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LYRIC AND GENDER: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY FEMALE AND MALE POETS

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LYRIC AND GENDER:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
TWENTIETH-CENTURY FEMALE AND MALE POETS

By

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ABSTRACT

LYRIC AND GENDER:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
TWENTIETH-CENTURY FEMALE AND MALE POETS

By

Karen Bouwer

French women poets have received little critical attention. Critics of male poets consider gender irrelevant. On the other hand, in the scant commentary dealing with women poets, even sympathetic readers inevitably discuss gender. This differential treatment of male and female poets points not necessarily to inherent qualities of the poetry, but to the expectations readers bring to texts when they know the writer's gender.

This comparative study attempts to determine whether there are differences that can be attributed to gender. Eight modern poets are treated: Yvonne Caroutch, Claire Lejeune, Thérèse Plantier, Marie Françoise Prager, Yves Bonnefoy, André du Bouchet, Jacques Garelli and Philippe Jaccottet. Although our knowledge of cultural clichés easily allows us all to distinguish between so-called "masculine" and "feminine" attributes in writing, establishing an exhaustive list of them or even selecting a few salient features is no simple task (1) because of the pervasiveness of these clichés, and (2) because qualities considered strengths in men can become negatively valorized when associated with women. We draw on a variety of sources in the various chapters, but the list of binary

oppositions evoked by Hélène Cixous in "Sorties" serves as the primary basis for the stereotypes examined.

Our readings focus on the images used by the poets, and show that they are not necessarily consistent with gender-based expectations. Even if we accept the negative connotations of so-called "feminine" elements, then, such elements do not distinctively characterize modern French women's poetry. The question remains: Why are these women poets not read? Social and political concerns, while providing the impetus for this study, are outside its scope. We do, however, urge more readings of texts by women and more gender studies, to map any real differences that may exist and/or to demonstrate that presumed differences are not in fact so pronounced as is generally believed.

A detailed examination of texts can illuminate the contributions of women poets, while exposing the erroneous assumptions brought to texts known to be authored by women.

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INTRODUCTION

To this day, discussions about French poetry refer to the poets with the neutral, universal "he." This gender bias is not merely a linguistic phenomenon. It reflects how thoroughly twentieth-century women poets have been ignored in France. Since they are not regularly studied, anthologies provide one of the only sources of information about them. Even when their works are anthologized, they are usually labeled as women's poetry, e.g., in Poésie 1: La Poésie féminine contemporaine (No. 6, 1969), Poésie 1: La Nouvelle poésie féminine (Nos. 39/40, 1975), La Poésie féminine: Epoque moderne by Jeanine Moulin (1963)[1] and more recently The Defiant Muse (1986)[2] edited by Domna Stanton (which anthologizes specifically feminist poetry from the Middle Ages to the present and therefore contains only a handful of twentieth century poets). Among the exceptions are Serge Brindeau's by now outdated La Poésie contemporaine de langue française depuis 1945 (1973),[3] which provides some biographical information and a short introduction to the works of each poet as well as extracts from poems, and which includes many women poets, and Jean Breton's Chroniques sur le vif,[4] collecting reviews that he wrote over a period of thirty years (1952-1980). He too includes several women in this collection. Carl Hermey's more limited volume, Contemporary French Women Poets: A Bilingual Critical Anthology (1977),[5] anthologizes and comments on the works of six women poets. A

handful of articles can also be found, usually dealing with more than one poet at a time, and accomplishing little more than to signal their existence to the public. Very few full-length studies of a twentieth-century woman poet exist.

Dozens of anthologies purporting to present "twentieth-century poetry" should more truthfully bear a title such as "twentieth-century male poets." The exclusion of women is never mentioned or justified. Fortunately, this oversight seems to be becoming less prevalent. Two more recent volumes that include poetry by women are Henri Deluy's Poésie en France, 1983-1988: Une Anthologie critique (1989)[6] and a thirtieth anniversary collection for Jean Grassin, 30 Ans de poésie contemporaine, 1957-1987: Anthologie (1988).[7] But critical discussion is apparently lagging behind the anthologies, for example, at a 1984 colloquium with the general title Espace et Poésie,[8] papers were presented by poets and critics, both men and women, but no mention of poetry by women was made, not even by Marie-Claire Banquart, herself a poet. At this colloquium Michel Deguy, Jacques Garelli and Yves Bonnefoy presented papers. The works of Bonnefoy and Jaccottet were discussed. (Jaccottet has also written about Bonnefoy and Du Bouchet in Entretiens des Muses and in Une Transaction secrète). There is considerable discussion of male poets by male poets. Yves Bonnefoy makes one exception in this regard: he writes a very positive article about Marceline Desbordes-Valmore in La Vérité de

parole (19).[9] But what about his contemporaries? And when in Entretien des Muses (1968)[10] Jaccottet decides to write something about a woman poet, the typography in the index is changed so as to marginalize her. Articles dealing with men's works are set up as follows:

YVES BONNEFOY Vers le "vrai lieu" (1967)251

while the reference to the woman poet appears thus:

Sur l'effusion (Anne Perrier) (1967)247

Not only does her name not appear in capital letters, it is put in parentheses. In La Semaison,[11] a collection of his notebooks for the period 1954-1979, he does however make references to Louise Labé and to Simone Weil, and in Une Transaction secrète (1987)[12] he devotes another short article to Anne Perrier, this time not singling her out as he had done in his previous volume. Despite these rare exceptions, it appears that most of the dialogue concerning poetry is conducted by men about men. The title of Stanton's anthology, The Defiant Muse, is therefore significant and points to the transgression committed when women take up the pen, especially to write poetry.[13] The same image is used by Jane McLelland in her article "Now That the Muse is Writing: *Ecriture féminine* and Contemporary French Women's Poetry."[14]

In an attempt to understand the exclusion of women poets from anthologies and discussions of literary criticism, we can look at the discourse surrounding poetry and the role attributed to poetry in this second half of the twentieth

century. Since this is not a sociological study but a study of poetry, we shall stay within the domain of poetic images when examining this discourse. Michel Deguy characterizes our world in this way:

> La crise de l'être-ensemble ne cesse de couver: il s'agit de la déclarer, dans le ressaisissement (revirginisation par le mythique, la con*sol*idation du destin terrestre), des liens de l'être-ensemble avec les choses, la langue, la justice, la fraternité (20)[15]
>
> [The crisis of being-together continues to intensify/grow: we must articulate it, in the recapturing (revirginization through the mythic, the re*ground*ing of earthly destiny), of the ties of being-together with things, language, justice, fraternity.]

According to Deguy, we are in a state of crisis with regard to our relationships to other people, and to the earth. What role can the poet play in this world?

> à côté des problèmes de l'articulation politique du social, l'inventive activité poétique peut, en mots, en oeuvres, en gestes, en silences, en allégories, refrayer, réindiquer des modes de rapprochement de l'essentiel -- qu'il ne faudrait plus appeler "l'essentiel"; réorganiser l'appartenance cosmique, historique, langagière, éthique. (20)
>
> [alongside the problems of the political articulation of the social, poetic invention, can, through words, works,

> gestures, silences, allegories, retrace, show once again the modes of approaching the essential -- which it is no longer proper to call "the essential"; reorganize cosmic, historical, language, ethical belonging.]

Deguy proposes that in this reductionist world, the poets are trying to preserve our sense of what it is to be human and that this humanity is fragile, threatened, and therefore in need of protection. If so, there seems no obvious reason why women poets should be excluded. If we give credence to roles attributed to women throughout the ages, are women not the ones who are traditionally and stereotypically associated with acts of bringing together, of (re)conciliation ("rapprochement," "appartenance")? We are not saying that this is what women are and do rather than that with which they are associated. Even the repetition of "re-" seems to indicate a realm associated with women, namely the preservation of tradition. It is men who are portrayed as venturing forth in search of "new" worlds, of exploring. Con*sol*idation can also be said to be within the feminine realm because it is women who are traditionally associated with the earth, with matter. Why are women poets excluded even when the imagery used to describe the goals of poetry conforms to those associated with them?

There are two ways of approaching this problem and each offers only a partial explanation. Historically poetry is not a woman's genre and poetry is "sacred" and should not be

desacralized by an approach that (inappropriately) draws attention to gender.

The novel, "lacking a venerated tradition of rules and conventions" (Stanton, xvi) is conventionally a women's genre. The novel was considered as less organized and disciplined than other forms, and as lying outside the classical canon of genres inherited from antiquity. Stanton quotes Woolf's remark in A Room of One's Own that "all the older forms of literature were hardened and set by the time she became a writer" (xvi). Gilbert and Gubar also address the obstacles to women's poetry in the introduction to their Shakespeare's Sisters.[16] They point out that this dichotomy of the novel versus older genres was further reinforced by feminist criticism which tended to concentrate on novelists rather than poets: "this critical blindness to women poets" which "demonstrates that the same conditions that originally restricted most women writers to the novel still obtain" (7). Conditions may have changed in the United States (where studies of Sylvia Plath and Adrienne Rich, among others, seem to abound), but this "critical blindness to women poets" is still alive and well in France, despite judgments such as the following:

> Yvonne Caroutch n'avait pas vingt ans et sa voix portait déjà si bien que Luc Bérimont pouvait voir en elle l'un des deux avènements de l'année littéraire (1954), l'autre se nommant Françoise Sagan. (Brindeau, 107)

> [Yvonne Caroutch was not even twenty years old and her voice already carried so well that Luc Bérimont saw in her one of the two happenings of the literary year (1954), the other being Françoise Sagan.]

Sagan's name is familiar but what about Caroutch's?

The "rules and conventions" of the "venerated tradition" which kept the women out attribute an almost sacred quality to poetry:

> Enshrined as the highest, most esoteric language in Western thought, poetry has been considered the property of a priestly figure whose gifts derive from or refer back to the godhead. (Stanton, xv)

The poet is called "bard or vates, genius or prophet" and

> has often been identified with the Adam of Genesis 2:19, the sole beneficiary of God's power to name. Down through the Judeo-Christian ages, this priestly figure has enjoyed a privileged connection to inspiration and enthusiasm--the breath and voice of the transcendental Father. In turn, he initiates neophyte sons into the s e c r e t knowledge of ancient glyphs and tongues, laws and rules, codes and conventions. (xv, xvi)

An obvious example of the poet as prophet is Hugo's visionary; even in the twentieth century Saint-John Perse presents the poet as a shaman. While this view does not persist in the same form today, I would like to suggest that there are

remnants of it in the way we approach poetry today. The poet is still the keeper of the sacred, albeit a secular sacred.

I would venture to say that this conception has not only kept women poets at bay, it has also prevented critics from carrying out gender studies on men's poetry. In an article on Du Bouchet, Janine Holman evokes the precariousness of the position of poetry in our world today:

> La poésie traverse le temps de la détresse, dit Du Bouchet, affrontée au nihilisme contemporain qu'elle ne récuse pas mais endure.[17] (60)
>
> [Poetry is going through a period of distress, says Du Bouchet, because it is faced with contemporary nihilism, which it endures rather than challenges.]

She also talks about the "attacks" which poetry has recently endured:

> Durant cette même période la poésie a été confrontée à une autre diffraction, celle imposée par le savoir; en effet, la poésie s'est vue auscultée jusqu'en ses derniers recès par de multiples moyens d'investigation tirés des sciences humaines, comme la linguistique, la psychanalyse, l'anthropologie, la sémiotique. Sous ce pluralisme critique à haute tension s'est produit un déplacement du lieu de lecture du poème. (60)
>
> [During this same period, poetry has been confronted with another diffraction (twist/warp), one imposed by learning /scholarship; in fact, poetry saw itself examined in its

deepest recesses by multiple means of investigation gleaned from the human sciences such as linguistics, psychoanalysis, anthropology, semiotics. This high-tension critical pluralism produced a displacement in the space from which the poem is read.]

These approaches may have become more legitimate in the United States and in relation to the novel, but criticism of French poetry reveals that it is still not common when analyzing poetry, despite Holman's evocation of the displacement of the space of reading.

> Son lieu d'interpétation quittait les images que le poème propose, *les visages du monde*, les apparences si chères au poète. *Le monde surgi du poème* était provisoirement mis entre parenthèses. Le sens de ce monde allait être déchiffré dans un ailleurs, dans des champs du savoir autres que le savoir immédiat de la poésie. (60) (Emphasis added)
>
> [The space of interpretation came to be at a remove from the images proposed by the poem, *the faces of the world*, the appearances so dear to the poet. *The world that had emanated from the poem* was bracketed. The meaning of this world was going to be deciphered in an elsewhere, in realms of knowledge other than the immediate knowledge provided by the poetry.]

Holman perceives such readings as almost sacrilegious because they do not respect the integrity of the world created by the poet/poem.

One must admit that a gender study risks being classified with these "sacrilegious" approaches because the poem is read from outside, from a context other than the one created by the poem. Deguy states quite clearly that "le poème est le contexte" (Deguy, 24), [the poem is the context]. And it is true that much modern poetry is understandable only if one is prepared to enter into the universe created by the poet and to accept on their own terms the elements that constitute that universe. In that sense poetry certainly does create its own context, a context we are supposed to accept unquestioningly. Jean-Pierre Richard's studies are exemplary of the way we are supposed to read poetry: he identifies (usually in binary oppositions) and examines the recurring images of a work and then extrapolates from them the poet's vision. According to Deguy, the poetic is the writing (but also the reading, I would argue) "du poème dans la circonstance de sa demande, de son accomplissement et de son agir propre." (19) [of the poem in the circumstance(s) of its demand, of its accomplishment and of its own act.] If the creation of the context of the poem by the poem itself is inherent in the poetic enterprise, it certainly makes it difficult to ask extrinsic types of questions, especially if we move away from texts that are at least somewhat mimetic. In a universe where there is no clear

representation of men and women, how does one ask questions about gender? By examining the space of production as Griselda Pollock shows in "Painting, Feminism, History."[18]

> The artist is canonically male (signalling the fusion of Culture with masculinity); *his* material is female (the assimilation of nature, matter and femininity). (138, 140)

In poetry also the "artist is canonically male". What is of particular interest is the statement she makes about non-representational art:

> the purity of the visual signifier, seemingly emptied of all reference to a social or natural world, is still loaded with significance through its function as affirmation of its artistic subject. (142)

Even when poems do not refer to relations between men and women and where only "human" subjects are portrayed, the artist is still mostly male, the poem is still the "site of expression of the creative self." (145) And images of the "colonizing masculine mastery" (142) of which she speaks shine through in discourse about poetry, despite all the references to "rapprochement" and "appartenance." Let us now examine Deguy's characterizations of poetry:

> Poétique [...] serait [...] l'acte inaugurateur qui instaure [...] qui trace en ajointant, qui incise un partage, etc.: alliance. Choisissez les exemples du conquistador "prenant possession" du Pacifique [...]. En

> quoi le poème écrit par un "poète" correspond-il à cet "acte" inaugurant? (25)
>
> [Poetic (...) would be (...) the inaugurating act that installs (...) that links while tracing, that abolishes a division, etc.: alliance/union. Choose the examples of the conquistador "taking possession" of the Pacific (...). In what sense does the poem written by a "poet" correspond to this inaugurating "act?"]

Deguy's images are contradictory. This joining of the different points of space ("ajointant," "alliance") can be seen as "feminine" but what about "incise?" How do "alliance" and "incise" complement each other? The image of colonists planting poles (to be linked by lines, fences) to stake off their land comes to mind. The example of the conquistador, despite the quotation marks meant to attenuate the act of taking possession (by pointing out its figurative nature), highlights the violence of such an enterprise (or by implying the impossibility of such an enterprise - taking possession of an ocean, that is - negates or denies the violence inflicted). Are the images of "rapprochement" and "appartenance" undermined or do the more "masculine" images complement the "feminine" ones? Either way, the exclusion of women would not be explained. Being required to read poetry on its own terms prevents precisely the kinds of readings which would bring up questions about the exclusion of women poets.

*

To compare the work of a female poet with that of a male poet inevitably raises the question about the validity of studies of gender differences, because such an enterprise appears to posit inherent differences between women and men which will manifest themselves in their writings. To be sure, such differences need not be solely physical. Even Hélène Cixous, who privileges the body in her writings, acknowledges the role of socialization and cultural heritage in constituting gender identity:

> men and women are caught up in a network of millenial cultural determinations of a complexity that is practically unanalyzable.[19]

So to set out in search of discernible differences, does not oblige one to consider them innate. We have all been raised either as a "woman" or a "man": these terms refer to constructs rather than to natural identities to which we have unmediated access. In her introduction to The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir stresses that one *becomes* a woman:

> When I use the words woman or feminine I evidently refer to no archetype, no changeless essence whatever; the reader must understand the phrase "in the present state of education and custom" after most of my statements.[20]

Although De Beauvoir is countering the essentialist position, she is still implying that it is possible to define what a woman eventually becomes. More recently Judith Butler, in

Gender Trouble,[21] has rejected the teleological implication in De Beauvoir's statement about becoming. For her gender "is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred" (16). In fact, she denies the very possibility of gender identity:

> identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results. (25)

We will further address this issue of essentialism versus social constructionism in Chapter 1, which deals with the question of identity. For now, it will suffice to explain that we are not ascribing the differences simply to the biological sex of the author, which leads us to another important distinction. Often when statements are made about women's writing, it seems to be assumed that if one is a woman, one will necessarily display certain characteristics, that these characteristics will shine through unconsciously, no matter what. This assumption can be made whether one subscribes to a biological or a social constructionist viewpoint. But it is obviously specious. To choose one among a myriad of examples, the lengthy discussion about the author of Les Lettres portugaises -- were they written by a real woman or by a man writing like a woman? -- discredits much of the theoretical debate around gender differences in writing.[22] As does an anecdote related by Jean Breton about Robert Champigny who asked his students to comment on poems from Poésie féminine d'aujourd'hui:

> Il leur avait lu des poèmes de ce choix, en vrac, sans indiquer le nom des auteurs. Tous déclarèrent ne pouvoir décider s'il s'agissait de voix féminines ou masculines! (Preface to La Poésie féminine contemporaine)
>
> [He had read a selection of these poems, at random, without providing the names of the authors. All of them admitted that they were unable to decide whether the voices were those of men or of women!]

Certainly, all women have not approached writing in the same way. Marguerite Yourcenar and Nathalie Sarraute, for example, have always refused the label of 'woman writer' and do not consider their status as women to be of any importance in their writing. Sandra Gilbert, however, asserts that even a denial of femininity "would surely be significant to an understanding of the dynamics of [a woman's] aesthetic creativity." For doesn't denial tell? Doesn't it betray that the speaker's position is marginal?

> "I don't think of myself as a man"; "I'm just a person, I just think of myself as a person." If one is the norm, one does not have to know what one is. If one is marginal, one does not have the privilege of not noticing what one is.[23]

That men's writing speaks for humanity and therefore voices universal concerns has not been questioned until recently, with the rise of feminist scholarship. And men are still not asked such questions as: "Is it valid/of value to write as a

[man], and is it part of your writing practice today?", a question posed by Alice Jardine and Anne Menke when interviewing fourteen French women writers.[24] (279) The question proves the marginal position of the women writers: they would not have to deny anything if they were not asked this type of question. Significantly, even Monique Wittig, who explicitly works toward the subversion of the dominant paradigm from both a feminist and lesbian perspective, still feels obliged explicitly to reject the label of woman writer. Yourcenar and Sarraute, on the other hand, deal with gender-neutral issues.

So a further distinction is necessary. It is obviously not simply a question of content, but of women's relationship to language. Laurence Enjolras quotes the reactions of several women writers, among them Marguerite Duras:

> Pendant vingt ans, on a parlé de mes livres comme des livres de femme, jusqu'au jour où j'ai refusé de répondre à des interviews qui portaient justement sur le fait d'être femme et d'écrire. J'ai demandé un jour à un journaliste s'il interviewait des nègres ou des juifs au même titre. Il n'a pas compris.[25]
>
> [For twenty years, my books were discussed as those of a woman author, until the day that I refused to give interviews which dealt specifically with the fact of being a woman and writing. I once asked a journalist

whether he interviewed Negroes and Jews in the same way. He didn't understand.]

