.

Noeuds d'or. (RA, 118)

Orly contains two elements: the first, gold, ought to represent the orientation and spiritual rebirth expected of the return home; the second element is a symbol of desire, of sexual intercourse, which debases the first, turning it into material, consumable gold. In the final passage of the work there is a sudden drop in speed as plane ten lands, emphasised by the repetition of the word "baisse" (RA, 120), like the sudden let-down after climax. The dominant feeling is one of exhaustion, of a sudden calming-down. The passengers prepare to disembark and one senses a return to normal. The actual arrival at Orly is an anti-climax. The lights of Orly are a glimmer in the darkness like that of the nickel moon, itself the very symbol of darkness. Orly is revealed as another false dawn where the phoenix is notably absent. Rebirth is not to be found at Orly. Here the relationship between man and place is very clearly expressed in sexual terms. However, the association of Orly and Paris with consumer goods results in the place being desired in a crass, commercial way. Paris is physically desired but only as something to be lusted after, used and then discarded, leaving one with a feeling of emptiness. Paris as a place is obscured by the goods it offers and no real contact with the place is established. Paris appears as much a victim of commercial exploitation as Noumea or Saigon.

Commercial exploitation, then, obscures the relationship between man and place. We must return to America in order to understand why this is so. As plane two flies over America the men referred to above are full of wonder and excitement at the sights they can see from the windows. Everything visible seems to live up to their expectations. Certain small



illusions are, however, dispelled by some of the women's replies:

Hawaii, for example, has become very Americanised, full of hotels and cars (RA, 44). B asks his companion about the Indians:

B           Les Indiens?  
           h           Dans des cirques.  
                   Oui, mais sur leurs chevaux au clair de lune?  
                   C'est peut-être une question très ridicule.  
                           Nous avons fait une fois une pointe jusqu'à  
                                   une réserve.  
                   Une réserve?  
                           Oui, un endroit où on les laisse tranquilles;  
                                   mais ils n'avaient pas de chevaux. (RA, 43)

The dispelling of these rather naive, romantic illusions is symptomatic of what is to follow.

When they leave Montreal for Los Angeles plane four takes off in the opposite direction and is bracketed or juxtaposed with plane two. It introduces a note of mild foreboding which contrasts with the wonder of plane two. While the sun still shines brightly for plane two clouds have already obscured Newfoundland for plane four (RA, 31). The peaceful green and gold of the plains seen from plane two seems like an impossible dream after the cloud separation of plane four:

A           Nuages brusquement se sont écartés, c'est  
                   comme une allée.  
           h           Hêtres pourpres.  
                   Comme un grand érable de braise du côté de  
                           l'Europe.  
                           La mer nourrie de sèves noires.  
                   Et le bateau qu'on aperçoit comme au-delà des  
                           feuilles mortes, déjà tout illuminé.  
                           Moières d'acajou virant au violet. (RA, 34)

Images of death and destruction seem to overshadow the natural world of America and a connection is established in this respect with the continent of Europe.

Foreboding becomes a warning when the juxtaposition with plane two is taken over by plane seven which takes off from Los Angeles and develops the idyllic side of America as it flies over the Atlantic. When the sun rises for plane seven it unfolds like a flower and gives a glimpse of an interior brimming over with life and vitality (RA, 67). The clouds, too, are full of richness and vitality:

B		Nuages.
	g	Blancs.
		Mousseux.
		Crémeux.
		Mais à travers ces nuages ...
		Ce n'est plus des nuages, c'est de la neige.
C		Terre-Neuve.
	f	Ce n'est plus de la neige, c'est de la glace.
		C'est de l'écume. ( <u>RA</u> , 71)

First of all soft and white with the richness of cream, the clouds are endowed with a cold, invigorating freshness which rolls over us like spume on a beach. However, this idyll contains its own warning. By use of deliberate incongruity the pure freshness of the clouds is polluted by the tea and coffee brought by the hostess. (RA, 71).

This warning is brought to fruition in plane nine which forms a powerful contrast with plane seven. While the latter flies through the creamy Atlantic clouds plane nine is landing at Los Angeles just as the light of dawn spreads over the horizon. This light is white like the clouds but watery, milky rather than creamy (RA, 72). The dawn is not pure but stained with petrol, symbol of man's industry. The angels of the city's name have also lost their purity and there is an air of putrefaction about them:

A		Les fleurs des anges qui se fanent.
	g	Une odeur de roses malades.
		Un mouvement de palmes doucement fiévreux.

La rosée de la sueur des anges.  
 Le fard des anges qui déteint.  
 Dans un moisissement de noirceur juste avant  
 l'aube. (RA, 72-73)

By the time plane nine is over the Atlantic the purity of the clouds and the sea of plane seven has been completely destroyed. The clouds are grey and polluted by the residue of base metals from the factories of Chicago, Detroit and Montreal (RA, 97, 104, 108, 111). The golden sun which rose so brightly over the Grand Canyon and the Mesa Verde, symbols of the Indian's America (RA, 80), is attacked and defeated at the end of the day by the poisonous clouds:

D        Le soleil qui s'est enfoncé dans les nuages.  
           E        Dans la mer au-dessous des nuages.  
           Toutes les scories des hauts fourneaux dans  
           les nuages.  
           Roulant fumeuses noires obscurcissantes.  
           Et des gouttes de métal clair soudain se figeant  
           parmi les nuages.  
           Autour de la lune roulant sur ces monceaux  
           de cendres. (RA, 111)

Eroded by the base metals the phoenix-sun is reduced to ashes and the nickel moon emerges victorious. The sea has taken on the texture of oil and the thickness of Guinness and black coffee whose bitter taste has replaced the pure freshness of the clear water (RA, 111). Nature is polluted in both air and sea by the waste from American industrial society.

This is a victory for the material human world of the white man over the natural world of the Indian. We can clearly see here that Butor is returning to one of the principal themes of Mobile. In Mobile we saw that the essential cause of the various manifestations of racism and the reduction of the natural world to one more consumable item was the reaction of the white man to the land of America itself. In their fear

the Europeans made little attempt to adapt to the realities of the continent. Rather, they made the continent adapt to what they had brought with them from Europe, modelling the land according to European ways, imposing European names upon it and dividing it into their European geometric patterns. Anything natural to the continent and in harmony with it they destroyed to the best of their ability. In Réseau Aérien, by contrasting the natural Indian world with the polluted world of the white man, Butor is showing the effects of the imposition of a foreign culture on America and the Far East. The imposition of a foreign culture, of which commercial exploitation is the most blatant example, on a particular place destroys the relationship between man and that place. This natural relationship between man and place is now no more than a dream shared by the couples of planes two, seven and nine in passages beginning:

Tu dors?

Je rêve sans dormir. (RA, 62-63)

The couple of plane two dream of old Pacific sailing boats while in both planes seven and nine the couples dream of peoples and lands of the past: American Indians and the natives of the Pacific Islands as Cook first saw them. There is a sense of wistful regret over something gone forever, something which people still need:

E

Dans tant de lits de toutes ces villes tant de  
jeunes gens qui rêvent des îles, qui rêvent au  
Pacifique et aux beaux sauvages pour toujours  
perdus. (RA, 67)

In these dreams of beautiful savages and in the romantic illusions of the men of plane two there nevertheless shines through a real need: people do not wish to return to a past way of life but they do have to feel in harmony with place. If they do not, then they feel disorientated

and the desire for rebirth arises. Rebirth is nothing less than the re-establishment of a natural and harmonious relationship with place.

The question now arises as to what is meant by a "natural" relationship with place and it is at this point that the significance of the sexual nature of the relationship comes to the fore. Rebirth is to be found neither in Paris, America nor New Caledonia. Butor chooses to privilege instead Iran and Borneo. Iran is a part of the East which has never been colonised by western European man and parts of Borneo remain, as couple A and j of plane one remark, unexplored territory (RA, 75).

We first experience the privileged nature of Iran in plane six as the sun rises over the land: the slowly rising sunlight has much in common with the sea and the clouds of plane seven over the Atlantic:

	j	Flammes de cuivre courant sur cîmes.
i		Marée de lumières de fruits.
		Nous y enfonçons, nous lavons d'orange. ( <u>RA</u> , 41)

The bright light makes us think immediately of all the citrus fruits and the reference to orange confirms this. We feel ourselves splashed with the invigorating, tangy acidity of the fruit and here there is no tea or coffee to spoil the effect. When the sun appears fully it seems to be bursting free of the chains of darkness:

i		Franchissant les barres d'aurore.
	j	Barreaux de cage du phénix.
		Arrivant à hauteur de monts.
		Leurs pentes plumes de faisans.
		Leurs cîmes crêtes de coqs d'or.
		Dépassant leurs névés d'ambre, leurs glaciers de vin blanc. ( <u>RA</u> , 44-45)

The phoenix sun rises freely into the sky in all its glory, a true rebirth. The birds of Iran seem to fly up and meet the passengers, creating a harmony between the land below and the people above. The taste of freshness continues to dominate in the ice-cold white wine, an image occasioned by the arrival of the hostess, and Guinness is notably absent.

It is when the sun sets over Iran in plane eight that the contact between the land and the passengers becomes sexual. Here the sun is not envelopped in noxious clouds or turned into a heap of ashes:

g	Un ciel de paon, sol de faisans, un lointain d'ailes de pintades.
f	Douce fournaise, douce terre tendue de peaux, douce fourrure de poussières. Un ciel d'agate, un ciel d'opales, teintes de roses. Tout est braise, tout est adoration du feu, tout est lèvres, lèvres qui s'attendent. Avec les yeux verts, avec les yeux d'or vert, avec les yeux d'or calciné qui vous épient. ( <u>RA</u> , 78)

The sun sets in the same fiery magnificence with which it rose. Again we seem to be surrounded by the birds of Iran which carry up with them the lips which are like those of the land itself. We feel as if we could kiss the land or reach out and caress its fur and skin. The closeness of people and land is expressed in erotic terms highlighted by the exchange between couple D and j which continues the motif of lips and sexual contact:

D	Tes longues lèvres, les douces lèvres, tes chaudes lèvres.
j	Ta peau de sable, ta peau d'argile, ta peau de douces tuiles d'or. Le vert de tes yeux, vivier de tes yeux, les roses vertes de tes yeux. L'île de tes yeux, la ville de tes yeux, les rues ombreuses de tes yeux. ( <u>RA</u> , 78)

The relationship with place is personified in the man whose skin is not only the colour of the land - he is a Thai (RA, 70) - but is made out of the very material of the land. In his eyes can be seen the town and streets of Teheran, seen at close proximity as if we were its lovers. Although the woman is white she is as if infused with the spirit of Iran through her contact with the man. In her eyes can be seen the roses of Chiraz which are not withered like those of Los Angeles. Together they harmonise and seem to flit freely around Teheran like the exotic birds, at one with the place.

The sensuality of couple D and j finds a parallel in couple A and j of plane one which flies over Borneo and Timor as plane eight is over Iran. From the experience of this couple it becomes clear that, despite the privileged treatment of Iran, the East is not to be seen as the ultimate goal. This couple are schoolteachers flying to Noumea to spend three years there (RA, 18). It is their first long journey away from home and the further they go from Paris the more lonely and disorientated they feel (RA, 75). Over Borneo and Timor their disorientation becomes complete as their shared dream indicates (RA, 79-104). In this dream they are naked like savages and make their way through hostile and unknown territory. Their feeling of disorientation is dispelled neither by the dream nor the arrival of dawn. The woman is still afraid and when her husband enumerates the stages of their journey to Noumea she thinks of the stages back to Paris (RA, 112). As they land at Noumea the man describes New Caledonia as "une grande île perdue" (RA, 119) and a cordon of reefs lies around the island indicating a feeling of imprisonment and implying that dangers will still have to be overcome before their return to Paris.

Despite this, a harmony is established in their dream between themselves and their surroundings:

A           J'écarte les lianes, je te tiens les mains, tu marches,  
              tu ruisselles de sueur.  
      j           Fleurs.  
              Serpents et fleurs et plumages à peine effleurés  
              par la lointaine lune et tes cheveux.  
              Qui poussent et se dénouent et se déroulent  
              comme des lianes. (RA, 87)

The alliteration of soft consonants establishes an atmosphere of peaceful harmony. Flowers and birds are present as they were in Iran and there is a calm sensuality in the woman's running sweat and in her hair which seems to merge with the lianas of the forest. Here it is the woman who becomes the personification of place. The man plays the role of guide in a journey which takes them ultimately to a safe and secure bed (RA, 94). They are like Adam and Eve before the fall but with one difference: they are not primitives of the past but primitives of the future. While they are in the plane Noumea represents the future, an unknown quantity which makes them feel apprehensive. Despite their fear and loneliness, the dream shows that they will safely reach a future where man and place lie harmoniously together. This future extends beyond Noumea to Paris, "l'inexploré Paris" (RA, 112). The real unknown quantity for this couple is Paris and it is there that they will ultimately make their bed. In the meantime, as schoolteachers, they embody a new attitude to the East and to place in general: they go to give and not to take. Noumea itself, however, is only a stage on the road to their ultimate future, Paris.

Paris is also revealed as the ultimate goal of couple D and j over Iran. If Iran appears as a privileged land in the work then it is the Iran of the past, Persia. Couple E and i who board at Teheran are a kind



of guidebook to the monuments of the past: the gardens of Ispahan, the Hacht Behecht, the Tchehel-Sotoun. It is into this past that couple D and j are transported in their dream, finding themselves in one of the enchanted gardens of Ispahan. The key to the significance of Iran in the work lies in the atmosphere created in this dream. Couple E and i contribute greatly to this with their references to the figures of Loft Ali Khan and Aga Mohammed Qadjar who, along with their palaces, seem to step straight out of the Thousand and One Nights:

E           Le Hacht Behecht à Ispahan, huit paradis.  
           i           Quand on se promène dans cet endroit,  
                   Fait exprès pour les délices de l'amour,  
                   Et qu'on passe par ces cabinets et toutes ces  
                   niches,  
                   On a le coeur si attendri, que pour parler ingé-  
                   nument,  
                   On sort toujours de là malgré soi. (RA, 95)

It is in this enchanted atmosphere of love and tenderness, in which we can almost visualise Scheherezade and the Caliph of Baghdad, that j waits for her oriental husband in their dream:

D           Je rencontre une grille ma chérie, une grille d'ar-  
                   gent ciselé, toute constellée de fleurs de nacre.  
           j           Je t'attends au milieu des narcisses, mon chéri,  
                   en feuilletant un livre aux pages toutes constel-  
                   lées.  
                   Il suffit du chant d'un rossignol pour que les spi-  
                   rales d'argent s'élargissent en tintant.  
                   Et les allées de mon jardin s'aplanissent devant  
                   tes pas, et les fleurs peintes sur mon livre  
                   s'ouvrent au toucher de mes doigts. (RA, 88)

In this clear image of defloration the western woman waits for an awakening which will be effected by the oriental man who, stripped of his western clothes (RA, 92) and therefore of western influences, becomes a catalyst, a key to her book, setting free the words it contains:

j C'est toi qui fais chanter les pages de mon livre.  
 D Toute une ville murmurante cachée dans les jar-  
 dins autour de nous.  
 Milliers de maisons doucement grises qui  
 s'élèvent pierre par pierre.  
 Le long des rues toutes bruyantes d'arbres en  
 fleurs et de fontaines.  
 Paris transparait dans mon rêve. (RA, 95)

The book seems to contain the spirit of the East, a kind of "génie du lieu", an atmosphere whose principal characteristic is love. Butor is not seeking to recapture the past of Iran or a return to a primitive state of existence but to re-establish a relationship of love and harmony between man and place. He expresses this relationship in terms of an atmosphere which he chooses to situate in an almost mythical Persia and in the myth of the beautiful savage in Borneo. Rebirth is situated in the East because of its particular atmospheric qualities in our imagination. Similarly, D and j dream of going to the Botanical Gardens in Paris, a part of the exotic Orient in Paris, on their return: there, amidst the smell of petrol and in an atmosphere of lassitude (RA, 103), symbols of the west, the oriental man will cause the flowers to open just as the flowers of the woman's book opened. The spirit of the East, symbol of a loving relationship with place, will be rekindled in Paris and rebirth effected there.

The visions of rebirth in terms of the relationship between man and place in Réseau Aérien, which are set in Borneo and Iran, are both presented to the reader in the form of dreams. In these dreams Butor's poetic language evokes an atmosphere which is designed to appeal to our senses and emotions. The golden age of the beautiful savage may never have existed in reality but in our imagination we like to feel that it did.

By presenting the visions of rebirth as dreams and by creating atmosphere Butor by-passes the intellect in favour of the sensual and the emotive. He is aiming for a contact with the reader at a level anterior to rational, intellectual thought. It is in this mode of contact that the ultimate significance of the sexual aspect of the relationship between man and place can be found.

We have already encountered this type of sexuality, which may be termed either telluric or geotropic, in La Modification where Léon Delmont explores and takes possession of the reality of Rome by taking possession of the body of Cécile. Geotropic sexuality is the term used by Daniel Bougnoux to describe the relationship in Où between Butor and Mount Sandia. In "35 Vues de Mont Sandia le soir l'hiver" Butor perceives the mountain as a female breast and his attempts to describe it amount to an attempt to possess it physically: "Une expérience sexuelle a lieu en effet avec le mont Sandia, un coït tellurique".<sup>11</sup> Lois Oppenheim characterises Butor's relationship with Mount Sandia as "essentially a physical and sexual rather than intellectual contact"<sup>12</sup>. In the context of her phenomenological approach to certain areas of Butor's work she considers the language used in "35 Vues" as non-representational and cites this as evidence of "the illogical, pre-reflexive nature of Butor's 'vues', as opposed to an objective language designating the reality of Sandia".<sup>13</sup> In failing to represent the reality of Sandia, Butor deliberately establishes a contact with the mountain which, in its sexual rather than intellectual aspect, is essentially pre-reflexive and primordial. In this sense the contact can be termed natural. Butor is only able to establish this type of relationship with Mount Sandia because it is an acultural object as far as western man is concerned. Mount Sandia is an object natural to

the land of America and associated only with the culture of the natural inhabitants of the land, the Indians. In Réseau Aérien Butor is expressing a desire for the re-establishment of a primordial or natural contact between man and place, a contact obscured, as we have seen, by the culture of western man with his overriding interest in commercial exploitation. It is this primordial contact which he expresses in sexual terms and which he makes us feel with his atmospheric language.

A second and related comparison with Où can be made in connection with the establishment of Paris as the final goal of the couples. The "new world" of Réseau Aérien is not to be found elsewhere: it has to be created in Paris, or, in more general terms, in the west, in one's own culture. A remarkably similar conclusion can be found at the end of Où. Butor finds in the Zuni Indians a people totally integrated into their own space and who have in their cosmogony a view of the total integration of space in general. The Zunis live, in their own eyes, at the centre of the world but for Butor this centre cannot become a new centre for his own world, in the way that Léon Delmont attempted to transfer Rome to Paris. Despite the geotropic coitus with Mount Sandia and despite the Zunis, Butor has to go back: "Je m'en vais" (Où, 377). He has to apply to Paris what he has learned from the Zunis and their harmonious relationship with place. His description of his return to Paris could well be the words of the couple in Réseau Aérien who will visit the Botanical Gardens:

Mais je reviendrai  
C'est pour te faire boire que je reviendrai  
Tous les voyages que je fais dessinent ta palpitation. (Où, 399)

It is the rebirth of Paris which is again the ultimate goal. All roads in Où, like the planes of Réseau Aérien, lead to Paris, which in the later work is not the imperial centre of Delmont but one of a plurality

of centres. .

We are now in a position to appreciate the full importance of Réseau Aérien in the context of Butor's work. The themes of the work constitute the basis of Butor's attitude to place and in so doing form the nucleus of the thought behind his commitment to change. The disorientation felt by Jacques Revel in modern western industrial society in L'Emploi du Temps is taken back to its origins in Mobile where the American white man, a new version of the European, is caught in the act of divorcing himself from the land. In Mobile the relationship between man and place is broken by man's exploitation and consumption of nature and the break in this relationship is seen as the origin of all the problems of wider human relationships, the exploitation of man by man. In Réseau Aérien Butor returns to this theme of Mobile and examines the nature of the relationship between man and place in much greater detail. The primordial relationship with place has to be re-established: this is the first thing which must change. Everything else depends on this. In the wider context of Butor's work Réseau Aérien belongs to a thread which begins with L'Emploi de Temps, continues with Mobile and proceeds beyond to Où and certain volumes of the Illustrations and Matière de Rêves series. No other work, however, so closely outlines the basis of Butor's thought with regard to place. In the context of the works studied in this section Réseau Aérien returns to a fundamental theme of Mobile, one which could not fully be dealt with in the broad scope of that work, and begins a re-examination of the theme of place which will continue in both Description de San Marco and 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde where it will be allied to an application of the thought contained in the concept of "l'oeuvre ouverte" to which we shall now turn our attention.

TABLE ONE

This table shows the frequency of aircraft appearances in the text. There is no overall pattern, only local ones. The numbers refer to the plane numbers used in the text.

1 2 1 2 1 ATHENS 3 1 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 2  
MONTREAL 4 2 1 TEHERAN 5 1 2 4 1 5 2 4  
2 5 1 KARACHI 6 5 1 2 4 1 5 6 5 1 4 2 LOS  
ANGELES 7 2 6 5 1 7 2 6 5 1 BANGKOK 8 6 1  
2 7 1 6 8 2 HONOLULU 9 7 2 8 6 1 SAIGON 10  
8 6 1 2 7 9 1 6 8 10 2 7 9 1 8 9 7 2 10  
BANGKOK 10 8 1 2 7 9 LOS ANGELES 9 7 2  
10 8 1 9 7 2 10 8 1 9 7 2 10 8 1 9 7 2 10 8 1  
2 9 8 1 10 KARACHI 10 8 1 2 9 1 8 10 2 9  
MONTREAL 9 2 1 8 10 TEHERAN 10 8 12 9 1  
10 2 9 1 10 2 9 1 10 2 9 2 1 9 10 ATHENS  
10 1 2 9 10 ORLY

FOOTNOTES

1. For some of the more outlandish accusations levelled against Mobile see: Pierre-Henri Simon, 'Mobile de Michel Butor', Le Monde, 7th March, 1962; Kléber Haedens, 'Le vrai mobile de Michel Butor ou jusqu'où peuvent aller la crédulité et la bêtise en 1962', Candide, 22nd March, 1962.

A possible explanation for this scandal can be found in: Roland Barthes, 'Littérature et Discontinu', in Essais Critiques, Seuil, 1964, pp. 175-187.

2. Bernard Pivot, 'Michel Butor a réponse à tous', Le Figaro Littéraire, 4th June, 1971, p. 11.
3. There are four exceptions to this rule: the three opening states, Alabama, Alaska and Arizona; Hawaii. These four states are visited too briefly for the phenomenon to occur.
4. This theme is not fully developed in Mobile but will become the subject matter of Réseau Aérien.
5. F. C. Saint-Aubyn, 'A propos de Mobile: Deuxième Entretien avec Michel Butor', French Review 38 (1965), 427 - 440 (p. 435).
6. See Michael Spencer, Michel Butor, Twayne, 1974, p. 97.
7. The method is, of course, valid for Europeans too.
8. Spencer, pp. 117-123.
9. With the exception of planes three and four which make no stop between their point of departure and Paris.
10. See Table One and also: Spencer: p. 174, note 13.
11. Butor: Colloque de Cerisy, U.G.E., 1974, p. 275.

12. Lois Oppenheim, Intentionality and Intersubjectivity, French Forum, 1980, p. 81.

13. Oppenheim, p. 81.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Description de San Marco and 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde: The "Open Work"

#### INTRODUCTION

At the end of Degrés the author was confronted with the impossibility of further novel writing. The novel form was seen to presuppose a relationship between writer and reader, designated as imperial, in which the freedom of the reader was severely restricted by the way in which his mode of reading was controlled and determined by the writer. The impossibility of further novel writing, however, did not in itself preclude writing in a different manner. Butor's first visit to America provided the stimulus for a major departure from the novel form, Mobile. The undoubted success of the work, the breadth of its scope and the richness of its literary content might well have made of Mobile and its form a viable alternative to that of the novel. Yet Mobile did not explicitly propose itself as such an alternative. Indeed, neither Mobile nor the subsequent Réseau Aérien explicitly dealt with the problem of writing at all. After these two works, the problems raised in Degrés still remain to be openly tackled: what kind of text can be found to replace the novel and at the same time give the reader the freedom which Butor deems necessary for the establishment of a harmonious relationship between the writer and his public? It is our contention that Butor returns to these problems in the two subsequent and closely related works Description de San Marco and 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. Our study of these two works will attempt to show that the theme of change is

extended to cover Butor's own problems in writing and the freedom of the reader. In so doing we will inevitably come into contact with the thought of the Italian critic Umberto Eco and the Belgian composer Henri Pousseur, co-author of the opera Votre Faust, in the area of the "open work". We shall therefore begin our study with a brief introduction to the concepts behind the "open work".

The most exhaustive study of the "open work" has been undertaken by Umberto Eco in his work L'Oeuvre Ouverte<sup>1</sup>. Eco begins his study by defining the work of art as "un message fondamentalement ambigu, une pluralité de signifiés qui coexistent en un seul signifiant" (Eco, 9). He further contends that this condition is "propre à toute oeuvre d'art" (Eco, 9). This fundamental ambiguity is what constitutes the openness of every work of art. This type of openness depends less on the message communicated than on the way the message is received:

Une oeuvre d'art est d'un côté un objet dont on peut retrouver la forme originelle, telle qu'elle a été conçue par l'auteur, à travers la configuration des effets qu'elle produit sur l'intelligence et la sensibilité du consommateur: ainsi l'auteur crée-t-il une forme achevée afin qu'elle soit goûtée et comprise telle qu'il a voulue. Mais d'un autre côté, en réagissant à la constellation des stimuli, en essayant d'apercevoir et de comprendre leurs relations, chaque consommateur exerce une sensibilité personnelle, une culture déterminée, des goûts, des tendances, des préjugés qui orientent sa jouissance dans une perspective qui lui est propre. (Eco, 17)

This implicit or natural openness, which depends on the receiver of the message, is not the subject of Eco's study. Rather, he is concerned with an openness which is explicit and which proposes "l'ambiguïté comme valeur" (Eco, 10). In this type of openness ambiguity is present

in the message itself and is deliberately put there by the author of the message: "(les) poétiques de l'oeuvre ouverte ... sont le projet d'un message doté d'un large éventail de possibilités interprétatives" (Eco, 11). The author of the message deliberately sets out to exploit the natural differences in the reaction of each individual receiver. The emphasis has shifted, to a small but highly significant degree, from the receiver to the author of the message. Eco takes his examples from the music of composers such as Stockhausen, Boulez and Pousseur:

(ces) oeuvres musicales ... ne constituent pas des messages achevés et définis, des formes déterminées une fois pour toutes. Nous ne sommes plus devant des oeuvres qui demandent à être repensées et revécues dans une direction structurale donnée, mais bien devant des oeuvres "ouvertes" que l'interprète accomplit au moment même où il en assume la médiation. (Eco, 16)

It is a characteristic of this openness "au second degré" (Eco, 62) that the message is not determined but indetermined: "on goûtera de façon toujours différante un message plurivoque" (Eco, 62). In music, the tendency toward indetermination can be seen as a reaction to the determination perceived in classical music. Henri Pousseur describes the attempts in more recent times to overcome the determination-indetermination dichotomy:

En Europe, on s'est efforcé, petit à petit, non pas de se vouer à l'indétermination, mais de créer des déterminations complexes, multiples, qui permettent des réalisations très variées. C'est-à-dire que l'on est en présence d'oeuvres aussi déterminées que les oeuvres classiques, et aussi variables que celles de Cage. On pourrait dire qu'elles sont surdéterminées, elles réunissent les propriétés les meilleurs du déterminisme et l'indéterminisme; "surdéterminé" veut dire qu'elles détiennent tellement de déterminations qu'elles ne peuvent pas exprimer tout ce qui contient l'oeuvre.<sup>2</sup>

The overdetermined work is one, the possible significance of which cannot be exhausted in one characteristic or interpretation.

The movement toward either indetermination or overdetermination has an effect on the role of the interpreter of a piece of music or the reader of a literary work:

La poétique de l'oeuvre <<ouverte>> tend, dit Pousseur, à favoriser chez l'interprète <<des actes de liberté consciente>> à faire de lui le centre actif d'un réseau inépuisable de relations parmi lesquelles il élabore sa propre forme, sans être déterminé par une nécessité dérivant de l'organisation même de l'oeuvre. (Eco, 18)

The increase in the freedom of the interpreter and the deliberate ambiguity of the message create their own particular problem: the danger of a degeneration into chaos. While information may be imparted, in a narrow, theoretical sense, communication is not necessarily established. To illustrate this point Eco uses the example of tar-macadam on a road:

Quand on regarde une route ainsi recouverte, on perçoit la présence d'innombrables éléments répartis de façon presque statistique. Aucun ordre ne préside à leur assemblage. La configuration est tout à fait ouverte et détient, en droit, le maximum d'information possible, puisque rien n'empêche de relier par des lignes idéales n'importe lequel des éléments à n'importe lequel des autres et puisque n'apparaît nulle part aucun commencement de suggestion. Mais, dans ce cas ... le fait qu'il existe une probabilité égale (une équiprobabilité) pour toutes les répartitions, au lieu d'augmenter les possibilités d'information, les réduit à néant. Plus exactement, ces possibilités demeurent sur le plan mathématique, mais disparaissent au niveau de la communication. L'oeil ne reçoit plus aucune indication d'ordre. (Eco, 133)

The work of art which contained as much information or as many interpretative possibilities as the tar-macadam would fail since no message could be perceived.

The indetermination or disorder of the "open work" must then be of a specific type:

la tendance au désordre qui caractérise de manière positive la poétique de l'«ouverture» doit être une tendance au désordre dominé, à la possibilité comprise dans un champ, à la liberté surveillée par des germes d'activité formatrice. (Eco, 92)

This balance between order and disorder, determination and indetermination, marks the frontier "entre le domaine où toutes les possibilités sont indistinctes et un champ de possibilités" (Eco, 133). This notion of freedom within a field of possibilities is the crux of the "open work". The author of an "open work" has a communication to make but does not want this communication to originate as if from a "Logos créateur" (Eco, 20). Nor can he afford the risk that his communication be interpreted by the receiver in any way he likes. He, therefore, restricts the freedom of the interpreter to a field of possibilities and, at the same time, protects his communication, by strictly controlling the disorder or indetermination necessary to his project.

The "open work" tends toward an increase in the freedom and in the participation of the interpreter within the work of art. In this respect its ends correspond closely to those of Butor as we discerned them in Degrés. Let us now proceed to Description de San Marco and 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde in an effort to discover in what way and to what extent Butor avails himself of the possibilities offered by the "open work" in these two texts.

# DESCRIPTION DE SAN MARCO

St Mark's basilica in Venice seems, at first glance, to encapsulate much of what Butor speaks against in his novels. It is, after all, a monument to a religion which was of little help to the protagonists of Passage de Milan and which came in for much criticism in La Modification where its imperial organisation and ideology was seen to be no longer sufficient for the needs of modern man. When we subsequently learn that the basilica contains a specifically Venetian interpretation of Roman Catholic tradition which marks the Venetians out as a chosen people and implies a transfer of the centre of their religion from Rome to Venice, we immediately think of Léon Delmont and his attempt to establish Paris as a centre in place of Rome. It is all the more surprising to discover that Butor's text, far from being a condemnation of the Venetians, is designed as a homage to the basilica:

Hommage, acceptez donc comme tel, vous lecteur qui cherchez à entendre et voir,

## DESCRIPTION DE SAN MARCO

(SM, back cover)

In this homage Butor draws attention to certain qualities which the basilica possesses and which suggest that the basilica as a whole is to be regarded as an example of an "open work". Butor's method of presentation, however, the very way in which he writes his text, points to a defect contained in the basilica which casts doubt upon this conclusion. Description de San Marco carries a certain sting in its tail. We shall begin our study of this tantalising work by discussing the qualities of the basilica.

The basic quality of the basilica is its ability to survive. The Venetian interpretation of Roman tradition which Butor finds in the basilica is applied to the whole of Biblical history, beginning with the creation itself:

<<Alors Yahvé Dieu modela l'homme avec la glaise du sol>>, version particulièrement intéressante pour Venise, la naissance de l'homme étant liée à la séparation de la glaise et des eaux, à la constitution de l'archipel vénitien. La lagune reproduit les origines de l'humanité, et ses habitants acquièrent par là même une autorité, un droit sur autrui. (SM, 31)

This interpretation also makes of St Mark's a symbol of the ark of the flood: "Dans le texte de la vulgate que suit le mosaïste: <<mansiunculas in arca facies>>, <<tu feras dans l'arche des petites maisons>>, ou des niches, ou des coupoles" (SM, 40). As both symbol of the ark of the flood and part of the reproduction of creation, the basilica finds itself between two types of water: "Entre les eaux inférieures et supérieures, ainsi la basilique et ses coupoles entre les eaux de la pluie et celles des vagues infiltrées si souvent dans la crypte" (SM, 28). The flooding of the crypt suggests that the basilica is threatened both by the waters from below - the waters of the chaos before creation - and, as ark, by the waters of the flood sent by Yahwe to punish man. By the end of Description de San Marco, however, it becomes clear that the basilica has overcome both of these apparent threats from water. In the final section of the work, "Les Chapelles et Dépendances", Butor takes us firstly to the crypt: "Autrefois inondée tous les ans, on l'a rendue étanche" (SM, 104). Then we follow Butor onto the roof where he shows us several complex crosses: "chacune tendant vers toutes les directions de l'espace vingt-sept boules dorées, telle des gouttes de pluie suspendues en globe au-dessus des pointes" (SM, 109). The menacing rain is here solidified

and as if transmuted into the alchemists's gold. Suspended above the basilica, the rain has been rendered harmless. It seems that the basilica cannot be touched by water either from above or below. It has become a symbol of survival from these threats. We must now examine the reasons for its survival and the nature of the water which threatens it.

As a site of beauty and the honeymoon capital of Western Europe, Venice as a whole, and St Mark's Square in particular, are thronged with visitors. It is from these visitors and not from water that the first threat to the basilica appears to come: "Les gens qui coulent comme un flot" (SM, 11). With the visitors comes a flood of language:

Ces phrases, ces mots, ces slogans, roulant les uns contre les autres, s'usant les uns les autres comme des galets, avec des violences soudaines, tel des rocs, avec des plages de sable où tout est pulvérisé, avec des moments de tumulte - on est recouvert par la vague - et puis des accalmies, une grande nappe de silence qui passe. (SM, 12)

The tourists' conversations, "ces fragments de dialogues" (SM, 12), form a chaotic flood of language and noise which presents the author with his first problem in his description of the basilica:

Toutes ces phrases de langues inconnues ou trop peu familières, qu'il m'était impossible de noter, tous ces mots passant trop vite, dont il ne restait plus qu'un bruit inintelligible, ceux que je saisisais bien comme mots, mais sans pouvoir rétablir les phrases dont ils se trouvaient détachés par les écrans d'autres paroles ou les oscillations de l'attention. Je n'ai pu conserver que quelques pointes, les crêtes, comme un peintre qui dessine une mer un peu agitée, juste ce qu'il fallait pour faire tourner ce murmure, lui faire éclairer, refléter les objets qu'il baigne comme les eaux dans un canal. (SM, 13)

The writer is almost submerged by this "bruine de Babel" (SM, 13) which is reminiscent of Eco's meaningless patterns of tar-macadam. He can only grasp the words in the fragments of conversation which run through his



text "en filigrane" (SM, 13). The basilica, for its part, is less affected by this problem than the writer. It exercises a certain control over the square and the conversations:

La place toujours hantée par ce murmure, par cette circulation de bavardage ... par ce pépiement, à la fois si loin de la basilique, et pourtant constamment, secrètement orienté, influencé par elle, absorbé par elle, imbibé. (SM, 12)

Nor is the basilica profaned by these visitors and their noise, on the contrary:

l'eau de la foule est aussi indispensable à la façade de Saint-Marc que l'eau des canaux à celle des palais ... la basilique, elle, avec la ville qui l'entoure, n'a rien à craindre de cette faune, et de notre propre frivolité; elle est née, elle s'est continuée dans le constant regard du visiteur, ses artistes ont travaillé au milieu des conversations des marins et marchands. (SM, 14)

Similarly the facade of the basilica is not something which protects it from the crowd but "un organe de communication entre la basilique et sa place, une sorte de filtre fonctionnant dans les deux sens, et que le vestibule complétera" (SM, 15). The threat of the flood of visitors and their noise is easily nullified by the basilica with its power of absorption, a power which extends to more solid objects than noise:

les deux piliers de Saint-Jean d'Acre, les quatre <<Maures>> de porphyre ... on y a vu des Sarrasins pétrifiés pour avoir voulu voler le Trésor; la basilique est si puissante qu'elle absorbe en son mur le corps même de ses ennemis. (SM, 24)

The basilica seems immune to any attack.

Although the first threat to the basilica which we encounter involves people rather than water, it is nonetheless expressed in terms of water and we should now consider the dependence of the basilica on

"l'eau de la foule" and the connection between water and language. At the origins of Venice, Butor tells us, water was a means of protection: "On sait que les premiers établissements lagunaires furent des refuges contre les invasions" (SM, 45). Water subsequently became, naturally enough, the means of communication for Venice between both the neighbouring "royaumes terre ferme" (SM, 45) and the more distant lands across the Mediterranean. Venice's position led to its control of the "commerce barbaresque" (SM, 45). Water, then, was essential for both communication and trade. It is, however, linked to communication of another kind. One of the capitals of the facade depicts the Virgin Mary: "la Vierge ... écoute une voix qui lui vient de l'autre extrémité, relayée par toutes ces vagues, ces ondes" (SM, 22). Water is the means of communication through language. Most importantly, water is linked to the communication of the gospels depicted in the transept: "à droite Saint Matthieu, à gauche Saint Marc, commençant la rédaction de leurs évangiles, surmontant les fleuves Gihon et Euphrate" (SM, 69). These are two of the rivers of paradise which play an important part in the Venetian interpretation of the Biblical genealogies.

At the creation God made the waters of chaos retreat to form the oceans and the four rivers of paradise allowing the land to appear. Three of these rivers, in the mosaics of the flood, are compared by Butor to Noah's three sons: "On peut reconnaître dans les trois fils de Noé les caractéristiques de trois des fleuves du paradis" (SM, 40). Butor does not say on what he bases this comparison nor which rivers are concerned but this becomes clearer with the dispersion of man at Babel. Man is dispersed in four groups by means of the rivers:

Les quatre groupes de dispersion correspondent aux quatre fleuves du paradis. Le fleuve Gihon contourne tout le pays de Kush, l'Égypte ... Kush est un des fils de Cham. Le Tigre coule à l'orient d'Assur; Assur est un des fils de Sem. L'Euphrate arrose le pays des descendants de Japhet, des Mèdes aux Dananéens qui se disperseront dans les îles. Quant à Havila où il y a l'or, que contourne le fleuve Pishôn, nous en retrouvons le nom parmi les fils de Cham. (SM, 45)

The disposition of the picture gives great prominence to Venice:

Venise, comme point de convergence des groupes dispersés à Babel. Orgueil, audace de Venise, la basilique et sa campanile comme lieu où les langues viennent se retrouver, les différents peuples s'entendre, la ville de la Pentecôte. (SM, 45)

The genealogy of the Venetians can be traced back, by means of the rivers, to the creation and to paradise. For our purposes and for those of Butor, the important point is not the glorification of the Venetians but the fact that this is a temporal statement. After Babel and the dispersion of man, the groups eventually converge at Venice with the passage of time. Water is therefore an image for time. The position of the evangelists over the rivers is an image of the diffusion of the gospels not only to different places but also through time, of the gospels and so of language itself.

At this point we recall Butor's difficulty in seizing the fragmented dialogues of the tourists in the square. Part of his difficulty involved the question of speed: "tous ces mots passant trop vite" (SM, 13). Butor did not have enough time to grasp the dialogues firmly. Inside the basilica he has the same problem with the language of the tourists but not, however, with the language of the basilica.

The theft of St Mark's body from Egypt has made of the basilica a refuge for his body. It is also a refuge for his gospel and the word of

God in general in the form of the mosaics and the inscriptions it contains: "De tous les monuments de l'Occident peut-être celui qui contient le plus d'inscriptions" (SM, 26). St Mark's is an "architecture de textes" (SM, 26) in which the word of God has been petrified, in a positive sense, rendered solid in the images of the mosaics and in the accompanying quotations from the Bible. These selections from the Biblical text are sometimes heavily abridged with the result that the text appears in fragmented form just like the tourists' conversations. Unlike these, however, the quotations are organised so that, with the images of the mosaics, they tell the Biblical stories. They are also organised to give a particular Venetian interpretation of the Roman tradition. The keynote of the language of the mosaics is therefore structure and organisation and in this respect it differs radically from the language Butor hears around him.

Inside the basilica, the problem of time in seizing the language of the mosaics is not apparent. Butor can take all the time he wants to look at, read or study the inscriptions. The basilica is there to be read at his leisure. The language of the mosaics has been stabilised in stone and will not flit away from him just as he has it in his grasp. The language of the visitors, on the other hand, remains as elusive as ever. It is noticeable in Butor's text that the language of the visitors is kept quite separate from the description of the basilica and its mosaics, from the basilica of the text:

De cette bruine de Babel, je n'ai pu saisir que l'écume pour la faire courir en filigrane de page en page, pour les en baigner, pour en pénétrer les blancs plus ou moins marqués du papier entre les blocs, les piliers de ma construction à l'image de celle de Saint-Marc. (SM, 13)

The flood of "bruit inintelligible" has no effect on the solidity of the inscriptions, whether in the basilica or in the text. Once again the basilica appears immune.

The solidity of the basilica's language only partly explains its immunity to attack. For a more complete explanation we must examine Butor's journey around the interior of the basilica. His journey reveals three essential points. First, the Biblical themes contained in the mosaics are placed in continually transforming relationships to the history of Venice. We have already noted the Venetian interpretation of the creation and the genealogies leading to the identification of Venice as the town of Pentecost. Almost every major Biblical event is linked in some way to the history of Venice marking the Venetians out as a chosen people. The essential aim of these violations of Roman tradition is the elevation of Venice to the status of New Jerusalem:

Au-dessus de la grande tribune, conclusion de tout cela, le Jugement universel, paradis au sommet et, par la grande baie, ce qui devrait être une figure de la Jérusalem céleste, Venise, le ciel de Venise. (SM, 89)

Within this process the basilica appears in many different rôles, ark of the flood, tower of Babel, the basket in which Moses was found, promised land, according to which part of the Biblical story is being depicted at the time. There is no one relationship which can be said to be a symbol of the total meaning of the basilica, no one meaning exhausts the interpretative possibilities of the basilica.

Second, it becomes clear that there is no one angle, no one vantage point, from which the interior can be seen in its entirety. Things are either hidden from view or are too far away to be made out clearly.

This is most evident when Butor goes up to the galleries on the third level:

Et maintenant montons à ce troisième niveau, dont nous n'avons vu jusqu'à présent que quelques passages dans les arcs, montons dans ces coupoles qu'il faut si longtemps pour voir en entier, qu'il faut étudier de tous les points de la basilique pour en lire tous les détails. (SM, 82)

It is necessary to walk about all over the basilica in order to see everything. The basilica is inexhaustible from one physical viewpoint as well as from one interpretative viewpoint.

The inexhaustibility of the basilica manifests itself in a third and equally physical way. It is not a prey to wear and tear in the way that the language of the tourists is: "Ces phrases ... s'usant les uns les autres comme des galets" (SM, 12). The basilica thrives on the physical contact it has with the visitors: "je descends les marches, caresse au passage les marbres rouges de l'ambon de l'évangile, comme les ont caressés combien de milliers et milliers avant moi, chauds, vivants, entretenus par ces caresses" (SM, 72). Unlike the conversations which eventually fall into "une grande nappe de silence" (SM, 12), the basilica is never silent inasmuch as its inscriptions are always there. If parts are worn they are restored. The caresses of the crowds render the basilica living because of its associations with Pentecost. The tourists come from many different parts of the world - there are sixteen nations of tourists like the sixteen nations in the Book of Acts - and leave again for them: "Grassi? - Je pars pour Trévisé. - Je viens de Salzbourg. - Enchantée! - It's" (SM, 37). The gospel is dependent for its survival on the diffusion of its message, hence the rôle of the evangelists: "Euntes in mundum universum prae" (SM, 75). The tourists

leave with all kinds of souvenirs: mosaics, postcards and, most importantly, memories. It is the inexhaustibility of the basilica which ensures that it will be visited over and over again. For even the most erudite visitor there will always be new things to see, new angles to explore and new meanings to discover in the symbolism of the basilica. The more the basilica is visited, admired and touched, the more it is diffused in the form of memories through space and time, the more securely it survives.

Memory, then, is vital to the survival of the basilica and in this respect we can see an essential difference between the activity of Butor and that of the tourists as revealed in the content of their conversations. Butor is making a reading of the basilica. In the Stones of Venice John Ruskin emphasises the importance of reading the basilica:

Our eyes are now familiar and wearied with writing: and if an inscription is put upon a building, unless it be large and clear, it is ten to one whether we ever trouble ourselves to decipher it. But the old architect was sure of readers. He knew that everyone would be glad to decipher all that he wrote: that they would rejoice in possessing the vaulted leaves of his stone manuscript; and that the more he gave them the more grateful would the people be. We must take some pains, therefore, when we enter Saint Mark's, to read all that is inscribed, or we shall not penetrate into the feeling either of the builder or of his times.<sup>3</sup>

The tourists, however, do no such thing. The fragmentation of the conversations creates an impression of speed: the tourists seem to rush through the basilica as if it were just one more stop on a guided tour of the city. This impression is heightened by the constant references to departure as if no one has time to stay and read the basilica at leisure as Butor does. The vast majority of the fragments have nothing to do with the basilica at all. The closest we come to comments on it

take the form of exclamations: "Certainement très restaurées! ... Ce reliquaire! ... Ce verre!" (SM, 104 - 105). There is no reaction to the story or message contained in the basilica. The exclamations give the impression that the tourists are, in a sense, seduced by the beauty or impressiveness of the basilica's contents and we recall in this respect their caressing touch on the marble. Venice is associated with lovers and a strain of eroticism runs through the conversations: "tu es belle" (SM, 75); "elle est belle" (SM, 72); "Tu as vu cette femme aux lèvres rubis?" (SM, 64). Much of this eroticism is indeed conveyed by the colours of women's hair, lipstick and nail varnish, colours once again taken from commercial catalogues (ES, 178). In the mosaics there are two erotic encounters, one between Joseph and Potiphar's wife, the second between Herod and Salome. One results in the near destruction of Joseph, the other in the death of John the Baptist. The erotic is therefore linked with death and destruction. In the case of the basilica, the erotic seems to pre-occupy the minds of the tourists to the extent that they overlook its message. The basilica needs to be remembered in order to survive. The tourists' flood of fragmented language threatens the basilica with "oubli". Yet, as we have noted, the conversations are absorbed by it, forming a strain of gold such as is to be found running through the mosaics. The basilica is saved from these speedy and pre-occupied "readers" by the diffusion of their own memories of the beauty of the site which reach Butor and others like him who are willing to take the time to read it. One careful reader is enough to ensure the basilica's survival and it should be noted that, although Butor is privileged in having access to certain restricted parts of the building, he makes these accessible to others through the medium of his text.



Let us now summarise the qualities of the basilica. It is an edifice not only of stones but of words and in this respect it is comparable to a literary work. It has managed to stabilise the chaos, the "bruit inintelligible", of language within its walls. It is solid enough to guarantee the preservation of its physical existence and the survival of the Christian message it contains. It is strong enough to withstand the passage of time and the chaos of neglect represented by the flood of the tourists' fragmented language. It is also guaranteed readers even if there is only one privileged reader careful and patient enough to take time to study it. Within the walls of the basilica the "reader" has a certain freedom: he is free to make a number of different interpretations of it. No one angle or point of view can sum up the basilica as a whole. The "reader" is obliged to be mobile within the building before he can have a total picture of it. It is at once ark, tower of Babel, New Jerusalem. Whichever meaning comes to the fore at any one time depends on where the "reader" stands during his journey around the building. We can make a useful comparison here between the basilica and the music of Webern as described by Henri Pousseur: "It is ... not indetermined but indeterminable, for the simple reason that it is too rich and too pregnant to be categorized by a simple definition or characterisation. It is thus literally overdetermined ..."<sup>4</sup> The basilica is fundamentally ambiguous within a controlled field of possibilities, that of Christianity or the Venetian interpretation of Christianity. It is this overdetermination, this fundamental ambiguity, which encourages us to conclude that the basilica is to be regarded as an "open work".

The overdetermination we have discovered in the basilica finds a parallel in an area of Butor's text: the tourists and their conversations. They are placed in a continually transforming relationship to the basilica just as it is to the history of Venice. They are at once positive and negative elements, depending on which way one looks at them. Their significance oscillates between a liquid flood of erotic "oubli", threatening the solidity and survival of the basilica, and the means to its continued vivacity through the diffusion of memories, even if these only concern the beauty of the site. Our interpretation of the tourists and their conversations at any given moment depends on where we stand within the text. They too are fundamentally ambiguous. This tends to suggest that Butor's text is also to be regarded as an "open work". Such overdetermination, however, can only be found in this one aspect of Butor's text and we should now test our conclusion by examining the way in which we read the text.

Like Stravinsky's Canticum Sacrum ad honorem Sancti Marci nominis, Butor's text is divided into five parts after the five domes of the basilica. The description of the basilica is essentially the record of Butor's journey around it. Butor begins his journey in St Mark's Square and moves through the vestibule, the interior, the baptistry and the dependent chapels, finally ending up on the roof after a kind of upward spiral. The journey is recounted in a first person singular which is clearly that of Butor, the author himself, of whose presence we are at all times aware. In fact, such is the presence of the author that whatever he sees, we see and whenever he moves, we move: "Entrons. Le murmure de la foule s'atténue. A droite la première coupole" (SM, 26). As Butor enters the vestibule so does the reader. When Butor points out

the first cupola the reader is obliged to see it too and to see nothing else. The reader is totally dependent on the author for where he goes and for what he sees. When Butor tells us that St Mark's contains a Venetian interpretation of Christianity, "version particulièrement intéressante pour Venise" (SM, 31), this is a statement of fact, a fact which emanates from Butor and not a conclusion at which we arrive ourselves. Butor is like a guide who has the facts at his disposal and whom we are obliged to follow around the basilica. Theoretically, of course, we can begin our reading journey anywhere we like, say in the Baptistry, and take a different route through the text. We are not, however, invited to do so before the text begins and there is no reason why we should take this initiative at the outset. Once we have begun our reading with "La Façade" the presence of the author in exhortations such as "entrons" or "passons" begins to impose upon us the self-same journey that he makes around the basilica. The freedom of the reader in his mode of reading is thus severely restricted. In our opinion this is done deliberately by Butor and is a direct consequence of his evinced desire to write his text in the image of the basilica and of the nature of the message contained in the basilica. Why does Butor adopt this particular way of visiting the basilica?

Butor, like the reader of Description de San Marco is technically free to explore the basilica in any way he chooses. However, the message contained in the basilica, despite the overt bias toward Venice and the Venetians, is essentially the traditional Christian message. In its form this message is a linear one, beginning with the creation, moving on to the prophecy of the Messiah, the Messiah himself and ending with the second coming and the Last Judgement. In terms of the message itself,

it would make no sense to begin one's reading with the Messiah and move back, say, to the flood. The coming of the Messiah is the culmination of a succession of events which it is necessary to know about before one can understand the Messiah himself. In other words, the way in which Butor visits the basilica is imposed upon him by the nature of the message it contains. Butor's journey in the basilica eventually takes him upwards to the roof and it does so necessarily. The religious message of St Mark's points upwards to heaven, to the sky of Venice and the paradise of the New Jerusalem. Butor is as powerless to resist this movement as the reader is to resist the author in Description de San Marco. The message of St Mark's is a closed one and Butor makes us feel this by imposing on us the same limits imposed on him by this message.

Are we now to conclude that St Mark's, despite the attention paid to its qualities, is, after all, a closed work? In fact, we are faced with the inescapable conclusion that the basilica is far more ambiguous than we had anticipated. We are forced to make a qualitative distinction between the basilica in its symbolic aspect and the message it contains. In its symbolic aspect, in its transforming relationship with Venetian history, the basilica is overdetermined and requires the reader to be mobile within its confines. Butor's journey with its vertical conclusion marks the limit of the field of possibilities contained in the basilica. The message contained in the basilica is totally determined, allowing no range of possible interpretations, and, as the word of God, emanates literally from a "Logos créateur". What Butor is doing is to point up the difference between the two and, in making his text emanate as if from a god-like author, he is letting us feel the desirability of the "open work" as opposed to the closed one. He has deliberately refrained from

writing an "open work" in order to prepare the way for 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde, the second half of an equation begun with Description de San Marco.

Butor's text is without doubt a homage to St Mark's and is designed to perpetuate its memory:

Puisse-t-il auparavant donner l'avant-goût, le désir, puis tout trempé des images qu'il aura contribué à faire se détacher sur l'or et l'ombre, vous restituer tous vos souvenirs précieusement serrés aux pinces de ses pages.  
(SM, back cover)

There is nothing in Butor's text to deny or decry the Christian message contained in St Mark's. Butor's objective here is not to criticise Christianity or to exhort us to change this particular aspect of human life. He emphasises the qualities of St Mark's as an edifice which is open in its symbolic aspect. His homage to the basilica lies in the fact that he has placed it in a transformed relationship to reality. In making the edifice of St Mark's a symbol of openness, Butor has placed it in a twentieth century context and given to it one more possible signification which increases the level of its overdetermination. He has not only added to its ambiguity as a symbol but has characterised it as fundamentally ambiguous in its totality, at once open and closed.

What conclusions can be drawn from a reading of Description de San Marco? We can see that Butor in practice has been true to the theory of the relationship between man and place outlined in Réseau Aérien. Place in this work appears as something which can be read and from which we can learn. Butor takes certain things from St Mark's but, in his homage to it, he also gives something back. He does not exploit St Mark's but, through his text, establishes a two-way relationship with it. The theme of place

in this work is, however, implicit and subsidiary, although in the comparison between the basilica and a literary work, in the comparison between the sixteen nations of the Book of Acts and the sixteen nations of tourists we can see an early example of Butor's concept of the literary work as ark, as a place in which humanity can be integrated as opposed to the dispersion of Babel. This concept will play an important part in Illustrations III. The principal conclusions that we can draw, however, concern the theme of writing itself. Descriptions de San Marco shows us the problems which confront Butor as a writer at this time. He wishes to construct a literary edifice which, like St Mark's, will survive the rigours of time and chaos, in which he can stabilise the "bruit inintelligible" of language. We can compare this latter objective with the struggle of Pierre Vernier to control the mass of information contained in Degrés. He is also concerned with his readership and the danger of falling into neglect. One careful reader will guarantee his survival as a writer just as he guarantees that of the basilica. He is making a plea for a careful reading. On his side, he will try to ensure that, within the solidity of his literary edifice, the reader is free and mobile, able to come to his own interpretation within a controlled field of possibilities, unfettered by the determination of the "Logos créateur" exemplified in the message of St Mark's.

In its solidity, St Mark's basilica is a refuge from the passage of time but one which necessarily implies the leaving of time, the vertical ascent to the atemporal paradise. Butor, however, seeks survival in time and progress with time and for this horizontal axis to his thought we must leave the limitations of St Mark's and journey on to 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde.

6 810 000 LITRES D'EAU PAR SECONDE

From Venice, the honeymoon capital of Western Europe, we move to Niagara Falls, the honeymoon capital of North America which Butor explores by means of a stereophonic play commissioned for radio. The text comprises twelve sections, each one corresponding to a month of the year, which in turn contain thirty-four sub-sections given the title "parentheses". The cast of the play is composed of a Speaker who provides a commentary of mainly factual details concerning the falls and the activities which take place there during the year, a Reader who reads two descriptions of the falls by Chateaubriand<sup>5</sup> and a succession of visitors to the falls whose names, although different, begin with the same letters of the alphabet from A to Q. These visitors appear as couples and are interchangeable. G and H, for example, are always "vieille peau" and "gigolo" while K and L are always respectively male and female "solitaires". The action of the play is concerned with the relationship between these visitors and their reaction to the falls. In the stereophonic arrangement the Speaker and the Reader can be heard in the centre while the couples are disposed either to the left or to the right. Within this scenario the reader and the listener are permitted up to nine<sup>6</sup> different routes through the sections and parentheses, the listener accomplishing this by the simple adjustment of the balance controls, deciding what he wishes to hear or suppress. The producer of the radio-play is also free to select which itinerary or itineraries he wishes to broadcast. An explanatory note reveals the function of these different routes through the text:

Les lecteurs pressés prendront la voie courte en sautant toutes les parenthèses et tous les préludes.

Les lecteurs moins pressés prendront la voie longue sans rien sauter.

Mais les lecteurs de ce livre s'amuseront à suivre les indications sur le fonctionnement des parenthèses et à explorer peu à peu les huit voies intermédiaires pour entendre comment, dans ce monument liquide, le changement de l'éclairage fait apparaître nouvelles formes et aspects. (N, 10)

The different routes through the text and Butor's description of it as a "monument liquide" suggest an open work. In what way and to what extent is 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde an open work? In order to answer this question we shall first of all make a thematic analysis of the text. This analysis is the result of an exploratory reading of the text, of accepting the third alternative proposed by Butor in his explanatory note, and should in no way be regarded as the result of taking "la voie longue". We emphasise this point because, as we shall see, both "la voie longue" and the exploratory method imply a reading of the totality of the text. The exploratory method, however, results in a non-linear reading of the totality of the text whereas "la voie longue" clearly implies a successive reading of the text. Having made a thematic analysis of the text, we shall then have recourse once again to the thought of Umberto Eco in order to illuminate certain aspects and to make final conclusions regarding both form and content.

The work reveals Niagara Falls to be a phenomenon of great complexity and the principal thrust of Butor's argument is that they have been misinterpreted and misused by the people who visit them. This argument finds initial expression in the theme of clothing or covering-up, the last thing we expect from a site which is a shrine to the rite of passage



from virginity to marriage. The first evidence of this and the resultant dissatisfaction it causes occurs in May on the newly-weds Abel and Betty's first morning together: "Et qu'avais-tu besoin de rouge pour me séduire ce matin? C'étaient tes lèvres toutes pures et toutes crues que je voulais" (N, 22). The husband desired the naked reality of her lips rather than the clothing or concealment of the lipstick, the reality which is symbolic of change: "et c'était un nouveau visage que tu découvrais dans ton miroir ce matin" (N, 22). The connection between the concealment of reality and make-up recurs when "vieille peau" is taken behind the falls by her gigolo: "Je suis folle, je suis complètement folle, tout mon maquillage et toute ma coiffure! Tu vas me retrouver vieillie de dix ans; tu vas t'apercevoir ..." (N, 80). Without her make-up the gigolo will see her as she really is.

The theme of the clothing of reality explains the inclusion of an element of racism which pervades the early part of the work. In the first May parenthesis the old couple, C and D, reminiscing on the period in their lives when they had black neighbours, recall an incident involving their daughter:

Un jour elle rentrait de classe, elle m'a dit: <<Maman, qu'est-ce que c'est que cette odeur?>> Je lui ai demandé: <<Quelle odeur?>> Mais naturellement, j'avais bien compris. Alors, elle a fondu en larmes; c'était une de ces pécores, une de ses camarades qui se mettait déjà du rouge à lèvres, je ne sais plus son nom, qui, je ne sais plus à quel propos, une dispute, lui avait crié: <<Mais enfin, lorsque tu rentres chez toi, est-ce que tu n'es pas incommodée par cette odeur?>> (N, 31-32)

Here, a racist question is posed by someone already wearing make-up, already concerned with the concealment of her own reality. The implication is that racism, in its preoccupation with colour, is a tendency to see only the surface of people, the clothing rather than the reality

below the skin. This impression is heightened in the third July parenthesis which deals with the preoccupation of the same couple with the purchasing of a shirt for their parents' black gardener on their first visit to the falls. The gardener had not appreciated the shirt and C suggests an explanation: "Nous ne l'avions peut-être pas choisie de couleur assez vive" (N, 88). The whites believe that blacks should want to hide their own colour by wearing bright, distracting clothes.

The concealment of reality is not confined to the visitors to Niagara. The falls themselves are also capable of this on occasions: "Alors le guide prend un caillou dans sa main et le lance sur cette obscure furieuse vitre liquide, qui s'entrouvre un infime instant, pour laisser fulgurer un éclair de jour cru" (N, 47). Positioned behind the falls the visitors' view of daylight is obscured by the torrent of water.

The falls have, in turn, been clothed by man. The flowers of the various festivals which take place during the year, together with the nighttime illuminations, decorate the site with a sea of colour which seems unnecessary in view of the variety of colour already present in the falls themselves: "La masse du fleuve ... se déroule en nappe de neige et brille au soleil de toutes les couleurs du prisme" (N, 14). In his text Butor explains this redundant decoration of the falls by associating the colours of the flowers and illuminations with both violence and seduction. The falls themselves are a phenomenon of considerable violence, as the descriptions of Chateaubriand indicate:

Mais ce qui contribue à la rendre si violente, c'est que, depuis le lac Érié jusqu'à la cataracte, le fleuve arrive toujours en déclinant par une pente rapide, dans un cours de près de six lieues: en sorte qu'au moment même du saut, c'est moins une rivière qu'une mer impétueuse, dont les cent mille torrents se pressent à la bouche beanté d'un gouffre. (N, 13)

This abyss has claimed many lives among those who have tried to shoot the falls in barrels and other types of container.

The colours become violent when they are associated with flowers. Both yellow and red are linked to fire early in the text in the names and colours of flowers: "Fournaise... Écarlate ... Grande Ville. Quelle ville comme une fleur? Comme cette fleur écarlate. Mangée de flammes jaunes ... Quelle ville grondante en flammes. ruisselante, ruisselante, ruisselante" (N, 30 - 31). The adjective "ruisselante" emphasises the connection with the falls: the flames of the colours seem to flow along the flowers, infusing them with the violence of the falls. The violence is being removed from the falls and laid out along with the flowers. A kind of exorcism is being performed, as Butor himself points out: "C'est pour l'apprivoiser, en quelque sorte, pour rendre cela humain, que l'on y met de la couleur, alors que les Chutes elles-mêmes sont un phénomène d'une puissance colorée déjà étonnante" (ES, 179). The violence perceived in the falls poses a problem for man, just as the violence perceived in the continent of America posed a problem for the European settlers in Mobile, and in his fear he attempts to solve it by dressing up the falls in their own violence.

The seductive power of the colours is a result of their origin. As in Mobile and Description de San Marco the names of the colours are taken from commercial catalogues, where, in order to express difference, the names have become extremely refined. They are also designed to be seductive:

Le fait que ces couleurs sont toujours publicitaires, donc que la couleur doit toujours rendre l'objet désirable, va les lier au thème fondamental de la consommation et à l'imagination de la consommation. (ES, 171)

The stage direction for the reading of the flowers and their colours is revealing in this respect: "Ne pas essayer de mettre du lyrisme dans les <<lectures>> de fleurs: seule une discrète contagion érotique" (N, 43).

This eroticism is linked to the idea of defloration. In May the young wife Betty explains why she put on lipstick:

(Betty) Je voulais pavoiser mes lèvres en notre honneur  
ce matin.  
(Abel) Les fleurir ... (Betty) Tous les pétales se sont  
arrachés sous ton rire ... (Abel) éparpillés ... (Betty)  
à ton haleine, ... (Abel) tout autour de tes véritables  
lèvres, ... (Betty) comme une couronne de petites flammes  
qui me brûlent. (N, 23)

The husband's laugh strips away the flowers of her lips to reveal their nakedness as the woman repeats, in metaphorical fashion, the events of the wedding night. The flames introduce a note of violence to these events. The colours, then, are infused with an erotic power which turns the falls into something sexually attractive, something to be deflowered and violently possessed. It is in the sexual notion of possession that the falls become a consumer object in similar fashion to Orly Airport in Réseau Aérien. This is highlighted by the various souvenirs of the falls which the visitors can buy:

des brosses à cheveux à chutes, des carafons à chutes, des  
cravates à chutes, des petites femmes nues en faïence dont  
on enlève les deux seins formant salière et poivrière, des  
lampes de chevet à chutes, des boutons à chutes, des tentures  
à chutes, des coussins à chutes, des diapositives à chutes.  
(N, 37 - 39)

These objects indicate that, not only have the falls been possessed, they have been degraded as well. The commercial exploitation of the falls, similar to that seen in Réseau Aérien is a symptom of the distortion and concealment of their reality. Man has broken the

relationship between himself and the site by responding with his own brand of violence to that which he perceived in the falls.

It is now time to focus our attention on the people who visit the falls and their reasons for so doing. The interchangeability of the couples, as expressed in their names, already points to a certain loss of identity. The extent of this can be gauged when the visitors descend into "la caverne des vents" in July and go behind the falls. Here they are required to strip off their clothes and change into special protective oilskins: "Le froid du ciré sur la peau vous fait sentir que vous êtes nu, sans poches, sans pièces d'identité, en pyjama au milieu de ces hommes normaux qui passent avec leurs vestons et chaussures" (N, 79). The oilskin, "le ciré", can be linked to a part of the site C and D do not remember visiting when they first came: "Est-ce qu'il y avait ce musée de figures de cire <<Madame Tussaud>>?" (N, 26). Human beings have been reduced to lifeless wax caricatures of themselves. The descent and journey behind that part of the falls known as "le voile de la mariée" (N, 83) is a parody of the wedding night. Underneath, the "pilgrims" are naked, or almost naked: "A la rigueur, vous pouvez garder votre slip" (N, 78). They then put on a pair of coarse pyjamas, the clothing associated with the bed, and finally the oilskins. The revelation of nudity involved in the wedding-night is replaced by successive layers of clothing which take away their identity and leave them in a state of anxiety: "les gens se regardent avec un sourire troublé" (N, 80). Anxiety turns quickly to feelings of humiliation and ridicule sparked off by the humorous sign: "<<Méfiez-vous des pickpockets>>". Alors on prend conscience de nouveau du fait qu'on n'a pas de poches, qu'on est en pyjama, que tous ces gens sont

en pyjama sous leurs cirés jaunes" (N, 82). They are only too glad to return and watch the next batch of "pilgrims" descend. The experience has been altogether unsettling, like a vision of the failure of their visit to the falls.

All the couples have come to the falls in search of something specific in relation to their sex lives. The newly-weds, A and B, are looking to initiate their sex life while the old couple, C and D, are trying to recapture theirs:

les vieux mariés qui étaient venus aux chutes et qui ont essayé de retrouver la même chambre, croisent un couple de vieux mariés qui n'avaient pu venir alors, il y a trente ans, et qui cherchent ici la fontaine de Jouvence. (N, 51)

This search for youth is also that of "vieille peau" who contrasts herself with the young newly-weds: "Ils n'ont pas besoin d'être rajeunis, mais je ne veux pas que tu les regardes" (N, 107). Couple I and J start out alone but come together in I's "vile séduction". The other "couples" are all lonely people, the young ones searching for partners, the older ones looking for their dead partners in the memories aroused by the falls. The failure of all these people to find what they are looking for is portrayed in the wedding night of the September section when A and B hide from each other's nakedness by switching out the light, C and D discover "qu'il est trop tard pour nous" (N, 135), Irving triumphs over his easy prey and the "solitaire" invokes the "lares du continent" (N, 143) in his desire to share what he imagines the others have. In fact, all remain solitary in a place supposedly dedicated to unification. The stage direction for October, "Les Réveils", sums up the failure of the night before: "Tous les couples sont ici <<divorcés>>; chaque personnage parle

comme s'il était seul" (N, 147). Even the newly-weds have not found what they were looking for: "Pour tant de couples amoureux maintenant, il est temps d'affronter de nouveau la route. Ceux qui voulaient rester plusieurs jours encore ici, mais qui ne savent plus" (N, 161). The dispersal of the new couples "Vers tous les états" (N, 163) is reminiscent of the dispersal of man at Babel in Description de San Marco. The couples leave in an image of separation rather than unification. Full of self-doubt, the pilgrims have become "pénitents" (N, 171).

The departure of the tourists points to another useful comparison we can make between them and their counterparts in Description de San Marco. The interchangeability of the characters expresses more than their loss of identity: it reflects the rapid replacement of one set of couples by another. The couples only stay at Niagara for a short time during which they attempt "marriage" with their partners and take part in the standard tourist activities: descending behind the falls, taking a trip on one of the excursion boats, etc. Not only are they stereotyped people but they treat Niagara in a stereotyped fashion, conforming to its image as honeymoon capital and tourist attraction. Like the visitors to St Mark's basilica they take no time to study the site. They clothe Niagara with their preconceived view of its reality. Their activities at the site are determined by their expectations of it. This point will be of importance to a later part of our discussion.

Only one couple, the black gardeners E and F, escape to a certain extent the general failure of the wedding night. Only they are at home in the storm which affects the other couples: "(Edmond) Tu as toujours aimé l'orage ... (Frieda) Tu as toujours été à l'aise dans l'orage" (N, 137). This storm is one of blood and murder which haunts the white

couples: "pluie de vieux sang noir dans la nuit, le sang de massacrés revenant mugissant dans la nuit noire" (N, 137). This fulfils the black couple's earlier prediction: "Nous allons troubler leur première nuit" (N, 71). The blacks are not implicated in this massacre with its racial overtones nor in the violence perpetrated against the falls. They are particularly receptive to nature, opening their window to the storm and the night, and, as gardeners, delighting in the floral displays. Their sexuality is also linked to nature:

Les mains couvertes de terre que tu lavais pour me caresser,  
mais qui sentaient le savon et la terre avec l'odeur des roses  
au-dessus du fumier et tes ongles encore tout encadrés de terre  
comme de jeunes pousses. (N, 57)

This passage is reminiscent of the roses of Chiraz and the future savages of Réseau Aérien. In their capacity as gardeners their relationship with nature is a harmonious one and does not have a negative effect on their own sexuality. The white couples, even although the newly-weds are clearly in love and speak to each other as tenderly as the blacks, "je t'aime" (N, 138), are affected in their own sexuality by the type of sexual relationship they have with Niagara which is encapsulated in Irving's consumption and exploitation of a string of "proies faciles". As in Réseau Aérien, the problems in human relationships, be they between black and white, man and woman, are seen as a consequence of the breakdown in the relationship between man and place. We should note here that Butor is deliberately using a clichéd view of the black man as an example of a harmonious relationship between man and place.