Wittig supports this oppositional tactic when she states that "no woman can say 'I' without being for herself a total subject -- that is, ungendered, universal, whole" and that language "as a whole gives everyone the same power of becoming an absolute subject through its exercise" (Straight Mind, 80). Of course not all women or feminists agree on this issue and works about our "man-made language,"[26] such as Dale Spender's, abound. She claims that the rules of grammar, the ideological baggage of lexis

> and the sexist judgements of academic literary criticism have conspired to undervalue women's language and creativity, denying them access to the only vehicle of communication that communication brings. (McKluskie, 51)

Even Wittig, in Les Guérillères, seems to give some credence to this idea that women are oppressed by language:

> Elles disent, le langage que tu parles t'empoisonne la glotte la langue le palais les lèvres. Elles disent, le langage que tu parles est fait de mots qui te tuent. (Enjolras, 21)

[The women say, the language you speak poisons your glottis tongue palate lips. They say, the language you speak is made up of words that are killing you.][27]

But it is also true that literature, writing as an art, always presupposes at least minimal mastery of language, at least

some control over the raw material of language, perhaps especially in the case of poetry. Wittig, like others, insists on the difference between the language we speak, and the language we control when we write. So if we afford women some autonomy in their use of language we can identify three approaches: a neutral, gender-free approach; *l'écriture féminine;* and a feminist approach. One's approach, of course, partly depends on one's topic, as Cixous points out:

> As Clarice Lispector says: "I'm a woman, plus something else". A part of me is specifically woman and the rest of me is human. *It's the same for a man.* These are the backgrounds of inscription, of thinking in the text, which are distinguishable from each other.
>
> If I were to write a historical novel, what would it matter if I were a man or a woman? But if I write about love, then it does matter. I write differently. If I write something letting something of my body come through, then this will be different, depending on whether I have experience of a feminine or a masculine body. (Emphasis added)[28] (151)

L'Ecriture féminine would then be a deliberate effort to foreground the woman's experience of her body, as Ann Rosalin Jones explains in "Writing the Body: Toward and Understanding of *L'Ecriture féminine.*"[29] The specter of biologism has been raised in regard to the approaches of Julia Kristeva (who posits the irruption of the feminine Semiotic into the

masculine Symbolic), Luce Irigaray (who insists on the psychosexual specificity of women) and Hélène Cixous, but much of the (re)valorization of women's experiences undertaken by the proponents of *écriture féminine* in fact seems to stem from the negative attitudes toward their bodies instilled by their socialization and is therefore not a case of unmediated experience of the body. A feminist approach to language is subversive and defines itself in opposition to the dominant tradition, notably, where vocabulary is concerned. Examples are neologisms (e.g. with prefixes such as "gyn-" and "sor-" as in "gynocriticism" the term coined by Elaine Showalter); the feminization of terms by adding (in French) suffixes such as "-esse" and "-aine" or simply an "e" as in "auteure" or "écrivaine" (common in Canada); a return to etymological meanings (e.g. "commère" did not have a negative connotation in the Middle Ages); the creation of "mots-valises"; and the breaking up of words thereby creating new meanings (e.g. the tile of Mary Daly's Gyn-Ecology).[30] (62)

Recognizing women's autonomy in language does not, however, resolve the problem that many elements of language have been inflected by the dominant position historically occupied by men. The linguist Deborah Cameron comments on the marginalizing effect of grammatical gender on women (masculine terms always being unmarked as opposed to the marked feminine terms):

> men have available to represent them a discourse of general humanness, as well as a discourse of masculine sexuality, while women have available to them only one discourse in which their sexuality is paramount. Men may efface their masculinity, but femininity can never be effaced. This produces the effect that women are an exception to the male norm.[31] (69)

And Wittig agrees:

> The result of the imposition of gender, acting as a denial at the very moment when one speaks, is to deprive women of the authority of speech, and to force them to make their entrance in a crablike way, particularizing themselves and apologizing profusely. The result is to deny them any claim to the abstract, philosophical, political discourses that give shape to the social body. (Straight Mind, 81)

This constraint is of course especially prominent in French, and Wittig has concentrated much of her effort on personal pronouns ("on" in L'Opoponax and "elles" in Les Guérillères) in order to universalize the particular. According to Wittig, a text by a minority writer "is effective only if it succeeds in making the minority view universal, only if it is an important literary text" (Straight Mind, 64) and it does this by assuring that formal experimentation is not overshadowed by the (particularizing) content.

There are times, though, when the content is not particularizing but the work is still particularized once it is known that the author is a woman. This brings us to a question studied in detail by Dale Spender in her work The Writing or the Sex? or why you don't have to read women's writing to know it's no good: women's works are either judged a priori as being inferior (and therefore not even worthy of being read, unless with pitying condescension) or they are approached with a whole series of stereotypical ideas which inform the reception of the work. As an epigraph to her work, Spender quotes a thought-provoking passage from A Narrative of the Life of Mrs Charlotte Charke (1755):

> As the following history is the product of a female pen, I tremble for the terrible hazard it must run in venturing into the world, as it may very possibly suffer, in many opinions without perusing it; I therefore humbly move for its having the common chance of a criminal at least to be properly examined before it is condemned.

When one sees how little attention the work of female poets in France has received, one starts wondering whether premature condemnation is not partly what has taken place. Or if these women's poetry has been perused, it has perhaps not been "properly examined." One of the only collections of essays that includes discussion of women poets as a matter of course is Jean Breton's Chroniques sur le vif, mentioned earlier. In his preface he explains that his aim was to reduce the 50 to

70 year "décalage" [time-lag] which always exists between what is written, what is taught in colleges, and, one might add, what receives critical attention. Priding himself on his mostly infallible sense of judgment, he describes how the decisions as to what to publish were made by him and his colleagues:

> Les difficultés du choix se décantaient d'elles-mêmes, avec facilité, à condition d'avoir bossé sur les pages qui nous étaient soumises et d'avoir lu chaque fois en laissant sa chance entière à la différence de l'autre, dans l'épaisseur du manuscrit. (11)
>
> [The difficulties of choosing ironed themselves out, quite easily, providing that we worked hard on the pages submitted to us and providing that we always read giving full play to the alterity of the other, in the entirety of the manuscript.]

This description sounds very much like what Mrs Charke was asking for over two centuries ago. Apparently these words still need to be heeded by most as far as women writers are concerned.

*

When undertaking a gender study, what criteria can be applied in order meaningfully to compare the works of women and men?[32] In mimetic works, the representation of women in works by women and men has received much attention. Such an approach usually delivers what bell hooks calls "good" or

"bad" images. Although she is talking about the intersection of racism and sexism, her analysis holds true in a broader context:

> The idea of a good image is often informed simply by whether or not it differs from a [...] stereotype. [...] Issues of context, form, audience, experience (all of which inform the construction of images) are usually completely submerged when judgments are made solely on the basis of good or bad imagery.[33] (72)

Since the poetry I am dealing with is mostly non-representational I shall focus on different kinds of images, literary images. Although the context of an image is always important because its relevance can be gauged only by its relation to the other images used by the poet, in Chapters 3 and 4, despite continued textual analysis, the context will also become extratextual because we shall be examining questions of audience. Even when we are not consciously aware of it, we associate certain types of images with women or femininity and others with men or masculinity. Proponents of deconstruction have shown that phallocentric binary oppositions are always positioned hierarchically and, of course, the item associated with women is always devalorized and ends up in the inferior position, as the list Cixous provides at the beginning of "Sorties" demonstrates:

> Where is she?
>
> Activity/passivity

Sun/Moon

Culture/Nature

Day/Night

Father/Mother

Head/Heart

Intelligible/Palpable

Logos/Pathos

Form, convex, step, advance, semen, progress.

Matter, concave, ground -- where steps are taken, holding-and dumping-ground.

Man

Woman

> Always the same metaphor: we follow it, it carries us, beneath all its figures, wherever discourse is organized. If we read or speak, the same thread or double braid is leading us throughout literature, philosophy, criticism, centuries of representation and reflection. (63)

She points out that this system is "related to 'the' couple, man/woman" and that the "question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it with the opposition: activity/passivity." (64) In Thinking About Women,[34] Mary Ellmann addresses the issue of sexual analogy and shows that despite the numerous technological advances that have invalidated many of our conceptions (in the industrialized

Western world, of course), sexual stereotyping persists. In her often facetious way, she highlights that it is not so much *what* is done in order for the action to be devalorized, but *who* is doing it (here comparing a woman being carted into a delivery room and an astronaut being shot into the air):

> We *see* a man doing what we would ordinarily think of as feminine, sitting still, and manage to think of it as masculine because a man is doing it. (6)

And she also mocks the extent to which such associations are taken to extremes:

> Particularly since Freud, we have come to know that we are less ingenious than slavish in our attribution of every extrorse form to the male and every declivity to the female. (7)

The pervasiveness of this kind of thinking becomes obvious when we start looking at comments made about women's (and men's) writing. Here is Margaret Atwood's discussion of the Quiller-Couch Syndrome:

> This phrase refers to the turn-of-the-century essay by Quiller-Couch, defining "masculine" and "feminine" styles in writing. The "masculine" is, of course, bold, forceful, clear, vigorous, etc.; the "feminine" style is vague, weak, tremulous, pastel, etc. In the list of pairs you can include "objective" and "subjective", "universal" or "accurate depiction of society" versus

"confessional", "personal", even "narcissistic" and "neurotic". (Spender, Writing, 740)

Obviously we all are familiar with such stereotypical caricaturing of women's writing. Even recent critics who are sympathetic toward women writers, in noting the absence of "feminine" qualities, betray the expectations they bring to work by women writers. With remarks like "Adieu mièvrerie"[35] [Adieu sickly sentimentality] (the title of Breton's preface to Poésie 1: La Poésie féminine contemporaine, 11-14) and "Elle ignore l'art de broder au petit point" [She does not know the art of embroidering with small stitches] (Luc Bérimont about Yvonne Caroutch in the same issue, 33) they are praising the work of women precisely because it does not display those elements traditionally associated with writing by women. It becomes a catch-22 situation: if a woman writes "like a man" is she implicitly agreeing that being associated with "femininity," i.e. with women, is undesirable? And is the mastery of language necessary for literary production so irremediably associated with virility, that to find virility or one of its synonyms in a literary work is the only way we can praise it?

Of course, revalorizing the "feminine" has been an important project in one strand of the feminist movement, especially in France. But I suspect that Artaud's statement that all is vain that does not show "l'âme entamée par le corps" [the soul penetrated/broken into by the body] (quoted

by Jean Breton in his preface to Poésie féminine contemporaine) will still be read very differently depending on whether the speaker is a man or a woman.

I would suggest that we all inevitably bring gender stereotypes to reading and that they inform our judgments about literature. I expect that a detailed analysis of gender-oriented images in the works of the poets will reveal that female and male poets each rely both on "masculine" and "feminine" images. As Kristeva states:

> ...dans l'écriture, il y a une telle imbrication du masculin et du féminin... (Enjolras, 54)
>
> [...in writing, there is such an interweaving of the masculine and the feminine...]

We then use the stereotypes presented by Cixous and Quiller-Couch to see whether the works of male and female poets conform to expectations raised by such preconceived notions. Whether correlations between gender and the use of images are found to exist or not, it will be important o try to determine what other variables may be influencing the findings, i.e. we need to heed bell hooks' call for the examination of issues such as context and audience when studying the images.

*

In keeping with the spatial imagery used in this study, we can talk about getting to know "les visages du monde" [the faces of the world] of each of the poets, as Janine Holman has urged (60). Although, when using this expression, she is

resisting the use of approaches which impose structures negating the complexity of poetic worlds, it nevertheless is true that much of what critics try to achieve is a better description of the unique features of poetic worlds or visions. Because the different works of a single poet tend each to reveal different traits of these worlds' visages, I have made an effort to include early as well as recent works by the poets. I have tended not to emphasize changes over time. It is only after having identified the salient aspects of a landscape that one begins to pay attention to how the marks of time have been inscribed in it. Perusing a large number of works, as I have in this study, permits only a cursory examination of the outstanding or remarkable features of each poet's face rather than a study of the changes it undergoes over time. Or, to return to the landscape imagery, it allows one to indicate landmarks providing the broad outline of a map which will facilitate and hopefully invite further exploration. Of course a considerable body of criticism on Bonnefoy already exists and the number of studies undertaken on Jaccottet and Du Bouchet is growing, but none of it deals with the issue of gender and it is from this point of view that I am attempting to map the landscapes of the male and female poets. It is also important to study a number of a works by an author because the works illuminate one another and thus allow one to uncover recurring and idiosyncratic

themes and images, rather than to be limited to the particular emphases of individual works.

None of the poets I am studying can be said to belong to any school or movement of poetry, although Thérèse Plantier at one stage defined herself as a surrealist. All the poets were writing during the seminal years of the women's movement, the late sixties and early seventies, although several of them published works earlier (Jaccottet as early as 1947) and later (as recently as the early nineties). Whether their works do or do not reflect an awareness of women's writing and a questioning of existing paradigms, it would certainly not be because of ignorance of developments in the women's movement. The men inevitably form a more homogeneous group since their work is considered human, universal. They do not have to make a choice to either identify as a member of their sex or not as the women are obliged to do. Choosing either all feminist or non-feminist women poets would in my opinion reduce the usefulness of the results in this study.

I have concentrated on the poetry and have made only occasional references to critical works by the poets, where these do in fact exist. Since the women poets especially are not well-known, it is important to highlight the poetry itself. In some instances I have referred to particular works in more than one of the chapters, in others I have treated

works in one chapter alone, depending on their relevance to the topic under scrutiny.

Since gender studies on twentieth-century French poetry is an uncharted area, I also explore different ways that such a comparison can be undertaken. This diversified approach not only allows us to see how our preconceived ideas about men and women poets function in a variety of contexts, it also provides a basis for comparison for the usefulness of approaches relying predominantly on textual analysis (Chapters 2 and 5) and those introducing other elements into the text (Chapters 1, 3 and 4). After providing a short introduction to each of the poets -- first the women and then the men -- I shall outline the overall organization of the dissertation.

Yvonne Caroutch (born to Mongolian parents in Paris in 1937; married to the writer Frédérick Tristan), whose first volume was hailed as one of the two literary events of the year in 1954 as we have mentioned, also received the Cocteau prize for La Voie du coeur de verre[36] (a collected volume) in 1974. Although she published a work on the Italian poet Guiseppe Ungaretti[37] and a series of interviews with Pieyre André de Mandiargues,[38] Caroutch has not made theoretical statements about poetry in general or about her works in particular. She has translated some of Ungaretti's poems for the Cahiers de l'Herne (1969) and also the Dino Campana's Chants Orphiques (Editions l'Age d'homme). Discussion of her

poetry is extremely rare. I will mention here the few existing opinions. Brindeau, in his La Poésie contemporaine de langue française depuis 1945, summed up her world as one of fear and anguish:

> c'est un monde fantastique qui s'éveille autour d'elle, un monde peuplé de spectres, de fantômes, d'oiseaux de proie, de fleurs venimeuses. (108)
>
> [it is a fantastic world that comes to life around her, a world filled with ghosts, phantoms, birds of prey, poisonous flowers.]

Renée Rièse Hubert[39] insists on the density and richness of the images in Caroutch's work, linked to create "chains of meaning" (46).

> Liberated from their every-day meanings, words eager to seek new encounters, words willing to venture into the unknown, gush forth into imagery. (46)

In his anthology of six Contemporary French Women Poets Carl Hermey calls her "The Magic Mind" (135) and reiterates the hermetic quality of her work:

> It would be difficult, if not impossible, to isolate given "themes" in her poetry; and if one had to choose a theme it would have to be the one all-encompassing one that runs through all her poetry -- that of disruption itself; and out of this disruption she tries to create a new poetic reality. (135)

As if to confirm the recurring theme of initiation André Pieyre de Mandiargues detects in her work in general as well as in the title of her next-to-latest work, Voyages du double (1989), she has recently changed her name:

> la jeune femme a modifié son prénom, ajoutant à celui d'Yvonne celui de Francesca, comme pour marquer une transformation de son existence (foreword to Voyages du double)
>
> [the young woman has changed her first name, adding Francesca to Yvonne, as if to indicate a transformation in her life]

Whether she is dealing with the relationship between lovers or the poetic process, a preoccupation with mythical themes such as reincarnation, rebirth, and dual realities (the worlds of sleep and waking reality or the temporal and the eternal realms) remains constant throughout her poetic production. I have studied Paysages provisoires (1965),[40] Lieux probables (1968),[41] Portiques du sel (1978),[42] Voyages du double (1989)[43] and Demeures du souffle (1992).[44]

Claire Lejeune (Havré, Hainaut, Belgium, 1926 -) has apparently abandoned poetry in favor of theoretical works in recent years. Self-taught, she founded two journals in Geneva: the Cahiers Internationaux de Symbolisme in 1962 and Réseaux (an interdisciplinary journal of moral philosophy and politics) in 1965. She is the permanent Secretary of the

Centre interdisciplinaire d'études philosophiques de l'Université de Mons (founded in 1971). In 1977 and 1978 she directed a writing workshop at the University of Quebec in Montreal.

Brindeau categorizes Lejeune as an esoteric poet and in his opinion she draws heavily on Heraclitus and Empedocles (123). He calls her first work, La Gangue et le feu (1963),[45] "un brasier de révélations" [a furnace of revelations] (123) and places her within the tradition of the alchemical poets.

> Son oeuvre, dans le secret des nuits, obéit à un rituel. Il s'agit de distiller les essences. Elle dit aussi: de distiller le sang. C'est d'elle-même qu'elle entend extraire la Vérité. Qu'elle se souvienne d'anciennes légendes et d'anciens textes n'enlève rien au style personnel de sa recherche. (124)
>
> [Her work, in the secret of night, follows the dictates of a ritual. Essences have to be distilled. As does, she says, blood. It is from herself that she means to extract the Truth. Her recollections/awareness of ancient legends and texts in no way distracts from the personal style of her search/quest.]

This last comment of Brindeau's is judicious. She displays a surprising blend of personal and general statements and styles. Because her preoccupations and clusters of images remain constant, her later works contribute significantly to the understanding of earlier ones. I have concentrated on La

Geste (1966),[46] Le Dernier Testament (1969),[47] Mémoire de rien (1972),[48] L'Atelier (1979)[49] and Age poétique, âge politique (1987).[50]

Despite the disillusionment of most followers of surrealism, Thérèse Plantier (born in Nîmes in 1911 -; formerly an elementary school teacher), who was a latecomer to this movement -- 1964 -- is quoted by Brindeau as having said:

> Je ne m'exprime qu'en surréaliste, le temps n'est pas venu où l'on puisse s'exprimer autrement. (79)
>
> [I express myself only as a surrealist, the time has not yet come for another form of expression.]

This strong statement no longer holds true at a later stage in her life when she becomes suspicious of the possible masculine bias of automatic writing (See Chapter 2). She is well-known for her quarrels with others, and her defiant attitude is also revealed in her view of art as a vehicle for bourgeois thinking. Surrealism therefore represented for her "ce qui reste du grand espoir révolutionnaire de 1917" [that which remains of the great revolutionary hope of 1917]. Having expressed his fear of losing himself in "le péril d'engloutissement et de dislocation" [the danger of being engulfed/devoured and dismembered] of her poetry, Brindeau accords her "un extraordinaire pouvoir de fascination" (80) Hermey insists that her poetic world is "a universe of endless flux":

> There are no certainties, no constants; nothing is stable or consistent, not even the voice of the poet (162).

Sceptical of language (in that it reflects the values of partriarchy), she rails against "bourgeois" poets who believe that nothing ever changes and have a blind faith in "papo-pontifical words" ("mots papo-pontificaux") (164). Hermey describes her vocabulary as ranging "from slang to scientific terminology to what could only be described as pure cacophony" (165) when it comes to strings of sounds that engender one another phonetically rather than according to logic or reason. In this flow, as he points out, words find new positions and juxtapositions, fall into new "contexts with each other and thus find new meanings" (167). In his preface to La Loi du silence Jean Rousselot, commenting on the multiplicity of voices and positions to be found in her poetry, admits that her work defies easy catagorization:

> Plus je vous pèse, soupèse, pétris, mordille, écorche la liasse de vos prosopopées [...] moins je me sens tenté de les ficeler d'une préface qui aurait, c'est le rôle des préfaces, à les définir, situer, commenter
>
> [The more I weigh you, weigh you up, knead, nibble at, scratch the bundle / wad of your prosopopoeias [...] the less I am tempted to tie them up in a preface which would be expected to, that is the role of a preface, define, situate, comment upon them]

Although she is said to have come to surrealism in 1964, Chemins d'eau (1963),[51] already shows evidence of this influence. I have drawn on Mémoires inférieurs (1966),[52] C'est moi Diégo (1971),[53] Jusqu'à ce que l'enfer gèle (1974),[54] La Loi du silence (1975)[55] and La Portentule (1978).[56]

Critics invariably state that the poetry of Marie-Françoise Prager (born to French parents in Amsterdam and who currently lives in Italy) was considered promising by Gaston Bachelard, Roland Barthes and Jean Rousselot. Guy Chambelland (in a preface to Poèmes inédits) evaluates it thus:

> Obsession, introversion totale marquent certes cette production. Mais quelle sublimation sur le plan poétique! Je connais peu de poésies aussi soudées, je veux dire où les mots forment une trame si serrée, un courant de subconscience qui charrie comme un émerveillement noir de vivre. Chaque image ici tire sa valeur non seulement d'elle-même, mais de mettre au monde la suivante et de naître de la précédente. (La Poésie féminine contemporaine, 103)
>
> [Obsession, complete introversion certainly marks this production. But what sublimation on the poetic level! I know little poetry that is so closely knit, I mean where the words form such a tight woof, an unconscious current which sweeps along a kind of dark wonder at living. Here each image draws its value not only from

itself, but from engendering the next one and from being born from the previous one.]

Carl Hermey points out her preoccupation with death:

Frequently, the subject of her dream is death, as evidenced by numerous references to tombs, cemeteries and mummies (105).

And Brindeau, hinting at the influence of mental illness on her poetry, makes the following statement about her poetic universe:

Dans cet univers du rêve éveillé, des songes, des visions du demi-sommeil, de l'insomnie, un écho du monde autrefois connu vient se mêler aux "faits divers" de la vie onirique, comme dans un coquillage bruit encore -- semble-t-il -- la rumeur de la mer. (117)

[In this world of daydreams, of dreams, of visions of drowsiness, of insomnia, an echo of the world once known mingles with the "trivial events" of the dream life, as the sea still murmurs -- so it seems -- in a shell.]

Only two volumes of poetry by Prager are available: Narcose (1966)[57] and Rien ne se perd (1970).[58]

Yves Bonnefoy (Tours, 1923 -), who met André du Bouchet and Philippe Jaccottet in 1961, is one of the best-known contemporary poets in France. In addition to numerous volumes of poetry, his writings include essays dealing primarily with literature and painting, as in L'Improbable (1959)[59] and Le

Nuage Rouge (1977).[60] He has also occupied the "chaire d'Etudes comparées de la fonction poétique" at le Collège de France and has more recently published Entretiens sur la poésie 1972-1990 (1990),[61] a work which includes some of his correspondence with one of his better-known critics, John E. Jackson. He has also translated several Shakespeare plays and a collection of poems by Yeats. Despite an earlier predilection for surrealism (in 1946 some of his verses appeared in a surrealist leaflet, La Révolution la Nuit), like many other poets, he was disillusioned, among other aspects of the Surrealist enterprise, by the lack of depth he perceived in automatic writing.

His essay "L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie" points not only to his preoccupation with poetics but also with space. In the first chapter of her book on Bonnefoy, "Continuities: The Place and the Path," Mary Ann Caws stresses the

> accumulating imagery and vocabulary of path and of voyage, and all that we associate with the idea of quest: setting off and returning, the *topoi* of the great myths, but also all the myriad entrances, the doors, the gardens, and the deserts.[62] (1)

He is the only one of the male poets included in this study who expresses an understanding for the special problems women poets face (in his article on Marceline Desbordes-Valmore).

> Dans notre société, les hommes n'échangent plus tout à fait les femmes comme on ferait de biens matériels, ils n'en ont pas moins décidé entre eux des valeurs, des idées, des perceptions, des projets qui donnent structure à la langue; et sans même y penser ils sont donc les seuls sujets libres d'un acte de la parole où la femme n'est qu'un objet. (Vérité, 13)
>
> [In our society, although men no longer exhange women as they would chattels, they have nonetheless agreed among themselves upon the values, ideas, perceptions, projects that create the structure of language; and without even reflecting upon it, they are therefore the only ones that are free subjects of speech acts whereas women are mere objects.]

I have concentrated on Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve (1953)[63] for its examination of the other; Pierre écrite (1965)[64] for the emphasis it places on inscription; and Début et fin de la neige (1991)[65] for the movement toward (albeit deceptive) simplicity. I have also drawn on Bonnefoy's essay "L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie"[66] as well as on his inaugural lesson at the Collège de France (La Présence et l'Image).[67]

André du Bouchet (born in Paris in 1924), poet, art critic and translator of Shakespeare, Joyce, Hölderlin, Celan and Mandelstam, published his first poems in the early fifties. The most striking characteristics of his poetry are the

largely blank pages and the spareness of the world he presents in his poems: air, earth, wind, mountains and glaciers are ever-recurring elements. His vision is remarkably consistent and if anything, his style has become even more elliptical over time. Brindeau compares his writing style with his reading style:

> On dirait que du Bouchet ne juge dignes d'être sauvées que ces quelques lignes maintenues dans la page blanche. N'a-t-il pas extrait de l'océan hugolien un recueil miniscule de citations sublimes? (205)
>
> [We could say that for Du Bouchet the rare lines dotted across the page are the only ones worthy of being retained. Did he not extract a miniscule collection of sublime quotations from the Hugolian ocean?]

I have drawn primarily on Air, 1950-1953 (1977),[68] Dans la chaleur vacante (1961),[69] Laisses (1979)[70] and L'Incohérence (1979).[71] I have also quoted from his journal (Carnets, 1952-1956).[72] Although Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous (1972)[73] deals with Giacometti, Matière de l'interlocuteur (1991)[74] with Reverdy and Cendre tirant sur le bleu (1991)[75] with painting, Du Bouchet's writing is still poetic (he uses similar images and typography) in these works and can theredore be analyzed as such.

In La Gravitation poétique (1966)[76] Jacques Garelli (Belgrade, 1931 -) makes explicit his view of language:

> Nul message dans la voix du poète, nulle force implacable de démonstration. Mais au sein du langage, l'irruption sauvage d'une brèche d'où coule l'inépuisable hémorragie des mots truqués, tronqués, auxquels la sagesse humaine cherche obstinément à conférer un sens! (Brindeau, 235)
>
> [No message in the poet's voice, no implacable powers of demonstration. But in the heart of language, the wild irruption of an opening from whence flows the inexhaustible bleeding of rigged, truncated words, on which human wisdom obstinately wants to confer meaning!]

Garelli's poetry is very rarely discussed, and as Brindeau points out, the philosopher (the author of theoretical works) can be sensed behind the poet. According to Garelli, as Brindeau correctly points out, the poem is "l'expression sonore de l'autoconstitution du sens" [the sonorous expression of the creation of its own meaning], the extreme auto-referentiality leaves the reader "sur sa faim" [still hungry /unsatisfied]. Brindeau cannot resist a word-play in characterizing Garelli's work:

> On se laisserait presque aller à dire que le poète se gargarise -- ô Narcisse! se *gargarellise* -- de sa propre parole. (236)
>
> [One would almost be tempted to say that the poet revels in the big words -- Oh Narcissus! [play on Garelli's name and the verb "to gargle," gargariser] -- of his very own text.]

As this quote from Brindeau indicates, Garelli's primary preoccupation is with the poetic process itself. His poetry is often obscure and non-referential: he expects sonorities and rhythm rather than semantics to create meaning.

I have examined all Garelli's poetic works with the exception of La Pluie belliqueuse du souviendras which follows Lieux précaires: Brèche (1966),[77] Les Dépossessions suivi de Prendre appui (1968),[78] Lieux précaires (1972),[79] Archives du silence suivi de Récurrences du songe (1987)[80] and L'Ubiquité d'être suivi de Difficile séjour (1989).[81]

Philippe Jaccottet (Moudon, Canton de Vaud, 1925 -), whose work has received considerable attention in recent years, settled in Grignan in 1953. His principal translations include works by Thomas Mann, Hölderlin, Rilke, Ungaretti and Gongora. Alain Clerval[82] points out that critics have all recognized the importance of light in Jaccottet's poetry. Evoking the "transparence fragile" [fragile transparence] of this light which comprises "un soubassement obscur" [a dark base] (63). Because of its precarious nature, light then becomes an "image d'une quête spirituelle, constamment menacée" [image of a spiritual quest which is constantly threatened. (63) Always striving for simplicity, Jaccottet refuses to become involved in "le labyrinthe cérébral d'où l'on ne ressort jamais que mutilé" (Brindeau, 414, 415) [the cerebral labyrinth from which one can never emerge without

being mutilated]. This is how Jaccottet characterizes himself in La Semaison:

> Moi avec mes arbres, mes fleurs, pas assez ignorant pour être naïf, trop ignorant pour passer au parti des savants, des linguistes, avec mes craintes, mes lâchetés, mon peu de vie, de sang, de paroles. (165)
>
> [Me with my trees, my flowers, not ignorant enough to be naive, too ignorant to go over to the party of the learned, the linguists, with my fears, my cowardice, my bit of life, blood, words.]

His self-critical attitude is often discernible, as in this account of what he aims at and fails to achieve in his poetry:

> une voix qui ne s'affermit pas -- rêvant de mêler la légèreté des choses au poids du temps j'écris exactement comme je dis qu'il ne faut pas écrire, je n'arrive pas à saisir modestement le particulier, le privé -- les détails exacts m'échappent, se dérobent; ou c'est moi qui me dérobe à eux. (165, 166)
>
> [a voice which does not become steady -- dreaming of mixing the lightness of things with the weight of time I write exactly as I say one should not write, I do not manage modestly to grasp the particular, the private -- the exact details escape me, shy away from me; or rather it is I who shies away from them.]

I examined a variety of works by Jaccottet whose work has become progressively more prosaic over time. His journal

differs from Du Bouchet's in that he presents more personal material. Both contain poems or ideas for poems but Jaccottet also reports dreams, daily events and reactions to readings, etc. Differences between his journal and poetry make his journal, La Semaison, an important document (e.g., Chapter 4). The comments Jaccottet made in 1990 about his first published work, Requiem (1947),[83] which he did not want to include in his oeuvre for a long time, are suggestive of how the poet reads his own works. Two volumes of mourning are indicative of Jaccottet's preoccupation with death: Leçons (1969)[84] and Chants d'en bas (1974).[85] L'Ignorant (1958),[86] Airs, 1961-1964[87] and two more recent works, Pensées sous les nuages (1983)[88] and Cahier de verdure (1990)[89] were also examined.

*

My dissertation is divided into five chapters. In addition to seeking an understanding of the various worlds created by the poets (Chapters 2 and 5), we place these "worlds" within the "real" world of social transactions, expectations and experiences, focusing on how women's position may differ from that of men. Having established the kind of world each poet creates for him/herself, we examine how each of these worlds relates to sociopolitical reality.

1. Identity

What notions of identity prevail in a world that has seen the deconstruction of the Subject? What does it mean to be both a woman and a poet?

2. The Poetics

This chapter examines the rules and underlying assumptions that make up the world created by the poet. My understanding of their aesthetics includes how the poet perceives the relationship between language and reality; the role of poetry and of the poet; and the actual functioning of the poetic process.

3. Tradition

Starting with Harold Bloom's theory of the Anxiety of Influence and how it relates to women, we shall explore the poets' relationships to their predecessors. Gilbert and Gubar have shown that women are excluded from Bloom's father-son conception of literary influence and have postulated in its stead an anxiety of authorship. How does this concern influence the texts they create? And where do they place themselves in relation to their literary heritage?

4. Interlocutionary Partners

Related to the question of tradition is the question of whom the poets imagine reading their works and what kind of reaction or reception they tend to expect from their readers. How do they inscribe these readers in their texts themselves? Are there differences that could be attributed to gender?

5. The Space of Poetry

In this chapter we will examine not only the actual spaces evoked by the poets, but also the spaces that they create within their poetry. Here internal and external spaces,

conventionally feminine and masculine respectively, will be examined.

CONCLUSION: The Space of Reading.

By examining so-called "masculine" and "feminine" modes of reading, we explore how much of the World readers carry with them as they enter and exit the world(s) of poetry and also what implications these gendered readings have for the works of both male and female poets.

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CHAPTER 1: IDENTITY

> j'avais, allant au peintre, chaque fois à traverser la peinture. aujourd'hui, ce qui allant à la peinture, sera à traverser, c'est la disparition du peintre. (N. pag.)
>
> [to get to the painter, I always used to have to go through the painting. today, to get to the painting, I have to go through the disappearance of the painter.]

As this quote from André du Bouchet's Cendre tirant sur le bleu (1991) shows, the assumption that a work of art is a direct expression of the artist has been radically questioned in recent years. But, despite the so-called absence of the subject, there is still a continual preoccupation with the artist, or perhaps rather with the space formerly filled by the artist, as will become apparent from our discussion in the next few pages. As a result, questions of identity are highly charged and they have posed many challenges to feminist critics who believe that gender is a relevant category in literary analysis and that it is important to study women authors. Nancy Miller addresses the latter question, that of signature, in "The Text's Heroine: A Feminist Critic and her Fictions."[1] She quotes from Foucault's "What is an author?":[2]

> No longer the tiresome repetitions:
>
> 'Who is the real author?'
>
> 'Have we proof of his authenticity and originality?'

> 'What has he revealed of his most profound self in his language?'
>
> New questions will be heard:
>
> 'What are the modes of existence of this discourse?'
>
> 'Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it?'
>
> 'What placements are determined for possible subjects?'
>
> 'Who can fulfill these diverse functions of the subject?'
>
> Behind all these questions we would hear little more than the murmur of indifference:
>
> 'What matter who's speaking?' (138)

Miller responds that it matters very much who is speaking

> to women who have lost and still routinely lose their proper name in marriage, and whose signature -- not merely their voice -- has not been worth the paper it was written on; women for whom the signature -- by virtue of its power in the world of circulation -- is NOT immaterial. Only those who have it can play with not having it." (53)

It obviously also matters to Claire Lejeune who mentions three times in the first three pages of the work that <u>L'Oeil de la lettre</u> (1984)[3] is her ninth book! Miller politicizes the statement "What matter who's speaking?" as does bell hooks in "Postmodern Blackness":

> Considering that it is as subject that one comes to voice, thenthe postmodernist focus on the critique of

> identity appears at first glance to threaten and close down the possibility that this discourse and practice will allow those who have suffered the crippling effects of colonization and domination to gain or regain a hearing.(28)

Judith Butler's Gender Trouble has further problematized the issue by positing that

> gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which "sexed nature" or "a natural sex" is produced and established as "prediscursive," prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts. (6-7)

Seyla Benhabib[4] explores the postmodern thesis of the "Death of Man." She explains that Butler is essentially supporting a "strong version" of this thesis which leads to the conclusion that "the subject is merely another position in language"[5] (214) accompanied by the disappearance of the concepts of "intentionality, accountability, self-reflexivity and autonomy" (214). This has been a cause of great concern for many feminists, such as Nicole Ward Jouve, who have reacted in much the same way as Nancy Miller:

> We have lost ourselves in the endlessly diffracted light of Deconstruction whilst we had not even got to the Constructionstage. You must have a self before you can afford to deconstruct it.[6] (7)

Talking about African-Americans responding to "the critique of essentialism, especially when it denies the validity of identity politcs," bell hooks reports a similar reaction in "Postmodern Blackness":

> "Yeah, it's easy to give up identity, when you got one." (28)

And she adds:

> Should we not be suspicious of postmodern critiques of the "subject" when they surface at a historical moment when many subjugated people feel themselves coming to voice for the first time. (28)

The importance of "coming to voice" is also addressed in Carol Gilligan's "Letter to Readers, 1993," her preface to the new edition of <u>In A Different Voice</u> which was originally published in 1982.[7] Speaking of voice both in a literal and figurative way she says that she has become sensitized to

> the changes in people's voices that occur when they speak in places where their voices are resonant with or resounded by others, and when their voices fall into a space where there is no resonance, or where the reverberations are frightening, where they begin to sound dead or flat. (xvi)

Although Gilligan examines the influence of gender on moral reasoning and claims that women speak in a (is the singular significant?) "different voice," which suggests homogeneity, what is important in this quote from her letter is the

emphasis on the context in which a voice speaks, an issue we shall address in chapter 4 by asking who is listening and whether the listeners are supportive or adversarial.

Feminists trying to integrate the new insights provided by postmodernism without losing the ability to act collectively, seem to come to conclusions similar to Benhabib's:

> The weak version of this thesis [of the Death of Man] would *situate* the subject in the context of various social, linguistic and discursive practices. [...] some form of autonomy and rationality, could then be reformulated by taking account of the radical situatedness of the subject. (214)

This would create a sense of community while allowing for differences. Nicole Ward Jouve puts this "radical situatedness" into practice in the preface of White Woman Speaks with Forked Tongue:

> No one who writes today can or should forget their race and gender. The "I" who has written this book is white; privileged, yes, middle class, yes [and heterosexual?]; and everything it has to say is limited and coloured by unconscious western European assumptions. (vii)

Although just stating these facts does perhaps not constitute a radical change of praxis, at least it draws attention to factors influencing her writing rather than disguising them or assuming that her position is objective and universal, as much *patr*iarchal discourse does. And bell hooks points out that

critiques of essentialism allow for an affirmation of "multiple black identities, varied black experience" while challenging "colonial imperialist paradigms of black identity which represent blackness one-dimensionally." This is of course also true of women. bell hooks again reminds us that recognizing "the way black identity has been specifically constituted in the experience of exile and struggle" does not mean falling into the trap of thinking that there is a black "essence." Coming to terms with the impact of postmodernism for black experience for her means the necessity of rearticulating "the basis for collective bonding." (29) Biddy Martin, quoted in Materialist Feminisms,[8] insists that our project is now the "undoing identity on the grounds of identity."

> We cannot afford to refuse to take a political stance "which pins us to our sex" for the sake of an abstract theoretical correctness, but we can refuse to be content with fixed identities or to universalize ourselves as revolutionary subjects. (145)

How then do these theoretical concerns influence our analysis of the poets we are examining? Without falling into an essentialist trap which proposes a monolithic image of women, we can try to find textual references which could reveal whether identity is an important issue in their poetry and also how the construction of identity is influenced by

their particular situation. We shall deal with questions of audience (Chapter 4) and relationship to tradition (Chapter 3), which are of course related to questions of identity. Without seeing the subject as constituted only by the intersection of discourses, we can examine the influence that this intersection has on voice, so important in lyric poetry. This intersection, although relevant to all, seems to be of special importance to women, who have often talked of ambivalent feelings with regard to their writing, as Judith Kegan Gardiner[9] points out:

> The problems of female identity presented in women's poetry [...] are difficulties in learning how to respond to social rules for what being female means in our culture. (359)

It also means having to contend with the assumption that if one is a woman and a poet that one is also inevitably a representative of one's sex. On the hand, women have fought to have the experiences of their daily lives validated and seen as material fit for poetry, as Adrienne Rich's account of her struggle with the non-universal character of the topics she wanted to write about demonstrates:

> In the late fifties I was able to write, for the first time, directly about experiencing myself as a woman. The poem was jotted down in fragments, during children's naps, brief hours in a library, or at 3 a.m. after rising with a wakeful child. I despaired of doing any continuous

> work at this time. Yet I began to feel that my fragments and scraps had a common consciousness and a common theme, one which I would have been unwilling to put on paper at an earlier time because I had been taught that poetry should be "universal," which meant of course, nonfemale. Until then, I had tried very much *not* to identify myself as a female poet. (Kramerae, 19)

On the other hand, women writers have fought to be seen as writers and not always particularized as "women" writers (as we saw in the Introduction). And since writing and mastery are essentially associated with masculinity, how does this affect a woman writer's sense of identity? Does she have an identity as a woman and a separate identity as a writer? Many women writers have addressed this question since their education often excluded their experiences as women and their concerns were often considered trivial, as was pointed out in our discussion of birth imagery in Chapter 2. Cora Kaplan claims:

> To be a woman and a poet presents many women poets with such a profound split between their social, sexual identity (their "human" identity) and their artistic practice that the split becomes the insistent subject, sometimes overt, often hidden or displaced, of much women's poetry. (Kramerae, 72)

Kramerae also quotes Erica Jong who explains why women would hesitate to identity themselves as women poets:

> As long as femininity is associated with ruffles and flourishes and a lack of directness and honesty, women artists will feel a deep sense of ambivalence about their own femaleness. In a culture where *woman* is a synonym for *second-rate*, there's no mystery about why women want to "write like men." (20)

Gilligan presents women as disconnected from other women and she also observes a "dissociation within women" (xiii). She posits an "inner division or psychic split" (xiii) which can result in difficulties in "distinguishing the created or socially constructed feminine voice from a voice which they hear as their own" (xvii).