Blacks, however, are in a minority in the text and the overwhelming mood of the work is of failure, isolation and desolation, particularly at Christmas in the heart of the winter when everything is closed and only the



lonely are out: "Quelques solitaires sur la neige, que font-ils sur la route à cette heure gelée?" (N, 211). This desolation is reflected in the generalized disintegration of thought and language which afflicts the characters and from which not even the blacks escape: "(Fanny) l'un des deux a dû se marier ... (Elias) Lequel? (Fanny) Je ne sais plus ... (Elias) Mais lequel as-tu vu? (Fanny) Je ne sais plus lequel j'ai vu ... (Elias) L'as tu même vu? (Fanny) je n'ai pas regardé" (N, 62). The blacks live in a white man's world and hope is not to be invested in them either.

The degradation of the characters' language - never anything more than banal - takes the form of an increasing frequency of repetitions which begin in January. In this section couple C and D say the same things that C and D said in May: "(Charlton) Tout a changé ... (Doris) Nous avons changé" (N, 230). This is heavily ironic since the repetition gives the lie to the meaning of the sentences. These repetitions build up in an accumulative fashion until the final March section where almost everything is a repeat of what has already been said elsewhere. These repetitions suggest that for the visitors to Niagara there is no possibility of change in either their relationship to the falls or to each other. Butor is showing in greater detail and to a greater degree the effects on a society of the breakdown between people and place. He takes us to the limits where even communication through language has become stereotyped and empty. Everything seems doomed to failure.

In the midst of this failure and desolation are there any grounds for optimism? Michael Spencer suggests that this is to be found in "a virtuoso distortion, fragmentation and final reassembly, in a coherent but different form, of Chateaubriand's text".<sup>7</sup> He contends that Chateaubriand's

texts form "a musical equivalent of the falls, suggesting in their development, repetition and continuous presence, the endless flow of water, which in turn symbolizes the passing of time".<sup>8</sup> We now propose to examine the validity of these assertions and to develop them in order to bring out the themes of time, change and reading contained in the text.

In his discussion with Georges Charbonnier Butor explains that he uses the two versions of Chateaubriand's description of the falls "pas comme une citation, mais comme une matière première" (ES, 144). He goes on to describe his musical treatment of the texts:

Et puis j'ai soumis ce texte classique à un certain nombre de traitements. Je l'ai soumis à une accélération, je l'ai mis en marche, ce texte, en utilisant un procédé classique en musique, je l'ai mis en marche en fabriquant des <<canons>>, c'est-à-dire que c'est fait comme si le texte, le même texte, était récité deux fois par deux lecteurs différents, avec un léger décalage entre les lecteurs. Des mots de la seconde lecture vont donc s'intercaler à l'intérieur des mots de la première lecture, ce qui va former un troisième texte. Le texte apparaît en surimpression sur lui-même, on a donc un troisième texte à l'intérieur duquel on reconnaît très bien des éléments qui reviennent et des éléments qui sautent, en quelque sorte, sur les autres.

C'est ce qui se passe lorsqu'on écoute une fugue ou un canon. Il y a des formules dont on voit très bien qu'elles se suivent, qu'elles se courent après, qu'elles sautent les unes sur les autres, d'où nous avons un sentiment de précipitation, de course, de fuite. (ES, 144 - 145)

What Butor has in fact done is serialise the two texts<sup>9</sup> and he seems to have omitted in the above extract one important impression that this treatment has on the reader. Butor begins in the "Présentation" by giving the earlier version of the description in its entirety and ends in the "Coda" by giving the full later version. The intervening "brassage", strictly

controlled, gives the impression that the first version finally flows into the second after a lengthy period of time. To create this impression of "fuite" Butor employs a technique which makes use of the possibilities of speed. We shall examine the effects of this technique by considering the first sentences of each version of the description as they appear in the May section. The extract falls into two parts: into the first sentence of version one of the description intrudes part of the first sentence of version two; the second sentence of version one is split into two voices, voice B intruding into voice A:

1	2	1	2	1	2
Elle est formée,	elle,	par la rivière,	est formée	Niagara	par la
1	2	1	2	1	2
rivière qui sort	du lac Érié	Niagara qui sort	et se jette	du lac Érié	
1	1A	1B	1A	1B	
dans l'Ontario	à environ neuf milles	à environ neuf milles	de ce		
1B	1A	1B			
dernier lac de ce	dernier lac se trouve	la chute sa hauteur	se		
1A	1B	1A			
trouve perpendiculaire	la chute peut être	d'environ deux cents			
1B	1A				
pieds sa hauteur perpendiculaire	mais ce qui contribue	peut-être			
	1B				
à la rendre si violente	d'environ deux cents pieds.				(N, 23-25)

The variation in speed, the constant flux and reflux of the language and its comparability to the waters of the falls is clear to the reader. What the reader is perhaps tempted to overlook because of the very efficacy of the technique is the inherent phenomenon of delay underlying the entire process. The intercalation of the second sentence or the second voice into the first extends the latter's duration - it takes us longer to reach the end of the sentence. The end is effectively delayed or suspended. This phenomenon applies to every sentence of every variation of the texts and most importantly to the arrival of the complete exposition of the second version of the description. The flow of language from one version to the next is constantly delayed. It is as if the flow of water over the falls,

the progress from the river above to that below, had been temporarily suspended. The water at the top and that at the bottom is essentially the same but the drop over the falls will have caused a re-arrangement, a modification comparable to that between the two versions of the description. The fragmentation or "brassage" between the two complete statements of the description is like the struggle of the second to be born from the first, a birth which is presented as possible only after a delay in the "fall". This is none other than a delay in temporal progression. Water and time are linked in the reaction of D to her daughter's question about the smell of black people:

Et le terrible, c'est que je suis restée tout interdite. Si j'avais su quoi lui répondre à ce moment-là, il aurait peut-être été possible ...; mais les minutes sont tombées comme des gouttes d'eau par la fissure d'un plafond. (N, 32)

The movement involved in the passage from one text to the other is, then, a temporal one, related to the theme of change as Spencer suggested. Change, Butor is telling us, can only come about through a delay in time, a delay which implies a certain control over time.

This control over time leads us to that part of the text which deals with attempts to shoot the falls in various ways and the activities of Blondin: "Le Styx" and "Le Froid". It is in these sections that the violence of the falls appears at its greatest. The falls can kill and going over the falls is the equivalent of crossing death's door: "Mais quel homme franchirait cette vitre du Styx?" (N, 222). The first attempts chronicled are those of Anna Edson Taylor whose cat was killed in a barrel before her own success. Her success, however, is not presented as a victory over death but rather as the refusal of death to accept her: "(Nadia) Elle a trouvé la porte fermée. (Otto) Elle a roulé le long de la porte" (N, 228).

Her success also appears to have been largely forgotten: "Elle a roulé dans l'oubli" (N, 228). Edson Taylor is not presented in a favourable light: she appears in the fourth February parenthesis, "figures de cire", as if she were comparable to the oilskinned, identity-less pilgrims of the "caverne des vents". She is like a wax figure caught in her own photograph. There is also a hint of reproach regarding the fate of her cat: "Ses yeux de chat crevé roulé par le torrent" (N, 228). The dead cat seems to haunt her.

Taylor's success did not guarantee the success of those who followed her. Charles Stephens and George Strathakis were killed while Bobby Leach was badly injured. His survival of the falls did not prevent him from dying after slipping on a banana-skin. Only Jean Laussier shot the falls without injury. All these people are relatively unknown compared to Blondin to whom Butor devotes two whole parentheses. The exploits of Blondin remain celebrated to this day and are quite different from the others. Instead of launching himself into the flood of the falls, Blondin crossed them on his tightrope. His exploits appear less as a response to the challenge of the falls than as a challenge to the falls themselves. Butor describes them in a strikingly simple way as if they were the most natural thing in the world:

Sur sa corde tendue, Jean-François Gravelet, dit Blondin, fit descendre au bout d'une corde un pichet jusqu'à la demoiselle du brouillard, le fit remplir par l'équipage, le remonta et dégusta l'eau de l'abîme. (N, 251 - 252)

This is an act, not only of supreme bravery, but of supreme insolence. Blondin is mocking the falls. His next feat, cooking an omelette on his rope - incongruous in its utter banality - also marks his lack of respect for the falls. He survives even the most dangerous feat - carrying a man

on his back across the falls. His is truly a victory over the falls and over death. It is a victory presented as qualitatively different from the others. No more details about Blondin's life are given to us and most importantly we do not learn how he died. He seems to remain etched in our mind's eye, eternally suspended above the falls. It is in this method of suspension that the importance of Blondin lies. In plunging into the torrent in a barrel or a rubber ball, Taylor and the others are at the mercy of the falls. It is as if who died and who survived were largely a matter of chance, the final decision being made by death itself: "Elle a trouvé la porte fermée". Blondin, on the other hand, survives by his own efforts. He "crosses" the falls on his own terms, choosing his own method and succeeding thanks to his extraordinary control of his technique. This is also the technique of nature: "... des carcajous se suspendent par leurs queues flexibles au bout d'une branche abaissée ...." (N, 281). The wolverines not only survive in this way but use it to take their food from the falls. In the light of our analysis of the treatment of the Chateaubriand texts we can see that Butor is using Blondin as an image for the suspension of time. By refusing to plunge into the waters, into the headlong rush of time, Blondin denies its passage. His relationship to time is, as it were, at right angles to it. He stands astride time as did the evangelists in Description de San Marco. Unlike man in general he responds to the violence of the falls, not by invoking his own violence, but by circumventing it. He triumphs over the falls without degrading them. Unlike the tourists he responds to the falls in an unconventional way: whereas the accepted manner of crossing the falls was by barrel and the like, he chooses the tightrope. Blondin is an example of an original reading of the falls which now stand revealed in the work as a symbol of the headlong rush, the chaos of time. In its historical

aspect the site as a whole becomes a symbol of the way in which time may be controlled. Change results from the controlled suspension of time.

We must now link the themes of time and change to that of reading and compare the form of 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde to further aspects of the thought behind the open work. Blondin chooses his own way of crossing the falls and this is precisely what the reader is invited to do within the scenario of 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. The explanatory note draws attention to the different ways in which the work may be read and places the responsibility of choice squarely on the shoulders of the reader. In this respect the field of action of the work is closely linked to the concept of openness in other arts:

La musique atonale oblige l'auditeur à organiser le monde sonore dans le cadre de formes données. La peinture informelle, de son côté, propose au regard des oeuvres dont le sens n'est pas fixé à l'avance et qui trouve leur achèvement dans la réaction interprétative du spectateur, qui se voit contraint d'inventer lui-même le chemin de sa compréhension parmi les éléments (taches, plans colorés, lignes) assemblés dans un complexe équivoque, riche en possibilités diverses de signification.<sup>10</sup>

The reader of this work is invited in exactly the same way to choose "le chemin de sa compréhension" within the forms provided by the author. The possibilities are limited to three: the fast, the slow and the exploratory reading. At first sight these terms appear quite innocent and self-evident. It seems clear that the reader who takes more time over a text will get more out of it. We have already seen, however, that great care is taken in the Chateaubriand texts to suspend the headlong rush of one into the other: a brake is placed on the speed of the progression. We have also seen that the tourists' visits to the falls are characterised

by speed and a preconception of what to expect there. We can therefore characterise a fast reader of Butor's text as one who arrives with pre-conceived ideas of what he is looking for, who will neither find what he is looking for nor take the time to find out why and who will leave the text with a feeling of dissatisfaction. He may even distort the reality of the text as the tourists distorted Niagara, "clothing" it to mask its reality.

In our study of Butor's novels we concluded that Degrés was a work stripped bare of all novelistic conventions which might result in the reader being dominated by the author and left powerless to resist his will. In his analysis of 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde Jean Roudant has come to a similar conclusion with regard to the works comprising "Romanesque II":

Le livre est à la fois offert et défait, complexe et instable, réel dans sa forme et transparent dans sa substance. C'est que, par opposition au livre qui raconte le réel perceptible et finit par empêcher de voir ce réel, par dresser un mur d'images entre le lecteur et la réalité qu'on voulait lui donner à voir, la série Romanesque II est constituée de livres transparents comme une feuille réduite à ses nervures. Laissant le regard filer à travers eux, ils ne restituent pas la réalité mais présentent des grilles de décryptement de la réalité.<sup>11</sup>

Although the largest of the three works of similar format studied in this section 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde is easily the one which has the least content in actual physical terms - the amount of language to be read. It is also the least complex in grammatical terms. The stereotyping of the characters results in short, simple sentences while the descriptions of the speaker are also short and essentially factual. There is little linguistic difficulty in the text: all the problems concern the manner in which we thread our way through it. Its density does not compare with



that of Mobile and thematically it represents a reduction from that work: there is much less thematic content which might possibly obscure its form. We might describe it as a text without frills, a naked text which has not been "clothed". More than any other work in this section it is one in which the reader is invited to see the reality of the text and its make-up, to treat the text in the way Butor would like to see Niagara treated.

Having noted the work's lack of density and physical content it then becomes apparent that it would have even less content were it not for the parentheses. It is in the very name "parenthesis" that the clue to the rôle of these sections in the work can be found. In the Chateaubriand texts the intercalation of a sentence or voice into another delays the end of that sentence by expanding the time taken to read it. Each sentence or voice appears very much like a parenthesis of the other. This is particularly evident visually if one undertakes the task of separating out the various constituent parts. In the same way the parentheses in Butor's text expand the time taken to read it and delay its end. This is conveyed in the text by the omission of the passage of time in the parentheses: the "sonnerie" of the "carillon de Westminster" can only be heard in the principal sections. The acceleration of time in these sections is slowed down by this omission of time from the parentheses. Each parenthesis read adds to the time taken by the reader and to the amount he reads. This is also true of those paths through the text which involve the suppression or inclusion of the dialogues between certain sets of characters. The choice faced by the reader of 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde is essentially one of addition or subtraction.

As we have seen Umberto Eco contends that the modern "open work" sets out to make openness a quality:

Cette valeur, cette espèce d'«ouverture» au second degré à laquelle aspire l'art contemporain pourrait se définir en termes de signification, comme l'accroissement et la multiplication des sens possibles du message. Mais le mot lui-même prête à équivoque: certains se refusent à parler de signification à propos d'un tableau non figuratif ou d'une constellation de sons. Nous définirons donc plutôt la nouvelle ouverture comme un accroissement d'information. (Eco, 62)

Such a definition, as Eco points out, takes the "open work" into the realms of information theory. A detailed analysis of the relationship between the "open work" and information theory is beyond the scope of this study. We shall limit our comments to three aspects of information theory which Butor adopts and adapts for his own use in 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde: information itself, redundancy and noise.

Information theory is concerned with the evaluation of the quantity of information contained in a given message. This is a function of the improbability of the information received and the degree of confidence held by the receiver in the sender of the message:

quand je demande à un agent immobilier si la maison qu'il me présente est ou non humide, je tire de sa réponse négative une information peu considérable et reste tout aussi incertain quant à la vérité du fait. Mais si l'agent me répond affirmativement, contre toute attente et contre son propre intérêt, je reçois une quantité d'information importante et je sais véritablement quelque chose de plus sur le sujet qui m'intéresse. (Eco, 70)

These two criteria lead Eco to make the following definition of information: "L'information est donc une qualité additive: quelque chose qui s'ajoute à ce que je sais déjà, et qui se présente à moi comme une acquisition originale" (Eco, 70). We saw above that the choice facing the reader

of Butor's text was one of addition or subtraction. In the context of the message, in its various interpretative possibilities, anything that is added, that is, included in the reading, can be compared to information. Anything that is subtracted or omitted from the reading can be said to be redundant.

Redundancy arises in information theory as a reaction to noise. There are two kinds of noise: actual physical noise, like the buzz on a telephone line hindering communication, and cultural noise:

In contemporary music ... "noise" is the result of a time lag between the habit responses which the audience actually possesses and those which the more adventurous composer envisages for it.<sup>12</sup>

Now, Butor includes in his text a large number of noises, both natural and man-made, such as "automobile qui démarre", "froissements de feuilles", "mugissements". The extent to which these noises actually hinder the listener's reception of the spoken text is largely immaterial for our purposes. By including these noises in his text Butor is drawing attention to the existence of noise as a phenomenon at the falls and uses these "real" noises as an image for cultural noise, the existence of which we have already noted and described above in different terms: as the preconceptions and expectations which the visitors bring with them to the falls. There is a gap between these expectations and what is offered by the reality of the falls. In terms of the reading choices in the explanatory note this cultural noise will constitute the habit responses of the "lecteur pressé".

Redundancy is the antidote to both natural and cultural noise:

Pour que le message échappe à la <<consommation>>, pour faire en sorte que, malgré le bruit qui s'insinue et tend à troubler la réception, la signification (l'ordre) reste inaltéré dans ses lignes essentielles - bref, pour qu'une partie au moins du message survive au bruit - il faudra comme envelopper le message de réitérations de l'ordre conventionnel, d'une surabondance de probabilités bien déterminées. Cette surabondance de probabilités, c'est la redondance. (Eco, 77)

In simpler terms, the "surabondance de probabilités" involves the repetition, in related but different forms, of the message. To illustrate this Eco uses the example of the message "Je t'aime" transmitted on a telephone line:

Pour être certain que le message sera reçu correctement et que la distance, ou les parasites, ne réduiront pas les traits distinctifs en sorte qu'on entende "je te hais", je puis prendre la précaution de dire:<<je t'aime, mon amour>>. A partir de ces éléments, et si mal qu'aillent les choses, la personne qui recevra le message aura la possibilité de le reconstituer. Selon les usages de la vie civilisée et le système de probabilités qui règle les rapports affectifs, lorsqu'on appelle quelqu'un <<mon amour>>, c'est qu'on ne lui adresse pas des injures; la première moitié de la phrase sera éclairée du même coup. (Eco, 77)

The repetition of the message in a related form is a protective measure to ensure its survival, at the very least in part form.

It is our belief that this type of repetition or redundancy exists in Butor's text. Each individual reader of the text, by virtue of its natural openness, will receive its message in a different way and it is not possible to generalise by stating categorically what happens when one reads the text. We can only suggest what may happen. Let us first of all take an extreme example. If, as a "lecteur pressé", we miss out all the parentheses, then we shall not read those dealing with the attempts to shoot the falls and the exploits of Blondin. This appears to be a crucial part of the text in which we discover that victory over time and death can

be achieved by the controlled suspension of time outwith the dangers of its headlong flight. Similar information is, however, contained in the treatment of the Chateaubriand texts where we encounter the suspension of time as the prerequisite of change. The information is not exactly the same but the crucial element of the suspension of time is contained in both. The message has escaped the "consommation" of the "lecteur pressé" and remains "inaltéré dans ses lignes essentielles". It is, of course, unlikely that the "lecteur pressé" would take the time to analyse the Chateaubriand texts in the way that we have done. Let us then consider a less extreme example of the phenomenon, namely, the colours.

The enumeration of colours appears in four of the twelve sections: May, August, October and December. In May the colours are those of the flowers, in August those of the illuminations. In October the colours once again refer to the flowers but are linked to the dawn breaking after the wedding night, to the flaming light which consumes, as it were, the hopes of the couples for successful "marriage". In December the colours again refer to the illuminations and contrast sharply with the darkness of the following section (N, 206-207) heightening the feeling of desolation in that section. It is possible for the reader to miss out the colours in all four months by taking route C in May and October, route E in August and route F in December.<sup>13</sup>

In May and August we are concerned primarily with the use of colour to "clothe" the falls and exorcise their violence. In October and December the concern is not primarily with this rôle and the reader will find that his information regarding this rôle is not increased. He may well feel, therefore, either that it is unnecessary for him to read these parentheses at all or that he can safely omit those dialogues containing the colours.

On the other hand, the reader more interested in the couples' failure or the theme of desolation may feel it desirable to explore these October and December parentheses. However, these themes are also dealt with elsewhere in the text: the failure of the couples is admirably portrayed in the wedding-night of the September section; the theme of desolation is also contained in the second December parenthesis, "Noël au Niagara" (N, 208-210); if the reader feels he has a sufficient grasp of these aspects there can be very little he can usefully gain in terms of information from reading the colours in these parentheses. In other words, what one chooses to read will in the final analysis be a function of what one has understood, of whether one feels one has all the information on a particular aspect that one needs. In order to reject a parenthesis or a particular set of dialogues it is, of course, necessary to know what they contain in the first place. It is in this sense that the exploratory method implies a reading of the totality of the text. Only when the reader knows what is contained in all the various parts of the text can he begin the process of selection according to understanding. The method of reading will literally be "un chemin de compréhension". The more quickly one understands the less one needs to include in one's own personal reading of the text. What is redundant for one reader will be necessary for another and the work is thus designed for all types of reader.

It might be felt that, in describing the reading method as "un chemin de compréhension", we are positing the existence of an unequivocal message to which all readers eventually return. This is not the case. We have seen that the work is designed for a variety of readers and for a variety of readings. Each reading constitutes a different interpretative possibility. The problem lies in the fact that these interpretative possibilities appear very similar. This indicates the presence of a controlled

field of possibilities. Like the author of the message "Je t'aime" Butor has something to communicate and like that author it would defeat his purposes if the opposite or something totally different were received to that which he transmitted. In other words, behind the message lies the source of the message, the intention of the author. The act of writing or of painting is a gesture and the work of art the sign of that gesture: "le geste originel fixé par le signe constitue une orientation et permet de retrouver l'intention de l'auteur" (Eco, 138). The author of the "open work" cannot allow his work to degenerate into chaos: he must create a balance between order and disorder. The sign that is the work of art must be invested "de toutes les intégrations personnelles compatibles avec les intentions de l'auteur" (Eco, 139).<sup>14</sup> This does not prejudice the plurality of the message which remains open "à plus d'une réponse" (Eco, 131). Each reader receives a personal message by selecting his own way through the text. At the same time the kernel of similarity in each reception of the message permits the survival of the author's intention. This is not a regressive process nor does the intention of the author remain static. This can best be understood if the reader imagines himself in the position of the producer of the radio play. The text that he "broadcasts" is, in essence, Butor's text and the intention behind the text, Butor's intention. However, the version which the reader "broadcasts" is his version of the text and, therefore, also his version of the intentions behind it. What the reader "broadcasts" is what he wishes to say. The reader takes over, as it were, the communication of the intention which, by virtue of the process of selection, is no longer uniquely that of Butor. Each reader will have his own version of the text and will have changed it in a positive way to suit his own particular needs. The reader operates the change just as it is the Reader who operates the change from one version of Chateaubriand's description to another. The author's intention survives in this transformational sense, no longer the sole property of the author, but altered to become the property of each

individual reader.

By putting ourselves into the position of the producer of the radio play we can also see the extent to which 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde is an experimental and exemplary text. In choosing our own "chemin de compréhension" we literally find ourselves with a different version of the text: as radio producers we can broadcast our version of the text and we could, if we so desired, write our own 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. Butor's aim, however, is not to have us all busily writing but to demonstrate in concrete fashion the type of internal reading process which he wishes to permit the reader: "le chemin de compréhension" which gives each of us a different version of the text in our heads. This process has been externalised in 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde to provide a literal and clear example of what he means. What is important in the volume is not each reader's literal possession of a different version of the text but the method by which he acquired that version. This point will be of importance in our discussion of Illustrations II.

The type of selective additive and subtractive reading required in 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde is reminiscent of the "savants passages" leading to the heart of the basilica of St Mark's. The reader is invited to initiate himself into the ways which lead to a reception of the author's message in its plurality. The more adept he becomes the less he needs to diverge into "parentheses". Butor has used the possibilities of the "open work" to construct a hermetic text, continuing his interest in alchemy, in which the "secret" is protected from the "lecteur pressé" and his cultural noise and at the same time is offered to the reader of goodwill who takes time to explore the possibilities of the work. It is in this sense that Butor can be said to have adapted the possibilities of the



"open work" to his own particular method of writing. The reader of 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde finds himself in a similar position to the young Butor of Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe.

Jean Roudaut has written of 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde:

le véritable sujet du livre n'est ni la cataracte (aucune description nouvelle n'en est tentée), ni les rapports de l'homme et du monde, ni ceux de la culture et de la nature: ce livre est le récit d'une lecture.<sup>16</sup>

We hope to have shown that all of these subjects are the concern of the work. The culmination of the breakdown in the relationship between man and place, a theme first encountered in Mobile, is shown in the failure of the visitors to achieve union with their partners and in the disintegration of their thought and language. The relationship between man and place has been obscured by a culture which attempts to possess and exploit place. The falls are a symbol of the dangerous and chaotic passage of time. In La Modification we saw that change was none other than the normal passage of time which Delmont denied in his attempt to return to a mode of organisation which belonged to the past. In the works of this section we find that time is passing too quickly. To change reality we need time but time is running out on us. The history of Niagara in the shape of Blondin shows that, to effect change, it is necessary to step outside the temporal flux, to delay and control its passage. Like the Americans of Mobile we need to slow down and take time to re-evaluate our reality, to re-read it and, in so doing, change it like the Reader of Chateaubriand's descriptions.

The treatment of time can be seen as both a comment on reality and on Butor's own literary career. Butor, too, needs time to effect change on his literary production after the break with the novel form. Both

Description de San Marco and 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde are monuments to temporal delay, experiments toward the establishment of a literary work which will be at once strong in its solidity and resistance to time, skilful in its control of time and flexible enough to involve the maximum of readers in the operation of change. Both works appear at a time when Butor clearly feels these aims have not yet been achieved. In this post-novel period Butor is still searching for a solid base to his general literary output. In the thought behind the "open work" Butor has found a means of increasing the freedom of the reader who is no longer dominated by the writer but is given an invitation: "faire l'oeuvre avec l'auteur" (Eco, 35). He has found a way of making the reader work for himself and become more independent. Armed with this weapon Butor will go on to stabilise his output in the shape of the series Illustrations and Matière de Rêves where the concept of openness will be extended to cover a plurality of works but in which the problem of chaos and time still have to be faced. Like Degrés before it, 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde marks the end of one phase of Butor's writing and announces the beginning of another.

Table OneSerialisation of the Chateaubriand Texts

Butor serialises the texts by treating each of the eleven sentences in each version of the text as an element in a series. Thus the first sentence of version one can be considered as element A, the first sentence of version two as element A<sup>2</sup> and so on. The canonical effect is created by the fragmentation of each sentence-element and by the running of different variations of the series simultaneously. As an example of this technique we have chosen the month of September since all the various procedures used in the work can be found together in the version of the texts which appears in this month. In this example there are three variations or statements of the series. Arrows indicate either a forward or reverse movement. A reverse movement is not only one in which element E, for example, will precede element D, but also one in which the fragments of an element will appear in reverse order. Thus, in the case of element D, "La cataracte se divise en deux branches/et se courbe en un fer à cheval/d'environ un demi-mille de circuit", a reverse movement will produce, "d'environ un demi-mille de circuit/et se courbe en un fer à cheval/la cataracte se divise en deux branches". The three variations of the series are as follows:

		→			←			→		
Statement One:	C	D	E	F / F	E	D	C / C	D	E	F
	→									
Statement Two:	A	B	C	D	E	F	H <sup>2</sup>	I <sup>2</sup>	J <sup>2</sup>	K <sup>2</sup>
	←			→			←			
Statement Three:	F	E	D	C / C	F / F	E	D	C		

The simultaneous running of these three statements produces the pattern below. The canonical effect can be seen most clearly in the section where element F is running in all three statements. The table should be read horizontally.

Statement	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
	C	A	F	C	A	F	C	A	F	C	B	F
	C	B	F	C	B	F	C	B	F	C	B	F
	C	B			C	F	C	C	F	C	C	F
	C	C	F	C	C	F	D	C	E	D	C	E
	E	C	E/D	E	C	D	E	C	D	E	D	C
	E	D	C	E	D	C	E	D	C	F	D	C
	F	E	C	F	E	C	F	E	C	F	E	C
	F	E	C	F	F	C	F	F	C	F	F	F
	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
	F	F	F	F	F <sub>2</sub>	F	F	F <sub>2</sub>	F	F	F <sub>2</sub>	F
	E	F <sub>2</sub>	F	E	H <sub>2</sub>	F	E	H <sub>2</sub>	F	E	H <sub>2</sub>	F
	E	H <sub>2</sub>	F	E	H <sub>2</sub>	F	E	I <sub>2</sub>	F	E	I <sub>2</sub>	F
	D	I <sub>2</sub>	F	D	I <sub>2</sub>	F	D	I <sub>2</sub>	F	D	I <sub>2</sub>	F
	C	I <sub>2</sub>	F	C	I <sub>2</sub>	F	C	I <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F
	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F
	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F
	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F
	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F
	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	F
	D	J <sub>2</sub>	F	C	J <sub>2</sub>	E	D	J <sub>2</sub>	E	D	J <sub>2</sub>	D
	D	J <sub>2</sub>	D	D		D	D		D	E		C
	E		C	E		C	E		C	E/F		

We now produce in table form the pattern of the overall shift from version one to version two of the text. Again the letters refer to the sentences of each version.

	Version One	Version Two
April	A B C D E F G H I J K	-
May	A B C D E F G H I J	K
June	A B C D E F G H I	K
July	A B C D E F G H	J K
August	A B C D E F G	I J K
September	A B C D E F	H I J K
October	A B C D E F	G H I J K
November	A B C D E	F G H I J K
December	A B C D	E F G H I J K
January	A B C	C D E F G H I J K
February	A B	C D E F G H I J K
March	-	A B C D E F G H I J K

FOOTNOTES

1. Umberto Eco, L'Oeuvre Ouverte, Éditions du Seuil, 1965.
2. Michel Butor, Henri Pousseur, 'Votre Faust', Les Cahiers du Centre d'Études et de Recherches Marxistes, no. 62 (1968), p. 16.
3. John Ruskin, The Stones of Venice, 3 Vols., Blackfriars, II, p. 123.
4. Henri Pousseur, 'The Question of Order in New Music', Perspectives of New Music, 5, no. 1 (Fall - Winter 1966), 93 - 111 (p. 108).
5. See Appendix One.
6. Although there are ten routes from A to J, there are only nine different routes.
7. Michael Spencer, Michel Butor, Twayne, 1974, p. 132.
8. Spencer, p. 129.
9. See Table One.
10. François van Laere, 'Une Issue pour l'art actuel: l'oeuvre ouverte?', Revue des Langues Vivantes, 33 (1967), 3 - 12 (p. 6).
11. Jean Roudaut, 'Parenthèse sur la place occupée par l'étude intitulée 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde parmi les autres ouvrages de Michel Butor', La Nouvelle Revue Française, no. 165 (September 1966), 498 - 509 (p. 507).
12. Leonard B. Meyer, 'Meaning in Music and Information Theory', in Music, the Arts and Ideas, University of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 16 - 17.

13. There is, of course, no reason why the reader should not mix his routes through the text in this way. Nor should the reader be discouraged from taking his own routes ie., routes not included in A - J.
14. The concept of the author's "intention" has been much challenged in recent times and we are aware of the arguments advanced, in the wake of Derrida, by Catherine Belsey. The notions of source, communication and reception are, however, central to the conceptual framework of our argument.
15. Roudaut, pp. 505 - 506.

SECTION THREE

THE ILLUSTRATIONS SERIES

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Illustrations: A Preview of the Series

#### INTRODUCTION

Although Illustrations was preceded by all of the novels and three of the four experimental works we have examined, Butor was a poet long before he turned his attention to other literary forms: "j'ai beaucoup poétisé quand j'étais enfant, puis étudiant, pendant les classes, quand le cours m'ennuyait. J'ai noirci des centaines et des centaines de pages que je donnais à des camarades" (TA, 12). As soon as he began work on his first novel, however, Butor ceased to write poetry:

A partir du moment où j'ai commencé à écrire Passage de Milan, en Égypte, j'ai cessé d'écrire des poèmes, je me le suis interdit pendant des années, pour que toute la charge dont je pouvais être porteur fût investie dans le roman. (TA, 12)

Only a few of the poems belonging to this early period have survived, a period given the title "Éocène" in Travaux d'Approche. These poems are the work of a writer called Michel Butor "qui est mort en 1951" (TA, 13). Illustrations is a collection of works which represent the poetic rebirth of Michel Butor.

The Michel Butor who returns to poetry is no longer writing alone at the back of a classroom but is crossing traditional frontiers and working in collaboration with various types of artists: painters, sculptors,



photographers. While concentrating all his efforts on the novel Butor nevertheless considered the idea of writing in collaboration with artists some time before his novel production had ceased. The collaboration whose origins are best documented is that between Butor and the American artist Gregory Masurovsky which gave rise to "Litanie d'Eau", the longest poem in Illustrations:

Les premiers dessins que j'ai vus de [lui] étaient exposés dans une galerie de la rive gauche en 1957, et ils m'ont tout de suite intéressé. J'ai eu l'impression en les voyant que j'aurais des choses à dire là-dessus. L'idée d'une collaboration est née dans mon esprit très vite. Pourtant l'occasion d'écrire quelque chose sur ces dessins ne s'est présenté que lors de [son] exposition, trois ans plus tard, à La Hune. C'était autour de cette rencontre que Bernard Gheerbrant a eu l'idée de faire un livre avec nous deux. C'a été <<Litanie d'Eau>>. <sup>1</sup>

Although 1960 may have marked the birth of "Litanie d'Eau", it was another two years before Masurovsky had produced a new series of drawings which Butor used as the inspiration for his text. The brief history<sup>2</sup> of the origins of "Litanie d'Eau" shows that Butor's adventure into a different realm of Art arose quite simply from a feeling that he might have something to say about a particular artist's work, be it a contemporary living artist such as Masurovsky or an eighteenth century painter like Magnasco.

It is not only in the collaboration with artists that Butor's new poetry differs from that of the pre-novel period. He is now less interested in the writing of poems as individual works than in their collection into volumes like Illustrations. He had already collected his critical essays together in Répertoire, the second volume of which was published in the same year as Illustrations. These two different types of collection stem from Butor's interest in the concept of openness and in the relationship between the singular and the plural, the individual text and the group of texts:

J'ai été très préoccupé, tous ces temps derniers, par la question de l'ouverture du volume, par la mise en question de la distinction entre le singulier et le pluriel, entre un texte (le livre) et plusieurs textes (le recueil). Je me suis livré à toutes sortes d'expériences. D'un côté les Répertoire sont presque des recueils classiques, de l'autre les Illustrations constituent des recueils d'un type nouveau qui tendent, je l'espère, à ébranler la notion même de recueil. (TA, 11)

The essential characteristic of this new kind of collection is that the texts included do not appear in their original form: "Je ne puis me contenter d'accumuler des textes déjà publiés par ailleurs. Je veux faire du rassemblement lui-même un travail original" (TA, 10). The originality of his method of collection lies in the revision of the texts: "chaque texte est présenté dans une nouvelle version, parfois entièrement récrit" (TA, 11). The revision of the texts and the preoccupation with the relationship between singular and plural has a particular effect in the Illustrations series: "l'acte de recueillir devient tellement essentiel que les textes originaux ne sont plus que les matériaux d'une opération qui les change complètement" (TA, 11). Butor is claiming here that his method of collection creates, in effect, a new text in which the individual component texts become part of a larger corporate entity.

Butor's return to poetry and the novelty of his collaboration with artists are marked by a certain degree of caution and trepidation. "Litanie d'Eau" appears to have constituted an important stage in his return to the poem. Explaining that he examined carefully Masurovsky's drawings before selecting the vocabulary which each one suggested to him, Butor says: "J'ai donc fait <<un poème>>. C'est une des premières fois où j'ai osé réemployer le mot poème en y mettant bien sûr beaucoup de guillemets."<sup>3</sup> The texts of Illustrations belong to a period when Butor is cautiously and carefully re-inserting part of his production into the genre we call poetry. At the same time he has to cope with the new domain of

art, a domain in which he feels insecure, writing in Illustrations: "N'es-tu pas en train d'ajouter des moustaches à la Joconde?" (I, 142). Butor feels that, in writing about art, in crossing the frontier between literature and art, he is somehow committing sacrilege.

In view of these fears it is perhaps not surprising that Butor's claims for the first volume of Illustrations seem modest in comparison to the claims he makes for this method of collection in 1972 and which we discussed above. The transformation of the individual texts is minimal:

Le texte originel est intégralement conservé, mais pour pallier l'absence des images primitives, il est souvent juxtaposé à d'autres textes ou à d'autres parties du même texte, et sa disposition sur la page est travaillée de telle sorte que tout l'ensemble du volume soit pris dans un seul mouvement. (TA, 187)

In contrast, Illustrations II is a far more ambitious project and corresponds much more clearly to Butor's description of his aims:

Ici les textes, présentés partiellement dans leur version originelle, réagissent les uns sur les autres, se transforment mutuellement, donnent naissance à de nouvelles versions, celle de l'un continuant sur la page de droite, l'autre sur la page de gauche. Les mots et les phrases glissent ainsi d'un texte à l'autre, l'ensemble acquérant une effervescence perpétuelle. (TA, 188)

Where the emphasis in the second volume falls on the intermingling of individual texts, in Illustrations we are concerned with a movement of juxtaposition where the order in which each text is placed is the most important factor. All the texts are kept separate from each other and do not intermingle. This stems from the fact that the texts which comprise Illustrations were not originally written with the intention that they would one day appear together in the same volume.<sup>4</sup>

Because of the lack of intermingling in Illustrations this first

volume is less well suited than those which follow it to answer the questions we would like to pose regarding Butor's method of collection and the creation of a corporate text. It is our intention to analyse the notion of a corporate text within the context of commitment to change, to examine its effect on our method of reading and its links to the wider context of reality as a whole. In addition, we shall examine the rôle of art and the artist: if we know why Butor collaborates with a particular artist what is it that attracts him to art and artists in the first place? What rôle can art play in changing life and can this be linked to the notion of a corporate text? We feel that these questions can best be answered by a detailed study of the later volumes in the series, beginning with Illustrations II where the process of "glissement" or contamination is first to be seen.

Illustrations itself can, however, serve as an introduction to our study for two reasons. First, it deals with the central theme of the first two volumes in a way which prefigures the successful resolution of that theme at the end of Illustrations II. Second, one of its poems, "Litanie d'Eau", affords a valuable insight into the process of textual contamination which characterises Illustrations II.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

The central theme of Illustrations can be summed up in the title of the second poem of the volume, "Rencontre": the meeting between the writer and the domain of art. The texts of the volume constitute a series of meetings between the writer and art in which the former gradually becomes more confident. To illustrate this point we can contrast the first and last poems of the volume, "La Conversation" and "La Cathédrale de Laon, l'automne".

In "La Conversation" M.B.<sup>5</sup> finds himself inside a painting which is based principally on Magnasco's "Assemblée dans un Jardin".<sup>6</sup> M.B. is an

outsider in this assembly and feels ill at ease there: "je n'avais pas la conscience tranquille" (I, 12). At first ignored completely (I, 12), he is then presumed to be a servant, a kind of savage by the name of Abel (I, 17). His task is to help the people of the assembly who are in an advanced state of decomposition: "Déjà la peinture de mes joues s'écaille" (I, 27). He is, however, revealed to be an impostor and expelled from the painting: "Sûrement c'étaient des chiens qui me chassaient. La grille se ferma violemment derrière moi. Ce n'était pas une grille, c'était un mur" (I, 29). The events of the poem can be interpreted as the first meeting between Butor and the world of art. Art needs the help of the writer but it neither recognises him nor welcomes him. The meeting is a failure, a veritable "rendez-vous manqué", like those of the subsequent "La Gare St. Lazare", which suggests that art is forbidden territory to the writer. As Abel, the writer seems to risk destruction in daring to enter the world of art. Butor calls "La Conversation" a "rêve éveillé"<sup>7</sup>: it is his nightmare as he sets out to encounter the world of art, a vision of failure and potential self-destruction.

In "La Cathédrale de Laon, l'automne" the situation has completely changed. For the reader of L'Emploi du Temps it is quite a delight to come upon a real unfinished cathedral where a real bishop was assassinated and where a real fire wreaked destruction. Approached from a distance, the cathedral gives the appearance of a sailing-ship of old, a "vaisseau-fantôme" (I, 19) which has seen better days. Its silhouette, as the textual figure shows, seems like topless masts with ragged sails and burnt rigging. M.B. and his companions enter the cathedral "tels des voyageurs s'engageant sur la passerelle d'un paquebot" (I, 191). This comparison with a ship recalls the New Cathedral of Bleston, the ultimate work of art, the decorations of which depicted living creatures of all kinds as if it were a new ark. Laon Cathedral is a symbol of art.

Each of the ten pages of the text presents us with a different figure. Unlike "La Conversation", where the text undergoes no transformation, here we have a constantly changing variety of typographical dispositions. It is as if the text had been liberated from all restraints. All the space of the volume is utilised. A similar freedom seems to have been gained by M.B. Emerging at the end of the text onto the tower (I, 199), he is on top of the cathedral, in command of the ship, as it were, and able to navigate to other horizons. The sun comes out from behind a cloud, the sun he thought had set, symbol of life and gold, the target of the alchemist. Bearing in mind that the cathedral is a symbol of art, M.B.'s position on top of it represents a triumph, that of the writer in control of his source, and contrasts sharply with "La Conversation". The mood is uplifting and optimistic where before there had been a feeling of doubt and despair. The triumph, however, is not a final one: the ocean has only just carried his ship away from the bank "où nous nous attardons" (I, 196) and the "other side" is a long way off. The cathedral remains unfinished.

What we see in "La Cathédrale de Laon, l'automne" is a vision of triumph and not an actual triumph, just as "La Conversation" is a vision of failure. Nonetheless, there has to be something which justifies this vision of success. The movement of Illustrations is one from failure to success and, since the order of the texts is the crucial factor in this movement, we believe that the explanation for Butor's vision of success lies in the immediately preceding text, "Litanie d'Eau".

The first impressions the reader has of "Litanie d'Eau" are of solidity on the one hand and chaos on the other. "Litanie d'Eau" consists of blocks of text positioned at the bottom of the page, the remainder of which is taken up with quotations, "keys"<sup>8</sup>, or the daydreams of the writer. The ten sections of the poem contain fifty paragraph-blocks of ten lines each. The outward solidity of these blocks contrasts with the chaos of their internal composition. The paragraphs do not recount a story with the result that the level of grammatical structure is low. The poem describes itself as "une longue phrase" (I, 111) or "une seule phrase interminable" (I, 119). In effect, the total absence of normal punctuation devices, such as commas, full stops etc., gives the impression of a single sentence which even transcends the gaps between sections. This long sentence consists of brief snatches of sentence structure and pure lists of words. The range and size of this vocabulary is extremely large. There are, for example, some one hundred and sixty-eight different verbs. The chaos of the extent of the vocabulary range is compounded by a large amount of repetition, both inside and outside each particular section. In the second paragraph of section three (I, 126), for example, the word "jaïs" occurs five times. The word "saphir" occurs in four different sections while its companions "turquoise, émeraudes, jaïs" appear in five. We have the impression of being lost in a wave of loosely connected words placed at random in the text and a syntax which has no apparent beginning or end.

Nevertheless, the reader can discern certain patterns, all of which are connected to the ideas of "glissement", mutual excitement and the passage from the solid to the liquid. It is noticeable that many of the verbs mean more or less the same thing and many nouns belong to thematic groups, like the precious stones we saw above. Butor explains how he

selected the vocabulary:

J'ai essayé d'utiliser, non seulement les dix gravures retenues, mais aussi les cinq autres, c'est-à-dire que j'ai cherché, en regardant longuement les gravures, le vocabulaire que chacune m'inspirait pour en faire une description.<sup>9</sup>

Hence the significance of the note on the title page of "Litanie d'Eau" in Illustrations: "sur dix ou plus exactement quinze eaux-fortes de Gregory Masurovsky" (I, 107). Hence, too, the proliferation of vocabulary: crammed into ten sections is the vocabulary of fifteen. The extent of the repetitions of vocabulary is also explained by Butor:

J'ai fait un texte en dix parties, chaque partie correspondant à une des gravures, mais le vocabulaire issu de chacune des gravures n'est pas utilisé seulement dans la partie du texte qui lui correspond ... Il y a toute une construction du texte par rapport aux gravures elles-mêmes, chaque gravure donnant le vocabulaire principal pour la partie du texte qui lui correspond, mais les gravures voisines prêtant quelques mots pour ce texte-là.<sup>10</sup>

We thus have ten separate sections each with their own native vocabulary to which is added, in any one section, both vocabulary from one or more of the rejected drawings and vocabulary from the two neighbouring sections. Butor quotes an example: one of the drawings (the third rejected drawing)<sup>11</sup> suggested to him the theme of mother and child: "Ce thème donc de <<mère et enfant>> a été le point de départ de toute une série de choses qui se sont glissées dans d'autres parties du texte".<sup>12</sup> Words "slide" from section to section. This phenomenon of "glissement" is not only limited to sections which are immediate neighbours; for example the words "ruisseau, source, torrent, courant, fleuve, marée, rivière, cascade, lac", which belong to the native vocabulary of section eight<sup>13</sup>, can all be found in section five, forming a sort of premonition, a trickle which becomes a flood in section eight.



The impression of chaos which results from this phenomenon of "glissement" is only apparent. We are, in fact, dealing with a vocabulary "travaillé par séries".<sup>14</sup> The serial organisation of the vocabulary takes several different forms ranging from the simple to the highly complex. The thirteen precious stones are an example of a simple series. The series occurs once in every section with a list of five stones.<sup>15</sup> In section one we can find: "perles diamants opales saphirs turquoises". In section two "perles" disappears and a new stone, "émeraudes", is added to the end of the list. This process continues until in section ten "perles" returns, completing a cyclical movement. The process is complicated in section three where each stone occurs more than once to give, extracted from the text (I, 122-127), the following figure:

jaïs, émeraudes jaïs, turquoises émeraudes jaïs, saphirs  
turquoises émeraudes jaïs, opales saphirs turquoises émeraudes jaïs.

In this example there are five versions of the series, the last being the full complement of five members. The series is regularly built-up from one member to five, a feature not typical of the complex series which are in the majority in the poem. We can see that only one version of the series is complete, the others all have elements missing.

A clearer picture of the nature of the serial treatment of the vocabulary can be gained from an examination of a complex series. The complex series are extremely large both in the number of members and in the number of versions and we cannot examine them all in the context of this study. We shall limit ourselves to a brief look at one of the two series of adjectives and more particularly at the figure it provides once extracted from the seven paragraphs of section five (I, 136-145):

A. léger vif doux tendre aérien multiple froid souple salé claire chaud./B. léger vif doux tendre aérien multiple froid souple salé/  
 C. léger vif douces tendres./D. douce tendre aérien multiples froides souple salé chaude./E. légère vive douce tendre aérienne multiple froide souple./F. léger./E. salé claire chaude/F. vive doux/  
 G. léger/F. tendre/G. vive/F. aérien/G. douce tendre/F. multiple/  
 G. aérien/F. froid/G. multiple/F. souple/G. froide/F. salé/G. souple/  
 F. clair/G. salé clair/F. chaud/G. chaud/H. léger doux tendre aérien multiple froide souple salée clair/J. léger vif doux tendre aérien froide.

We have chosen this particular series because it begins with a complete version. In view of Butor's use of music elsewhere<sup>16</sup>, we shall employ musical terminology in connection with the series of the poem. The complete version A is a statement of the theme of the series, of its constituent notes, while the subsequent versions are variations on this theme. The first five variations are relatively simple: variation B misses out the elements "clair" and "chaud"; variation C only proceeds as far as "tendres" while D restates "douce tendre" and continues to the end of the theme; variation E restates the whole theme but is interrupted by the first note of F between "souple" and "salé", a brief dialogue being created. It is at this point that matters become complicated: two variations, F and G, form a double voice, alternating with each other until a double ending on the same note, "chaud chaud". Here a full dialogue between the variations is created. With variations H and J we return to a less complex arrangement. In this example of the series we have all the basic techniques used in the poem, except one: in sections seven and nine this particular series occurs in reverse order. This technique is not widely used in the text.

It can be seen that the serial organisation of the text makes for considerable variety and mobility, the technique of the double voice occasioning meetings between the variations. This technique is expanded to include different series at various points in the poem, notably in

section two where there is a dialogue between several series of verbs. The series as we have shown them above offer a picture of extremely tight and controlled organisation which denies the chaos on the surface even if, on reading, this is perceived as no more than an undercurrent flowing from paragraph to paragraph, section to section.

The serial organisation and the phenomenon of "glissement" contribute to the downfall of the paragraph with its four-sided rectangular shape and also to that of the barriers between sections. The words refuse to stay inside either of these frames, spilling over their sides like water. The solidity of the paragraph has given way to the liquidity of the series. The serial organisation also produces a wave phenomenon: scarcely has the theme ended when it returns in a slightly different form, like one wave succeeding another: the text ebbs and flows.

We have remarked in our examination of the above two series that, in certain variations, elements of the series were missing. The space of "Litanie d'Eau", although large, is limited. Into the restricted space of ten sections Butor has put the vocabulary of fifteen. It is clear that there is not enough room for everything, that we cannot always have a complete variation. It is equally clear that, if a given word occupies a given position, this is not entirely by chance as the serial organisation proves. Yet, the organisation cannot be entirely serial, entirely mathematical. There has to be an element of choice on the part of the writer as to which word goes where, which word is left out. Referring to the reworking of entire texts in the later volumes of the Illustrations series, Butor offers a clue as to how he makes this kind of choice:

Si l'on <<reprend>> un texte, c'est qu'à la relecture on a bien senti que les mots ne restaient pas tranquilles que certains s'excluaient mutuellement, demandaient à changer de place, à disparaître, que d'autres au contraire appelaient commentaires et compléments. (TA, 17)

If we consider that the original "texts" of "Litanie d'Eau" were the fifteen separate groups of vocabulary inspired by the drawings then we can see how this comment might be applied to it, how, for example, the word "glacier" might become the title<sup>17</sup> of the first section, a section corresponding to a drawing of the sun, when "glacier" belongs to the vocabulary of a rejected drawing.<sup>18</sup> A further clue to this process can be found in the same discussion:

Dans mes tentatives les plus récentes, j'essaie de ronger une nouvelle démarcation, celle qui sépare les textes fixés des textes en ébullition. En les remettant en chantier, dans leur creuset, dans leur fonderie, je m'efforce de les faire revivre, je les excite mutuellement. (TA, 17)

Again we can apply this to the vocabulary of "Litanie d'Eau". Fixed by Butor's original selection to particular drawings, fifteen in number, the words are then taken away from these drawings and thrown into a much narrower framework of ten where they have to react and choose themselves, as it were. In Butor's conception, it is the words themselves which refuse to remain quiet, which demand a re-arrangement. "Litanie d'Eau" thus becomes "chantier, creuset, fonderie". This latter image is not inappropriate as the poem contains a series of metals, liquified by the serial organisation, and an anvil (I, 131), making us sense the presence of a blacksmith, the writer. The poem is a melting-pot bubbling over with rejected words.

The aim of putting words or texts into the melting-pot is to make them live again, to excite them. This notion of excitement appears

central to Butor's conception of language<sup>19</sup> and the task of the writer:

<<Propriétés excitantes du langage<sup>20</sup>>>, cela peut avoir au moins deux sens; l'un direct, grossier, très beau d'ailleurs, nous dit que le langage peut exciter le corps, sexuellement en particulier ... exciter l'esprit, l'autre que le langage peut se présenter à nous sous deux états, l'un terne, dormant, poussiéreux, l'autre vibrant, brillant, vivant, d'excitation, et que cette excitation peut être provoquée non seulement par des agents extérieurs mais par ses propriétés mêmes convenablement mises en oeuvre. Au lieu d'être fixés définitivement ... les mots peuvent atteindre un état supérieur dans lequel ils éveillent perpétuellement d'autres mots. Quelque chose en eux frémit. (TA, 17)

Here we return to two of the key notions in Butor's note on Illustrations II, namely that the texts of the volume "réagissent les uns sur les autres", producing "une effervescence perpétuelle".

The excitation of language in "Litane d'Eau" produces what we might call textual meetings between words and takes us back to the question of punctuation. As we have seen, there are no printed punctuation marks in the text. However, the text produces its own internal punctuation in the fluctuation between snatches of sentence structure, lists of words and elements which can be considered as sentences within the huge sentence of the poem. This type of punctuation allows the text to flow from one half of the double page to the other and from one double page to another. Thus in section four the last line of paragraph three continues over the page:

phrase qui se reprend dans le ciel roule s'étend croule tremble va  
Croule roule/saphirs turquoises émeraudes jaïs améthystes/s'effondre  
croule sombre sous le ciel/eau de fonte/va s'engloutit  
(I, 133-134)

The lines indicate the type of punctuation we make as we read. The act of turning the page occurs, not at the first of these lines, but between "tremble va" and "Croule roule". In this extract we have a subject,

"phrase", with no main clause but with a subordinate clause which is punctuated by the list of precious stones, takes up again and is then further punctuated by "eau de fonte". It continues with "va s'engloutit" and lasts for another two lines:

vient jusqu'à l'horizon de nickel de mer va revient s'adoucit  
s'étend sous le ciel file s'étale météore d'eau se lisse s'allonge  
(I, 134)

With this punctuation a new subject, "météore", takes over to pursue a similar adventure. The first subject runs into the second one to create a dual entity, "phrase-météore", a meeting between two elements. The first subject with its wave of verbs rolls over the second one, sweeping it along with it. The movement of the text mirrors that of its subject matter, the wave. The punctuation we make as we read creates a kind of parenthesis, a parenthesis of precious stones in the extract above. These elements appear as contents of the clause, as if the clause-wave were made of these materials. The words or signs thus treated make up a vast wave of language while what they signify makes up the wave of water.

The encounter between "phrase" and "météore" is not an isolated one: there are many meetings of this kind in the text. We intend, however, to deal only with those meetings involving the word "phrase" which belongs to one of the two privileged series in the work, that of writing.<sup>21</sup> This series, along with that of the colours, which we do not intend to discuss, is privileged in that the inspiration for it cannot come from the drawings since there is no drawing which depicts a sentence or a book in the way that one depicts a tree, another a volcano.<sup>22</sup> If this series can be said to have been inspired by the drawings it is because of the very absence of its theme in the drawings:

le texte complète la gravure dans la mesure où il lui apporte de la couleur, le texte est formé d'un vocabulaire qui tient de la gravure, mais aussi un vocabulaire qui s'ajoute, qui donne ce qui manque à la gravure.<sup>23</sup>

Like the colours, the theme of writing was not present in the drawings.

The writing series is native to section nine of the poem and the word "phrase" pushes the idea of "glissement" to its limit by being absent from its native territory. It completely mocks the notion of frame, of a fixed barrier. In this respect, it is perhaps the "hero" of the poem. In connection with "Rencontre" Butor has said: "certains mots, par-delà l'affabulation du récit primitif, devenaient de véritables personnages de roman, qui avaient des aventures".<sup>24</sup> This is all the more true of "Litanie d'Eau" which contains a series of adventures in which certain words, by virtue of their frequency or position, become privileged personages. In general these are words which could become titles of the drawings or are in certain cases section titles: "enfant, calice, phrase, vague, arbre, glacier" etc. "Phrase", title of section two, is thus a word-hero which breaks down the barriers of the paragraph more effectively than any other.

The word "phrase" occurs in seven of the ten sections and three other meetings of the type "phrase-météore" are produced: "vague-phrase" (I, 111), "arbre-phrase" (I, 156) and "volcan-phrase-aube" (I, 164). The first two figures involving "phrase", "vague-phrase" and "phrase-météore", sum up the themes of the poem: "Nous étions tout à fait d'accord sur la thématique générale qui était celle de l'eau et des météores".<sup>25</sup> We have the twin theme of water and fire, water which washes down and fire which purifies<sup>26</sup>. This is the treatment undergone by words in "Litanie d'Eau". In addition, a meteor is a celestial body which blazes a new trail across

the sky. The next figure is "arbre-phrase": suitably purified, language rises from its own ashes in the form of a tree of life with all its different branches of possibility. The tree is an appropriate symbol since it appears solid from the outside but depends on the passage of water inside: we might say that it was solidly liquid. The volcano of the figure "volcan-phrase-aube" also has this dual nature: solidly mountainous and apparently dead from the outside, it is bubbling over with life inside, occasionally spewing out molten rock which will cool to create new forms. Finally, this entire process heralds the approach of a new dawn, a new beginning.

In this way we can see how the word "phrase", and the poem it describes, transcends its own limits to become also wave, meteor, tree, volcano and dawn. The word has become new and exciting, enriched with additional significance. Melting-pot, volcano of language, "Litanie d'Eau" reveals "les propriétés excitantes du langage". It makes words react with one another, awaken one another, generating a bubbling effervescence which gives birth to new entities, new systems of organisation, new possibilities.

We are now in a position to understand the vision of success and the liberation of the text in "La Cathédrale de Laon, l'automne". The text is completely unfettered and able to form whatever figures it chooses. The rigid framework of the paragraph has given way to a flexibility which is full of new possibilities. We have seen that the process of "glissement" involves the movement of words from their own domain to that of other words. It is this movement which is responsible for the break-up of the solidity of the paragraph and the passage to a liquid text.



It is this passage from the solid to the liquid which seems to us to be the lynch-pin of the Illustrations series, the objective of the series. Once this objective has been reached Butor will indeed be at the helm. At once navigator and blacksmith, his next task is to transcend the barriers of the individual text, to forge a melting-pot of texts, to write Illustrations II, in which the notion of "glissement" or "contamination" as it is known in connection with this work, is expanded and refined: "les textes personnages ne vont plus seulement se suivre, jalonner une aventure commune, mais dialoguer".<sup>27</sup> It is to the system of dialogues of Illustrations II that we shall now proceed, forewarned and fore-armed by our reading of "Litanie d'Eau".

TABLE ONE

This is not a complete tabulation of the vocabulary of "Litanie d'Eau" which would run to many pages. We have included the main vocabulary series referred to in our discussion: the precious stones, the water series and the writing series. We have added the sea series (native to section two, "Phrase") in order that the reader should appreciate that the native territory of a particular series is clearly a function of frequency of appearance. We have also added for contrast a series which is a permanent feature of all sections of the text, the liquid series. The numbers refer to the paragraphs of each section: thus the word "vague" appears in all three paragraphs of section one, "Glacier".

TABLE ONE

	Glacier	Phrase	Calice	Alcool	Buisson	Bitume	Menace	Torrent	Enfant	Huile
vague	1 2 3	2 4								
eau	1 2 3	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 9	1 2 3
mer	1 2 3	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 7 8 9	1 2 3
remous		1 2 3 4 5								
gouttes		1 2 3 4 5								
baie		1 2 5								
buée		1 2 3 5								
frange		2	1				2			
bulle		1 2 4								
écume		5	1 3				3			3
tourbillon			1 2 3							
houle				1 2 4 5						
profondeur		4		1 2 4 5	4		3	4		
mots										
livre		5			4				3 5 7 8	
ligne		5			4					
paragraphes			3						4 6 7 8	
marges				5					4 6 7 8	
signes					4					
signet						3			4 6 7 8	
listes								7	5 7	
propositions									5 7 8	3
tables									5 7 8	3

TABLE ONE

[illegible]

FOOTNOTES

1. Obliques: numéro spécial Butor-Masurovsky, 1975, p. 1.
2. For the complete history of "Litanie d'Eau" see Obliques, pp. 1-4; for the text and drawings of "Litanie d'Eau" see Obliques, pp. 19-52.
3. Obliques, p. 1.
4. See 'Comment se sont écrits certains de mes livres', in Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui: 2. Pratiques, U.G.E., 1972, p. 243.
5. We shall use this abbreviation, both here and in the Matière de Rêves series, to distinguish between Butor the character, M.B., and Butor the writer.
6. For the sources of "La Conversation" see Nouveau Roman, p. 243.
7. Nouveau Roman, p. 243.
8. Nouveau Roman, pp. 248-249.
9. Obliques, p. 1.
10. Obliques, p. 1.
11. See Obliques, p. 51.
12. Obliques, p. 1.
13. This is established by frequency of appearance. See Table One.
14. Nouveau Roman, p. 248.
15. See Table One.

16. For example, the structure of L'Emploi du Temps and, of course, the collaboration with Pousseur in Votre Faust. See: Jean-Yves Bosseur, 'Michel Butor et la musique', Musique en Jeu, no. 4 (1971), 63-111.
17. A title is the single word preceding each section.
18. See Obliques, pp. 22, 50; accepted drawing one and rejected drawing one.
19. Compare, for example, with Butor's comments in the final discussion with Georges Charbonnier (ES, 237-245).
20. The phrase is quoted from Valéry.
21. The series comprises thirteen members: phrase, page, mot, livre, ligne, paragraph, marge, signe, feuillet, signet, liste, proposition, table. See Table One.
22. Obliques, pp. 51 (drawing five), 41.
23. Obliques, p. 2.
24. Nouveau Roman, p. 246.
25. Obliques, p. 2.
26. Compare the oceans of Mobile and Réseau Aérien, and the phoenix sun of Réseau Aérien.
27. Nouveau Roman, p. 249.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Illustrations II: Collage and the Corporate Text

#### INTRODUCTION

Illustrations II consists of texts written in collaboration with artists of different kinds and a composer, Henri Pousseur. Unlike its predecessor, where the texts followed each other in strictly linear fashion, here the texts dialogue with each other in a pattern of juxtaposition or "contamination", contamination being a process whereby elements from one text appear in another. The texts as originally published form the raw material for a work in which it is never possible to read one text from start to finish in its original form:

La plus grande partie du volume est constituée par la contamination des ces matériaux primitifs les uns par les autres. Pour lire dans l'ordre primitif la totalité du texte de La Gare St. Lazare par exemple, dans Illustrations, il fallait feuilleter plusieurs fois les pages. Ici, pour retrouver la totalité de Regard Double il faudra la reconstituer à partir de ses diverses transformations.<sup>1</sup>

The reader is faced with a much more difficult task, in terms of actual reading, than in the first volume.

The volume contains seven principal texts and two "vignettes":

Chacun des sept textes principaux, auxquels j'oppose les deux séries de vignettes: Poème Optique et Comme Shirley, est d'abord exposé dans sa version primitive, les pages se suivant de la gauche à la droite, mais toujours d'une façon incomplète, ne commençant en général qu'après son vrai début et se terminant avant

sa vraie fin, déroulement premier qui sera interrompu par un second dans lequel la demi-page sera confrontée à une demi-strophe du Poème Optique, puis par un troisième dans lequel la page sera confrontée à celle d'un autre texte principal.<sup>2</sup>

In order to effect these three types of situation each principal text is divided into sections; "Regard Double" and "Ombres d'une île", the first and last principal texts, have three sections; "Dans les Flammes" and "Spirale", the second and sixth texts each have four while the three central texts, "Dialogues des Règles", "Paysage de Répons" and "Les Incertitudes de Psyché", all have five sections. The first section of each text is always the incomplete primitive version which opens and closes each text's appearance in the volume. Within this framework the second section of each text dialogues with parts of "Poème Optique"<sup>3</sup> while the third, fourth or fifth sections are confronted with other principal texts, with the exception of "Paysage de Répons" which also dialogues with the second vignette "Comme Shirley". Each section is only ever confronted with one other section from another text. The question of which section of which poem dialogues with which is best answered by recourse to a table:

	P.O.	R.D.	D.F.	D.R.	P.R.	C.S.	I.P.	S.	O.I.
R.D.	II		III						
D.F.	II	III		IV					
D.R.	II		III		IV		V		
P.R.	II			III		IV	V		
I.P.	II			III	IV			V	
S.	II						III		IV
O.I.	II							III	

We can see from this table that each principal text only dialogues with those other principal texts which are closest to it in the volume, with those which are "running" concurrently with it. For example, "Paysage de



Répons" does not dialogue with either "Dans les Flammes" which has already ended, or "Spirale" which has not yet begun. Nor does any text dialogue with those sections of another text which fall outside the framework of its own primitive version. The fourth section of "Dans les Flammes" dialogues with the third section of "Dialogues des Règles" and not the fourth which occurs after the closing appearance of the primitive version of "Dans les Flammes". Dialogues are only effected between sections directly juxtaposed on the double page.

The system of dialogues poses one obvious problem: how does the reader know with any degree of certainty which text or texts he is reading at any given time? The creation of a corporate text, the feeling of contamination, the feeling that the barriers between texts are being broken down, can only be effected, paradoxically, by presenting the texts as different and separate, by emphasising their separate identity. Butor, therefore, has recourse to the running title:

Pour aider ... l'usager de ce labyrinthe, le voyageur textuel, à s'y orienter, il fallait perfectionner le système de signalisation connu traditionnellement sous le nom de titre courant et que L'Emploi du Temps avait déjà utilisé, par un enchaînement de marques se communiquant leur valeur un peu comme les paragraphes de transition de La Modification.<sup>4</sup>

These running titles appear at the top of every page, except for the title pages of each text, and are composed of either one or three words: one word when the version is pure and three when the version is either primitive or involved in a dialogue:

Lorsque les versions sont pures, les mots sont empruntés au texte seul, lorsqu'elles sont contaminées les mots-cadres appartiennent aux texte-forme, au texte-habitation, le mot central à celui d'en face, au texte imprégnant, traversant. Ces titres courants évoluent peu à peu jusqu'à un milieu puis se replient en quelque sorte jusqu'à retrouver leur début. Ils indiquent non seulement dans quel domaine on se trouve, mais ce qui lui arrive, et à quel moment on en est du déroulement de ce domaine et de cette action.<sup>5</sup>

The words used to form the running titles are either taken from the poem's title, its subtitle, the titles of its sections or constitute important elements in the action of the poem. If we take "Regard Double" as a convenient example, then we can find in section one, the primitive version: "REGARD DOUBLE REGARD" (III, 3); at the end of the dialogue between section two and "Poème Optique" we find above the pure version: "REGARD" (III, 8); finally, in the dialogue with "Dans les Flammes"<sup>6</sup> we can see "DOUBLE MOINE DOUBLE" opposite "DAME DOUBLE DAME" (III, 22-23), thus designating the left-hand page as the domain of "Regard Double" and the right-hand page that of "Dans les Flammes": the central words identify the contaminating text. Each page is, then, quite specifically identified for the reader who can, consequently, orientate himself within the volume. It only remains for the reader to determine which elements on any one page belong to which of the two texts involved. This is not difficult but it does require the reader to work and this is a point to which we shall return.

We now know in theory how Illustrations II is organised. We propose now to examine the effects of this organisation: what does the dialogue system bring to the reading of the individual texts and is a new corporate entity created as Butor claims? The volume contains nine texts which are all extremely rich in content and it will not be possible for us to analyse in detail each individual text and each individual dialogue. We propose first of all to make a reading of a specimen text which, it is hoped, will illustrate the effects of the dialogue system. For this purpose we have chosen "Regard Double", the first of the principal texts, since it also introduces us to the fundamental themes of Illustrations II. In the second part of our study we will examine the thematic movement of the volume, discussing what seem to us to be the most important texts which

we will treat, in the main, as if they were separate entities, although referring when necessary to the dialogues, secure in the knowledge that these texts were conceived as a group which would be presented as a corporate entity in a collection like Illustrations II.

### REGARD DOUBLE

"Regard Double" was first published in 1963, together with photographs by Bernard Larsson, as the introduction to Die Ganze Stadt Berlin<sup>7</sup>, a collection of works on Berlin. We shall begin by reading the two halves of the primitive uncontaminated version of the text, a course of action which might be described as the natural reaction of the uninitiated reader faced with the apparent chaos of the volume and in search of something stable to read. In the first half of this first section a negative picture of Berlin is painted. The city is divided by the Wall and Butor contrasts visitors to Berlin, who are allowed to pass through the Wall, with the inhabitants of the city who are not. The latter are divided into three groups, all of which have problems with their sight. The first group consists of those who cannot get used to the existence of the Wall, who cannot believe what they see; the second group have never known anything else, have never seen what is on the other side of the Wall:

pour qui le monde s'arrête à ce mur ... pour qui l'espace de l'autre côté apparaît soudain comme tout aussi impénétrable que si ce bleu laiteux, ces sommets de toitures aperçues étaient de la peinture sur du fer. (III, 3)

The third category is made up of former inhabitants who come back looking for things they knew before the war, looking for their past. Everything has been destroyed and they can only contemplate the scene of this disaster

"de leurs yeux de pierre lézardée" (III, 3).

Not only is the city divided in two by the Wall, but its inhabitants seem separated from each other and unwilling to be seen by others, as the parenthesis in the Bodestrasse shows (III, 4). As they walk along the street all three men appear to be trying to hide those parts of their body which remain naked, and therefore visible, after they have dressed, their face and hands. Not only are they protecting themselves from the winter weather but also from the gaze of a fourth man, a soldier, the only one of the four who dares to look at the others. Soldiers are ever-present in Berlin. Heavily armed and with the task of maintaining the separation between the two parts of the city, they constitute the final negative element of this first half-section.

The second half of section one seems altogether more positive. Despite the destruction and the dilapidation, the "villas abandonnées" and the "immeubles surpeuplés" (III, 34), there is evidence everywhere of rebuilding, of "projets de reconstruction" (III, 34). The shops appear laden with goods (III, 35) and we have the general impression that Berlin is slowly rising from the ashes of destruction. The Wall itself is notably absent and the final paragraph seems optimistic. There are, however, plenty of puzzling details, such as the attention paid to "costumes" and "guérites" (III, 36), which we cannot link to what we have read so far. Let us now go back to the second section of the text.