> Girls' initiation or passage into adulthood in a world psychologically rooted and historically anchored in the experiences of powerful men marks the beginning of self-doubt and the dawning of the realization, no matter how fleeting, that womanhood will require a dissociative split between experience and what is generally taken to be reality. (xxi)

In her preface to C'est moi Diégo (1971) (in which she assumes a male voice), Plantier qualifies as a "miracle" that there are some women, among them herself, who did not fall victim to the debilitating effects of self-doubt. The "midinettes" [working girl] and "ménagères" [housewives] who live in a world "si restreint que l'univers y était amputé à quatre-vingt-quinze pour cent" (8) [so restricted that in it 95% of

the universe was amputated] are ultimately not much worse off than a woman who, "se croyant émancipée," [believing herself to be emancipated] attends the "Ecoles"

> où on l'a entonnée d'un langage dans lequel tout, verbes et sujets, était, explicitement ou de façon détournée, au masculin. (8)
>
> [where she has been enclosed in/intoned to (with a secondary resonance of "étonnée," etymologically "thunder-struck") in a language which was, verbs and subjects, explicitly or indirectly, masculine]

The result is that she becomes completely "aliénée d'elle-même, de sa nature véritable qui aurait dû sécréter pour elle-même la seule explication appropriée du monde" (8) [alienated from herself, from her true nature which should have secreted for her the only approprate explanation of the world]. She quotes George Orwell's 1984 to demonstrate how language influences thinking:

> Le but du novlangue était [...] de rendre impossible tout autre mode de pensée... Il était rarement possible en novlangue de suivre une pensée non orthodoxe plus loin que la perception qu'elle était non orthodoxe: au-delà de ce point, les mots n'existaient pas. (9)
>
> [The goal of newspeak was (...) to make any other form of thinking impossible... In newspeak it was seldom possible to pursue an unorthodox thought beyond the

perception that it was unorthodox: beyond that point, the words did not exist.]

Seeing this not only as a dystopic vision, she insists that this "assassinat mental" [mental/psychological assassination] has already been perpetrated against women. Plantier's essentialism shows in these passages ("true nature" and the use of a verb such as "secrete") and in her insistence on gender inequalities, she leaves out questions of race. A troubling text in La Loi du silence (1975) betrays her essentialist tendencies. While reminiscing about an Armenian youth who had given her a manuscript to read, she also mentions that she has never been physically attracted to someone of color:

> Mon corps est raciste. Aucune morphologie africaine n'a jamais présenté pour lui le moindre attrait (par contre, les grands garçons blonds...) D'ailleurs l'Arménie se situe en Asie. Aucune importance. Les Africains, les Italiens, les Ottomans, les Arabes et, en fin de compte, tous les Méditerranéens réfugiés à Marseille après avoir fui leur patrie, n'ont eu aucune chance de coucher avec moi, ce que je trouve fort étrange, puisque, indiscutablement, j'éprouve de l'estime pour leur moral et leur mental. (18)
>
> [My body is racist. No African morphology has ever presentedthe least attraction for it (tall, blond boys on the other hand...) Besides, Armenia is in Asia. No

> matter. Africans, Italians, Ottomans, Arabs and, all things considered, all the Mediterraneans who took refuge in Marseilles after fleeing their countries, had no chance of ever sleeping with me, something I find very strange, because I undoubtably admire their moral and mental capacities.]

Although she finds it "very strange" she does not question this distinction. She assumes that physical attraction issues from the body and is therefore "natural." She does not consider that this lack of attraction could have been determined by societal factors; she seems to assume that the reactions of her body are unmediated. She does however, in her preface to this work raise pertinent questions about the identity of the writer. She initially wanted to use the title "L'Antilocus" for this volume because "je ne le reconnaissais guère comme une émanation du Moi où je suis logée" [I hardly recognized it as an emanation of my Self which I inhabit]. She also talks of the Other who speaks in her place and of "un dire dont l'intention m'échappe" (7) [a statement whose intention escapes me/is unknown to me/is beyond me]. Despite these statements that undermine her autonomy and intentionality, she nonetheless puts her signature on the book (a signature which is enduring because as she says "plus je me suis mariée, plus je suis devenue Thérèse Plantier" (16)) [the more often I got married, the more I became Thérèse Plantier]! And in a discussion of this work printed on the back cover of

the book, where she reiterates the multiplicity of voices to be found in this work ("J'ai voulu être fidèle aux instants d'un personnage habité par mille personnages, d'un langage habité par mille langages." [I wanted to be faithful to the different moments of a character inhabited by a thousand characters, of a language inhabited by a thousand languages.], she comments on her choice of interspersing prose and poetry:

> La prose, par exemple, dans une sorte de narration balbutiée, remplit nos espaces qu'élargit d'un coup l'irruption verbale poétique. Si l'on tient à restituer le flux ininterrompu des sensations pensées, on se nomme Chef d'un Orchestre où chaque instrument n'a en tête que de jouer une partition personnelle pourtant incapable de se soustraire aux lois d'un Orchestre encore plus grand.
>
> Il m'a semblé pouvoir recréer cette cacophonieessentielle en courant de la plume sur des proses cassées par des pages où le poème ressuscite les thèmes, étant bien entendu que ces thèmes se juxtaposent et s'entrecroisent.
>
> [Prose, for example, in a sort of stammered narration, fills our spaces which a sudden verbal irruption of poetry extends. If one wants to restore the uninterrupted flow of thoughts, one assumes the position of Leader of an Orchestra where each instrument wants to play only its personal score which is nonetheless

> incapable of escaping the laws of the Orchestra as a whole.
>
> I felt that I could recreate this essential cacophony by interrupting the fragmentary prose with pages where the poem reintroduces the themes, the themes of course being juxtaposed and intersecting.]

Landry's and MacLean's interpretation of Derrida's goals in Materialist Feminisms illuminates her rhetoric:

> his is a critical posing of the theoretical limits of all practice, an exposure of how the subject is not decentered but rather always in the process of centering itself in order to act, write, or think. (174)

The multiplicity of voices and the unconventional mixing of genres may mask the well-orchestrated nature of the work. The coherence supplied by the image of the Leader of the Orchestra (with the capital letters also reminiscent of that of the Self or the Ego [le Moi]) perhaps also suggests that such "dispersal" of the self is possible only because there is no self-doubt to undermine the integrity of the poet's identity.

Plantier's poetry attests to a constant battle against the language of patriarchy. The integrity of her identity allows her to assume playfully other voices, such as that of Diégo, who is presumably speaking in the poem "Rêveries capitalistes dans le Rome-Calais":

> j'achèterai pour ma femme un chapeau d'une
> paille dont je connais parfaitement le nom

j'achèterai un couteau on se souvient alors de
son enfance
je l'achèterai elle aussi qu'elle se méfie
je possèderai tout par
droit de cuissage financier (Diégo, 20)
[I will buy a hat for my wife of a kind of
straw whose name I know very well
I will buy a knife that way one remembers one's
childhood
I will buy her too let her beware
I will possess everything through
financial *jus primae noctis/droit du seigneur*]

The obsessive repetition of "j'achèterai" linked with the totalizing discourse ("tout"), culminates in a vision which reminds us how human rights have been abused and leads us to confront the abuse of the word "right" as used in "droit de cuissage":

j'aurai acheté la planète et ses satellites les étoiles
et tous les hommes à y naître
égaux en droits pour la douleur
ils y ont droit. (21)
[I will have bought the planet and its satellites the
stars
and all men yet to be born
with equal rights to suffering/pain
they have a right to it.]

The apposition of "ses satellites" and "les étoiles" could designate the earth *and* the stars, but here it means that the stars *are* the satellites of the earth, evoking the humanist vision that sees Man as the center of the universe. And although the etymology of "homme" includes men and women, women are excluded from this vision.

Plantier seems to have skipped some of the stages Cixous claims writers have to go through. Cixous talks of her moving toward writing for the theater where "the author's 'I' should be the lightest, the most transparent possible":

> I don't believe this is a point we arrive at straight away. The inaugural gesture of writing is always in a necessary relation to narcissism. When one begins to write, one is constantly reminding oneself of the fact: "I write". [...] It takes time for "I" to get used to "I". Time for the "I" to be sure "I" exists. Only then is there room for the other.[10]

Plantier's position is the antithesis of Lejeune's who still talks of her struggle for identity in her more recent writings. Lejeune's journey illustrates this movement from "I" to "the other." In La Geste (1966) she recounts the experience of a total loss of self that leads to a turning point in her life:

> Je cessais d'exister, je n'étais plus rien que cette évidence-là! Je courus devant un miroir: je n'y vis

> plus qu'une explosion lumineuse. Je n'avais plus de visage! Je n'existais donc plus!
>
> "Si je n'existe pas, les autres existent!"; je courus dans la chambre où dormait la toute petite. Je vis son visage qui filait... (24)
>
> [I no longer existed, I was nothing but that undeniable fact! I ran to the mirror: I saw only a luminous explosion. I no longer had a face! I therefore no longer existed!
>
> "If I do not exist, others exist!"; I ran into the room where my youngest daughter was sleeping. I saw her face slipping away...]

In addition to occupying herself with tasks which can "me rendre un pesanteur" [give me weight] (24), she also tries to pin herself down on paper:

> j'[ai] tenté de rassembler tout mon être et de le coincer là entre la feuille blanche et la pointe de mon crayon. L'écriture comme salut! (40)
>
> [I attempted to gather all my being and to pin it down between the white page and my pencil's point. Writing as salvation!]

Writing helps her in her "poursuite affolée à travers moi pour tenter de rassembler les fragments de mon être..." (25) [frantic chase across myself in an attempt to assemble the fragments of my being...] In <u>L'Atelier</u> (1979) she states:

> Jusqu'ici, j'ai écrit pour être. (35)

[Up until now I have written in order to exist.]

and she explains:

> J'ai commencé à me bricoler en janvier 1960, avec les débris d'une conscience éclatée (11)
>
> [I started to mend myself/put myself together in January 1960, with the debris of a shattered consciousness.]

In Age poétique, âge politique (1987) Lejeune is still recounting her personal journey toward an identity, which she here represents as a fluid. However, contrary to the fluidity described by Irigaray in "When our Lips Speak Together" (a more "feminine" image) the goal of her journey is the hollowed out river bed, which points to greater stability and constancy.

> il m'aura fallu plus d'un quart de siècle pour retrouver le fond de la vallée, pour creuser mon lit de rivière dans les méandres d'une existence que tout semblait vouer à la routine ménagère plutôt qu'à l'imprévisible. (45)[11]
>
> [It took me more than a quarter century to find the bottom of the valley, to hollow out my river bed in the meander of an existence which everything seemed to doom to domestic routine rather than to the unforseeable.]

The process was not an easy one. In La Geste she expresses her frustrations with writing, presented in the most personal terms (reinforced by the repetition of the possessive adjective):

> Ma rage, ma désolation, ma honte... Ces retours désespérés à ma table, à la feuille blanche (46)
>
> [My rage, my desolation, my shame... These desperate returns to my table, to the blank page]

Whereas Garelli can have enough distance from his work to say "Ce poème, je l'aime" (Brèche [1966] 27) [This poem, I like it]; whereas his poem is a separate entity with a life of its own ("Parti de moi" (27) ["Having left me"]), Lejeune is consubstantial with her poem and such an attitude as Garelli's is unimaginable in her world. Although these differences in one's sense of identity as a writer cannot be attributed simply to gender, it does seem to play some role: it is hard to imagine a male poet ever having to choose between poetry and "la routine ménagère" [domestic routine]. It is also this inescapable preoccupation with forging her own identity which explains the relatively "narcissistic" quality of Lejeune's text: her locutionary partners for the most part seem to be herself or a vision of her husband/lover: "Tu es là, debout sous mes paupières" (Geste 12) [You are there, erect beneath my eyelids], the change in preposition (in Eluard's poem it is "sur" [on]) perhaps emphasizing that the image has been internalized. This inward turn further reinforces the impression of a monologue rather than a dialogue and her "I" is unflaggingly prominent.

As the epigraph to Narcose (1966) shows, the question of identity is central to Marie-Françoise Prager's poetry as well:

J'avance sur la corde raide de mon identité.

[I advance on the tightrope of my identity.]

The tenuous character of her identity suggested by this image is reinforced in the final poem of this volume:

et le battant glissant sur le dormant, la porte endormie,
je me trouve être seule ailleurs et j'ai changé de sexe. (88)

[and the panel sliding on the frame, the sleeping door,
I find myself elsewhere alone and I have changed sex/I have undergone a sex change.]

Images of an internal doubling or split appear from the very beginning of Narcose. At the same time, frequent references to writing create a highly self-conscious text.

J'essaie en mon prologue
gisant fondant, funèbre
pourquoi? en mes vertèbres
de suivre le suspect
verbal inné, doublant
un obscur monologue.
Je me retrouverai. (7)

[I try in my prologue
recumbent/reclining melting/founding, funereal
why? in my vertebrae

to follow/understand the innate verbal

suspect, doubling/dubbing/overtaking

an obscure monologue.

I will find myself again.]

The last line suggests that she has lost herself and "gisant" and "funèbre" evoke loss and death. In the first stanza she had been presented as passive, as the object of the action:

Sous un phare immobile

on me pose en secret,

mordue et exclusive. (8)

[Under a motionless lighthouse/headlight

they secretly place me,

crazy and exclusive/absolute.]

In the first extract, even though lying down, she is a subject actively pursuing a goal and the future tense of the last line seems confident. The possessive adjective in conjunction with a word referring to the writing process ("mon prologue") also reinforces the impression of her autonomy. Two voices seem to inhabit her. Is one of these akin to the voice of socialization outlined by Gilligan? Is "le suspect verbal inné" also language itself? No dialogue seems to exist between the voices. Will an understanding of this "obscure monologue" (monologue because she is talking to herself, despite the splitting?) help her to find herself?

The references to writing in this first poem ("prologue," "monologue") prepare the reader for an even greater

intermingling of realms in a later poem which examines the relationship between the text and the world. Where is she?

Je pense à la morte dans un poème
à la patience d'une statue
je suis la morte
je suis le poème dans une tombe
l'objet
rêvant de rêver l'objet
je suis la morte dans moi-même
je suis la morte dans mon poème (12)
[I think of the dead woman in a poem
of the patience of a statue
I follow/am the dead woman
I follow/am the poem in a tomb
the object
dreaming of dreaming the object
I am/follow the dead woman in myself
I am/follow the dead woman in my poem]

The verb "suis" can of course be read as conjugations of both "être" [to be] and "suivre" [to follow] (the use of the infinitive "suivre" in this first poem reinforces this reading). In my translation I deliberately inverted the order or the two verbs at the end of the poem, because I think that this shift is brought about by the poem, although both meanings are present at all times. Does Prager become consubstantial with her poem? Does she become the dead woman

because representation in a poem is akin to a statue, i.e. lifeless? She is simultaneously subject and object of her identity; an identity which the process of writing helps to create.

Whereas Plantier's extra-textual identity sometimes slips into her poetry -- as when she has her mother say "Tu me mettras où tu voudras Thérèse" [You can put me wherever you wish Thérèse] in Jusqu'à ce que l'enfer gèle (79) -- Prager's identity is largely textual, closer to Lejeune's "Hors texte je n'ai jamais eu lieu" [Outside of the text I have never taken place / existed] (Mémoire de rien, 105)

In Jaccottet's case, however, personal and poetic identities are apparently inseparable. His preoccupation with death and dying repeatedly surfaces in his work. He undergoes an identity crisis as a poet when faced with death. Whereas writing is salvation for Lejeune, the first poem of Leçons shows how the poet has lost his former faith in the powers of language and poetry. Rather than a movement toward greater confidence, he becomes less and less self-assured of the role that poetry may be able to play in life.

Autrefois,
moi l'effrayé, l'ignorant, vivant à peine,
me couvrant d'images les yeux,
j'ai prétendu guider mourants et morts.

Moi, poète abrité,
épargné, souffrant à peine,
aller tracer des routes jusque-là!

A présent, lampe soufflée,
main plus errante, qui tremble,
je recommence lentement dans l'air. (11)
[In the past,
I the frightened one, the ignorant one, barely alive,
covering my eyes with images,
I claimed to be guiding the dying and the dead.

I, the sheltered poet,
spared, hardly suffering,
(I claimed to be) laying out roads all the way there!

Now, with the lantern blown out
with a more groping, trembling hand,
I slowly start over in the air.]

He seems to be implying that he formerly understood the role of the poet to be the conventional one of prophet, seer. As with Lejeune, the past self is compared with the present self, in Jaccottet's case a judgmental one. He used to be arrogant; now he is humble.

J'écoute des hommes vieux
qui se sont accordés aux jours,
j'apprends à leurs pieds la patience:

ils n'ont de pire écolier. (14)

[I listen to old men

who have reconciled themselves with passing time,

I learn patience at their feet:

they do not have a worse pupil/I am their worst pupil]

A psychic splitting similar to Gilligan's evocation of dissociation in women can be detected, although we are dealing with two time frames here. Formerly the poet unquestioningly assumed the role of poet handed down to him by tradition and only now, in a moment of crisis, is he being forced to allow a more authentic, personal voice to surface. In Chants d'en bas, another volume of mourning, the poet presents his loss of faith in the ability of words to represent reality:

et j'aurai beau répéter "sang" du haut en bas

de la page, elle n'en sera pas tachée,

ni moi blessé. (41)

[and it will be no use for me to write "blood" again and

again from the top to the bottom

of the page, it will not be stained by it,

nor I wounded.]

Whereas reality and writing are difficult to separate in Prager's "morte dans un poème," Jaccottet is stressing the radical separateness of language and reality: although the events of his life profoundly influence his writing, he does not believe that words have the power to change reality. He believes that one can find better things than writing to do

with one's hands ("faire meilleur usage de ses mains", 41), because extreme suffering makes talking (and writing poetry) meaningless.

> Parler alors semble mensonge, ou pire: lâche
> insulte à la douleur, et gaspillage
> du peu de temps et de forces qui nous reste. (42)
> [Then speaking seems to be a lie, or worse: a cowardly
> insult to pain, and a waste
> of the little time and energy which we have left.]

But of course, the poet is still writing, and despite his protestations and his disillusionment, we can assume that the writing process does have some therapeutic value for him. The very act of writing belies the content of his poems.

Writing does not help create Garelli's identity; instead, it simply reflects the changes that take place in his life. Although Garelli can be found saying that he used to speak "pour croire davantage en moi-même" [in order to have more confidence in myself] (Brèche 60), his personal identity is not enmeshed with his textual identity.

When, in Brèche, Garelli's lyric self does address more personal matters, it is to take stock of his life ("Que d'erreurs commises!", (13) [So many mistakes made!]), not to question his identity:

> J'ai mal été, pour sûr. Je serai pire sans doute. Mais
> nous sommes ici, bien ou mal, sans façon. J'ai mesuré

> mes chances. Mes cheveux sont en place. J'ai compté mes orteils et j'ai toutes mes dents. (25)
>
> [I existed badly, for sure. I will no doubt be worse. But we are here, well or badly, without ceremony. I estimated my chances. My hair is in place. I have counted my toes and I have all my teeth.]

The facetious tone of this statement of physical integrity leads one to believe that psychological integrity is not an issue. In Garelli's later works such as Archives du silence (1987), the self's integrity taken as a given is suggested by the presence of hard objects in his work: "briques" (10, 22), "mur" (10, 32), "cristal" (18, 28, 32), etc. [bricks, wall, cristal]. This is reinforced by adjectives such as "incompressible" (10, 12), "rocheuse" (25), "solide" (28), "géologiques" (32) [incompressible, rocky, solid, geological]. The poetic self is like a stone, a rock or a gem. They are not objects of contemplation to which he aspires, it is rather his own sense of resolve which is being projected into the landscape he describes. His is an essentially inhuman universe in which there is no dialogue with the self. Whereas Lejeune imagines herself "émerger un jour du ventre des mots" (49) [emerging one day from the womb of (the) words], and states: "Les mots me multiplient et me distribuent." (53) [(The)[12] words multiply me and distribute me], when speaking of poetry, Garelli is concerned about "la catastrophe imminente du langage, de ses fadeurs" [the imminent

catastrophe of language, and its insipidity] and he suggests a remedy, a way of reinvigorating language. His flows are cascades of rock:

> Ouvrons l'écluse! Et c'est l'avalanche au creux du poème; les blocs incrustés d'où surgit un sens, l'odeur d'une langue à demi sauvage, comme on vomit ou l'on étrangle: à grands traits, le rythme lacuneux du temps. (18)
>
> [Let us open the sluice-gate! And it's an avalanche in the hollow of the poem; encrusted blocks from which a meaning suddenly appears, the smell of a half-wild language, as one vomits or strangles: in large strokes, the lacunary rhythm of time.]