This section is very short, comprising only four paragraphs of "Regard Double" and dialoguing with the Z verse of "Poème Optique" cut in two. It deals with the activities of the soldiers on the Wall and a special event in the life of Berlin, the May Day Parade, which the soldiers can see from their vantage point. Not only can they see the parade, they can hear

it too as the noise is carried toward them by the wind. The paragraph introducing the parade to the text (III, 7) is contaminated by two words from "Poème Optique": "tourbillons" and "broussaille". These two words serve to highlight the importance of sound in the paragraph. Both contain a double "L" sound. The first word is used in conjunction with other "L" sounds: "cette foule vagante, tous ces gens qui coulent en tourbillons tranquilles" (III, 7). The effect of this is to create an underlying movement of flowing sound which contrasts with the repeated plosive "T" and hard "C" sounds. It also contrasts with the hard, harsh sounds of the end of the paragraph: "cette broussaille de drapeaux, ce bloc, ce monument, cette pétrification de drapeaux" (III, 7). An element of ambiguity is introduced into the paragraph. The rigid solidity of what the soldiers see is undermined to a certain extent by what they hear. The solidity of the "other side" seems to break down and flow over the Wall.

The parade also introduces us to the idea of rupture. The parade only lasts for a day and the following day the soldiers can see "la toile de tous les jours qui reprend" (III, 8). Here we have another incursion from "Poème Optique" in the form of the word "toile" which replaces "vie" (III, 34). The noise of the parade gives way to the normal noises of Berlin traffic. The May Day parade constitutes a rupture in the day to day life of the city. The use of the word "toile" provides a connection with painting and echoes the earlier description of the sky on the other side of the Wall as impenetrable "peinture" (III, 3). The last line of this section reinforces the link between the Wall and painting: "les peintures sur les toiles, sur les murs, le mur" (III, 9). The Wall becomes a kind of "wall-painting" made out of the same material, "toile", which is ruptured by the May Day parade.

At this point the reader is left hanging in mid-air, with half-formed notions and plenty of questions, by the beginning of "Dans les Flammes". What is the significance of the ideas of sight, concealment of nudity and rupture? Is the Wall itself to be ruptured, thus occasioning the apparent optimism of the second half of section one? We have been given a tantalisingly incomplete glimpse of the text. We are forced to make a choice of reading paths: we can read the beginning of "Dans les Flammes" and a part of its dialogue with "Poème Optique" (III, 10-15), before reaching section three of "Regard Double"; we can jump directly to the third section and its dialogue with "Dans les Flammes" (III, 16); we can concentrate on a particular paragraph and follow it in its transformations. Bearing in mind Butor's description of the reader as a "voyageur" in the labyrinth of the volume, let us choose this last course of action.

The paragraph concerning the May Day parade appears again in section three (III, 18) and in the second half of section one (III, 34). In section three, three elements are included which supplement what we have gleaned from section two: the people in the parade "se cherchent"; the parade is a "brassage" and takes place "devant le fantôme déchiré de la hideuse cathédrale". In section two we could read "devant les aigles déchirés de la cathédrale" (III, 8). The word "aigles" is another contamination from "Poème Optique" and it sets up a resonance with the Metro Hotel of the second half of section one: "l'hôtel Métro qui étend ses ailes, semblable à un aigle dont on aurait rogné le bec, et dont on peut s'amuser à voir les serres figurées par l'agence de la Berliner ComMERZbank" (III, 35). This in turn leads us to consider again the churches which appear in the same paragraph: "(les églises molles, sèches, lourdes, glacées ...)" (III, 35). These churches belong to "les quartiers neufs déjà vieillis, les vieux quartiers qu'on modernise" (III, 35). We have a "brassage" of

churches in a city in the midst of reconstruction. The ruined cathedral is like the German eagle, its destructive beak clipped, which now rises again with its grip on commerce - a new Germany founded on money rather than violence. The series of churches, which might signify spiritual rebirth, is counterbalanced by the series of shop shelves, on the bottom half of the same page, which are laden with "chaussures, tissus, légumes" (III, 35) symbolising economic rebirth. Yet both the signs which indicate spiritual and economic rebirth are linked to the eagle, possibly suggesting that these are not to be seen as positive values as we had earlier imagined. We should note that we would have been unable to make the above connections without the contaminating word "aigles" from "Poème Optique".

The latter half of section one provides us with the fullest version of the May Day parade paragraph. The parade is a "brassage" of "civils en uniforme, militaires en costume de sport" (III, 34). The customary rôles are reversed but, even in civilian clothes, the military do not lose their character: "ces équipes d'aviron portant leurs rames comme des armes, ces bataillons de marins" (III, 34). The military presence in the parade creates an underlying feeling of menace absent from the first two versions of the paragraph which have masked their true identity. This explains the significance of the contamination of the paragraph in section three by "Dans les Flammes":

le masque du feu noir blanc noir qui souffle, s'épanouit,  
souffle dans les galeries blanches pourpres du brasier blanc,  
dans le brassage, le vent, le cri, le chant, traversant,  
retraversant la Spree. (III, 18)

The "other side" of the Wall becomes a place fraught with potential danger, where one risks being consumed in the fires of violence, the same fires which destroyed the cathedral. The fires may also be carried over the Wall

by the wind or brought in by the river Spree.

We can see here a parallel between "Regard Double" and "La Conversation", the first text of Illustrations. In that text M.B. found himself inside a painting the environment of which turned out to be extremely hostile to him. If the "other side" of the Wall is a painting and if the Wall fulfils the function of protective frame or barrier then the passage of the visitor through the Wall can be interpreted as the passage of the writer from writing to painting. The environment of this painting may be as dangerous for the visitor-writer as that of "La Conversation" and its flames may well destroy the domain of writing. Where "La Conversation" was a vision of failure in Illustrations, "Regard Double" depicts the reality of the potential dangers involved in the meeting between writing and art: the struggle has begun in earnest.

Yet the fire brought into "Regard Double" is not an entirely negative element. Just as the fire enters "Regard Double", so certain of its elements find themselves in "Dans les Flammes", as if thrown, metaphorically, into the flames. The first of these elements are the bricks from the old city wall, parts of which, we learn in section three, have been incorporated into the new Wall; "leurs tuiles hérissées semblables à des armes prêtes à tirer" (III, 18). These sections have become part of the menace inherent in the Wall. Their presence in the flames implies that the fire has begun to consume the Wall itself. Also to be found in the flames are the faces of the guards (III, 21) and the solid block of flags from the parade (III, 21). The fire is thus an ambiguous element, on the one hand threatening the western part of the city, and yet on the other destroying the symbol of its separation from the eastern sector. The fire threatens to engulf the writer once he is inside the domain of painting and



yet breaks down the barrier between writer and painting so that he can gain access to the domain of the latter. This implies a secret desire on the part of painting for the writer's presence, a desire which we will encounter again in the second half of our study.

We can see, then, that the field of expression of "Regard Double" has been expanded by the dialogues with "Poème Optique", the word "toile" acting as a catalyst, and "Dans les Flammes". West Berlin, East Berlin and the Wall have come to signify respectively, writing, painting and the barrier between them.

We have now gone as far as we can with the May Day parade paragraph and we must now begin to fill in the gaps in our reading. In this part of our analysis it will become clear that the expansion of the field of expression of "Regard Double" does not prejudice in any way the original field of expression of the text. Although Berlin has become an image for the meeting between writing and art it retains the significance which it had in the original version of "Regard Double". In the contamination system of Illustrations II "Regard Double" does not lose its independence. Rather, it is given an additional rôle to play in the volume.

The first gap to be filled in concerns the concealment of nudity which we encountered in the first half of section one in the Bodestrasse parenthesis. The people who look over the Wall also conceal their nudity: the old ladies hold their theatre glasses with hands "gantée de fil" (III, 5), as if afraid that, in looking, they will be seen, as if afraid to show their hands. Similarly, the May Day parade is not only a "pétrification de drapeaux" but also a "foule de casquettes, foule de chandails" (III, 7). Military clothing is, of course, much in evidence, Berlin being the ideal place to see soldiers (III, 5). Their clothing is as much a symbol of their

violence as their weapons. The guards on the Wall with their helmets are dressed from head to foot and all that we see of their bodies are their fingers on their gun barrels and their eyes. Even the latter are sometimes concealed behind sunglasses. Everyone seems to want to hide even the smallest part of their nakedness from the look of the other. It is as if everyone were wearing protective clothing or uniform, taking part in

la vie en casquette, la ville des casquettes,  
casquettes civiles et militaires, orientales, occidentales,  
américaines, anglaises, françaises et soviétiques,  
casques, carapaces, armures. (III, 36)

Nakedness is vulnerability and must be covered up:

vous pourrez examiner les nus orientaux et occidentaux, les nus de chair sur les plages et ceux de pierre et ceux de bronze sur les places;

et les diverses enveloppes dont se parent ou se protègent ces nudités, contre le froid ou le soleil, contre le regard ou l'oreille, contre leur propre regard, contre leur bruit, contre les balles,

les costumes de bain, les dessous, les costumes de toile ou de bronze, les pelages, les pelisses, les masques, les drapés et les draperies, les vêtements de papier couverts de textes et d'images dont on recouvre les trottoirs, dont on se masque le visage, dont on recouvre la nudité des rues, des autres, des problèmes, les morceaux d'étoffe dont on entoure les bâtons pour habiller la ville, habiller les cérémonies, habiller le vent.  
(III, 36)

We can see from this passage that it is not only the people of Berlin who conceal their nudity, but also the city itself. Berlin is a city hiding from itself, a city which has made of itself a fortress where even the most innocent objects turn into sentry-boxes:

les guérites d'osier sur les plages,  
les guérites de métal qui roulent sur les routes,  
les guérites de bois près des casernes,  
les guérites de verre et leurs téléphones. (III, 36)

Telephone-boxes, cars and bathing-huts are dressed-up, as it were, as

shelters. Everyone and everything is enclosed in a protective envelope.

Berlin also clothes itself in the monuments of the past. Berlin is a collection of the ruins of an older city destroyed in part by the war: "la vie dans ce musée de ruines" (III, 25). Even the buildings which remain bear the marks of destruction:

ces façades étroites, serrées, comme tout récemment léchées de flammes, dont le plâtre noirci tombe par plaques depuis des années, aux fenêtres étroites, serrées, et les visages qui sortent de ces fentes, cous tendus, comme les gargouilles d'une cathédrale. (III, 5)

The buildings are in need of attention and so are their inhabitants who merge with them, risking petrification, as if they were about to become part of the ruins, part of the museum. These people are leaning out of their windows to look over the Wall, as if by their gaze they could cross again the city they once knew. Like the ex-Berliners who come back to visit their old haunts they are trying to make the past live again, clothing themselves in the past. The Wall, as well as separating the two present-day Berlins, acts as a focal point, a magnet, drawing peoples' eyes toward the past.

The visitors to Berlin are attracted "par les monuments d'autres temps, détruits par le temps, émergeant de la ferraille de notre temps" (III, 2). A monument is defined by Robert as follows: "Ouvrage d'architecture, de sculpture, destiné à perpétuer le souvenir de quelqu'un, quelque chose". Berlin contains different kinds of monuments: those which have been destroyed or are in ruins; monuments made of "toile ou de bronze" (III, 30); a monument of the present day, a monument to past monuments, the Wall itself. The Wall perpetuates the memory of an old unity, one which time has destroyed and which is no longer appropriate for the present. Yet

the Wall, which incorporates an even older wall, monument to an older organisation, is itself showing signs of decay: "les sentinelles qui caressent de leurs longs doigts minces la barrière dont la peinture s'écaille" (III, 18).. Time has already begun to destroy the Wall, showing that it, too, is no longer an appropriate monument, if it ever had been.

The monuments of "toile ou de bronze" echo "les nus orientaux et occidentaux ... ceux de pierre et ceux de bronze sur les places" and also "les costumes de toile ou de bronze". The canvas monuments are clearly paintings and the bronze ones, statues. Statues do not wear clothes and would make ideal nudes. However, the materials they are made of, bronze and stone, are described respectively as "costumes" (III, 36) and "enveloppes" (III, 37). These materials, like the canvas of paintings, are masks which must be stripped away if the monuments are to reveal their significance.

Into all the clothing-protection of Berlin there intrudes one element which is not enclosed in any envelope, one element of nudity: hair flowing freely in the wind. This hair belongs to girls taking part in the leisure activities of the city. In the first half of section one the visitor to Berlin is informed that he will participate "aux milles ruptures" (III, 9) of "la toile de tous les jours" when he dresses up to attend the many spectacles the city has to offer. Going out, whether it be to the theatre or to a picnic by the lakes, involves a different sort of dress from that of everyday life. The act of dressing becomes one of pleasure rather than protection. The girls whose hair blows in the wind wear "décolletés" (III, 26) and we can see "épaules nues" (III, 26). Paradoxically, the act of dressing for these activities involves a degree of undressing. It is only at these social events that people begin to feel at ease with their

nudity. The "tissu" has been broken to let a little nudity appear and Berlin can begin to look at itself again.

Linked to this rupture is a sound heard by the visitor as he goes from the spectacle he has chosen: "vers un verre de vin lumineux moins enivrant que ce dernier accord qui résonne encore dans votre tête, que cette cadence encore imperceptiblement scandée par vos doigts gantés" (III, 26). The visitor has heard another sound quite different from the normal noise of the traffic which is another envelope used by the city to protect its nudity "contre l'oreille". This leads us back to the May Day parade where the noise of the traffic was absent for the day, giving way to the sound of the parade, the flowing sound which seemed to undermine the rigidity of the parade and travel to the western sector with the river Spree. This link between the two ruptures provides the final element in the significance of the parade. Like the fire it is ambiguous. Harsh and militaristic at the present, it contains a music whose flowing, liquid nature may break down its walls, may reverse the petrification of the flags and make them flow in the wind like the girls' hair at the picnics. The parade, like the fire, doubly masks its true nature.

The process of the undressing of Berlin has only just begun: the hands of the visitor-spectator remain gloved (III, 26). Similarly, rents in the monuments, in the "enveloppes de pierre" are only just appearing (III, 37). However, many of the costumes which cover up the city's nudity go into the fire of "Dans les Flammes" (III, 25), including the "casques, carapaces, armures" (III, 29). Anything which covers up nudity, which prevents the city from seeing itself, should be burned. For, at present, the city is incapable of seeing itself because its inhabitants are unaware of the significance of the "ruptures" in everyday life. After the May Day

parade in East Berlin life begins again just as it was before. The soldiers on the Wall watch the parade in the same way as they watch the traffic the next day. They do not really see the parade or hear its message.

Similarly, it is not a Berliner in whose head the music resonates, but a visitor, someone from the outside.

The theme of the visitor and the privileges he enjoys runs through the work and is linked to that of the unity of Berlin. The work begins as an invitation: "Vous qui n'êtes pas de Berlin, venez à Berlin, car Berlin vaut bien le voyage" (III, 2). A little further down the opening paragraph we find the ironic phrase: "(car Berlin c'est au moins toute une ville)" (III, 2). The phrase is repeated twice more in this form (III, 5, 18) before being linked to the visitor: "si vous n'êtes pas de Berlin, car cela est indispensable aujourd'hui pour voir Berlin comme toute une ville au moins ..." (III, 24). Here the irony has gone and there is a suggestion that Berlin can indeed be regarded as a whole city. This is possible for the visitor because he is "loin du tissu quotidien" (III, 26). This distance from Berlin is reminiscent of the distance Léon Delmont was able to take from himself in La Modification because he found himself in an abnormal situation: having taken a different train from usual he found himself distanced from the "tissu quotidien" of his everyday life and came to see the reality of his project. Berliners themselves appear too involved in the everyday life of the city and too obsessed with the Wall to see clearly the possible unity of Berlin. Despite this, and despite the discrediting of the symbols of economic and spiritual rebirth which we saw above, "Regard Double" does not end on a pessimistic note.

Butor suggests that, instead of being obsessed by the Wall, Berliners consult another type of monument. He inserts the sign of art and unification into the work when he puts the capital letters into "Berliner ComMERZbank" and dedicates the text to the memory of Kurt Schwitters (III, 35). Schwitters, both painter and writer, created his own "Merz" movement, the word being cut out of a newspaper advert for the "Commerz und Privatbank" for use in one of his collages. Schwitters' avowed aim was unity in Art and much of his work is situated at the boundaries between poetry and painting or poetry and music. In this respect his goals seem close to those of Butor in this Illustrations series. In "Regard Double" Butor reinserts the word "Merz" into the modern equivalent of its original context and makes it shine through "Commerzbank" - art shining through commerce, as if art were the real means to the reconstruction of a new unity. The fire from "Dans les Flammes", whether in its own domain or in that of "Regard Double", begins to destroy the buildings of Berlin, the sentry-boxes, shops, ruins and churches:

La chevelure du feu.  
les églises délicates les affectées les tranchantes.  
Brûle! ... (III, 23)

The images of Berlin's spiritual and economic rebirth are not only discredited but destroyed. They are not sufficient for a new type of unity since they are reconstructions of what was there before the war. They represent repetition rather than change.

It is not art itself, however, which is being put forward as the means to a new unity. Rather, it is what is represented by the type of art the word "Merz" suggests: collage. Not only is "Regard Double" dedicated to Kurt Schwitters, but Illustrations II itself is dedicated to Jiri Kolár, the Czech artist and writer who works principally in the

medium of collage. We have already described the passage of the visitor-writer through the Berlin Wall as the rupture of the barrier protecting painting from writing. In the same way, the system of dialogues or contamination between the texts allows each one to pass into another, breaking down the wall, as it were, which normally exists between two separate and distinct texts. The passage of one text into the domain of the other is only a partial one, however. Only pieces of the text, or individual words as in "Poème Optique", break through. In this respect we can compare contamination to collage. Pieces of text are taken out of their original context and "stuck" into another text. The ideas of cutting out and insertion are particularly evident visually in "Regard Double" due to the use of dashes to indicate the change of text:

les églises brutales, surchargées  
 - les remparts rouges blancs du four rouge blanc qui  
 déploient leurs tissus mordorés de feu blanc -,  
 avec leurs vitrines sur lesquelles on jette un coup d'oeil  
 avant de traverser devant l'hôtel qui étend ses ailes semblable  
 à un aigle  
 - la crinière noire bleue noire du feu bleu qui s'enroule aux  
 piliers jaunes, se tresse bleu dans les salles jaunes dorées,  
 s'enroule jaune aux tisons -,  
 les étalages de chaussures, légumes, journaux. (III, 22)

The dashes operate like slits in the paper into which the extracts from "Dans les Flammes" have been inserted. Butor has cut up his text into small pieces and stuck them together again in a different arrangement on the same "canvas".

The metaphor of collage can be extended to the type of reading required of the "voyageur textuel" in the volume. Our reading of "Regard Double" has not been a linear one in which we have followed from beginning to end a text conveniently laid out at our disposal. We have had to go and look for the text. Not only do we find the text divided into three



sections, but we find that, in certain areas, such as the May Day parade paragraph, the sections overlap, with the result that we have to compare the information provided in each version. As we read the three versions of the May Day parade we gradually build up a picture of the whole paragraph, re-inserting the missing pieces. We accomplish the same task at the level of the text as a whole, collating information from the three sections until we have a complete picture. As we have already seen, our path through the text can take different directions. Whereas in

6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde an explanatory note was included to encourage the reader to make his own way through the text, in Illustrations II this method of reading is now taken for granted and the reader receives no help from the author. It is up to the reader to decide how he will read the text. We chose at a particular point to follow the adventures of a single paragraph, but this did not lead us to ignore other parts of the text. Rather, it led us back to them. In other words, whatever the direction taken at a particular moment, the nature of the reading task does not change. We are constantly led to re-assemble the text from its scattered pieces. This work of re-assembly does not imply that, at the end of our reading, we return to the original version of the text. As we read we become conscious of the arrangement of the text in the volume and the associations produced by its juxtaposition with a second or third text. We also become aware of the changes in these associations produced by the variations on certain elements. Our understanding of the May Day parade is altered by the increasing amount of information at our disposal and the juxtaposition with the fire of "Dans les Flammes". The more we read, the more we reconstitute the text as it is arranged in the volume.

It might be felt that, in reconstituting the text as it is arranged in the volume, we have not received our own version and that, consequently,

the text demands only one response. However, we saw above that our method of reading is the same as it was in 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde, that it is "un chemin de compréhension". The text presents itself as chaos, but a chaos in which indications of order can be perceived. Once we choose a reading path communication is established between ourselves and the text, communication which, as we saw, is always on the increase. This points to an essential difference between 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde and Illustrations II: in the former certain parts of the text were, for each reader, redundant while the latter is a collage, a whole in which each constituent part has a rôle to play. The reading of Illustrations II can only be additive. As we read, we construct the collage, conferring order on the text, and each of us does so in a different way. We might liken the process to the construction of a jigsaw in which each of us sees connections between the pieces at different times: one of us might complete the top left-hand corner while another is working on the centre and the author himself may have begun at the bottom right-hand corner. Each of us has a different version of this order in our heads and each of us considers the collage as a harmonious whole for different reasons. In reconstituting the text, we construct our own version of the collage, we construct harmony. We piece it together using variations of the author's method and reconstitute something new and original, harmony from chaos. Illustrations II is as much an "open work" as 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. Since the remainder of the volumes which we will discuss in our study are also creation from chaos, the comments made here can also be applied to them and we shall not, therefore, be returning to the question of openness.

In describing the type of reading required by the volume we can answer our question regarding the reader's work in the text: how does the reader determine the origin of the textual elements he finds on any one page?

The extracts which we have quoted from "Dans les Flammes" demonstrate that there is little difficulty in the dialogues between principal texts. They are sufficiently different in both style and vocabulary for identification to be made. Matters are less simple in "Pòeme Optique" where contamination is effected by single words. Initially, in fact, we do not know that a particular paragraph has been contaminated. We find out when we come across a second version of the paragraph where the words are different. We can then tell from the context which word belongs to the uncontaminated version: in the May Day paragraph, for example, "vie" is clearly more in tune with the context than "toile". Not all cases are as clear-cut but it is not necessary to have recourse to the original version of the texts as they are published elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, a good deal of cross-referencing may be required before a decision can be made. The reader is made to work, sometimes literally to piece things together, just like the author. There is a clear connection between the difficulty the reader may experience in reading the volume and the themes of the volume. In this difficulty we can see the presence of a similar hermetic technique to that used in 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. The work required of the reader protects the text and its message from the "lecteur pressé". Since the "lecteur pressé" is not granted his own path through the text, the "fast" reading, we can say that the defensive barriers have been raised even further in this work. These comments also apply to the works which we will subsequently study.

It now remains for us to examine the connection between collage and Berlin, to discuss the final significance of Berlin and "Regard Double" within Illustrations II and to make our conclusions about the contamination system.

Berlin is not only a gathering-place for ex-Berliners but also for celebrities, past and present, of the world of the arts: film directors, writers, artists and so on. It is for this reason that the visitor will

be forced to come back to Berlin, either in person or "par personne interposée" (III, 37), for this reason that Berlin is unique:

ce n'est plus seulement toute une ville parmi les autres,  
avec ses stades, ses théâtres, ses tribunaux, ses musées, ses  
vitrines, ses laboratoires et ses bruyants champs de manoeuvres,  
stade, ring, arène,  
toute entière théâtre, cirque, opéra, avec ses coulisses et  
fosses d'orchestre,  
barre, vitrine, laboratoire, où l'on vient de loin exposer,  
afficher, éprouver les sons, les images, les mots, les objets,  
les idées et les inscriptions. (III, 37)

Berlin is a privileged city, a city that people come to, a city where people meet. Despite the military presence, the manoeuvres and the confrontation across the Wall, Berlin is a magnet for all the arts. It is a place where artists come to see and to be seen, to exhibit, to hear and be heard. It is a laboratory, a place of research, a place of possibilities. But what kind of possibilities?

Berlin is a city which seems to be incredibly full of both people and objects. This effect is created in the text by the constant use of repetition, whether it be of guards (III, 16), churches (III, 35), monuments (III, 30) or sentry-boxes (III, 36). Berlin is in itself an enormous "brassage" of different elements. It occupies a unique position in time as a result of the destruction caused by the war. It lies between destruction and reconstruction. It contains monuments "détruits par le temps" and monuments "émergeant de la ferraille de notre temps" (III, 2), monuments "en pleine douleur de naissance" (III, 31). Berlin is a rupture in the tissue of time, a rupture which has made all the objects and people it contains, all the buildings and monuments uniquely visible to the eye of the observant visitor "privilegié puisque vous n'êtes pas de Berlin" (III, 30). Only the visitor can see both sides of the city, and what he sees is this great "brassage" of Berlin: rather than seeing a whole city, a whole organisation, he sees a huge collection of individual

constituent parts, a city stripped of its envelope of unity. Berlin is, as it were, out of its temporal context. It is a "brassage" which could be transformed into a collage, the possibility of a different arrangement. It is in this sense that Berlin can be seen as a city "toute entière". No longer stage of confrontation but theatre workshop, Berlin is, above all, a challenge to meet the possibilities it offers: "il vous faudra bien un jour ou l'autre affronter les feux de cette rampe" (III, 37). It is a challenge to construct a different future based, not on economic rebirth or on the type of spiritual rebirth offered by the churches, but on the principles of collage.

"Regard Double", as it is arranged in Illustrations II, issues a similar challenge to both reader and writer. In complementing the original text by producing additional meanings, the contamination system has enlarged the possibilities of the text's field of expression and transformed the city into an image for the meeting of writing and painting while at the same time retaining its original meaning as a potential collage. It is this new field of expression which unifies "Regard Double" and "Dans les Flammes", the "other side" which has become the domain of painting, and creates a corporate entity. The reader is challenged to construct this unity out of the scattered pieces of text which he reads. The writer is challenged to go to Berlin, to enter the world of painting and, once inside, to lead painting to the same self-perception required by the Berliners. He is challenged to overcome the dangers of this rupture of the protective barrier between writing and painting, dangers which, as we shall see, begin in "Dans les Flammes".

## THE MOVEMENT OF ILLUSTRATIONS II

Butor visited Berlin "par personne interposée", through the medium of Bernard Larsson's photographs, and the movement of Illustrations II concerns different stages in the relationship between the writer and the artist. The movement is from a relationship characterised by violence to one whose essential ingredient is love. The violent relationship can be seen in "Dans les Flammes"<sup>9</sup>, the "other side" of the frame represented by the Berlin Wall, and to a lesser extent in "Dialogues des Règnes".

In Saigon on the 11th of June 1963 the Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc died in the flames of self-immolation in front of the Cambodian Embassy. His act was a protest against the persecution of Buddhists by the regime of catholic president Ngo Dinh Diem and his powerful wife Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu. In December of the same year the president and his brother were assassinated. Madame Nhu, however, was in America at the time. The newspaper photographs<sup>10</sup> of the burning monk shocked the world and later inspired a series of forty-two water-colours by the American artist Ruth Francken. These in turn provided the source for Butor's "Dans les Flammes", subtitled "Chanson du moine à Madame Nhu".

In the second and third stanzas of the poem the monk identifies himself with the bull of the western bull-ring and turns his self-immolation into a contest in which Mme Nhu is the matador. The rôles are somewhat reversed as the monk feels that he is taking revenge on the matador:

Ah, femme, comme dans ces fêtes sauvages, la noble bête  
 qui se venge! ...  
 Au milieu de cette arène, je me précipite vers toi. (III, 17)

These words form part of the monk's song in the poem and if Mme Nhu is present in the bull-ring, and therefore open to the song, it is because the monk's self-immolation is an extraordinarily vivid event which attracts attention and makes everyone look at the monk. Mme Nhu is no exception to this power of attraction. The monks song opens with the words "Dans quelques instants enfin je serai délivré de moi-même" (III, 50). The monk considers his death as an access to freedom from himself and his attachment to the world. The identification which the monk makes between himself and the bull in stanzas 2-3 is rejected in stanzas 8-9 "Si j'ai pu me croire un instant semblable à cette noble bête, comme son image soudain se retourne contre moi, me chasse au loin de ta traîtreuse fraîcheur (III, 58). In the intervening stanzas the monk-bull has charged Mme Nhu and thinks he has wounded her. However, she mocks him in the certainty of her inaccessibility: "Tu as beau appeler à ton secours les cornes et le mufle et le regard ... Jamais plus l'image de la noble bête ne pourra te délivrer de moi" (III, 60). The image of the bull is a trap. In identifying himself with the bull the monk is committing an act of violent revenge which makes him no better than his tormentor. It lays him open to the seductive power of Mme Nhu and her Siren-like song: "Ta basse bouche me chante une dérisoire sérénade merveilleuse" (III, 54). Mme Nhu's mouth has become her sex as she attempts to seduce him. She also offers her hand for him to kiss and in so doing alerts the monk to the image of the bull already seduced (III, 58). The bull is an image conjured up by Mme Nhu herself, "Impitoyable sorcière" (III, 58), in an effort to escape the monk. As a bull the monk only sees the sexual aspect of the woman and is diverted from his real purpose, the nature of which we shall now examine.

In his impetuosity the monk has almost been trapped by Mme Nhu. His attack has nonetheless had some effect: "Mais du moins te voilà séparée de toi-même" (III, 52). The result of this separation is important: "Tu te vois brûler sous mes yeux" (III, 52). The monk's attack forces Mme Nhu to sit up and take notice, to take a look at herself. She is being consumed by the look he sets on her and by the fire she has set on him.

The monk's act also separates him in two but, unlike Mme Nhu, who is forced to do so, the monk performs this act consciously and willingly: "Je me dédouble à ton miroir" (III, 62). The separation involved here is not the Christian separation of body and soul. Buddhism allows of no such separation, denying the existence of "soul". An insight into the nature of this separation may be gained from the Buddha's Fire Sermon. In this sermon all the six senses<sup>11</sup> are burning and, as all burn in exactly the same way, one example will suffice:

The mind is burning, mental objects (ideas etc) are burning, mental consciousness is burning, mental impression is burning ... Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of hate, with the fire of delusion; I say it is burning with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, with lamentations, with pains, with griefs, with despairs.<sup>12</sup>

The learned disciple who can see this state of affairs becomes dispassionate to all the senses and all the consciousness and impressions they involve:

Being dispassionate, he becomes detached; through detachment he is liberated. When liberated there is knowledge that he is liberated. And he knows: Birth is exhausted, the holy life has been lived, what has to be done is done, there is no more left to be done on this account.<sup>13</sup>

The disciple becomes dispassionate about life itself, totally detached from it and uninvolved in it. He has attained the highest degree of



insight, Nirvana. Self-immolation in itself is not proof that the monk has attained this level. However, by rejecting the image of the bull - in Zen Buddhism the taming of the bull represents the taming of the mind - he rejects attachment to life, to the things which make him burn in the sense of the Buddha's sermon. His separation in two is therefore an image of detachment from himself and his involvement in the world.

This detachment allows the monk to see himself as he burns and to gain insight into the significance of his action. By identifying himself at first with the image of the bull, the monk made his action one of violence aimed at the destruction of Mme Nhu. In rejecting this image, so easily seduced, the monk changes the orientation of his action to one in which he attempts to give Mme Nhu the same insight into herself that he has already gained. His action is aimed at her salvation and not her destruction. The Christian cross presides over the end of the first half of the poem: "Et la croix de la fumée retombe" (III, 12). At first sight this seems ironic - the Christian sign of rebirth presiding over a Buddhist's death which has been caused by the oppression of Christianity. Yet the cross is also a symbol of martyrdom: Christ died that others might live, even his enemies. Self-immolation is not in keeping with the pure and original teaching of the Buddha but is nevertheless part of a long tradition:

Burning oneself without attachment to life, but with devotion to religion, to pay homage to the Buddha, was a cult among Mahāyāna Buddhists in China since the fifth century A.C. For the first time in Vietnam, it was in the middle of the fifth century A.C. that a Buddhist monk burnt himself in this manner.<sup>14</sup>

The motivation for self-cremation can be one of two things, offering or protest:

The idea of burning oneself or a part of the body before a monument of the Buddha ... was not apparently considered by Chinese Buddhists either theoretical speculation or illustration but an act of religious devotion to be practised ...

The recent self-cremation of Vietnamese Buddhist Monks is thus in keeping with this old Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. These monks with deep devotion to the Buddha and his teaching sacrificed their lives without harming their persecutors, in order to protect and perpetuate their religion by safeguarding the legitimate rights of Buddhists in their country.<sup>15</sup>

We can see, then, that the motivations for self-immolation do not include the idea of the salvation of the other. Buddhists do not die for the sins of their persecutors as Christ died for the sins of man. The presence of the cross brings to the monk's action an element of significance which would not normally be present. The cross brings to an end a series describing the smoke of the fire in terms of obscurity.<sup>16</sup> The smoke prevents the monk from clearly seeing either himself or Mme Nhu and this mirrors the progression toward blindness as the monk's body continues to burn: "L'un de nous tient un oeil ouvert sur toi, un autre de nous n'en peut déjà plus " (III, 25); "Il ne reste déjà plus de mon visage qu'un masque méconnaissable" (III, 29). The monk's detachment from himself enables him to overcome the barrier of blindness and to continue to hold Mme Nhu in his gaze.

The monk's aim is the revelation of Mme Nhu to herself and her subsequent salvation. Mme Nhu is in a similar situation to the people of Berlin. Both are unable to see themselves without external aid. Both "clothe" themselves in a way which conceals their true identity from themselves and these "clothes" are stripped away by the look of the outsider. Mme Nhu is revealed as "Fausse nonne" (III, 25) and "fausse reine" (III, 50). The unification of the two Berlins was posited in terms of a "new music" and it is by the song of the monk that Mme Nhu is to be saved. By virtue of his song the monk becomes a writer-composer figure

who illumines by the burning clarity of his words.

The contamination system permits an identification of the monk with the stag of "Dialogues des Règnes":

Le front, les tempes, les veines du feu.  
J'ai vu la peau de cette femme lune,  
de cette soeur de Mars, de cette déesse vautour,  
se baigner dans une fontaine couverte de brume à l'aurore,  
et soudain mon front s'est orné de ces cornes  
tout mon corps s'est couvert de poils, et depuis ...  
Si j'ai pu me croire un instant semblable à cette noble bête,  
comme son image soudain séduit se retourne contre moi ... (III, 58)

The monk is not only bull but stag as well. Because of what he has seen the stag is in a similar position to the monk: "ah, quelle brume d'étincelles qui fait crépiter, brûler toute ma peau" (III, 58). The stag is a figure from Greek mythology, Actaeon, who surprised the goddess Artemis bathing while he was out hunting. Enraged that any man should have seen her naked, the virgin goddess changed Actaeon into a stag, with the result that his own dogs tore him to pieces. In "Dialogues des Règnes" the stag is still alive but in perpetual flight from human dwellings and dogs (III, 59). Artemis was also the patron of young girls between the age of eleven and puberty and her own hunting was less directed at beasts than bestiality, at animals and men who gave themselves up to their savage instincts. Artemis, then, was firmly opposed to nudity and had more reason than most goddesses for not being seen naked. Later versions of the myth contend that Actaeon stole up on Artemis intent on raping her. This departs from the original version which tells of an accidental meeting. Whatever version one accepts, in turning Actaeon into a stag, Artemis transformed him into a symbol of sexual ardour.

The monk, who also metamorphoses into an animal with horns, has perceived the nudity of Mme Nhu. The image of the bull is sent by Mme Nhu

and she now becomes "déesse vautour" while Artemis becomes "impitoyable sorcière" (III, 58). She also becomes associated with fire: "C'est que je fus homme autrefois et que j'ai vu le masque du feu noir blanc qui souffle" (III, 59). The mask of the fire, due to the contamination process, replaces what the stag saw in the original version, namely the skin of the goddess. Artemis becomes, like Mme Nhu, a mask for the destructive force of fire.

The message is clear: whoever attempts to perceive nudity through the use of violence risks punishment and destruction. The identification of the monk as a writer figure, the identification of the "paysage" of "Dans les Flammes" as the domain of art and the link between Mme Nhu and the fire which emanated from the domain of art into "Regard Double" suggest that Mme Nhu is a representative of art. In addition, the image of Mme Nhu as "sorcière" is based on the figures of the witches in Goya's "Sabbat".<sup>17</sup> She is at once a real life and imaginary figure. The monk sets out to perceive the nudity of Mme Nhu's character and, even when he does so for the purpose of salvation rather than revenge, he can only succeed by sacrificing himself in the fire. The nature of the relationship between the monk and Mme Nhu, writing and art, is such that only the death of one can result in the enlightenment of the other: "c'est à toi de te voir maintenant" (III, 31). The state of relations is so bad that one is in fact persecuting the other. The two sides are in confrontation and the only way of establishing contact lies in the death in spectacular fashion of the monk-writer. The death of the monk, while a victory in Buddhist terms, is a defeat for the writer inasmuch as he himself does not survive. We recall in this context the death of Pierre Vernier in Degrés. In that novel Vernier's method of writing implied his own death. The death of the monk shows the risk the writer takes in making contact

with art. If his method of approach is violent, if the attitude of one or both is violent, then no relationship can be established and writing will come to an end as it did in Degrés. Similarly, art itself will remain a persecuting entity capable of arousing only feelings of violence. Neither will profit.

The question now arises as to why writing and art should react violently to each other in the first place. The answer to this question and the type of attitude required on the part of both can be found in "Les Incertitudes de Psyché"<sup>18</sup>. This text relates part of the myth of Cupid and Psyche which we will now briefly summarise.<sup>19</sup>

Psyche was so beautiful that she was hailed as a new Venus and received as much reverence and adoration as the goddess herself. In her jealousy, Venus entrusted her son Cupid with the task of making Psyche fall in love with the most miserable of creatures. For all her beauty Psyche had no suitors and, fearing that the gods had reserved a cruel fate for his daughter, her father consulted the oracle of Apollo which decreed that she be left on a mountain-top, there to be carried off by her husband-to-be, a fiery dragon. Left alone on the mountain, she was carried by the wind into a deep valley in which she found a wonderful palace. In this palace she is visited every night by an invisible lover. She is eventually tracked down by her jealous sisters who persuade her to take action to discover the identity of her lover, although she had promised him never to attempt this. The sisters hope that he will turn out to be a dragon and instruct Psyche to take a lamp and a razor with which to cut off his head. This she does and the lover is revealed to be Cupid. Unfortunately, Psyche spills oil from the lamp and awakens the sleeping

god who leaves her because she has broken her promise. In search of her departed lover Psyche falls into the hands of Venus who gives her impossible tasks to perform as a punishment. With the aid of enchanted Nature she manages, however, to perform them. Cupid, meanwhile, who has been imprisoned by his mother, escapes and appeals to Jupiter. Jupiter takes pity on the couple and they are happily married.

Butor's text is set in the palace on the afternoon and evening prior to Psyche's discovery of her lover's identity. The text shows her fears and anxieties as she reflects on the memory of her first day and night in the palace, the subsequent visits of her lover and how she has passed this fateful day. During all this time Psyche has been at an essential disadvantage in the relationship since she cannot see her lover. She relies on her memory in her attempts to imagine his face: "Et je passe ensuite toutes les heures du jour à essayer de reconstituer son visage, appelant à mon secours les souvenirs de tous les hommes que j'aie jamais pu apercevoir" (III, 109). The basis of her confusion is that both Cupid and dragons have wings and horns. She is at once enchanted by her lover and afraid lest he turn out to be a monster. Her fear of seeing him is balanced by his fear of being seen;

C'est mon regard qu'il craint pour moi; il craint que mon premier regard sur lui le fixe à tout jamais dans cette forme qu'il n'aura choisie que pour un instant, lui qui voudrait toujours être un autre pour moi, puiser toujours dans cet intarissable trésor de formes auquel lui donne accès l'invisibilité. (III, 216)

One of the forms she imagines is that of a horse. His feet are as hard as hooves and he shakes the hair on his back "tel un jeune cheval sa crinière" (III, 167). This establishes a connection between Cupid and the writer of the story, Lucius Apuleius, who is transformed into an ass.

Psyche, too, is afraid that she is being looked at. Her fear is associated with guilt as she makes her way back to her room concealing the lamp and razor: "et les galeries vides que j'ai traversées vers ma chambre me semblaient toutes pleines d'yeux espions" (III, 171). Her anxiety also stems from the presence all around her of other invisible people: musicians who play for her, servants who bathe and wait upon her and disembodied voices which try to reassure her about her lover. The invisibility of all these people and particularly her lover has an important consequence; "(à quel point j'ai pu étudier mes propres traits à la fontaine et dans tous les miroirs disséminés sur les étagères!)" (III, 115). Without other faces to look upon she is obliged to study her own. The palace environment is conducive to self-examination.

The key to an interpretation of the text lies in the nature of Psyche's bedroom. The most noticeable feature of the room is the window which is extraordinarily wide. The window is the subject of one of the series of variations which characterise the text and which reflect Psyche's ever-changing memories and emotions. In this case, there are seven variations, the first of which concerns, curiously enough, not the window but the door: "C'était sans doute pour encadrer harmonieusement ses épaules qu'il avait fait percer une porte aussi élégante" (III, 105). The important point here is the notion of framing. The second variation leads us to the window itself:

C'était sans doute pour laisser passer ses ailes qu'il avait fait percer une baie aussi large. Tout le reste de ce palais était construit à ma mesure; seule cette chambre était sienne. (III, 107)

The window is also described as a rectangle (III, 107). If we transpose the notion of framing from the door to the window then we can see that it

is an image for the frame of a painting, a means of access to the painting in which Psyche finds herself. She ascribes the room to the domain of her lover and develops this idea further in a fourth variation: "Tout le reste de ce palais n'était qu'un beau piège; seule cette chambre était sienne et je m'y étais enfermée" (III, 117). Psyche feels caught in a trap but, in a fifth variation, makes it clear that the trap is not only for her: "C'est pour fuir de toutes ses ailes qu'il a fait creuser une baie aussi large. Il sait que ce palais contient pour lui un piège, et il a pris ses précautions contre moi" (III, 145). The room is a trap for both of them: Psyche cannot escape his embrace because she is taken before she can see him and Cupid risks the revelation of his identity. As she waits for her lover at night Psyche's attention is fixed on the rectangle of the window. As long as the moonlight (which would reflect Cupid's shadow) is shining, the window is described as being intact (III, 121). Once her lover has arrived she can no longer distinguish the edges of the window (III, 133). With Cupid's arrival the symbol of separation between the two lovers disappears, the outside and the inside become one. In the dialogue with "Poème Optique", the word "rectangle" is replaced by "passage" (III, 148) and "déchirure" (III, 150). The window is a tear in the fabric of the painting through which Cupid - as Lucius Apuleius, ass-writer - can pass and fuse with his beloved Psyche, the internal nakedness of the painting.

Cupid's advances are well received by Psyche and she even looks forward with impatience to his visits: "il est des nuits de pleine lune où je maudis cette lumière qui le retarde" (III, 144). Her lover's presence always calms her fears. As she waits for him she lies naked of her own accord and never resists him. Although she harbours anxieties about his form, she is not afraid of him as a lover. She is a willing



partner and never tries to cover her nakedness. This is in marked contrast to the efforts of Berlin to clothe itself and to the violence of ~~Mme~~ *Nhu* and *Artemis*. In similar vein, *Cupid*, the male element, is clearly in love with *Psyche* and there is a certain tenderness in the way he speaks to her. Yet the relationship is not unproblematic.

The essential problem can be seen in *Psyche's* naïvety. The reader is always one step ahead of her: he knows who her lover is while she is still imagining him to be a horse or a dragon. Her analyses of the situation always seem to be just wide of the mark. This is most evident in the case of the engravings on the ceiling of her bedroom. These depict the four tasks *Venus* will give her to perform and the words of the ant, the eagle, the reed and the tower who help her.<sup>20</sup> She is surrounded by prefigurations of what will happen to her if she tries to discover her lover's identity. She even looks at the engravings in the hope of discovering some indication as to her fate but is unable to find any (*III*, 137). Butor's text ends at the point in time just before she takes action which is very nearly fatal for both of them. The happy ending to the story only results from divine intervention. *Psyche's* problem is that she is so obsessed by her lover that she looks for the wrong thing in the decorations. Her memory of the day after *Cupid's* first visit shows us why: "Je me souviens, pendant toute cette interminable journée, je l'ai appelé sur cette herbe, aux abords de cette source, en ces bosquets où je musais, sous ces plafonds. Comme j'ai cherché son image!" (*III*, 108). The image that she has of her lover is that of either a prince or a dragon. She looks for his image instead of trying to decipher the decorations. She is literally blinded to their significance by the invisibility of *Cupid*. The decorations form part of the painting the interior of which is the bedroom. We can see, then, that painting is as yet unable to gain insight

into itself or its destiny. While it is willing to enter into a relationship with a lover, it is unable to illuminate itself simply because it does not know that the true identity of its lover is writing.

Psyche is depicted as an inexperienced girl and it is clearly not her fault that she is unable to decipher the decorations. The burden of responsibility for this must be borne by Cupid. It is true that he warns Psyche repeatedly against her evil sisters, but since it is his palace, he is responsible for the decorations in her room. He provides for her the elements which prefigure her destiny but leaves her unable to decipher them. In the myth Cupid has a double reason for remaining invisible. First, Venus would be furious if she knew he had fallen in love with Psyche. Second, no mere mortal was allowed to look upon a God. We recall the fate of Actaeon. Marriage would be out of the question due, as it were, to the difference in status. Cupid has everything to lose in being seen by Psyche and she herself risks destruction at the hands of Venus. In the relationship between writing and painting there is no jealous mother figure in the background. This leads to the conclusion that the writer-Cupid views the relationship as one between god and mortal, between unequal partners. Psyche-painting is not deemed worthy of a frank, equal relationship from the start. Despite his love for Psyche, Cupid remains invisible for selfish reasons, reasons which could bring about his own and Psyche's destruction. Unlike Cupid, the writer is not a god. He is afraid to be seen, to be seen for what he is. The biggest single barrier to the relationship between writing and art is the fear of being seen by the other. It is this fear which provoked the violence of Mme Nhu-Artemis and Actaeon. Both writing and art are mortal and therefore, like Mme Nhu, capable of faults and imperfections which the other could improve. Like mortals, however, they are loth to admit it.

Union is achieved between Cupid and Psyche, writing and art, but it is an imperfect union. Love is not enough if it does not bring with it mutual revelation of nudity. The union is inevitably dangerous to both partners and can only be saved by a miracle.

We now know that love is the basic ingredient for a successful relationship between writing and art. It must be accompanied, however, by trust on the part of both partners so that the revelation of one to the other can be accomplished without fear. We have also seen in "Les Incertitudes de Psyché" that the writer apparently holds the key to the destiny of art which appears as inexperienced and unsure in the environment in which it finds itself. We are confronted with more questions: what is the "destiny" of art and why should the writer hold the key? If the relationship between Cupid and Psyche is an imperfect one what might the ideal relationship between writer and artist be like? What will be the rôle of each partner in such a relationship and what are the wider implications for the relationship between writing and painting on the one hand and reality on the other? The answers to these questions are to be found firstly in "Spirale" and then in "Ombres d'une île", the final two texts of Illustrations II.

The protagonist of "Spirale" is a painter who, in the first four sections,<sup>21</sup> has fallen victim to a profound malaise. We find the painter inside a painting through the canvas of which he can see his bedroom. The canvas is also described as a window separated into four panes which form the shape of a cross (III, 195). The painting is full of the material necessary to the painter's art and is, in fact, his studio. With

him in this studio-painting is a dog: "toi qui es à la limite, le gardien même de la limite entre nos mondes, matérialisé à ce seuil de toile" (III, 197). In Egyptian mythology the dog was associated with Thot, the god of writing and, if we recall, in connection with Schwitters in "Regard Double", that Butor is working at the boundary between writing and art, then we can see that the dog is a writer figure. The painter's bedroom is described as a place where one hangs pictures and is full of spectators whom he can see looking at him in the painting. The bedroom is therefore an art gallery or museum where pictures are exposed. The visitors to this gallery can see the artist and the writer together in a painting representing the artist at work in his studio, in his own domain.

The artist is sick but hopes that the act he is about to perform will, if not cure him completely, at least lead to a period of convalescence. After this act has been performed the dog will go and communicate with the spectators: "toi qui iras chez eux, n'est-ce pas, qui iras aboyer chez eux" (III, 197). It is as if the dog were the interpreter between the painter and the spectators. The act which is to be performed is none other than the act of painting itself and the first section closes with the artist taking his brush to the canvas.

The painter's illness involves his relationship with the spectators, those people who are looking at his painting, and through it, at him. In the first section he is prey to their laughter and blows (III, 197). In the second the brush he was about to use is revealed as contaminated "des spores de l'horrible nation que j'entrevois me regardant tel un mannequin dans sa vitrine, et à qui j'ai failli livrer l'accès de ma région" (III, 203). The painter is at odds with the spectators and does not want them in his domain. With the painting he is trying to ward off the

spectators but, in section three, it proves useless against their laughter:

Et maintenant ils s'esclaffent. Et chaque éclat de leur rire, franchissant à la volée cet écran de fibres que j'avais cru tendre entre eux et moi, ce n'est pas de la glace, c'est du verre, ce ne sont pas des éclats, ce sont de longues tiges de métal qui s'enfoncent. Je me rassemble, tous les morceaux de moi sont maintenant cloués en moi. Et chacun d'eux est un malheur qui m'attendra inéluctablement si jamais je sors du carré protecteur. (III, 185)

The painter feels in need of protection from the spectators for whom he has become a clown (III, 185) rather than a magician as he had hoped (III, 199). He decides as a result to shut the painting-window completely by covering it with more paint (III, 185). The window will become a wall (III, 185), closing off any communication between the painter and the spectators. The relationship between the artist and his public is on the verge of breaking down completely and he will become, to all intents and purposes, invisible.

The problem faced by the painter is resolved in two ways. The studio-painting has become a cell (III, 188) from which he wants to escape. Before he can do so he has to tidy it up. On the floor he can see all the rubbish left over from his previous painting activity: "J'ai sous les yeux maintenant, tout près de moi, tout mon fatras: godets, bobines, tubes de couleur avec ou sans bouchon, à demi vidés, tordus, délaissés" (III, 187). In the light of the studio which forms a peculiar mountain landscape, this rubbish becomes that of absent towns:

les amoncellements de déchets, les cendres, les étangs putrides, les brûlures, les raclures des villes absentes, car ces tours et ces cheminées qui viennent de surgir sont déjà lézardées, fondantes, et la montagne ... ressemble à un énorme conglomérat de chiffons. (III, 188)

The industrial landscape formed by the rubbish is in a state of decomposition,

the remains of something past. Also linked to the past are the chairs of his studio which he must avoid if he is to escape his cell: "Ah, comme leur bois devenait chaud, caressant, comme elles pesaient, comme elles bourdonnaient de souvenirs!" (III, 203).

Both the chairs and the rubbish represent his past, one in the form of memories, the other as the remains of past activity.

He succeeds in tidying up this rubbish only after the sudden appearance of an aid who guides him in his movements and provides a cart to gather up the remains:

Seulement, sans lui, comment aurais-je pu introduire dans cette chambre cette charrette? Elle est son don. Introduire d'ailleurs est erroné. Il vaudrait mieux dire qu'il l'a façonnée, suscitée. On dirait qu'elle a des mamelles sous elle. C'est une charrette truie, ou chienne. Sans elle, j'aurais eu beau fouler, lisser, aplanir; tous ces restes, qu'aurais-je pu en faire? (III, 205)

The cart bears the characteristics of a female dog and since the aid has created it, we can connect him with the writer. The writer provides the artist with a means of collecting up the rubbish of his past, what he refers to as his "temps d'exil" (III, 209).

The second part of the solution can be found in "Les Cent Hommes" where we find ourselves in the landscape of Arles and, more specifically, in a bull-ring. The bull, which is being tormented by small boys - phantom matadors -, is compared to a dog: "Un animal couché tranquille comme un gros chien. De petites cornes lui poussent" (III, 192). Although the matadors are the size of small boys, their faces reveal a "pourrissante sénilité" (III, 193). They flit through the air like spirits and are described as "sylphes singes" (III, 193). Their aim is to torment the bull as much as possible and in their threats they reveal their weapons to be

those of painting: "L'herbe, ton herbe même, nous allons la peindre si bien que tu ne sauras plus la reconnaître. Et nous peindrons les pierres en herbe pour que tu t'y casses les dents" (III, 249). They will paint a decor where the bull will fall into all their traps. We are inside a painting where the writer, as bull-dog, is assailed by the evil spirits of painting who torture him and prevent him from getting out. The spirits progress from weapons of painting to real weapons, arming themselves with guns. They become distinctly military in nature and perform all sorts of military dances in a parade which calls to mind the May Day parade in "Regard Double", as does the transformation of their noses into eagles' beaks (III, 213). As "Les Cent Hommes" draws to a close, the bull-writer seems to be facing violence at least equal to that perpetrated by Mme Nhu in "Dans les Flammes".

Everything changes, however, in the next section, aptly named "Victimes", where the torturers themselves become the victims: "Trop tard, leurs têtes se sont aplaties, sont devenues semblables à des semelles. On leur a cloué des semelles sur la tête. On leur a coupé bras et jambes" (III, 250). Their action in torturing the bull becomes one of self-torture: "<<Nous ne savions pas que nous nous voulions tant de mal>>" (III, 250). The flattening of the matadors' heads recalls the flattening in the painter's studio and suggests that the painter himself has intervened to help the bull. The evil spirits are routed and become youthful once more, leaving the way clear for further incursions by the bull-writer into the painting. To torture the writer is also to torture the painter who, as we saw in "Les Incertitudes de Psyché", actively desires the entry of the writer into his domain.

With the defeat of the evil spirits the painter's problem is

virtually over and we can return to his studio in "Le Paradis" in which there hangs a painting representing another Arles landscape. The painting invades the studio by means of its water and vegetation:

il est certain qu'une eau en ruisselle pour moi, une eau très claire, très fraîche, délicieuse, capable sinon d'étancher du moins de soulager ma soif, une eau très puissante capable de faire tourner les roues à aubes de mes moulins, d'actionner ma centrale, de faire germer, pousser, fleurir et fructifier tout le fatras de l'atelier. (III, 251)

The artist's studio becomes a place of creation again and a grass begins to grow on its floor. The miracle of the grass is complemented by the presence of the spectators: "Et vous, est-ce vrai? Vous êtes là! Quel bonheur pour moi de vous contempler! Quelle bonté dans vos visages, quelle patience ..." (III, 251). The attitude of both the spectators and the painter has changed. Among these spectators is a woman described as ageless (III, 252). It is at this point that the painter begins to use the "nous" form, describing the horizon as "le nôtre" (III, 252).

The new-found harmony between painter and spectator is almost consecrated in "Le Mariage". A female figure is being dressed for marriage (III, 215) and seems to be moving gradually toward the painter. The horse<sup>22</sup> finishes off the preparation by crowning the woman (III, 251). All seems ready for the union of the painter and the female representative of the spectators. In "La Quatrième des Quatre Montagnes" the aid was seated on a horse (III, 237). Thus, the horse too is connected to the writer who, in crowning the bride, gives his blessing to the marriage, as if he had organised it.

Every paradise, however, implies an expulsion. Before the marriage can take place, the mood changes and the landscape closes. The painter is rescued by the faithful horse and flees (III, 253). The expulsion confirms



that the landscape of paradise was "une végétation esquissée, transitoire" (III, 251). The painter has been given a glimpse of paradise, something to aim for in the future. Like the vision of success in "La Cathédrale de Laon, l'automne" in Illustrations, the landscape of Arles is a future one: "Il nous avait semblé que nous y étions bien, que nous aurions pu un jour y être bien" (III, 254).<sup>23</sup>

The coda to the peregrinations of the painter is provided by the last two sections, "Jambes et Chiens" and "Hommes et Chiens". At the beginning of the former the painter looks back on what has happened:

Nous sommes passés de toile en toile, de décor en décor,  
de faux travail en faux soupir, le long des barrières montantes,  
dans l'éclaboussement des eaux que nous aimions, réduits à notre  
marche, perdant la tête, perdant nos bras, perdant notre torse,  
réduits à nos jambes. (III, 254)

The plural form is explained by the fact that the painter has become the representative figure of a people of millions. In the pain of his legs he assumes their suffering (III, 254). Reduced to nothing but legs in the dissolution of the beginning of the text (III, 184), the painter is now re-created by the movements of the dog which draws in his body right up to his face (III, 255), a face which turns around him, watching him. The painter is re-drawn by the writer and in such a way that he can see himself. The dog opens up paths for the painter whose true rôle is neither that of clown nor of magician, but of prophet:

Nos pieds sont devenus des montagnes ourlées de brumes.  
Dans le paysage à naître, je me devance, Moïse serrant contre  
mon épaule les blanches tables d'une autre loi, fonçant dans  
cette absence à laquelle vous étiez condamnés, et j'ai emprunté  
à l'Égypte, serrure de mon ancien continent, la coiffure de ses  
prophètes. (III, 245)

Wakened from a sleep of centuries by the writer, the painter can take his

proper place in society as a pioneer confident of his own invincibility (III, 257).

In its final sections "Spirale" illustrates a perfect relationship between writer and painter. The dialogue with "Les Incertitudes de Psyché" connects the aid-writer with Cupid:

(S.) C'est fait. Je n'aurais pu y réussir, je crois sans l'aide.  
(I.P.) Dans les nuits de nouvelle lune, il vient me rejoindre  
beaucoup plus tôt.

Like Cupid the aid approaches the painter in a spirit of love, but unlike him he fulfils his function as guide. At the beginning of the text the painter is involved in an essentially false work. He uses his painting as a means of protection, as a means of separating himself from his public. For this reason he is misunderstood and violently attacked by that public. The writer is someone who can act as a go-between, interpreting and illuminating the painter's work for the public. The evil spirits which resist the presence of the writer are overcome by the painter himself. The writer wipes out the painter's false past and brings him to a new consciousness of his rôle in society. His past is equated with a decaying industrial world, while in the future he will be the prophet of a new world which he will help to create together with the writer. Both are prophets who will never reach the promised land they strive for. In all these respects what happens to the painter is strongly reminiscent of what happens to the writer in both L'Emploi du Temps and La Modification. In "Spirale" the painter attains a similar level of insight to both Revel and Delmont, while the link between the decaying industrial landscape of the painter's past and the rusty town of Bleston or the cracked universe of Delmont's Parisian life is unmistakeable. The writer has at last made an ally of the painter in his quest. The painter has become an equal

partner who can benefit just as much from the writer as the writer can from him.

This alliance is one of outcasts: "voici que ma poitrine chante aux premiers rayons de l'astre des noirs" (III, 245). Once a violent alter ego given to hiding in the night of Bleston or the métro of Degrés, the black man is now out in the open. The writer and painter accept their alter egos as their true diurnal rôle. Outcasts they may be, but now they can at least sing about it. They are ready to go forward in a spirit of creation rather than violence, ready for the London of "Ombres d'une île".

"Ombres d'une île" takes us back to the second world war which had devastated Berlin in "Regard Double". The poem begins, however, with a picture of pre-war Britain. This Britain, in its physical detail, greatly resembles the Bleston of L'Emploi du Temps with its incessant rain, northern industrial cities, black beer and oily canals. The society of this pre-war period is depicted as deeply divided between rich and poor. This separation is highlighted by the leisure activities of the two classes. The rich spend their time at the races while, for the poor, the only refuge from the rain is the public house (III, 228), a place viewed with suspicion by the authority of the land:

dehors dans la ruelle aveugle, l'agent de police attendait  
l'heure où fermeraient tous ces lieux de rencontre, où se  
disperseraient lentement les couples ou les groupes éméchés  
sous la pluie, ou les solitaires, après l'alcool, le bal,  
le spectacle, et certains se retrouveraient au sec dans une  
cellule. (III, 228)

All the meeting-places of the common people are as if under military guard

and the penalty for meeting can be prison. No such tribulations trouble the rich who calmly await their evening meal served by the servants from downstairs (III, 228).

Black is the colour of the servants' clothes and the colour of the north from where many of them come. The north is even more wet and miserable than London. Its towns are smoky mining towns surrounded by bings where the washing is never dry and never finished (III, 229). Clothes and children are perpetually being rewashed in an effort to clean the all-pervading blackness. Butor paints a dismal picture of the life of the poorer people. Yet, amidst all this misery there are, in Butorian terms, some optimistic signs. These centre around the mixture of fire and water. The fire from the furnaces of the northern towns mingles with the rain while, inside the houses "lorsqu'on se lave dans l'unique chambre comment ne pas éclabousser encore le linoléum qui se moisit, comment des gouttes ne gicleraient-elles pas dans les cendres?" (III, 258). A similar mingling can be found in the streets; "en revenant d'un jeu, en revenant de passer le pont ou sous le pont, de se faufiler dans ces rues sans fenêtres, entre ces bouteilles fumantes de briques noires" (III, 258). These smoking bottles are strongly reminiscent of the elixir Revel saw seeping from the bricks of Bleston (ET, 297). Like Bleston, Britain in this text seems to contain the possibility of its own salvation.

The organisation of this society which keeps rich and poor apart, tidily arranging each in their own particular pigeon-hole, is disturbed by the war and especially by the blitz. The air raids send almost everyone down to the underground shelters, virtually emptying the streets of London. This descent is highly significant:

Une île plus nocturne que toutes les îles, et que la guerre fit descendre d'un degré dans sa connaissance de la nuit, car la lune lui découvrit alors l'envers de ses solitudes, les réverbères qui jadis lui donnaient une lumière d'heure en heure moins peuplée ne projetait plus qu'une ombre déserte. Et tous les habitants de la grande ville ... menacée par les bombardiers qui déferlaient du continent, organisant leurs nuits sous la terre, descendaient sans s'en douter tous les échelons des sommeils d'antan, quartier par quartier, toute cette ville était retournée comme un vêtement, et les habitants de toutes les poches se retrouvaient ensemble aux trous les plus profonds, toute cette vie si bien compartimentée, si bien enveloppée dans ses boîtes, dont on apercevait si peu à l'extérieur, elle se dénudait dans les souterrains ... et sur la surface de la terre, vidée des lumières humaines et presque vidée d'habitants (seuls quelques audacieux ou bien chargés de surveillance ou possédés par le démon de voir, mais tous invisibles dans les ténèbres de leurs recoins ...) la lune dessinait des ombres d'une netteté oubliée, sous les vrombissements et les explosions la plus fine musique s'exposait. (III, pp 236, 237, 258, 259)

This extract demonstrates how the blitz provokes in London precisely what was missing in Berlin. In the air raid shelters all sections of the community are forced to mingle together, to meet rather than to separate. The city and the way of life it symbolised does not cover itself up with clothes like Berlin, but turns itself inside out like a coat and reveals itself in all its nudity. Like the Berliners, however, the people in the air raid shelters are unaware of the significance of their descent. This revelation of nudity is the revelation of reality to the photographer, to the artist, and subsequently the writer. As in "Regard Double" revelation comes about because of an extraordinary event.

In "Regard Double" the visitor-writer was able to see the reality of Berlin precisely because he was not a Berliner but an outsider. Distance from reality is a necessary prerequisite for the perception of reality and in this respect Butor has some advice for us in "Ombres d'une île":

et pour vous montrer quels pourraient être les sourcils  
de cette île, ses ongles, ses narines, ses écharpes et ses  
chapeaux,

ses paupières, iris, cils, pupilles et replis,  
le mieux est parfois d'aller en retrouver des exemplaires  
frappants sur quelque continent ailleurs, ainsi que l'on peut  
étudier dans les musées de l'île même les statuettes ou  
tableaux fabriqués au-delà des mers,

les objets mêmes ou leurs copies, leurs enfants, leurs  
très lointains, très indirects descendants, chez qui ressurgit,  
après des siècles de latence (ou des années), après d'innombrables  
relais et détours, en quelque aspect, quelque détail, l'air  
indubitable. (III, 260)

To see the face of the island, or what that face could be, it may be  
preferable to view it, or objects which call it to mind, from a distance.  
The objects Butor has in mind are clearly related in some way to art and  
it is noticeable that copies of the objects are sufficient. This reflects  
the way that Butor himself works in relation to real places and events in  
the volume. Berlin and London are not physically visited but seen  
through the photographs of Larsson and Brandt. These photographs are  
copies of the places or events,<sup>24</sup> however much these latter may have been  
transformed by the artist or writer. As we have seen, it is the artist  
and the writer who see clearly the reality of Berlin or London and not  
those cities' inhabitants. If it is necessary to take a certain distance  
from reality in order to see it, then this is what is characteristic of  
the work of the artist or writer. The acts of painting, photographing or  
writing constitute a withdrawal from direct involvement in the world and  
the reality which appears in works of art is reality taken out of context  
and placed where it may be more clearly perceived.<sup>25</sup> Reality is best  
studied when it is transferred either in time or in place, whether the  
place be real or a work of art.<sup>26</sup>

Just as love is essential in the relationship between artist and  
writer, so love cannot be absent from this transfer: "petites chambres

où goûter un époux d'une nuit (bel indien perdu dans notre île, aurais-tu jamais été caressé par des mains si blanches et si longues?)" (III, 234). Here we see the love for the foreigner, and implicitly the love for the foreign, who is transferred from his normal environment or context. It is clear that the transfer is envisaged as working both ways - objects from Britain studied abroad and vice versa. We remember that, at the end of La Modification, Butor sketched out a kind of interlocking relativity in which no one centre was dominant or attempted to implant itself in another. The London of the blitz is no longer the capital of an empire: "Et tous les habitants de la grande ville (depuis bien des années déjà elle n'était plus la première du monde)..." (III, 258). The London of the war is no longer an example of a dominant centre, but one which can take its place in a system of relativity, a plurality of centres such as Butor presents in Où. This system of relativity is not a way of creating a world of mass uniformity in which differences would disappear: "l'oeil, cet oeil si allemand, si espagnol, vous savez bien qu'il n'aurait pas eu les mêmes ombres, s'il n'y avait pas eu l'île ..." (III, 260). Difference from the other is what lends to each his identity and both can profit, not from the imposition of one on the other, but from a transfer between the two in which that identity can properly be perceived. It is precisely this principle that is exemplified, not only in the collaboration between artist and writer which forms the theme of the volume, but also in the very way that Illustrations II is constructed. The contamination system, the intermingling of texts, produces a transference between texts, and yet, at the same time, each text not only retains its separate identity but has that identity reinforced in a process that leads to the creation of a corporate entity. All the texts profit by having their fields of expression expanded and each has its part to play in a volume which is a concrete

example of a system of interlocking relativity.

The theme of transfer re-appears in Illustrations III and it is to this volume that we must now turn for answers to the questions which still remain after the reading of Illustrations II. "Spirale" has shown us both the ideal relationship between artist and writer and the way in which Butor feels the artist may profit from the collaboration with the writer. "Regard Double" and "Ombres d'une île" have shown us in turn that the objective of the collaboration is the perception of reality. In this objective the work of art functions in the same way as the train compartment of La Modification. Within the works of art reality appears differently and in such a way that those of us who are normally closely involved in reality, that is, the spectator of "Spirale" or the reader, can perceive it more clearly. A second objective of the collaboration is the reconstruction of reality as a "collage" in which all the various constituent parts acknowledge each other's difference. There is a new arrangement of interlocking relativity. The collaboration between artist and writer, which can be considered as a reduction or miniature of the proposed reconstruction of reality, is one in which both co-exist in harmony, with the result that the perception of the reality of the other, accomplished by the transfer to a different context, can be seen as leading to the tolerance of the other. The "collage" arrangement is one of harmony and mutual understanding. We have, in fact, learned much from Illustrations II but certain things remain unclear: why must reality be re-arranged, how would the "collage" system work and why is the artist so necessary for the perception of reality? It is hoped that the themes of transfer and sight, as they appear in Illustrations III, will provide us with the answers to these questions.



TABLE ONE

In its original form "Poème Optique" comprises seventeen verses of thirty-six words each, arranged in four columns of nine words.<sup>27</sup> Each verse corresponds to the letter of the alphabet which is numerically dominant in that verse. A series of sixteen letters is used, eight from each half of the alphabet: A, B, C, D, E (twice), F, G, H; N, O, P, R, S, T, V, Z. The first three verses can be tabulated as follows:

A	A	A	A	B	B	B	B	C	C	C	C
A	A	A	Z	B	B	B	V	C	C	C	T
A	A	Z	B	B	B	V	C	C	C	T	D
A	Z	B	V	B	A	C	T	C	B	D	S
B	V	V	C	C	Z	T	D	D	A	S	E
A	Z	B	V	B	A	C	T	C	B	D	S
A	A	Z	B	B	B	V	C	C	C	T	D
A	A	A	Z	B	B	B	V	C	C	C	T
A	A	A	A	B	B	B	B	C	C	C	C

It can be seen that each verse is symmetrical about the middle line. Each verse contains twenty words beginning with the "home" letter, six with the letter immediately preceding it in the series, five with the letter immediately following it, four with the letter two behind it and one with the letter two in front of it. The incursions of letters foreign to the domain shows that, in its original form, "Poème Optique" is contaminated in much the same way as "Litanie d'Eau" in Illustrations.

In Illustrations II the rectangular block is exploded and the contamination process is carried much further. Each verse, or each half-verse in the dialogues with principal texts, is contaminated by whole lines from other verses. Thus in the "pure" version of the Z verse (III, 262), the middle twenty-four words belong to the Z verse, the top six belong to the T verse and the bottom six to the B verse. Each verse is thus contaminated by the verses two behind and two in front of it in the series. The "ébullition" of "Poème Optique" is further compounded, of course, by the dialogues with the principal texts. However with the information presented here the reader should be able both to identify exactly each word from "Poème Optique" and to place it in its correct verse.