Not only is his creative act a joint effort (the first person plural imperative), it is impersonal. For him, poetic language seems to partake of the forces of nature, outside and separate from the poet.

In Garelli's writings it is the workings of the poetry that are accorded primary importance. Even when he does address the question of the "I" in Prendre appui (which follows Les Dépossessions), it is in the context of the poet's insertion into language.

> Le poème établit le non-lieu de sa demeure au point périlleux d'insertion et de distribution de la parole qui dit "Je" (68)

[The poem establishes the non-place/acquittal of its dwelling at the perilous point of insertion and distribution of the words that say "I"]

Despite an abundant use of the first person singular, he is insisting in this text that it is not the poet but the language which is saying "I."

In opposition to Garelli's frequent use of the pronoun, Caroutch's "je" is surprising in its absence: it shows up only in the seventeenth poem of the thirty-two poems that constitute Paysages provisoires (1965), which appears to be a more personal volume than the others. The absence of articles in her poems "Voyageurs immobiles" [Immobile travelers] (1),[13] "Solitaire larve gloutonne" [Solitary greedy larva] (2), reinforces the impression that the "nous" that recurs is an inclusive we, the we of the human race. Is she evoking the human condition in the first lines of her first poem?

Voyageurs immobiles dans les paysages provisoires
gisants circulants à la vitesse des rêves
en quête de terres brûlées aimées à corps perdus
et jamais retrouvés (1)
[Stranded travellers suspended in temporary landscapes
(reclining figures) circulating at the speed of dreams
in quest of burned lands loved desperately
and never recaptured]

The first possessive adjective is "our" and the first personal pronoun that appears is also the first person plural:

Au chevet de la mort opaque
veillent nos vies antérieures
Nous attendons la nuit masqués (1)
[At the bedside of opaque death
our anterior lives stand vigil
Masked we are waiting for night]

Of course all interpretation is to some extent speculative but it seems that Caroutch feels no internal split as far as her poetic identity is concerned. The etchings by Vittorio Basaglia which accompany Caroutch's text show human figures without any recognizable features although one does distinguish men and women. The "tu" of the text becomes a little more specific in the context of love which slowly emerges from the text:

Tu donnes ta bouche au sommeil noir
et ton amour s'endort aussi (14)
[You surrender your mouth to black sleep
and your love too falls asleep]

The "I" which has still not been mentioned becomes one of a dyad which now makes up the "nous."

Lorsque le ciel sera blanc
sur le sol brûlé
nous entrerons dans le temps des autres
[When the sky is white

on the scorched ground

we shall enter the time of others]

Now the "nous" clearly no longer includes everyone as it may or may not have before; it stands in opposition to the "others." When the "je" first appears it is a context of closeness: "comme je t'écoute" [Oh how I listen to you] (17). The poems become progressively more personal. The intimacy of the lovers is evoked:

Sans bruit je meurs à ton approche

Corps à corps dans la nuit (28)

[Noiselessly I die at your approach

Hand-to-hand fight in the night]

But this closeness will come to an end: "la folle saison bascule" [the mad season tumbles] (29); the lovers' "demeures de sable" [sand dwellings] crumble (30) and "le rideau de l'été" [the curtain of summer] is drawn (31). The presence of the lover is replaced by an internalized image:

Tu es en moi comme un arbre

miroir inculte qui interroge

sous l'apparence du refus

Règne erratique fixité

Attente fougère pliée

Le geste futur déjà chemine sous la houille (32)

[You are in me like a tree

crude mirror questioning

under the semblance of refusal

Erratic reign fixity

Expectancy bent fern

the future gesture already makes its way beneath the coal]

The penultimate stanza of the last poem starts on an intimate note "Tu es en moi" [You are in me] but the imagery becomes progressively impersonal. The tree presumably suggests rootedness but it also leads up to the image of the coal: the wood has undergone a transformation; it has crossed over from the vegetal to the mineral realm and is therefore less alive. But it also suggests a much higher concentration of energy and supports the hopeful anticipation of the future with which the poem ends. The poet thus seems to return to the general, having had her lyric self pass through the particular, perhaps insinuating that even personal experiences are eventually subsumed into greater, more universal rhythms as her preoccupation with myths suggests.

Although André du Bouchet's "je" is not as infrequent as Caroutch's, it is seldom the first element of the poem, as these first sentences from several poems taken from Air, 1950-1953 show:

Dans le pré où tremblent des bouteilles

je pèse dans le jour (N. pag.)

[In the meadow where bottles tremble

I am heavy in the day/light][14]

Dans le lierre jusqu'aux coudes. ("Matin")

[In ivy up to my elbows.]

Mèches

et cet oeil qui avance pas à pas

je marche dans un oeil que je ne connais pas ("Effigie")

[Curls (of hair)

and this eye which advances step by step

I am walking in an eye that I do not know]

As the prepositions ("dans") show, the "je" is always situated in a landscape, and as already pointed out, the poet stresses a bodily, physical experience of space and the elements. This emphasis sometimes takes the form of highlighting the different body parts that come into contact with the elements as in "Pleine mer," suggesting a fragmentation of the self.

Tête horizontale

le genou

coupé par le fil blanc de la lumière

les croisées et les branches se mêlent dans la crible

le jour reprend l'aiguille

poitrine

chambre de vagues.

[Head horizontal

knee

cut by the white thread of light

the crossings and the branches mingle in the sieve

the day/light takes up the needle again

chest

room of waves.]

But of course it is a human subject reporting his impressions, and this becomes more obvious when we look at some of the images used by the poet, e.g. "chambre de vagues" in this poem. A human artifice ("chambre") is used to describe a natural phenomenon. The topos of nature becoming a text to be read is also an indication of the presence of a human consciousness which is interpreting the world around it, as can be seen in the poem "Vocable":

Tout devient mots

terre

cailloux

dans ma bouche et sous mes pas

[Everything becomes words

earth

pebbles

in my mouth and under my feet/steps/footsteps]

In Laisses the uncommon references to linguistic utterances or even to cries ("je foule -- muet" [I stride -- silent]) once again emphasizes the experience of a body in space. As with other poets such as Jacques Garelli, there seems to be an attempt to relate to the world in a preconceptual way. When, for example, the lyric I evokes a "toiture conjointe à

montagne" [roof/roofing conjoined to mountain] it is an attempt to present the visual image without interpreting it. In Du Bouchet's notebooks for the period 1952 to 1956, we find the following words:

> [...] rien n'est à
> inventer.
> Il n'y a qu'à dire
> ce que l'on voit. (28)
> [(...) nothing is to be
> invented.
> One need only say
> what one sees.]

As Jacques Depreux notes, "l'objet de l'auteur n'est pas de décrire un paysage mais de s'y inscrire." [the purpose of the author is not to describe a landscape but to inscribe himself in it.][15] We find evocations of legs walking, a face feeling the air and references to the temperature. The frequent references to hands highlight the importance of one's body being "voyant et visible" [seeing and visible]:[16]

> Mais mon corps, s'il est visible, est aussi un voyant, un élément actif, perceptif, comme l'oeil[17]

[But my body, if it can be seen, it can also see, an active, perceiving element, like the eye]

But of course the observer, the poetic subject, is always the center; it is his perceptions and sensations that are being transcribed. Therefore the "traversée" or "parcours" of space

is linked with the creation of meaning despite the attempt to avoid the conceptualization of language. Although the subject is experiencing space with his body, it is by linking the various points in space through his movement that he imposes meaning on it. It is his consciousness that makes it meaningful.

Despite the centrality of the perceiving consciousness, there is room for the other in Du Bouchet's subject:

> de soi à soi,
> l'autre déjà. et l'intime qui dissocie -- BLANCS DESERTS -- lui-même, d'un temps à un autre, dehors largement. (Interlocuteur, 28)
>
> [from oneself to oneself,
> the other already there. and the intimate which dissociates -- DESERTED BLANKS -- itself, from time to time, outside widely.]
>
> de soi à soi, c'est un autre déjà (Interlocuteur, 33)
>
> [from oneself to onself, there is already another]

But this other seems only to help him better to find or return to himself:

> toujours à la première personne, ce sujet prolongé lorsqu'il s'y imprime jusqu'au blanc de l'identité perdue où [...] je dois me perdre comme revenir -- SUR LES JAMBES D'UN AUTRE -- à moi. (Interlocuteur, 36)
>
> [always in the first person, this prolonged subject when it is printed right up to the blank of lost identity

> where (...) I have to lose myself/get lost as if I were returning -- ON ANOTHER'S LEGS -- to myself.]

Garelli's "I" becomes empty. Since it is a shifter, anyone can occupy that space. Du Bouchet feels, however, that even filling the "I" of another poet (in this case Reverdy) brings him back to himself. In the passage we quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Du Bouchet had remarked on the disappearance of the subject in painting. In chapter 4 we shall also see him commenting on the space filled by the reader. The notion that one is free to deconstruct identity or empty the "I" of its subject when one already has a solid identity or has not been denied a voice, is perhaps true in Du Bouchet's case. Although he plays with the spaces in language that he does or does not occupy, he never seems to feel that he has truly lost himself; he always returns to himself.

Bonnefoy is also preoccupied by the "Je," but he is more interested in the one who has historically taken it upon himself to speak in the name of truth and universality rather than the more linguistic aspects that interest Du Bouchet. In "L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie" Bonnefoy encourages

> un examen scrupuleux à des fins quasi morales des prétentions de ce Je qui avait si souvent affirmé sans preuves, écrit sans croire, trompé.[18] (168)

> [a scrupulous examination of the quasi moral goals of the pretentions/claims of this I who has so often stated without proof, written without believing, deceived.]

The new poets who have questioned this "Je" accept

> avec une prudence et une réserve extrêmes, après vérification, les nécessaires élans de leur esprit, de leur voix. (168)
>
> [with extreme prudence and reserve, after verificatiton, the necessary flights/surges of their minds, of their voices.]

Having made a "table rase" [tabula rasa] of the "geste assuré" [confident gesture], they invented anew "les quelques gestes élémentaires qui nous unissent aux choses" (168) [the few elementary gestures that unite us with things]. Bonnefoy opposes the "romans nouveaux où celui qui parle s'efface." (169) [where the speaker disappears] because he believes that

> Quand il n'y a plus de désirs, d'errements ou de passions, même le vent et le feu ne sont plus réels, la demeure d'absence est grandie aux proportions de ce monde. Et c'est la conséquence dernière de la Providence brisée, mais aussi la contradiction dangereuse de l'athéisme, s'il est vrai qu'on n'aurait abattu la machinerie divine que pour ne plus vouloir que dans l'événement ou les choses batte le sang subjectif. (169)
>
> [When there are no more desires, wanderings or passions, even the wind and fire are no longer real, absence

> engulfs the whole world. And this is the final consequence of shattered Providence, but also the dangerous contradiction of atheism, if it is true that we would have destroyed the divine machinery only because we no longer wanted subjective blood to pulse in events or things.]

i.e. to get rid of the subject/Subject. As we see, Bonnefoy is extremely concerned about the loss of the subject. He is critical of the unquestioning and unquestioned "Je" of an earlier epoch, but he, not unlike the women we quoted at the beginning of the chapter, insists: "il n'en reste pas moins que nous disons *Je*" [the fact nevertheless remains that we say *I*] (Présence, 19) and that we believe this to be more than "un froissement léger des structures" [a light crumpling of the structures] (of language) (19). He continues:

> Nous disons *Je*, nous gérons, grâce d'abord à ce mot, notre existence et parfois celle des autres, nous décidons de valeurs, il arrive même, bizarrement, que des êtres meurent pour ces dernières par ce qui semble un choix libre (20)
>
> [We say *I*, we manage, thanks first of all to this word, our existence and sometimes that of others, we decide on values, it even happens, bizarrely, that beings die for these values out of what seems to be a free choice]

In addition to this exposition of a common-sense approach to the question of identity and the use of "I" to refer to our

sense of self, he also points out the devastating effects that the lack of this sense of self can have on people.

> [D]'autres êtres, à notre époque nombreux, souffrent d'avoir perdu un rapport cohérent et clair avec un fond qu'ils puissent dire leur être propre (20)
>
> [(O)thers, numerous in our age, suffer from having lost a coherent and clear link with a depth which they can call their own being.]

He then insists that

> il faut chercher comment cet élan que nous sommes peut, dans la dérive des mots, s'affirmer pourtant comme une origine. Que faire, autrement dit, pour qu'il y ait quelque sens encore à dire *Je*? (22)
>
> [we must find how this elan that we are can, in the drift of words, nevertheless affirm itself as an origin. What can we do, in other words, so that saying *I* can still have some meaning?]

In his interviews with Yvonne Caroutch, André Pieyre de Mandiargues[19] made the following statement, openly professing his desire for a distinctive, original voice, while making explicit the link between the language and the signature.

> Ce que je voudrais, ce que je crois possible, est qu'une page, n'importe laquelle, écrite par moi, soit reconnaissable pour un lecteur attentif sans qu'il ait vu ma signature. (165)

> [What I would like, what I believe possible, is that a page, any page, written by me, be recognizable to an attentive reader without having seen my signature.]

Discussions about the subject simply being a position in language are negated by remarks such as this one by Pieyre de Mandiargues. He wants his textual identity to lead the reader to his name, to his actual identity. And is it not likely that a reader familiar with Du Bouchet's idiosyncratic typography would have little difficulty in identifying a text as one of his, despite the poet's statement about the disappearance of the artist?

Although it was suggested that questions of signature were of great importance for women writers, once again their responses are not homogeneous. Although three of the women poets studied directly address the issue of identity, Caroutch's poetry tends to be impersonal and the others deal with it in different ways. The question of identity is of course central to Lejeune's work. Although she needs to go through an initial period of healing, she is more concerned with the distance she perceives between herself and others than with internal dissonance. Prager's "I" is divided. But it is not clear that this split can be attributed to the dissonance between an imposed social role and the emergence of a personal voice, as Gilligan would suggest. Whereas Lejeune acknowledges the role of writing in creating a sense of

identity, it remains clear that writing is for her a means to an end and not an end in itself. In Prager's writing, we do not sense an identity apart from her poems: the world and the text become confused and she seems to become a product of her writing. Plantier effortlessly assumes a variety of voices but nevertheless assumes the position of "Chef d'Orchestre" thereby acknowledging the unifying role of her consciousness.

Neither Garelli nor Du Bouchet finds the question of identity troubling. The integrity of their sense of self is perhaps what allows them to play with the "I" as a mere shifter, confirming the statement that deconstructing identity becomes possible only if you already have one. But Bonnefoy does not agree. Although he understands the dangers of an unquestioned, pretentious "I," he insists on the need to acknowledge how we live our lives instead of getting entangled in theoretical constructs. Both Bonnefoy and Jaccottet have reneged earlier positions and both warn about the dangers of according to primacy to textual realities. Bonnefoy moves away from Surrealism's play of signifiers whereas Jaccottet realizes that he had inherited from tradition a poetic identity (as one who could lead the dead and the dying) which was dissonant with his life experiences.

With the exception of Caroutch, all the poets are preoccupied with questions of identity in one form or another. A final quote from Du Bouchet's Cendre tirant sur le bleu highlights the ongoing preoccupation with questions of

identity and signature, and the paradox involved in all discussions about the disappearance of the subject:

> sur le débord se placera quelquefois l'initiale d'un nom qui ne renvoie pas à une identité, mais à l'autonomie de la langue peinture. c'est l'attache. (14)
>
> [on the overlapping edging there will sometimes be the initial of a name which does not refer to an identity, but to the autonomy of the language of painting. it is the link.]

If we are truly intent on concentrating on the language itself, why are we still so obsessed with the "link"?

NOTES

1 Nancy K. Miller, "The Text's Heroine: A Feminist Critic and Her Fictions," Diacritics 12 (1982) 48-53.

2 Michel Foucault, "What is an author?," Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980) 113-138.

3 Claire Lejeune, L'Oeil de la lettre (Bruxelles: Editions Le Cormier, 1984).

4 Seyla Benhabib, Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics (New York: Routledge, 1992).

5 Benhabib here quotes from Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," Signs, 12.4 (1987): 621-43.

6 Nicole Ward Jouve, "Criticism as Autobiography," White Woman Speaks with Forked Tongue (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) vii-ix.

7 Carol Gilligan, In A Different Voice (1982; Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1993) ix-xxvii.

8 Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, "The Politics of Essence," and "Identity and Sexuality," Materialist Feminisms (Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1993) 145-152; 153-182.

9 Judith Kegan Gardiner, "On Female Identity," Critical Inquiry 8.2 (Winter 1981): 347-361.

10 Susan Sellers, ed., Writing Differences: Readings from the Seminar of Hélène Cixous (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988) 153.

11 Judith Kegan Gardiner quotes Luce Irigiray's "When Our Lips Speak Together." Her conception is in opposition to Lejeune's although they use the same metaphor:

> These streams don't flow into one, definitive sea; these rivers have no permanent banks; this body, no fixed borders. This unceasing mobility, this life. Which they might describe as our restlessness, whims, pretenses, or lies. For this all seems so strange to those who claim "solidity" as their foundation. (Trans. Carolyn Burke, Signs 6 [August 1980]: 75.

12 "Words" or "the words"? This is a problem akin to the one arising in Sartre's Les Mots, which title, depending on one's interpretation, can be translated The (special) Words, or (mere) Words.

13 Paysages provisoires is unpaginated, but the poems are numbered.

14 Cp. Verlaine's "L'Art poétique": "sans rien qui pèse ou qui pose" [wihout anything that is heavy or that is set down/poses].

15 Depreux, 20.

16 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, L'Oeil et l'Esprit (Paris: Gallimard, 1964) quoted by Janine Holman, "L'aventure du sens ou les maillons de l'impraticable dans la poésie d'André du

Bouchet," French Studies in Southern Africa 17 (1988): 64.

17 Holman, 64.

18 Yves Bonnefoy, "L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie," L'Improbable (Paris: Mercure de France, 1959) 147-185.

19 André Pieyre de Mandiargues, Un Saturne gai (Entretiens avec Yvonne Caroutch) (Paris: Gallimard, 1982).

CHAPTER 2: THE GENDER OF POETICS

In discussions of the creative process, the male poets never mention that they are men nor do they consider their gender an integral part of the process. Their discourse unproblematically assumes universality. Among the women poets, as is to be expected, we have a less homogeneous response. Claire Lejeune presents writing as part of becoming a woman/the woman she is. Caroutch ignores her sex, Prager does not strongly emphasize gender issues, and Plantier, through her feminist poetics, politicizes her womanhood. Garelli, in Récurrences du songe (1987), analyzes dispassionately the workings of poetry. His tone contrasts strongly with Lejeune's, for "giving birth" to the poems also means giving birth to herself.[1] This difference would seem to fall comfortably within the realm of stereotypes about differences between women and men: women cannot escape the tyranny of their bodies, and are therefore incapable of being objective. Woman does not control nature, she is nature. In Satrean terms, it is said that where women are concerned the for-itself (transcendence) is incapable of extricating itself from the in-itself (immanence) (in Cixous' terms, matter), an example of philosophical discourse legitimizing popular stereotypes. In this chapter we shall examine how active or passive the poets perceive themselves to be when producing their poetry. Cixous has pointed out that this pair of opposites underlies the other pairs she evokes.

Poetics will be taken in the broad sense of the word, not referring to purely technical concerns, but rather to the function of poetry and to the role of the poet. I shall be examining the images used to describe the poetic process both in the poetry and the theoretical writings (if they exist) of the poets. The etymology of the words associated with poetry stress creation, production, formation, i.e. activity, (*poiesis* - creation; *poietes* - maker; *poiein* - to make, create) which is in turn associated with masculinity, passivity (waiting, receiving) usually being identified with femininity. Why then are there so many references in discussions of the poetic process which stress the passive attitude of the poet, especially in the works of male poets? It will be useful to examine different facets of the poetic process separately. Five different aspects can be discerned. (1) Of course "inspiration" of divine or supernatural origin is not commonly found in modern poetry. (2) We do however find the poets preparing themselves so that they can be receptive, attentive; we see them waiting for words to emerge. (3) The question then becomes: where do these words emerge from? (4) The next stage is the conscious reworking of the poetry.[2] (5) Finally, we can examine how the poets regard the final product. Evidently, not all the poets mention or comment on all these aspects and what for one poet may just be a step, is for another the final product.