FOOTNOTES

1. Michel Butor, 'Comment se sont écrits certains de mes livres', in Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui: 2. Pratiques, U.G.E., 1972, p. 250.
2. Nouveau Roman, p. 250.
3. See Table One.
4. Nouveau Roman, p. 251.
5. Nouveau Roman, p. 251.
6. "Dans les Flammes" is subtitled "chanson du moine à Mme Nhu".
7. Die Ganze Stadt Berlin, Nonnen Verlag, 1963.
8. It is, of course, much easier for the reader if he has access to these!
9. Michel Butor, 'Dans les Flammes', Tel Quel, no. 24 (Winter 1966), pp. 24-32.
10. Reproductions of these photographs appeared in the Daily Record, 14th June 1978, p. 7.
11. The mind counts as a sense in Buddhism.
12. Walpola Rahula, What the Buddha Taught, Gordon Fraser, 1959, pp. 95-97 (p. 96).
13. What the Buddha Taught, p. 96.
14. Walpola Rahula, Zen and the Taming of the Bull, Gordon Fraser, 1978, p. 111.
15. Zen and the Taming of the Bull, pp. 112, 114.

16. Voile, nuage, rideau, tourbillons, spires, épaisseurs, replis, taie, paupière, obscurité, nuit.
17. This information can be found in the "Correspondance Francken-Butor" in the Bibliothèque Municipale de Nice. Francken describes what each watercolour represents for her; for No. 30 she writes: "Mme Nhu - rappelant personnage du Sabat de Goya - jouant une sérénade pour le moine qui brûle"; for No. 32: "Mme Nhu en Sabat - les cheveux tombant et enveloppant le moine brûlant avec". The images of bull-ring, bull and insect are also part of her impressions. It is striking to note how clearly Butor follows Francken's ideas.
18. Michel Butor, 'Les Incertitudes de Psyché', in Variations sur l'amour, Club du Livre Français, 1964. Extracts can be found in La Nouvelle Revue Française, no. 192 (December 1948), 732-735.
19. Details taken from: The Golden Asse of Lucius Apuleius, translated by William Adlington, Hazel, Watson and Vivey, 1925, pp. 89-121.
20. The ant: "Pitié, filles agiles de la terre mère de toutes choses, pitié pour une aimable enfant!"  
the reed: "Assaillie par tant d'épreuves, ne souille point par une mort misérable la sainteté de mes ondes."  
the eagle: "Simple et sans expérience, tu espères dérober une goutte à cette source terrible."  
the tower: "Pourquoi, malheureuse enfant, chercher à te tuer en te précipitant?"
21. The correct order of the sections of "Spirale" is one of the most difficult tasks of cross-referencing in the volume. The details below can be checked by reference to: Michel Butor, 'Spirale', Quadrum, no. 19 (1965), 107-114. The work falls into two parts of eight sections each:  
Part One: Peintre et Chien Observateur.  
Femme, Eau et Champignon.  
Personnage en Folie.  
Marchand d'Épingles.  
La Première des Quatre Montagnes.  
La Deuxième des Quatre Montagnes.  
La Troisième des Quatre Montagnes.  
La Quatrième des Quatre Montagnes.  
Part Two: Les Cent Hommes (I, II, III).  
Victimes.  
Le Paradis.  
Le Cirque d'Hiver.  
Le Mariage.  
L'Expulsion.  
Jambes et Chiens.  
Hommes et Chiens.

22. Identified as such in "Le Cirque d'Hiver" (III, 241).
23. The situation of paradise in Arles has no significance. It could be anywhere, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Connecticut (III, 254).
24. Similarly, the myths of Actaeon, Artemis and Psyche are seen through works of art centuries after they were written down, works of art which become their distant "descendants".
25. Compare the withdrawal from the headlong rush of time in 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde as encapsulated in the person of Blondin.
26. Hence in La Modification Delmont will write a book, a work of art.
27. This information can be found in the Bibliothèque Municipale de Nice.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Illustrations III: Art, Chaos and Celebration

In terms of technique, Illustrations III is more closely related to the first volume of the series than the second: there is no system of contamination and the structure is a development of the simple sequential juxtaposition of Illustrations. There are six texts in the volume, all of which are divided into individual parts, be it the seven letters of "Courrier d'Images" or the fifty-nine "figurations" of "Méditation Explosée". It is these individual parts of text, rather than whole texts, as in Illustrations, which are juxtaposed with each other. The distribution of these individual parts creates the movement of the volume.<sup>1</sup> Unlike Illustrations, however, this movement is not strictly linear. The work is organised around a centre or pivot: the letter to the Egyptian artist Gazbia Sirry (IIII, 82), the fourth part of "Courrier d'Images". This symmetrical structure of the volume can be made into a spatial figure, that of a triangle, with its apex at the letter to Sirry and its points at the first and last letters of "Courrier d'Images".<sup>2</sup> Table Two shows that the work divides itself into three different levels: at the base, "Méditation Explosée", then "Remarques" and finally, on the top level, "Petites Liturgies Intimes". All three of these principal texts are joined on their respective levels by letters from the other three texts which can be associated with them. The movement of the volume is therefore vertical

rather than linear and in our analysis we shall, broadly speaking, follow this movement, progressing from the base to the top level of the triangle.

As the centre of the volume the letter to Gazbia Sirry occupies a privileged position in its arrangement and provides the reader with his first clue in the interpretation of the work. The emphasis in this letter falls less on the artist than on what the artist brings to France: Egyptian houses and their constituent parts:

Il faut que ces briques, portes et fenêtres, avec leur population, regards et fantômes, greniers, odeur, cris, murmures et pas précipités, viennent hanter nos murs, nos vitrines et nos trottoirs. Et j'espère aussi que nos maisons viendront se prendre au piège de vos yeux, que vous en emporterez les regards jusqu'au Caire, et que vos toiles un jour nous les chuchoteront. (III, 82)

As well as introducing us to the concept of the house, the letter expresses Butor's hope for a reciprocal transfer of Egyptian and French houses, the latter being caught by the eyes of the artist. Here, what is being transferred is space: Egyptian space has been translated onto the work of art and made available for perception in France. Butor hopes the reverse will also be possible. Space and sight are the twin poles of Butor's concern in the volume and we shall begin our analysis of the nature of space by examining "Méditation Explosée" and its associated letters from "Courrier d'Images" and "Quatre lettres du Nouveau Mexique".

The most immediately striking aspect of "Méditation Explosée" is its sheer size or, to put it another way, the proliferation or multiplication of its paragraphs. A "meditation" on the act of writing, it carries its own commentary:

Un alphabet de 59 caractères, et chacun me raconte une histoire, l'histoire de son inscription transposée dans un paysage ou une fable, et si vous les conjuguez un texte énorme hantera les parois de votre chambre ou de votre laboratoire. (III, 41)

The text is at once a whole and an assortment of scattered parts, metaphorically exploded into pieces, each one of which is considered as "germe d'une peinture et d'une lecture" (III, 42).

The exploding or scattering of "Méditation Explosée" invites an immediate comparison with the landscape of the first of the New Mexico letters:

dans la fenêtre du téléphérique s'inscrivent des anfractuosités,  
 puis tout un massif de rainures, paumes, piliers, failles,  
 sutures, antennes, signaux, casques et mâchicoulis.  
 A leurs pieds divers éboulis:  
 on nomme ces boucliers couverts de lichens le colloque des  
 tortues,  
 ces gorges gravées de filets ramifiés les servantes,  
 ces amoncellements arrangés en cratères la vaisselle des  
 anciens,  
 ces éclats arrosés de ruisselets rouillés l'arsenal,  
 et ces sables en nappes le souvenir de la traversée. (III, 27)

The names are presumably Indian ones, but the importance of the names lies not in their origin or meaning but in the fact that they are given at all. The chaotic scree is unified under the umbrella of the names, with the result that the abiding image is of a scene of the utmost harmony: "Tout cela coiffé de forêts ... auxquelles répondent dans les gouffres et sur les pentes les touffes des yuccas ..." (III, 27-28). It is also noticeable in this letter that the rocks themselves are used for artistic purposes: they are decorated with runes and recall Butor's comment on "Méditation Explosée" in "Le Nuage" (7)<sup>3</sup>; "Comprenne qui pourra mes figures, je tire de ces hiéroglyphes une instruction oblique" (III, 17).



The use of debris for creative purposes is not restricted to the New Mexican runes. In the letter to Nadia Blokh, Butor sings the praises of materials other than the canvas normally used by the artist:

lambeaux. Ce qui reste des robes, manteaux, dessous, nappes, torchons, serpillières, et tout cela déchiqueté par le vent, lavé par la pluie ou la mer, usé par les galets, le sable, taché de rouille ou de pétrole, teint, déteint, roulé, déchiré; quel peintre jamais au seul moyen de ces pauvres pâtes qu'il fait jaillir de tubes achetés chez quelque marchand pourra rivaliser avec ces textures et nuances? (IIII, 46)

These rags are as rich, if not richer, in "lumière et vie" (IIII, 46) as the artist's more usual materials. So much so, that Butor positively encourages their use:

Ainsi, chercher le long des haies, des plages ou des greniers ces exquises provocations, ces propositions de peinture, ces balbutiements, ces minutieux filets tendus mais oubliés par les hommes, où se sont déposées l'histoire et la nature, les rassembler, les accomplir dans un vitrail féminin ... (IIII, 46)

The smallest, dirtiest rag is an invitation to the artist and Butor desires the use of all substances, from gold to sand. We are reminded of Butor's borrowing of Henry James' definition of the novelist as "quelqu'un pour qui rien n'est perdu" (R, 272). The interest lies not in the rags for their own sake but in what they contain, "l'histoire et la nature", and in the way in which they can be assembled together, integrated to form a whole. The ideas of assembly and reintegration remind us of "Regard Double" and collage.

If the reader has any doubts as to what might be created with such materials these are dispelled in the second New Mexico letter where a sudden downpour provides the reservation children with great artistic and imaginative possibilities using only mud and rudimentary tools:

avec les dents d'une fourchette que leurs travaux avaient à demi déterrée, aubaine, ils ont dessiné parmi les touffes d'épines le plan d'un parc à fontaines et canaux, avec toutes sortes de cages pour leurs zoos, de terrasses pour leurs soirées, piscines pour leurs étés, pistes d'atterrissages pour leurs avions, bancs pour leurs fusées, ports pour leurs yachts ... (IIII, 58)

Here we have an architectural project for the buildings of a society which reveals a grasp of its customs as well. A sophisticated project arises from almost nothing.

The children's plan is a realistic representation but the same can be achieved using only colour and certain types of brush stroke. From Shirley Goldfarb Butor desires a painting of uniformly violet background where the artist's touch will convey not only vibrant life but also communicate textures, smells and tastes: "la saveur des prunes"; "de lents chuchotements de senteur"; "le fumet des cuisines"; "le satin des yeux du soir" (IIII, 71). In the midst of all this life the artist can even create an atmosphere of intimacy and calm: "en la regardant on attendrait la nuit, et quand on éteindrait la lampe on s'endormirait dans ses plis ..." (IIII, 71). Butor ascribes a similar technique to the Brazilian artist Waldomiro de Deus who can bring to Paris "les liqueurs de Bahia", "toute la distance et l'or de Bahia" (IIII, 93) in his abstract figures. The most insignificant texture, the most uniform colour, all are pregnant with possibility for the artist. There is no aspect of art which cannot be productive and, most importantly, there is no aspect of space, natural or human, which cannot be integrated into art. Everything in reality can have meaning or can be integrated into a meaningful whole. The art, as it were, is in seeing this.

Taking as our point of departure only the title of "Méditation Explosée", we have already been able to travel to the second level of the

volume in our analysis of the treatment of space, to the letters to Nadia Blokh, Shirley Goldfarb, De Deus and Camille Bryen which accompany the main text "Remarques" and its other associates, the letter to Jean-Luc Parant and the third New Mexico letter. It is now time to introduce to the treatment of space the theme of sight and to examine the ways in which their paths begin to cross.

"Remarques" recounts the struggle of the writer for sight in the world of art. In view of the rôle played by eyes and balls in this text, we should examine first of all the letter to Jean-Luc Parant, the self-styled "fabricant de boules et auteur de textes sur les yeux".<sup>4</sup> Parant's "boules" are a somewhat abstruse and inexpensive form of art and, suitably enough, the "boules-planètes" of the universal architect are not constructed from the noblest of materials<sup>5</sup>: "de tous les débris que les mers de là-haut jetaient sur leurs plages, il pétrit d'autres pains obscurs qu'il fit graviter autour du premier-né" (LVII, 118). All the more astonishing, then, what can be seen by the architect on these ordinary looking "boules":

Seule sa vue divine put découvrir alors sur ces boules  
qui s'amoncelaient tous les prés, forêts et populations, tous  
les baisers, larmes et brûlures, tous les yeux dont leur artisan  
rêvait en le modelant, imperceptibles à sa veille. (LIII, 118)

Parant's art is nothing less than the re-creation of universal space, microcosm and macrocosm, from the debris of the existing universe. He re-assembles space in order to re-create it. This fits in neatly with the treatment of space we have already seen above, but does one need to be endowed with "divine sight" in order to perceive this creation?

It is at this point that the rôle of the artist for Butor becomes abundantly clear. The two New Mexico letters examined above are notable for their attention to minute detail. Attention to detail is the subject

of the third of these letters in which a profusion of objects describing a night-time scene is revealed by the penetrating look of the artist, objects which become his virtual property;

Bien imprudent l'usurpateur qui vient d'ouvrir à ton regard transatlantique la porte de cette chambre forte, car il me suffit de détailler les trésors que tu m'exposes, bijoux de ta couronne, pour t'établir comme seul héritier légitime. Que saurait-il en faire, vraiment? Il ignore que dans cette troisième double page froissée du journal d'avant-hier, ce qui lui semble n'être que le bulletin météorologique décrit avec une grande précision, pourvu qu'on ne lise qu'une lettre sur trois, le chemin qui mène d'ici jusqu'à l'entrée si soigneusement tenue secrète de ces cavernes éclairées par une lampe curieusement semblable à celle que vit en songe Poliphile, où se sont réfugiés, depuis bien des siècles, les habitants de Chaco canyon, fumant les pipes d'immortalité. (IIII, 105)

The visual world is the property of the artist, for it is he who truly sees, and in seeing, reveals. For the writer to see he must enlist the help of the artist, initiate himself into the artist's ways, decipher his codes to find the path to "Chaco canyon". Yet it is the artist himself who helps to initiate the writer. Sight is one of the five senses and it is the artist's ability to heighten the senses of those who view his work, so evident in the art of Goldfarb and De Deus, which enables the writer to transform himself from usurper to initiate, to annexe to himself the space which seemed the unique property of the artist. This is not just a gift for the lucky few: the usurper always finds the way left open for him: "Quant à la vis, au peigne, au crin de cheval, aux rognures d'ongles, ... qu'il s'essaie donc, s'il le désire, à en découvrir les vertus" (IIII, 106). The attention to detail in Bryen's work, the inclusion of debris, of rubbish normally discarded, sets it on the same level as that of Parant and De Deus. All three seek the total integration of global space: it is not just Bahia or the name of Bahia that the Brazilian brings to Paris, but "les liqueurs de Bahia", "la distance de Bahia", the spirit

of the place. The ability to see is the ability to bring near, to assemble in the one spot.

The artist, then, is necessary because he increases our sensorial receptivity to reality, allowing us to see what he has already seen. It is less clear why the integration of space should be so desirable. "Remarques" will go some way to answering our query but we must first of all enlist the help of "Méditation Explosée", the "debris" of the volume. Lest this description be misleading, let us state immediately that the sixty paragraphs of the text are not unconnected. In fact, Butor goes out of his way to propose connections between the paragraphs, to suggest, therefore, a way in which the text ought to be read. The largest group of proposed connections occurs in "Le Baiser" (59): "Et la déclaration s'enchaîne à la braise, le miroir s'enlace à la palissade, la chaleur sollicite la solitude ..."  
(III, 152). All the nouns are the titles of paragraphs and using these titles, Butor suggests a comparative reading of the text. In "Le Baiser" the text is divided into two halves, each of thirty paragraphs. The reading would compare paragraph one with paragraph thirty, two with twenty-nine, in the first half, thirty-one with fifty-eight, thirty-two with fifty-seven,<sup>6</sup> in the second half and so on. A second type of comparative reading is suggested in the series of "légendes" which runs through the central section, or upper levels, of the volume. This reading pairs paragraphs over the whole length of the text: one and sixty, two and fifty-nine and so on. Matters are further complicated by the fact that there are certain easily discernable thematic links between paragraphs which correspond to neither of the numerical systems above. At least ten paragraphs provide an image of some kind of catastrophe, for example, "Le Conciliabule" (5), "Les Hampes" (12), "La Foule" (20). Almost as large a group are devoted to the subject of writing while many others depict seascapes of one type or another, whether it be the shipwreck

of "La Barre" (43) or the birds of "L'Envol" (31). There appear to be alternatives to Butor's proposed system. There are even certain paragraphs whose very theme is the possibility of alternatives, such as "Le Crabe" (6): "J'y vois un crustacé, mais pour un autre ce sera une bague avec le sceau de l'empire, ou un turban ..." (IIII, 16). These alternative titles for the paragraphs may even be doubled or quadrupled as in "Le Voyage" (34):

Carrefour d'expressions après la route à titre simple, voici la bifurcation jumelée; ainsi à droite du théâtre<sup>7</sup> vous prenez les cygnes et les hêtres, ou si vous préférez les dômes et les avertissements ... (IIII, 122)

Other paragraphs propose additions to paragraphs we have already read: "Après le dernier mot de l'échange, ajoutez: tiré par un attelage de rennes au harnais de cuir mosaïqué; après le dernier du voyage: les palmes et les chameliers" (IIII, 44). These alternatives and additions seem to bring little significant change to the meaning or the images of the paragraphs they supplement. It is as if Butor were refusing to be limited by the end of a paragraph or to be pinned down by what has already been written, demonstrating his ability to produce variation in both fixed form, as in "Missive mi-vive", and unfixed form, and openly flouting the comparative system of connections he himself proposes. While certain of these clearly work - "La Braise" and "Le Miroir" (29/32) are a case in point - others equally clearly do not: there seems little connection between Duchamp's "Nu descendant un escalier" (40) and the disaster of "La Bourrasque" (21). Butor is renowned for the rigour of his structures: is he showing that he does not need such a "crutch" in order to write, thereby replying to some perceived criticism of his use of mathematical organisations? Is he just teasing the reader who has come to expect such structures? Is he relaxing from the discipline such structures impose on him or is he demonstrating the vast possibilities opened up by the mastery

of art? Whatever the answer to these questions - and we shall return to them - it would appear that the importance of "Méditation Explosée" lies not so much in any internal connections, but in connections with the other texts in the volume, fulfilling its rôle as "germe d'une écriture". We have already linked its title to the treatment of space and we shall now supplement that connection by turning our attention to the largest single homogenous body of paragraphs in the text: those dealing with catastrophe.

Several of these paragraphs<sup>8</sup> are linked to the theme of the "renversement" of an old order. We cannot analyse all of these paragraphs and we shall therefore limit our comments to one which appears typical and which opens out onto other parts of the volume: "L'Ombre" (56). In this paragraph disaster is occasioned by an enormous shadow:

Elle descend du ciel brûlant comme un paquet de cordages;  
 elle coule et recouvre les champs où les animaux se terrent;  
 elle écrase les églises de l'ancienne religion de ce pays,  
 casse les clochers, décroche les cloches qui vont s'enfoncer  
 dans les cimetières ... C'est la lessive noire, crient les  
 bûcherons qui déposent leur cognée sur le seuil, et se lavent  
 les mains dans les baquets préparés à leur intention sur les  
 tables des cuisines: un autre règne arrive. Les puissants  
 se lamentent devant l'explosion de leurs banques, et toute  
 une foule silencieuse cherche son chemin dans les rues  
 encombrées de la ville éperdue. (IIII, 149)

It is this crowd of silent, helpless refugees which leads us to the final letter of "Courrier d'Images", the letter to Édouard Delaporte, where in the midst of "la guerre encore et toujours" (IIII, 154), appears a group of penitents described as "les rescapés de la catastrophe interminable, du naufrage, de la dérive, de l'ignominie qui pleut, ceux qui palpitent encore, respirent encore, rêvent, surnagent dans leurs baignoires d'acides" (IIII, 155). This piteous group of people wander aimlessly in the midst of a chaos of destruction seeking shelter. The theme of wandering is inextricably linked to that of the integration of space.

It is a theme present from the very first page of the volume in Marc-Jean Masurovsky's charming drawings of, on the one hand, the crusader, the soldier and Napoleon dreaming of home as they suffer some sort of exile and, on the other hand, the final image of "ce petit pays ensoleillé" (IIII, 9) with its little house and home comforts. The theme comes to a head in "Remarques" which, as we have intimated, recounts the struggle of the writer for sight in the world of art. In fact, in a symbol which will become standard in the series Matière de Rêves, the world of art is represented by a town into which the writer slips by means of a slit in a painting. His first footsteps in the town of art are faltering in the extreme and almost totally blind: "Les yeux semblables à des grappes de groseilles blanches, il épie derrière une vitre qui tremble" (IIII, 47). The eyes are without pupils. By the end of the text the writer has become a highly individual part of a collective chain: "Ce corps supérieur n'étant plus formé que de la succession des regards" (IIII, 116). Art is the source of production for the writer, the source of ink - witness the fountain of ink in the metallic café (IIII, 52) - and it comes as no surprise to find that the pupil of the eye is a symbol of ink and that this ink can be found in the balls of the outlandish "billiard" game: "A l'intérieur de chaque bille en jeu, dans les fourris de lames, de filaments incandescents et de massues caoutchoutées, se creuse une pupille, mare d'encre cendreuse" (IIII, 52). It is mastery of the "billiard-échiquier" (IIII, 108) which leads to the actual establishment of a home in the town of art after the escape from the endless suburban drudgery of the Kafkaesque stairs and escalators.<sup>9</sup> The game played resembles pinball but with no glass to keep the balls in the machine:



parfois certaines sont expulsées avec une telle violence qu'elles s'encastrant dans les murs couverts à cet effet de polystyrène expansé, ou même, traversant le vitrage, vont se perdre dans les rues où on ne les retrouvera que bien plus tard. Certaines resurgissent après des siècles d'aventures obscures; longtemps après la mort des joueurs initiaux, d'autres pourront les introduire dans leurs propres jeux. Le vent, parfois, malgré la densité de ce métal, peut en apporter quelques-unes. On a l'impression qu'elles se matérialisent dans l'air. (IIII, 107)

The machine itself can produce new balls suggesting that these are the fruit of the collaboration between writer and artist, new eyes with which to view reality. The balls from the past and the "joueurs initiaux" are references to Butor's tendency to use authors from the past in his own work, old eyes which may still have a valid point of "view". The balls rushing off to mysterious future adventures are the views of Butor and his contemporaries which may one day be used by someone else. The machine and the game constitute a focal point ("un foyer") where there is an interplay between, and an integration of, eye-balls from the past and present. The home ("le foyer") of the writer, where the game is played, has become a place which permits multiplication of view and space, a place where the wanderers of the present, "les foules venues d'aujourd'hui et d'ici, trahies par l'histoire" (IIII, 112), can find shelter. Having come in from "les marais de l'errance" (IIII, 69) to the town of art and made a home for himself there, the writer becomes "constructeur de regards" and "berger d'espaces" (IIII, 112), opening his door to others. From being a simple suburban "worker-bee" in the honeycomb of art, the writer has turned into a "travailleur-joueur" (IIII, 112) who is part of a collective superior entity in which he nevertheless retains his own identity:

Le cerveau du travailleur-joueur ne pouvait supporter la souffrance de tous ces nerfs. Il lui a fallu inventer une autre tête, non seulement une collective à laquelle accorder la sienne, mais une individuelle aussi dont les circonvolutions eussent la liberté de fleurir à l'extérieur de la boîte. Il ressemble à un buisson d'oreilles et d'yeux.<sup>10</sup> (IIII, 112)

In order to cope with the numbers of wanderers a collective effort is called for, with the immediate aim of searching out survivors of the catastrophe: "tous les rescapés, de tout le rescapé dans l'ennemi, de tout ventre à ensemençer, de tout regard à caresser" (III, 116). These survivors resemble Delaporte's "pénitents" and the various victims of disaster in "Méditation Explosée". In an unusually direct statement Butor describes history, past and present, as a continuous sequence of catastrophe in which the task of the writer is to assemble and save humanity. Reality is in a state of chaos in which all sense of direction has been lost:

Voiles dépenaillées sur les tisons des beauprès, crânes  
et cornes parmi les oriflammes en lambeaux, rouille de voyages.  
Gouvernails et cabestans sous les algues, avec les filets  
tendus de poteaux en bornes, carènes éventrées, poitrails de  
planches aux pustules de sel avec des bouquets de palourdes et  
d'oursins, traces de braises. (III, 154)

Reality has been shipwrecked and all that remains is broken or rusty parts. Yet, we saw in the work of Goldfarb, Parant, Blokh and Bryen that something could be created out of rubbish, something meaningful and of great beauty. Butor sees reality as chaos, as a heap of rubbish, but from chaos can come creation. The dispersed parts can be re-assembled to form a new arrangement, a collage. Reality can be salvaged and in this operation writer and artist are in complete harmony: "je t'aime, je t'aime, dit le travailleur-spermatozoïde à l'iris-joueuse, dit le joueur-pupille à l'ovule-travailleuse, dans la ville entière et sa dissémination, dans l'espace entier et sa multiplication" (III, 116).

The final images of "Remarques", with their emphasis on fertilisation, are remarkably similar to those of "Petites Liturgies Intimes" on the top level of the volume, where the more personal consequences of the integration

of space for the writer are revealed. This text also provides the key to the tone of Illustrations III and to the ultimate ambition of the writer for humanity. This text has as its source Jacques Hérold's best-known sculpture, created for the 1947 International Surrealism Exhibition:

j'avais fait une sculpture représentant un „grand transparent", ce mythe de l'homme futur que Breton avait décrit dans ses Prolégomènes à un Troisième Manifeste. Le soleil, la lune, dans la tête une perspective de cristaux, une main brûlant, l'autre tenant un fil à plomb à l'envers, signe de l'anti-gravitation, le ventre creux, avec un miroir dans lequel on se voit tout petit et à l'envers, et à côté de lui sa nourriture: les deux hémisphères comme oeufs sur le plat.<sup>11</sup>

In Hérold's brief description can be seen the sources for the "Liturgies" entitled: "La Grotte Cérébrale", "La Pyramide Pectorale" (the chest of the statue is an inverted triangle to which are pinned the sun and the moon), "La Multiplication des Mains (the statue has three) and "Le Miroir Ventral".

The text shares certain ideas common to other parts of Butor's work. Readers of the first two volumes of the Illustrations series will recognise in "Préliminaires ou Bandeau" the familiar sight of the writer becoming a new man after the contact with art, here fashioning a new self from the very substance of art: "une boucle de lointain" (IIII, 72). Not so familiar, at first sight, is the theme common to Hérold's work, in "La Grotte Cérébrale" of the penetration of objects by the artist with their accompanying destruction:

Cette intrusion au coeur des choses implique habituellement violence: comment connaître l'intérieur du corps sans le détruire? Ces représentations de choses écorchées ne sont-elles pas inévitablement des représentations de choses détruites? Ce visage creusé, ne sera-t-il pas fatalement la ruine d'un visage? Ce corps exploré comme avec un scalpel, n'est-il pas fatalement un cadavre?<sup>12</sup>

The answer in "La Grotte Cérébrale", as indeed it is in Hérold's art, must be in the negative. The rock, prised open with a knife without any sign or sensation of violence, bears no trace of the passage of the human body through it after the latter's departure, save for a new skin indistinguishable from the old one. The passage of the one through the other renews them both. We may take this process at its face value: aided by the artist's vision the writer has a hitherto impossible access to the objective world, an access which is mutually beneficial. Alternatively the rock may be taken to represent the artist himself, and the "retournement" the necessary change wrought in the writer in order for him to gain access to the artist. Finally, the rock may represent previously inaccessible regions of the writer's own persona in a process anterior to the above two. The "retournement" of the body begins to resemble more and more closely the nudity of Berlin or London in

### Illustrations II.

Whatever interpretation one prefers, it is clear that the process of "retournement" has as its aim the integration of space: "paysage intime". Both "La Pyramide Pectorale" and "La Multiplication des Mains" are equally concerned with space. The penetration of space and the writer, the interiorisation of the sun and the moon to the extent where space has become the very substance of the writer's body, is reminiscent not only of the universal strategy of Parant's "boules" but also of the global strategy of Butor himself in the series Le Génie du Lieu. The writer gathers space to himself like a magnet, becoming the focal point of space in the manner of the "Roi-Lune" or the listener of Centre d'écoute. Such reception of space permits a multiplication, a flowering of new directions which the writer may take: "un espace à neuf directions principales" (III, 84) in which the hand of the writer is all the more sure, the new hand, the

third hand created from those of writing and art. Not only a flowering of directions but a flowering of senses, another increase in sensorial receptivity, "Voir le centre de la terre" (IIII, 88), reality become transparent.

The final element of the "new man" can be found in "Le Miroir Ventral": writer and artist in a fusion of intimate space, in a union which becomes once again the focal point of time, the present, the apex of the temporal triangle, from whose heights can be seen the origins of the past and the potentiality of the future: seen, gained and therefore controlled. The integration of space leads to control over time and, therefore, as in 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde, to victory over death, "l'espace, le champ des morts" (IIII, 59) of "Remarques". The body of the writer is no longer a prey to "la machine à tricoter le temps qui passe" (IIII, 51) but fully connected to the fountain of ink. The integration of space means everything to the writer who can now truly claim to resemble the Zuni of Où.

What we have analysed above may be described as the underlying serious intent, rather than the real subject, of a text which is characterised by humour and relaxed tone. As the title implies, Butor's text is a none too serious look, not so much at the surrealist "mythe nouveau" as at the recurrent theme of the "new man" in his own work. The "absurdity" and blatant impossibility of the instructions in Butor's do-it-yourself recipe for becoming a new man are in sharp contrast with the seriousness associated with religious liturgy and ritual. Even if the reader is at first tempted to search for a serious symbolic meaning behind each ritual, it soon becomes clear that Butor is writing with tongue in cheek:

Au milieu d'une épaisse foule - on conseille le métro parisien à six heures de l'après-midi, mais les trains ou les bus de Tokyo conviendraient tout aussi parfaitement ... observer attentivement le ventre d'une femme. (IIII, 92)

It is in the mock seriousness of the instructions, in the very attention to detail, that Butor deliberately gives the game away. It might even be argued that the text contains certain private jokes between Butor and Hérold: knowing the latter's preoccupation with revealing "l'envers des objets" (whence the notion and technique of transparency), the instruction in "La Pyramide Pectorale" with regard to the moon, "reconnaître sa face obscure" (IIII, 80), might well be interpreted as a sly wink in the direction of the artist. Be that as it may, it is clear that Butor is having fun and giving free rein to his imagination: there can be no possible reference point for the reader for concepts such as "le chardon des orages" or "les trois point épineux" in "La Multiplication des Mains" (IIII, 83-84).

Any analysis which can be made of the serious intent of the text must be based on hints and suggestions which lie fairly deep within it, at a level where they can be glimpsed and extracted but not to the detriment of the overall impression generated by the text. The real subject is intimacy, the enjoyment of intimacy between writer and artist - it is interesting to note the predominance of the artist's work in "Petites Liturgies Intimes", implying a strong bond between the two - and finally the freedom which the writer gains from such a close relationship. There is a complete lack of tension in the work: the riotous surrealistic actions, physically impossible of course, take place with consummate ease; there is no difficulty implied in straddling the Equator in coral waters and doing contorsions with one's hands. We are reminded of the paragraph in "Méditation Explosée" where we can read: "Un coup de pinceau, c'est le prince qui s'avance et, dans un monologue splendidement entortillé, vient

nous raconter son amour contrarié pour la fille du roi des Indes" (IIII, 123). With art on his side the writer has the freedom to perform magic. There are no limits to what can be accomplished.

"Petites Liturgies Intimes" is a happy text and we should not be surprised by the riotous colour and bold brush strokes of its author. If there is any surprise, then it is in the way in which "Remarques" is written. As the account of a struggle this text is much less humorous than "Petites Liturgies Intimes". Yet we can hardly claim to be plunged into the mind of a writer struggling blindly through the depths of despair. We do not feel the pain, the fear, the horror of the experience which is the underlying implication of the text. We are aided in the avoidance of these emotions by the variation in narrative perspective, the shifts from a rather pitiful and peculiar third person character to a vague first person narrator. While this may indicate thematically the emergence of a stronger writer in the town of art, it also distances the reader from the personage and his experience, as do the impossibly complex workings of the various machines, with the result that we do not come to share it. Similarly, there is little feeling of combat in the way in which the various obstacles are overcome: we flit from "Prisonnier de soi-même" to "La Ville" without any logical reason for the escape and, of course, none is necessary. The victory over death is accomplished as if by the magical and tacit approval of "la foule des anciens" (IIII, 59). This is the most light-hearted of the paragraphs of "Remarques", paradoxically reflecting the extent of the writer's fear, as the juxtaposition with the second New Mexico letter demonstrates: all artistic creation is transitory and highly fragile (IIII, 58). Butor is taking the opportunity to mock death while he can. The real combat has already taken place, in Illustrations II. In this third volume,

the struggle is being recounted from a standpoint where it has already been won, at least for the time being. In "Remarques" we can see the same free rein being given to the author's imagination without the accompanying feeling of soaring freedom and celebration.

The slight note of caution introduced above in the midst of all this happiness is a strand which runs through the volume, particularly in "Missive mi-vive", "Quant à moi c'est toujours l'incertitude et la nuit" (IIII, 50), and in certain paragraphs of "Méditation Explosée". Butor is not finished with either writing or art. We can see from "L'Aurore" (26) that there is a voyage to be undertaken, a voyage to "continents hypothétiques" (IIII, 41), to the new world and, in view of past experiences, there is no reason to suppose it will be an easy one. Illustrations III is liberally littered with shipwrecks. There is always the fear that the ability to write will desert him and this fear is expressed in the matrice of "Missive mi-vive". It, too, is a charming and light-hearted text but the fear of his own "incertitude" remains. The future is to be approached with caution.

For the moment, though, Butor is on holiday in the little house of Marc-Jean's "petit pays ensoleillé" and determined to enjoy himself. This explains the feeling in "Méditation Explosée" that Butor is playing with the reader by deliberately flouting the comparative reading system he himself proposes. The questions we posed do not really require answers: what is important is that Butor feels free to indulge his sense of humour and his imagination. Just as Dali can make his clocks melt and flow, so Butor lets his writing flow and makes us climb into the sun. This freedom is possible because of the intimacy between the writer and "le grand transparent", Butor and Hérold, Butor and art. Butor's "new man" has perhaps little in common with the surrealists' "mythe nouveau" but nevertheless the body of the sculpture is freely and confidently given to him to do with as he pleases. "Petites Liturgies Intimes" is the practical result of the



establishment of the harmonious relationship between art and writing in Illustrations II. This is what Butor is celebrating in this volume: the freedom he has acquired and the possibilities it offers him, the possibility to integrate space, the stage following the re-established harmony between man and place of Réseau Aérien, the possibility to integrate the human race and salvage it from the shipwreck of reality. The writer has become a Noah figure providing in his work shelter from the waters of chaos. This is the ultimate reason for the privileged positioning of Gazbia Sirry's houses. The final level of the volume is that of "Petites Liturgies Intimes", a level of happiness and intimacy. It resembles the most intimate part of the house that the triangle or roof shape suggests, the attic. It is a place of shelter and like the attic of "La Charpente" (50) it is a place to be alone with familiar objects, such as Hérold's statue, a place to dream a little of things past and things to come. Illustrations III is the little house where Butor rests after the struggle of Illustrations II and before the voyage of Illustrations IV.

Illustrations III reveals art to be a formidable weapon in the struggle to change life. It is through art that the writer is able to perceive reality and through art that he hopes to be able to reconstruct reality out of the chaos into which it has fallen. The key to reconstruction is to be found in the concept of collage, an arrangement where the whole is the sum of constituent parts in balanced and harmonious co-existence. The collage is not only an arrangement but an integration, an integration of global space and humanity, a place where humanity can shelter from catastrophe and the betrayal of history. For the writer personally, art opens out a vista of new directions and possibilities and enables him to continue writing and avoid the death that the inability to write would represent.

TABLE ONE

## SYMMETRICAL SEQUENTIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE PARTS OF ILLUSTRATIONS III

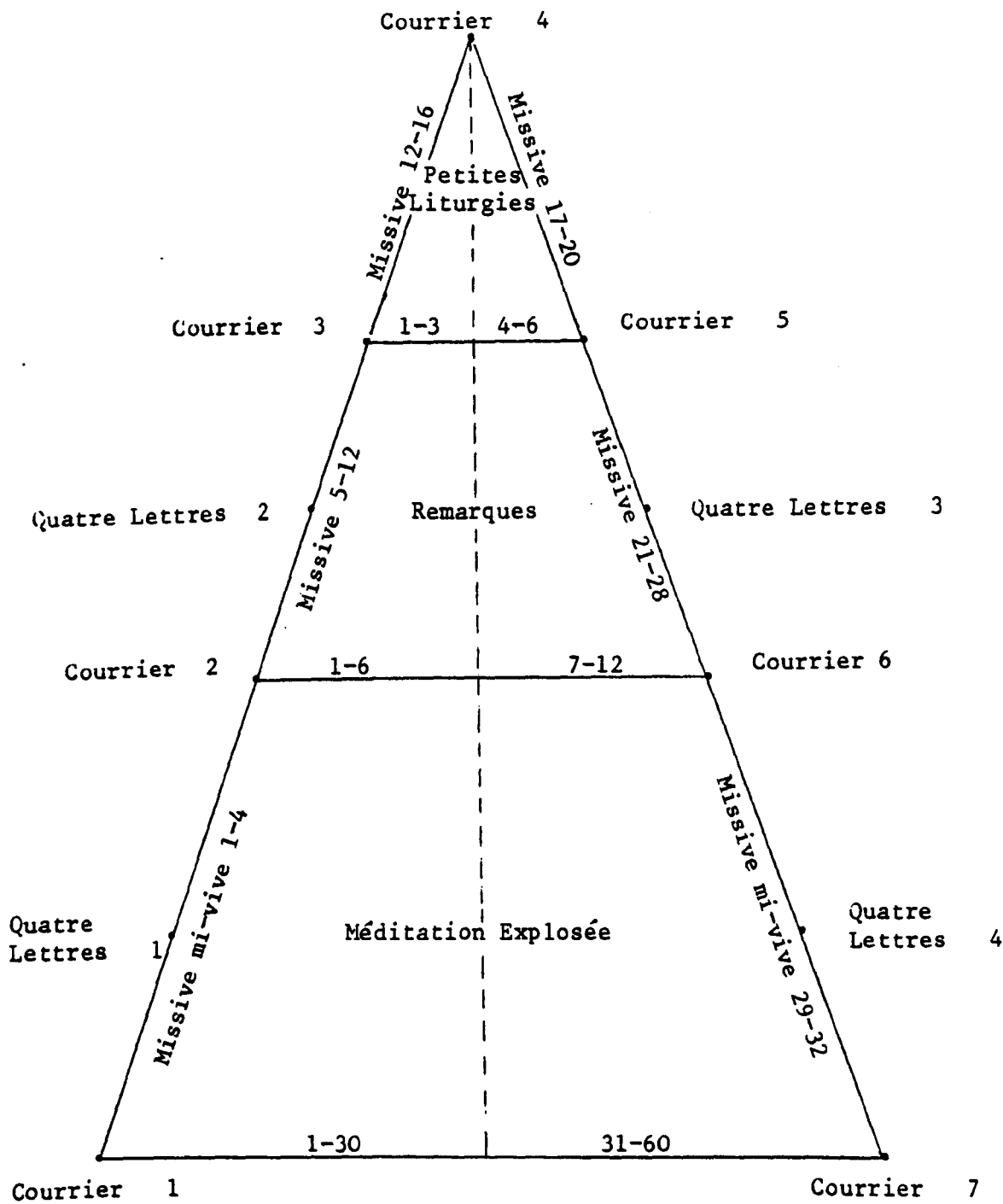
Courrier	Méditation	Liturgies	Méditation
Méditation	Méditation	Missive	Méditation
Méditation	Méditation	Légendes	Missive
Méditation	Courrier	Missive	Méditation
Méditation	Remarques	Liturgies	Méditation
Méditation	Missive	Missive	Méditation
Missive	Légendes	Légendes	Méditation
Méditation	Missive	Missive	Méditation
Méditation	Remarques	Liturgies	Missive
Méditation	Missive	Courrier	Méditation
Méditation	Légendes	Remarques	Méditation
Méditation	Missive	Missive	Méditation
Missive	Remarques	Légendes	Méditation
Méditation	Quatre Lettres	Missive	Méditation
Méditation	Remarques	Remarques	Quatre Lettres
Méditation	Missive	Missive	Méditation
Méditation	Légendes	Légendes	Méditation
Méditation	Missive	Missive	Méditation
Quatre Lettres	Remarques	Remarques	Méditation
Méditation	Missive	Quatre Lettres	Méditation
Méditation	Légendes	Remarques	Missive
Méditation	Missive	Missive	Méditation
Méditation	Remarques	Légendes	Méditation
Méditation	Courrier	Missive	Méditation
Missive	Liturgies	Remarques	Méditation
Méditation	Missive	Missive	Méditation
Méditation	Légendes	Légendes	Missive
Méditation	Missive	Missive	Méditation
Méditation	Liturgies	Remarques	Méditation
Méditation	Missive	Courrier	Méditation
Missive	Légendes	Méditation	Méditation
Méditation	Liturgies	Méditation	Courrier
	Courrier		

Dotted lines indicate the division between each group of six.

Solid lines indicate the change from one principal text to another.

TABLE TWO

TRIANGULAR SHAPE OF ILLUSTRATIONS III



FOOTNOTES

1. See Table One.
2. See Table Two,
3. These numbers in brackets refer to the paragraphs as numbered in the text.
4. See: Jean-Luc Parant, Le Bout des Bordes, no. 4 (October 1978). The newspaper is published by Christian Bourgois.
5. Parant is clearly being gently "ribbed" here, but tone and humour will be discussed below.
6. In the first proposition paragraphs fifty-nine and sixty are omitted.
7. This is the title of the following paragraph.
8. Numbers 5, 12, 20, 21, 26, 28, 42, 43, 45, 49, 56.
9. Compare also "la machine à tricoter le temps qui passe" (LIII, 51) with the punishment machine of Kafka's In der Strafkolonie.
10. "buissons d'oreilles et d'yeux": for similar sensually heightened beings compare the "Roi-Lune" and the personage of Butor's Centre d'écoute; see also p.315 below.
11. A similar line of thought is expressed by the unfinished nature of America in Mobile.
12. Héroid par Michel Butor, Musée de Poche, 1964, pp. 18-19.
13. Héroid, p. 23 (Butor's comments).

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Illustrations IV: Collage in Action

In Chapter Five we stated that the goal of the Illustrations series appeared to us to be the passage from the solid to the liquid, an early example of which we found in "Litanie d'Eau". Although this passage was implicit in Illustrations II, where the solidity of the individual text was broken down by the contamination system, the main theme of that work was the notion of collage rather than that of liquidity itself.

Similarly, while Illustrations III marked an important stage in the relationship between the writer and art, the work was a resting-place in which the writer expressed his satisfaction with that relationship before embarking once again on the voyage to the new world, the voyage which began in "La Cathedrale de Laon, l'automne". Without abandoning the theme of collage, Butor returns in Illustrations IV not only to this voyage, but also to the contamination system, in which there are now three texts dialoguing at any one time, and to the theme of liquidity:

<<Illustrations IV>>, c'est le développement de ce qu'il y avait dans <<Illustrations II>>. Seulement, alors que là il y avait contamination de la page de droite à la page de gauche, ici c'est un peu plus compliqué. Les choses sont plus complexes. Dans <<Illustrations II>>, si vous voulez, les textes étaient à peu près considérés comme agissant les uns sur les autres de la même façon ... Et lorsqu'il y en avait un qui agissait sur l'autre, l'autre agissait sur lui. Et cela aboutissait à un certain nombre de variations suffisamment continues. Cette idée de variations continues, de textes qui changent au fur et à mesure qu'on les lit, c'est ce qui me donne le sentiment de liquidité. On trouve déjà cette impression de textes liquides dans <<Illustrations I>>, avec <<Litanie d'Eau>> ... Alors, dans <<Illustrations IV>>, il y a des parties du texte qui

sont des textes liquides. Et ces textes liquides réagissent les uns sur les autres comme les textes d'«Illustrations II». Mais, au milieu des ces textes liquides, il y a ce que j'appelle des textes solides, ce sont des textes qui ont pour moi une espèce d'évidence visuelle.<sup>1</sup>

The six solid texts, "Épître à George Perros", "Affiche", "Tourmente", "Hoirie-Voirie", "La Politique des charmeuses", and "Éclats", all appear in the middle of the page, while the upper and lower registers are occupied by the liquid texts, "L'Oeil des Sargasses", "Conditionnement", "Western Duo", "Octal", "Trille Transparent Tremble", "Les Parenthèses de l'été" and "Champ de vitres". Each liquid text appears in an incomplete, uncontaminated version, as in Illustrations II, and in a version which is contaminated both by another liquid text and by a solid text, which itself is never contaminated and which acts as a catalyst:

Ces textes solides sont en particulier des textes écrits pour mai 1968 ... Donc ces textes apparaissent sur les autres comme sur un fond. Ils vont être coloriés par ce fond, contraster plus ou moins avec ce fond. Mais les mots restent intacts. Ce sont des mots tels qu'ils étaient, qui restent. Mais ils vont réagir sur les textes qui les entourent, le liquide qui les entoure. C'est-à-dire que les textes liquides vont en quelque sorte réfléchir certains mots des textes solides. Ainsi, à l'intérieur d'un texte qui a été travaillé pour avoir une variation continue, il y a un terme qui va être remplacé par un terme qui vient du texte solide: par exemple, des textes de mai 1968. Le terme remplacé va donc se mettre à vivre sa vie propre. Si vous voulez, c'est comme une molécule libérée qui va aller à la recherche d'autres molécules, qui va se comporter donc comme la molécule d'un gaz. D'où les textes gazeux qui sont des constellations de mots, qui viennent de la vaporisation des textes liquides. Alors, cela fait toute une hiérarchie très complexe. Cela constitue une sorte de société avec des rôles différents. De société ou d'organisme! ... Parce qu'il y a là vraiment dans ce livre une espèce de réalisation d'un vieux rêve alchimique: fabriquer un homoncule. Oui, fabriquer une espèce de modèle d'un être vivant avec des humeurs qui coulent, des humeurs et des vapeurs. Il y a un côté Frankenstein, si vous voulez. Bon, je suis un peu le Docteur Frankenstein dans ce livre, hein? Ce livre est idéalement - enfin dans mon rêve - ce livre est bien une sorte de golem.<sup>2</sup>

It will be the aim of this study to discover what kind of "monster" Butor

has created in Illustrations IV, what kind of society or organism. To reach this objective we will analyse the movements of texts contained in the various dialogues. In this analysis the general themes of the volume will, as a rule, take precedence over the individual themes of the constituent texts, although these will be of importance for what we might refer to as the thematic background or scenario of the volume.

The scene is set in the first dialogue of the volume between the solid "Épître à Georges Perros" and the two liquid texts, "L'Oeil des Sargasses" and "Conditionnement". "Épître à George Perros" takes the form of a letter in verse in which Butor states his dependence on the company of others, in this case a writer, for his own writing:

je cherche un moyen de dire  
Sans emphase à ceux qui me lisent avec bienveillance  
Que sans ton encouragement bien souvent j'aurais  
Renoncé devant la marée de sottises. . (LIV, 25-26)

Alone Butor could not continue his writing voyage. The poem is designed to be a homage to Perros' companionship:

j'ai bien essayé de composer à  
Ton illustration quelque étude glanant  
En tes écrits des citations ...  
... pour en façonner la colonne  
Vertébrale et développer autour de cette chaîne de galets  
Immergée dans ma crique d'acides respectueux quelques ondes  
Méditatives décomposant ton regard de Breton d'adoption.  
(LIV, 27-28)

The poem fails in this respect ostensibly because Butor knows Perros too well to be able to write anything for him: "Notre connivence est trop intime" (LIV, 28). However, another explanation can be gleaned from that part of the poem which appears in brackets. The five stanzas of the poem

take us rapidly through the summer holiday months from "les derniers jours bousculés de juin" (LIV, 25) to September and "la rentrée des classes proche" (LIV, 29). Time is a major problem for the writer - the summer months pass too quickly for him to write a proper homage: "C'est pourquoi j'ai préféré te rediger ces quelques lignes inégales" (LIV, 29). The mood of regret aroused by this state of affairs is compounded by a feeling of foreboding particularly evident in the third stanza where the family is at Cauterêts in a scene familiar to readers of Où:

(le gave  
Est moins bruyant que l'an passé mais le tumulte  
Des journaux bien plus fort août  
Les montagnes pèsent à peine derrière la brume souffrée  
C'est le ciel qui est lourd comme une mamelle pendant  
Au milieu de ce giron de roc ...) (LIV, 27)

Butor seems to be prey to a certain mood of anxiety and despair, concerned with the problems of solitude and time. "Épître à Georges Perros" provides a useful introduction to Illustrations IV: the tumult of the mountain stream prefigures the "tumultuous" solid texts dealing with May '68, while the notions of solitude and tide, "la marée", are both "reflected" in "L'Oeil des Sargasses".

The theme of "L'Oeil des Sargasses" is the voyage of Columbus-Butor to the new world of America and his passage through the Sargasso Sea. The voyage of the mariner-writer, like that of his historical counterpart, is not an easy one. The text falls into two parts around its major organising sign "LA LUNE ET SON DOUBLE" (LIV, 19), the moon which controls the motions of the tide. There are two subsidiary signs: for the first part "le vent d'est" (LIV, 18), and for the second "le vent d'ouest" (LIV, 20).



The appearance of the west wind, which might possibly blow the mariner back toward Europe, hints at an unfavourable end to the voyage. The mood of the poem is set at the very beginning:

l'étain vibre de lueurs et regrets  
 sel brouillon des champs ratures  
     la solitude  
 continuer  
     la solitude. (LIV, 8)

Writing is a lonely vigil which requires a continuous effort to carry on and there is always the problem of "le temps qui passe" (LIV, 9). The most dominant and persistent emotion in the poem is solitude, solitude everywhere and at all times: "la solitude au milieu des cris" (LIV, 15); "solitude au milieu des ronflements" (LIV, 22). It is so pervasive as to be tangible: "la solitude boire la solitude" (LIV, 19).

Nevertheless, at the beginning, the poem expresses optimistic hopes of the "Indes" (LIV, 10), the glory of "L'Image de la Reine" (LIV, 11) and of the discovery of "Sauvages" (LIV, 11) and "Trésors" (LIV, 11). There is also an undercurrent of desire which runs throughout the text, expressed in the series of word couples relating to the female body and the act of love: "hanches et cils" (LIV, 11); "seins et paumes" (LIV, 12); "câlîneries et promesses" (LIV, 16); "enlacements et caresses" (LIV, 18). This desire extends to the treasures of the palaces of the new world: "colliers et bagues" (LIV, 12); "coraux et perles" (LIV, 11). The new world is physically coveted by the mariner-writer and in the reference to the Queen of Spain an imperialistic motivation for the voyage is hinted at.

These comments apply to that part of the poem which is in serial or list form. By far the greater part of the text is, however, in verse form and it is in this part that the strongest impression of "liquidity" is

encountered. This impression is created by the continuous variation of the vocabulary of the poem, achieved by the repetition of words in different combinations. The number of repetitions increases as the poem progresses but this build-up is neither regular nor steady: in the first twenty-eight lines there are no repetitions at all; in the first half of the poem overall there are some sixty repetitions, while in the second part there are almost two hundred; the jump from the second quarter to the third is from fifty-three to one hundred and three repetitions. The pattern of the repetitions themselves is limited to a certain localisation of the repeated words. We may take as an example line twelve:

barbouillages des sillons accolades arêtes. (LIV, 10)

Three of these words re-appear in two lines near the end of the poem:

de la soie chaude aux sillons rayures  
trémas des dactyles barbouillages et accolades. (LIV, 29-30)

The three words are to be found repeated in proximity to each other but combined with words from other lines.<sup>3</sup> The fourth word of line twelve, "arêtes", disappears altogether. The degree of proximity of repeated words conforms to no overall pattern. Words, then, originally brought together in one line, are later separated to a greater or lesser degree. As many words are repeated more than once, this may be viewed as a continuous process in which certain entities are formed only to be dispersed at a later date to form different entities. It is as if the lines of the poem were dispersed by the movement of the sea and the words floated away. This, however, would give the mistaken impression that the rôle of the words themselves was a passive one. Georges Railland has written of "L'Oeil des Sargasses":

butor, loup, poisson, Butor, autant d'étapes, d'avatars:  
L'Oeil des Sargasses est le moment <<poisson>>: tout  
peut se diluer, toute marque se laver ...

Le texte s'écaille en centaines de fragments, luisants,  
durs dans une eau qui fournit un fond fluent ...<sup>4</sup>

It seems to us, however, that the words of the text are less the scales of fish than the fish themselves. There is a dynamism in their movements. Certain words, such as those we saw above, are repeated at great distance from their original lines, their adventure a slow-moving one. Others, particularly the often-repeated verbs, move much more quickly:

respirent écailles changent frétille  
roulent saumons dans les bulles d'oxalide  
...  
changent point roulent agrostides  
l'étain vibre sous les lueurs et les regrets  
en dards qui soufflent éperlans qui s'enfoncent  
dans le sel qui souffle et les ouïes qui flairent. (LIV, 17)

The words underlined seem to flit rapidly from one line to another, swiftly changing position like bright, darting fish. The words seem to have taken on a life of their own and their movements, whether rapid or slow, lend to the text an impression of immense vitality such as would be associated with living beings rather than dead scales. Butor seems to have created a living entity which is forever capable of changing and renewing itself in an eternal life cycle. However, the entity which he has created turns against him.

Not only do the words take on a life of their own but they also seem to have a will of their own. Without a readily identifiable pattern to the repetitions, the movements of the words appear anarchic, as if the words chose to reappear at will, confounding the reader and the writer with their independence. We have already hinted that, in the second part of the poem, both wind and tide seem to turn against the mariner-writer, and drawn attention to the large difference between the amount of repetitions in the

two parts. In the second part of the poem the amount of new vocabulary introduced into the text is less than one fifth of the total vocabulary employed. We are confronted with a massive body of repetition. The clue to the nature of this body lies in the localisation of many of the repetitions. Each word may be like a fish, but not a fish alone. Although the words follow individual trajectories, they are nonetheless together, part of a collective movement which can be likened to that of a shoal of fish. The position of words may alter, certain may become distanced from their earlier companions, some may even disappear or "die", but the shoal remains, changing in its individual parts but unchanged in essence. Despite the lack of pattern in individual word movements, the body of repetition builds up inexorably, stifling the new vocabulary and lending to the text a certain impenetrability which suggests the clogging weed of the Sargasso sea. The progress of the writer is blocked by this massive wave of repetition which seems to swamp him and, as shoal, to carry him back whence he came, to solitude and "poix et rouille" (IIIV, 31). This attempt to reach the new world is a failure. Alone and with a questionable attitude to the new world he seeks, the writer loses control of his language and can proceed no further.<sup>5</sup>

The result of this failure to reach the new world is the agonised suffering of the writer in "Conditionnement", a text "sur la souffrance physique".<sup>6</sup> The personage of the text is in a dream-like, semi-conscious condition, resembling "le réveil des opérés" (IIIV, 33), in which he remembers another world whose peaceful nature contrasts with the constant pain of his present circumstances:

une goutte de mercure aux rives couvertes d'arbres vert sombre  
non 14  
une goutte d'encre je me promenais sur un grand fleuve  
vert rêver rupture une goutte d'alcool b tibia

médecin ce ne pouvait être qu'un autre monde

z 13

je dors c'était sûrement un autre monde  
jaune aiguille insufflation z noir électrisation  
monsieur le médecin c'était sans doute un autre monde  
y 12

je vogue c'était peut-être un autre monde  
orangé cuivre je brûle électrisation a péroné  
ayez pitié très loin d'ici

x 11. (LIV, 34)

It is on the levels of pain, suffering, solitude (he is alone at the mercy of the "doctor") and this "other world" that the text rejoins "L'Oeil des Sargasses". It is the notion of heaviness from "Épître à Georges Perros", "le ciel qui est lourd comme une mamelle pendant ...", which is reflected in the movement between the two liquid texts. The words of "L'Oeil des Sargasses" seem to drip down onto "Conditionnement" in the manner of a "perfusion" (LIV, 18). They drip down "heavily", as if weighing on the disturbed mind of the writer, increasing rather than alleviating the suffering: "plomb" (LIV, 18); "solitude" (LIV, 19); "fièvre" (LIV, 20); "brûler" (LIV, 22). Others, in the memory of the palaces of the new world, accentuate the dream-like nature of the "other world": "tours" (LIV, 25); "frontons" (LIV, 25); "créneaux" (LIV, 25); "balcons" (LIV, 26); "gargouilles" (LIV, 26). It is as if the dream of the new world of "L'Oeil des Sargasses" had become the nightmare of "Conditionnement". In the face of his failure to reach the new world, the writer is left in a semi-comatose, half-mad state of wandering mind and physical suffering. The writer seems at his lowest ebb.

The situation of the writer begins to improve in the next two dialogues, involving first of all "Conditionnement", "Western Duo" and the solid

"Affiche", and then "Western Duo", "Octal" and the solid "Tourmente". In its primitive version (LIV, 48-49, 52-53) "Western Duo" comprises verses, in both French and English, of grammatically unlinked words evoking the desert landscape of New Mexico. We have two elements essentially foreign to each other co-existing on the same page. In reading this primitive version, however, we do not have the impression that the two languages clash, but rather, that they complement each other in a unified whole. Each text is to a large degree similar, the same vocabulary being used in many cases in both languages: "fault" (LIV, 48) and "faille" (LIV, 49); "fields" (LIV, 48) and "champs" (LIV, 49); "stream" (LIV, 49) and "ruisseaux" (LIV, 49). We have less two different languages than two different sonorities describing the same things. The similarity, rather than the difference, between the two languages is being emphasised. A frontier is crossed between French, the language of the writer, and English, the language of the artist, Gregory Masurovsky. The distance between the two is reduced, the real distance which separated them during the collaboration, Butor in Albuquerque and Masurovsky in Los Angeles.<sup>7</sup> "Western Duo" illustrates the overcoming of the barriers between writer and artist.

The vocabulary used in the poem covers a wide-ranging area of both the physical and mental space of New Mexico from Indian times to modern day highways and towns, including the natural landscape with its flora and fauna. It is as if the text stretches out to the past and its "history" (LIV, 52) and to the future and its "rêve" (LIV, 50). Without grammatical links, the words themselves are like grains of sand in the desert caught in a moment of potential before the wind organises them in a different way. Raillard comments:

détachés, sans lien syntaxique entre eux, mais un seul lien positionnel, ils rayonnent, pauvres outils, mais aussi enclencheurs

de rêve et porteurs d'histoire. Ce qu'il faut, c'est profiter de leur mise en scène: comme des acteurs, ils sont prêts pour tous les rôles, pour les engagements les moins prévus au répertoire. Jouez à la nouvelle syntaxe, inventez des traces d'églantines, arrêtez des coulées de camions, de mimosas ou de serpents, entrez dans la ville de l'arc-en-ciel, rêvez l'Ouest, rebâtissez-le.<sup>8</sup>

Unified in the vision of both writer and artist, the space of the West has been re-integrated in a similar way to space in Illustrations III and awaits the moment of reconstruction into a new world.

In the short dialogue with "Conditionnement" (LIV, 41-47) the addition of the word "loin" at the end of each verse of "Western Duo" echoes the words "très loin d'ici" (LIV, 41) of "Conditionnement" which relate to the "other world" of that text. The writer's dream of the "other world" becomes concrete in the shape of "Western Duo". The writer is dreaming of, and, in his agony, calling out for, a world in which writer and artist appear together in harmony, where he is no longer alone. This new world combines with the notion of "aurore" (LIV, 45) in "Affiche" to herald a new dawn. A liquid element is also introduced into the desert in the form of the verbs "je ramais" (LIV, 42), "je vogue" (LIV, 44) and "je rame" (LIV, 45) from "Conditionnement", implying the possibility of creation or flourishing. The movement implied by these verbs is also reflected in the combination of different verses<sup>9</sup> and the difference in shape from the primitive version. The grains of sand have begun to move, a movement which has its roots in "Affiche":

Rêvant de larguer ses amarres  
La ville frémit à son quai. (LIV, 45)

A turning point has been reached in the suffering of the writer. The vision of the artist and writer together is enough to liberate his language from its

anchors and move his ship away from the quay - the voyage to the new world has begun again.

This voyage gathers momentum in the dialogue between "Western Duo", "Octal" and "Tourmente". Although the words of "Western Duo" began to move in the previous dialogue, they nevertheless remained unlinked grammatically and isolated from each other as they were in the primitive version. As soon as "Octal" begins, grammatical connections appear. At first, these are extremely simple: "arbres et observateurs et danses et lapins et argent et étendues" (LIV, 54). In the next verse word couples or duos are formed: "pierres-égantines et camions-coupoles et bisons-ceintures" (LIV, 55). These grammatical links evolve into a fully fledged series of twenty-five elements: "et, puis, sur, devenant, ou, devant, avec, traversant, grondant, sombrant, en, parmi, illuminant, après, sifflant, ô, roulant, improvisant, caressant, quelle, produisant, revant, bientôt, sanglant, calmé". These elements are serialised into a number of variations of forward and reverse movements which create an impression of constant transformational movement. The movement is controlled and appears so powerful as to be irresistible:

aurore ou oiseaux devenant couteaux sur échelles puis habitations-  
cauchemar et bords ...

... devenant légendes sur camions puis barrages-colombes  
et ceintures-paniers puis maïs sur vent devenant conifère ou coq.

(LIV, 59)

The regularity of the serial variation gives the impression that the writer's language is on the march, progressing to the beat of an inaudible drum. It has the inexorable force of an army on the move. The order of the language contrasts strongly with the anarchic chaos of "L'Oeil des Sargasses".



Order is, however, disrupted by the massive displacement of words occasioned by the contamination from "Octal". With the beginning of "Tourmente" the words of "Octal" disappear from their allotted position at the bottom of the page. Of the eleven stanzas of "Octal" which run concurrently with "Tourmente" only three (LIV, 65, 67, 68) actually contain, within the framing constellation names, words from "Octal". These missing words are to be found en masse amongst those of "Western Duo" in the top register. "Western Duo" is literally burst open, much of its content being displaced into "Octal". The clue to this massive and violent contamination is to be found in "Tourmente".

The theme of "Tourmente" is the upheaval in Paris caused by the events of May '68 and it is without doubt the most passionately aggressive and angry of Butor's works. Butor's anger is directed against the authorities who refuse to heed the cries of protest:

Trempez les draps de votre sueur car il est temps sourds  
Que votre oreille se rouvre à cette douleur suraigue  
Sourds. (LIV, 61)

In his anger, Butor does not speak alone. He takes up the cry and becomes part of the "movement" of May '68:

Oui nous voulons le dévorer  
Ce fruit de l'arbre du savoir  
Il ne fallait pas nous tenter  
En le faisant miroiter  
Derrière les grilles  
Tous les faux anges casqués matraqueurs  
Ne suffiront plus à nous en écarter  
Le feu de leurs glaives  
S'est communiqué à nos griffes  
Et nous sifflons comme des brandons de bois vert  
Nous bouillonnons comme un cratère qui se rouvre. (LIV, 63)

Butor alludes to the suddenness of the outbreak of protest:

La palpitation des flammes  
sur les tempes des jeunes filles  
Il y a quelques instants encore si timides. (LIV, 67)

The suddenness of the aggression also comes as a surprise in Illustrations IV and provides the shock which activates "Octal". "Tourmente" is a text which "burns" and heats "Octal" to the point of evaporation, echoing Butor's description of words as "molecules" in his conversation with Madeleine Santschi. We may liken this process to the action of water or wind. Both actions are united in "Tourmente".

La population des mansardes amoureuses  
Lâchée comme un ouragan  
Écume et rejaillit frappant le sol. (LIV, 64)

Similar images can be found in the series "j'ai vu" which Butor uses to help the reader determine the type of movements involved in the volume. Three members of this series can be applied to the contamination of "Western Duo" by "Octal": "J'ai vu des mots-poussieres et horizons soulevés par des phrases-siroccos" (LIV, 49); "J'ai vu des textes-pluies fertiliser des textes-déserts" (LIV, 52); "J'ai vu îles et constellations dériver sur le mont Sandia" (LIV, 54). The wave of violence released in "Tourmente" makes of "Octal" a flood of water which is greedily drunk by the desert of "Western Duo". Alternatively, the heat of "Tourmente" evaporates "Octal" into a gas and whips up a wind, stirring up the dust of "Western Duo" onto which the words of "Octal" rain. "Western Duo" becomes a storm of language; the words underlined belong to "Octal":

nocturnes feuilles caressant murailles improvisant houle roulant  
lourde aurore ô réseau frémissant des buées sifflant granit  
après tempête illuminant arcs-en-ciel parmi silencieuses averses  
illuminant changeant orages furieux après vergers sifflants rocs  
ô menthes roulant pentes improvisant ruines caressant cratères  
improvisant enfants roulant coeurs ô météores sifflant élans. (LIV, 66)

Both the pace and change of pace in these lines are electrifying compared to the verses of the primitive version and their isolated words. Pace is created firstly by the consistent use of "Western Duo's" present participles which emphasise the "doing" of actions while dispensing with their starting and stopping. The series of grammatical links changes direction twice without, as it were, pausing for breath, after "parmi" in line three and "caressant" in line five. Change of pace is effected by the intrusions from "Octal". The heavy sounds of "houle roulant lourde aurore" are immediately followed by "ô réseau frémissant des buées" where the lighter sounds and more lengthy grammatical links allow us to speed up our reading. "Octal" can also place a brake on the headlong rush of "Western Duo": "illuminant changeant orages furieux": the two consecutive participles cause us to pause for breath and slow down our reading. The language gusts, changing speed and direction in a whirlwind effect of imagery which is constantly in transformation and never permitted to settle. These changes of pace effected by "Octal" emphasise the difference between the two texts. Thematically, nothing could be more different from the desert of "Western Duo" than the lush vegetation and marine environment of "Octal". The words from "Octal" do not settle easily into "Western Duo" and, as the changes in pace show, are only assimilated with difficulty. The texts seem almost literally to inflict violence upon each other.

In contrast to the turmoil of the upper register, the bottom part of the page, where the displaced words of "Western Duo" take root, is remarkably calm. The words form harmonious and calmly co-existing couples:

l'étendue de la houle la tendresse des aventures  
l'aurore de la douleur  
les haricots de l'arc-en-ciel. (IV, 66)

The words appear to have found sanctuary from the chaos above in the protective framework of "Octal". "Octal" provides the final elements for an understanding of the entire process. The very presence of the framing words suggests a connection with art. The source of the text is the work of Victor Vasarely and many of the words used to form the visual frame are titles of his paintings: "Deuton" (LIV, 99), "Mindanao" (LIV, 100), "Mindoro" (LIV, 103), "Garam" (LIV, 97), "Locmaria" (LIV, 64), "Sauzon" (LIV, 59), "Our" (LIV, 59). The reference to "Belle-Île" in brackets refers to a period of his painting of the same name. A second frame of reference can be discerned from the vocabulary used in the verses and from the way in which the verses are organised. The largest vocabulary group in the poem contains words with musical connotations: "modulation", "timbres", "rythmes", "harmonie", "gammes", "suite", "accords", to list but a few. The text itself is organised according to serial variation in which words change position between verses in strictly controlled patterns. These patterns are extremely numerous, extremely varied and highly complex and we cannot examine them all here. We shall restrict ourselves to a brief examination of one of the adjective series as it appears in the first four, relatively uncontaminated verses of the poem (LIV, 55-58). We have underlined the adjectives and the numbers refer to the positions in the five-word first lines of each verse:

1	2	3	4	5
verre	la	<u>lente</u>	rosée	sur le <u>solennel</u> grès
		<u>calme</u>	miroir	<u>bruissant</u>
les	algues	aux	nuances	de vagues <u>transparentes</u>
		les	plaques	<u>chaleureuses</u> d'écume <u>claire</u>
l'	oscillation	des	<u>lourds</u>	<u>chênes</u>
		<u>frémissants</u>	trembles	<u>silencieux</u> ormes <u>vifs</u>

1	2	3	4	5
<u>sombre</u>	émail	sous la buée	des grès	<u>obscur</u>
	miroir	<u>brûlant</u>		
la lente	altération	des solennelles	flaques	
	et <u>calme</u>	écume	<u>bruisante</u>	
dans la	vibration	des chênes	<u>transparent</u>	
	trembles	<u>chaleureux</u>	ormes	<u>clair</u>

1	2	3	4	5
émail	de la	<u>soudaine</u>	averse	<u>lourd</u>
		<u>frémissantes</u>		miroir
vagues	soupirs	des plaques	<u>obscur</u>	
		écumes	<u>brûlantes</u>	
une	accumulation	<u>solennelle</u>	de	trembles
	<u>calmes</u>	ormes	<u>bruisants</u>	

1	2	3	4	5
<u>intense</u>	grès	orage	de laines	<u>transparentes</u>
<u>soudaine</u>	reprise	de	<u>lourdes</u>	coquilles
		<u>frémissante</u>		
ondulation	de	trembles	<u>obscur</u>	
		vignes	<u>brûlantes</u>	

The first statement of the series ends in line two of the second verse, the second in line four of the third verse and the third in the last line of the fourth verse. Each statement varies slightly with elements either added or omitted. It can be seen that the series is so designed that certain adjective combinations appear in different odd or even lines of the successive verses. Thus "calme" and "bruisant" appear in lines two, four and six respectively of verses one, two and three. It can also be seen that nouns change position within the same equivalent line in each verse. Thus "grès" begins in position five in the first line of verse one, moves to position four in the first line of verse two, disappears in verse three and returns in position two in verse four. The verses appear in sets of eight and these movements of adjectives and nouns are standard for each set.

Further variation is, however, introduced by the combination of lines from different verses and by a serialisation between the equivalent lines of each verse set. The first line of the second verse set (LIV, 62), for

example, is as follows:

criques ou solennelle modulation de calmes rochers.

The first adjective used here is "solennelle", the second adjective of the first verb set above, producing a horizontal serial progression of "lente solennelle, solennelle calme" which continues throughout the first line of each successive verse set and uses each member of the series. The poem thus contains a constant process of both horizontal and vertical serialisation, of variation which is constantly changing rhythm and key like a piece of music. This produces an effect of constant movement and transformation in the island and the vegetation which form the thematic backdrop to the text. The island seems to move horizontally, across the ocean, and, vertically, in the growth of its vegetation. A living being is created which responds, as if by magic, to serial music. Language flourishes under the control of music.

The order of "Octal's" language is, of course, disrupted by its violent contamination of "Western Duo" which we can now interpret fully. In protest at his failure to reach the new world in "L'Oeil des Sargasses" and at his suffering in "Conditionnement", Butor turns to both art and music for help. The meeting between the three elements, writing, art and music, produces a whirlwind of new language which is as yet chaotic and uncontrolled. The key word in this process is "amoureuses" in "la population des mansardes amoureuses" (LIV, 64) of "Tourmente". The three elements desire each other in a fiery, violent passion which results in the wholesale "attraction" of "Octal" to "Western Duo" and vice versa. In the passion of the texts for each other we might see an echo of the initially violent attempts of the writer to conquer art in Illustrations II, although in this volume the violent upheaval leads to the birth rather than the death of the writer's

language.

The word couples harmoniously co-existing in the sanctuary of the framework of "Octal" are, in a sense, the "dream" of the dialogue. They are the stable molecules which float down after the whirlwind, the calm collaboration at which Butor aims. Their stability is only temporary and fragile, elements from "Octal" appearing sporadically in the bottom register (LIV, 67, 68). It is also to some extent illusory since the word couples are composed in part of contaminating words from "Tourmente".<sup>10</sup> Stable collaboration has not yet been achieved.

Although Butor's language is still presented as being out of his control, he has now become part of a movement which, under the impetus of protest and passion, appears inexorable. Following Madeleine Santschi's description of Butor as "révolutionnaire sans fusil", referred to in our introduction, adherence to this movement should not be seen as a change in attitude on Butor's part. Butor is not approving the use of violence. In "Tourmente" acts of actual physical violence are perpetrated by the representatives of authority, by the "faux anges casqués matraqueurs" with their "grenades" (LIV, 66). The violent and aggressive tone of the poem reflects the strength of the passionate protest. It is with this cry, this "hurlement nourri de toutes nos larmes" (LIV, 64) that Butor sympathises. The writer and the reader are now being carried toward the new world by a wave of language which reflects the wave of protest of May '68.

It is now time to pose the question which has been on our lips since our discussion of the first dialogue of the volume. By 1976, the year of publication of Illustrations IV, stable collaboration has been achieved. Serial music techniques were successfully used by Butor in "Litane d'eau" and the relationship between the writer and art stabilised as far back as

the end of Illustrations II. It is clear that Butor is going over old ground in these dialogues and this explains the carefully ordered anarchy of "L'Oeil des Sargasses". What is not clear is his objective in so doing. Why is Butor concerned with early stages in his relationship with art and music when the "collage" of the three elements is already well-established? The answer to this question is not immediately apparent. For the moment we must be content with the continuing progress of the mariner-writer but this question will not be far from our minds.

In the final stanza of "Western Duo" words appear in their correct position, but with dots between them. This slows down our reading, as if the storm of the dialogue had abated, leaving us with a breathing-space, mirrored in the word "respirer" (LIV, 71) on the facing page. It is as if we were being invited to pause and reflect on possible new links between the words, to invent their future. The storm is not, however, over and it starts up again with full intensity in the dialogue between "Octal", "Trille Transparent Tremble" and the solid "Hoirie-Voirie".

Subtitled "les stances des mensualités", "Hoirie-Voirie" returns to the problem of time raised in "Épître à Georges Perros". The poem takes the form of a testament in which Butor leaves certain items to each month of the year, the first of which is always a part of the two signs of the zodiac relative to the month in question:

Je lègue à Messire Janvier  
 Outre la queue du capricorne  
 Et la tête compatissante  
 Du verseau penché sur son urne  
 Mes deux mains sans le moindre sou. (LIV, 81)



In bequeathing these items to the months of the year, Butor is bequeathing them to time itself. As the title of the poem suggests these items are worthless "rubbish":

Les plumes des Gilles à Binche  
Des milliers de pépins d'oranges  
Roulant sur le goudron des rues  
Puis écrasés par les voitures. (LIV, 83)

As part of his testament these items can be seen as belonging to Butor and, indeed, as parts of himself. Butor has dispersed himself into small, worthless parts which he bequeaths to time, emerging at the end of the poem very much alive at the age of forty-two (LIV, 104) and in excellent humour. The anger of the May '68 texts gives way in this poem to a light-hearted tone and impish humour:

Ainsi je versificationne  
En comptant les pieds sur mes doigts  
Tapadipadi tapada  
Avec innombrables licences  
Pour soupçon de modernité  
Rimer serait trop difficile. (LIV, 82)

Numerous humorous comments on various parts of the text are included in a gentle, pseudo-grandiose self-mockery: "Une technique impressioniste" (LIV, 90); "Lyrisme de l'individu" (LIV, 92); "La touche dix-huitième siècle" (LIV, 96). Butor is celebrating a certain liberation of his writing reminiscent of Illustrations III, albeit in a more humorously self-conscious way. This liberation is from time itself and it is expressed in a way familiar to us from our reading of 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde.

The poem contains twenty-four verses, two for each month of the year. Time has again been elongated and the passage toward the end of the year, symbolising the end of time, delayed. This elongation of time allows

Butor to slip through it, as if it were a sieve, leaving behind only worthless parts of himself. The clue to the nature of this process lies in a word from "Trille Transparent Tremble" with its theme of seeds: "le vanneur" (LIV, 85). The process is one of winnowing in which time is left with the chaff. "Hoirie-Voirie", then, presents us with a victory over time: the problem of time in "Épître à Georges Perros" is represented as being solved. How has this victory been achieved? The answer lies in "Trille Transparent Tremble".

If the chaff is left to time in "Hoirie-Voirie" then the grain is carried along in the movement of the dialogue between "Trille Transparent Tremble" and "Octal". Like "Western Duo", "Trille Transparent Tremble" is burst open by intrusions from "Octal", entire sections being displaced into the bottom register of the page (LIV, 86). Although this process begins gradually and increases in intensity, it does not follow an established pattern whereby a peak is reached to be followed by a corresponding reduction in intensity. Even towards the end of the dialogue the upper register can be totally devoid of elements from "Trille Transparent Tremble" (LIV, 99) at one moment and then partly filled by them at another (LIV, 101). The degree of contamination fluctuates wildly in this second whirlwind of language.

The writer-subject of "Trille Transparent Tremble" has metamorphosed into a tree, "Je devins arbre" (LIV, 79), or, more precisely, into a tree-human, a dryad. The writer-dryad is as if shipwrecked on an island on which he is apparently dying:

plus aucune feuille désormais est-il possible à détacher  
dans les canaux déserts de mon aubier l'écume seule  
ramone et ressasse. (LIV, 105)

He bemoans his lack of knowledge about his origins and his destiny:

en sautant sur leurs vacances naufragé signalant ma détresse par  
des écharde flûtées et des graines bien sûr des graines  
d'où pouvait-elle être venue celle de mon origine quel courant  
l'avait pu déposer en ce nombril d'archipel percé de criques.  
(LIV, 83)

ma descendance pourquoi  
fallait-il qu'elle me fût aussi totalement inconnue ô forêt.  
(LIV, 101)

Despite these complaints and the apparent imminent death of the tree, its ultimate survival seems assured. The tree arrived on the island in the form of a seed and will depart from it in the same way, carried along by "toutes les pièces d'un orage dépenaillé dans l'océan nomade" (LIV, 106). The tree will survive by dispersing itself into seed. This survival is reflected in the organisation of "Trille Transparent Tremble".

Both "Western Duo" and "Octal" are serially organised texts, the order of which is disrupted by the dialogues. "Trille Transparent Tremble", on the other hand, is not organised according to serial variation and, as in "L'Oeil des Sargasses", its variations or repetitions conform to no overall pattern. However, an undercurrent of possible order and of growth appears to be contained in the text. Certain parts of the text show themselves capable of expansion (we have removed the contaminating elements):

volcan nageur j'ouvris mes pentes  
comme des ailes tournoyant  
gauchissant ruisselant rasant les crêtes  
gémissant. (LIV, 80)

volcan nageur à travers coeurs et vagues  
j'ouvris mes pentes  
à travers roues et ruses comme des ailes  
salons nacelles et vestiaires tournoyant  
cours empierrées gauchissant  
quais tachés d'huile ruisselant  
stades supermarchés cliniques rasant les crêtes  
une ambassade de fragrances gémissant. (LIV, 82)

We can see that the components of the last three lines of the first verse become the ends of expanded lines in the second verse, while the element "volcan nageur" becomes the beginning of a similarly expanded line. It is as if these initial components formed the base from which the lines of the second verse grow. However, this second verse also corresponds to what is presented as the primitive, uncontaminated version of this part of the text (IV, 105). Does this then mean that the first verse above should be regarded as a reduction of the second? In fact, there are so many versions of this part of the text (IV, 107, 110, 113, 121), including four variations in the "primitive" version alone, that we cannot tell which represents the original and which the variation. We are simply confronted with the fact of continuous variation, with the presence of the text as it is here and now. In other words, the questions of origin and destiny cannot be applied to "Trille Transparent Tremble": we know neither where the text has come from nor where it is going. The complaints of the writer-dryad concerning his origin and destiny are denied relevance and, indeed, importance by the organisation of the text. What is important is the very fact of the text's existence and its vitality, its ability to vary itself. This vitality is expressed in the constant movement of expansion and reduction. The text pulsates with life and seems to shoot out buds or branches in all directions. The text survives and it does so with some ease. The crucial factor in the survival of the text is its receptivity to other sources.

The clue to this receptivity lies in the light-hearted tone of "Hoirie-Voirie". Without the anger and intensity of "Tourmente", the upper register of the text is much more relaxed. The two liquid texts, "Trille Transparent Tremble" and "Octal", are still locked in a close embrace, as the extent of the contamination shows, but the wild changes of pace wrought

on "Western Duo" by "Octal", the impression that the texts wreak violence on each other, have disappeared. Both "Octal" and "Trille Transparent Tremble" share a similar thematic backdrop of marine and vegetative life and fit together in the dialogue much more easily than "Octal" and "Western Duo". They can be read more easily as one text. There exists an interesting example of this compatibility. Butor has published the contaminated version of the second verse quoted above (LIV, 82) as part of an independent poem, "Nuage", in collaboration not with Kujawsky, but with Masurovsky:

Aÿlho à travers coeurs et vagues  
doigts innombrables Cassiopée tranquillité aleph  
à travers roues et ruses comme des ailes  
salons nacelles et vestiaires tournoyant  
cours empierrées gauchissant  
quais tachés d'huiles ruisselant  
stades supermarchés cliniques rasant les crêtes  
une ambassade de fragrances gémissant.<sup>11</sup>

"Octal" and "Trille Transparent Tremble" mix to produce their own "children". The texts inseminate each other, words playing the rôle of seed. It is as if the texts enjoyed each other's company, playing with each other to see what they can produce. After the whirlwind of passion in the previous dialogue comes a whirlwind of mutual enjoyment and exploration in which all thoughts of past or future are absent. We can now understand how the victory over time has been achieved.

In "Épître à Georges Perros" Butor was unable to write the homage that he had envisaged because time passed too quickly. He was unable to reach the objective which he had set himself. He was, however, still able to write something, to continue to produce and so ward off the "death" that would be represented by the complete inability to write. Similarly, in the meeting between writing, art and music, the objective is a calm, ordered collaboration. At this point in the volume this objective has not been reached but Butor has still been able to continue writing. Just as the writer-dryad was deposited on the island by a storm, so Butor has been deposited at this point in

Illustrations IV by a storm, a storm of language, of texts, occasioned by the meeting of writing with art and music. Just as Butor has dispersed himself into chaff in "Hoirie-Voirie", so he has dispersed himself into the texts which have brought him this far, into seeds of survival. These seeds of survival enable Butor to ward off "death", the end of his "time". It is in this sense that time can be said to have been elongated.

Not only has Butor been able to continue to write, but he has made of his writing a movement, a movement which, in the previous dialogue, appeared inexorable. With art and music on his side, the source and the means of organisation, Butor is expressing his faith in his ability to continue writing and to do so inexorably. Even although a stable collaboration has not yet been achieved, the dialogue between "Octal" and "Trille Transparent Tremble" is a celebration of the ability of writing, art and music to mix and produce, to produce indefinitely and so ensure the survival of writing. In this celebration time and death are not only overcome but appear as inconsequential and Butor is able to flout time openly in "Hoirie-Voirie". We might liken this celebration to that of "Petites Liturgies Intimes" in Illustrations III, although here, of course, Butor is celebrating somewhat in advance. Nevertheless, the movement of the writer toward the new world has taken another important step: the three elements of the "collage" are now mixing productively and the problem of time has been overcome.

After the whirlwinds of passion and enjoyment in the last two dialogues the relationship between "Trille Transparent Tremble" and "Les Parenthèses de l'été" is extremely calm and is characterised by regularity and consistency. Contamination is limited to the intrusion of individual words rather than larger pieces of text. The intrusion of words into "Trille

"Transparent Tremble" reaches a peak and then falls away in the following manner: 1, 1, 2, 3, 4, 3, 1, 1. Even at its peak (LIV, 118) the contamination is not total and the upper register remains recognisably that of "Trille Transparent Tremble". In comparison to the size of the verses of "Les Parenthèses de l'été", very little displacement of the bottom register is effected. Again the nature of this process is reflected in the solid text, "La Politique des charmeuses", another humorous text which is based on the futuristic world of Charles Fourier.

The key ideas we should retain from "La Politique des charmeuses" are those of marriage,

philanthrope Cymodocée  
troisième fille de Damon, après avoir  
épousé l'ambitieux berger Tircis  
au clair de Mercure inventeur de la rose (LIV, 117),

love, "l'amour de son fils Childebert" (LIV, 120), and management:

chevalière de miséricorde, recouvrer par la gestion sage  
de votre fortune bientôt considérable toute l'estime attendrie  
de votre père timoré lui-même le bon Damon. (LIV, 119)

After the initial passion come the more stable and mature relationships of love and marriage which require to be "managed". The texts in the dialogue no longer burst in upon each other but seem to caress each other lovingly and respectfully. Each text marks the other with its presence, influences it, but does not intrude unnecessarily or violently upon it. Affection is conserved but a little distance is taken, the bodies unwind after passionate coupling:

J'ai vu des courants de textes visqueux  
se désirer se baiser se démêler. (LIV, 126)

This notion of uncoupling is also contained in the movement of "Les

Parenthèses de l'été". The verses of "Les Parenthèses de l'été" are organised according to serial variation. Each verse contains eight elements which, in the first verse (LIV, 113), we can separate out as follows:

1. Sable
2. de l'autre côté de la vitre l'inondation la transpiration des façades
- 7.<sup>12</sup> vapeurs
4. les parois trempés réfléchissant. les pastilles de mosaïque
5. Je saignerai sur tes paupières
6. et là-bas là-bas les maîtres nageurs les photographes continuent
3. La fuite des mômes
8. le sac de la dame bavarde semblable au crâne d'un mouton

Each of these elements has an equivalent in the subsequent verses. Thus, in the second verse (LIV, 114), element two has become: "De l'autre côté de la vitre la transpiration le fourmillement de la nuit". A feeling of movement is created not only by the slight change in the composition of each element but also by the change in the position occupied by the element in the successive verses. In verse one element two occupies the second position while in verse two it occupies the first position.

The first five verses each contain one example of each element. In the last five verses<sup>13</sup>, however, two examples of the same element begin to appear in the same verse: verse six (LIV, 118), for example, contains two examples of element two, the first from verse two (LIV, 114) and the second from verse one (LIV, 113):

... de l'autre côté de la vitre la transpiration  
 ...  
 le fourmillement de la nuit de l'autre côté de la vitre  
 L'inondation la transpiration des façades



This verse also contains two examples each of elements one and four. The process of mingling, by which only one example of each element appeared in each verse, is beginning to come undone. The various examples of the same element are beginning to seek each other out.

After the end of the dialogue with "Trille Transparent Tremble" this process of separation or "évidement" (LIV, 124) becomes complete, all eight examples of element four, for instance, appearing together in the same verse without other elements, albeit in abbreviated form:

Les barreaux frémissant les labyrinthes fleurissant  
 Les ombres bourdonnant les rayures quittant le sol  
 Les parois réfléchissant les pastilles  
 Les portières tremblant les lèvres bavant  
 Les yeux goulus dégustant l'épuisement des amoureux. (LIV, 126)

The text has gone back even further than the original version of its organisation to the simple enumeration of its constituent parts, emptying itself completely. However, even as the textual organisation comes undone, it begins again in a new form. While the even elements, two, four, six and eight, are separated out, the odd elements, one, three, five and seven together with the even element four, organise themselves into new combinations (LIV, 124-125, 128-129, 130-132)<sup>14</sup>. It can be seen from Table Two that these new serial combinations do not provide the same impression of stability and fixed pattern as those of the original version in Table One. Nor do we have the impression that the organisation is disintegrating like that of the Illustrations IV version in Table One. Rather, the text appears to be trying out new possibilities in a process of internal reconstruction or internal management which is presented as continuous and therefore unfinished. There are different combinations of both the odd elements and the elements one, four and seven and it can be

seen that many other combinations would be possible. The possibilities of the series are far from being exhausted and the text seems determined to explore every one. It seems that the text has taken on a new lease of life after, as it were, re-examining its constituent parts and what it can do with them. It is as if the writer had temporarily abandoned the structures of his language, returning to his basic vocabulary in order to re-evaluate it and elaborate different structures.

This process can be interpreted in two, complementary, ways. After the passionate disruption caused by the meeting of writing with art and music the writer requires to undergo a process of self-examination in which he re-evaluates his own writing. Secondly, as the product of a mingling of different elements, "Les Parenthèses de l'été" can itself be seen as a collage. The uncoupling of its constituent parts mirrors the uncoupling of the texts in the dialogue with "Trille Transparent Tremble". The re-examination of the relationship between its constituent parts can be interpreted as a symbol of the re-examination of the relationship between the three elements which form the collage of writing, art and music. The writer requires not only to re-evaluate his own writing but his relationship with art and music in a process which is presented as continuous. In this movement of continuous re-evaluation, in this movement from one set of relationships to another or to others, the writer will find the strength and vitality to reach the new world which, in Illustrations IV, takes the form of "les échos du port de New York" (IV, 130) in "Champ de vitres".

In this final liquid text the horizontal movement which has characterised the voyage of the mariner-writer across the ocean toward the

new world becomes a vertical one. "Champ de vitres" is constructed in columns:

LUNE	
	le bronze
bave	
	PRISME
l'impact	
	des météores
FUMÉE	
	sur la pluie
des ombres	

(LIV, 131)

The text is short and occurs twice in its entirety in the version we have here. The movement of the text is expressed in the different positions occupied by the words in the repetition. Below we quote the end of the first occurrence of the text and the beginning of the repeated version.

FUMÉE	
	envers
s'effilent	dans les puits hurleurs
	douceur
PRISME	
	perle
sibilante	
<hr/>	<hr/> LUNE
le bronze	
	bave

(LIV, 135)

We can see that the position occupied by "LUNE" in the first version is now occupied by "le bronze" which has moved upwards and to the left. This is a consequence of the upward movement to the right of "LUNE" itself. This vertical, zig-zag movement is effected by all the elements of the text. The text is as if walking up steps in a kind of spiral staircase. At the same time it is growing taller, adding more foundation at its base, as if elevating itself into one of the "tours" (LIV, 132) of New York. An additional dimension is provided at the very end of the text when a third version begins in a third column:

FUMÉE

envers  
           douceur  
 s'effilent dans les puits hurleurs  
           PRISME  
 perle  
           derricks  
                   LUNE

(LIV, 137)

The movement of construction which the text has become is broadening out at its base, making its foundations more solid. Here, the reference to "derricks", "des mots pilotis et antennes" (LIV, 136) and "le pétrole du vent" (LIV, 136) suggest that the columns of the construction can be likened to the legs of an oil-rig being driven into the harbour floor. It is as if the writer had established an exploratory base-camp in the port of the new world. This exploratory construction is only just beginning as Illustrations IV draws to a close:

j'ai vu des textes spermatiques  
 déborder les horizons du livre. (LIV, 134)

From the antennae of the rig only echoes of the new world reach the writer in the "jardins d'enfants furtifs" (LIV, 130). These children are clearly the "mômes" of "Les Parenthèses de l'été". The writer is still involved in the process of re-evaluation and "Champ de vitres" is no more than a vision, an echo of the construction of the new world. We have not yet arrived at journey's end.

We are, then, still at the re-evaluation stage and herein lies the key to our final understanding of the volume. We can now answer our questions concerning the nature of the organism created by Butor and the reasons for going over old ground, gain an insight into what is meant by

re-evaluation and gauge the extent of Butor's victory over time.

The stages of the development of the relationship between writing, art and music are stages in the development of the collage which Butor's writing has become. Each stage is also a stage in time, a period during which a certain type of relationship prevailed among the three elements of the collage. The rôle of the one text of Illustrations IV which we have not so far discussed, "Perle", now becomes clear.

"Perle" appears seven times in the text in the same type face as the solid texts to which at first it seems to belong. Each verse comprises thirteen lines of roughly equal length and, in its "évidence visuelle", the first verse resembles a square (LIV, 13). Unlike the solid texts, however, "Perle" is not static. The second verse (LIV, 37) is elongated, two lines detaching themselves from the block of text while two lines from "Conditionnement" infiltrate it. The verse is also contaminated by the word "jaune" from "Conditionnement". This elongation process reaches a peak in the fourth verse (LIV, 75) where six lines have become detached from the block which is contaminated in twenty-two places by two words from "Octal", "écumes" and "neiges". The elongation recedes until in the seventh verse the block once again appears solid. In this verse, however, the contamination is at its peak: the verse is contaminated in forty-six places by four words from "Champ de vitres": "fumées", "prismes", "lune", "envers". The movement of "Perle" can be likened to that of a shell which opens to the wave of the liquid texts. The contamination represents feeding by the oyster the shell contains. In the final verse the shell has closed but the oyster is gorged with the food it has received.

Just as the oyster feeds on each of the liquid texts, on each stage of the volume, so Butor feeds on each stage of the development of the

relationship between the three elements of the collage to write the volume Illustrations IV. The return to these stages of the relationship permits Butor not only to survive the passage of time but to feed off it. He finds in the passage through these earlier stages, the movement from one to another, the nourishment which provides him with the impetus to pass on to another stage, that of re-evaluation or management.

Illustrations IV is itself a concrete example of the re-evaluation carried out in the organisation of "Les Parenthèses de l'été". Butor returns to what we might call the basic vocabulary of the Illustrations series, the relationship between writing, art and music. He presents this relationship in terms which we have not encountered before: the initial meeting becomes a stage of fiery, passionate desire which is followed by a period of mutual physical exploration and insemination. In these stages we have already found echoes of both Illustrations II and Illustrations III but we have not been able to discern exact equivalents. The re-evaluation of the relationship places the elements of the collage in different relationships to each other and produces further variation. Not only that, it produces further progress - the management stage is one we have not seen before - and, indeed, appears as the prerequisite to that progress. Without the impetus gained from the earlier stages the movement to the new stage would not be possible. Re-evaluation, the elaboration of a different "mise en relation", appears in Illustrations IV, as it did in "Les Parenthèses de l'été", as the prerequisite to the continued progress of the collage of Butor's writing.

Now, as we have already noted, this collage already existed before the beginning of Illustrations IV. It might be felt that, in returning to earlier stages and tracing its development, Butor is simply showing how the

collage came into being. The difference in the nature of the texts seems to bear this theory out. Borrowing an image from "Épître à Georges Perros" we can describe the solid texts as "la colonne vertébrale" (LIV, 27-28) of the volume. The organism possesses a solid backbone in these solid texts, while in the liquid texts the rest of the body is as if emerging from the waters of chaos, of creation, embryonic but alive, "ce qui naît" (LIV, 133). Since, however, this embryonic being is itself a re-evaluation of an already existing collage, and since this re-evaluation is presented as no more than an embryonic being, we can see that, for Butor, collage, in its essence, must be constantly embryonic, a perpetual coming into being. The elements which make up the collage of Butor's writing can never be allowed to settle into a fixed, static relationship. The relationships between the elements must be constantly re-evaluated to effect a process of constant birth and constant progress.

Illustrations IV, inasmuch as it is a re-evaluation, is, then, a living or working collage. Butor has used the stages of the development of the relationship between writing, art and music, the stages in the development of his own personal writing collage, to illustrate or exemplify the principle of collage in action. On the one hand, Butor is expressing his belief that a world organised according to the principle of collage is possible, giving a concrete example of his contention that "il est possible de trouver autre chose".<sup>15</sup> At first, the disparate elements which form the collage, although desiring each other passionately, create a violent chaos, a stage where incompatibility seems to have the upper hand. The violence of the contact, however, creates a powerful movement which carries the elements beyond this stage to one in which they take pleasure in each other's company and find that their relationship can be productive. Finally, the elements settle down into a

stable working relationship. The difficulties involved in implementing the principle of collage are overcome. Collage is seen to work. On the other hand, Butor shows that collage is a dynamic process which must be maintained and managed. In making of Illustrations IV a process of re-evaluation, he also gives a concrete example of this maintenance. Collage is seen at work.

In Illustrations IV Butor has brought to life the system of interlocking relativity of Illustrations II in an effort to show that the reconstruction of reality does not end with the assembly of the world into a collage. In line with his basic belief in the continuous transformational movement of time, a belief elaborated in L'Emploi du Temps and La Modification, Butor does not present collage reality as a fixed entity but as a dynamic process of constant re-assessment and constant transformation. Collage must be a constant movement of change in which the constituent parts work together in an increasingly constructive and harmonious way. In this volume, the notions of collage and transformation are inseparable.

We can now summarise the rôle of each volume in the series.

Illustrations is a volume which introduces us to the concept of meeting between writing and art and which provides us, in the shape of "Litanie d'Eau", with a miniature of the principal thrust of the series, the passage from the solid to the liquid. The introductory nature of the volume enables us to consider it as an example of a delay in time. The volume was published in 1964, one year before 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. At this point Butor is still trying to find a way of increasing the freedom of his reader, of solving the problem raised in Degrés. This problem has to be solved before he can produce a textual collage in which the type of reading path



encouraged in 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde will be taken for granted. The progress of Butor's writing is in danger of being held up by this problem. He therefore continues the movement of his writing by producing a volume which introduces us to the world of art but which is not a collage, thereby avoiding the problem. Writing continues and the passage of time is delayed. After 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde the textual collage, Illustrations II, can safely be written. In this second volume Butor elaborates the principle of collage, the system of interlocking relativities, and examines the nature of the attitude required for a successful collaboration between writing and art. In Illustrations III Butor celebrates the achievement of harmonious collaboration by taking a rest but does not remain idle. This volume shows us why Butor feels the need for the companionship of the artist and provides the aim behind the collage principle - the integration of man into a global collage and the reconstruction of reality. Finally, in Illustrations IV Butor provides an example of a living collage and expands on the nature of collage which now appears as a continuous transformational process.

One question now remains to be answered: can we indeed say, as we have earlier claimed, that the goal of the Illustrations series has now been reached? The passage from the solid to the liquid has certainly been achieved. Liquidity is movement and Butor has progressed from a stage in which his solitary progress toward the new world was blocked by the solid weed of "L'Oeil des Sargasses", a stage anterior to his collaboration with music and art where the only movement was backwards, to one in which he has acquired an inexorable momentum which, it seems, will carry him onward, come what may, to the other shore. The acquisition of this momentum, without which Butor would certainly remain stationary, still appears to us to be the goal of his collaboration with art and music, the goal of the

series. The series is, however, not finished and, at the end of Illustrations IV, the writer is still at the stage of re-evaluating his own writing. Since re-evaluation is presented as a continuous process we may logically expect further re-evaluation to follow. Yet, with the momentum of Illustrations IV behind him, it seems that Butor is now well-equipped to perform whatever maintenance his writing may require and that further progress is now ensured. We cannot predict what will be contained in Illustrations V but we can now pass on to the re-evaluation contained in the series Matière de Rêves.

TABLE ONE

Organisation of "Les Parenthèses de l'été"

In this table we reproduce firstly the pattern of element appearances in the original version of the text, published in the review Encres Vives, no. 67 (Autumn-Winter 1969), 140-144. The order and regularity of this pattern will be self-evident to the reader. We then give the pattern of element appearances in the Illustrations IV version of the text, the first five lines of which give an impression of disorder. This is followed by the phenomenon of separation dealt with in our discussion. The original version contains eight verses, the Illustrations IV version, ten.

<u>Encres Vives:</u>	<u>Verse</u>	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		2	2	1	4	3	6	5	8	7
		3	7	4	1	6	3	8	5	2
		4	4	7	6	1	8	3	2	5
		5	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4
		6	6	5	8	7	2	1	4	3
		7	3	8	5	2	7	4	1	6
		8	8	3	2	5	4	7	6	1
<u>Illustrations IV:</u>		1	1	2	7	4	5	6	3	8
		2	2	7	1	4	6	5	8	3
		3	3	4	7	1	6	8	5	2
		4	5	6	7	3	8	1	2	4
		5	8	7	5	2	3	4	1	6
		6	1	2	7	2	1	4	4	
		7	3	4	7	4	3	1	6	6
		8	5	6	7	6	5	3	8	8
		9	8	7	8	5	2	2	5	
		10	3	4	7	4	3	1	6	6

TABLE TWOPost-dialogue organisation of "Les Parenthèses de l'été"

In this table we can see the simultaneous separation of certain elements of the text and the re-organisation of other elements into a new system. For guidance here we give the corresponding page numbers of Illustrations IV as the term "verse" does not apply in all cases.

<u>Page</u>	123	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	124	1	4	7	1	4	7	
	125	7	4	1	4	7	1	
	126	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	127	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	128	7	1	4	7	1	4	
	129	7	4	1	4	7	1	
	130	5	7	1	3	5	7	1 3
	131	7	1	3	5	7	1	3 5
	132	1	3	5	7	1	3	5 7
	133	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

FOOTNOTES

1. Madeleine Santschi, Voyage avec Michel Butor, L'Age d'homme, 1983, pp. 147-148. It is, of course, Butor who is speaking.
2. Santschi, pp. 149-150.
3. "rayures" : line nine (LIV, 9).  
 "chaude" : line eighteen (LIV, 10).  
 "dactyles" : line twenty-seven (LIV, 11).  
 "soie" : line fifty-four (LIV, 16).  
 "trémas" is a new word at this point in the text.
4. Obliques: numéro spécial Butor/Masurovsky, 1975, p. 15.
5. This loss of control is, of course, only apparent. "L'Oeil des Sargasses" has been carefully organised to create an impression of disorder. We will return to this point below.
6. Santschi, p. 152.
7. See Obliques, pp. 4-5, for the origins of "Western Duo".
8. Obliques, p. 14.
9. For example, the verse on p. 47 is a combination of the first two verses of the bottom half of p. 53.
10. In the extract quoted above the following words are from "Tourmente": "houle", "tendresse", "aventures" and "aurore".
11. See Obliques, p. 125. The second verse of "Nuage" is also recognisably a combination of elements from "Octal" and "Trille Transparent Tremble", although not one which is to be found in Illustrations IV.
12. Elements three and seven of the original version exchange position in the Illustrations IV version. See Table One.

13. See Table One.

14. See Table Two.

15. Santschi, p. 65.

SECTION FOUR

THE MATIÈRE DE RÊVES SERIES

## CHAPTER NINE

### Matière de Rêves: A Freudian Reading Method

#### INTRODUCTION

The first three volumes of the series, Matière de Rêves, Second sous-sol and Troisième Dessous, were published in consecutive years, from 1975 to 1977, while the fourth volume, Quadruple Fond, did not appear until 1981. Since Quadruple Fond involves a slightly different method of reading to the three earlier volumes, we will consider the latter as a unit, devoting only two chapters to these three volumes. The final chapter of the section will be devoted to Quadruple Fond which is closely related to the earlier volumes but takes us into a new area, an area which we have not so far encountered. In this first chapter we will be concerned with finding a way in which to read Matière de Rêves and with the interpretation of its dreams. We will then discuss in the next chapter, Second sous-sol and Troisième Dessous, emphasising less the interpretation of the dreams than certain general questions raised by the type of writing found in the series. Before embarking on such a study we shall briefly discuss Butor's use of dreams elsewhere in his work in an effort to discover if these dreams can be of use to us in our reading of Matière de Rêves.



The use of dreams by Butor dates back to the very first of his novels and his interest in them even further. In an interview with Jean-Marie Je Sidaner he discusses his attitude to both real and fictitious dreams:

Je me suis toujours intéressé au rêve. J'ai eu la chance, quand j'étais encore étudiant, d'avoir quelques rêves d'une grande beauté, d'une intensité, d'une précision, d'une continuité, d'une complexité exemplaires. Je ne les ai pas notés à l'époque ou du moins je n'ai pas conservé ce que j'en avais noté, et je serai bien incapable de le faire aujourd'hui bien que certaines images, certains moments subsistent avec autant de force que les souvenirs de la veille. C'est pourquoi je suis en général déçu quand je lis (ou entends) les récits de rêve des autres. En général cela tourne court. Ce n'est que la cendre de quelque chose. Et je l'ai éprouvé moi-même bien des fois: le souvenir du rêve se défait au moment même où l'on s'efforce de le raconter; et cela vient de notre logique, de certaines structures du récit de notre civilisation si diurne. Il y a là une censure extrêmement difficile à tourner. C'est pourquoi me satisfont surtout (en dehors de quelques notables exceptions au premier rang desquelles je mettrais bien sûr la lettre de Baudelaire utilisé dans Histoire Extraordinaire) les rêves indirects, ceux qui se développent à l'intérieur de fictions et comme moments essentiels de celles-ci: le rêve du Francion de Charles Sorel, les rêves de Jean-Paul ou de Dostoïevsky. Ce sont eux qui me semblent capter la source, atteindre la nappe.<sup>1</sup>

The peculiar circumstances in which real dreams occur leave the dreamer with a pale shadow of what he has experienced and prevent him, in general, from gaining a clear insight into the content of his dream. As Butor says, one of the great exceptions to this rule which has come down to us in literature is that of Baudelaire's dream analysed by Butor in Histoire Extraordinaire. Butor's interest in this dream, and indeed that of Baudelaire himself, lies in the remarkable extent to which it illuminates the work of the poet. The dream provides Butor with a point of departure for a synthesis of Baudelaire's life and work. Such dreams are rare, however, and it is not surprising that Butor should feel a stronger leaning toward the greater efficiency of fictitious dreams: "Il s'agit pour moi grâce à ma machine littéraire ... de rêver à volonté en plein

jour, d'y rêver mieux qu'on ne rêve la nuit".<sup>2</sup>

Butor makes widespread use of fictitious dreams in his earlier works, particularly the novels, and it is not our intention to discuss all of these dreams here. For our purposes, we feel that the dreams which can be of most use to us are those to be found in L'Emploi du Temps, Réseau Aérien and the autobiographical Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe.

In both L'Emploi du Temps and Réseau Aérien we come into contact with dreams in which a certain desire is represented as fulfilled. Jacques Revel's dream is a vision of the future, that of the expansion of Bleston's New Cathedral to a point where the beginnings of another new building can be glimpsed. It expresses the deep-rooted desire of both Bleston and Butor for a new world which is still to be realised. It is the "dream" of L'Emploi du Temps, a dream trying to transform itself into reality. Similarly, in Réseau Aérien, couple D and j dream of the transfer to Paris of the spirit of harmony evident in the relationship between man and place over Iran, a transfer which has not yet taken place. In their dream they see themselves realising this transfer in Paris' Botanical Gardens, fulfilling their desire. In the dream of couple A and j over Borneo Butor allies this fulfilment of a desire or wish to certain hidden fears or anxieties. The passage of the couple through the jungle of Borneo in their dream expresses their anxiety at encountering a new and strange place in which they will feel disorientated. The end of their dream portrays the anxiety as overcome: the woman symbolises place and the couple lie harmoniously together in the same bed. At the end of the dream their wish for harmony with place is represented as

fulfilled. The combination of anxiety and the fulfilment of a wish suggests a certain Freudian influence on the content of this dream. Freud contends that dreams are wish-fulfilments: "a dream is a (disguised) fulfilment of a (suppressed or repressed) wish".<sup>3</sup> This applies to all dreams without exception, even dreams which are not pleasurable for the dreamer, dreams which give evidence of a sensation of anxiety. In anxiety dreams the wish-fulfilment takes the form of the overturning of the anxiety. Such Freudian influence can also be discerned in the dream of the autobiographical Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe.

The dream chapters of the Capriccio have as their source part of Les Mille et Une Nuits. The dream chapters number seven out of the fifteen which form the principal section of the work, "Voyage". The vast majority of the dream is a direct and unmodified quotation of the second Kalendar's tale in "The Tale of the Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad". The importance of the dream lies not only in the deviations from the source but in the discrepancies between the events of the dream and the events of Butor's stay in the castle.

In the tale the Kalendar is transformed into a monkey as a punishment for sleeping with the paramour of a genie and luxuriating in the pleasures of the genie's lair. The genie is alerted to the presence of the Kalendar in the girl's chamber when, in a fit of drunkenness, the Kalendar breaks a talisman. After various adventures

the Kalendar is only restored to his human form at the outcome of a violent struggle between the genie and a sultan's daughter in which the latter is victorious at the cost of her own life and the loss of one of the Kalendar's eyes. Like the Kalendar, Butor avails himself of the services of the young girl in the dream and is caught in the same way. However, the cause of his drunkenness is a different one: the Kalendar drank from a bottle of old wine whereas Butor partakes of a bottle of Tokaj, the smoky taste of which is linked in the diurnal chapters to the smoke from the count's cigars which is at the origin of Butor's eye problems.

In the dream the girl and the luxuries of the genie's lair symbolise the treasures which Butor finds, in the form of alchemical books, in the castle library and which he studies during his stay at the castle. The colour of the Tokaj wine associates it with the alchemists's athanor, the means of transmuting base metal into gold, and, therefore, with the treasure of the alchemical texts. The message of the dream is as follows: the store of treasure represented by the books is not to be broken into nor is it to be looked upon as something in which to luxuriate, something in which to over-indulge in the form of an over-lengthy stay in the castle. The sheer richness of the treasures could overwhelm Butor and blind him to their real meaning and purpose for this life. Such behaviour will result in the withdrawal of the treasure (the death of the girl) and punishment in the form of ultimate blindness. The events of the dream almost take place: Butor's

heady drunken feeling at the sight of the library's treasures leads him to behave as if he were breaking into the castle and he is very nearly taken for an intruder and summarily dealt with by the angry villagers. Similarly, the fire which partially blinds the Kalendar has begun to affect him as the smoke from the count's cigars shows. The elixir of the Tokaj, the store of treasure in the library, has been tasted and must now be put to use rather than wholly consumed. It is time to flee the castle and Butor does so, his sight still intact.

The discrepancy between the events of the dream and those in the castle allows us to characterise the dream as an anxiety dream. The dream represents the nocturnal fears of Butor as he initiates himself into the library's treasures. In this respect the dream is comparable to that of couple A and j in Réseau Aérien and we are once again confronted with evidence of the influence of certain Freudian theories on dreaming. However, what is most important for us here is the absence of any wish-fulfilment in the dream of the capriccio. The dream ends in the ultimate and permanent blindness of Butor, the Kalendar-writer. In fact, the wish-fulfilment in the capriccio, namely the transmutation of the library's treasures into Butor's personal "gold", is to be found at the end of the series of patience games played by Butor and the Count.<sup>4</sup> This deviation from the standard Freudian axis of anxiety/wish-fulfilment, an axis exemplified in the dream of A and j in Réseau Aérien, in the construction of the dream of the capriccio shows that Butor is quite

prepared to depart from Freudian norms should it suit him to do so. Large parts of the capriccio's dream chapters re-appear in Troisième Dessous and an understanding of the mechanics of the dream and the warning it contains regarding Butor's use of Freud will stand the reader in good stead for a reading not only of that work but of the first three volumes of the series Matière de Rêves as a whole.

### MATIÈRE DE RÊVES

As in Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe the principal character of the first three volumes of the Matière de Rêves series is Michel Butor himself. There is evidence in the texts that each volume, like the capriccio, deals with a specific period in the author's life. In Matière de Rêves there are five dreams, all of which were written in the years 1974-1975: "Le Rêve de l'huître", "Le Rêve de l'ammonite", "Le Rêve du déménagement", "Le Rêve de Prague" and "Le Rêve du tatouage". In "Le Rêve de l'huître" M.B. is seen arriving on the American continent. "Le Rêve de l'ammonite" was written in collaboration with the Belgian artist Pierre Alechinsky but this collaboration is not avowed anywhere in the text. Butor first visited America after the publication of his last novel, Degrés. It seems reasonable to assume at this stage that Matière de Rêves refers to a period in Butor's life after the novels and before Illustrations, that is, between 1960 and 1964. In both Second sous-sol and Troisième Dessous collaboration with artists is openly avowed

as, as it was in the Illustrations series, the name of the artist involved appearing in the text in the final paragraph of each dream. In "Le Rêve de Vénus", the first dream of Second sous-sol, M.B. is seen attempting to come to grips with the world of painting in a similar way to "La Conversation", the first text of Illustrations, which describes his initial contact with art. These two volumes would appear to concern the period beginning around the time of the publication of Illustrations, 1964, and extending either to 1975, the year of the publication of Matière de Rêves, or to 1977 when Troisième Dessous appeared.

Equally, there are indications in all the dreams of the three volumes that, again as in the capriccio, certain fears or anxieties of the writer are being expressed. M.B. is frequently to be found in situations of adversity: in Matière de Rêves he is twice put on trial for vague, undefined crimes for which he has no defence; in Second sous-sol he can be seen wandering aimlessly in an extremely hostile environment or at the mercy of the judges of hell; in Troisième Dessous he is very nearly burnt at the stake like a religious heretic. It would appear that Butor is recounting personal problems which he faced at various periods of his life.<sup>5</sup>

There are, then, strong reasons for suspecting that in these three volumes we are once again confronted with anxiety dreams. This plunges us directly into the realm of Freud and psychoanalysis in a much more problematic way than in Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe. In that work interpretation of the dream was greatly facilitated by the existence of diurnal chapters which invited comparison with the dream. Moreover, the content of the dream was made up of an easily recognisable quoted source which provided a strong foundation for the interpretative work. Neither of these props are available to the reader of the Matière de Rêves

series. Of course, the dreams are not real dreams but their fictitious nature merely compounds the problem and calls into question the exact rôle of psychoanalysis in these texts. Butor has said in relation to the first volume:

je l'ai dédié <<aux psychanalystes entre autres>> parce que ces textes ne sont pas des récits de rêves, au sens habituel. En particulier, ce ne sont pas des récits de rêves tels qu'on les trouve dans les ouvrages de psychanalyse. Ce sont des rêves au second degré. Des rêves construits.<sup>6</sup>

In Butor's opinion the constructed nature of the dreams does not, of itself, preclude psychoanalytic investigation:

Il n'en est certes pas moins vrai qu'il y a là toute une matière qui s'offre à l'investigation psychanalytique, que guette le texte pour la réabsorber, la mettre en rêve par la suite. La grande différence c'est que le psychanalyste ne peut s'empêcher de considérer le rêve ou plutôt son récit comme un symptôme à interpréter entièrement à partir des récits diurnes d'un sujet individuel fermé.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, it would be possible to use the dreams to psychoanalyse Butor himself according to the traditional Freudian technique of diurnal association. This is, however, of little use to the reader who wishes to come to an understanding of constructed dreams which bear certain hall-marks of Freud's theory of dreaming but in the interpretation of which the actual techniques of psychoanalysis cannot be applied. As readers, then, what are we to make of the Freudian aspect of the dreams and how, indeed, are we to read these dreams?

Our basic hypothesis is that the dreams are without exception anxiety dreams which reveal certain problems faced by the writer at different periods of his life. It should be noted here that our attribution of



these problems to the real Butor must remain hypothetical due to the impossibility of diurnal association mentioned above.<sup>8</sup> The exposition of these problems is contained in that part of the dreams which we shall call the dream narrative. Each dream in the three volumes comprises a number of paragraphs part of which is devoted to the action of the dream and the rest to supplementary material. We call this material supplementary because it was not included in the original versions of the dreams published separately prior to their incorporation into the volumes of the Matière de Rêves series. The supplementary material is of three kinds: quotation from the dreams themselves; quotation from external sources, involving both other authors and other works by Butor; various types of series.<sup>9</sup> The individuality of each volume in this respect stems from variations within these three categories and from the different ways in which they are used. We hope to show that these individual variations within a basic structural similarity are related to the different problems encountered by the author in the series.

The existence in the text of two different kinds of material, the second of which is itself extremely varied, poses us immediate problems in our reading. Within the paragraphs there is no physical separation between the dream narrative and the supplementary material. Rather, the dream narrative runs into the supplementary material, pitching the reader from the relatively stable action of the dream into a mass of material, the constituent parts of which he is initially at a loss to identify, as the following extract from "Le Rêve de l'huître" illustrates. M.B. has arrived in the dream narrative inside a small hut:

je m'enveloppe dans les couvertures rêches et pends au  
plafond les lambeaux de mes vêtements, étale sur les journaux  
ma montre qui s'est arrêtée. Une peinture où je vois mon

visage. Leur hôpital. Textes effilés. Qui flotte. Cécile. Sur un lac. Je t'aime. Dans la salle. Agnès. D'opérations. Textes laminés. C'est la même lampe. Irène. Bleue, éblouissante. Je t'aime. Ils m'étendent. Textes tréfilés. Sur le sol carrelé. Je t'aime. Et s'accroupissent. Textes serpentins. Autour de moi. J'étale sur les journaux ma montre qui s'est arrêtée. Dans la peinture un théâtre où je me vois déclamer: <<s'effondrer, je t'aime, filer dans les turbulences du dégel. Aimez-moi. Si cela se produisait avec une certaine violence ... Le prince gardien d'Albion brûle dans sa tente nocturne. Sur son buste de stèle, peintures de rêves, son cou s'allonge en fumée d'usine ...>> (MR, 15-16)

Even when the reader has established, by referring to the beginning of the following paragraph, that the dream narrative breaks off with the words "ma montre qui s'est arrêtée", it is unclear whether the painting alluded to is a feature of the hut or not. In fact, the painting forms part of one of the three series in the extract which also contains quotations from "Le Rêve du tatouage", "Le Rêve de l'ammonite" and William Blake's America. The quotation from "Le Rêve du tatouage" takes the form of the sentence beginning "Leur hôpital" which is broken up into small units producing a staccato and disjointed effect at the beginning of the supplementary material. The text seems to dissolve into chaos and the reader is confused: where does this material come from and what is its relationship to the narrative of the dream? As he reads through the volume the reader will gradually come to realise that the supplementary material contains quotations from other dreams he has read and that certain elements in the supplementary material of one dream closely resemble those in another - he becomes aware of the series. Once he has realised that these series and quotations are dispersed throughout the supplementary material of the volume, it becomes his task to identify them. To do this he must extract them from their surroundings and investigate the manner of their disposition in the volume in order to find out what pattern or patterns underlie the apparent chaos of this part of the text.

It is the disposition of the internal quotations of Matière de Rêves, the quotations from the dreams themselves, which sheds the greatest light on the manner in which Freudian dream theory is used in the volume. As can be seen from Table Three, the extraction of the internal quotations from their context in the volume reveals an organisation which effectively splits the volume in half. The two halves of the volume reflect one another, producing correspondances between "Le Rêve de l'huître" and "Le Rêve du tatouage", "Le Rêve de l'ammonite" and "Le Rêve de Prague", and finally between the two halves of "Le Rêve du déménagement". These correspondances invite us to make a comparative reading of the volume rather than a linear one, associating the first dream with the last and so on.

A comparative reading suggests that the volume may be organised on a dual axis. We remember Freud's theory that all dreams are wish-fulfilments. In Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe we noted that the themes of anxiety and wish-fulfilment were kept in separate yet related parts of the text. Is it not possible that we shall find a similar pattern in Matière de Rêves, the anxiety of "Le Rêve de l'huître" being overturned, for example, in "Le Rêve du tatouage"? On the other hand, we have contended that all the dreams of the volume show traces of anxiety. Let us now attempt to clarify this situation by turning our attention to the dream narratives.

We noted above the relative stability of the dream narrative compared to the supplementary material. By stability we understood the untroubled progress of the action of the dream until it encountered the supplementary material. However, the unfamiliar reader might well feel that the dream

narrative is as chaotic as the supplementary material, although for different reasons. The problem concerns the very basis of the dream narrative: the events in the action and the way in which they are described. In the first dream of Matière de Rêves, "Le Rêve de l'huître", M.B. goes through a bewildering series of metamorphoses, from white man to black, from human to wolf, serpent, shark and oyster before regaining his original form. At various points in the action he is in danger of being throttled by his own tie, burnt to death, devoured by a shark and eaten as an oyster by ravenous Academicians. The text itself offers no explanation for these forms or events and they appear to the reader to succeed one another without rhyme or reason. In the realm of dreams we may well expect an element of symbolism to come into play and it is in this respect that the work of Freud is of help to us once again.

In his work on the interpretation of dreams Freud discusses two ways in which the lay world has attempted to interpret dreams. The second of these is of particular interest to us:

It might be described as the 'decoding' method, since it treats dreams as a kind of cryptography in which each sign can be translated into another sign having a known meaning, in accordance with a fixed key. Suppose, for instance, that I have dreamt of a letter and also of a funeral. If I consult a 'dream-book', I find that 'letter' must be translated by 'trouble' and funeral by 'betroted'. It then remains for me to link together the key-words which I have deciphered in this way.<sup>10</sup>

Freud finds this method unreliable for a scientific treatment of dreams: "In the case of the decoding method everything depends on the trustworthiness of the 'key' - the dream-book, and of this we have no guarantee."<sup>11</sup> However, in the same work Freud states that the existence of dream symbolism itself cannot be disputed, for the following reason: "Dreams make use of this symbolism for the disguised representation of their

latent thoughts."<sup>12</sup> He goes on to say that much of dream symbolism is used for the representation of sexual material and that it is indeed possible to draw up a kind of "dream-book" on the principle of decoding, since this type of symbolism is also to be found elsewhere:

this symbolism is not peculiar to dreams, but is characteristic of unconscious ideation, in particular among the people, and it is to be found in folklore, and in popular myths, legends, linguistic idioms, proverbial wisdom and current jokes to a more complete extent than in dreams.<sup>13</sup>

There exists, then, a certain body of symbolism<sup>14</sup> which may be regarded as standard, the key to the interpretation of which may be considered as sufficiently trustworthy for use in a literary work. We are all more or less aware of certain of these standard symbols: a serpent, for instance, is widely known as a symbol of the male sex organ. Let us now examine in detail "Le Rêve de l'huître" to determine the extent to which Butor uses standard symbolism and to decide whether it provides a valid key to the reading of the dream narratives in the volume.

Standard dream symbolism is predominantly but not exclusively comprised of sexual symbols. One of the standard non-sexual symbols is water: the entering of water is a symbol of death while the emergence from water is equivalent to birth. At the beginning of "Le Rêve de l'huître" we find M.B. on a beach taking a break from a cocktail party given in his honour after he has delivered a lecture at an American university. His intended return to the party by the way he has come is cut off by the incoming tide which eventually forces him to scramble up a cliff to safety. In the course of this episode he inadvertently drops into the sea the clothes which he has removed precisely to avoid getting them wet. The solid bundle of clothes which he had made is dispersed in the sea and he

is obliged to enter the water to retrieve and re-assemble them. If the symbolism of entry and emergence from the water is clear, what are we to make of the clothes?

A second dispersal, this time of the pieces of one article of clothing, occurs once M.B. has reached the top of the cliff. Attempting to find his way back to the house where the cocktail party was being held, he crawls under some barbed wire:

Bruit de déchirure; je suis bloqué, tire; le dos de mon veston se sépare en deux. Heureusement le col tient encore; mais à chaque pas les deux pans se soulèvent dans le vent, puis retombent sur mes fesses en gifles humides. (MR, 14)

By the time M.B. gets inside the hut on the other side of the wire, the jacket has completely separated into two halves.

It is in this hut that the relationship between clothes and the wearer becomes clearer. In dream symbolism all houses or containers are symbols of the vagina. This symbolism is further emphasised in the text by the description of the interior of the hut which is the size of a double-bed. The hut, then, symbolises a woman and M.B. has had to force his way into it, taking violent possession of it. His possession of the hut is, however, called into question with the arrival of another man whose past history is identical to his own: "Car j'ai été français aussi, brillant professeur, tournées de conférences, cocktails dans la villa sur la falaise" (MR, 17). It soon becomes apparent that the man's intention is to return to the villa and take M.B.'s place at the party. There is only one difficulty: "Le problème, c'est le costume, car ce qui me reste du vôtre est tout à fait insuffisant pour me permettre de faire bonne figure" (MR, 17-18). The man cannot properly take M.B.'s place without

exactly the same clothes. Clothes are a symbol of the wearer's identity and their dispersal is indicative of the dispersal of that identity.

The double dispersal of M.B.'s clothes prefigures the actual dispersal of his person. Once the man leaves the hut the dream narrative becomes a struggle between several men to take M.B.'s place at the party. The key to victory in this struggle lies in possession of another article of clothing, the cuff-links bearing the serpent's head design. Without these the other clothes are insufficient proof of identity. The real M.B. loses the cuff-links on his first visit to the hut, returns to recover them and promptly loses them again to another of the men involved in the struggle. He is left with a tie in their place, a tie which is slowly strangling him. In standard symbolism both the serpent and the tie are symbols of the penis. In the text, however, there is a difference of degree between the two symbols. The cuff-links are first lost in the hut. In other words, M.B. has lost his sex-organ, and so his sexual power, inside a woman who does not belong to him and whom he has, in effect, raped. When the organ is lost again it is replaced by a substitute, the tie, which attempts to destroy him. The tie is evidence of an urge to self-destruction.

The tie originates from one of the other men involved in the struggle, all of whom are named Bernard. Having lost the symbol of his identity, M.B. is also given this name. Taken together with the fact that all the other men have the same past history as M.B., this suggests that all these men are dispersed instances of M.B. himself. The tie, then, originates from this dispersal and we return to the equation between dispersal and death first encountered in the beach episode.

What then is the anxiety or the anxieties which produce a dream in which M.B. loses the symbol of his identity, his sexual power, and finds himself dispersed in person and threatened with death? The answer lies in the nature of the identity which has been lost. As we have seen, M.B. attends the cocktail party in his capacity as lecturer and it seems that this is the identity which has been lost. In real life, of course, Butor is invited to lecture all over the world because of his status as critic, "universitaire" and writer. Now, although Butor is well-known as a critic and earns his living as a university teacher, it is nevertheless writing which forms the mainstay of his existence: "l'écriture est pour moi une colonne vertébrale" (R, 272). His identity as lecturer is subsidiary to his principal identity as writer. In his interview with Butor, Le Sidaner, remarking on the productiveness of Butor's career, asks the following question:

Pourtant vos textes inscrivent une <<expérience>> d'écriture (corporelle, psychique ...) qui comporte le risque de la folie, du silence. Certains d'entre eux n'ont-ils pas manifesté plus particulièrement, de la façon la plus dangereuse, ce risque?<sup>15</sup>

The way in which Butor answers this question is revealing for our purposes:

Chacun de mes livres a été arraché à un monstre, et quand j'y repense, très sincèrement je ne sais pas comment j'y ai réussi. Quant au silence: chaque fois que j'entre dans une salle de classe j'ai le trac, et je sais que cela ne finira jamais. Voir Matière de Rêves.<sup>16</sup>

Le Sidaner's question applied to silence in the context of writing but Butor transfers his reply to the context of teaching and makes a connection with Matière de Rêves. We would suggest that a similar transfer has occurred in "Le Rêve de l'huître". Butor has shifted the context from writing to lecturing, making use of the phenomenon which Freud terms



"dream-displacement", in which there is a gap between the content of the dream and the thoughts behind the dream.<sup>17</sup> The sexual power lost in the hut can be interpreted as the loss of the power or ability to write. Without this power, it is implied, M.B.'s personality could disintegrate and death could ensue. Dispersal is viewed as a consequence of the loss of the ability to write. The principal anxiety of "Le Rêve de l'huître" is the fear of silence in the sense of being unable to continue writing. The fear of dispersal is a related but subsidiary anxiety. The presence of more than one anxiety will have certain consequences for the way in which we read Matière de Rêves.

What are the reasons which lie behind the fear of silence? We remember that M.B. entered the hut in violent fashion and that the sequence of events leading to near-strangulation begins in the hut. We must not forget, however, that prior to this, M.B. was already in a state indicating a degree of dispersal. The beginning of the sequence of events responsible for this situation took place in the sea. It is clear that the setting of the dream is an American one and this allows us to add to the symbolism of the water. The immersion in the water represents the journey across the Atlantic, and the emergence from it the arrival on the American continent which is concomitant with a hope of birth. The whole sequence becomes an anxiety/wish-fulfilment in miniature, a "mise en abyme". Butor went to America after the publication of Degrés, a novel demonstrating the impossibility of writing any further novels. It is not difficult to imagine that the realisation of this impossibility could result in the fear of silence and that America could be regarded as a possible source of renewed literary production. There exists a fear, however, that this hope could be seriously compromised.

In Illustrations II we saw that the relationship between writer and artist could be compromised if the former tried to take violent possession of the latter. A relationship of love, respect and mutual understanding was necessary. In this dream Butor has lost the power to write and the way in which he enters the hut is symbolic of an attempt to repossess this power by means of violence. The woman symbolised by the hut can herself be interpreted as a symbol of writing. Such an act of violence, however, leads to a dispersal far more dangerous than any previously encountered, one which could result in the definitive self-destruction of the writer. Such violence is therefore to be deplored and the Bernard who finally attempts to take M.B.'s place at the party, and who is of a violent disposition, as his wolf's-head cufflinks suggest, is devoured by M.B. himself. Ultimately violence must consume itself. This Bernard is like a vampire who would feed on the woman of writing, exhausting her life-blood.

It is now time to take stock of what we have learned from "Le Rêve de l'huitre". Our analysis of events has covered almost all the action of the dream and we have been able to elucidate the anxieties involved. We could not have done so without the help of standard dream symbolism but before we can say that dream symbolism provides the key to the reading of the dream narratives two qualifications have to be made. The first concerns the sexual nature of the symbols. In his treatment of neurotic patients Freud uses the interpretation of dreams to trace the origins of the neurosis to sexual events in the patient's childhood. The suppression of these events in the patient's unconscious leads to their translation into symbols in the dreams. The sexual interpretation of these symbols is an end in itself. In "Le Rêve de l'huitre" this is clearly not the case.

The symbolic value of the entry to the hut, the hut itself, the tie and the serpent's-head cufflinks goes beyond sexuality. All have a further symbolic significance within the context of writing: the penis symbolises the power to write, the vagina the woman of writing. Butor is consciously using standard dream symbolism for his own ends.

This is all the more apparent when one considers the proliferation of these sexual symbols and the objects used to represent them. Everywhere the reader turns he finds something which, according to dream symbolism, ought to be interpreted as either a male or a female sex organ. Butor is not content to restrict the symbolism of the male sexual parts to a tie and cufflinks. In the final sequence of the dream M.B. metamorphoses from wolf to fish and encounters a shark which he devours, just as he devoured the Bernard-wolf. Fish in dream symbolism play the part of the male genitals. It is revealed that the shark too has once been M.B. and so, in devouring the shark, M.B. devours his own genitals, thus paving the way for his metamorphosis into a sexless oyster. The image of M.B. devouring his own genitals is perhaps the final straw for the reader. Butor is not just using dream symbols, he is playing with them. Not only are sexual symbols liberally sprinkled throughout the dream but the symbols themselves appear incongruous. Nowhere in Freud's exemplary dreams do we find serpent's-head cufflinks, talking fish or people being strangled by ties in the front seat of a lorry. Archetypal symbols appear slightly ridiculous and this produces a comic effect. The tone of "Le Rêve de l'huître" is one of comic exaggeration. Freud is being used and parodied and M.B. himself is being mocked.

Nonetheless, the extension of the symbolic value of the sexual symbols to cover the field of writing points to an underlying serious intent on the part of the author. The crisis is real enough: it is simply being treated

in a humorous way. The reasons for this treatment will become clearer as our discussion of the three volumes proceeds. For the time being we may say with certainty that standard dream symbolism is essential to the mode of reading of the dream narratives but that the author is adapting it for his own particular use. Dream symbolism is an indispensable starting-point.

The conclusions we have reached in respect of the Freudian aspect of the dream narratives may equally be applied to our theory of the dual anxiety/wish-fulfilment axis of the structure of the dreams. We left M.B. in the form of a sexless oyster about to be eaten by the guests at a banquet presided over by the French Consul "en costume d'académicien" (MR, 35). This episode reveals a second subsidiary anxiety in the dream, that of M.B.'s vulnerability to the attacks of the French literary establishment. This anxiety recurs throughout the three volumes and we shall return to it. What interests us here is the manner in which M.B. escapes his fate.

His escape is nothing short of miraculous. He is plucked from under the forks of the guests by a black woman. With her aid he is taken to an ark where he metamorphoses through serpent back to his original human form, indicating that his writing power has been regained. He appears as Noah, a new man. The dream provides us with no explanation for his escape. We do not know who the woman is, where she comes from or why she should wish to rescue M.B. Butor's wish, that his writing power should return, is clearly fulfilled but for no apparent reason. This lack of logic in the solution to the anxiety is quite consistent with real dreams. In real dreams the anxiety relates to real or perceived problems in diurnal life and the dream itself does not work out a real solution to these problems. They merely represent the problem as solved according to the wish of the

dreamer. Wish-fulfilment in dreams is, in effect, a form of wishful thinking.

Now, in the anxiety part of "Le Rêve de l'huître", Butor has presented us with a real diurnal problem, a crisis in his writing career. However, we as readers know that Butor overcame the problem since he has continued to produce works in considerable number and we naturally want to know how he did so. The end of the dream does not provide us with a real solution. Nor does it provide us with a complete wish-fulfilment since the fear of dispersal is not overcome. M.B. goes through a final metamorphosis into a river. The woman's words, "Va de par le monde, il est temps" (MR, 38), reminiscent of those of Christ to the disciples, suggest the metamorphosis is a positive one. Water, however, is a symbol of dispersal in the dream and, as a river, M.B. rushes toward the sea into which he will empty himself. Although the creative power is regained, M.B. remains dispersed and the anxiety remains: "demain cela recommence" (MR, 38). Once again the Freudian theory has been adapted by Butor: while the principal anxiety is counterbalanced by a wish-fulfilment, the subsidiary anxiety is not. This lack of symmetry in the two anxieties poses immediate problems for our reading path through the volume. Where are we now to look for the real solutions, if they exist, of Butor's diurnal problems? The solution to the fear of dispersal is clearly dependant on a solution being found to the loss of the power to write. Are both solutions to be found in "Le Rêve du tatouage", as the comparative reading outlined above would suggest, or is the solution to the fear of silence perhaps to be found in an earlier dream? The supplementary material of "Le Rêve de l'huître" provides a possible answer to our problem.

If the principal anxiety expressed in "Le Rêve de l'huître" is that Butor is no longer capable of writing, the actual event which triggers off the potentially destructive series of metamorphoses is the violent entry into the hut. We interpreted this as a violent attempt to re-possess the woman of writing. If Butor is to regain his creative power then the question of his relationship with writing has to be resolved. In the supplementary material of "Le Rêve de l'huître" are to be found quotations from Chateaubriand's Atala. The extracts are taken from the beginning of the prologue and the end of the epilogue. In the epilogue, which describes the Indians' march into exile, the situation of the old Indians is similar to that of M.B. in the dream: "les vieillards cheminaient lentement au milieu, placés entre leurs aïeux et leur postérité, entre les souvenirs et l'espérance, entre la patrie perdue et la patrie à venir" (MR, 13). Butor is in exile in America looking for a new world and separated from the old one where he found he could no longer write. The prologue to Atala reminds us that Butor is not the first to come to America looking for a new world and that one result of this search was the establishment of the French Empire in America.

The idea of empire provides an association with William Blakes' America, the largest external source in the volume. This work occupies a special position in Matière de Rêves, falling outside the realm of nineteenth century French literature to which the other external sources belong. It runs through the volume, the largest extracts appearing in the central dream "Le Rêve du déménagement". Furthermore, in one of the series of the supplementary material, M.B. is continually crying out for Blakes' help: "William Blake! Aie pitié de moi. William Blake! Viens à mon secours!" (MR, 78). America is Blakes' visionary account of the American revolt

against British imperial rule in which the King of England is seen as the agent of Urizen, the symbol of violent, repressive authority. At the beginning of the revolt the thirteen English governors of the colonies convene "dans la maison de Bernard" (MR, 82). This is Francis Bernard, governor of Massachusetts:

an autocratic person, to whom the leaders of the popular party were "demagogues". His misleading reports to the king are held to have been responsible to some extent for the conduct of the home government towards the colonies.<sup>18</sup>

In "Le Reve de l'huitre" we remember that M.B. was dispersed into different personages all of whom were called Bernard. The identification of M.B. with Francis Bernard brings an additional element to the nature of Butor's relationship to writing at the time. Butor regards writing as his own colony and the attempt to re-possess the hut is an attempt to re-establish his own imperial rule over writing as if he had the right to govern it. This points to a self-assertive attitude on the part of the author toward writing.

La Modification shows us that the idea of empire in Butor's work is intimately connected with the power dominance of a centre. In Atala we saw the presence of France in America in the form of empire. In "Le Rêve du déménagement" the opposite of this is revealed by a puzzling detail in the house: "Il y a quelques bûches à côté, une pile de journaux américains. Nous sommes en France pourtant" (MR, 75). Here we see the presence of America in France, the direction of the passage between the two countries being reversed. Clearly, the empire of America on Butor would be no more desirable than that of Butor on America. In the light of Butor's problem and bearing in mind the experience of Delmont in La Modification would not the ideal solution be some form of two-way relationship between Butor

and America? Can such a solution be found in "Le Rêve du déménagement"?

The action of the dream narrative of this central dream can be summed up in the title of one of the external sources in its supplementary material, Stendhal's Le Rouge et le Noir. In the title the two colours appear as an equally balanced combination. The beginning of the narrative shows a clear parallel with that of "Le Rêve de l'huître". M.B. once again forces entry to a container, this time a house. The presence of a printing-works in the house confirms that we are again dealing with the woman of writing. M.B.'s wife, M.-J., plays a crucial rôle in the action of the dream. From the outset it is clear that she is in considerable discomfort. The trouble stems from a wound in her hand caused by the presence of a foreign body, a match, which is described as a "bâton" (MR, 77) and, as such, is a clear penis symbol. The process of M.-J.'s recovery is begun when the match is removed and used to light a fire which is fuelled by M.B.'s clothes. The first article of clothing to be burnt is his tie which was once again strangling him. The burning of his clothes is accompanied by a feeling of sacrifice: "Je n'ai qu'un seul imperméable, mais c'est le moment ou jamais de le sacrifier" (MR, 77). Once the clothes are burned M.-J.'s wound heals and she recovers. We can interpret the episode as follows: M.J.'s wound is a direct consequence of M.B.'s "rape" of the house/woman. His violent conduct toward the woman of writing backfires on his own wife. To cure her he must sacrifice the instrument of rape, the tie-penis, and all the clothes associated with it. In other words, he must abandon his identity of writer. This is the anxiety part of the dream, as is indicated by the quasi-miraculous healing of M.-J.'s wound.



The real solution to the problem takes place in the second half of the dream (from paragraph eight onwards) in the cellar of the house. The first part of the cellar is a vivisection laboratory in which M.B. finds a vat of blood, to his own evident discomfort: "J'ai toujours eu horreur du sang, je m'évanouis si le mien coule, perds la tête si j'en vois jaillir dans la rue" (MR, 85). Curiously, this horror of blood actually suggests a vampire side to M.B.'s nature as writer. A vampire obviously cannot bear to lose its own blood while the sight of blood lost by others can send it mad with desire and frustration if it cannot be obtained. In "Le Rêve de l'huître" M.B. devoured the second Bernard, a vampire associated with violence toward the woman of writing. In this dream, however, M.-J. actively encourages M.B. to immerse himself in the blood. His immersion takes the form of a two-way blood transfusion between himself and a series of animals. Their heads, and the fact that they gaze left, indicate that the animals represent Egyptian gods.<sup>19</sup> They are caged with their paws or wings in the shape of a cross as if they had been made prisoner by the cross, by Christianity. The transfusion sets them free and suggests a liberation of the past. This is confirmed by the attitude to M.B. of the corpses in the printing-press who make of him their messenger for the future. The dates of the death of the corpses all end in the numbers 26, the last two numbers of Butor's date of birth. By immersing himself in the vat M.B. accepts his rôle as vampire, not as vampire-vivisectionist indulging in violent butchery, but as a vampire who gives as well as takes blood. M.B. liberates the past from the constraints of an imperial, centrally organised religion. This can only be understood if the previous occupier of the house is seen as M.B. himself. The manner in which the vivisectionist imprisoned the animals suggests a Pope or emperor figure and recalls the previous emperor/colony relationship between M.B. and the

woman of writing in "Le Rêve de l'huître". Egypt has always been the land of rebirth in Butor's work and a religious interpretation should not be put on the liberation of the gods. Rather, M.B. sets free his own rebirth as a writer, a rebirth hitherto rendered impossible by his imperial attitude to writing. He sets free his own past and becomes the instrument for his own future. The transfusion transforms M.B. into someone who takes life from writing but also gives life to writing.