The apparently paradoxical alternation between passive (attentiveness) and active (manipulation of language) stances seems to correspond not only to different moments of the poetic process but also to the expectations that we, and the poets, bring to poetry. Du Bouchet addresses this contradiction in his Cahiers (1952-1956):

> Ce qui est déconcertant dans la poésie, c'est la part de la volonté -- sans laquelle rien ne peut aboutir --, mais qui semble en même temps la frapper de contrefaçon (39)
> [What is disconcerting about poetry, is the role of will -- without which nothing can be achieved --, but which seems to falsify it]

Although poetry is known to constitute the most carefully crafted language (masculine activity, control), there is also the expectation that it be spontaneous, natural (feminine):

> ... quand "cela" s'assemble
> en poème -- fin de ce qui est authentique --
> esthétique -- authenticité
> -- plus profonde, peut-être (14)
> [... when "that" is assembled to form a poem -- the end of all that is authentic -- esthetic -- authenticity -- more profound, perhaps]

Here, by using the impersonal reflexive verb (rather than concentrating on the agency of the poet by using an active form, for example, "quand le poète assemble 'cela'"), Du Bouchet is downplaying his active role in the writing of the

poem. The less control the poet exerts, the more "authentic" the poem presumably becomes.

Someone who like Plantier takes a political stand would however be wary of such an approach. In the attitude outlined by Du Bouchet the products of the automatic writing practiced by the Surrealists would be considered authentic because spontaneous. Plantier (despite her earlier allegiance to Surrealism) regards this so-called spontaneity with suspicion.

> Je me méfie de tout, surtout de l'écriture automatique, car l'apparente spontanéité du langage y joue automatiquement en faveur du virilisme.[3] (Discours du mâle, 150)
>
> [I am suspicious of everything, especially of automatic writing, because the apparent spontaneity of language automatically favors the cult of virility.]

Believing with Dale Spender that language is man-made, she suspects that any spontaneous production would still bear the mark of pejorative views of women. The spontaneity prized by many poets is therefore seen as potentially dangerous by Plantier. In her view, women need to be vigilant at all times, which might explain why we seem less likely to find images of passivity in the women's poetics.

1. THE PREPARATORY STAGE

At this stage, both Garelli and Jaccottet stress the need to free themselves from any preconceived ideas, and thereby

open themselves up to the world. Jaccottet insists that one must

> se défaire des théories, du savoir, de l'assurance qu'ils nous prêtent, enfin de tout ce qui nous protège, nous enferme et nous ferme[4]
>
> [get rid of theories, knowledge, of the assurance that they give us, in a word of everthing that protects, encloses and closes us]

Only when one has done this, will one be able be receptive to the world:

> brûler en esprit tous ces livres, tous ces mots [...] pour s'ouvrir à la pluie qui tombe [...] à un craquement dans les pierres du mur ou le bois de la porte[5]
>
> [burn in our minds all these books, all these words [...] in order to open ourselves to the falling rain [...], to a cracking noise of the stones in the wall or the wood in the door]

We see that Jaccottet is not talking about a great revelation or divine inspiration, simply about attentiveness to the small details of the world we live in.

Garelli addresses the strictures of a language with fixed definitions, i.e. the language we all inherit. He likens it to the "terrorisme d'une aiguille [...] sur un cadran." [the terrorism of a hand on a dial] He also rejects concepts because,

> Le concept, qui permet d'inclure la chose dans la clarté d'une définition [...] la prive de Monde.[6] (108)
>
> [The concept, which enables us to include the thing in the clarity of a definition, deprives it of being part of the World.]

Once the poet has cleared his mind of all the "lies" ("j'attends qu'un à un les mensonges s'écartent" [I wait for the lies to move away one by one] (Jaccottet, Ignorant, 34)), he is ready to see the world differently.

2. THE EMERGENCE OF THE WORD

> Patience dans l'attente. Vertu d'amandier.
>
> [Patience in waiting. Virtue of the almond tree.]
>
> Lejeune, Le Dernier Testament (17)

This stage is closely linked to the previous one and in some instances the two moments overlap due to the attentiveness generally required on the part of the poet at this point of the poetic process. In his Carnets, Du Bouchet presents the emergence of the words in the following way:

> Nature -- sous la dictée de ce délire tranquille -- les mots arrivent par endroits à crever la nappe --
>
> crèvent
>
> cassent (11)
>
> [Nature -- taking down the dictation of the peaceful delirium -- the words manage to burst through the tablecloth --

puncture

break]

Plantier has a strikingly similar image in Jusqu'à ce que l'enfer gèle. She does not however intimate that she is passive and we can assume that the violence comes from within her due to her strong emotional responses.

Je ne puis sur ces feuilles écrire
sans que les pointes et les plumes
n'y deviennent fourches
n'enfoncent leurs dents au travers (12)
[I cannot write on these pages
without the points and the quills
becoming forks
sinking their teeth into them]

When she states that "le poème distribue à coups de couteaux / ses vérités" (12) [the poem distributes its truths with knife stabs], she still seems to be the agent of this distribution of truth despite the fact that "le poème" is the subject of the sentence. In Du Bouchet's case, the poet is passively transcribing the words dictated to him. The words themselves are active (even violent), not the poet. In addition to this, he seems to be in an altered state of consciousness, a delirium, thereby futher undermining any impression of his conscious control. In the first poem of Caroutch's Voyages du double, we find a similar situation. She too is in an altered state of consciousness since she is

half-asleep ("le demi-sommeil") and the words are inserting themselves into their contexts like machines for cutting the threads on bolts or screws ("taraudent") so as to draw her attention. Here too it is ultimately the words that are active: "la parole [...] marche sur un fil" [the word walks on a wire] as in poem XXXIX we shall see that "le poème se fraie un chemin à son insu" [the poem clears a path for itself without its knowledge]. In the first poem, language seems to emerge from a frozen landscape, but when the words start becoming her own, they start melting, flowing. She is to collect the drops ("les [...] recueillir goutte à goutte"). Caroutch's most active role is that of choosing 'le mot juste': "mesurer [les mots] au fléau d'impalpables balances." [to measure (the words) on the beam of impalpable scales]. But the significance of this act is diminished because the tools she uses are unreal, intangible.

Further images of passivity in Du Bouchet's poetry are associated with waiting, the traditional role of the woman:

mon cahier devient
un champ
vide

attendant le blé (34)
[my notebook becomes
a field
empty
awaiting the wheat]

Here the poet hardly seems to participate at all and the poetic process is likened to the natural growth of plants. He does not control his poem,

> mon poème court sans cesse
>
> en avant de moi (37)
>
> [my poem is always running ahead of me],
>
> ... pour que mon poème serve
>
> de route
>
> à ce que je ne connais pas (33)
>
> [so that my poem serves as a road to that which I do not know].

Analogously, the "feminine" role of the poet in Garelli's poetics is demonstrated in his portrayal of the poet following the vagaries of the sentences as they unfold at the precategorial level:

> l'oeuvre [...] se forme par esquisses, par pulsions rythmiques, par bribes de séquences déployant l'énigme de ce qu'elles fondent. (Récurrences, 93)
>
> [the work is formed by outlines/sketches, by rythmical throbbing, by snatches of sequences unfurling the enigma of that which they are founding/establishing.]

The conclusion of the sentence is not known at the outset, there is always an element of surprise, as also in Du Bouchet:

> J'écris comme on marche -- à l'aveuglette --
>
> même en plein jour; comme on va devant soi, sans songer même de marcher. (33, 34)

[I write as one walks -- blindly --
even in broad daylight; as one keeps moving ahead,
without thinking about walking.]

Saying that he writes "blindly" even in broad daylight subverts the conventional dichotomy between Jung's (feminine) "unconsciousness-darkness-night" and (masculine) "consciousness-light-day".[7] Du Bouchet's universe is diurnal par excellence and "jour" in his world inevitably means daylight.

Garelli is also constantly in a "feminine" mode of waiting and listening, like Caroutch, who is on the watch ("guetter"). He wants to resist the situation where he stays in the "ornières" [ruts] of old, fixed meanings, where his "bouche dérisoire épelle le trop-plein gorgé de vieux mots" [derisory lips spell the overflowing mouthful of old words] ("Ornières," Brèche, 60) He does not want to create a new world with his words, he wants to see anew, to listen anew, in order to present the world the way it really is, by destroying ("rayer") "les assises célées d'un ordre collectif" [the concealed foundations of a collective order] ("Imposition d'une langue", Archives) by listening to/for "une parole aux sonorités portuaires" [words with the resonances of ports] (i.e. open to the ocean), a "parole [...] que scande un enfant" [words [...] chanted by a child] (innocence), "où vient battre l'océan" [where the ocean strikes] (unfettered nature) (23). Of course "scander" and "battre" can also

suggest the regular beating of a rhythm. In the poem, "Sol réceptif", the title already presents the poet as the (fertile) site/field/page receptive to the world outside. The poet is open ("tendu" [tense], "réceptif" [receptive], "à l'écoute" [listening]) to all that is virtual or potential: "ce qui n'a pas eu lieu" [that which has not taken place]; "ce qui se défait" [that which is undone]. "J'ausculte" [I auscultate] although still related to listening, and therefore "passive", now assumes a more active cast because of the present indicative. He listens for obsolete, unknown meanings, for the "roaring" of animals or elements which exists outside the realm of language:

> j'ausculte des chiffres aux fonctions non retenues, des paroles mises à l'écart, des attentes qui mugissent sous les charges désamorcées des nombres. (15)
>
> [I sound the figures whose functions we have forgotten, the words set aside, the expectations roaring under the defused charge of the numbers].

"Je m'absorbe en cette tâche et conspire" [I am absorbed by this task and conspire] portrays the active role the poet plays, but the evocation of the maturation ("mûrie") of the ink on the page "par l'accident", once again shows that the poet has to relinquish some control in his enterprise. He wants to prevent his words ("ces mots" - here associated with concepts?) from wiping out the ink (a more concrete image?) from the page. Even though the "nous savons" [we know] at the

beginning of the poem establishes this knowledge (of the negative aspects of language) as universal, the mode of the rest of the poem is personal because the "je" does not explicitly refer to all poets.

In Lejeune's case, the distinction between activity and passivity cannot be divorced from the centrality of the birth imagery. Although the urgent nature of giving birth makes her seem passive, a vessel who has no choice, she counters this impression with imagery associated with male sexuality:

> Quand la parole s'annonce, c'est toujours comme une violence qui s'amoncelle en moi, comme un silence qui m'habite et vient à son terme. Je ne peux vivre qu'en m'allégeant. [...] Ma pensée est jaillissement de semence. Je vis ma spiritualité comme l'homme vit sa sexualité. [...] Je suis pleine de sens; il me faut dire ou mourir!
>
> (Geste, 43)
>
> [When the words approach, it is always like a violence building up in me, like a silence inhabiting me and coming to term. I can live only by unburdening myself. (...) My thought is an outpouring of seed. I live my spirituality as a man lives his sexuality. (...) I am pregnant with meaning; I must express myself or die!]

In this paragraph, fecundity is represented by both "masculine" and "feminine" images. "[M]'habite" [inhabits me], "à son terme" [at term] and "pleine" [full, but also the

word used for pregnant animals] are associated with gestation, but the lyric self is not exclusively womb: retrospectively "s'amoncelle" [builds up] can be seen as the tumescence which precedes the "jaillissement de semence" [spilling of seed/semen]. Although the verb "s'alléger" [alleviate, literally to make lighter] is more readily linked with ejaculation, in this ambivalent context it also evokes the imperative nature of the birth experience. In fact, birth images appear at the end of the following verse: "me remettre au monde" [replace myself in the world], "m'expulser de moi" [expel me from myself]. She is therefore both the vessel/mother and the child (hermaphroditic, parthenogenetic?). Such images persist: "Me concevoir [...] afin de m'engendrer moi-même sans cesse." (45) [Conceive myself [...] in order incessantly to engender myself.]

At times, as in these words from Le Dernier Testament, Lejeune present words as autonomous and beyond her control:

> Pourquoi ces choses-là se disaient-elles à l'insu de l'enclume et du marteau, comme échappées à notre sceau? (34)
>
> [Why were those things said without the knowledge of the anvil and the hammer, as if they had escaped our stamp/seal?]

Of course the tools she evokes tend to be associated with men, so once again she seems actively to be countering a facile identification between women and passivity, despite her

frequent use of birth imagery which may lend itself more readily to such stereotyping. In Garelli's case one wonders whether it is a conscious choice when a discourse of control shines through even when he is promulgating the need to be open and receptive:

> la maîtrise de cette situation implique une attitude d'ouverture réceptrice dont l'enjeu relève de l'exercice conjoint de l'écoute et du regard. L'invention créatrice ne pouvant surgir que pour qui sait accueillir. C'est-à-dire, écouter, sans forcer. (Récurrences, 96)
>
> [the mastery of this situation implies an attitude of receptive openness which requires the joint effort of hearing and sight. Creative invention can only come to those who know how to welcome. That is, to listen, without forcing.]

"[M]aîtrise" [mastery], "exercice" (action), "regard" [look/gaze] (more control), "l'invention" (despite the etymology of the word which means to discover) highlight the active role, whereas passivity is evoked by: "attitude d'ouverture réceptrice" [attitude of receptive openness] (waiting), "l'écoute" [hearing] (sound is invasive, we cannot control it), "accueillir" [welcome], "écouter" [listen]. The message of the text is to be passive -- "sans forcer" [without forcing] -- but the abundance of words with connotations of mastery and control belies this attitude.

Jaccottet, who is much more humble and strives for simplicity, also talks of the importance of waiting receptively, (reminding us of the meek who will inherit the earth):

> Ce n'est pas la Beauté que j'ai trouvé ici [...]
> mais celle qui s'enfuit, la beauté de ce monde [...]
> Elle n'est pas donnée à nous qui la forçons [...]
> mais peut-être à l'attente, au silence discret,
> à celui qui est oublié dans les louanges
> et simplement accroît son amour en secret.[8]
> [It is not Beauty that I found here (...)
> but the one that slips away, the beauty of this world (...)
> It is not given to those of us that force it (...)
> but perhaps to waiting, to discreet silence,
> to him who is forgotten in the songs of praise
> and simply increases his love in secret.]

In a poem entitled "Le Travail du poète" from L'Ignorant (1957) he states that his task is not to dream,

> mais de veiller comme un berger et d'appeler
> tout ce qui risque de se perdre s'il s'endort. (37)
> [but to keep watch like a shepherd and to call
> all that could be lost if he were to fall asleep.]

Watchfulness (of a humble shepherd), rather than active creativity, becomes the role of the poet. We also see a need to preserve, if not life, at least the memory of things and

people, an aspect of his poetry that we shall discuss later in this chapter.

3. THE PLACE OF POETRY

que je sois la terre favorable

[so that I can be the favorable earth]

Bonnefoy, Douve (86)

Fertile soil (like the good soil in the parable) is a recurring image for the place of emergence of the words, whether this place be inside, as in the poem by Bonnefoy cited in the epigraph, or outside, the poet. Birth imagery, or perhaps more specifically images of gestation, are also regularly evoked when referring to the creative process, that mysterious process that takes place inside the woman's body, where it cannot be seen. Garelli seems to support the stereotype: "la femme, de toute évidence, en ses mystères est nocturne!" [woman, quite obviously, in her mysteries is nocturnal!] (Récurrences, 109) Gestation serves well for the parts of the poetic process that are difficult to explain, the nine-month waiting period suggesting the patience necessary for the maturation of the poem.[9] Of course, not all poets rely heavily on such imagery, but even when they deploy other systems for explaining the creative process, this topos of giving birth to the poem is fairly common.

Garelli offers a good example of this phenomenon. His preoccupation in Récurrences du songe, among others, is with

the place of the gestation of the poem. But this reference to maternity seems conventional because there are no related images to support it; significantly, this place is outside of himself. "[P]rofondeur" [depth], "béance" [wide open space], "horizon," "zone," and especially "champ" [field] denote this place (82) "d'émergence préindividuelle" (83) [of pre-individual emergence], i.e. a place which has not yet been subjugated to the interpretive grid of language.

In Du Bouchet's universe, the words also emerge from the outside, from the landscape, the countryside,[10] as we have already seen in the image of the fields awaiting the wheat and it is his movement within this landscape that creates meaning, that creates the poem:

> ... promesse, je t'ai gardée
> comme un papier blanc
>
> cette grande réserve de terre
> et de ciel
>
> où j'avance (62)
>
> [... promise, I kept you
> like a white sheet of paper
>
> this great reserve of earth
> and of sky
>
> where I advance]

Writing is like walking; the earth is like a page, and Du Bouchet tends to be in motion, i.e. not simply passive.

Ma ponctuation est la bêche avec laquelle
j'avance dans le champ. (63)
[My punctuation is like the spade with which
I advance in the field.]

The "place" and the "act" of poetry are difficult to separate in Du Bouchet's poetics, since his movement has an impact on the space in which he moves; the very motion creates space, the space of the poem itself.

In Bonnefoy's work, images of fields awaiting the emergence of words occasionally appear although they are not very common. In one such image, "le sol sonore" [resounding ground], the assonance reinforces the suggestion of a voice rising up from the earth. Although in Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve he at first says,

Quelle parole a surgi près de moi
[...]
A peine si je sens ce souffle qui me nomme (83)
[What words have suddently sprung up close to me
(...)
I can hardly feel this breath which is naming me]

thereby clearly indicating that the words are coming from outside himself, in the next stanza he realizes that they in fact come from inside him:

Pourtant ce cri sur moi vient de moi,
Je suis muré dans mon extravagance.
Quelle divine ou quelle étrange voix
Eût consenti d'habiter mon silence? (83)
[Yet this cry on me comes from me,
I am walled in my extravagance.
What divine or what strange voice
Would have consented to inhabiting my silence?]

This dialectic between internal and external spaces is developed further by the image "muré dans mon extravagance" due to the etymology of the latter which means to wander outside of something ("extravagare"). As we shall show in chapter 5, inside and outside often merge in Bonnefoy's world, or take on characteristcs of their opposites. The place of poetry, rather than being an identifiable space, is created by relationship, by interaction, thus explaining the emphasis on the threshold in Bonnefoy's work.

Although we shall see (in Chapter 5) a confusion of internal and external spaces in Caroutch's work, similar to that in Bonnefoy, the "place" of her poetry, even when gestational imagery is suggested, is always outside of herself; she is never the vessel in the same way that Lejeune is, although for her the emergence of language is associated with desire and, to some extent, birth:

l'espace calciné par le désir est un phénix qui reverdit,
enserrant dans ses bras la genèse du voyage. (<u>Voyages</u> I)

[the space charred by desire is a phoenix which grows green again, clasping the genesis of the journey in its arms.]

Because of the evocation of desire, "la genèse" can be seen in its etymological sense of birth, rather than as just an origin. But this imagery is balanced by spatial imagery which suggests a razed area that becomes fertile again, "reverdit." Caroutch's first evocation of the words places them in a space far from herself:

Au début, ce ne sont que mots lointains poudrés de givre, inhabitables. (I)

[In the beginning, there are only distant, uninhabitable words, powdered with frost.]

This "langue" that first appears irrevocably external to the poet, offering her no theater of operations, remains resistant even when assimilated by her, for it refuses to emerge as "parole." The shift from ice to fire (the subjective, sensory reaction to extreme cold) does suggest a latent potentiality for the words' future coming to life. Caroutch still feels at a distance from such a future, however, as revealed by her use of the more general definite article ("la"), rather than a possessive adjective:

D'autres brûlent au noeud de la gorge muette.

[Others burn in the lump of the mute throat.]

When she does use the word "ventre" (womb) it is along with another more neutral word "gîte" [lodging/site/dwelling]. Her

final image in this first poem presents words walking on a wire, "au-dessus de l'abîme" [above the abyss].

Lejeune, Plantier and Prager also use this image of walking a tightrope. We have seen that as an epigraph to her volume Narcose, the latter says:

> J'avance sur la corde raide de mon identité.
>
> [I advance on the tightrope of my identity.]

Lejeune too uses this image in a context of identity, as does Leah D. Hewitt in her work on women writers, Autobiographical Tightropes.[11] So although the ground in Du Bouchet's world may become "meuble" or "friable" and therefore unsure, it does not seem to be as threatening. Plantier states it thus:

> je danse [...] sur la corde raide, je chancelle, sur le point de tomber ou de m'écraser dans l'un de mes deux Moi (Discours, 150)
>
> [I dance (...) on the tightrope, I totter, on the verge of falling or of being dashed in one of my two Selves]

Language springs forth from the womb in Lejeune's work, as we have seen, and she presents us with very concrete, "graphic" images of birth:

> accoucher sans cesse, assumer les eaux, le sang, l'arrière-faix
>
> [incessantly giving birth, taking on the waters, the blood, the afterbirth]

but it is the waters, the blood and the placenta "du langage," and the two realms of parturition and of language are inextricably linked from the beginning:

> Il allait falloir vivre la gestation et l'éclatement du langage. Mettre dehors le dedans des mots, afin qu'ils deviennent tous rayonnant de sens. (Geste, 49)
>
> [I was going to have to live the gestation and the bursting open of language. Put out the inside of the words, so that they could all radiate/glow with meaning.]

In Prager's text one never is sure whether she is in the text or the text in her:

> Si j'ai sous la peau le texte à l'envers de mon repos, où me relire?
> Une étreinte me fera sortir de mon texte...
> (Narcose, 88)
>
> [If I have the text under my skin on the reverse side of my repose, where can I reread myself?
> An embrace will make me leave my text...]

4. ACTIVE REWORKING OF THE POEM/LANGUAGE

Despite the evocation of an altered state of consciousness in the title Narcose, Prager is definitely active and in control in her poem "La Suffisance du Mot"

> D'une matière efficace nous sommes les manipulateurs responsables. (71)

[We are the responsable manipulators of an effective/ efficient matter/material/subject.]

Plantier also never seems seriously to doubt her control over language. In her preface to C'est moi Diégo, she talks of the decision of women writers to subvert partriarchal, manmade language, in order to make themselves heard:

> à choisir entre un monde qui n'était pas taillé à leur mesure et un nouveau langage permettant d'appréhender un monde nouveau, elles n'ont pas hésité: elles ont parlé autrement, tout au moins l'ont-elles tenté. (10)
>
> [having to choose between a world which was not made for them and a new language which would allow them to apprehend a new world, they did not hesitate: they spoke differently, or at least they tried.]

She also points out that the so-called universal "homme" (despite the etymology "homo" which means "human" as opposed to "vir" which means "man"), in fact designates male and masculine values and preoccupations.

> Serait-ce donc que le langage véhicule un constant parti-pris[12] au profit du sexe masculin?
>
> Qui ne le voit ne veut le voir.
>
> Par le langage et la pensée, l'homme se croit homme et ne se figure pas "vir" (Discours, 141)
>
> [Could it be that language is constantly advantageous to men?

Those who do not see this, do not want to see it.

Through language and thought, men believe themselves to be human and not men.]

If women then want to represent their own experiences, they have to change language, they have to do violence to it. Undercutting the nurturing quality we associate with a maternal figure when she says that "le langage est notre maman" [language is our mama] (Enfer, 15), Plantier's poetry is irrevocably political. Since, as another voice says to her, "tu t'es entré la politique dans l'oeil" [you have put politics in your eye] (15), she sees everything through a political lens. Even if she were to try to avoid being political, she tells us wryly, her typewriter would not let her:

car
le ruban de ma machine à écrire
se retournerait dans sa tombe. (15)
[for
the ribbon of my typewriter
would turn over in its grave]

Presenting us with the tool of her trade, instead of a natural image such as a field, Plantier draws attention to the agency of the poet. And even though it can be "convulsé" [distorted] and "révulsé" [contorted] (15), she never really doubts the power of language:

> c'est grâce au langage que je serai sauvée si je parviens à en faire le fondement essentiel de ma libération. (Discours, 150)
>
> [it is thanks to language that I will be saved if I manage to make it the essential foundation of my liberation]

Notwithstanding their different philosophical and theoretical frameworks and goals, we find similarities between the strategies of male poets and feminists. Garelli has to

> "détraquer" le langage, pour dégager les notions instituées, de la sphère du concept (Récurrences, 83)
>
> ["derail" language from the sphere of concepts, in order to free fixed notions]

This task resembles that of women writers who have to combat fixed meanings in order to mold language to fulfill their needs and express their experiences. Monique Wittig, in "The Trojan Horse," discusses literature in which "words are given to be read in their materiality:"

> But one must understand that to attain this result a writer must first reduce language to be as meaningless as possible in order to turn it into a neutral material--that is, a raw material. (Straight Mind, 72)

She wants to strip words of their conventional meanings so as better to work the raw material as the sculptor works clay (71). This Plantier does by drawing attention to the sounds rather than the meanings and by creating nonsensical words

that we nevertheless understand within the context, as in a poem criticizing politicians:

hommes po hommes à lunettes
hommes politi
méphipolitimemphi
limemphi
tiques (Enfer, 54)

[men po men with glasses
men politi
mephipolitimemphi
limemphi
tics] (Stanton, 62)

At other times, of course, the play on sounds coincides very well with the intended meaning, as in a poem dealing with the war in Vietnam where she plays once again with the name of an important political figure, Henry Kissinger: "kissinguerre" [kissingwar] (63) and "kissinguère" [hardly any kissing] (Enfer, 64). With the exception of Garelli whose poems sometimes present a linking of words based more on sound than on meaning and who also sometimes strings a whole series of relative clauses together without providing a main clause, the male poets tend not to violate the rules of language in the way described by Lejeune in L'Atelier. She criticizes the relationships that can spring up among signifiers that become "de plus en plus creux" [emptier and emptier] until they "ne se connaissent plus" [no longer know each other]:

> mots-bulles où le signifié est raréfié, avec lesquels on peut jongler, auxquels on peut faire dire n'importe quoi: ils ne s'honorent plus: "abolis bibelots d'inanité sonore"... Jusqu'à ce qu'ils se perdent dans notre ciel comme un envol de ballons. (86)
>
> [bubble-words where the signified has become rarefied, with which we can juggle, which we can make mean anything at all: they no longer honor each other: "abolished knick-knacks of sonorous inanity"... Until they get lost in our sky like a bunch of balloons.]

The allusion to Mallarmé's "Sonnet en -yx" with its nonsense word "le ptyx" associates the modern master of male poets with this undesirable, dehumanizing practice. Ironically, however, her quote from Mallarmé, rather than proving her point that signifiers become empty and meaningless, seems to do just the opposite: if the words "abolis bibelots d'inanité sonore" describe these empty signifiers so well, how can these words themselves be regarded as empty signifiers? Similarly, the play of signifiers which she seems to be criticizing, and which is quite prevalent in Plantier's work, does not prevent the latter from writing political poetry in which the message, if not paramount, is undeniably relevant. Contextualization then becomes the key, as in Lejeune's text as well: had she not provided the context for the quote, it would not necessarily have been understood in the same way.

Du Bouchet, albeit with less violence, suggests a practice similar to that of Garelli's "derailing." Although he is occasionally obscure, he tends to use language in a more straightforward fashion:

> Je ne me sers que du langage que j'ai emprunté.
> Il n'est pas à moi.
> Il n'est que bien ou mal employé.
> ... Je détourne le langage de tout le monde.
> Ce sont vos mots que vous ne reconnaissez pas,
> -- les mêmes. (Carnets, 23)
> [I only use the language which I have borrowed.
> It is not mine. It is only used well or badly.
> ... I divert/reroute (misappropriate/embezzle)
> everyday language. These are your words and you do not
> recognize them -- the same ones.]

True to his constant evocations of roads, Du Bouchet's expression "détourner" implies taking a different road, not derailing. Continuing this idea of using normal language, which becomes unrecognizable, Du Bouchet tells us:

> je n'avais fait que
> copier la
> nature
> et on ne la reconnaissait pas (30)
> [I did nothing but
> copy

nature

and people did not recognize it.]

Here again the poet attributes language to nature, to the elements, rather than to himself:

je desserre

la bouche

de la terre

elle parle par flaques

et je comprends

son langage de lumière (30, 31)

[I unclench

the mouth

of the earth

it speaks with pools of water

and I understand

its language of light]

He is active only in so far as he unclenches the mouth of the earth.

If, with the exception of Caroutch, the women poets seem to be less likely to present themselves as passively waiting and tend to concentrate more on their active manipulation of language, what implications does this have for the way they view the poem as a finished product?

5. THE FINISHED PRODUCT. A MONUMENT?

Monument offert à l'impossible.

[A monument offered to the impossible]

Jaccottet, Semaison (58)

In his book on Jaccottet, Jean Onimus speaks of formal perfection, of "achèvement" as belonging to a bygone era:

> elle convenait à une culture heureuse, où l'homme se sentait à la mesure de toutes choses, maître par son esprit et possesseur de la nature, confiant dans ses idéologies réductrices de mystères. L'oeuvre achevée ressemble à l'instrument de cette domination: le concept. Comme lui elle se veut universelle, cohérente, transhistorique. (Onimus, 48)
>
> [it suited a happy culture, where man felt capable of anything, mastering with his mind and possessing nature, confident in his ideologies which reduced mystery. The completed work resembles an instrument of this domination: the concept. Like the latter, it wants to be universal, coherent, transhistoric/a-historic]

Modern poetry aspires to far less exalted ends, as Jaccottet's allusion to Hugo's "Magnitudo Parvi" in Les Contemplations demonstrates:

> "Plutôt un feu de pâtre que les accents majestueux de l'orgue..." L'accord unanime et durable est brisé; il reste les éclats, et, entre eux, un vide presque invivable qui menace de les engloutir. (Semaison, 83)

["A shepherd's fire rather than the majestic tone of the organ..." The unanimous and lasting chord has been broken; only fragments remain, and, among them, an almost unlivable emptiness which threatens to engulf them.]

In Jaccottet's view, the kinds of poems that can represent this new reality, are hai-ku because they are "self-obliterating."

When faced with death, Jaccottet doubts language:

On peut nommer cela horreur, ordure,
prononcer même les mots de l'ordure
déchiffrés dans le linge des bas-fonds:
à quelque singerie que se livre le poète,
cela n'entrera pas dans sa page d'écriture.
(Leçons, 22)

[We can call it horror, filth,
even pronounce the words of filth
deciphered in the washing of the slums:
no matter to what antics the poet gives himself over,
it will never enter the page of his writing.]

But of course, Jaccottet is writing, and many of his works deal with death (Requiem, Leçons, Chants d'en bas) and all of them to some extent serve to keep the memory of the deceased alive. Even when writing does not have this explicit function, its lasting quality is of import.

When Plantier is faced with her mother's death, she too experiences a loss of faith in language:

> parce que ma mère allait mourir
> tout l'alphabet a capoté
> la mort badigeonne les portes
> [...]
> prétentieuse vie que les choses remportent
> pauvres désirs inégalés
> pauvres syllabes qu'une réciproque haine agglutine
> bruits non perçus défunts
> avant que de percuter les tympans (Enfer, 40, 41)
> [because my mother was going to die
> the whole alphabet was overturned
> death is smeared on the doors
> (...)
> pretentious life that things carry away
> pathetic inconsistent desires
> pathetic syllables that a reciprocal hatred sticks together
> undetected noises defunct
> before even reaching/striking the eardrums]

But she finally manages, through language, not only to capture and preserve the memory of her mother and of her experience of her mother's death, she can also let it go, allow it to become a part of the past.

> une phrase enfouie [...] a métamorphosé en continents boueux ses eaux, et enfin, émergée, a pu se dissoudre et disparaître, engloutissant avec elle la mort de ma mère. (78)
>
> [a buried sentence (...) has transformed its waters into muddy continents, and finally, having emerged, was able to dissolve and disappear, engulfing with it the death of my mother.]

This conception corresponds to Derrida's description of traces in Speech and Phenomena.[13] He explains that memory is based on the retentional function of traces but that each trace is also perpetually effaced; and once effaced, it belongs to the past:

> Effacement must always be able to overtake the trace; otherwise is would not be a trace but an indestructible and monumental substance. (156)

Plantier comes back to her mother, this time in a far more sublimated form, in her poem "Stabat Mater" in which she evokes all the statues and paintings representing the Virgin Mary, saying that they represent for her "pas mal de mères" [quite a lot of mothers] (85). The lofty tone suggested by the Latin of the title and the reference to the suffering of the Virgin (dolorosa) is undermined when Venus with her associations to sexuality becomes one of the mothers and the tone becomes decidedly irreverent as they are characterized as

"toutes bon pied bon cul bonnes gueuses et ben honnêtes" [all good feet good pussy good wenches and real decent].

> cette pépée ma mère belle tellement enculée au cours des âges
> mais qui depuis un certain temps dégénère sous sa cloche
> tout en snobant les autres de son éclatant fessier
> Vénus ma plus large mère aux hanches démodées (85)
> [this bird my beautiful mother butt-fucked so much through the ages
> but who for some time now has been degenerating under her bell jar
> while snubbing the others with her dazzling/stunning ass
> Venus my broadest/largest mother with the old-fashioned hips]

The memory of her real mother is replaced by a multiplicity of artistic representations that ironically bring us back to political reality. This proliferation of images of the mother may prevent the memory from becoming monumental by virtue of the never-ending opportunity to replace one image with another.

Bonnefoy, Du Bouchet and Jaccottet, despite references to monuments in their works, seem intent on leaving "traces" rather than "indestructible and monumental" works. In Bonnefoy's Pierre écrite, we find several poems entitled "Une pierre," representing inscriptions on tombstones and inspired,

presumably, by Mallarmé's "Tombeaux." Du Bouchet would also like the poem to be witness to something:

> un poème -- qu'est-ce -- rien
> et pourtant le monde était là (75)
> [a poem -- what is it -- nothing
> and nonetheless the world was there]

In order to capture something of what was, albeit with "rien" [nothing],

> je travaille dans cette matière
> humaine (les mots)
> je tire un matériel inhumain
> de cette matière humaine --
> pour durer. (17)
> [I work with this human matter (words)
> I draw an inhuman material from the human
> matter -- in order (for it?) to last.]

It is also in this context where the poet presents poetry as being some kind of monument. Does the "durer" refer to himself or to the poetry? Even if it is only to himself, it is nonetheless an attempt to keep a record which perpetuates his memory. This desire to preserve, to bear witness to an event, can also be evidenced in the traces he leaves on the page, traces which are also the "laisses," the high-water and low-water marks, he leaves on the page:

> ... je n'écris que pour
> me retirer

que ce que j'ai dit soit comme une grande plage
d'où je me suis retiré. (36)
[I write only in order to withdraw myself
so that what I said be like a big beach from which
I have withdrawn]

Is he once again withdrawing the human element in order to be left with something durable? In addition to being solid and durable, monuments also tend to be quite often phallic, undeniably masculine. But in Du Bouchet's case, although the traces remain on the page, they can hardly be called solid or durable. Despite the harshness and hardness of many of the elements in his work, there are also less solid elements: the earth is "meuble" [mobile] or "friable au souffle" [flaky/crumbly in the wind] and the recurring mountain is often presented as a vision shimmering in the air: "mais la montagne, c'est l'air encore." [but the mountain, it is more air]. And although Du Bouchet's "I" is always walking, stepping, advancing (elements of Cixous' characterization of masculinity), we can say that he steps lightly. Of course the words on the page are there to stay, but the blank spaces in between create the impression that he leaves only light traces on the moving sand, a fragile monument, which could easily be wiped away by the wind, just as the wind can blow away his words:

Et silence
bêchant dehors, comme -- sur qui a crié, retournera le

dehors.

Un éclat de vent ferme ma parole perdue. (N. pag.)

[And silence
digging outside, like -- on he who has shouted,
the outside will turn over.

A gust of wind shuts (up) my lost words.]

The tension created by this attempt to erect a precarious monument to an ephemeral experience can be seen in the first words of the last poem of the volume, "Un jour de plus augmenté d'un jour [One more day augmented by a day]":

Préserver pour perdre en bloc. Demeure le bloc. Bloc perdu.

[Preserve to lose as a whole. The block remains. Block lost.]

The typography becomes more conventional when, instead of demonstrating it, Du Bouchet starts explaining his project to aerate his pages by keeping the words as far away from each other as possible:

aussi loin qu'ils peuvent l'être les uns des autres sans que le fil distendu qui les relie soit perdu

[as far as they can be from one another without losing the slack thread linking them together]

This in part suggests that theoretical discourse tends to be more "monumental" than poetry itself, a distinction analogous to the one we made in the Introduction, when we characterized

theoretical discourse on space as more violent than the experiences presented by the poets themselves.

Despite the title of Bonnefoy's volume, he wants to capture the here and now, but he knows that as soon as he expresses it, it is already elsewhere and in the past. His "pierres écrites" are therefore fragile "monuments" that always bear traces of his awareness of the precariousness of that which he is trying to capture.

> Le jour au fond du jour sauvera-t-il
> Le peu de mots que nous fûmes ensemble?
> Pour moi, j'ai tant aimé ces jours confiants, je veille
> Sur quelques mots éteints dans l'âtre de nos coeurs. (42)
> [Will the day/light at the depths of the day/light save/redeem
> The few words that we were together?
> As for me, I liked those confiding days so much, I watch over
> A few burnt-out words in the hearths of our hearts.]

In this poem the fragility of what he is trying to preserve is demonstrated by the doubt raised by the question. The relationship of the two people is reduced to the words they exhanged. The simplicity of the language also contrasts with the lofty language usually associated with monumental poetry. Bonnefoy exposes the futility of this gesture because he is watching over "quelques mots éteints," words that have lost their human warmth. The poem *is* in actual fact these words.

But as he states in "The Act and the Place of Poetry" this is all we can attain without deluding ourselves. And the impermanent quality of the images assures that they do not conceal the presence they are supposed to name.

This lack of permanence in the images is perhaps best summed up in Bonnefoy's own words in a poem from Hier régnant désert, "L'Imperfection est la cime."

Il y avait qu'il fallait détruire et détruire et détruire,
Il y avait que le salut n'est qu'à ce prix.

Ruiner la face nue qui monte dans le marbre,
Marteler toute forme toute beauté.

Aimer la perfection parce qu'elle est le seuil,
Mais la nier sitôt connue, l'oublier morte,

L'imperfection est la cime. (152)
[There was that one had to destroy and destroy and destroy,
There was that salvation could be had only at this price.

Ruining the naked face which rises up in the marble,
Chiseling each form each beauty.

Loving perfection because it is the threshold,
But repudiating it once encountered, forgetting it once dead,

Imperfection is the peak.]

This constant starting over by destroying is akin to what Du Bouchet describes when he addresses the "work" that goes into poetry:

... je n'ai pu travailler
que pour détruire mon poème
... Tant j'ai travaillé
pour détruire ce qu'il y avait
de trop -- j'avais créé
l'air -- fait place (42)

[... I could work only
to destroy my poem
... I worked so much
to destroy that which was
too much/superfluous -- I had created
air -- made room]

While describing his poetic practice, Du Bouchet is also subverting the idea of "creating" a poem, in the sense of a lasting artifice.

Just like Bonnefoy who always wants to start over each time and does not want to leave any lasting monuments (only a concept is a "demeure éternelle" [eternal dwelling], Bonnefoy, Les Tombeaux de Ravenne [Douve, 22]), Jaccottet, by showing us the processes he uses when writing a poem, and then giving an alternative version, in a poem significantly dealing with a

monument, shows that it is never immutable, never written in stone.

Immémoriale tombe ou monument
sans ornement que du lierre tenace
une guirlande au promeneur disant
bronze de guerre ou verdure nocturne
Au pied, offerts par une source intime,
à qui s'approche comme à qui s'éloigne
une coupe de miel, une cloche de lait.

Ou:

Immémorial monument ou grande urne
sans ornement que du lierre tenace
une guirlande évoquant à qui passe
bronze de guerre ou verdure nocturne.

A celui qui célèbre cette roche
comme à celui qui vivant s'en approche,
la primevère offre son bol de miel,
la perce-neige une cloche de lait. (Semaison, 35, 36)

[Age-old tomb or monument
With only the tenacious ivy as ornament
a garland saying to the passerby
war bronze or nocturnal verdure
At the foot, offered by an intimate spring,
to he who approaches as to he who moves away
a bowl of honey, a bell of milk.

Or:

Age-old monument or large urn
With only the tenacious ivy as ornament
a garland evoking for him who passes
war bronze or nocturnal verdure.