The transformation of M.B. into benevolent vampire paves the way for the immersion of M.-J. in her vat of black liquid: "et voici la piscine de l'encre. C'est le centre de l'atelier, miroir noir" (MR, 93). The second sentence clearly refers to the status of "Le Rêve du déménagement" in Matière de Rêves. It is the centre of the volume, the mirror through which, as the quotation system shows, the work reflects itself. The centre is also a mirror of ink, a mirror of writing in which Butor can see himself. This is of fundamental importance, not only for Matière de Rêves, but for the series as a whole, and we shall return to it. For the moment, though, it is important that M.-J. immerse herself in the vat of ink. M.B. suddenly finds himself devouring his own wife in the same way as he devoured the Bernard in "Le Rêve de l'huître". It seems an ominous sign. However, inside the heart he discovers M.-J. alive and well. Their brief conversation is revealing: "Essuie ta bouche, tu es tout barbouillé de noir. - Suis-je encore rouge? - Tu pâlfras pour autrui, tu pâlfras pour toi-même, mais pour moi tu seras toujours parfaitement rouge" (MR, 96). The heart, as a container, is yet another vagina symbol and therefore another woman of writing. As he enters the woman, M.B. is concerned about his redness, his writing power, and his rebirth. Quite at home within the woman of writing, his wife's reply is an expression of confidence in his ability to remain a

writer. Here, black and red reveal themselves to be two aspects of the same thing. Black or violet, as the colours of ink, represent the active part of writing as can be seen from the violet sweat dripping from M.B.'s fingers shortly after. Red is the passive side, the correct attitude required before the ink can begin to flow.

M.B.'s children form the final element in the dream. M.-J. tells him that their perception of their father as red depends on the way in which they will be installed in the house of writing. At the end of the dream the children appear on the horizon and M.-J. gives M.B. an order: "Elles ont faim, dit Marie-Jo, va leur chercher des livres à manger, fourre-les de fruits, fais-les rôtir" (MR, 98). This is a command for M.B. to write so that his family can eat. Their perception of M.B. as red, as benevolent vampire, depends on what this writing provides for them. As he descended to the cellar M.B. realised that the family had no possessions whatsoever, save the house of writing (MR, 85). The family depend on his writing for their livelihood. His family has a place within the house of writing and now that he has adopted the correct attitude M.B. will not have to abandon writing as a means of providing for his family.

The solution of the dream has a double aspect. M.B.'s former relationship with writing was like that between an imperial ruler and his colonies. In other words, M.B. regarded writing as his own particular property to which he would always have access and with which he could do as he liked. His ability to write was not in question since writing would always respond to his command. In addition, writing was something from which he derived the means to survival, both as a writer and in the broader sense, as the provider of his family's livelihood. It was something from which he could profit. He literally fed upon it like a vampire without giving anything in

return. We may conclude that, while in Degrés Butor had come to view the relationship between the novel writer and the reader as an imperial one and had therefore rejected that position, he had not addressed himself to the question of the relationship between the writer and his own writing prior to the realisation that it was not possible to write further novels. It is in his attempt to break new ground after the novels that he discovers his own attitude to writing is also an imperial one. It is tempting to draw a parallel between this discovery and the absence of the theme of writing in Mobile and Réseau Aérien, both works in which certain aspects of imperialism are still being criticised.

Such an imperialistic attitude results in the loss of the power to write with detrimental consequences for both M.B. and his family. The change in attitude reverses this situation. In this respect the rôle of M.-J. in the dream is revealed as a dual one. In "Le Rêve de l'huître" M.B. was saved by the appearance of a mysterious black woman. In this dream, M.B. enters and devours M.-J. as black woman but finds inside an M.-J. who is not black. The black M.-J. is another symbol of the woman of writing while the second is the "real" M.-J. Both are, in a sense, the wives of M.B. Since M.B. is saved in the first dream by a woman the colour of ink and guided here by an M.-J. who turns black, it is clear that M.B. is aided in finding a solution to the problem by writing itself. As both American and black, the woman of "Le Rêve de l'huître" represents both America and writing. If the new world of America is to be the land of the re-birth of Butor's writing then America is being cast in the rôle of a possible source of further literary production. America and writing are virtually synonymous. Treated properly, the woman of America/writing will help Butor toward re-birth as a writer. The dual aspect of the symbolism of the black woman and M.-J. may be regarded by the reader as unnecessarily tortuous. However, according

to Freud,<sup>20</sup> a characteristic of symbols in dreams is their overdetermination, that is, the investment of the symbol with more than one meaning which may appear contradictory, as is the case with M.-J. Butor is availing himself of one more aspect of Freudian dream theory, one which permits him to link the two dreams even more closely.

In "Le Rêve du déménagement" M.B. re-constitutes himself as a double, both red and black, and destroys himself as an imperial centre. The identity of the writer is changing. The change in attitude may be described as a passage from self-interest to a feeling of responsibility to writing itself and to the sources from which he derives his production. Butor has to put something back. It is important to realise that, in this change, the writer is not dispersed. He remains a solid centre but this centre consists of two equally balanced halves between which there is no relationship of dominance. The dual nature of the writer as centre is reflected both in the structure of the quotation system and of the volume as a whole but the ramifications of this exceed the boundaries of Matière de Rêves and we shall return to this question in our discussion of Second sous-sol.

"Le Rêve du déménagement" provides us with a solution to the problem of Butor's relationship with writing which is the key to the fear of silence as it is expressed in "Le Rêve de l'huître". One of the wishes of the latter dream is indeed fulfilled in the central dream of the volume and the solution is one which is worked out in the dream, one which we can explain: Butor has regained his power to write because his attitude to writing has undergone a fundamental change. The solution is not a wish-fulfilment in the sense of wishful thinking but a real diurnal solution to a real diurnal problem. Having discovered the solution to one of the problems of "Le Rêve de l'huître" in the central dream of the volume we must now look for a

solution to the problem of the dispersal of the creative power and see if it is to be found, as the mirror system suggests, in the final dream, "Le Rêve du tatouage".

The opening of the dream finds M.B. the victim of an air-crash, injured, with a piece of the aeroplane's wing in his chest. The crash has resulted in an apparent loss of memory; "Je suis sans doute le seul survivant, ne sais plus d'où je viens, où j'allais" (MR, 122). This loss of the sense of direction is reminiscent of his situation in "Le Rêve de l'huître" as expressed in the quotation from Atala. He has lost contact with his past, has not yet found his future and wanders aimlessly in the present. As the means by which he arrived at his present situation, the aircraft can be interpreted as a symbol of writing. Writing is the means by which he travels through life, as it were, and it has come crashing down around him. The crash has left him with a piece of writing embedded in his chest, symbolising the pain his writing is causing him. The destination of his journey is a lecture theatre in which he was supposed to give a talk. In reality, however, the lecture is an "opportunity" for M.B. to confess his faults before an Academic assembly. His silence results in a flood of accusations made by an academician in military uniform. Among other things he is accused of the theft of books and the despoiling of museums. To crown it all his own works are also attacked: "quant à ses livres ils réussiraient à pervertir le feu" (MR, 125). The perversion of which his works are accused turns to subversion when, instead of replying to the accusations, M.B. begins to slaver uncontrollably. His slaving is a standard symbol of emission and virility representing the outpouring of his writing which threatens to engulf the academician's town. His writing subverts authority. For this crime M.B. is

sent to prison where his slaver turns out to be just as dangerous:

"J'entends la voix du geôlier-chef: <<Désolé, Monsieur l'Académicien, nous ne pouvons le garder ici, il va pervertir tous ses frères>>" (MR, 129).

His subversive writing threatens to spread to other writers.

We have already seen M.B. in the rôle of visiting lecturer in "Le Rêve de l'huitre". He also appears in this guise in the series enclosing each block in the internal quotation system.<sup>21</sup> In this series M.B. sees an image of himself either reading or hearing himself speaking the words quoted in each block. Table Four shows that the series comprises a forward and reverse movement around a double centre formed by the elements "tapisserie" and "mosaïque", thus producing a mirror effect. Each setting forms a frame for further settings: the painting, for example, contains the representation of a theatre in which M.B. also sees himself speaking. The most important frame concerns the tapestry and the mosaic, the central elements. The tapestry contains an embroidery and a mosaic while the mosaic has an embroidery and a tapestry. The embroidery does not figure in the series of outside frames, inviting us to concentrate on the notions of tapestry and mosaic. Both are assemblages, composed of many small pieces. The quotation system, which employs similar frameworks, is also composed of an assemblage of small pieces or blocks of text. By virtue of the comparative or mirror method of reading they bring the dreams into a closer relationship with each other than would be the case if we only read the dream narratives. We are invited to compare specific paragraphs of two dream narratives placed side by side when they would normally be separated by the intervening narratives of other dreams. Where the text is dispersed in the narrative, it is gathered together in the quotations. We are encouraged to see in this assembly of text a technique similar to that employed in tapestries and mosaics. We

should also note in passing that the technique is similar to that of collage as employed in Illustrations II.

This process of assembly or gathering together mirrors that used by the Maoris to whom M.B. is sent to be cured of his wound in "Le Rêve du tatouage". The cure falls into two stages. From the prison he is sent to the hospital where he is tended by black doctors and nurses. There, the piece of wing is removed from the wound but not in the way we might have expected. Instead of extracting and discarding it, the doctors transform it into a liquid which is made to enter his body in a less harmful way: absorption through the mouth. This shows that the piece of wing is not a foreign body with which his system cannot cope. As a symbol of writing, it is a natural part of his body. He has only been experiencing it as harmful because he felt unable to write. With the absorption of the liquid the pain eases: "Je ne souffre presque plus" (MR, 131). Once inside his body writing has to be kept there and the wound sutured. This can only be accomplished by tatooing due to the length of time the wound has been festering and emitting puss.

Having journeyed across the sea to the land of the Maoris, M.B. is hung upside down and the puss flows into bottles from incisions made at the ends of his fingers, indicating that the puss, too, represents the suffering writing has caused him. Once the puss has left his body M.B. is no more than a hollow shell, the dryness of which contrasts with the immersion in water and the metamorphosis into a river in "Le Rêve de l'huitre". The Maoris begin their tatooing using a thread which is dipped into the jars of puss. Once again a symbol of pain is transformed into one of healing; not only is writing sewn up inside M.B. but he is sewn up by writing. With the completion of tatooing M.B. is re-assembled as a whole writer and dispersal



appears to have been overcome. However, a detail in the tatooing process indicates that something has been added to the identity of the writer and casts doubt on the extent to which the problem has been solved. We must now leave "Le Rêve du tatouage" for a short time to explore this additional element.

As the Maoris work, the puss takes on different colours and the tatooing itself is described as "dessin" (MR, 135) and "arabesques" (MR, 135). A real tatoo is, of course, created by the injection of colorants under the epidermis. Tatooing, like tapestry and mosaics, is a form of art. In both "Le Rêve de l'huître" and "Le Rêve du déménagement" we saw that America was envisaged as a possible source for Butor's literary production and we know from the Illustrations series that Butor used the work of artists as a starting-point for his texts. Art is obviously related to this question of source and is the subject of the anxieties and wish-fulfilments of both "Le Rêve de l'ammonite" and "Le Rêve de Prague".

Of the five dreams of Matière de Rêves "Le Rêve de l'ammonite" is the only one to have its origins in painting; the work of Alechinsky. In this dream M.B. is arrested by a woman clerkess, brought to trial before a judge and then rescued by the very same woman. The identity of the woman is hinted at during the preliminary hearing when she charges M.B. with mistakes and inadequacies in his works. These inadequacies are contained in the register of M.B.'s memory which the woman has in her possession. The clerkess opens the register "tournant négligemment le pinceau dans le pot de colle" (MR, 42). Equally revealing is her method of drawing attention to his mistakes: "mon attention est tellement accaparée par cette langue qui se

contorsionne en dessinant des illustrations pour toutes les insuffisances qu'elle veut souligner" (MR, 43). The clerkess has something of an artist in her. As we have already noted, collaboration with artists in Second sous-sol and Troisième Dessous is openly admitted to by the inclusion of the artist's name at the end of each dream narrative. The omission of the artist's name in this dream, together with the fact that Butor's fears concern his inadequacies as a writer, suggest that we are dealing with a preliminary encounter with art in which Butor is not confident enough to ally his name with that of the artist. The encounter in this dream reveals fears which are even earlier than the feeling of rejection expressed in "La Conversation" in Illustrations.

The anxiety, then, is that the world of art will condemn Butor as inadequate for any collaboration, thus rendering him silent, unable to write. This fear is counterbalanced by the hope contained in the wish-fulfilment that art will provide the elixir of new texts. The fulfilment of the wish is, however, incomplete, as it was in "Le Rêve de l'huitre". M.B.'s realisation of the woman's benevolent attitude to him comes too late for anything more than a glimpse of the world of art. The woman fossilises into an ammonite and the salt, one of the essences in alchemy, is beyond his grasp: "je suis toujours à l'épiderme de la grandiose bavarde" (MR, 72). M.B. is left scratching at the surface of art and his problems continue: "Adieu, adieu, je sens que je m'éveille: essuie ma sueur avant que je ne recommence à taillader ma jungle" (MR, 72).

The problem of art is essentially the problem of finding a source for his literary production, something which will enable him to continue writing, and a solution is to be found in the counterpart to "Le Rêve de l'ammonite" in the second half of the volume, "Le Rêve de Prague". In this dream M.B. is on a secret mission in which it is essential he conceal his identity as

writer, as serpent. To conceal his identity he takes a medicine which is only a temporary cure and has the unfortunate side-effect of harming his sight. This in turn has an even more serious consequence: "Mes yeux me font mal; en coulent des ruisseaux de larmes; si j'attends un peu trop ce seront des larmes de sang; ou m'a prévenu; il y a un risque sérieux qu'à pleurer je me vide de tout mon sang" (MR, 103). The need to conceal his identity as writer leads to a loss of sight which in turn compromises that very identity, his status as vampire newly acquired in "Le Rêve de déménagement". Should this happen there is only one solution: "Alors, rien ne pourrait me ranimer que la transfusion de celui d'un autre vampire fraîchement gorgé de celui d'une jeune fille endormie, car je suis incapable de boire le sang moi-même" (MR, 103). Once again we encounter the fear of blood. He can only be saved by another vampire, another writer in full possession of the blood of the woman of writing which he feels unable to drink. The loss of writing power is emphasised by a similar degradation in his clothing to that in "Le Rêve de l'huître".

The first step toward cure is to find an optician at the Palais Waldstein. This optician, who provides M.B. with glasses which render his sight almost perfect, is also a musician and he plays a piano throughout the transfusion process. The affliction to M.B.'s sight suggests a connection with painting, the eye being the medium through which art is perceived. This impression is reinforced by two details: the transfusion ends with the entry of the six hundred and sixty-sixth flame: this is the number of the Book of Revelation in the Bible and revelation implies an end to blindness; after the transfusion is complete M.B. enters a cathedral the nave of which contains a gigantic palpitating woman's breast; this has distinct surrealist overtones as does the presence in the cathedral of

Guillaume Apollinaire.

The access to sight and revelation is provided by a musician on the one hand and a writer in the form of vampire on the other. The importance of music for Butor's work with artists will become clearer in Second sous-sol and Troisième Dessous. During the course of his mission M.B. is given instructions by three writers: Apollinaire, author of Le Passant de Prague, William Blake, whose importance we have already seen, and Jules Verne. Another detail points to the presence of a fourth writer.

On his way to the shop M.B. washes his clothes in a fountain under the statue of Justice and hangs them out to dry on the statue. This is a mark of disrespect. Running through Matière de Rêves is a series in which M.B. drinks writers from a bottle<sup>22</sup>. The majority of these writers are quoted from in the text and the drinking action symbolises Butor's consumption and use of them as sources. Three of the writers in the series are not quoted from: J. K. Huysmans, Jules Verne and Franz Kafka. In a second series M.B. makes love with and has children by characters from the quoted works and from Huysman's A Rebours. No characters from Verne or Kafka appear in the series. Kafka, of course, lived and worked in Prague. In two of his works Das Schloss and Der Prozes, the protagonist attempts to gain satisfaction from an elusive and hostile authority. In the customs sequence of "Le Rêve de Prague" the series of rooms and corridors are strongly reminiscent of both these works. In "Le Rêve de l'amonite" M.B. undergoes a trial in which reference is made to a third work by Kafka: "Doit ... quelques idées pour améliorer le fonctionnement de nos colonies pénitenciaires (il vaut mieux qu'elles soient ingénieuses, si elle ne veut pas les expérimenter elle-même)" (MR, 64). The reference is unmistakably to the short story In der Strafkolonie, already used by Butor in Illustrations III, where the agent of

authority is destroyed by his own punishment device, which, significantly in the light of "Le Rêve du tatouage", engraves the victims' crimes on their bodies. The insult to the statue of Justice is an act of homage to Kafka. Butor shares the disrespect to authority shown by Kafka's protagonists. In every dream except "Le Rêve du déménagement", M.B. can be seen escaping the clutches of the representatives of authority, such as the Academicians, who are always depicted as grotesque and ridiculous.

As a source for Butor's writing Jules Verne comes into his own in Second sous-sol. However, a reference to his work can be found in "Le Rêve du tatouage". At the end of the tatooing process the name Paganel appears on M.B.'s back. Jacques Paganel is the rather incompetent geographer of Les Enfants du Capitaine Grant who is tatooed at the end of the work by the Maoris. The identification of M.B. as Paganel is the final act in his re-assembly in the dream. The Maoris take leave of M.B. by placing him in a canoe and pushing him out to sea. A voyage awaits him and he has become both geographer and discoverer like Paganel. This voyage, like that of Second sous-sol, is made under the sign of the author of Les Voyages Extraordinaires.

The help accorded M.B. by other writers in "Le Rêve de Prague" appears as a pre-requisite to any successful relationship with art. M.B. has to learn how to use writers before graduating to artists. In "Le Rêve de l'ammonite" we saw that Butor felt inadequate as a writer and not yet ready to tackle painting. In this dream M.B. purchases new clothes which do not fit him:

Pas de vendeurs, je n'ai qu'à me servir; pas de choix non plus: un seul modèle, et il manque justement ma taille. Il en est de même dans tous les autres rayons: je suis obligé de prendre trop grand pour moi, mais tout cela est de bonne qualité. (MR, 120)

As we have seen, M.B.'s clothes symbolise his identity as a writer. Here, the clothes are too big, indicating that he has not yet grown sufficiently as a writer to fill them. Painting remains only a glimpse caught in the cathedral but the quality of the clothes is good and there is, therefore, every reason to be optimistic. His secret mission, which is none other than the regaining of the power to write as symbolised by the replacement of the wand/penis at the end of the dream, can be brought to a successful conclusion.

Even at the end of the dream, however, the need for disguise remains. The optician warned M.B. before the transfusion that there was still a risk that his serpent nature could be revealed. His escape from the soldiers and dustmen on his way to the Palais Waldstein implies that painting is guarded from writers and a degree of stealth and deceit is required if he is to approach it successfully. We are again dealing with a preliminary approach to painting. Butor is not ready for open confrontation and is still coming to grips with another source, that of other writers. It is this latter problem which is solved in the dream. The vampire, despite his grumbling, grants M.B. the transfusion and help is accorded by Blake, Verne and Apollinaire. Butor feels that he has been granted permission to use other writers as sources for his own work.

Another step has been taken in the changing identity of the writer. After Prague, Butor is not only a vampire as regards writing itself but also as regards other writers. The writers in Prague, and in the volume, are all writers of the past whose works have acquired a certain age. It is clear from the series in which M.B. makes love with literary characters that Butor regards his use of literary sources as one which produces children for their authors as well as for himself. The works of the past are as if

re-born in his own by being placed in a modern context in which they are seen to be relevant to the present and of use to the modern author. We shall be returning to this question and giving further clarification in our discussion of Second sous-sol.

If both "Le Rêve de l'ammonite" and "Le Rêve de Prague" deal only with preliminary approaches to the world of painting what is the explanation for the presence of art in the healing process of "Le Rêve du tatouage"? By the time the tatooing is finished M.B. is literally a walking work of art and has regained his full volume. The tatooing closes the wounds and completes the movement from external to internal which began with the absorption of the piece of wing. Writing and art exist together inside M.B.'s body, art helping to keep writing in place. M.B. then becomes a haven of creation and fertility: flowers grow inside him and bees produce their honey. The honey attracts flies which cover his body to such an extent that he can only see by looking through them. The flies represent artists attracted by his fertility as a writer who become the means by which he can see, the means by which he can perceive reality, just as writer and artist worked together for the revelation of reality in Illustrations II and Illustrations III. In this respect, the co-existence of art and writing inside M.B.'s body is clearly anticipatory. The Maoris' tatooing is a wish-fulfilment in the Freudian sense, that is, no more than wishful thinking, unlike the solution in "Le Rêve du déménagement". Access to the world of painting has still to be gained. Matière de Rêves represents the first steps along the road to the complete re-assembly in a modified form, of the writer's identity, a re-assembly which can only be achieved in the world of painting, the world of Second sous-sol and Troisième Dessous.

The interpretation of the dreams of Matière de Rêves allows us to draw certain conclusions but also encourages us to pose further questions. We can now state with exactitude the extent of the influence of Freudian dream theory on the volume. The dream narratives are indeed based on the axis of anxiety and wish-fulfilment. In the nature of the wish-fulfilments in the dreams, however, certain deviations from Freudian theory can be found. In "Le Rêve du déménagement" and "Le Rêve de Prague" the anxieties concerning the inability to write and the use of literary sources are overturned in a way which can be explained in terms of cause and effect. Real diurnal solutions have been found to the problems. In both "Le Rêve de l'huître" and "Le Rêve de l'ammonite" the wish-fulfilments concerning the fear of dispersal and the world of art are only partial, reflecting the fact that these problems are not solved within the confines of Matière de Rêves. Only in "Le Rêve du tatouage" do we find a wish-fulfilment which adheres completely to Freudian theory: a real anxiety is overcome in the dream by a piece of wishful thinking, the problem being represented as solved when in reality it is not. This, too, would indicate to someone who read Matière de Rêves before the publication of its successors that there was indeed more to come, as the back cover of the work suggests: "A suivre". It can clearly be seen that Butor adheres to, or adapts, Freudian theory as the circumstances demand.

The overall comparative structure of the volume, initially suggested by the internal quotation system, is also essentially based on the anxiety/wish-fulfilment axis. Here, too, there are deviations, however, and the mirror system does not provide an exact reflection. The primary anxiety of "Le Rêve de l'huître", the fear of silence, is overturned not in "Le Rêve du tatouage" but in the central dream, "Le Rêve du déménagement". Only the



fear of dispersal is reflected from the first to the last dream. Because the fear of silence is the primary anxiety on which everything depends, any solution to other problems must necessarily follow upon its solution. The work would lose its shape if the solution to the primary anxiety were the last to be encountered. For this reason, only the second and fourth dreams and the two halves of the central dream truly reflect each other.

We have already noted that Butor invests standard symbols with additional symbolic value as a result of the difference in purpose between psychoanalysis and his writing. It can also be noticed that certain symbols are used which have no connection with standard dream symbolism. This is particularly evident in the case of painting. In the relationship between writer and artist it is the former who is actively seeking the latter and who is therefore most suitable for representation by sexual symbols. Painting is variously symbolised by a clerkess and a fossil in "Le Rêve de l'ammonite" and by tatooing in "Le Rêve du tatouage" while artists in that dream are represented by flies. In Second sous-sol a more integrated form of symbolism is developed for Butor's relationship with the world of art which owes nothing to standard dream symbolism. However, the latter is not absent from that work and it cannot be argued that Butor begins with standard symbolism and then gradually distances himself from it. Standard castration symbols, for example, are to be found in the central dream of Troisième Dessous and the nature of Quadruple Fond can be summed up by one particular dream symbol. The truth is that standard symbolism is simply too restricted for certain aspects of the series' subject matter. If it is applicable, Butor employs it. If it is not, he invents his own symbolism.

Freudian dream theory has proved an invaluable aid to the discovery of the way in which Matière de Rêves should be read. The anxiety/wish-fulfilment axis is the key to both the structure of the dream narratives and

the overall relationship between individual dreams. The same essential structures appear in both Second sous-sol and Troisième Dessous. Similarly, the key to the reading of the dream narratives in these works is symbolism, whether it be standard or otherwise. For these reasons we shall concern ourselves in the discussion of these works less with the interpretation of the dreams than with certain broader questions already posed by Matière de Rêves.

Perhaps the most obvious question is why Butor should be concerned in the seventies with the exposition of problems in his writing career which relate to a period of time around the early to mid-sixties. If these problems are relevant to the Butor of the seventies why does he then proceed to distance himself from the Butor of the sixties by the sustained use of humour? Humour is not confined to "Le Rêve de l'huître" but is fairly evenly spread throughout the volume. The reader can choose between the picture of M.B. ranting insanely in the cathedral, slaving over the academicians in "Le Rêve du tatouage" or escaping from the police chief of "Le Rêve de Prague" in a scene reminiscent of silent films. Furthermore, is the exposition of Butor's personal writing problems a subject which is of sufficient interest to the reader? In what way are we concerned?

Other questions arise from the make-up of the text itself. We have noted the existence of two types of material, the dream narratives and the supplementary material. Our interpretation of the dreams has shown how the supplementary material may be used. The various series and the external sources either reflect or supplement the situation of M.B. in the dreams. Both are of considerable help to the reader in his interpretation of the dreams. Without the two series of authors and their characters it is doubtful if we could fully understand "Le Rêve de Prague". Yet, can this subsidiary,

although important, rôle be the only function of the supplementary material in the work? We remember that it is primarily responsible for the initial feeling of chaos and confusion experienced by the reader. It also produces a variety of stylistic differences within the text. It was necessary for the reader to extract these various constituent parts from their context in order to identify them and only then could he begin to examine their relevance to the dream narratives. Is the effort required in reading the text really worthwhile? In view of the equally balanced centre which the writer comes to constitute, why is there an apparently hierarchical relationship between the dream narratives and the supplementary material, in which the latter plays the supporting rôle? These problems, as we shall discover, are closely linked to the so far unexplained conclusion in "Le Rêve du déménagement" that part of the solution to Butor's inability to write lies in writing itself: the contradiction of "in order to be able to write, Butor must write". In other words, what is the nature of writing as it is to be found in Matière de Rêves?

TABLE ONEEXTERNAL SOURCE MATERIALMATIÈRE DE RÊVES

QUOTED SOURCES	-	Chateaubriand :	<u>Atala et René</u>
		Constant :	<u>Adolphe</u>
		Hugo :	<u>Notre Dame de Paris</u>
		Balzac :	<u>Le Père Goriot</u>
		Stendhal :	<u>Le Rouge et le Noir</u>
		Sand :	<u>La Mare au Diable</u>
		Flaubert :	<u>Madame Bovary</u>
		Zola :	<u>Germinal</u>
		Blake :	<u>America</u>

UNQUOTED SOURCES	-	Huysmans :	<u>A Rebours</u>
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Three characters from this work appear in Series one (see Table Two).

OTHERS	-	Verne
		Kafka

No quotations or characters from these authors' works appear in the text.

SECOND SOUS-SOL

QUOTED SOURCES	-	Jean-Paul Richter :	<u>Des Leben Quintus Fixleir</u>
	-	Novalis :	<u>Heinrich von Öfterdingen</u>
	-	E. T. A. Hoffmann :	<u>Prinzessin Brambilla</u>
	-	Kleist :	<u>Die Marquise von O</u>
	-	Achim von Arnim :	<u>Isabella von Ägypten</u>
	-	Brentano :	<u>Gockel und Hinckel</u>
	-	La Motte-Fouqué :	<u>Undine</u>

- Verne : Voyage au centre de la Terre
- Butor : Rien à déclarer  
: Vue Céleste  
: Centre d'Écoute
- Blake : The Book of Urizen

## UNQUOTED SOURCES

- Bettina von Arnim: Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde

Bettina von Arnim appears in the series of authors.

TROISIÈME DESSOUS

## QUOTED SOURCES

- Defoe : Robinson Crusoe
- Fielding : Tom Jones
- Swift : Gulliver's Travels
- Butor : Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe  
: Veilleuse-Brûlot  
: Les Cloîtres du vent  
: Les Petits Miroirs

## UNQUOTED SOURCES

- Sterne : Tristram Shandy
- Cleland : Fanny Hill
- Dickens : Oliver Twist
- Lewis : The Monk
- Kipling : The Jungle Book

The authors and characters of these works appear in their respective series.

TABLE TWOMatière de Rêves - Series

1. j'aperçois Atala (MR, 10)  
 Atala me fait signe (MR, 11)  
 J'entraîne Atala à l'écart (MR, 12)  
 [je] caresse Atala  
 je fais l'amour avec Atala (MR, 13)  
 Atala est enceinte (MR, 14)  
 Atala est en train d'accoucher  
 Je tiens dans mes bras le bébé d'Atala. C'est une fille.  
 Atala allaite sa fille (MR, 15)  
 [je] dis adieu à Atala qui se transforme  
 en nonpareille des Florides

This series is repeated with different literary characters and slight variations throughout the volume.

- 
2. sourire d'Atala caresse d'Atala  
 sourire d'Ellénore caresse d'Ellénore  
 sourire d'Amélie etc. caresse d'Amélie etc.  
  
 baiser d'Atala  
 baiser d'Ellénore  
 baiser d'Amélie etc.

This series begins in paragraph seven of "Le Rêve du déménagement" and ends in paragraph six of "Le Rêve de Prague" (pp. 79-112). It contains not only literary figures but also what they are transformed into in series one above.

- 
3. Sur une étagère je reconnais Chateaubriand etc.  
 Je le bois.

Occurs each time there is a change of author in the external quotations.

4. Dans la chambre une édition d'Atala et René etc.

One for each external source.

---

5. (supplementary to four).

Dans la chambre mon pantalon	Dehors il pleut
Dans la chambre mes chaussures	Dehors il neige
" une paire de chaussettes etc.	" il grêle etc.

Occurs throughout the volume.

---

- |    |    |               |    |               |
|----|----|---------------|----|---------------|
| 6. | A. | Soupirs       | B. | Flore         |
|    |    | Pleurs        |    | Brouillage    |
|    |    | Halètements   |    | Interférences |
|    |    | Douleurs      |    | Trou          |
|    |    | Frémissements |    | Boucles       |
|    |    | Horreurs      |    | Noeuds        |
|    |    | Hideurs etc.  |    | Ratures etc.  |

Occurs throughout the volume.

---

7. Twenty-five element infinitive series.

Frémir  
Trembler  
Transpirer  
Haleter  
Souffrir  
Soupirer etc.

Occurs between pages 50 and 112.

---

8. Marie-Jo gémit  
     " se retourne  
     " pleure  
     " crie  
     " appelle  
     " respire etc.

Occurs in last 3 dreams in company with:

- 
9. Marie-Jo/Irène/Agnès/Cécile      passe en chantant  
    pleurant  
    tricotant etc.

Occurs in last dream.

- 
10. mes souvenirs de Salonique  
                                  le Caire  
                                  Londres  
                                  Chicago  
                                  Berlin etc.

Occurs throughout the volume.

With the exception of the star and nationality series which can be found in Tables Five and Six of Chapter Ten, the series of Second sous-sol, Troisième Dessous and Quadruple Fond are very similar to those of Matière de Rêves and we shall not reproduce them here.



TABLE THREE

MATIÈRE DE RÊVES - INTERNAL QUOTATION SYSTEM

This table shows where the blocks of quotation occur and the contents of each block. All numbers refer to the paragraph numbers in each dream. Each block contains an odd number of quotations from three to seven organised according to a framework system. In two cases the final frame is missing. By dividing the sequence at the two central paragraphs of "Le Rêve du déménagement", paragraphs seven and eight, it can be seen that the two halves of the system reflect each other exactly, except for paragraph thirteen of "Le Rêve de l'ammonite" where "Le Rêve du tatouage" forms the frame instead of "Le Rêve de l'huître". This is inconsistent with the rest of the system and would appear to be an error.

<u>FIRST HALF</u>		<u>SECOND HALF</u>	
<u>Dream and Paragraph Number</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Dream and Paragraph Number</u>
<u>Huître</u> 10	Tatouage 19 Ammonite 9-11 Tatouage 19	Huître 7 Prague 9-10 Huître 7	<u>Tatouage</u> 14
17	Prague 15 Ammonite 15 Prague 15	Ammonite 4 Prague 5 Ammonite 4	7
21	Déménagement 14	Déménagement 2	3
23	Ammonite 19	Prague 1	1
<u>Ammonite</u> 7	Tatouage 11 Déménagement 6 Tatouage 11	Huître 14 Déménagement 10 Huître 14	<u>Prague</u> 11
13	Tatouage 18-19,22 Prague 9 Huître 1-10 Prague 9 Tatouage 22	Tatouage 25 Ammonite 12 Huître 4,7,8 Ammonite 11 Tatouage 16-25	6
<u>Ammonite</u> 16	Prague 14-15,17 Déménagement 10 Huître 11-16 Déménagement 13-15 Prague 17	Ammonite 2,4,5 Déménagement 6 Tatouage 9-14 Déménagement 1-3 Ammonite 2	<u>Prague</u> 3
17	Huître 18-20,22	Tatouage 3,5,6,7	2
<u>Déménagement</u> 4,7	Tatouage 6,10,11,13 Prague 5 Ammonite 1-6 Prague 5,8-9 Tatouage 13,17-19,21,22,24	Huître 9,12,14-15,19 Ammonite 12,15 Prague 13-18 Ammonite 10-12 Huître 2,4-5,7-9	<u>Déménagement</u> 11,8

TABLE FOURMatière de Rêves - "Mosaic" System

We reproduce here in full the frameworks which enclose the internal quotations in "Le Rêve du déménagement" in which the centre of the series occurs. We then give a complete list of the frameworks used in the volume together with a list of those elements which they frame. The mirror effect is distorted by the movement of elements from one series to the other. Thus the last two elements of the frameworks series should be "écran de cinéma" and "peinture" and not "opéra" and "théâtre".

Le Rêve du déménagementParagraphContents

4. Un poste de télévision où l'on diffuse mes malheurs.  
C'est un poste de télévision où l'on diffuse mes malheurs.
7. Une tapisserie dans laquelle est tissé ma destinée.  
Un autre panneau.  
Sur un coin de la tapisserie une broderie dans laquelle sont entrelacées nos avanies.  
Un coin de la broderie représente une mosaïque dans laquelle sont pétrifiées mes hantises.  
Autre mosaïque.  
Autre mosaïque.  
Hantises pétrifiées dans la mosaïque représentée sur un coin de la broderie.  
Autre broderie.  
Autre broderie.  
Nos avanies entrelacées dans une broderie sur un coin de la tapisserie.  
Un autre panneau.  
Un autre panneau.  
Un autre panneau.  
C'est une tapisserie dans laquelle est tissée ma destinée.

8. Une mosaïque dans laquelle sont pétrifiées mes hantises.  
Autre mosaïque.  
Autre mosaïque.  
Dans un coin de la mosaïque une broderie dans laquelle sont entrelacées nos avanies.  
Autre broderie.  
Sur un coin de la broderie est représentée une tapisserie dans laquelle est tissée ma destinée.  
Un autre panneau.  
Un autre panneau.  
C'est une tapisserie dans laquelle est tissée ma destinée sur un coin de la broderie.  
Autre broderie.  
C'est une tapisserie dans laquelle sont entrelacées nos avanies dans un coin de la mosaïque.  
Autre mosaïque.  
Autre mosaïque.  
C'est une mosaïque dans laquelle sont pétrifiées mes hantises.
  11. Un poste de télévision où l'on diffuse mes malheurs.  
C'est un poste de télévision où l'on diffuse mes malheurs.
-

Frameworks

peinture  
 écran de cinéma  
 journal  
 stèle funéraire  
 images d'Épinal  
 salle de conférence  
 chaire de cathédrale  
 téléphone  
 télévision

tapisserie
mosaïque

télévision  
 téléphone  
 livre  
 lettre  
 haut-parleur  
 stèle funéraire  
 journal  
 opéra  
 théâtre

Framed Frameworks

théâtre  
 opéra

haut-parleur  
 diapositive, lettre  
 vitrail, livre

broderie, mosaïque
broderie, tapisserie

vitrail, chaire  
 diapositive, salle de conférence  
 images d'Épinal

écran de cinéma  
 peinture

FOOTNOTES

1. Jean-Marie le Sidaner, Michel Butor: voyageur à la roue, Encre Editions, 1979, p. 44.
2. Le Sidaner, p. 47.
3. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, translated by James Strachey, 24 vols., The Hogarth Press, 1953, IV, 160.
4. In the final patience, "La Roue des Planètes", a new king takes primacy, the king of clubs, Saturn, whose reign can be transmuted into a golden age. In the disposition of the planets, the king of diamonds is resurrected to illuminate the Earth as a symbol of sight and not blindness (PA, 212-217).
5. This hypothesis is all the more attractive if we take into account the case of Illustrations IV, a contemporary of these three volumes. Illustrations IV is not a dream-text nor does it contain any dreams. However, we noted that the themes of solitude and time appeared as problems confronting the writer at certain points in his career and saw that solutions to these problems were found.
6. Madeleine Santschi, Voyage avec Michel Butor, l'Age d'Homme, 1983, p. 175.
7. Le Sidaner, p. 47.
8. The fact that Illustrations IV presents problems and solutions outwith the realm of the dream lends added weight to our own case. However, we prefer to err on the side of caution.
9. See Tables One - Three.
10. Freud, IV, pp. 97-98.
11. Freud, IV, pp. 100.
12. Freud, V, p. 352.

13. Freud, V, p. 351.
14. For a complete list see: Freud, V, pp. 353-357.
15. Le Sidaner, p. 54.
16. Le Sidaner, p. 54.
17. Dream displacement is a result of a censorship which is itself a defence mechanism. See: Freud, IV, pp. 134-164, 305-309. Butor freely admits to the use of defence strategies in his work. See: Santschi, pp. 123-125. By using displacement Butor defends himself both from the "distress" of the dream and from the "lecteur méchant". Compare also 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde and Illustrations II.
18. The Prophetic Writings of William Blake, edited by D. J. Sloss and J. P. R. Wallis, 2 vols., Clarendon Press, 1926, I, 56 (footnote).
19. The correspondences are as follows:
 

le bouc	-	Barnaded of the Mendean Triad
l'âne	-	Ra
le cynocéphale	-	Thoth
l'ibis	-	Thoth in the form of Aah-Te-Huti, the moon god
le chacal	-	Anubis, embalmer of the dead
20. See: Freud, IV, pp. 279-304. Overdetermination is a result of condensation.
21. See Table Four.
22. See Table Two.

## CHAPTER TEN

### Second sous-sol and Troisième Dessous: The Changing Identity of an Exemplary Writer

We stated in the preceding chapter that the structure of the dream narratives and the relationship between individual dreams in Matière de Rêves are the same in both Second sous-sol and Troisième Dessous. In Second sous-sol there is, however, one important structural difference from Matière de Rêves. This concerns the internal quotations and their organisation into a mirror system. The comparative reading of Matière de Rêves is, at first glance, impossible in the case of Second sous-sol since, in the former, it depended on an organisation centred on the middle dream of the volume. Although Second sous-sol is also composed of five dreams, "Le Rêve de Vénus", "Le Rêve des pommes", "Le Rêve de la montagne noire", "Le Rêve de l'ombre" and "Le Rêve de boules et d'yeux", an examination of the central dream reveals no such reflective mirror system.<sup>1</sup> It can be seen from Table One that the first dream, "Le Rêve de Vénus", is linked with the second, "Le Rêve des pommes", and not with the last as was the case in Matière de Rêves. If, however, the reader shifts his gaze away from the centre of the middle dream to the end of the first dream, "Le Rêve de Vénus"<sup>2</sup>, then he will find exactly the same reflective organisation of the quotations as that in Matière de Rêves, inviting exactly the same comparison between the two halves of the volume and confirming that the turning-point in the volume is indeed to be found at the centre of the middle dream, "Le Rêve de la montagne noire". Why, then, does the centre of the quotation system not

coincide with the centre of the volume as it did in Matière de Rêves?

The question is linked to one of the problems experienced by M.B. in both "Le Rêve de Vénus" and "Le Rêve des pommes", namely, time. The artist associated with "Le Rêve de Vénus" is the Belgian surrealist Paul Delvaux. The action of the dream takes place in a town and the changes of scene follow a progression of Delvaux's works dating from 1938 to 1971, four of which have the word "town" in the title: La Ville endormie (1938), L'Entrée de la ville (1940), L'Aube sur la ville (1940) and La Ville inquiète (1941). Delvaux's towns abound with classical buildings and personages and it is no surprise that, on entering the town, M.B. imagines himself to be in Italy. And yet he had originally imagined the town to be Hamburg. The dream narrative contains quotations from Jules Verne's Voyage au centre de la terre the action of which begins in Hamburg. The connection between Delvaux and Verne is to be found in the person of Otto Lidenbrock, the hero of Verne's tale: "Hanté dès l'enfance par les illustrations des <<Voyages>>, le peintre belge Paul Delvaux utilise comme fréquent archétype l'énigmatique Otto Lidenbrock".<sup>3</sup> The town which M.B. enters has a double significance: on the one hand it symbolises the town of painting, on the other it is the starting point for a journey to the centre of the earth.

Initially expelled from the town of painting, M.B. returns in the form of an adolescent who has not yet attained sexual maturity. Once again the loss of sexual power can be interpreted as the inability to write. His entry into the town coincides with a disturbance in time there: "le temps n'est plus seulement ralenti, il se renverse; la nuit revient, le croissant regonfle, Islam vitrifié" (SS, 23). This reversal of time has certain consequences for some of the town's inhabitants: "Les Sabines



attendent qu'on les enlève. Eliézer a perdu Rebecca. Pyramé appelle Thisbé. Les funérailles de Phocion ont dû être interrompues" (SS, 26). These characters from classical history or myth all appear in paintings by Nicolas Poussin, the seventeenth century French artist. Certain events depicted in the paintings have not yet occurred or have been interrupted suggesting that the reversal of time is actually undoing the paintings. In M.B.'s first entry to the town a scene from a sixteenth century painting of the Fontainebleau school came alive and two women were undoing the scene (SS, 12). Before encountering Poussin's work M.B. is described as being "chez Claude Lorrain" (SS, 21). After Poussin M.B. is briefly given the names of Antoine Watteau and Raphael and even later the cold is described as "le froid préraphaélite" (SS, 38). The time reversal also causes panic among the present inhabitants of the town by bringing back an eclipse of the moon and a volcanic eruption. M.B.'s presence in the town has a destructive effect on the world of painting which is retroactive from the present day to the sixteenth century.

Despite the reversal of time in the town the actual movement of M.B. through the different periods of painting is from the sixteenth century towards the present day, suggesting a search for the re-establishment of normal temporal progression. This journey goes hand in hand with the search for Otto Lidenbrock who is M.B.'s uncle in the dream, thus identifying M.B. with Lidenbrock's nephew who accompanied the professor to the centre of the earth in Verne's work. Lidenbrock is the only person who can help M.B.: "l'oncle Otto [...] seul saura me faire descendre dans la cheminée des volcans en me donnant ainsi l'usage de mes membres" (SS, 15-16). Lidenbrock will not only help restore M.B. to his whole adult body, but will point the way to the future, in the form of the descent through the

volcano Sneffels to the centre of the earth. In the course of his search for Lidenbrock M.B. comes across the statue of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius and has the impression it is trying to help him. This proves to be a false hope: "le bras continue d'indiquer l'endroit d'où je viens, et l'illusion s'efface" (SS, 30). The search for the professor is confirmed as one for the future and not for the past.

M.B.'s journey finds him constantly caught somewhere in between the two. He is not the first to be petrified by the woman sculptor at the start of the dream and he will not be the last. He is always leaving behind his clothes for a successor, the professor's colleague Zacharie who is one step behind in the search for Lidenbrock, and inheriting others. This situation is best encapsulated when, amidst the panic in the town, the person one step ahead of M.B. is having the situation explained to him:

la Comtesse des Ombres, en boucles anglaises, décrit la situation à celui que je dois devenir, assis, méditatif, une main soutenant son menton, mon menton ..., à celui que j'étais avant la première rencontre avec cette Duchesse des Aréoles, lorsque j'étais encore tout recouvert de ce costume de velours noir râpé trop grand pour moi qu'a adopté le collègue Zacharie, trop grand pour lui qui passe précautionneusement entre ces deux moi-même, le fuyard et le paralysé. (SS, 26)

Zacharie is described as M.B.'s father and is always lagging some way behind. He, too, is an instance of M.B. who is dispersed in time, his present striving toward the future while attempting to take the past with it. In "Le Rêve de Prague" in Matière de Rêves the clothes bought by M.B. were too large, suggesting that he was as yet unprepared to tackle the world of art. In this dream, the adolescent M.B., in entering the town of art, appears to be trying to mature too quickly for his own comfort.

The beginning of the end to this confusion of time occurs when M.B.

arrives at the sleeping Venus (Vénus endormie, 1943). Venus, and the various duchesses who are dispersed instances of the goddess, is a symbol of the woman of painting who can give M.B. back the power to write. Venus reverses the process of sex change which has by now given M.B. certain feminine traits. His muscles also begin to function again but he loses these completely at the sight of a skeletal Christ being taken down from the cross (Descente de Croix, 1949). At this sight M.B. and all those around him are reduced to skeletons. The scene is an image of M.B.'s own death, the preoccupation with which is linked to his childhood: "C'est l'épave d'un retable qui me hantait pendant mes heures de catéchisme, ... l'icône d'une religion qui est passée sur notre vie comme un grand nuage" (SS, 39). M.B. is haunted not by the death of Christ but by the spectre of death itself. M.B. is afraid of the passage of time. The anxiety of the dream is therefore twofold: Butor still feels unready for the confrontation with painting; he needs more time to grow and yet time itself is rapidly passing.

The second dream, "Le Rêve des pommes", written for Jiri Kolár, takes the form of a descent to hell. In Dante's Inferno hell is composed of nine circles through which the poet is guided by Virgil. In the dream M.B. encounters nine women, is given nine objects and there are nine quotations from Baudelaire's Spleen et Idéal. These three elements divide the text into nine sections or episodes. The descent to hell is described as "descente dans un puits d'écriture" (SS, 57). Yet M.B. moves through landscapes and meets characters from well-known paintings. Many of Kolár's collages are composed of reproductions of famous paintings cut out of books, catalogues and encyclopaedias. Many also contain large amounts of words from books, newspapers etc. and signs from musical scores. The

material of the collages is, of course, paper. Thus it is that M.B. finds himself at the beginning of the dream "sous une pluie de presse" (SS, 57). The rain is so strong that it turns M.B. himself into paper:

J'en suis moi-même transpercé; mes mains sont moulées dans des gants de missel, mes jambes enrobées dans un pantalon de dictionnaire et je porte un masque de catalogue de fonderie. Je respire les bribes et les jambages; l'intérieur de mes narines se tapisse d'échantillons. Je mâche des mots. J'étouffe. (SS, 57-58)

The sheer amount of paper threatens to stifle him, suggesting that he feels submerged by the size of the body of art in existence.

In the Aeneid the passage of the hero through hell is marked by the acquisition of certain objects and the sacrifice of others. We recall the burnt cakes given to Delmont in the dream of La Modification. The objects in this dream have a similar talisman function. Each object, save the last, has to be given up to the female figure following the one who has provided it. These objects permit M.B.'s passage through the nine stages of the dream, transporting him from painting to painting. The last object to be granted is the apple of youth.

The apple of youth is the only one of the nine objects which is not made of paper: "c'est un fruit qui a rougeoyé sur l'arbre du verger d'ailleurs, du verger d'alors, du verger d'éveil" (SS, 98-99). The other objects are paper substitutes for the real talisman, substitutes given by the women, who are all Proserpine figures, to divert M.B. from his journey. At the beginning of the dream M.B. was reduced to paper and all the paintings appear as paper reproductions of the real thing. The real paintings are all stored in

museums, safely guarded from Butor, just as their paper reproductions are guarded by the women in the dream. In the Inferno the descent to hell is just that, a vertical movement lower and lower into the depths of hell. M.B.'s progress, however, is not down but across, a horizontal movement across surfaces of paper. Butor is afraid that access to the essence of painting, below its surface, will be denied him and he will remain a "paper" writer, incapable of writing "les plus beaux mots" (SS, 99) represented in the dream by the quotations from Baudelaire. To overturn the anxiety Butor must gain time to get properly to grips with painting and the apple of youth is vital for his purposes. Butor needs to delay the passage of time.

These two opening dream narratives are not alone in their concern with time. The internal quotations also betray such a preoccupation in the form of the attention paid to tense. In Matière de Rêves the verb tenses in the quotations are the same as in the dream narratives. This is not the case in Second sous-sol. The quotations from the first dream, "Le Rêve de Vénus", are put into the past tense and given the title "Rappel". Those from the other four dreams are put into the future tense and named "Annonce".<sup>4</sup> These changes in tense reflect the structure of time. The first dream that we read in Second sous-sol is, naturally enough, the first dream of the volume, "Le Rêve de Vénus". In terms of reading time this is our present. While we are reading this dream any other dream in the volume remains to be read and is therefore part of the future. The first dream to be quoted in the volume is the second dream, "Le Rêve des pommes", and it and the following three dreams are quoted in the future tense.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, by the time we begin to read the final dream, the first dream has become part of the past and so the past tense is employed.

A second series of internal quotations is used in the work which recalls the phenomenological concept of time structure already encountered in La Modification. In this concept of time structure, we remember, the rigid separation of past, present and future is rejected. By the inclusion of the second series the present is followed or preceded by a near-past and a near-future, "Souvenir" and "Anticipation"<sup>6</sup>, which bring the three instances of the temporal continuum closer together. In the case of "Le Rêve de Vénus" this gives the following time passage: present (narrative) becoming near-past ("Souvenir") becoming more distant past ("Rappel"). For the final dream we obtain: future ("Annonce") becoming near-future ("Anticipation") becoming present (narrative).

The attention paid to tense in the quotations raises the consciousness of the reader with regard to time and he becomes aware of a delaying effect inherent in the volume. Clearly, if the dream narratives were the only components of the text, then it would take us a much shorter time to read the volume. The inclusion of supplementary material makes the reading time much longer. Now, this is also true of Matière de Rêves. The emphasis in this work is, however, quite different. Although the mirror system is the same in both volumes, the quotations of Matière de Rêves are organised in such a way as to suggest the idea of mosaic or patchwork and are therefore linked to the themes of dispersal and re-assembly. We are not made aware of the temporality of the text as we are in Second sous-sol. In the case of the four dreams quoted in the future tense, the reader has already read part of the text before he reaches the beginning of the narrative. He then finds himself re-reading parts of a dream, "Le Rêve de Vénus", the narration of which has already been completed. Certain dreams pre-exist their actual narrative while another survives it. In other words, their

existence, their presence to the reader, is elongated. The time taken to read the volume is extended, the passage of time is slowed down and the end of the volume is delayed. The quotations function in exactly the same way as the parentheses and the serialisation of the Chateaubriand texts in 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde where a delay in time was seen as a prerequisite to change.

A delay in the passage of time is precisely what is granted to M.B. in the central dream, "Le Rêve de la montagne noire". In this dream M.B. finds himself at the centre of the earth which is revealed to be none other than the centre or the essence of painting. M.B. is granted a look from painting, "un clignement d'effroi" (SS, 118), as a result of a lapse in the security maintained by its guardians: "Interstice d'une nanoseconde peut-être au milieu de leur surveillance, décalage qui ne se reproduira vraisemblablement jamais plus dans les relais de leur immortelle soulerie" (SS, 119). The lapse is presented as a gap in time into which M.B. can slip. At the end of the dream we return to the ideas of delay and youth:

je te cueille enfin équilibre, sursis, spasme tendre ...  
 Dans mon dragage de ce marasme où je retombe, la vieillesse  
 me mâchonnant avec ses gloussements idiots, je distille  
 péniblement quelques gouttes d'anti-Léthé pour supporter,  
 pour absorber la face obscure, pour rogner les griffes de  
 Kronos, retrouver sa vocalise, havre de grâce. (SS, 137)

The look granted by painting is sufficient to remain in his memory and help delay the passage of time which ends in death, the end of writing. We have seen that Second sous-sol is structured around a delay in time and it is noticeable that, at the end of the work, M.B. is only just gaining access to the town of painting, just as Butor was only beginning to establish a satisfactory relationship with the artist at the end of Illustrations II. Butor needs time to obtain what he wants from painting.

During this time he must continue to write in order to ward off "death". In being granted a look by the essence of painting Butor gains enough to be able to do so and prevent his "youth" from disappearing too quickly. He cannot afford to stop writing while he studies painting and this is why part of his problems in the series is solved by writing itself. Butor had already adopted a similar solution at an earlier period in his career. The delay in time wished for in Second sous-sol is exactly the same as that called for in 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde and we can now see clearly that both the latter and Description de San Marco are the practical results of the solution. While searching for a solid base to his production at that time Butor was still able to continue writing and produce Description de San Marco and 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. The apple of "youth" was also granted at that time.

The use of the past and future tenses in the internal quotations highlights the existence of the text in time. The text is seen to exist before and after its actual narration. In Matière de Rêves we saw that Butor rejected what he regarded as his own self-assertive attitude to writing. In Second sous-sol the notion of the text as independent self-assertive centre is called into question. The displacement of the centre of the quotation system alters the status of the beginning and end of each dream. If we regard each dream as an individual text we can see that each text has its beginning in a previous text and also forms part of a subsequent text. Any one text is the expansion of a previous one and the prefiguration of a subsequent one. No one text, therefore, has an existence purely of its own. The text appears not as a centre with rigidly defined borders separating it from all other texts, but as a part of a continuum where borders overlap.



It is clear from this treatment of the internal quotations in Second sous-sol that Butor is explaining why it is so important for him to have access to external literary sources. Each text exists in a continuum of literature in which it draws on texts of the past and provides material for those of the future. No text can pretend to exist outside this continuum and be independent of texts already in existence. While each has its own individuality, it cannot view itself as a closed centre which makes statements for the first time about a given subject. The text has no right to self-assertive authority. This poses two questions. First, if the text does not exist purely on its own, where does this leave the writer? Second, is there any connection between the nature of the text as it is revealed here and the relationship between the dream narratives and the supplementary material?

In Matière de Rêves the internal quotations form not only a mirror system but are also organised into a system of repetitions. Certain of the quoted passages appear more than once, some as many as four times.<sup>7</sup> Table Four shows that the quotations from each dream occur in four separate sequences. In both "Le Rêve de l'huître" and "Le Rêve du tatouage", the first and last dreams of the volume, we find, taking into account the repetitions, a total of thirty-five quoted passages. The four sequences number respectively twenty, ten, four and one element. The composition of these sequences, however, differs radically between one dream and the other. In "Le Rêve de l'huître" the first sequence contains twenty different passages without a single repetition. The three remaining sequences contain only repetitions of passages in the first sequence. In none of the four sequences do original quotation and repetition mingle. In the three intervening dreams the composition of the sequences begins to change, repetition mingling with original quotation within individual sequences.

By the time we reach "Le Rêve du tatouage", where the numerical order is reversed due to the mirror effect, the first sequence contains one passage of original quotation, the second three new elements and one repetition, the third six new elements and four repetitions while the final sequence produces a balance of ten new elements and ten repetitions. The final sequence, therefore, contains a double combination of new and previously quoted passages in harmonious co-existence rather than rigid separation. No one element dominates the other.

The significance of the establishment of a double relationship between quotation and repeated quotation extends beyond Matière de Rêves. In the context of the quotation sequences, the repetitions appear as quotations of an original text. Yet that "original" text is itself part of what we have called supplementary material. Thus the sequences can be seen to symbolise the relationship between an original, new text and a quoted, old one and to reflect in miniature the relationship between the dream narratives and the additional external and internal sources of the supplementary material. There are, however, differences between the volumes in this respect. In Matière de Rêves no external source material is contained in the body of the dream narratives and it is possible to make a clear distinction between the latter and the supplementary material. In Second sous-sol quotations from external sources are inserted into the dream narratives as if Butor had been waiting for the permission of the writers in "Le Rêve de Prague". There they play the same basic rôle as the external sources in the supplementary material. We have already noted the cases of Jules Verne and Baudelaire in this respect. However, these quotations from external sources also delay the passage of the dream narratives in a similar fashion to that discussed above and their use

suggests that narration is not necessarily the only means of presenting the dream action.

Second sous-sol has enabled us to understand why part of the solution to Butor's problems lies in writing itself. We have also come to understand more fully the rôle of the supplementary material in the series and possess much stronger indications that there is indeed some form of evolving hierarchical relationship between this material and the dream narratives. We will not be able to make a final definition of this relationship until Quadruple Fond. In order to explore the relationship further, however, and to answer the other questions posed at the end of our discussion of Matière de Rêves we must now proceed to the third volume of the series, Troisième Dessous.

Like its predecessors, Troisième Dessous is composed of five dreams, "Le Rêve des conjurations", "Le Rêve des souffles", "Le Rêve des archéologies blanches", "Le Rêve des temps conjugués" and "Le Rêve des lichens". In this volume the external sources occupy a much larger area within the dream narratives and three of the dreams, "Le Rêve des souffles", "Le Rêve des temps conjugués" and "Le Rêve des lichens", do not actually tell a story at all. In the first two of these Butor does not appear as the subject of the dreams which are closer to being prose poems than narratives. In the two dreams which do tell a story, "Le Rêve des conjurations" and "Le Rêve des archéologies blanches", the bulk of the text is composed of external material. In the final dream, "Le Rêve des lichens", the dream narrative is principally made up of the text of an interview between Butor and the artist Bernard Saby quoted from the review L'Oeil. There are further quotations from the Taoist philosopher Tchouang and Jules Verne's Autour de la lune. The original material comprises a poem by

Butor and the actual action of the dream, which occupies a minute part of the dream narrative, is provided by a walk in the company of Jules Verne and the explorer Xenomanes. In this dream quotations from external sources do not merely complement the "action" of the dream but form an integral part of it. The dream narrative has therefore passed in the space of three volumes from the completely original to a blend of the original and the quoted, in which actual narration of a story loses its dominant position, in the same way that the quotation sequences of Matière de Rêves move from the separation of the original and the repeated to a harmonious double combination. The movement in these sequences might be said to represent the "wish" of that volume for the first three volumes of the series Matière de Rêves, a wish for a balance between original and quoted and, therefore, also for a balance between past and present.

It is in the balance of past and present and, more specifically, in the nature of that present, that the clue to the identity of the writer and the "raison d'être" of the series as a whole lies. We noted the distance between the problems outlined in Matière de Rêves and the work's date of publication. Those of Second sous-sol are closer to the present day but are clearly not contemporary. In both these works the writer was seen to be going through a period of crisis and Troisième Dessous is no different in this respect.

In "Le Rêve des conjurations" M.B. is metamorphosed into an ant on the trail of the source of an appealing odour of jam. Instead of the jam the ant finds a book containing a message from the owners of the coveted store of jam who make it clear that no harm will come to the ant provided a treaty is established between the two parties, a treaty "d'alliance précisant territoires et prérogatives" (TD, 10). On the other hand, if the

ant continues its activities severe punishment will be meted out:

si tu continues à venir en files serrées dans notre cuisine pour tremper tes pattes dans les taches de confiture chaque fois que nous tardons un peu à laver la toile cirée, si tu continues à te glisser entre les pages de nos livres et à grouiller entre nos draps quand nous les ouvrons pour dormir ... nous te massacrerons jusqu'à la dernière fourmi d'Argentine. (TD, 11-12)

The references to "taches", "toile" and "livres" suggest that the authors of the message are those to whom Butor has often looked in the search for sources for his writing, whether directly from their works or from their reproductions in books, namely, painters. They object to the surreptitious pilfering of their treasures, their store of jam, and demand an adherence to frontiers between his work and theirs. M.B.'s reaction to the message is flight and this occasions a rejection by his own kind, the ants themselves. He is no longer worthy of being an ant.

Back in human form, M.B. is abruptly transported from America to France, from the New World to the old, where the search for food continues. Inside a house, M.B. breaks through a door from the other side of which the smell of jam seems to emanate. Once again he finds a warning: "Indiscrets! Puisque vous lisez ce texte, c'est que vous êtes parvenus dans la réserve de notre réserve, c'est que vous avez forcé nos serrures, dérangé nos meubles et livres entassés" (TD, 16). The interior of the house is filled with books and records indicating a store of some kind. If we equate the old world context with Butor's career prior to his use of painting, then the store is that of literature and music which Butor disturbs and uses for his own purposes. The authors of the warning are in control of the store and do not want their authority to be questioned. Having ignored the warning and read to the end M.B. is partially absorbed into the pages: those who

try to bring literature and music out of storage and into the light will only be re-absorbed into the obscurity of the store.

M.B. is not the first to disturb the store and is put in a box with others of his kind. Even here he is not made to feel at home; "Alors le chœur des locataires indésirables bourdonne: il nous effare, il nous brûle il nous traverse il nous distille, il nous énerve il nous craquelle il nous provoque il nous exaspère" (TD, 18). The reasons for this become clear when M.B. and his companions purge the library of the Sorbonne beginning with Rabelais' Pantagruel. In view of Butor's admiration for Rabelais, M.B.'s presence at the purge seems surprising and so it proves. M.B.'s companions recognise him as a traitor to their cause, the destruction of the culture of the past. There is a place for M.B. neither in the establishment nor the anti-establishment. M.B. finds himself comprehensively rejected even to the point of being declared unsuitable for "la liste d'Aptitude à la Maîtrise de Conférences" (TD, 20).<sup>8</sup> He is rejected by his own kind, other writers, by painters, by the guardians of the store of literature and music and by those who seek the destruction of culture. This isolation is similar to that at the end of Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe; in the dream M.B. is banished by the rector for the destruction he has caused while the end of Butor's stay in the castle sees him about to set off alone for an unknown destination. We might sum up this situation by quoting from the capriccio as it is quoted later on in Troisième Dessous; "Michel Butor abandonné de tout le monde" (TD, 191).

This feeling of rejection and abandonment is compounded by a further problem made evident in "Le Rêve des souffles". The subject of the text is not Butor but the winds of the earth which are given the various names by which they are known in different parts of the world. The winds appear

as an unharnessed force, sweeping from landscape to landscape, often destructive, sometimes appeasing but never tamed. Not only are the winds the subject matter of the dream, they are also the grammatical subjects of the verbs the movement of which, accelerating or decelerating, forms the main part of the dream narrative. In this movement the human never appears as a controlling subject but always as an object at the mercy of the whims of the winds: "dressent les écharpes des noctambules, épanouissent leurs chevelures, inclinent les fumées, font vibrer les fils électriques, chatouillent les écolières grelottantes, mélangent les papiers de l'instituteur qui se presse" (TD, 57). It can also be seen from this brief passage that the subjects of the verbs, the names of the winds, are not in direct proximity to those verbs. This phenomenon is established as a norm in the text at the very beginning of the dream: "qui descendent aux vallées" (TD, 57). We are left without an identifiable subject in a text which begins with the very absence of a beginning. A similar phenomenon can be observed at the end of the dream. Commas provide the only punctuation in the text and, at the end, we find a phrase which effectively leaves the text open, having no punctuation at all: "phénix provocateurs de souffles" (TD, 101). The names of the winds appear as a series disposed along the text, their direct relation to the verbs always prevented by the use of commas: "sifflent dans les interstices des granges, foehn, battent les portes en la nuit noire" (TD, 57). This disassociative use of punctuation gives the impression of a text which the winds have literally blown through and dispersed. Not only is the human element of the subject matter at the mercy of the wind, but also the human element of the text itself, the writer. The writer's product, his text, is presented as being out of his control. Wind and text, subject matter and means of representation, have escaped the clutches of the writer.

Now, if a text produces in a reader an impression of dispersal and lack of authorial control then either that is indeed the case or the text has been carefully orchestrated to produce that effect. As we have seen, the effect of dispersal is produced by the use of devices; punctuation and the serially disposed names of the winds. The effect is orchestrated and the writer is in control of the text, just as he was in control of "L'Oeil des Sargasses" in Illustrations IV. We are, of course, dealing with the expression of an anxiety.

Butor, then, is afraid of two things at the beginning of Troisième Dessous: of rejection and isolation on the one hand and of having lost control of his writing, and therefore of reality, on the other. In view of the movement between Matière de Rêves and Second sous-sol towards the present day, logic demands that the perspective of Troisième Dessous will be the most contemporary of the three volumes. It will also be the perspective closest to the period during which the series Matière de Rêves was written and conceived. The anxieties expressed in Troisième Dessous are the anxieties of the period immediately prior to the conception and publication of Matière de Rêves. The solution will help to answer the questions we have already posed.

M.B.'s solitude is characteristic of the dreams of Matière de Rêves and Second sous-sol with three notable exceptions. In "Le Rêve de l'ombre", the fourth dream of Second sous-sol, M.B. is aided in his struggle against the judges of hell by a veritable army of ant-like climbers forming a chain in which each individual lives and breathes through his neighbour. M.B. is simply another link in a human chain which is reminiscent of the type of corporate identity taken on by the writer in "Remarques" in Illustrations III. The identity of his helpers, however, remains vague. In "Le Rêve de Prague" we saw M.B. guided and aided by other writers in



the dream narrative while the notion of belonging to a family was implied by the relationship between M.B. and his sources in the two series devoted to authors and their characters. The idea of family is made concrete in "Le Rêve de Vénus" where Otto Lidenbrock plays the rôle of M.B.'s uncle. This is to some extent prefigured in "Le Rêve du tatouage" where M.B. is identified with Jacques Paganel.

From being a part of the family of Verne's characters in these two dreams M.B. graduates to being a part of Verne's own family in "Le Rêve des lichens", the final dream of Troisième Dessous. In this dream Verne himself is M.B.'s uncle. However, the family connection extends beyond Verne to include two members more distant in time: Rabelais, in the person of Xenomanes, "le grand voyageur et traverseur des voies périlleuses" (TD, 178) of Le Quart Livre; the Taoist philosopher Tchouang. Tchouang is also an uncle and Xenomanes is a cousin. All three play a different rôle in their family relationship with M.B. Verne is the uncle "qui a été le confident de toutes mes découvertes" (TD, 180) and who also showed the family link with Xenomanes: "L'oncle Jules, grâce à qui, en grande partie, j'ai découvert ma parenté avec Xénomanes" (TD, 208). Xenomanes in turn provides the link with Tchouang since, being familiar with his language, he is able to provoke his appearances. M.B.'s rôle is confined to that of spectator and the appearances are provoked for his benefit. It is important for M.B. to be recognised by Tchouang; "Dès le sourire j'avais su qu'il reconnaissait l'appel de son neveu Xénomanes. Mais moi? Pendant longtemps je me suis demandé s'il m'identifiait, me reconnaissait" (TD, 211). When Tchouang finally speaks to M.B. he is overjoyed; "Il a éclaté d'un rire léger, puis pour la première fois il m'a parlé, d'une voix un peu chantante, c'était comme si des volutes d'encens montaient de ses syllabes et se dispersaient aux vents marins" (TD, 229-230). Tchouang confirms M.B. as a

member of the family:

<<Toi aussi, tu es mon neveu ... mais ta famille m'a oublié depuis des siècles. Ce n'est pas seulement par l'oncle Jules mais aussi par moi que tu es le cousin de Xénomanes>>. Et le visage de celui-ci était rajeuni de jubilation. (TD, 233)

Xenomanes, too, is overjoyed by Tchouang's acceptance of M.B.

The nature of the acceptance and of the family is revealed in the symbolic identities of Tchouang and Xenomanes. The latter is clearly a painter, working as he does with a paint brush in a studio. Tchouang appears either through the canvas of a painting or the pages of a book. He is like the essence of painting in "Le Rêve de la montagne noire". Xenomanes, like the real-life painter associated with the dream, Bernard Saby, is a painter of lichens. Tchouang appears through the lichens without being associated with them. He seems to originate from an unspecified region beyond the field of symbiosis associated with lichens.

In reality Tchouang was a philosopher and some idea of the spirit behind symbiosis can be gained from the quotations of his writings in the series "l'oncle Tchouang commente". The first part of the text deals with animals, the biggest and the smallest, showing that not only should they not criticise the differences between them but these differences are important for the dual perspective they afford: "Le bleu est-il la couleur naturelle du ciel, ou l'expression de la distance immense? De là-haut Lucien aperçoit peut-être vers le bas cette même couleur que nous apercevons vers le haut" (TD, 182). We can see here a plea for tolerance between the writer and the artist. Lucien is the huge phang or roc-bird who needs to gain a height of 90,000 leagues in order to go south. The small insects regard this as a ridiculous length to go to in order to get somewhere.

Everything, however, is relative:

A celui qui va dans la campagne proche, il ne faut que la provision de trois repas; il revient l'estomac encore plein. Pour trente kilomètres il faut piler assez de grain pour passer la nuit. Pour 1000 il faut de quoi se nourrir tout un mois.  
(TD, 203)

We recall M.B.'s search for food, symbolising sources, in "Le Rêve des conjurations". Butor is making an apology for the number of sources he uses. The journey he proposes is long and he needs plenty of provisions.

The most important part of Tchouang's writings concerns the perfect man: "Aussi dit-on: l'homme parfait est sans moi, l'homme inspiré est sans oeuvre, l'homme saint ne laisse pas de nom" (TD, 233). This dictum is linked to the notion of pride contained in the quotations in this dream from Gulliver's Travels. The virtuous Houyhnhnms show no trace of pride in their own qualities. It is to be found in the Yahoos and Swift makes it plain that he considers pride to be one of the worst vices:

... les Houyhnhnms qui vivent sous le gouvernement de la raison, n'éprouvent pas plus d'orgueil des bonnes qualités qu'ils possèdent que moi de ne manquer ni de bras ni de jambes ... et si je m'étends un peu sur ce sujet, c'est dans le dessin de me rendre la compagnie d'un Yahoo anglais (ou français) si possible supportable; et c'est pourquoi je supplie ceux qui ont la moindre trace de ce vice absurde de m'épargner leur vue.  
(TD, 215)

In Matière de Rêves one of Butor's faults was to regard writing as his own colony. In Second sous-sol this attitude had changed to one in which the right of the individual writer and the individual work to self-assertive independence was denied. The writings of Tchouang and Gulliver suggest that such self-assertion is a result of the sin of pride. In this dream Butor effaces himself into a family tradition. He is accepted because he no longer shows traces of pride in his attitude toward painting and artists.

The writer has become part of a continuum in which he is a moment no more and no less important than the others.

The family relationship between M.B. and Verne and Xenomanes shows that he is accepted into the tradition as a voyager. In Matière de Rêves M.B. becomes the voyager Paganel while in Second sous-sol the journey to the essence of painting was presented as a voyage to the centre of the earth. In Troisième Dessous there are three voyages, one around France, one around the world and one to the moon.

The voyage around France is contained in Butor's Veilleuse-Brûlot written in collaboration with Gregory Masurovsky. The work is comprised of quotation from the National Atlas of 1840, which enumerates the sights worthy of visit in the departments of the time, and Butor's suggestions for certain changes in geographical reality. The description of each department shows that France is built on successive layers of different civilisations:

Curiosités du département du Gard-et-Sarthe: Nîmes fondée par les Phocéens d'Ionie a conservé de nombreux témoignages de la grandeur romaine, la fontaine sans fond située près de Sablé, à quatre lieues et demie de Nîmes au-dessus d'un défilé sauvage où coule le Gardon, s'étend le superbe aqueduc appelé vulgairement le Pont du Gard, antiquités druidiques près de Foulletourte à Connercé et à Dollon, (TD, 125-126)

The movement from the bottomless fountain to the aquaduct is typical of the constant shift between depth and height in the text. This highlights the vertical aspect of the construction of reality through layers of time within the horizontal movement of the text over the surface of the country. The need for a continuation of the movement of construction is expressed by the imaginary changes Butor proposes; "Recouvrir les villes de Nîmes et du Mans d'un immense dôme pour en faire une seule serre tropicale,

observer la transformation des costumes et coutumes" (TD, 126). Butor combines areas which are geographically apart into an image of construction. The areas are integrated into a future project, just as space was integrated in Illustrations III.

A similar process of integration can be found in the "bistrot" series. This series is organised in the same way as the star series in Second sous-sol<sup>9</sup>. In that series the stars meet and produce children. The names of members of Butor's family are substituted for certain of the stars and, together with the eternal return of the stars in the sky, this creates an image of continuous rebirth through the generations, contrasting with Butor's fear of death on the level of individual time. In Troisième Dessous the names of Butor's family are again substituted for the nationalities of the people in the bistrot reinforcing the idea of a world family. One hundred and twenty-five people of different nationalities perform a varying number of actions inside the bistrot from the moment they arrive to the moment they leave. The serial variation permits different actions performed by different people to take place at the same time within each occurrence of the series:

Le Malien nous donne des nouvelles de sa femme ...  
Emmanuel fait des projets ... Le Malais part d'un grand rire ...  
Marie-Jo finit son verre ... Le Malgache se lève ... Mathilde  
salue la compagnie ... Le Liechtensteinois ferme la porte  
derrière lui. (TD, 131-132)

Each series of nationalities in the successive dreams co-exists in the bistrot in complete harmony. Each person describes his place of origin and how he came to the bistrot before making projects for the future and leaving. The past is integrated in the present of the bistrot and the future is planned. Like the journey around France in Veilleuse-Brûlot

the movement of the text as we read the series through the volume is a horizontal one through the countries of the world.

In "Le Rêve des lichens" one of the tasks of Jules Verne is to announce the chapter headings of his own work Autour de la lune. In all, the work contains twenty-three chapters but only nineteen are announced. It is clear that Butor is not contemplating a real journey to the moon. A clue to the significance of this journey can be found in Tchouang's writings in the alteration to the destination of the roc-bird, Lucien: "Par-delà les nuages, le ciel bleu au-dessus de lui, il dirige son vol vers le Sud pour atteindre la Mer de la Fécondité" (TD, 209). The moon also figures prominently in Second sous-sol which is dedicated to "les amoureux de la lune". In "Le Rêve de Vénus" there is an eclipse of the moon both in the town of painting and in the accompanying quotations from Jean-Paul's Des Leben Quintus Fixlein. The moon is absent when M.B.'s situation is at its worst. In Verne's series of Voyages Extraordinaires the heroes all set out on a voyage in search of a far-off and seemingly unattainable goal. In Autour de la lune the three companions do not quite reach the moon but fall back to earth. In the series of chapter headings Butor, however, cuts off the progression at the nineteenth chapter, leaving them still orbiting the moon. The moon is not reached but neither do the companions fall back to earth. In addition, the chapter headings are accompanied by a series of the legends from the illustrations in Verne's work which is organised in such a way that the closing element of the series is the legend from chapter twenty, "Les sondages de la <<Susquehanna>>"; "Il me semble que je les vois" (TD, 247). This provides a connection with the interview with Bernard Saby in the form of the ultimate goal of the artist: "Donc ce que tu cherches finalement c'est à réaliser par sondages une sorte de relevé du réel total, du monde dans son

globe entier ..." (TD, 247). The voyage to the moon must be continued. Associated in Tchouang's writings with fertility, the voyage to the moon is a journey to the creation of a new reality, the vertical journey of construction following the horizontal voyage of integration around the world. The idea of "voyage" contained in Verne's works organises Butor's approach to painting in both Second sous-sol and Troisième Dessous.

The identity of the writer has now been completely re-defined. The M.B. who finds a home in "Le Rêve des lichens" among artists and voyagers is quite different from the M.B. of "Le Rêve de l'huître". The violent and proud emperor of that dream has been transformed into a tolerant, self-effacing member of a tradition of writers, a blend of the past and present, in which his goals are the integration and reconstruction of reality. The crisis revealed at the beginning of Troisième Dessous has been so acute that it has led Butor to a searching re-examination of his identity in which he begins by dispersing and emptying his character in Matière de Rêves and then re-assembles and refills himself with the sources provided by America, writing and art. He solves the problems revealed in Troisième Dessous, which would appear to apply to the mid-seventies, by provoking a "delay" in time which allows him to explore the way in which he solved earlier problems which appear to relate to the mid-sixties and his initial encounters with the world of art, which allows him to continue writing and produce Matière de Rêves and Second sous-sol. This explains the appearance of these two works at a time when the anxieties present in their dreams would already have been solved in reality.<sup>10</sup> It also explains the use of humour as a distancing device.

In Matière de Rêves we noted that humour was fairly evenly spread throughout the volume. In Second sous-sol the first two dreams are more openly humorous than the others. "Le Rêve de Vénus", in particular, can make the reader laugh out loud. The panic caused in the town by M.B. is quite out of proportion, especially the devastating backward effect on the history of painting. Through all this panic stumbles the ridiculous figure of the adolescent M.B. who somehow always manages to catch a glimpse of his uncle without ever realising what is going on. In "Le Rêve des pommes" this pubescent youth becomes a sort of dirty old man surreptitiously having his way with the Proserpine figures, while the quotations from Baudelaire are marvellously out of place in what is supposed to be hell. The other three dreams are less outrageously humorous and a similar phenomenon can be observed in Troisième Dessous. In "Le Rêve des conjurations" the letters are particularly funny as is the image of M.B. as a filthy little insect sniffing around the kitchens of culture. The most sophisticated comic concept in the series is perhaps that of the lichens in the final dream, especially in the guided tour with Jules Verne where we learn the intimate details of "usnea barbata" et al which have absolutely no bearing at all on the meaning of the dream. In "Le Rêve des archéologies blanches" dream symbolism is once again parodied with the castrated buildings and the disgusting mess splattered over M.B. by the guillotine at the end of the dream. In the other two dreams of this volume humour is noticeably absent.

In Second sous-sol it is not only Butor who is mocked but the reader as well. In Matière de Rêves Butor seemed to be playing a game with the reader by tempting him to seize uniquely on the psychoanalytic interpretation of the symbols. This game is taken to greater lengths in the second volume.



A warning is given in the series "Attention piège pour ..." and traps, in fact, abound in the volume. The most carefully laid is that involving Verne's Voyage au centre de la terre.

One naturally expects the quotations from Verne's work to be of significance for the dream narrative of "Le Rêve de Vénus" and this is to a certain extent true, particularly in the case of the last quotation describing the emergence of the companions in Sicily. The real aim lies in another quotation: "Regarde, me dit-il, et regarde bien! Il faut prendre des leçons d'abîme" (SS, 43). The reference is, of course, to the nephew's fear of heights. Butor subtly perverts the quotation. If Second sous-sol is a voyage through the hell of painting for the writer there is certainly a case for saying that it is a voyage through a hell of writing for the reader. Of the three volumes its structure is the most complex with the displacement of the centre of the quotation system. It is also the volume in which most external source material is to be found in the supplementary material which makes the process of association highly complex. The quotations from Verne's work show that Butor is aware of the problems faced by the reader. This is first apparent in the rapprochement which might be made by an unkind reader between Butor and the image of Otto Lidenbrock: "Mon oncle, malheureusement, ne jouissait pas d'une extrême facilité de prononciation" (SS, 17). The real mockery of the reader comes with Arne Saknussever's book and the cryptograph:

Quel livre! Quel livre! ... Il y avait de quoi perdre la tête! Quatre idiomes dans cette phrase absurde! Quel rapport pouvait-il exister entre les mots <<glace, monsieur, colère, cruel, bois sacré, changeant, mère, arc ou mer?>> ... Je me débattais donc contre une insoluble difficulté; mon cerveau s'échauffait ...; j'étouffais; il me fallait de l'air ... Quelle fut ma surprise ... (SS, 27, 30-31)

The cryptograph has no importance for the dream whatsoever. Butor anticipates the reaction of the frustrated reader and uses Verne's work as a lesson in "mise en abyme". The lesson is continued in the patterns on the wings of the butterflies of "Le Rêve des pommes" which reflect the structure of the volume (SS, 79). Butor seems to want to make the reader suffer as much as he does, albeit in a playful sort of way.

The notion of suffering provides the key to the humour directed at Butor himself. We have already mentioned in the preceding chapter Butor's claim that each of his works has been snatched from the jaws of a monster. In the same interview he goes even further:

J'ai toujours travaillé dans le risque de la folie. D'abord parce que tout ce que je fais, comme ce que fait tout artiste digne de ce nom, est en résistance contre la folie générale. Et d'autre part parce que cette folie générale (de nos gouvernants, de tout ce qui a pouvoir) risque de resurgir atrocement contre celui qui la dénonce, risque de s'incarner en lui comme une tumeur qui le dévore.<sup>11</sup>

He then gives his views on humour:

Le rire est une défense. C'est d'abord le rictus animal de l'attaque, de l'intimidation, le retroussement des babines. Le bonheur du rire, le plaisir du rire en commun, vient de la conscience d'une menace écartée, c'est la détente, la comédie, ou le drame satyrique après la tragédie; on peut souffler. Il y a donc d'abord perception d'un danger: plus sérieux celui-ci, plus éclatant le rire qui manifeste que nous pouvons néanmoins vivre, qui dit que nous sommes armés, que nous pouvons utiliser cette menace. Celui qui ne rit pas sera la proie des loups.<sup>12</sup>

Humour is a defence against attack and its use proof of survival. In the dreams M.B. is constantly under attack from all sides, including his own writing which, in Matière de Rêves, seems to have turned against him. As a general rule, the opening dream in each volume tends to be more overtly humorous than the others, although in Matière de Rêves this is perhaps a

matter for personal taste. The relatively even spread of humour in this work is explained by the distance in time between the problems of that period and the beginning of the writing of the series. The problems have been largely solved already and the feeling of hell which comes over very strongly in Second sous-sol is absent in Matière de Rêves. The opening dreams deal with the fundamental problem of each volume; the degree of humour is a function of the degree of suffering involved.

Defence can also be turned into attack as the "bande-annonce" of Troisième Dessous implies; "Un rire exterminateur". Butor never misses an opportunity to ridicule those whom he feels are against him, what we might term the "cultural authorities". Whether it be the authority which considers him unsuitable for a lecturing post in France, the academicians of Matière de Rêves, or the "culture officielle" which dictates the rigid separation of writing and painting, for whose representative Butor provides "une méticuleuse petite bombe" (SS, 125) in Rien à Déclarer, all feel the weight of Butor's pointed wit. Humour is part of a strategy of defence and attack which enables Butor to distance himself from very real problems and ensure his own survival.

From the point of view of Troisième Dessous Butor's ultimate survival is ensured by the writing of the series. But what is it that Butor has written? Is it another autobiographical capriccio commissioned by others and written principally for the author's own pleasure? Our discussion of the identity of the writer with his aims of integration and construction has already taken us beyond the boundaries of Butor's personal problems as a writer. Can we see in this a more universal aspect to the series than is immediately apparent?

In the interview with Le Sidaner mentioned above Butor characterises his writing as "en résistance contre la folie générale". This generalised madness is reminiscent of the view of the world contained in Illustrations III. In that work, too, the theme of integration played an important part. At the end of "Remarques" the writer has become "berger d'espaces" and "constructeur de regards" (IIII, 112). He has also taken on a corporate identity. The integration of world space and the construction of a way in which the world can truly be perceived has one aim: the provision of a kind of ark for the survivors of world disaster, a disaster generalised in time and space: "intégrer les billes venue d'autrefois ou d'ailleurs ... intégrer les foules venues d'aujourd'hui et d'ici, trahies par l'histoire" (IIII, 112). We recall that, at the end of "Le Rêve de l'huître", M.B. regained his human form in an ark, becoming a Noah figure, Noah who was himself the new man, the new Adam. In Illustrations III the image most commonly used to express disaster is shipwreck and the penitents of the last letter of "Courrier d'Images" are described as: "les rescapés de la catastrophe interminable, du naufrage, de la dérive" (IIII, 155). They are the survivors of a flood of disaster. In "Le Rêve de l'huître" M.B.'s identity was dispersed first of all in the sea. Delaporte's penitents wander aimlessly in a world in confusion which seems to have lost its ability to progress and are surrounded by the decay and chaos of "la guerre encore et toujours" (IIII, 154).

Chaos and dispersal were the effects deliberately orchestrated in "Le Rêve des souffles". The solution to the writer's lack of control over his writing and over reality is contained in the fourth dream of Troisième Dessous, "Le Rêve des temps conjugués", dedicated to Camille Bryen. Bryen was both painter and poet and one of Butor's closest friends. It is not

surprising that he should dedicate to Bryen a dream in which writing and painting appear in close harmony organised by a combination of the powers of language and music. As the title of the dream implies, the tenses of the French language play a key rôle. Fourteen tenses are used altogether, separated into two series of seven members each, the present occurring in both.<sup>13</sup> After an initial triple statement of series A, the two series alternate throughout the dream. In the first statement of each series there are seven elements, each tense occurring once. Gradually the number of successive occurrences of each tense is multiplied, reaching a height of seventeen past subjunctives in series B with a total of eighty-one elements. The reasons for this phenomenon of expansion are linked to the series of verbs used in the dream. There are sixteen verbs in all but we do not encounter them all straightaway.

In the first statement of series A only one verb, "peindre", is present. In the second statement it is joined by "écrire", while in the third the two verbs appear with derivatives such as "dépeindre" or "récrire". In the first statement of series B, which is shortened, only two derivatives appear. The fourth statement of series A is doubled, introducing two new verbs, "lire" and "dialoguer", with their derivatives. The second statement of series B is also shortened and contains only derivatives of the four verbs. The next two statements of both series introduce seven new verbs, while each contains a tense which should be in the other.

Up to this point we have an impression of confusion: the series are having difficulty establishing themselves. The reasons for this are connected with speed. At the very beginning of the dream the rhythm is extremely fast: "Je peins ce que j'ai peint en pensant à ce que je peindrais quand j'aurais peint ce que je viens de peindre en me souvenant de ce que j'avais peint en imaginant ce que je vais peindre" (TD, 141). The

text rushes along in the same way as that of "Le Rêve des souffles". The lack of punctuation, the predominance of verbs and the abrupt changes of tense all contribute to the impression that, once again, the text is out of control. Gradually elements are introduced which stem the flow to a certain extent: the days of the week, the months and seasons of the year, adverbs and adjectives describing the weather on particular days. The rhythm remains quick, however:

en rêvant à ce que je regarderai rapidement du jeudi ou samedi  
superbe en désirant que tu rêves lentement du dimanche au mardi  
voluptueux ce que vous veniez de désirer rapidement du mercredi  
au vendredi délicieux. (TD, 162)

In the sixth statement of series A and the fourth of series B the verb series stabilises into a logical order in which the full sixteen members of the series gradually appear. This stabilisation begins to take place immediately after the phrase "tandis que nous allions revenir plus lentement" (TD, 162). From this point on, the text is slowed down to a much greater degree by a process of multiplication. In both extracts quoted above, the change from one verb to another is accompanied by an immediate change in tense. This no longer happens and the effect can immediately be felt:

tandis que nous allions revenir plus lentement ils effacent  
peignant repeignant lundi ce que vous avez médité furieusement  
et qu'ils ont ruminé peint mardi repeint en pensant à ce que  
nous dialoguerions superbement et que vous effaceriez rumineriez  
mercredi peindriez l'automne repeindriez en cachette et quand  
nous aurions médité effacé jeudi ruminé peint l'hiver repeint  
ce que je viens d'écrire dans l'ombre. (TD, 162)

By putting different verbs in the same tense, the duration of the tense is much longer. This physically expands the text, allowing for the insertion of further braking elements, such as "en cachette" and "dans l'ombre". It

also expands the time of the text, making it longer and therefore slower to read. We are once again confronted with the elongation of time, the phenomenon of delay.

In Second sous-sol delay enabled Butor to continue writing even although he did not have the store of painting in his possession. We can see in the two parts of this text so far two stages of Butor's work in the realm of painting. The first is a preliminary one, containing at the same time tentative statement, headlong rush and confusion. The second stage is more accomplished with the establishment of order and a delay in the passage of time. The revelation of the full series of verbs can be considered as the description of Butor's progress toward painting: "venir charmer désirer rêver regarder imaginer se souvenir penser écrire lire dialoguer méditer effacer ruminer peindre repeindre". We should note that writing appears not at the end of the series but at the beginning of the second half.

A third division in the text can be discerned in the seventh statement of series A where a further refinement of the organisation occurs. In the second part the change from one tense to another does not always coincide with the beginning of a new statement of the verb series. Certain verbs appear twice in succession in close proximity as if the series needed an extra impetus to get back on the right course: "ruminer au printemps peindre l'hiver et repeindre avant qu'ils ne vinssent convulsivement et que tu ne vinsses charmer désirer jeudi et vendredi rêver" (TD, 172). This results in jumps in the numerical progression of the verb series.<sup>14</sup> In the third part of the text no such repetition of verbs occurs so that each tense change coincides exactly with the beginning and end of each successive statement of the verb series. They are seen to progress hand in hand and the numerical progression is regular with one new member added each time to

the verb series. By the end of the text the verb series in statement seven of series A has progressed only as far as nine members and the first seven verbs of the series are absent from this third part of the text. This implies that the stages they represent are no longer necessary for the writer and that a new series has been formed in which the progress toward painting begins with thought and writing and not meeting and desire. No effort of memory is required in the new series, suggesting a firmer, more immediate grasp of the situation. The chaos of the first part of the text has been overcome by a process of expansion in which the power of language to organise is aided and abetted by serial variation.

In "Le Rêve des pommes" of Second sous-sol the central object-talisman given to M.B. is a violin. His penetration of the Proserpine figures is always preceded by the collapse of a series of things associated with either the idea of obstacle or that of prison: "musées, bibliothèques, donjons, législations, frontières, impossibilités". The collapse of these obstacles to his progress toward painting is always followed by "coups de canon". The musical association of this word reminds us of Joshua knocking down the walls of Jericho by means of music. The violin, "taillé dans la matière de mes rêves désespérés de musique" (SS, 71), takes M.B. to a town which previously he could not identify. The journey along "un Nil de notes" (SS, 71) in an Egyptian barque is accompanied by the passage of the sun. Like Jean Ralon in Passage de Milan M.B. is in the boat of the sun god Ra. Unlike Ralon he emerges from the realm of the dead and reaches the town. The violin is taken from him before he can explore the town but it is clearly that of painting. The wish expressed here shows that music is the talisman which will lead to the overthrow of Proserpine and permit access to the world of painting. "Le Rêve des temps conjugués" demonstrates in concrete fashion that the key aspect of music in this respect is its



capacity for variation as encompassed in modern serial composition.

In "Le Rêve des temps conjugués" order is imposed on chaos by returning to the statements of the series and going over them again in a slower way. They are repeated in an expanded variation. It is a feature of Butor's writing that he very often says much the same thing in a completely different way: the form of the vehicle of expression is changed. In L'Emploi du Temps the problems encountered by Jacques Revel were solved by a re-organisation of his past in Bleston. The perspective of Troisième Dessous shows us that Butor began the writing of the series Matière de Rêves in order to solve two problems by which he was beset at the time: a feeling of isolation and a loss of control over his writing. The first problem is solved by a complete re-examination of his identity as writer starting from his break with the novel form. The second problem is solved by the way in which the series is written.

Butor has written, and continues to write, a vast amount of short texts, both prose and poetry, of extremely varied style and tone which he later incorporates into longer collections like the works of the Illustrations series. It is not hard to imagine that the very amount and variety of such works could lead to doubts about his control over his writing.<sup>15</sup> In the three volumes under discussion Butor includes many of his own shorter works in both the supplementary material and the dream narratives. Together with the various series, internal quotations and quotations from other writers, these create a variety of intertextual relationships which complement the dream narratives and add considerably to their significance. In the interview of "Le Rêve des lichens" Bernard Saby extends his notion of variations within one lichen to the relationship between different lichens:

En prenant deux objets que j'ai déjà élevés, je cherche comment je peux varier leurs rapports: à côté l'un de l'autre, l'un devant l'autre, l'un dans l'autre, l'un dominant l'autre, l'un fuyant l'autre, l'un devenant l'autre, l'un donnant naissance à l'autre. (TD, 266)

There is a clear parallel between this technique and Butor's method of intertextual composition. In fact, Butor goes further than Saby by putting into relationship more than two "objects" at a given time. A good example of this technique can be seen in the use of quotations from Chateaubriand's Atala in Matière de Rêves. Not only do the quotations broaden the nature of M.B.'s situation in the dream narrative of "Le Rêve de l'huître", they are also the catalyst for the appearance of Blake's America in the supplementary material which takes us directly to the central problem of the writer's relationship with his own writing in the dream narrative of "Le Rêve du déménagement". All the different texts and types of text have a rôle to play, thus making of each volume a concrete example of the continuum of literature.

Nothing could be further from the style of the dream narratives in which they appear than the prophetic writing of Blake's America in Matière de Rêves or the childlike fantasy of Butor's own Les Petits Miroirs in Troisième Dessous. Yet they exist harmoniously in the texts by virtue of the fact that they are given a function which can be discovered by the reader. We have already stated that the initial impression of the reader of the series was one of chaos and confusion. We have also seen that the view of the world expressed in Illustrations III was equally one of chaos. Now, it is clear from our analysis of the three volumes that, both individually and as a unit, they are not at all chaotic but form an extremely coherent whole. We were able to discover this as a result of the method of reading we were obliged to employ. We dismantled the

apparently chaotic text and re-assembled it into an ordered whole. Our work was one of integration and imposition of order. In this respect we have reproduced the work of the writer. In these three volumes Butor creates order out of chaos. In the face of problems besetting him in the seventies, Butor returns to the period immediately following his abandonment of the novel form, to the first crisis in his career, and analyses his identity from then to the present. He uses the writing of these three volumes as a mirror of ink, "miroir noir", in which he is revealed to himself. Having analysed his identity as writer as fragmented and his writing as uncontrolled and chaotic, he re-organises the material of both into an ordered whole. He does not, however, stop there. He presents the material in an apparently chaotic way with the result that the reader himself experiences chaos and adopts the very same solution as Butor himself. Butor provides the reader with an example of a personal world in disarray which reflects his analysis of the state of external reality. He takes the reader on a voyage of integration and organisation around a personal world and proposes to him a method of solving the problems of the external world. It can readily be seen that the notion of collage, first encountered in Illustrations II, is once again very much to the fore in this solution. In these volumes, however, the wider variety of texts in "dialogue", the wider variety of tone and style, creates a stronger impression of the possibility of constructing an ordered whole from a range of disparate and different constituent parts. The separation of the dreams into paragraphs leads to a predominance in visual terms of the rectangular block and enables the idea of construction to come across more solidly and forcefully. The series is both autobiographical and exemplary, its commitment reaching out to the re-construction of reality. Its value to the reader is as great as any of Butor's previous works.

Writing, then, in the series is creation from chaos. The writer has become like Noah, sheltering in the ark of his work a wide variety of different texts which enrich the volumes with their mixture of styles and tones. Each volume resembles a patchwork or mosaic to which every part of the text, narrative or external source, brings its own particular colour. In painting terms we might describe the text as being composed of different blocks of colour, some lighter, some darker, which are traversed by lines represented by the various series. The subject, the "je", of "Le Rêve des temps conjugués" is both writer and painter and we might see in Butor's successful arrangement of textual colours in the series one of the personal aims of his collaboration with artists. In these three volumes Butor writes like a painter.

Our journey from Matière de Rêves to Troisième Dessous has taken us beyond Freud and psychoanalysis but not, perhaps, beyond the dream itself. Butor has used the dream as a medium for invention. He has solved his own writing problems and at the same time given an example of how the wider problems of a reality in chaos might be tackled. The wish contained in the three volumes is for the re-organisation and re-construction of reality, a wish which goes beyond the frontiers of the individual: "le rêve est irréductible activité dans laquelle les frontières mêmes du sujet individuel se dissolvent. Le rêve est aussi <<commun>> que la veille".<sup>15</sup> Butor is not yet finished with the dream and the process of dissolution is taken further in Quadruple Fond in which we will cross yet another frontier and find the answer to our questions concerning the relationship between the dream narrative and the supplementary material.

TABLE ONESECOND SOUS-SOL - INTERNAL QUOTATION SYSTEM

In this table we posit the centre of the internal quotation system as being at the centre of the middle dream, "Le Rêve de la montagne noire", as it was in Matière de Rêves. Such a hypothesis, however, does not reveal the same reflective system which we saw in the first volume. There are no links between dreams one and five, two and four or the two halves of dream three and the whole pattern appears very unbalanced. As Table Two will demonstrate, the hypothesis is incorrect.

<u>FIRST HALF</u>		<u>SECOND HALF</u>	
<u>Dream and Paragraph Number</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Dream and Paragraph Number</u>
<u>Vénus</u> 1	Pommes 3	Vénus 17	<u>Yeux</u> 21
2-3	Pommes 3	Vénus 14	20
4	Pommes 5	Vénus 12	17-19
5	Pommes 7	Vénus 11	16
6-7	Pommes 10	Vénus 8	14-15
8-10	Pommes 12	Vénus 6	11-13
10	Pommes 16	Vénus 5	11-13
12-13	Montagne 5	Vénus 3	8-9
14-16	Montagne 8	Vénus 2	5-7
17-20	Montagne 11	Vénus 1	1-4
<u>Pommes</u> 1-2	Montagne 11	Yeux 22	<u>Ombre</u> 18-20
3-4	Montagne 15	Yeux 21	15-17
5-6	Montagne 19	Yeux 20	13-14
7-9	Ombre 5	Yeux 17	10-12
10-11	Ombre 8	Yeux 16	8-9
12-15	Ombre 10	Yeux 14	5-7
16-20	Ombre 13	Yeux 11	1-4
<u>Montagne</u> 1-4	Ombre 15	Yeux 10	<u>Montagne</u> 19-22
8-10	Ombre 18	Yeux 8	15-18
11-14	Ombre 21	Yeux 5	11-14

TABLE TWO

SECOND SOUS-SOL - INTERNAL QUOTATION SYSTEM

This table shows that the centre of the internal quotation system has been displaced from the centre of the middle dream to a point between the end of the first dream and the beginning of the second dream. This displacement produces exactly the same reflective organisation as in Matière de Rêves, correspondances being produced between dreams one and five, two and four and the two halves of dream three. In this volume there is no framework system. The significance of the titles will be dealt with on pp 427-428

<u>FIRST HALF</u>			<u>SECOND HALF</u>		
<u>Dream and Paragraph Number</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dream and Paragraph Number</u>
<u>Yeux</u> 1-4	Rappel	Vénus 1	Yeux 22	Annonce	<u>Ombre</u> 19-20
5-7		Vénus 2	Yeux 21		15-17
8-9		Vénus 3	Yeux 20		13-14
11-13		Vénus 5	Yeux 17		10-12
11-13		Vénus 6	Yeux 16		8-9
14-15		Vénus 8	Yeux 14		5-7
16		Vénus 11	Yeux 11		1-4
17-19		Vénus 12	Yeux 10		<u>Montagne</u> 19-22
20		Vénus 14	Yeux 8		15-18
21		Vénus 17	Yeux 5		11-14
<u>Vénus</u> 1	Annonce	Pommes 3	Ombre 21	Annonce	<u>Montagne</u> 11-14
2-3		Pommes 3	Ombre 18		8-10
4		Pommes 5	Ombre 15		1-4
5		Pommes 7	Ombre 13		<u>Pommes</u> 16-20
6-7		Pommes 10	Ombre 10		12-15
8-10		Pommes 12	Ombre 8		10-11
10		Pommes 16	Ombre 5		7-9
<u>Vénus</u> 12-13		Montagne 5	Montagne 19	Annonce	<u>Pommes</u> 5-6
14-16		Montagne 8	Montagne 15		3-4
17-20		Montagne 11	Montagne 11		1-2

TABLE THREE  
SOUVENIR AND ANTICIPATION

This table lists the constituent parts of a second series of internal quotations which introduces an additional element to the temporality of the text. "Souvenir" quotes passages we have just read while "Anticipation" quotes passages we are just about to read.

<u>Dream and paragraph number</u>		<u>Title</u>	<u>Content</u>	
<u>Vénus</u>	8-10	Souvenir	Vénus	3
	14-16		Vénus	6
	17-20		Vénus	8
	17-20		Vénus	12
<u>Pommes</u>	7-9		Vénus	14
	12-15		Vénus	17
	16-20		Vénus	21
	16-20	Souvenir	Pommes	7
<u>Montagne</u>	1-4		Pommes	12
	1-4		Pommes	16
	8-10		Pommes	21
	11-14	Souvenir	Montagne	5
	11-14	Anticipation	Montagne	19
	15-18		Montagne	24
	19-22	Anticipation	Ombre	8
<u>Ombre</u>	1-4		Ombre	13
	5-7	Anticipation	Yeux	5
	10-12		Yeux	8
<u>Yeux</u>	1-4		Yeux	10
	1-4		Yeux	11
	5-7		Yeux	16
	11-13		Yeux	17

TABLE FOURMATIÈRE DE RÊVES - QUOTATION REPETITION SYSTEM

In this table we list for each dream the four separate and successive sequences of quoted passages from that dream which we present in columns. As always, numbers refer to the paragraphs of each dream. Numbers in upper case represent passages of original quotation, that is, the first occurrence in the system of a particular paragraph. Numbers in lower case represent the repetitions of that paragraph. Thus in the first column of "Le Rêve de l'huître" all numbers are in upper case since the sequence contains no repetitions. At the bottom of each column we provide the totals of original and repeated quotations and the grand total. In this way we can follow the movement of the system toward a balance of original and repeated quotation in the final column of "Le Rêve du tatouage".

Le Rêve de l'huître

	<u>Sequence One</u>	<u>Sequence Two</u>	<u>Sequence Three</u>	<u>Sequence Four</u>
<u>Paragraph</u>	ONE			
	TWO	two		
	THREE			
	FOUR	four	four	
	FIVE	five		
	SIX			
	SEVEN	seven	seven	seven
	EIGHT	eight	eight	
	NINE	nine		
	TEN			
	ELEVEN			
	TWELVE	twelve		
	THIRTEEN			
	FOURTEEN	fourteen	fourteen	
	FIFTEEN	fifteen		
	SIXTEEN			
	EIGHTEEN			
	NINETEEN	nineteen		
	TWENTY			
	TWENTY-TWO			
Original Quotation:	20	0	0	0
Repeated Quotation:	0	10	4	1
Grand Total:	20	10	4	1 = 35



Le Rêve de l'amonite

	<u>Sequence One</u>	<u>Sequence Two</u>	<u>Sequence Three</u>	<u>Sequence Four</u>
<u>Paragraph</u>		ONE		
		TWO	two	
		THREE		
		FOUR	four	four
		FIVE	five	
		SIX		
	NINE			
	TEN	ten		
	ELEVEN	eleven	eleven	
		TWELVE	twelve	
	FIFTEEN	fifteen		
	NINETEEN			
Original Quotation:	5	7	0	0
Repeated Quotation:	0	3	5	1
Grand Total:	5	10	5	1 = 21

Le Rêve du déménagement

<u>Paragraph</u>	<u>Sequence One</u>	<u>Sequence Two</u>	<u>Sequence Three</u>	<u>Sequence Four</u>
			ONE	
			TWO	two
			THREE	
			FOUR	
		SIX	six	
		TEN	ten	
		THIRTEEN		
		fourteen		
	FOURTEEN	FIFTEEN		
Original Quotation:	1	4	4	0
Repeated Quotation:	0	1	2	1
Grand Total:	1	5	6	1 = 13

Le Rêve de Prague

	<u>Sequence One</u>	<u>Sequence Two</u>	<u>Sequence Three</u>	<u>Sequence Four</u>
<u>Paragraph</u>				ONE
			FIVE	five
		NINE	EIGHT nine	nine TEN
	FIFTEEN	FOURTEEN fifteen	THIRTEEN fourteen fifteen SIXTEEN seventeen EIGHTEEN	
Original Quotation:	1	3	5	2
Repeated Quotation:	0	1	4	2
Grand Total:	1	4	9	4 = 18

Le Rêve du tatouage

<u>Paragraph</u>	<u>Sequence One</u>	<u>Sequence Two</u>	<u>Sequence Three</u>	<u>Sequence Four</u>
				THREE
			SIX	FIVE six SEVEN
		ELEVEN	TEN eleven THIRTEEN	NINE ten eleven TWELVE thirteen FOURTEEN
	NINETEEN	EIGHTEEN nineteen	SEVENTEEN eighteen nineteen	SIXTEEN seventeen eighteen nineteen TWENTY twenty-one twenty-two TWENTY-THREE twenty-four TWENTY-FIVE
		TWENTY-TWO	TWENTY-ONE twenty-two TWENTY-FOUR	
Original Quotation:	1	3	6	10
Repeated Quotation:	0	1	4	10
Grand Total:	1	4	10	20 = 35

SECOND SOUS-SOL - STAR SERIES

The star series is extremely long and we feel that an adequate insight into the working of the series can be gained if we only reproduce here that part which appears in "Le Rêve de Vénus". Below the names of the constellations we include the card suit to which each belongs. There are four types of card suit: the standard playing card suits, tarot suits, suits from Breton's surrealist card game and suits invented by Butor. The number 1 represents an activity in which the constellation replaces the subject of sentences from the first paragraph of the dream narrative, a type of quotation from the dream narrative. A vertical reading of the table shows the activities accomplished by each constellation. A horizontal reading provides the content of each sequence of the series. Thus the very first sequence contains only "Naissance d'Andromède". Certain of the activities have been heavily abbreviated, only the key word or words being included.

Andromède (Pique)	La Pompe (Coeur)	Le Martinet (Carreau)	Le Verseau (Trèfle)	L'Aigle (Epées)	L'Autel (Coupes)	Le Bélier (Deniers)	Le Cocher (Bâtons)	Le Bouvier (Aventures)	Le Ciseau (Délices)	La Girafe (Charmes)	Le Cancer (Ruses)	Les Chiens de Chasse (Révolutions)	Le Grand Chien (Amours)	Le Petit Chien (Connaissances)	Capricorne (Rêves)	Le Navire (Roues)	Cassiopée (Flammes)
1. Naissance																	
2. Lever	Naissance																
3. Air	Lever	Naissance															
4. 1	Air	Lever	Naissance														
5. Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance													
6. Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance												
7. Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance											
8. Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance										
9. Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance									
10. Récite	Me confie																
11. Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance							
12. Disparition	Coucher	Récite															
	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance					
		Disparition	Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance		
			Disparition	Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
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				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
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				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
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				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
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				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
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				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite	Me confie	Le bébé	Exaltation	Pose	Rencontre	1	Air	Lever	Naissance	
				Coucher	Disparition	Coucher	Récite										

TABLE SIX

TROISIEME DESSOUS - NATIONALITIES SERIES

Once again we reproduce only one version of the series, that taken from "Le Rêve des temps conjugués". The vertical reading again provides the activities performed and the horizontal the content of each sequence. Numbers refer to the quoted paragraphs of the dream in which a member of the series appears as the subject. We have underlined those instances where an activity is replaced by quotations from dreams of Matière de Rêves or Second Sous-sol and from Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe. The nationalities appear in reverse alphabetical order and we have included in their correct alphabetical position those nationalities which actually appear in a coda to the statement, that is after the other nationalities in the text. This creates a phenomenon of doubling in our tabulation.

<u>Vaticanaïis</u>	<u>Sanmarinote</u>	<u>Ruandais</u>	<u>Roumain</u>	<u>Rhodésien</u>	<u>Portugais</u>	<u>Polonais</u>	<u>Philippin</u>	<u>Péruvien</u>	<u>Hollandais</u> (Pays-Bas)	<u>Paraguayen</u>	<u>Panaméen</u>	<u>Pakistanaïis</u>	<u>Ougandais</u>	<u>Néo-Zélandais</u>	<u>Norvégien</u>	<u>Nigérianais</u>	<u>Nigérien</u>	<u>Nicaraguaïis</u>	<u>Népalais</u>	<u>Mongol</u>	<u>Monégasque</u>	<u>Mexicain</u>	<u>Mauritanien</u>
	CODA		CODA		CODA		CODA		CODA		CODA		CODA										
s'installe se fair servir drapeau village voyage parle décrit raconte	drapeau village voyage  décrit raconte  17	drapeau village voyage  décrit raconte repris 17	<u>Vénus</u> voyage parle  raconte repris va saluer	village voyage parle  raconte repris va saluer	voyage parle décrit  repris 17 nouvelles	voyage parle décrit  repris 17 nouvelles	parle <u>Huitre</u> raconte  17 va saluer	parle décrit <u>Portrait</u>  15 va saluer	écrit raconte repris  va saluer nouvelles  écrite	écrit raconte repris  va saluer nouvelles  écrite	raconte repris <u>Portrait</u>  10 projets	raconte repris 10  <u>Vénus</u> projets	repris 8 va saluer projets écrite se lève	repris 5 va saluer projets écrite se lève	1 va saluer nouvelles projets écrite se lève	va saluer nouvelles projets écrite se lève	nouvelles projets écrite finit se lève	projets écrite finit se lève	écrite finit se lève	finit se lève salue ferme	se lève salue ferme	salue ferme	ferme
17 va saluer nouvelles projets  finit se lève salue ferme	nouvelles projets  finit salue	nouvelles projets écrite finit salue	projets écrite se lève ferme	projets écrite se lève ferme	projets finit salue	écrite finit salue	finit se lève ferme	finit se lève ferme	se lève salue	se lève salue	salue ferme	salue ferme	projets écrite se lève ferme	projets écrite se lève ferme	écrite finit se lève salue ferme	va saluer nouvelles projets écrite se lève	nouvelles projets écrite finit se lève	projets écrite finit se lève	écrite finit se lève	finit se lève salue ferme	se lève salue ferme	salue ferme	ferme



FOOTNOTES

1. See Table One.
2. See Table Two.
3. François Riviere, Jules Verne: Images d'un mythe, Henri Veyrier, 1978, p. 89.
4. See Table Two.
5. We emphasise these two words since clearly dreams two, three and four have also become past in our sense by the time we begin dream five.
6. See Table Three.
7. See Table Four.
8. This actually happened to Butor.
9. See Tables Five and Six.
10. Again we must emphasise that these conclusions must remain hypothetical.
11. Jean-Marie Le Sidaner, Michel Butor: voyageur à la roue, Encre Éditions, 1979, p. 54.
12. Le Sidaner, pp. 58-59.
13. See Table Seven.
14. The jump in this case is from fourteen to sixteen elements. See Table Seven.



15. Compare with Butor's comments on the "masse de matériaux" in his conversation with Le Sidaner; Le Sidaner, p. 60.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### Quadruple Fond: The New World and Humility in Action

In our discussion of Matière de Rêves we were able to make a clear distinction between what we termed the dream narrative and the supplementary material. The dream narrative of each dream comprised an original text with an independent story-line. This material was separated into paragraphs or blocks which lent to this part of the text an appearance of solidity and order. The text seemed to dissolve into chaos only at the moment when this dream narrative gave way to supplementary material which consisted of various types of series and quotations, fragmented into small parts. We had to extract from their context the various constituent parts of the supplementary material and re-assemble them. In Second sous-sol supplementary material began to appear within the dream narratives themselves and by the end of Troisième Dessous the dream narrative was composed of a balanced combination of original and quoted material.

The extension of this process in Quadruple Fond presents us with the first significant departure from the composition of the three earlier volumes. The dream narratives of the five dreams of Quadruple Fond, "Le Rêve d'Irénée", "Le Rêve de Jacques", "Le Rêve de Klaus", "Le Rêve de Léon" and "Le Rêve de Marcel", are composed of scenes from various versions of the opera Votre Faust<sup>1</sup> written in collaboration, not with an artist, but with the composer Henri Pousseur. Each dream narrative is a quotation of part of an already existing text and forms part of one single

story-line. The material which comprises the "dream narrative" thus comes into the category of what we called "supplementary material" in the earlier volumes.

The distinction between the two categories is further obscured by the way in which the quoted material from Votre Faust is presented. The first dream of the volume, "Le Rêve d'Irénée", contains two movements: a forward movement through scenes A, B and C of the second part of the opera; a reverse movement through scenes 4A, 4, 3, 2 and 1 of the first part of the opera. These two movements run concurrently, with the result that we do not read one scene in its totality followed by another, but rather the fragmented parts of each scene. The solidity of each individual scene is exploded into small parts. It is as if one scene dissolved into another, giving to the "dream narrative" a liquid character.

As in the supplementary material of the earlier volumes, however, the dissolution or chaos of the text is not complete. The fragments of scene are separated from each other either by extracts from the "bande magnétique" of Votre Faust, noises characteristic of a particular scene, or a combination of both. This separation enables the reader to carry out the very same work which was necessary in the supplementary material of the earlier volumes, namely the identification of the constituent parts and their re-assembly. The following extract from "Le Rêve d'Irénée" contains one fragment each from part one, scene 4A, part two, scene A and part one, scene 4, separated in the manner described above. To emphasise the divisions we have inserted lines into the extract:

Dans la chambre Ernest Edgar: <<Elle avait l'air de fort méchante humeur. Je crois qu'elle est jalouse de votre cantatrice. - Nous étions pourtant convenus.. - Laissez passer ce petit orage ...>>|

Murmures de fontaines. Il faut que vous sortiez mon garçon c'est une foire fort singulière. | Dorothée se penche: <<Ne vous étonnez pas, c'est la soeur de Nelly. - Elle ne lui ressemble guère.>> | Chocs de verrerie. Certaines de ses boutiques de ses attractions sont très anciennes il y aura là pour vous quantité de choses à glaner. | <<A propos, où en êtes-vous, demande le Directeur du Théâtre des Arts dans ma chambre, je ne veux certes pas vous bousculer. Vous avez été, je crois, assez dérangé ces temps-ci...>> (QF, 12)

Rapid identification of scene is facilitated by the adoption of a technique already used in Degrés. Phrases such as, "dans ma chambre", "Dorothée se penche", "à l'hôpital", "en février dans le jardin d'hiver de la Volière", identify the scene just as dates, lesson content etc., identified the various parts of Degrés.<sup>2</sup>

The work of separation, identification and re-assembly expected of the reader in the "dream narrative" of Quadruple Fond is also the work expected of him in the major part of the supplementary material of which there are two kinds. The first comprises three types of solid blocks of text which appear in italics in separate paragraphs from the main body of the text and which are always clearly identified: thirty "fouilles" in the "archéologies blanches" of the artist Henri Maccheroni; twenty-two "textamorphoses" on the "légendes" of Audré Masson's "Vingt-deux dessins sur le thème du désir", "traversées de citations extraites de la préface de Jean-Paul Sartre à l'édition originale reprise dans le volume quatre de Situations" (QF, 131); five versions of the "trois discours de l'ivresse de Noé dans le troisième acte du Procès du jeune Chien" (QF, 116) composed by Henri Pousseur for the centenary of Schoenberg. The second type of supplementary material comprises various series, internal quotations, quotations from the three earlier volumes, quotations from Buffon's Histoire Naturelle<sup>3</sup> and a series of "Cent Phrases" from the opera Procès de Jeune Chien. The following extract shows the similarity of presentation

between this type of material and the "dream narrative". Again we have used lines for clarification:

Le lapin multiplie si prodigieusement dans les pays qui lui conviennent, que la terre ne peut suffire à sa subsistance. | La succession des toits il pleut sur les plis. | Non pas Sylvain mais Théodore. | Le loup. | Je cherche maintenant l'issue de ce Bâtiment. | La forme du chevruel est plus arrondie, plus élégante, et sa figure plus agréable que celle du cerf. | Scarabée roulant son Soleil de bouse | Applaudissements | Grappes ... (QF, 28)

The similarity between the supplementary material and the "dream narrative" is highlighted in the text by the fact that the former begins before the latter ends. In this extract lines indicate the intruding supplementary material, an extract from Buffon:

Les poignets dans mes mains mes mains contre ses mains la langue dans sa paume. | Sans avoir comme l'homme la lumière de la pensée, le chien a toute la chaleur du sentiment. | Il y aura là pour vous quantité de choses à glaner il faut vous aérer mon cher commencez votre existence nouvelle. (QF, 25)

The rigid separation between the "dream narrative" and the supplementary material in the earlier volumes has gone and one seems to dissolve into the other, implying a certain continuity between them. In Quadruple Fond the whole text, with the possible exception of the solid blocks in italics, appears to the reader as chaotic, rather than simply one part of it. The reader unfamiliar with the earlier volumes might be forgiven for feeling that the text had been written by a drunk and, indeed, some substance for such a view appears in the "discours" of Noah:

je suis Noé, le nouvel Adam. J'ai fait mes preuves en culture de vignes et fermentation, ce pourquoi on m'a nommé Dionysos. Je suis ivre dans mon arche. (QF, 34)

In view of the large number of quotations from Buffon's Histoire Naturelle we are entitled to make a comparison between Quadruple Fond and the ark

and, therefore, between the writer and the drunken Noah. The questions posed by the first major departure from the three earlier volumes are therefore: Why does Butor deliberately cast himself in the rôle of a drunk and why is the level of apparent chaos increased?

The second major difference between Quadruple Fond and its predecessors concerns another aspect of the way in which Butor presents himself in this volume. In the earlier volumes Butor was the main character in each dream narrative, appearing as a personage whom we designated by the initials M.B. to differentiate between Butor the writer and Butor the character. In Quadruple Fond Butor is still the protagonist but he does not appear as the personage M.B. Instead, he plays the rôle of certain of the principal characters in Votre Faust. In the first two dreams, "Le Rêve d'Irénée" and "Le Rêve de Jacques", Butor takes the rôle of the composer Henri<sup>4</sup>, in the next two dreams he incarnates the Director (the Mephistopheles figure), a rôle he actually played for the German recording of the opera<sup>5</sup>, and in the final dream he plays the parts of first Greta and then Maggy. The character M.B. thus disappears to a certain extent, effacing himself behind the three principal characters of the Faustian theme, Faust himself, Mephistopheles and Gretchen. The character M.B. is fragmented into different parts, fragmented or dissolved.

The Faustian theme itself undergoes a similar type of dissolution. In the action of Votre Faust the composer Henri is offered a contract to write an opera by the Director under the terms of which the latter undertakes to supply all Henri's material needs. The Director's one condition is that the opera be on the theme of Faust. Henri is never able to begin

producing because of this condition and the only solution put forward in the opera is the rescinding of the contract.

In Quadruple Fond the contract between Henri and the Director is placed in the context of Butor's relationship with the world of art. In "Le Rêve de Jacques" the money to be furnished by the Director is described in the following terms:

J'alimenterai votre compte en banque. Combien y avez-vous en ce moment? Pas grand-chose je gage. Vous pouvez aller voir ce soir la provision. Je ferai en sorte qu'elle ne diminue jamais. (QF, 41)

The "provision" of money reminds us of M.B.'s search for jam in Troisième Dessous, the search for the store of art to which he desires access. Allusion is made to this search in the form of quotations from "Le Rêve des Conjurations": "Il faut chercher fortune ailleurs, dévorer grain de blé sur grain de blé" (QF, 16). We can therefore suggest the following initial interpretation of the scenario of the "dream narrative": Butor, as Henri, is offered a constant supply of "food" by the Director who represents the source that is art and who, in turn, needs the "food" that is the writer's production, the projected opera: "Je ne suis pas seul, vous comprenez, j'ai un conseil d'administration, il faudrait que je puisse montrer quelque chose" (QF, 87); however, the terms of the supply contract result in Butor-Henri being dominated by the provider of the "food" to the extent where he is only permitted to write what the Director dictates, to provide the "food" the Director demands; this results in the loss of the power to write, expressed in the harm that comes to Maggy, in the form of imprisonment or illness, who represents the woman of writing, the feminine side of Butor-Henri.

The two endings of Votre Faust which are used in Quadruple Fond lead, on the one hand, to the resurrection of Maggy after her death in prison, and, on the other, to the reconciliation of Butor-Henri and Maggy after they have been deliberately separated by the Director in response to Maggy's successful recovery from illness in the hospital. In the latter case, the "reconciliation" of Butor-Henri and Maggy is, in fact, a stratagem of the Director designed to separate them definitively and the actual reconciliation is quite unexpected.<sup>6</sup> Both endings lead to the annulment of the contract and the end of the Director's domination over Butor-Henri. We can see, then, that the scenario of Votre Faust, as it is used in Quadruple Fond, contains a problem and, apparently, two possible solutions to that problem. The quotation of the opera is used to express an anxiety: Butor-Henri is afraid of being dominated by the provider of the food which he needs and, consequently, of being unable to write. The quotation then presents the problem as solved, but in a quasi-miraculous form as the resurrection of Maggy or the reconciliation of Maggy and Butor-Henri. The solution to the problem is not actually worked out within the scenario of the opera. In view of the continuity between the "dream narrative" and the supplementary material, this suggests that the action of Votre Faust, the "dream narrative" of the entire volume, forms little more than a backdrop and that the real solution, and the real "action" of the volume is to be found in the supplementary material. It is as if we were being asked to step from the stage through a trap-door and go below the surface of the Faustian theme which has been dissolved into the supplementary material:

... le thème de Faust, transformé en matière Faustienne, comment dirais-je, grésille absolument dans tout ce volume. Je voudrais donner l'impression qu'il est juste sous la surface



des pages. Qu'il y a quelque chose qui grouille sous les lignes et que, si on gratte un tout petit peu, le thème de Faust se mettra à grimacer, si vous voulez, et à se transformer de toutes sortes de façons.<sup>7</sup>

We now propose to go through this trap-door and to examine in particular the evolving comparisons which can be made between the animals of Buffon's Histoire Naturelle and the writer in the various rôles in which he appears in the scenario of Votre Faust. We will be searching principally for an explanation for the increased level of apparent chaos in the volume and for a real, diurnal solution to the problem of Butor-Henri as it is expounded in the "dream narrative".

Through our reading of the earlier volumes in the series we have, by now, become quite familiar with Butor's use of the Freudian axis of anxiety/wish-fulfilment as a mirror effect. The mirror system invited a comparison of the two halves of the volume while each individual dream contained an anxiety and a form of wish-fulfilment. It can be seen from Table One<sup>8</sup> that it is possible to discern a mirror system in this volume. However, Butor's use of the Freudian axis is limited to an overall comparison between the two halves of the volume. In the first half of the volume the dreams contain only anxieties or problems and there are no wish-fulfilments. In the second half of the volume the reverse is the case. In the first dream, "Le Rêve d'Irénée", the various possible comparisons between the animals and Butor-Henri produce anxieties related to two possible approaches to the problem of the "dream narrative", the problem of food or survival. In "Le Rêve de Jacques" and in the first half of the central dream, "Le Rêve de Klaus", the origins and consequences of these approaches are explored. We shall, therefore, require

to amend slightly the methods adopted in our discussion of the earlier volumes and treat the first half of the volume as a unit complete in itself, largely ignoring the barriers between individual dreams.

The first approach to the problem to which we will turn our attention is encapsulated in the plight of the wolf:

Le loup meurt souvent de faim, parce que l'homme lui ayant déclaré la guerre, l'ayant même proscrit en mettant sa tête à prix, le force à fuir, à demeurer dans les bois où il ne trouve que quelques animaux sauvages qui lui échappent par la vitesse de leur course. (QF, 32)

Although the wolf possesses "les moyens de satisfaire son appétit véhément pour la chair" (QF, 29), the degree of violence which it employs leads to its own downfall. Too much violence in the search for food would lead to the death of Butor-Henri. We are reminded here of the self-destructive violence employed by M.B. in "Le Rêve de l'huître" of Matière de Rêves. An echo of Buffon's wolf can be found in the violent subject of the fifth "fouille":

j'ai vécu dans plusieurs empires, plusieurs vallées et deltas, dévalisé les tombes des rois, ravagé les jardins des reines, cassé les pyramides, vidé les lacs, roulé les horizons, brûlé les louvres, éparpillé les livres, irrigué les déserts et déplacé les mers. Assez! Ayez pitié de moi, dieux des frontières! Délivrez-moi de ce lent suicide où je me complais dans les puits de pétrole que je hante, et donnez à mes dents les proies qui puissent les rendre douces. (QF, 31)

This wolf-like subject who begs to be saved from his own teeth is none other than the writer himself "traquant sans relâche d'éternité en éternité le gibier de nos nouveaux mondes qui tardent tant!" (QF, 31). The writer is begging for an end to the violence with which he attacks the frontier between writing and art in his relentless search for the new world. The theme of hunting links the violence of the wolf to the horse

and the red deer, and to a particular emotion, pride.

The horse is "fier, ardent, impétueux" (QF, 15) and shares the warlike nature of its knight: "Le cheval se fait au bruit des armes, il l'aime, il le cherche et s'anime de la même ardeur que son cavalier" (QF, 15). The horse also excels in hunting (QF, 17) which is associated with war: "L'exercice de la chasse au cerf doit succéder aux travaux de la guerre, les précéder même" (QF, 26). Deer hunting is described as the pleasure "des plus nobles des hommes" (QF, 25), as the pleasure of heroes. Both the horse and the red deer are, then, associated with heroic deeds, war and unbridled, wolf-like violence. For all its associations with nobility and heroism, however, the red deer is treated less sympathetically than the roe-deer: "S'il a moins de noblesse, de force et beaucoup moins de hauteur de taille, le chevreuil a plus de grâce, de vivacité et même de courage que le cerf" (QF, 27). Heroism is not necessarily synonymous with courage and the latter appears the more desirable of the two. In his search for food, in his search for the new world, the writer is afraid of resorting to violence and of conducting himself like a hero, committing the sin of pride which we encountered in Troisième Dessous, a problem which was solved in that volume by the writer's refusal to regard himself as a self-assertive centre and his subsequent acceptance into a family tradition. The sin of pride is also the subject of the "discours" of the drunken, and decidedly unheroic, Noah:

Je m'adresse d'abord à toi Tubal, mon premier-né. Tu deviendras le père des forgerons et bâtisseur de villes, ce pourquoi certains t'appelleront nouveau Prométhée. Ne construisez pas la tour de Babel, car le Vieux n'hésiterait pas à envoyer contre elle éclairs et tonnerre pour vous priver de votre langue et isoler vos tribus dans l'aridité. (QF, 34)

The sin of pride, exemplified in the construction of the Tower of Babel,

leads only to the dispersal of man and the loss of speech, to violent revenge perpetrated on the sinner. The writer's appearance in the rôle of a drunk is, then, linked to both the notions of pride and dispersal.

Behind pride and violence lies a second emotion, fear, which is evident in the behaviour of certain of the predatory animals of "Le Reve de Jacques". The weasel sleeps for most of the day and only comes out to hunt at night (QF, 42), as if afraid of being seen. The polecat hides in farms and other quiet places, again only hunting at night (QF, 38), as if afraid of being seen by the farmer, the provider of food, while the water-rat avoids all kinds of troubled waters (QF, 45) as it hunts the small fish which constitute its diet (QF, 48). Behind the sleep and the hunting, the violence of these animals, there appears to lie a certain cowardice, a fear for their own safety. This fear leads the polecat to kill everything and take more food than it immediately needs: "Le putois coupe ou écrase la tête à toutes les volailles, ensuite les transporte une à une et en fait magasin" (QF, 39). There is a delay between the taking of the food and its consumption. This is also true of the domesticated weasel which, again, only eats at night:

La belette traîne dans son paquet d'étoupe tout ce qu'on lui donne, ne mange guère que la nuit, et laisse pendant deux ou trois jours la viande fraîche se corrompre avant que d'y toucher. (QF, 41)

We can now trace a path from the origins to the consequences of violence: fear results in unbridled violence, like that of the polecat, the excesses of which result in the need to store up large quantities of food which only goes bad. The implication is that the writer, unlike the weasel, cannot make use of bad meat and that rapid consumption, rather than storage, is desirable.

There exists, however, a curious contrast to this negative portrayal of animals which store food: the red squirrel. The red squirrel stores up food for the winter during which it hibernates. However, no description of these well-known habits is provided and the alertness of the red squirrel contrasts with the general sleepiness which afflicts many of the animals in this dream:

L'écureuil est propre, leste, vif, très alerte, très éveillé, très industrieux ... L'écureuil a les yeux pleins de feu, la physionomie fine, le corps nerveux, les membres très dispos. (QF, 47, 48)

Despite its occasional consumption of birds, the red squirrel is also described as being "ni carnassier ni nuisible" (QF, 45). The red squirrel is being privileged for reasons which are not yet clear to us.

We can now turn our attention to the second possible approach to the problem of the "dream narrative". This approach is precisely that which forms the anxiety in the scenario of the opera, namely, acceptance of the terms of the contract. The character of the dog mirrors the situation in which Butor-Henri would find himself if he were to follow this course of action:

Le chien vient en rampant mettre aux pieds de son maître son courage, sa force, ses talents ... Le chien attend les ordres de son maître pour en faire usage, il le consulte, l'interroge, le supplie, un coup d'oeil suffit, il entend les signes de sa volonté. (QF, 22)

Acceptance of the contract would reduce Butor-Henri to a state of abject subservience, certain consequences of which are expressed in problems involved with the domestication of wild animals. The ferret is unable to survive in the wild, to find its own food:

Le furet n'a pas le même instinct pour trouver sa subsistance que le putois ... Il faut avoir soin du furet, le nourrir à la maison du moins dans ces climats ... Le furet ne va pas s'établir à la campagne ni dans les bois, et ceux que l'on perd dans les trous des lapins ne se sont jamais multipliés; ils périssent apparemment pendant l'hiver. (QF, 39, 41)

The plight of the ferret can be interpreted as a result of over-domestication in which the natural abilities of the animal are eroded. A similar case is that of the ermine where captivity prevents the natural process of colour change in winter (QF, 44). From the example of these two animals we can see that the long-term consequences of the subservient approach imply a complete dependence on the "captor" for survival, a dependence which is, in effect, a kind of prison in which the "animal's" natural identity is gradually lost.

Having so far considered each approach independently, let us now examine what they have in common. The first element that they share is an apparent reconciliation of the two tendencies at the end of "Le Rêve d'Irénée" in the shape of the fox and its relationship with the badger:

Comme il a le corps allongé, les jambes courtes, les ongles, surtout ceux des pieds de devant, très longs et très fermes, le blaireau a plus de facilité qu'un autre pour ouvrir la terre, y fouiller, y pénétrer et jeter derrière lui les débris de son excavation qu'il rend tortueuse, oblique et qu'il pousse quelquefois fort loin. (QF, 32)

The use of the word "fouiller" recalls Henri Maccheroni's "Archéologies Blanches" and suggests that the badger is an artist figure.<sup>9</sup> The fox makes use of the badger's excavations:

Ne pouvant le contraindre par force, le renard oblige par adresse le blaireau à quitter son domicile en l'inquiétant, en faisant sentinelle à l'entrée, en l'infectant même de ses ordures. (QF, 33)

The fox-writer uses stealth and cunning, rather than brute force like the wolf, to gain access to the store of the badger-artist and is, as a result, "plus sûr de vivre" (QF, 32). Neither violent nor subservient, the fox appears to strike a balance between the two tendencies, one which permits it to feed and survive. However, the character of the fox implies a certain weakness: he is forced to steal. The hallmark of a harmonious relationship between writer and artist is not theft - M.B. is condemned for precisely this crime in "Le Rêve des conjurations" - but an open invitation to enter the domain of art, exemplified in the person of Psyché in Illustrations II. The character of the fox represents neither a logically worked out solution to the problem of food nor a piece of wishful thinking: it is a false solution or, in other words, no solution at all. Thus the final "fouille" of "Le Rêve d'Irénée" appears simply as a wish:

Un jour l'arche pénétrera de l'autre côté des cavernes ...  
 Un jour un autre sang coulera dans nos veines, un jour un autre  
 jour éveillera nos villes-fantômes et nous glisserons, animaux  
 des livres, dans la vague des ères sur les sables de la tendresse.  
 Un jour une autre mort libérera nos morts, un autre langage  
 flambrera le nôtre, une autre vue nous donnera tout notre corps,  
 un autre goût nous permettra de lécher le ciel, un autre odorat  
 de sentir les astres. (QF, 36)

The reference to "cavernes" and the heightened senses of the new man are reminiscent of Illustrations III but here the goal seems very far off.

The second element shared by violence and subservience is an emotion which appears as a consequence of both courses of action: guilt. As Maggy, the woman of writing, languishes in prison, crying out "<<Jacques! Jacques!>>" (QF, 38), in the "dream narrative", Butor-Henri has metamorphosed into the messy polecat: "Le putois se glisse dans les basses-cours, monte aux volières, aux colombiers, où, sans faire autant de bruit que la

fouine, il fait plus de dégât" (QF, 39). This can be linked to an internal quotation from "Le Rêve de Klaus" on the same page in which Henri says: "<<S'il y a un coupable dans l'affaire, c'est moi, tu le sais bien Pauline>>" (QF, 39). The writer feels guilty for the mess he has caused, for the perilous situation into which the woman of writing has been precipitated, by accepting the contract, by adopting the subservient approach.

This guilt also echoes throughout the "dream narrative" in the form of the voice of Butor-Henri's conscience:

Je regarde foule et peintures dans la lumière rouge et entends au profond de moi-même une voix grave familière qui me crie <<Espion!>> au milieu des exclamations et tamponnements. (QF, 38)

This, and other insults, such as "<<Ignoble cafard!>>" (QF, 104), provide a direct connection with the words of "Le Rêve des conjurations", "Et c'est le mot <<cafard>> qui s'inscrira sur votre paume ... Le mot <<blatte>> sur le dos de votre main" (QF, 27), which will be inscribed on M.B. for disturbing the store of art. The polecat, like the fox, is a thief, but a violent thief, and the writer feels guilty for the mess he makes in the world of art. Both the violent and the subservient tendencies will lead to feelings of guilt.

Finally, both violence and subservience share, in two ways, the same essential nature. An apparent consequence of subservience, of domestication, can be found in the character of the marmot, a consequence which turns the very notion of subservience on its head. At first, the marmot seems comparable to the dog:



La marmotte, prise jeune, s'apprivoise plus qu'aucun animal sauvage, et presque autant que nos animaux domestiques ... La marmotte apprend aisément à saisir un bâton, gesticuler, danser, obéir en tout à la voix de son maître. (QF, 51, 53)

The subservience of the marmot, however, soon turns into something quite different: "Lorsqu'elle commence à être familière dans la maison et se croit appuyée par son maître, la marmotte attaque et mord en sa présence les chiens les plus redoutables" (QF, 54). The marmot, while remaining subservient to its master, uses the latter's power as its own in an attempt to dominate the dog. The marmot unifies the two tendencies of subservience and violence. The willingness to be subservient, to be dominated, is revealed as a secret desire to dominate in turn, to dominate the dogs, other subservient beings. Subservience is simply a more subtle form of domination by violence, of procuring food by violence. Subservience, then, is violence and we can now discuss the two tendencies as one. This will enable us to discern their common origin.

Both violence and pride have reminded us at certain points of problems in the earlier volumes of the series. Yet another animal brings to mind Matière de Rêves and provides the key to the first half of the volume:

"Le daim de Virginie, presque aussi grand que celui d'Espagne, est remarquable par la grandeur du membre génital et la grosseur des testicules" (QF, 26). The large penis and testicles remind us of the problems which M.B. experienced with his tie-penis in "Le Rêve de l'huître" and "Le Rêve du déménagement", particularly since this deer is the only animal in the first half of the volume which belongs to the new world. The references to Virginia and to Spain, the imperial power behind Columbus, further recall M.B.'s violent conduct toward the woman of writing in these two dreams where writing was treated as Butor's colony. In the face of the Director's

threat to his survival in the "dream narrative", is Butor afraid of reverting to attitudes of the past, of the old world? Certain quotations from the earlier volumes support such an interpretation.

From Troisième Dessous we find an allusion to M.B.'s return to the old world in "Le Rêve des Conjurations";

Je trouve dans la poche un billet d'avion pour la France, une adresse, des dollars ... Bus, aéroport, oui, il y a le passeport aussi, la photographie me ressemble, tout va bien, un voyage sans une secousse, taxi, j'ai même les clefs. (QF, 19)

Similarly, the quotations from "Le Rêve de Vénus" in Second sous-sol recall the reversal of time occasioned by M.B.'s intrusion into the town of art: "Les Sabines attendent qu'on les enlève" (QF, 30). M.B. himself reappears as the adolescent, "entre ces deux moi-même, le fuyard et le paralysé" (QF, 29), trying to grow into himself, a condition comparable to that of the "hommes minuscules" (QF, 23) of the first "textamorphose" and linked to the need for vertical growth in "Le Rêve de Jacques" where all the animals are noticeably small. The artist in this dream is represented by the field-mouse which is "remarquable par les yeux qu'il a gros et proéminents" (QF, 44). Sight is the sense of the artist and the field-mouse is to be found especially on high ground (QF, 47), from which, as it were, it can see further. Butor-Henri has to grow in size to reach the "height" of the artist, to be able to see further like him. The problem of growth was first encountered in "Le Rêve de Prague" of Matière de Rêves and it is in quotations from another dream of this volume that the reversal of time is taken furthest: "Je grelotte, ... Où aller? ... Où me sécher? ... Où me rechauffer?" (QF, 33, 34). Here, M.B. has just emerged from the sea at the beginning of "Le Rêve de l'huître", indicating that Butor-Henri has been precipitated back to the period of his first arrival in America, to the very beginning

of the problems of the series. It is as if all the old problems had to be faced again in a slightly different form: "une nouvelle génération de problèmes" (QF, 20).

We are now in a position to expand on the situation of Butor-Henri as it is expressed in the scenario of Votre Faust. The Director's contract is proposed at a time in Butor's career when the collage of the three elements, writing, art and music, has already been achieved. In this respect the field of concern of Quadruple Fond appears, at first sight, comparable to that of Illustrations IV. However, the problem posed by the Director is a new one, one which we have not encountered before, and cannot be considered as old ground. We can therefore see it as a problem of the new, collage world. The harmony of the new world is being disrupted by the attempt of one element of the collage, art, to dominate another, writing. In the face of this disruption, Butor is afraid of reverting to old world attitudes, to old world solutions which he had already discarded within the context of the old world in his successful attempt to establish a harmonious relationship with art. Violence and pride gave way in the earlier volumes to love, respect and humility. Butor is afraid of making the same mistakes again. This is the overall anxiety of Quadruple Fond. We can now proceed to the central dream of the volume, "Le Rêve de Klaus", where we will encounter the ultimate consequence of the violent approach and the solution to the writer's problems.

"Le Rêve de Klaus" presents us with the first metamorphosis in the identity of the "je" of the "dream narrative". This metamorphosis can be seen as the result of the fusion of the two tendencies in the marmot in

the previous dream. Since subservience is in fact a form of violence Butor-Henri can give way to Butor-Director. Now, it should be emphasised that, although Butor appears in the guise of the Director, he does not do so as instigator of the contract in the "dream narrative". Butor is espousing the violent tendency, the violence which is evident in the Director's attempt to dominate, and which is also now characteristic of Henri himself. Furthermore, the "je" of "Le Rêve de Klaus" is still that of the writer. The violence which erupts in this dream is, therefore, both the violence of the artist, Butor-Director, and of the writer, Butor-Henri. We saw above that both Henri and the Director were in need of food. Both shared the same problem. Since Butor is now both writer and artist we can infer that the solution to the problem will be valid for both. Strictly speaking, then, we should now mention both artist and writer in the same breath. This, however, would be unduly cumbersome and, since the solution is presented with reference to the writer rather than to the artist, we will amend our terminology slightly and refer henceforth, not to the woman of writing, but to the woman of production.

In the first half of the dream all the animals are old world bats, suggesting that Butor-Director has reverted to the vampire nature of "Le Rêve du déménagement", the central dream of Matière de Rêves. The vampire is not yet benevolent, however, and is juxtaposed with images of violence in a quotation from Troisième Dessous:

Dans cette chambre le matelas est jeté sur le sol, les draps déchirés comme s'il y avait eu lutte violente, le carrelage est étoilé en plusieurs endroits, des éclats ont sauté; un bout de corde. Le vampire a le nez contrefait, les narines en entonnoir avec une membrane qui s'élève en forme de corne ou de crête pointue et qui augmente de beaucoup la difformité de sa face. (QF, 64)

There follow references to blood which are associated with the distress of

M.B.'s wife, M.-J., in "Le Rêve du déménagement";

La literie est en moins bon état, le lit change de place; de temps en temps des taches rouges, roses ou grises, et parfois des salles plus vastes que l'on vient de laver. La pipistrelle. Tu vois que Marie-Jo sanglote, cherches des paroles pour la rassurer, vous donner du courage. Je tombe ... Le Haut-Voltaïque se fait servir un verre, saigne, (QF, 65)

Since Butor-Director is also a writer we can see that the violence in this dream is perpetrated by the writer on the writer himself. In "Le Rêve du déménagement" the distress of M.-J., the woman of writing, was caused by M.B.'s attempt to take violent possession of the house of writing, while in Illustrations II we recall that Butor's violent attempts to take possession of art threatened the survival of writing. Thus, in the first half of this dream, Butor-Director's espousal of violence threatens the survival of M.-J., the woman of production. Butor-Director, by feeding on his own blood, threatens himself with death. We should note here that, in the first half of the dream, the peak of M.-J.'s distress has not yet been reached, the match-penis has not yet caused her to bleed, and that fire is envisaged as the solution to her problem: "... la seule chose à faire serait d'allumer du feu" (QF, 65).

In the second half of the dream violence actually appears to be on the increase. The old world bats give way to the large predators of the new world, of America, Asia and Africa. The chief exponent of violence is the tiger:

Le tigre saisit et déchire une nouvelle proie avec la même rage qu'il vient d'exercer, non d'assouvir, en dévorant la première ... Le tigre désole les pays qu'il habite ... Le tigre égorge, il ravage les troupeaux d'animaux domestiques, met à mort toutes les bêtes sauvages, attaque les petits éléphants, les jeunes rhinocéros et quelquefois même ose braver le lion. (QF, 70, 73)

The tiger's method of killing points to a qualitative difference between the violence of the first and second halves of the dream. The vampire receives the blood of its victim in an internal process: it sucks the blood directly into its own body. The tiger, on the other hand, rips the body of its victim to pieces, tearing out the throat and causing blood to flow like a river, "Teindre le Doubs en rouge sang" (QF, 69), or "Une fontaine" (QF, 70). The violence of the second half of the dream is still directed against the writer, but as tiger, rather than vampire. Butor-Director rips himself to pieces and lets his blood flow out.

In "Le Rêve du déménagement" M.B.'s problem was solved by his transformation into benevolent vampire, a vampire who gave as well as received blood in a kind of two-way transfusion. M.B. allowed his blood to flow out. In the first half of this dream we noted that M.-J.'s distress had not reached its peak. In the second half her wound opens: "Je m'aperçois que sa main est blessée ... Le sang coule goutte à goutte sur un petit tapis à demi-brûlé" (QF, 74). The peak of her distress has been reached but we can view this as a positive factor since the solution to her problem is now contained in the notion of flowing: "Le mouchoir est tout rouge ... Il faudrait trouver de l'eau, un évier, un robinet" (QF, 69). We can now see that "Le Rêve de Klaus" proposes a similar solution to the writer's problems as "Le Rêve du déménagement". In ripping himself to pieces and letting his blood flow, Butor-Director liberates production: the blood of production has begun to flow again just as the two-way transfusion of blood in "Le Rêve du déménagement" paved the way for the flowing of ink. If the key to this liberation lies in the notion of flowing we should nevertheless note a curious detail: in the text we encounter the solution before we see the blood flowing and it flows onto "un tapis à demi-brûlé".

Fire still appears to be present. Let us now investigate the manner in which the notion of flowing can be considered a solution to the writer's problems. We shall first of all examine what we might term the theory.

In "Le Rêve du déménagement" the solution permitted the writer to become an equally balanced centre rather than an imperial one. In Second sous-sol the writer became, not an independent centre, but a moment in the continuum of literature, a moment in which the past flowed through the present toward the future. In this volume not only is the writer not an independent centre, but he is not a solid entity. In tearing himself to pieces, the writer reduces himself to a flood of "semence et sang" (QF, 71). The writer has become liquid. Now, this is precisely how the writer appears in the volume as a whole. We have already seen that Butor has dispersed or dissolved himself into the main characters of the Faustian theme. We also saw that, as Noah, he had become an unheroic drunk who preached against the sin of pride. Since the writer is now confirmed as liquid can we now see him not only as drunk, but as the liquid by which he becomes drunk, unheroic? What might this liquid contain?

In Illustrations IV Butor defeated time by dispersing himself into seeds of survival, into the texts which had enabled him to reach a certain point in the volume. In Quadruple Fond the dispersal of Butor into the Faustian characters creates a much greater distance between Butor the writer and Butor the character than in the earlier volumes. In those volumes the character M.B. was clearly recognisable as Butor - the texts abounded in personal details and the problems of the dream narratives applied to periods of his writing career. In the "dream narrative" of

Quadruple Fond the scenario of Votre Faust in itself contains no reference to Butor's life or career and has no relevance to these. It is only the supplementary material which permits us to relate the scenario to the projection of a possible future problem. The presence of Butor in the volume is not evoked by his physical person but by the texts which he has written, the texts with which we are already familiar: Votre Faust, Matière de Rêves, Second sous-sol and Troisième Dessous. As in Illustrations IV, Butor has dispersed himself into his texts which, as the body of his writing and the "colonne vertébrale" of his existence, represent Butor's body itself, a body cut open and presented as liquid as "semence et sang". Butor has stripped away his form to open up his content. The technique is similar to that of Masson as described by Sartre in the second part of this extract:

les clivages-tissus apparaissent comme des mouvements internes de sa chair, les coups de fusil de son chant adolescent | labourent l'intérieur des corps à gros traits, en même temps qu'ils amenuisent à l'extrême la ligne extérieur qui dessine leur forme. L'accent est mis alors sur la substance, les sillons, les stries. (QF, 72)

In opening himself up, in laying himself bare like Psyché in Illustrations II, Butor makes himself receptive. Quadruple Fond, the body of Butor, is, as we have noted, largely composed of supplementary material, of material which is not original. It does not, in the main, present itself as an original text, but as a collection of old texts, a receptacle or receptivity of old texts, an ark of old texts. If these texts are old they are nonetheless lively. Although they have been fragmented into small pieces, they are not static. The continuity which is discernible between the fragmented peices permits the texts to flow from page to page, from dream to dream. The activity of the texts is not confined within the boundaries of each



individual. We have already seen that the connection between Votre Faust and Butor was only made possible by the existence of the supplementary material, in this case a quotation from Troisième Dessous. In fact, our interpretation of the volume has relied heavily on the quotations from the earlier volumes and Buffon's Histoire Naturelle, yet another old text. It is the juxtaposition of all these texts, Votre Faust included, the way in which they lie together, which provides the spark which brings the volume to life, the spark which enables the reader to confer meaning upon it. It is as if the texts rubbed against each other, creating a certain friction. Appropriately, the process is illustrated by a quotation from Troisième Dessous:

Atlas national de 1840, curiosités du département de l'Aveyron: les montagnes brûlantes, celles de Fontaigue et de la Buègne dont le phénomène est dû à la combustion spontanée des houillères. (QF, 39)

In this spontaneous combustion we can see an explanation for the presence of fire in the cure for the distress of the woman of production. Not only does Butor become receptive to old texts but also to what lies behind them. If the presence of Buffon's Histoire Naturelle indicates a receptivity to other moments in the continuum of literature, then the presence of Votre Faust and the three earlier volumes of the Matière de Rêves series, all of which are the products of collaboration, indicates a receptivity to both music and art, the other elements of the collage. This receptivity allows the three elements of the collage to co-habit, to produce a spontaneous friction which leads to the creation of new entities, both in the form of the volume as a whole and of the three solid texts which are presented as original: the "fouilles", "textamorphoses" and "discours de Noé" which are themselves products of collaboration. Quadruple Fond is,

then, a collection of living and creative texts. Just as Illustrations IV is an example of a living collage, of collage in action, so Quadruple Fond is an example of receptivity in action.

As collection or ark, the volume is also a store. Just as Noah stored the animals of the pre-flood world to take to the new, post-flood world, so Butor and the volume which is his body store up texts and, in a sense, problems to take to the new world. The problem of man's overweening pride is as old as man himself, dating back at least as far as Babel. Nor is the Faustian theme a new one. In fact, a whole tradition of artistic production has grown up around the theme, in the form of the "guignol" and the works of Marlowe, Goethe and Gounod to name but a few. To this tradition Butor and Pousseur have added their names. In Votre Faust Butor and Pousseur acknowledged their debt to this tradition by including a vast amount of literary and musical quotation. In Quadruple Fond Butor presents the Faustian theme principally as a quotation, as something unoriginal, and presents himself as a mere receptacle of this tradition. His own individual contribution comprises the three new, solid texts of the volume. These texts are like the solid matter of creation which is as if born out of the liquidity of chaos. In our discussion these texts have played a minor but significant rôle. We have used them to expand on, or clarify, the interpretations which we based on the old texts. We illustrated Butor's method of laying himself bare, for example, by reference to Sartre's description of Masson's technique in one of the "textamorphoses". Each solid block is "Une espèce d'illustration qui apparaît à l'intérieur du livre".<sup>10</sup> The theme of the series of "textamorphoses" depicts a titanic struggle between the masculine and the feminine, reflecting Butor's metamorphosis from the violent masculine to the receptive feminine and

bringing something new to the Faustian theme without altering its essence. Butor is presenting himself as a mere illustrator of an age-old problem. For the sake of receptivity, for the sake of the harmony of the new world, each element of the collage must be prepared to go even further than Butor himself did in Troisième Dessous: each element must become humble in the extreme, divesting itself completely of pride and only retaining enough individuality to ensure survival and creativity, food for its companions. Each element must become a voluntary drunk.

We now have a good grasp of the theory of the solution. By turning himself into a liquid Butor humbles himself in order to become receptive to the other members of the collage and thereby preserve the harmony of the new world. However, certain nagging doubts remain. We have described the volume as a store and yet the notion of storage appeared in an unfavourable light in "Le Rêve de Jacques". The very notion of humility also seems problematic. At the beginning of "Le Rêve d'Irénée" the proud horse is contrasted with the humble donkey (QF, 15) whose humility only seems to make it vulnerable: "L'âne souffre avec constance, et peut-être avec courage, les chatiments et les coups" (QF, 16). How will humility help Butor in practical terms if another element of the collage, like the Director-artist, refuses to become voluntarily unheroic? The answer to this question lies in the last two dreams of the volume, "Le Rêve de Léon" and "Le Rêve de Marcel".

In our discussion of the theory behind the solution adopted in "Le Rêve de Klaus" we drew a comparison between Butor's dispersal into seeds of survival, texts, in Illustrations IV and his dispersal into texts in

this volume, old texts which constituted the parts of his body. In "Le Rêve de Léon" we discover that these parts have a particular rôle to play in Butor's body. In this dream Butor-Director metamorphoses into various types of armadillo: "La cuirasse du dos de l'encoubert est partagée en six bandes qui empiètent peu les uns sur les autres" (QF, 90). The word "cuirasse" suggests protective or defensive armour and finds an echo in the twentieth "fouille":

guerrier portant son cri d'une main, de l'autre son bouclier où dégouline la tête tranchée, guetteur au temple des gaines, les deux pieds avec leurs semelles de fonte, fermement assurés sur l'assise magnétique. Souplesse de ces remparts de cuir de d'émail, créneaux d'ongles et dents. (QF, 85)

The armadillo, with its protective armour, is comparable to a fortified castle. The need for defence and fortification appears as a result of the continued presence of fear in the new world and the subsequent necessity for hiding. Fear is expressed in the behaviour of the baby opossum:

La poche de la sarigue renferme des mamelles, les petits nouveaux-nés y entrent pour les sucer, et prennent si bien l'habitude de s'y cacher qu'ils s'y réfugient, quoique déjà grands, lorsqu'ils sont épouvantés. Il faut escalader ce pilier de bois, m'introduire dans cette ouverture. (QF, 88)

The juxtaposition of the opossum's pouch with the opening which leads to the store of jam in "Le Rêve des conjurations" establishes the opossum as an artist figure and suggests that, in providing both food and shelter, it is the mother of the writer. When he is afraid the writer has only to slip into the artist's pouch. Since fear in the volume is caused by the threat represented by the Director-artist's contract, we can see that fear of art is overcome by reference to art itself, to past dealings with art,

past "habitudes". This is precisely the solution adopted by Butor in Quadruple Fond. Afraid of making the same mistakes again, Butor returns to the earlier volumes of the series, earlier dealings with art, in which he solved his old world problems. These earlier volumes function like indelible memories, providing examples of behaviour to avoid, which he can recall when he feels his production threatened. The old texts are the defence mechanisms of Butor's body. They, too, can be described as seeds of survival.

These defence mechanisms, these outer casings of protective armour, are not presented as a hindrance, but as flexible and mobile, "qui empiètent peu les uns sur les autres". This flexibility is linked to the notion of variety first introduced in the coat of the ocelot: "De tous les animaux à peau tigrée, l'ocelot mâle a certainement la robe la plus belle et la plus élégamment variée" (QF, 81). Variety is also apparent in the different members of the armadillo family: "cirquinçon", "kabassou", "tatuète", "apar". The armour of the armadilloes is characterised by regular geometric design: "Le bouclier des épaules du kabassou n'est formé que de quatre ou cinq rangs, composés chacun de pièces quadrangulaires assez grandes" (QF, 90). The writer's defence mechanisms, the memory of old texts, permits a variety which permits spontaneous combustion and a stability of production, obvious examples of which are Illustrations IV and Quadruple Fond themselves, thereby ensuring creativity. This combination produces a particular type of movement:

Quand l'apar se couche pour dormir, il rapproche et réunit pour ainsi dire en un point ses quatre pieds, ramène sa tête sous son ventre, et se courbe si parfaitement en rond qu'on le prendrait plutôt pour une coquille de mer que pour un animal terrestre. (QF, 95)

In his defensive posture the writer has become like a sea-shell, solid on the outside, but soft and liquid-like on the inside. We are reminded of the "Perle" of Illustrations IV which opened up to receive the food of the dialogues, and also, in the quotation from "Le Rêve de boules et d'yeux" which is juxtaposed with the extract above, of the "boules" of Jean-Luc Parant. The writer is liquid or porous enough to be receptive, and solid and mobile enough to roll away from the clutches of predators like the Director. Like the tree of "Litanie d'eau" he has become solidly liquid. This solid liquidity is illustrated by the "textamorphoses": each block of language contains certain elements which originate in its predecessors and others which re-appear in its successors, creating an internal sensation of movement and fluidity within an external framework of solidity.<sup>11</sup>

The liquidity of humility is, then, supported by the solidity of defence and this ensures the writer's survival from attack and his creativity, his production of food. For hunger, like fear, still exists in the new world: "l'ocelot est très vorace" (QF, 83). It is hunger that awakens the vampire of "Le Rêve de Prague": "<<Pourquoi m'avez-vous tiré de ma nuit?>> ... <<Pourquoi m'avez-vous fait ressentir à nouveau cette horrible faim?>> (QF, 90, 91). Here, voracious appetite is not associated with fear and sleep but actually ensures the alertness that was lacking in so many of the animals of "Le Rêve de Jacques". The vampire of Prague granted M.B. a blood transfusion and in the consequence of hunger we can see that the vampire of "Le Rêve de Klaus" has been transformed: "Vomir, vomir au plus tôt ... Je sais que la meilleure méthode est de se chatouiller le fond du gosier avec une plume d'oiseau, cherche dans la région des volailles" (QF, 95). Instead of being stored, food is immediately vomited. The word "plume" suggests writing and therefore productivity. Receptive and

creative, the writer is able to use the food he receives almost immediately, giving it back in the form of production as food for the artist. There is a two-way "transfusion" of food.

Storage, however, still has a rôle to play in the new world. In "Le Rêve de Léon" there is one animal which belongs to the old world: "le petit-gris", a Siberian variety of gray squirrel: "Le petit-gris fait des provisions de graines pour l'hiver ... Le petit-gris dépose ses provisions dans le creux d'un arbre où il se retire pour la mauvaise saison" (QF, 94, 95). Storage should not be a general practice. However, provisions, and sleep in the form of hibernation, are necessary for the bad season, the season of "floods" and problems such as Butor encounters in Quadruple Fond. It is in this sense that the volume can be legitimately regarded as a store. We might compare the hibernating squirrel with the visitor to Berlin in "Regard Double" who was better able to study the "problem" of Berlin because he was not directly involved in it. Butor retires to his store, to his ark, with his provisions, suspending the activity of hunting to solve the problem of hunting.

The squirrel, as we saw, already existed in the old world as "l'écureuil" and we can now understand why it appeared as a privileged animal. The squirrel survives in the new world in a slightly different form. It is as if the seed of the gray squirrel were already contained in the red. This allows us to draw certain conclusions concerning the nature of the solutions in the second half of the volume.

In his insistence on the ancient origins of the Faustian theme, in his projection of the Faustian problem into the new, collage world, Butor is telling us flatly that this world is not going to be a dream-like paradise where no problems exist. In fact, in the new world, the old

problems will still exist. We will not have to look for new problems but for new solutions. These new solutions, like the gray squirrel, have their roots in the old world. Both halves of "Le Rêve de Klaus" are characterised by violence. In the second half of the dream, however, Butor-Director literally turns the violence on himself, inflicting it directly on himself rather than on the woman of production. Violence turns from negative to positive. Similarly, fear and the solution to fear, hiding, will still exist in the new world. However, instead of hiding from art, the provider of food, the writer now hides in art. Digestion of food still appears as the solution to hunger but the digestion process is speeded up. These solutions are all survivors from the old world, the nature of which is summed up in quotations from the "Atlas national" of Troisième Dessous: "Vestiges d'un camp romain entre Gamarde et Saint-Georges-d'Auribot ... Les ruines du Château de Castelnau, l'Odilienberg montagne célèbre" (QF, 94). These survivors are vestiges, remains of the old world which can be used differently in the new world. A symbol of the process by which they survive can be found in the final bat to appear in the first half of "Le Rêve de Klaus": "Le fer à cheval" (QF, 68). The horseshoe is a structure which turns back on itself, which inverts itself. The solutions of the old world are as if turned on their head, pointed in another direction, and become suitable for the new world. This movement of "retournement" is reflected both in the overall disposition of the supplementary material of the volume and in the structure of the series constituted by Buffon's animals.<sup>12</sup> The ark that is the volume is not only a store of problems but a store of solutions as well, a store of seeds which can produce different varieties of the same fruit.

The importance of recognising the different use to which the old world solutions must be put in the new world is highlighted in the final



dream of the volume. At the beginning of the dream attention is drawn to resemblances between the new world and the old world animals: "Le glouton, gros de corps et bas de jambes, est à peu près de la force d'un blaireau" (QF, 110); "Le vansire ressemble beaucoup au furet" (QF, 110). Despite these resemblances there are basic differences: "Le vansire a douze dents mâchelières dans la mâchoire supérieure alors que le furet n'en a que huit" (QF, 112). Resemblances or comparisons are, in fact, a trap into which it is easy to fall, as a quotation from Second sous-sol indicates: "j'avais dû lui rappeler quelqu'un ... et c'est naturellement parce qu'elle me rappelait quelqu'un qu'elle m'avait si facilement fait tomber dans son piège" (QF, 115). It is this trap of comparisons, of previous mistakes, that Butor avoids by dispersing himself into seeds of survival, by transforming himself from a proud to a humble animal.

The ultimate consequences and the ultimate nature of humility are revealed by the animals which figure at the end of "Le Rêve de Marcel". The support given to humility by the defence mechanisms endows the writer with the strength of the elephant, a strength not allied to violence: "L'éléphant a la docilité du chien" (QF, 129). The elephant is also "susceptible de reconnaissance et capable d'un fort attachement" (QF, 130) without showing the subservience of the dog. The strength of the elephant is contrasted with that of the rhinoceros: "Le rhinocéros n'est guère supérieur aux autres animaux que par la force, la grandeur et l'arme offensive qu'il porte sur le nez et qui n'appartient qu'à lui" (QF, 130). The rhinoceros' horn can be likened to that of the vampire (QF, 64). The brute force of the vampire-rhinoceros is inferior to the gentle strength of the elephant, fulfilling the words of the twentieth "textamorphose": "(et pourquoi la force serait-elle d'autant plus grande que plus aveugle?)"

(QF, 117). This can be taken both metaphorically and literally. In becoming elephant the writer has not only gained strength but size. The vertical growth of the writer is expressed in the presence of three animals with long necks, the giraffe, the vicuna and the llama. In his receptivity to art the writer has gained the ability to see far.

The llama reveals the essential nature of humility. Like the giraffe it is a "useless" animal:

Pérou, selon Grégoire de Bolivar, est le pays natal, la vraie patrie du lama ... On conduit à la vérité le lama dans d'autres provinces, comme à la Nouvelle-Espagne, mais c'est plutôt pour la curiosité que l'utilité. (QF, 125, 127)

As a useless animal, the llama cannot be exploited or dominated. As llama, the writer offers himself as an object of curiosity, as something which is of interest because of its difference. He asks for his difference to be recognised. Since the solution of humility is valid for all members of the collage we can see that humility is the recognition of the difference of the other.

Recognition of the difference of the other is what creates unity in the collage world. The writer's humility allows him to become female - we recall that a receptacle is a vagina symbol in Freudian dream symbolism - and to metamorphose in the "dream narrative" into the two halves of Gretchen in Votre Faust, Greta and Maggy. The first of the opera's endings, the resurrection of Maggy in "Le Rêve de Léon", can be seen as the resurrection of the woman of production. In the second ending, as Gretchen,<sup>13</sup> the writer becomes one with the woman of production, production itself, food for the artist. Since the writer is now Maggy, the artist is now Henri, but since Henri is now also Maggy we can see that in the final profession of love both writer and artist pledge themselves to each other

as food or production, breaking the power of the Director who is now neither writer nor artist, but a symbol of violence and pride. The Faustian problem has been solved, but has it been solved definitively?

At the beginning of our discussion we noted that the series "Non pas" extended the "décalage" of the characters' names to the end of the alphabet. This "décalage" is also extended in the internal quotation system. The internal quotation system of Quadruple Fond is similar to that of Second sous-sol. In the first four dreams we read quotations from each dream's immediate successor: "Le Rêve d'Irénée" contains extracts from "Le Rêve de Jacques", which, as its successor, can be considered as the future. Thus, as in Second sous-sol, the last four dreams have their roots in the past, reflecting the fact that the seeds of the new world solutions are to be found in the old world. "Le Rêve d'Irénée", however, like "Le Rêve de Vénus", does not appear in the system until the final dream of the volume, thus appearing to us as part of the past in the future. In the extracts from "Le Rêve d'Irénée" the characters have names which fall outwith the "décalage" of the "dream narrative". Henri becomes "Norbert" (QF, 110), the name following Marcel, the last name of the "dream narrative". The series continues, implying that the Faustian problem will continue to exist throughout time.

This implication is also contained in the movement of the "textamorphoses". The first "textamorphose" contains vocabulary elements from the twentieth, twenty-first and twenty-second "textamorphoses". The movement of the series is a circular one, indicating a continuous struggle between the masculine and the feminine. Butor is telling us not only that the old problems will still exist in the new world, but that they will

always exist. This explains why, at the end of the supplementary material, the writer is still one of the "animaux des livres", and why certain of the animals of the final dream appear to have human characteristics:

Le suricate marche quelquefois debout ... Le suricate se tient souvent assis avec le corps très droit, les bras pendants, la tête haute et mouvante sur le cou comme sur un pivot; il prend cette attitude toutes les fois qu'il veut se mettre auprès du feu pour se chauffer. (QF, 121, 124)

Here we have an image of an animal transforming itself into a man, of a man coming into being but not yet born. Since the horse makes a return, along with the name "Norbert", in the supplementary material (QF, 110), we can see that Butor views man, the balance of the masculine and the feminine, as a continuous coming into being. In Illustrations IV Butor presented collage in exactly the same way and the fact that man cannot be, but must continually be coming into being, should not be seen in a negative light. Butor conceives time as continuous flux and this is the way in which man is presented in Quadruple Fond. The problem of pride existed in the old world and was solved there, only to re-appear in the new world. Man appears as a continuous flux between the tendencies of pride and humility. As long as time continues man can only ever attempt to achieve a balance between the two, since both are inherent to his nature, a balance in which destructive self-assertion gives way to creative individuality or difference. The difference between the old world and the new is that man now appears singularly capable of continuously achieving this balance.

By the end of Illustrations IV the passage from the solid to the liquid had been effected and we felt that Butor was now well-equipped to deal with any future problems which his writing might pose. In Quadruple Fond we encounter a future problem, not so much of Butor's writing, but of the new, collage world. In our discussion of the earlier volumes in

the series we encountered the use of humour as a defence mechanism.

Humour is also a feature of Quadruple Fond, as it already was of Votre Faust.

The Director does not take himself too seriously:

<<Entrerez-vous dans une de ces baraques? Je les connais presque par coeur. J'aime mieux flâner dans ces ruelles provinciales, à la recherche d'un beau visage, d'une réplique inattendue, je suis, comme on disait, un amateur d'âmes.>>  
(QF, 60)

The Director is presented in such a way that we can laugh both with him and at him and he therefore becomes less dangerous. Buffon's animals also provide much scope for humour. As in Illustrations III, the artist is gently ribbed as the badger with its tortuous and oblique excavations. Nor does Butor spare himself:

Toutes les habitudes du cochon sont grossières, tous ses goûts sont immondes, toutes ses sensations se réduisent à une luxure furieuse et une gourmandise brutale qui lui fait dévorer indistinctement tout ce qui se présente, et même sa progéniture quand elle vient de naître. (QF, 21)

Butor pokes fun at his tendency to "eat" everything, even his own works. As llama Butor becomes curious, rather odd, a description with which many readers might feel they wish to concur. Even as vampire Butor does not appear totally sinister: "Le vampire, lorsqu'il vole, paraît être de la grosseur d'un pigeon" (QF, 63). The vampire, with its horn, appears no more harmful than an ugly old pigeon, an incongruous comparison which reduces the feeling of danger. It is as if the vampire were already doomed to defeat. This is, in a sense, true.

Although we can discern a clear progression from the animals of the first half of the volume to those of the second, we do not have the impression that there is any difficulty involved. Butor transforms from bat to tiger as naturally as day follows night. It is as if the struggle

were already over. Similarly, although we do not encounter the solution to the problem until the central dream, the first half of the volume is written as if the solution had already been found: it is already fragmented. And, of course, the solution has already been found, in the old world. This is not to say that an impression of struggle is not to be found in the volume. We only have to look as far as the grotesque combat of Masson's "univers monstrueux". Yet, this is an internal struggle, a struggle of content within the body of man. This is the struggle of the volume, a struggle not between the elements of the collage, but within each element itself. The solution is there, what is required is the courage to grasp it, the courage shown by the big cats: "La lionne, naturellement moins forte, moins courageuse et plus tranquille que le lion, devient terrible dès qu'elle a des petits" (QF, 71). Each element of the collage must have the courage to defend the harmony of the new world, the courage to tear itself to pieces, the courage to implement the solution. The struggle lies below the surface of the solution and this explains the presence of humour. If, in the earlier volumes we could discern serious intent below the humour, here we can discern humour below the serious intent. Man appears capable of continuously solving the Faustian problem because of his experience in the old world, because he already has the solution. All it takes is a little courage. There is every reason for humour and optimism.

Towards the end of our discussion we have, to a large extent, left Butor behind and talked of man. In switching his attention from the old world to the new Butor has involved himself with basic human emotions, pride, fear, humility. Because of this, Quadruple Fond emerges as the most obviously exemplary of the four volumes of the series. Quadruple Fond is an example of the behaviour that will be necessary in the new world, of

the humility without which harmony cannot survive. Like Butor's other texts, Quadruple Fond does not present a programme but merely shows that certain things are not impossible, that the world can be turned upside down: "(pourquoi ces hommes n'auraient-ils pas des ailes?)" (QF, 84)

In the space of four volumes the writer and the series Matière de Rêves have themselves, in a sense, been turned on their heads. This phenomenon allows us to draw a parallel between the changing identity of the writer and the changing rôle of the supplementary material, to answer a question which we first posed in our discussion of Matière de Rêves. In Matière de Rêves the writer appeared initially as an imperial, self-assertive centre who regarded writing as his colony. At the same time the dream narratives appeared as original material quite distinct from the supplementary material which was used simply to illustrate it. Linear narration of an independent story-line appeared as the dominant partner in the collaboration. There was a clear hierarchical relationship between the two.

In Second sous-sol the writer could no longer be seen as a centre at all but as a moment in a continuum of literature, no more and no less important than any other moment. In this volume the original material of the dream narrative began to be invaded by supplementary material, such as the quotations from Voyage au centre de la terre. This material was still used to illustrate the dream narratives but its presence challenged the independence, the originality of the story-line and presented an alternative to linear narration. In Troisième Dessous the writer rejected any form of self-assertive independence, inserting himself into a family tradition, and

the supplementary material assumed much greater importance. In "Le Rêve des Lichens" it became an integral part of the dream narrative which was formed of a balance between the original and the unoriginal. The hierarchical relationship disappeared, the dream narrative became fragmented and the story-line was as much that of Verne as of Butor, a fact symbolised in the comradely walk around the lichens during which Verne acted as guide.

In Quadruple Fond the writer is even more deeply ensconced in a tradition, the tradition of speech, of what has been said. Everything has, in a sense, been said before and if the writer can still speak, still retain his individuality, it is as an illustrator, as one who expands slightly on an old theme, who presents it somewhat differently, and not as someone who asserts his own novelty. In this volume the supplementary material takes over the dream narrative which now becomes one single story-line to which it, the dream narrative, has no independent claim. Linear narration is completely fragmented indicating that each story is composed of pieces of other stories and has no existence independent of them. Original material still has a rôle to play: it is not, however, presented as a story in itself but as the illustration of a story. The new relationship between unoriginal and original is not hierarchical; the old material does not attempt to stifle new production but gives birth to it, forming the material to be illustrated. In this new relationship we can see that the text, like the writer with whose body it fuses in Quadruple Fond, has become humble. Both the content and the form of the series are exemplary.

The metamorphosis undergone by both writer and text in the series is that which Butor would like the reader, and man in general, to undergo. In this series Butor has gone further than ever before. He has not only shown us that it is possible to reach the new world but that it is possible



to stay there. Furthermore, he has given us a glimpse of the new world which appears, not as an unearthly paradise, but as a human world where human problems still have to be faced. It is in these dream texts, paradoxically, that Butor appears least like a dreamer, like a wishful-thinker. He has used the example of his own self and his own writing to provide us with a solution to our problems and in this we can see the depth of his commitment to change. It is Butor who has delved deeply into his persona, examining his motivations, tearing himself apart and re-constituting himself in a different manner, Butor who has worked "dans le risque de la folie". His is a courageous example, but it is no more than an example, one which we can follow or reject. We have seen the possibility of a solution, a possible scenario. As in Votre Faust we can choose our own ending.

TABLE ONEQuadruple Fond - Internal Quotation System

In this volume the centre of the internal quotation system has been displaced to the middle of the second dream, "Le Rêve de Jacques", producing the by now familiar reflective organisation which we tabulate below.

<u>First Half</u>			<u>Second Half</u>		
<u>Dream and</u> <u>Paragraph Number</u>		<u>Content</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Dream and</u> <u>Paragraph Number</u>	
<u>Marcel</u>	1	Irénée 2	Marcel 11	<u>Léon</u>	10
	2	Irénée 3	Marcel 10		9
	3	Irénée 4	Marcel 9		8
	4	Irénée 5	Marcel 8		7
	5	Irénée 6	Marcel 7		6
	6	Irénée 7	Marcel 6		5
	7	Irénée 8	Marcel 5		4
	8	Irénée 9	Marcel 4		3
	9	Irénée 10	Marcel 3		2
	10	Irénée 11	Marcel 2		1
<u>Irénée</u>	1	Jacques 2	Léon 10	<u>Klaus</u>	10
	2	Jacques 3	Léon 9		9
	3	Jacques 4	Léon 8		8
	4	Jacques 5	Léon 8		7
	5	Jacques 6	Léon 7		6
	6	Jacques 7	Léon 6		5
	7	Jacques 10	Léon 5		4
	8	Jacques 11	Léon 4		3
	9	Jacques 11	Léon 3		2
	10	Jacques 11	Léon 2		1
<u>Jacques</u>	1	Klaus 2	Klaus 10	<u>Jacques</u>	10
	2	Klaus 3	Klaus 10		9
	3	Klaus 4	Klaus 10		8
	4	Klaus 5	Klaus 9		7
	5	Klaus 6	Klaus 7		6

## TABLE TWO

Internal Fluidity of the "textamorphoses"

Each "textamorphose" contains elements which have appeared in the three previous blocks and elements which will appear in the three succeeding blocks. This creates an impression of passage or flux between the blocks. Since it will figure in a later part of our discussion, we have chosen as an example the first "textamorphose" which contains elements from the last three blocks in the series, the movement of which is therefore circular. We have underlined the elements which move between blocks, numbers referring to the origin or destination of each element.

<sup>2,4</sup> <sup>22</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup>  
 parmi les falaises-oracles, les éboulis et les gradins, des  
<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup>  
femmes colossales se montrent des hommes minuscules qu'elles viennent  
<sup>2,3</sup> <sup>20</sup>  
 de découvrir, c'est le plus innocent de leurs plaisirs. Approchez:  
<sup>22</sup> <sup>22</sup> <sup>22,3</sup>  
au fond de la mer - tremblements une barque humaine. Sphynxes  
<sup>22</sup>  
devant leurs seringues, elles font le gros dos, comètes et giclures,  
<sup>21,2</sup> <sup>2</sup>  
 bouquets de poitrines, et juments aux crinières gluantes de fange.  
<sup>22</sup> <sup>22</sup> <sup>2</sup>  
 Cet univers de monstrueuses répercussions est la représentation de  
<sup>3,4</sup> <sup>21</sup>  
 nos oliviers agités, êtres masculins métamorphosés en scories (ainsi  
<sup>22</sup>  
naissent les sujets), viols, meurtres, combats singuliers, éventrements,  
<sup>22</sup> <sup>20</sup>  
 chasses à l'homme, coraux à l'affût, promesses, clous et bulles.

TABLE THREE

This table shows the location of the three new, solid texts and of the quotations from Matière de Rêves, Second sous-sol and Troisième Dessous. In the first two dreams the supplementary elements are located in the same paragraphs in each dream and the pattern of disposition is identical. In "Le Rêve de Klaus" the pattern remains the same but the elements are located closer to the beginning of the dream. The movement has begun. In the final two dreams the pattern changes. In "Le Rêve de Léon" the first element becomes the last while in "Le Rêve de Marcel" a whole group of elements has been displaced, almost completely reversing the pattern which has turned back on itself. We have abbreviated the names of the earlier volumes.

<u>Irénée</u>	3	fouille, TD	fouille, TD	<u>Marcel</u>	2
	5	fouille, TD	textamorphose		3
	6	textamorphose, TD,SS	fouille		
		fouille	Noé, TD,SS,MR		4
	8	fouille, TD	textamorphose		
	9	textamorphose, TD,SS	textamorphose		
		fouille	fouille		
10		Noé, TD,SS,MR	fouille, TD		7
		textamorphose	fouille, TD		9
		textamorphose	textamorphose, TD,SS		
		fouille	fouille		
<u>Jacques</u>	3	fouille, TD	fouille, TD	<u>Léon</u>	2
	5	fouille, TD	textamorphose, TD,SS		3
	6	textamorphose, TD,SS	fouille		
		fouille	fouille, TD		5
	8	fouille, TD	textamorphose, TD,SS		6
	9	textamorphose, TD,SS	textamorphose		
		textamorphose	fouille		
		fouille	Noé, TD,SS,MR		7
10		Noé, TD,SS,MR	textamorphose		
		textamorphose	textamorphose		
		textamorphose	fouille		
		fouille	fouille, TD		10
<u>Klaus</u>	2	fouille, TD			
	4	fouille, TD			
	5	textamorphose, TD,SS			
		fouille			
	7	fouille, TD			
	8	textamorphose, TD,SS			
		fouille			
	9	Noé, TD,SS,MR			
		textamorphose			
		textamorphose			
		fouille			

## Animal Series

<u>chauve-souris</u>	<u>rousette</u>	<u>rougette</u>	<u>vampire</u>	<u>céphalote</u>	<u>ch-s. mus</u>	<u>grande sirotine</u>	<u>oreillard</u>	<u>noctule</u>	<u>sérotine</u>	<u>pipistrelle</u>	<u>barbastrelle</u>	<u>fer à cheval</u>	<u>panthère</u>	<u>jaguar</u>	<u>cougar</u>	<u>lynx</u>	<u>maraputé</u>
chauve-souris	rousette																
chauve-souris	rousette	rougette															
chauve-souris	rousette	rougette	vampire														
chauve-souris	rousette	rougette	vampire	céphalote													
chauve-souris	rousette	rougette	vampire	céphalote	ch-s. mus												
	rousette	rougette	vampire	céphalote		grande sirotine	oreillard										
		rougette	vampire				oreillard	noctule	sérotine	pipistrelle							
							oreillard	noctule	sérotine	pipistrelle	barbastrelle						
								noctule	sérotine	pipistrelle	barbastrelle	<u>fer à cheval</u>	panthère	jaguar	cougar	lynx	maraputé
												tigre	panthère	jaguar	cougar	lynx	
											lion	tigre	panthère	jaguar	cougar		
										raton	lion	tigre	panthère	jaguar			
									castor	raton	lion	tigre	panthère				
								ours	castor	raton	lion	tigre					
								ours	castor	raton	lion						
								ours	castor	raton							
								ours	castor								
								ours									
									castor	raton	lion	tigre					

FOOTNOTES

1. The versions used in the volume can be found in the following journals: La Nouvelle Revue Française, no. 109 (January 1962), 65-86; no. 110 (February 1962), 261-289; no. 111 (March 1962), 461-482; no. 112 (April 1962), 641-657; Les Cahiers du Centre d'Études et de Recherches Marxistes, no. 62 (1968); Médiations, no. 6 (Summer 1963), 5-20; L'VII, no. 10 (June 1962), 13-43.
2. The use of this technique means that the reader does not require to have recourse to Votre Faust to re-assemble the text. As in Illustrations II, however, his task will be made all the easier if he has access to the original versions.
3. Georges-Louis de Buffon, Histoire Naturelle, Gallimard, 1984.
4. As the titles of the dreams indicate, the original names undergo an alphabetical "décalage" in Quadruple Fond. Thus, Henri is successively Irénée, Jacques, Klaus, Léon, Marcel; Maggy becomes Nelly, Odile, Pauline, Queenie, Rosie and so on. This process is taken to the end of the alphabet in the series "Non Pas". For the sake of simplicity, we will, in our discussion, refer to the characters by their original names, Henri, Maggy, Greta and the Director.
5. Madeleine Santschi, Voyage avec Michel Butor, L'Age d'Homme, 1983, p. 183.
6. This is all the more striking if the reader is familiar with the version of the opera in L'VII to which this ending belongs. In this version Maggy actually replies "<<Je ne t'aime plus>>", rather than "<<Je t'aime>>" and Henri is forced back into the hands of the Director.
7. Santschi, p. 184.
8. Table One.
9. It might be objected that it is Butor who carries out the "fouille" into the "Archéologies Blanches". However, if Butor excavates the artist's work, it is the artist who excavates reality. The reader should compare in this respect Butor's comments on another "excavator", Bram van Velde: see Santschi, p. 185.

10. Santschi, p. 184.
11. See Table Two.
12. See Tables Three and Four.
13. In Votre Faust Greta is virtually indistinguishable from Maggy. When Maggy is absent Greta is present, suggesting that, whatever the problem, writing is never really completely absent. There is therefore no particular significance in the transition from Greta to Maggy which takes place smoothly on p. 120: "Marcel dans sa chambre sans nouvelles de moi brusquement disparue à Vienne où j'étais avec lui". The terms Greta, Maggy, Gretchen have become interchangeable at the end of Quadruple Fond.

### CONCLUSION

j'entends murmurer depuis  
quelque temps déjà: <<Où  
Michel Butor va-t-il?>><sup>1</sup>

Our journey through the "mouvement général" of Butor's production has taken us through four separate and distinct areas of his work and enables us, in the first instance, to say from where he has come. Our perspective has not only allowed us to find a unity in these four areas but also to discern how logically the different areas succeed one another. In his novels Butor begins by examining what he clearly considers to be the most gaping hole in reality: the self-centred attitude of man to reality which manifests itself in the myth of imperial dominance. Butor is content neither to simply state his opposition to this attitude nor to limit his criticism of it to areas in which he himself is not implicated. In L'Emploi du Temps and La Modification Butor states his opposition to the imperial view of reality and offers as an alternative his own conception of a reality which is essentially temporal and transformational in nature. At the same time he is already asking himself questions about his method of production, the novel, and demonstrating how it might be used to dominate the reader in a fashion also designated as imperial. These questions come to a head in Degrés where the possible perception of the author as a quasi-divine figure becomes too great a risk to take. With no viable solution apparent in the novel genre, Butor finds himself obliged to seek the liberation of his reader in different forms, thereby committing himself to change in his own production as well as in the wider field of reality.

There follows a group of experimental works in which Butor finds in



the concept of openness a means of balancing his desire to communicate a message to the reader and the reader's freedom from authorial domination. While searching for a solution to his problem in this "parenthesis" to his production, Butor still manages to provide a foretaste of his collage principle in Mobile and examine the relationship between man and place in Réseau Aérien, Description de San Marco and 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde, considering change in this relationship as the key to change in wider human relationships. Having solved the problem of the reader's freedom, Butor goes on in the Illustrations series to investigate the possibilities of an alternative to the imperial organisation of reality, presenting Illustrations II as a concrete example of the principle of interlocking relativities proposed at the end of La Modification and providing us with a "nouveau mot" for our discussions on the organisation of reality in the form of the name of the principle: collage. In Illustrations IV he expands further on the nature of collage, showing that, despite problems, it can be implemented and that it is not a fixed and immutable system but a perpetual coming into being, a perpetual re-examination of its constituent parts and the relationships between them. To do this Butor uses his own relationship with music and art, his own personal collage, as an example of a living collage. In this examination of the collage principle Illustrations III appears somewhat "parenthetical". However, Butor inserts this restful work into the main line of his production by combining an explanation for the need for art in the integration of human space, the aim of the transformed relationship between man and place of Réseau Aérien, with the most complete and direct statement of his view of the world as chaos.

In the Matière de Rêves series Butor again uses his own experience, in particular his problems with art, in an exemplary manner, presenting his

personal world as an example of chaos and demonstrating that such a world can be re-integrated and re-organised to form a coherent and harmonious whole. In the volumes of this series collage appears as a practical solution to real problems. If, in Illustrations IV Butor showed that the problems of implementing collage can be overcome, here he shows how they can be overcome by turning the series, in both form and content, into a progression toward an example of living receptivity or humility. Although we can now see that humility is implied in the abandonment of the myth of imperial dominance in the novels, we have not come full circle. We have seen that humility can change man's relationship to place, and therefore to his fellow man, that man and space can be integrated into a harmonious whole in a new, collage world and, in Quadruple Fond, that man can remain in that new world. We have seen what Butor desires us to change, how he desires us to change it and how we can make that change continuous. We have seen Butor's commitment to change in action and we have progressed.

Each group or series, then, appears as if in response to the previous one. Just as La Modification completes and expands certain facets of L'Emploi du Temps, so each group or series enlarges on its predecessor. Butor's work as a whole forms a progression which, although not corresponding to a pre-ordained plan as the various crises indicate, is carefully thought out and logically constructed. Even those works which do correspond to a crisis in his career are brought into the fold and given a precise rôle. Each work appears like the part of a collage, the collage that is Butor's whole production, coherence from chaos, unity from diversity.

L'idée de l'égalité massive, chacun devant manger la même chose, chacun non seulement pouvant, mais devant aller à l'opéra, est une des plus décourageantes qui soient. Un des premiers droits de l'homme, c'est celui à la différence.  
(RS, 27)

If we are now in a position to emphasise the unity of Butor's production, it would not do to overlook its diversity, neither within individual volumes nor in the work as a whole. In both the Illustrations and Matière de Rêves series Butor confers value on diversity, on the independence and difference of all the constituent parts. In Illustrations II we saw that the expansion of the field of expression of "Regard Double", which brought it into the collage, did not prejudice its existence as an independent entity. In Illustrations IV the texts entered into a loving relationship in which the difference between them was respected, while in Quadruple Fond the essence of humility was revealed to be recognition of the difference of the other. It is in those groups which can be regarded as series, which are conceived as units, that Butor appears most faithful to this principle of diversity or difference. Each volume of the Illustrations series is constructed differently and each requires a different method of reading. We are never allowed to rest on our laurels. Even in those volumes which resemble each other most closely, the first three volumes of Matière de Rêves, Butor deliberately introduces devices, such as the displacement of the centre of the internal quotation system, which require us to alter our reading methods. In these three volumes we have the strongest impression that things are the same, but different.

Butor's work appears diverse not only in its form but also in what we might term its cultural content. In this respect similarity and difference seem to us to be characteristic of Butor throughout the writing journey upon which we have accompanied him. Since the end of Degrés the identity of the writer has undergone a process of constant transformation, a process chronicled in the Matière de Rêves series. Since Illustrations Butor has taken on an identity which is composed, in the main, of a collage of three areas of culture: art, music and literature. Prior to this, of course, Butor was already profoundly steeped in culture and our study of his works

took us through certain areas of mythology, religion and philosophy, psychoanalysis and the thought behind the "open work". He already possessed a certain collage identity, parts of which remain in the "new" collage identity. What we wish to discuss however is not the similarity or difference between these two identities but the similarity or difference within these two identities, the relationship between Butor and the elements which compose these two cultural collages, what is Butor and what is not.

In certain individual areas of Butor's work his use of culture is already clear to us. In his later works art appears as a source for his production and music as the means of organising that production. In the Matière de Rêves series Butor's use of literary sources appears as an expression of his humility, as an acknowledgement of the fact that the writer cannot be completely original. For the global presence of culture in Butor's work there are two more general reasons, the second of which will permit us to examine Butor in terms of varying degrees of similarity and difference:

Parfois j'ai besoin de me défiler. Comme un lézard, vous voyez? Comme ça. Toutes sortes de gens veulent me prendre. Et moi, je ne veux pas me laisser prendre! Je peux y laisser ma queue, hein, ou un membre ici ou là ... Et cela repoussera. Mais, je ne veux pas me laisser prendre. Voilà. Il y a une certaine souplesse qu'il m'a fallu mettre au point, développer. Et il y a, dans cette culture, comme chez Montaigne, deux raisons. Premièrement elle est là pour égarer. Cela fait partie de la stratégie défensive. Égarer les méchants! Les mettre sur des fausses pistes! Afin qu'ils ne puissent pas dire telles sottises sans qu'un certain ridicule retombe sur eux. La culture est là pour ça. Elle joue ce rôle défensif. Deuxièmement, elle est là pour aiguiller vers d'autres livres, vers d'autres choses, vers un ailleurs que le livre, etc. Cette culture est là pour tout mettre en effervescence. Pour qu'on remue la bibliothèque, qu'on remue ailleurs que dans la bibliothèque. La culture est destinée à mettre en branle le reste de la culture et, de proche en proche, tout ce qui est en dehors de la culture doit être mis en branle également. Alors, évidemment, cela ne peut être fait qu'à l'intérieur de régions où le lecteur reconnaît sa culture, où il va trouver les indications, d'autres choses qui l'inviteront à aller chercher ailleurs. Ces indications vont arrêter le lecteur stupide, qui va buter, bon. Mais elles vont inviter le lecteur astucieux à aller à la recherche de quantités d'autres choses. Cela lui fera découvrir des choses merveilleuses.<sup>2</sup>

We have already encountered Butor's use of defensive strategies in other aspects of his work, such as the use of dream displacement in "Le Rêve de l'huître" and that of hermetic techniques to protect the message in 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. We can, in fact, draw a parallel between the "lecteur pressé" or the visitors to Niagara, who took no time to study the site and harmed it with their preconceived view of its reality, and the "lecteur méchant" or "lecteur stupide" of the above extract. Butor does not seek to preserve his work for an élite, but to protect it from those who would do him harm. His fear of being "taken" recalls M.B.'s imprisonment for subversion by the Academician in "Le Rêve du tatouage". During the Colloque de Cerisy Butor expressed his fear of appearing too openly subversive:

Une chose m'a frappé pendant ce colloque: je me suis découvert beaucoup plus subversif que je ne croyais, et cela me met en danger. A certains moments, j'avais la tentation de m'écrier: vous avez raison, mais il ne faut pas le dire encore!<sup>3</sup>

This is in line with his long-term strategy:

j'ai appris que très souvent, lorsqu'on essaie de changer les choses directement, ouvertement, lorsqu'on dévoile ses batteries trop tôt, lorsqu'on n'a pas su trahir ses secrets ... avec la lenteur suffisante, on n'arrive qu'à un seul résultat: fortifier les défenses de ce contre quoi on prétend lutter.  
(RS, 83)

Butor seeks to defend his work from those against whom he struggles, from his enemies. Yet, the enemy is never totally excluded. In the search for survivors of a chaotic world in Illustrations III a place was reserved for "tout le rescapé dans l'ennemi" and in the third New Mexico letter of that volume the door to the marvellous world revealed by the eye of the artist was left open for the usurper. The "lecteur pressé" can always change his reading path.

In the Matière de Rêves series we saw that Butor's use of humour was a defence mechanism which was, on occasions, turned into a means of attack. In the second of Butor's explanations for his use of culture, "remuer la bibliothèque", we might see a similar reverse side of the coin which allows us to examine the relationship between Butor and the other elements of the "new world" collage of art, music and literature. Butor attacks the guardians of culture who would keep it hidden in their stores and organised into separate categories by crossing frontiers between his own works and those of other writers and between different regions of Art. To what extent is he successful in this method of "remuelement" and can he legitimately claim to have become a benevolent vampire? In answering the second of these questions, we feel, we will find an answer to the first and we shall attempt to do so by examining the reader's relationship with the source upon which Butor feeds most voraciously, art.

Let us begin by formulating the problem in more precise terms. In the Illustrations and Matière de Rêves series to what extent does the absence of the "illustrations" work to the detriment of the artist? Do we concentrate on the text and forget, more or less, about the artist? These questions appear difficult to answer for several reasons. For one thing, we always know that each particular text has been written in collaboration with a particular artist since their names are always included somewhere in the volume. Secondly, if, as is invariably the case, we are faced with difficulties in the reading of these texts, one of the most natural reactions is to seek out the source, the work of the artist, to see if this can be of any help to us. We seem always to be aware of the artist. However, once we have solved our problems do we then simply return to the text and ignore the contribution of the artist? It seems to us that we have difficulty answering our original questions because of a certain imbalance in our

perception of the source as we read.

In certain of the texts, the presence of individual works by the artist, despite their physical absence<sup>4</sup>, shines through very clearly, while in others it does not. The former seems to us to be true when there are several recognisable changes of scene in a text. This is particularly evident in "Le Rêve de Vénus" where almost every scene corresponds to a particular work by Delvaux which is readily identifiable and in "Le Rêve des Pommes" where we flit, as it were, from one piece of paper to another in a combination, a collage, of Kolár's collages which, once again, we can readily identify. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the case of the photographs of Adams, Brandt and Larsen in Illustrations and Illustrations II and, in a slightly different way, in "Octal" where Vasarely's pictures are actually named. We can also draw a parallel between these artistic works and the literary works which are actually quoted from in the Matière de Rêves series and in the obvious presence of the composer in works such as Votre Faust. We should like, therefore, to propose three general categories of artist: the first is composed of those, such as Delvaux or Brandt, to individual works of whom Butor's text takes us directly and in which the connection between text and painting is obvious; the second category would include such as Vasarely, where we can find the paintings but where the connection is not at all apparent; the third group would consist of such as Alechinsky, Bram van Velde or Soulages, where Butor is using a series of works, or even the whole body of production, and where, again, the connection is not clear. In our opinion Butor is doing a greater initial service to the latter two groups than to the first.

Our access to Butor's artistic sources is, unless we embark on a grand tour of the world's art galleries, almost exclusively through the medium of

the book or the catalogue. If we take as an example the work of Paul Delvaux we can easily find reproductions of his work. When we look at these we can immediately find paintings to which correspond certain parts of "Le Rêve de Vénus". The temptation is then to look no further. We go back to the text, having, as it were, come into contact with the surface of the paintings, realise the connection with the decor of the dream and make our interpretation, in which the paintings play little part, and give Delvaux little further thought. This also appears to us to be the reaction to those literary works which are quoted from directly. Once we establish the connection between Atala and "Le Rêve de l'huître" we do not tend to read any further in that novel. We recall in this respect Butor's fear of remaining on the surface of painting, of remaining a paper writer. A certain depth is perhaps added to our knowledge of Delvaux by the connection in his later works and in Butor's text, with Jules Verne. On the whole, however, we remain on the surface, at the level of the image in the book or catalogue.

In contrast, if we refer to a book on Vasarely and find the paintings named in "Octal", our reaction will be of almost complete consternation. There is clearly a vague connection between Vasarely's geometric figures and the octagonal "shape" of "Octal" but beyond that the reader may be left feeling puzzled and rather inadequate. In this type of situation, we feel, the reader's interest in the artist actually increases. Defeated by the surface, we explore the depth and avail ourselves of the critical text which invariably accompanies the reproductions. In the vast majority of cases this will not help us at all in the interpretation of the particular text. This is not important, however. We learn about the artist and his paintings and, moreover, we begin to see why Butor is collaborating with or using as his source this particular artist.



It may seem obvious or natural that Butor should collaborate with people who are of like mind but, in a great many cases, the extent to which this is the case is quite remarkable. We have, at times, seen evidence of this in the texts we have studied. In "Petites Liturgies Intimes" we saw that Hérold's technique of transparency, of seeing right through objects, was clearly comparable to Butor's desire to see reality and make reality visible to his readers. Despite the difference between the surrealist "mythe nouveau" and Butor's "new man" there was a clear parallel between the thought of the artist and that of the writer. A similar parallel can be drawn between the thought of Butor and Pousseur:

[La musique de Pousseur] est aussi une des plus <<politiques>>, non qu'elle obéisse aux mots d'ordre de quelque parti que ce soit, de quelque tonique ou dictature si bien timbrée, si bien intentionnée qu'elle se veuille, mais ce refus des frontières entre les États, entre les époques, ce refus de se laisser assimiler dans une uniformisation servile, dans la monotonie d'un dirigisme qui ne peut assurer sa domination qu'en excommuniant, fermant bien les verrous, ce refus, cette passion d'ouvrir des trous dans les remparts, de berner les douanes, c'est aussi bien sûr le refus des cloisons à l'intérieur de notre société, c'est la passion d'une société sans classes et sans castes, où chacun puisse manifester sa différence et sa relation unique aux autres noeuds du réseau, du flux, de la vibration. (RV, 253)

The description is Butor's and the cynical reader might be tempted to see in such a close parallel an echo of Butor's words at the end of Histoire Extraordinaire: "Certains estimeront peut-être que, désirant parler de Baudelaire, je n'ai réussi à parler que de moi-même" (HE, 267). Such a reader might be more convinced by the curious feeling that, in certain critical appreciations of artists, the critic is talking about Butor rather than the artist. A striking example of this is Otto Hahn's work on André Masson. Comments abound which could easily apply to Butor. Referring to Masson's second Surrealist period, Hahn remarks: "He went through all his work and picked up the loose strands".<sup>5</sup> Such a description could be applied to Butor's

method of writing in both the Illustrations and Matière de Rêves series, although the word "loose" might be debated. On the progression of Masson's work, Hahn comments: "Every step calls into being the step after".<sup>6</sup> We have described the progression of Butor's work in very similar terms. If these comments apply particularly to the structure of Butor's work we have only to look as far as Vasarely to find comparable objectives and means of achieving those objectives. Here the critic is Gaston Diehl:

The ultimate ambition is to enlarge the work to the dimensions of the city, and soon of the universe, of today. He therefore insists on the profound need for an art with a monumental vocation, on the desirable connections with architecture, on the resources offered by the new materials, and on the beneficent contribution of an expression which meets the needs of the community.<sup>7</sup>

The monumental vocation of Vasarely's art is comparable to Butor's objective of global integration expressed in Illustrations III and made concrete in the series Le Génie du Lieu. Vasarely's call for connections with other branches of art to achieve his aim is even more clearly expressed in the following quotation from the artist himself:

Easel painting is not outmoded in the negative sense of the word. But there is a transition from the individual to the collective which in our age is appearing in a genuinely new guise because of the evolution of technology. I believe that the plastic arts are ripe for a vast synthesis of painting, sculpture, architecture and urban planning ... The new techniques and their marriage are opening limitless horizons to us.<sup>8</sup>

We are reminded here of Butor's own collaboration with other branches of culture, of his call for the artist to leave no means of expression untouched in Illustrations III, of his own transition from the individual to the collective and of the limitless horizons opened up for him by the world of art.

We have cited the work of Masson and Vasarely. We could have chosen

Hérould, Kolár or Soulages and many more. Such close parallels between the work of Butor and that of his sources indicate that Butor is far from being alone on the journey which he has undertaken. More fundamentally, such parallels beg the question: to what extent can the work of modern artists and composers be regarded as an influence on Butor rather than as a mere source? To what extent can we find in his difference, his identity as Butor, a similarity to the other inhabitants of this particular collage? Such questions unfold a potentially fascinating area of study. We have, in a sense, come back to Butor but a profound analysis of the work and thought of contemporary artists and composers would be called for in the type of comparative study we are suggesting. Butor's use of art, then, not only brings the work of artists out of storage for us to see, but also appears to demand a study of them in their own right and in the way in which their aims parallel those of Butor and, indeed other writers. Here we seem to have a prime and concrete example of what Butor means by "remuer la bibliothèque". Butor's artists are not only brought out of storage but a change is called for in their position on the shelf. Finally, we can close the circle by suggesting that our reaction to artists such as Vasarely encourages us to return to Delvaux in search of what we may have overlooked. In the same way the unquoted presence of Kafka encourages us to examine more closely Chateaubriand or Zola. We feel that Butor can definitely claim to have become a benevolent vampire and that his texts "creusent un désir de savoir".

Our discussions of the collage identity which Butor has acquired from art, music and literature has caused us to call into question the barrier between source and influence, to blur the distinction between similarity and difference, to end with a question rather than an answer. In the

identity which Butor already possessed prior to his adventures with art and music we might, perhaps, expect to be a little more certain. In our study we have encountered three specific areas<sup>9</sup> which may be considered as influential, the thought behind the "open work", Freudian dream theory and phenomenology.

We first encountered the thought behind the "open work" in our discussion of 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. In that work Butor used the principles of the "open work" to solve the problem of the reader's freedom. He managed to create a balanced work in which his desire to communicate a message to the reader did not impinge on the independence of the reader who was able to find his own way to the message, to create, in effect, an "open work". Openness then became an inherent quality of both the Illustrations series, from Illustrations II onwards, and the Matière de Rêves series, in both of which it appeared most strongly as a defence mechanism allied to the alchemical concepts of hermeticism and initiation. Butor remains faithful to the basic principles of the "open work" but adds something of his own, using it in a related but slightly different way. The degree of difference between Butor and the thought behind the "open work" is relatively small.

The influence of Freudian dream theory on Butor's work was apparent as early as his second novel L'Emploi du Temps, re-appearing sporadically in Réseau Aérien and Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe and finally coming into its own in the Matière de Rêves series. The dreams of all these works are based on the Freudian axis of anxiety and wish-fulfilment while standard dream symbols provide the key to the interpretation of the first three volumes of the Matière de Rêves series. In the latter, and in the capriccio, we can see that Butor parodies dream symbols and adapts the anxiety/wish fulfilment axis whenever it suits his purposes. Because of his

desire to present real solutions to his problems and his concern with the field of art, both the Freudian axis and standard symbolism are too restrictive for Butor. He is obliged to deviate from Freudian theory but this deviation nonetheless brings something new to it. Freudian theory becomes a basis for invention in another sphere. It has not been rejected in its own field but, like "Regard Double", given a new rôle in another. In this transformation we can see a relatively high degree of difference between Butor and Freudian dream theory.

The influence of phenomenology also appeared at an early stage of Butor's production. We can see a phenomenological influence in his rejection of the notion of enigma in L'Emploi du Temps:

The world and reason are not problematical. We may say, if we wish that they are mysterious, but their mystery defines them: there can be no question of dispelling it by some 'solution', it is on the hither side of all solutions.<sup>10</sup>

In L'Emploi du Temps Butor expands the field of expression of phenomenology by allying it to his own concern with the myth of imperial dominance, presenting the latter as just such a solution and then denying its validity and, indeed, the validity of all solutions. He goes on in La Modification to combine the theme of change with the phenomenological concept of time as continuous flux, presenting reality itself as a continuum of temporal transformation. In Illustrations IV and Second sous-sol the concept of time as flux is applied respectively to collage and literature so that both become comparable to time and, therefore, to transformation.

Butor's use of art as the instrument through which reality can be seen also points to an underlying phenomenological conception of the work of art. In Illustrations II we saw that distance from reality was a necessary pre-requisite for the clear perception of reality and that this distance

characterised the work of the artist and of the writer. In the work of art reality appears out of context, placed where it can be more clearly perceived. The work of art appears like a window on the world, almost like a spectacle which we view. Reality is as if painted on a canvas which can be as much that of the book as that of the painting. This change of context, this distance taken from reality is very clearly related to the phenomenological withdrawal:

It is because we are through and through compounded of relationships with the world that for us the only way to become aware of the fact is to suspend the resultant activity, to refuse it our complicity (to look at it ohne mitzumachen, as Husserl often says), or yet again to put it 'out of play'.<sup>11</sup>

Thus Léon Delmont's withdrawal from the activity of his life permits his modification and thus, too, he will write the book which will enable him to see and understand the experience he has lived through.

It is in the second stage of this process that we can see philosophy give way to art, Merleau-Ponty or Husserl give way to Butor and, also, the work of art become philosophy: "True philosophy consists in relearning to look at the world".<sup>12</sup> Phenomenology, in Butor's conception of reality, literature, collage and the work of art, appears as the most abiding of the influences upon him and, in the close interaction between the two, we have the strongest impression of Butor's similarity in difference, difference in similarity. Once again we seem to have blurred the distinction between similarity and difference, although in a different way. Butor seems to elude even the reader of goodwill. We are left with a limb, but can we be sure it is his? In a slightly different sense from that which was intended, the final influence might be a Sartrian one: Butor is what he is not, and is not what he is.

In this discussion of Butor's cultural identity we have seen the writer at various stages of passage between similarity and difference. We have seen a writer who mixes his own blood with that of others in varying degrees:

C'est le métis qui fait bouger, le noir et le blanc, celui qui mue ... Celui à l'intérieur de qui passe la frontière.  
(RS, 182, 183)

Butor has appeared as an open frontier through which other elements pass on their way to a new collage world in which all exist harmoniously, equal in their difference. As frontier, Butor appears simultaneously as the living collage, the living humility and the living transformation to which he is committed, unity from diversity, diversity in unity.

We are, of course, unable to answer the question posed at the beginning of this conclusion. We hope, however, to have removed some of the confusion and contention which underlie the question. Wherever Butor goes, he will doubtless proceed with logic, care and humility in his search for our new worlds. We do not know what to expect from Butor in the future. Perhaps all that we can say with certainty is that Butor will remain committed to change, that there will be more of the same, in a different way.

Et puis ...  
Et puis on verra bien.<sup>13</sup>

FOOTNOTES

1. Georges Raillard, 'Nos Archéologies intimes', La Quinzaine Littéraire, 16th - 31st May 1981, p. 7.
2. Madeleine Santschi, Voyage avec Michel Butor, L'Age d'Homme, 1983, p. 125.
3. Butor: Colloque de Cerisy, U.G.E., 1974, p. 440.
4. This "presence within absence" absolves us of the need to discuss separately "Livres de luxe" or works such as Obliques where Butor's text appears alongside the original or reproductions of the artist's work. The problem is essentially the same, differing only in the degree of presence of the artist's work.
5. Otto Hahn, Masson, Abrams, 1965, p. 14.
6. Hahn, p. 5.
7. Gaston Diehl, Vasarely, Bonfini Press, 1973, p. 29.
8. Diehl, p. 33.
9. There are, of course, many more. See Santschi, pp. 109 - 127.
10. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, translated by Colin Smith, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962, p. XX.
11. Merleau-Ponty, p. XIII.
12. Merleau-Ponty, p. XX.
13. Santschi, p. 222.



## APPENDIX ONE

In this appendix we reproduce in full the two versions of Chateaubriand's description of Niagara Falls used by Butor in 6 810 000 Litres d'eau par seconde. The first is taken from Essai historique, politique et moral sur les Révolutions anciennes et modernes considérées dans leurs Rapports avec la Révolution française. The second appears in the novel Atala.

### Version One:

Elle est formée par la rivière Niagara, qui sort du lac Érié, et se jette dans l'Ontario. A environ neuf milles de ce dernier lac se trouve la chute; sa hauteur perpendiculaire peut être d'environ deux cents pieds. Mais ce qui contribue à la rendre si violente, c'est que, depuis le lac Érié jusqu'à la cataracte, le fleuve arrive toujours en déclinant par une pente rapide, dans un cours de près de six lieues; en sorte qu'au moment même du saut, c'est moins une rivière qu'une mer impétueuse, dont les cent mille torrents se pressent à la bouche béante d'un gouffre. La cataracte se divise en deux branches, et se courbe en un fer à cheval d'environ un demi-mille de circuit. Entre les deux chutes s'avance un énorme rocher creusé en dessous, qui pend, avec tous ses sapins, sur le chaos des ondes. La masse du fleuve, qui se précipite au midi, se bombe et s'arrondit comme une vaste cylindre au moment qu'elle quitte le bord, puis se déroule en nappe de neige et brille au soleil de toutes les couleurs du prisme: celle qui tombe au nord descend dans une ombre effrayante, comme une colonne d'eau du déluge. Des arcs-en-ciel sans nombre se courbent et se croisent sur l'abîme, dont les terribles mugissements se font entendre à soixante milles à la ronde. L'onde, frappant le roc ébranlé, rejaillit en tourbillons d'écume qui, s'élevant au-dessus des forêts, ressemblent aux fumées épaisses d'un vaste embrasement. Des rochers démesurés et gigantesques, taillés en forme de fantômes, décorent la scène sublime; des noyers sauvages, d'un aubier rougeâtre et écailleux, croissent chétivement sur ces squelettes fossiles. On ne voit auprès aucun animal vivant, hors des aigles qui, en planant au-dessus de la cataracte où ils viennent chercher leur proie, sont entraînés par le courant d'air, et forcés de descendre en tournoyant au fond de l'abîme. Quelque carcajou tigré, se suspendant par sa longue queue à l'extrémité d'une branche abaissée, essaie d'attraper les débris des corps noyés des élans et des ours que la remole jette à bord.

### Version Two:

Nous arrivâmes bientôt au bord de la cataracte, qui s'annonçait par d'affreux mugissements. Elle est formée par la rivière Niagara, qui sort du lac Érié, et se jette dans le lac Ontario; sa hauteur

perpendiculaire est de cent quarante-quatre pieds. Depuis le lac Érié jusqu'au Saut, le fleuve accourt, par une pente rapide, et au moment de la chute, c'est moins un fleuve qu'une mer, dont les torrents se pressent à la bouche béante d'un gouffre. La cataracte se divise en deux branches, et se courbe en fer à cheval. Entre les deux chutes s'avance une île creusée en dessous, qui pend avec tous ses arbres sur le chaos des ondes. La masse du fleuve qui se précipite au midi, s'arrondit en un vaste cylindre, puis se déroule en nappe de neige, et brille au soleil de toutes les couleurs. Celle qui tombe au levant descend dans une ombre effrayante; on dirait une colonne d'eau du déluge. Mille arcs-en-ciel se courbent et se croisent sur l'abîme. Frappant le roc ébranlé, l'eau rejaillit en tourbillons d'écume, qui s'élèvent au-dessus des forêts, comme les fumées d'un vaste embrasement. Des pins, des noyers sauvages, des rochers taillés en forme de fantômes, décorent la scène. Des aigles entraînés par le courant d'air, descendent en tournoyant au fond du gouffre; et des carcajous se suspendent par leurs queues flexibles au bout d'une branche abaissée, pour saisir dans l'abîme, les cadavres brisés des élans et des ours.

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This bibliography is highly selective in terms of both primary and secondary material. In the primary material we have included only those works by Butor which are directly relevant to the thesis. All other works, major or minor, have been omitted. For a more exhaustive listing of Butor's published works the reader should refer to the bibliography of F. C. St. Aubyn, details of which are contained in this bibliography. In the secondary material we have included works which are either of direct relevance to this study or of particular general interest to the student of Butor. An exhaustive list of secondary material can be found in the checklist compiled by Barbara Mason, details of which, once again, we reproduce below. We have listed both primary and secondary material in alphabetical order.

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