To he who celebrates this rock
as to he who, living, approaches it,
the primrose offers its bowl of honey,
the snowdrop a bell of milk.]

Since his poem is not permanent, it is perhaps the organic plants -- the ivy and the flowers -- rather than the stone tomb that best represent the poem. Jaccottet's poems, rather than being eternal monuments, share the precarious existence of all living things.

These poems that participate in the ephemeral nature of living things can be said to leave light traces rather than constituting massive monuments. The blank spaces that are left in between the words, especially prevalent in Du Bouchet's work as we have seen, reinforce the impression that only traces are being left, rather than substantial, durable structures. Jaccottet sees our existence as a crossing which leaves similar, light traces. Although he is not referring to Du Bouchet in this instance, he provides a very good metaphor for the impression created by his poetry.

Nous avançons comme le fil dans le tissu; l'aiguille ne pique que d'instant en instant. Nous laissons un dessin,

un sillage, dans le passé, ou étoffe traversée.
(Semaison, 110)

[We advance like the thread in the cloth; the needle only pricks now and again. We leave a sketch, a wake, in the past, or traveled/crossed fabric.]

This feminine image par excellence, while suggesting that we leave only light traces, also implies a movement which links different points in space, as does Du Bouchet's spade, piercing the ground with punctuation marks. But these connections seem very tentative and Jaccottet reminds us that this kind of poetry never forgets that "les choses peuvent de nouveau se défaire" [things can fall apart again] (Semaison, 65) at any time, and that poetry can provide but a feeble or illusory hold on things:

c'est à peine si je les tiens, si j'en tiens l'ombre.
(65)

[it is as if I hardly hold them, as if I hold their shadow.]

Lejeune, whose writing certainly is hardly ever light, despite frequent aphorisms in her earlier works, summarizes this kind of writing thus:

Non plus poème héroïque où la mémoire se sédentarise, informée par "le dur désir de durer" [an allusion to Eluard], mais poésie/prose où ne cessent de se réinventer les voies de notre transhumance (Atelier, 125)

[No longer the heroic poem where memory settles,

informed by the "strong desire to last," but poetry/
prose where the routes of our transhumance never stop
reinventing themselves]

Although she does not use formal experimentation as some of the other poets do and tends to adhere to prose in recent years, thereby rendering her style heavier, her persistent return to similar issues proves the point that it is impossible to capture experiences or impressions for once and for all. And Garelli's hesitation ("on ne savait au juste s'il convenait de statufier ou d'immoler" [we did not really know whether to erect a statue or whether to immolate/sacrifice/slay] (Brèche, 32)) between preservation and destruction, in fact becomes a moot point: both are part of the same process.

The women poets are not seen to make statements such as the following made by Jaccottet in "Les Eaux et les forêts,"

et la parole n'est ni plus ni moins utile
que ces chatons de saule en terrain de marais (Airs, 60)
[and words are no more and no less useful
than these pussy willows in marshlands]

and Bonnefoy in Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve,

Je ne suis que parole intentée à l'absence,
L'absence détruira tout mon ressassement.
Oui, c'est bientôt périr de n'être que parole,

Et c'est tâche fatale et vain couronnement.

("Une Voix," 93)

[I am but words indicting absence,

Absence will destroy all my obsessive repetitions.

Yes, being but words means perishing soon

And it is a fatal task and a futile crowning.]

With the exception of Caroutch, they also do not stress the first two "stages" of the poetic process, the preparation and the emergence of the words, these being when the poets are at their most passive. Whereas men seem to favor outside spaces when discussing the place of poetry, there tends to be a play between inside and outside for most of the poets. When it comes to the agency of the poet in the (re)working of the language, women's works provide numerous examples. Although we cannot deal satisfactorily with this issue at this time, it does seem to be reasonable to say that because writing was an activity that women were denied for so long, they cannot afford to doubt seriously the power of language, even when they consider the language they inherited as alienating to at least some degree. This past exclusion perhaps also explains the relatively few references to monuments in the women's works: not only were they not habitually creators of such literary monuments, they are also well aware of the dangers of images and ideas that are set in stone and that can trap women in debilitating and disempowering stereotypes. An awareness of the dangers of such fixing should logically bring the women

closer to the conception of always starting over which we saw among the male poets. But the cycle of creating and destroying endorsed by the male poets perhaps also runs counter to the need in women to construct and create where there was nothing before as we have seen in the previous chapter. Although some findings in this chapter are attributable to gender, they cannot be explained simply in terms of the stereotypes they appear to support: the context in which women write can turn out to be a more important variable in determining their poetics than an innate quality (even such as the ability to give birth).

NOTES

1 Perhaps this characterization of the poetic act applies equally well to men whose identities have been fundamentally challenged by the prejudices of society. Regarding Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, see the introduction to Aimé Césaire: The Collected Poetry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) by Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith: "The incredible burden of the poem is that of a parthenogenesis in which Césaire must conceive and give birth to himself while exorcising his introjected and collective white image of the black." (21)

2 Paul Valéry contrasts "vers donnés" with lines achieved through laborious effort.

3 Thérèse Plantier, Le Discours du mâle: Logos spermaticos (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1979).

4 Elements d'un songe (Paris: Gallimard, 1961): 135, quoted by Jean Onimus, Philippe Jaccottet: Une Poétique de l'insaisissable (Paris: Champ Vallon, 1982) 44.

5 Philippe Jaccottet, Journées (Lausanne: Payot, 1977): 28, quoted by Onimus, 44.

6 Jacques Garelli, "L'Ecoute et le Regard," Oeuvres et Critiques 15.1 (1990): 103-112.

7 Dickason, 21. Of course in other instances Du Bouchet's imagery reinforces the stereotype as we have seen in Chapter 1.

8 Philippe Jaccottet, L'Effraie et autres poésies (Paris:

Gallimard, 1953) 34, 35.

9 In Les Cinq Grandes Odes, Paul Claudel compares the nine Muses with those months of gestation.

10 In an issue of Derrière le miroir (No. 199) (Maeght éditeur, 1972), the painter Pierre Tal-Coat (on whose work Du Bouchet has commented) makes a similar assertion when talking about a canvas:

> Le fond animé comme préparation pour les semailles, comme hersé, égratigné, encore vierge de pas, encore humide. (p. 4)
>
> [The back(drop?) lively as if in preparation for sowing, harrowed, scratched, still free of footsteps/virgin, still humid.]

11 Leah D. Hewitt, Autobiographical Tightropes (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

12 Perhaps an allusion to the title of Francis Ponge's famous collection, Le Parti-pris des choses (1945), implicity assimilating the masculine to brute externality, to the "en-soi."

13 Jacques Derrida, Speech and Phenomena. Trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973) 156.

CHAPTER 3: RELATIONSHIP TO TRADITION

Harold Bloom, in The Anxiety of Influence,[1] postulates that artists do not struggle against nature nor against themselves but rather fight against art (9) in their efforts to differentiate themselves from their predecessors. For him, poetry becomes a "meditation of the melancholy of the creative mind's desperate insistence upon priority" (13). Of course several critics have argued that women writers are excluded from the Oedipal conflict of this "family romance."[2]

Male poets' "assertion against influence" can in fact be seen as a "ritualized quest for [personal] identity" (64) precisely because they already belong to a community, that of poets. They do not doubt their membership, they are simply trying to prove their superiority to others in that community. Bonnefoy can serve as an example. Having received probably the highest honor for a living poet in his country today, the chair of the "Etudes Comparées de la Fonction Poétique" at the Collège de France, he pits himself against Paul Valéry (who had been the first to occupy this prestigious position) in his inaugural address:

> il avait déjà décidé que le contenu du poème [...] n'est qu'un élément en somme formel dans une combinatoire (Présence 10, 11)
>
> [he had already decided that the content of the poem (...) was an essentially formal element within a set of combinations].

Evoking the unfortunate influence of this formalism on the younger generation of writers such as Roland Barthes, Bonnefoy calls on the traditions of his forebears to back him up:

> Telle n'avait pas été la pensée des premiers poètes qui fréquentèrent le futur Collège de France (10)
>
> [Such had not been the thinking of the first poets who frequented the future Collège de France]

who believed that the poet could "atteindre à la vérité" [reach truth] (10).

But how do women relate to their predecessors? It is undoubtedly true that women need, as much as men, to clear an "imaginative space" (Bloom, 5) for themselves. But do women fear a "tradition grown too wealthy to need anything more" (21)? Are they petrified by the "terrible splendor of cultural heritage" (32)? Poets are said to dread the judgmental gaze of their predecessors (i.e. their projection of what they imagine that judgment to be). They are said to suffer from the "disease of self-consciousness" (29). What then are women poets, who will undoubtedly have heard or read many disparaging remarks about themselves and their sisters, to feel? In "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision"[3] Adrienne Rich points out that Virginia Woolf had been acutely conscious of being overheard by men and had remarked that she anticipated their criticism: "I even hear them as I speak." (37) Also, according to Rich, no male writer

> has written primarily or even largely for women, or with the sense of women's criticism as a consideration when he chooses his materials, his theme, his language (37, 38)

implying that women constantly need to do just that with regard to men, while on the other hand, they have had to contend with a plethora of images of female passivity for

> there were all those poems about women, written by men: it seemed to be a given that men wrote poems and women frequently inhabited them. (39)

These are also the kinds of issues Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar address in The Madwoman in the Attic. Since women have predominantly been the objects rather than the subjects of poetry, instead of an anxiety of influence they posit an "anxiety of authorship" (45) among women:

> Her battle, however, is not against her (male) precursor's reading of the world but against his reading of *her*. (49)

Given the paucity of female models available to the woman writer and the omnipresence of denigrating stereotypes not only of women in general but of women writers in particular, these critics also suggest that women often actively seek a female precursor

> who, far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal literary authority is possible. (49)

But it is obvious that not all women writers assume an antagonistic stance vis à vis their masculine cultural heritage. If Nancy Chodorow (in The Reproduction of Mothering[4]) and Carol Gilligan (in In A Different Voice[5]) are correct in saying that women tend to maintain rather than sever relationships, sometimes at high costs to themselves, how might this tendency influence their relationship to their literary predecessors? As we pointed out, women, of course less so today than in the past, have to prove their worthiness to join the poetic "club," they have to strive to obtain their "citoyenneté" [citizenship] in Lejeune's words. So, in addition to an anxiety of authorship, perhaps we can also say that they suffer from an anxiety of dissociation (both from the dominant tradition and from female predecessors), rather than from the "dread of threatened autonomy" (Bloom, 26) or the "demon of continuity" (Bloom, 39). In her article "The resonance of interruption",[6] Michelle Cliff talks of a "tradition of an interrupted sequence of silences" (32) and of the "consistency of discontinuity" (33) in women's literary history.

Linguists using the Speech Styles Approach, although they are referring to spoken rather than to written language, may be able to shed some light on the different reactions women writers demonstrate to their predecessors since they premise "particular linguistic forms and genres of speech" as "indicators to the group membership of individuals."[7] (91)

They examine "the ways that speakers manipulate their speaking styles to emphasize or de-emphasize particular social identities." (78) Howard Giles[8] proposes that

> people continually adjust speech style to reduce or accentuate the linguistic differences between speakers -- in order to communicate social similarity, difference, approval, disapproval, or desire for approval. [...] A shift toward the perceived speech style of another he terms *convergence*; a shift away is called *divergence*. (Kramerae, 101)

Studies in Speech Style Adjustment suggest that "people requiring a relatively great deal of social approval will do more accommodating than those who have a low need." Accommodation theory "predicts that low status groups [among which we can of course count women] will adapt their speech style to receive approval from high status groups." (105) Different reactions are however possible. Kramerae notes that if members of a low status group

> perceive no cognitive alternatives to the present intergroup situation, they are likely to consider their low status as resulting from the inferior characteristics of their group. Some speakers may accept the inevitability of their inferiority. Others may try to disassociate themselves from their own group, adopting the speech patterns of the dominant group in an effort at individual social mobility upward. (108)

This disassociation may best describe the situation of the majority of women writers before the advent of overt resistance to male paradigms. It would also explain the "splitting off of consciousness" that Virginia Woolf described in A Room of One's Own (2).[9] The oppositional stance of more recent writing by women can be explained by Kramerae's characterization of members of a low status group that start questioning the status quo.

> However, when subordinate group members do perceive alternatives to the intergroup situations, they are likely to advocate social change, to blame the dominant group for their oppression, and to stress the distinctiveness of their speech. (108)

All women are therefore not likely to act in the same way, as we are well aware. While there has been significant work done, especially in English, on the reconstitution of a women's literary tradition, and while it is true that "women writers inevitably engage in a literary history and system of conventions shaped primarily by men" as Elizabeth Abel points out in her introduction to Writing and Sexual Difference,[10] the practice of feminist critics that "strive to elucidate the acts of revision, appropriation, and subversion that constitute a female text" (3) leaves out of account texts that do not fit this model.

But whether women assume an attitude of "convergence" or "divergence," writers inevitably read the works of their

precursors and often imitate them in an effort to learn their own craft. Robert Louis Stevenson stated:

> Before he can tell what cadence he truly prefers, the student should have tried all that are possible.[11] (154)

Virginia Woolf of course felt that a man's stride was too heavy for a woman to imitate, and that "the [female] ape is too distant [from the male writer] to be sedulous" (Fox, 153). But if women can be taught to read like men, will their writing not also be informed by their education? Bloom reports Chomsky's comment that "when one speaks a language, one knows a great deal that was never learned" (25) and this may also be true of the acquisition of a literary language.

If a woman does not place herself as a woman, does she suffer the same anxiety of influence as a man? Bloom mentions Emily Dickinson in The Anxiety of Influence, but her sex is not a variable in his analysis. She provides an example of apophrades (or the return of the dead). According to him she has a

> style that captures and oddly retains priority over [her] precursors, so that tyranny of time almost is overturned, and one can believe, for startled moments, that [she is] being *imitated by the ancestors* (141)

She is therefore a "strong poet" as, Laurence Porter argues, is Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, warning against the confusion of particularizing content as an index of a writer's formal command of the language:

> When we find Desbordes-Valmore's verse uneven, inept, or incoherent, I would argue, our reaction often results from a failure to recognize -- parallel to the subjects of pregnancy, motherhood, loss, and lamentation in her *écriture féminine* -- the varied, assertive, controlling craftsmanship of the strong poet.[12] (194)

In this chapter I will be studying the relationship of the poets to tradition, mostly by examining their use of epigraphs and allusions to previous works. In the case of a woman, I intend to examine whether she is always ostensibly "in dialogue with both masculine and feminine literary traditions"[13] ( ) as Elaine Showalter claims. Although Adrienne Rich is critical of her early dependence on allusion,

> I hadn't found the courage yet to do without authorities, or even to use the pronoun "I" (45),

Porter points out that, as opposed to the use of epigraphs, allusions attenuate the presence of the Other in a poem.[14]

If it is said to be hard for women diligently to copy the example posed by male writers, Jaccottet shows in his comments (made in 1990) on his poem Requiem (written in 1945 or 1946 when he was twenty or twenty-one years old) that even when it is a male writer sedulously imitating his predecessors, problems can and do arise. He attributes the pretentiousness of this early poem to his lack of maturity, to "cet élan qui me faisait me croire autorisé à fréquenter les sommets" (38)

[this élan which made me feel authorized to inhabit lofty heights]. Talking of the influence of the young Rilke's First Elegy on him he says:

> Ce calme chant méditant, cette pensée chantante ne pouvait pas ne pas me hanter et me servir de modèle, puisque je n'avais pas encore appris la sagesse de ne parler qu'au plus près de ce que l'on a vécu, senti et compris. Mais il y a eu de pires influences. (38)
> [This calm meditating chant, this singing thought could not haunt me and provide a model for me, because I had not yet learnt the wisdom of speaking only very closely to that which one has lived, felt and understood. But there were worse influences.]

He mentions his admiration for Eliot and also names Pound, of whom he says: "que, Dieu merci, je n'avais pas encore lu" [whom, Thank God, I had not yet read] (39). Interestingly enough, Bloom quotes Richard Eberhart as saying that he too "held off from reading highly mannered people like Eliot and Pound so that [he] should not absorb anything, even unconsciously." (7) Jaccottet is not indulgent toward his younger self:

> Voilà donc une partie de ce dans quoi mon esprit baignait alors avec enthousiasme, et bien incapable de se rendre compte que ses ailes ne lui permettaient pas de voler aussi haut sans quelque ridicule et quelque tricherie. (42)

> [Here then is a part of that in which my mind was steeped with enthusiasm, and quite incapable of realizing that its wings did not allow it to fly so high without some degree of ridiculousness and cheating.]

This harsh attitude toward himself is also prevalent in Jaccottet's relationship with his predecessors, which seems to be rather problematic. When reading his journal, one realizes that he feels unqualified to make critical judgments of artists whose works have been consecrated. Although he mentions having some reservations, he does not develop his thoughts, presumably because he does not believe himself able to convince others or compete with those who are bound to disagree with him. So, instead he suppresses his insights by judging them as he believes others will:

> Réserves (absurdes bien sûr!): sur les allégories et lespensées de Leopardi, la tension de Hölderlin, les attitudes de Baudelaire. (Semaison, 20)
>
> [Reservations (absurd, of course!): about Leopardi's allegories and thoughts, Hölderlin's tension, Baudelaire's attitudes.]

One can almost talk of an inferiority complex in Jaccottet's case, although in the following text he is of course referring to musicians with whom he would not be in direct competition.

> L'immense Requiem de Verdi, les cris et les soupirs de Gesualdo, la fin du Lied von der Erde. On repense à ces

immenses symphonies dont Mahler se sentait lourd. On envie ces dimensions, quand soi-même on est à peine capable de quelques notes en marge. (Semaison, 168)

> [Verdi's immense Requiem, Gesualdo's cries and sighs, the end of the Lied von der Erde. One is reminded of those immense symphonies which Mahler felt weighing on him. One envies these dimensions when one is oneself hardly capable of a few notes in the margins.]

His continual use of "on" rather than "je" indicates that he is uncomfortable and perhaps not ready to face his feelings of mediocrity. Of course, the possibility also exists that he is using a strategy similar to Lejeune's. Is he being overly modest perhaps in order to provoke denials from his readers? This hypothesis does not seem entirely unreasonable if we recall the passage in which he describes the new poetry as being "Plutôt un feu de pâtre que les accents majestueux de l'orgue..." [Shepherd's fire rather than the majestic chords of the organ] (Semaison, 83), especially since it is consecrated by Hugo. Should his "shepherd's fire" then not be as valid as the "immense" works of earlier artists? And he is of course characterizing the poetry of his day, not only his own.

Lejeune cannot afford to be as self-effacing as Jaccottet and she explicitly addresses the question of belonging in her poetry because her constant struggle with identity extends to

her sense of lack of community. She uses repetition to convince herself not only of her existence but also of her membership to the human race:

> Aujourd'hui je suis moi, un être humain. Je veux croire que je suis un être humain parmi les milliards d'êtres qui gonflent cet instant de leur souffle... Cette phrase, je l'ai écrite cent fois, avec l'obstination du naufragé, formule à la fois mécanique et magique de ma propre existence. (Geste, 40)
>
> [Today I am (me), a human being. I want to believe that I am a human being among the billions of beings who are inflating this moment with their breath... I have written this sentence a hundred times, with the stubbornness of a shipwrecked person, it is both a mechanical and a magical formula of my own existence.]

The sense of exclusion she feels leads us to question her place in the cultural and literary tradition in which Garelli seems unproblematically to take his place in the tradition of the arts: his epigraphs in Archives du silence place him in the grand tradition of mainstream French poetry and the page from the Beethoven score places him in the grand tradition of all the arts. Garelli is clothed in cultural prestige, which his association with cultural monuments enhances.[15] In Récurrences du songe he explains the origins of one of his poems, "Carcéral," which has the following epigraph:

HOMMAGE A PIRANESE

Sur une phrase d'Aragon

Voici venir le jour de feindre
Etre ne suffit plus à l'homme
il lui faut
Etre autre Ainsi
S'exerce la souveraineté de
l'esprit.
"L'Acteur sur la plate-forme de l'U.", Théâtre Roman.
1974.

[HOMMAGE TO PIRANESE

On a sentence by Aragon

Here comes the day for pretenses
For man(kind), being no longer suffices
he needs
To be other Thus
The sovereignty of the mind
is exercised.]

Although he explicitly acknowledges his debt to Aragon and Piranese, in his explanation of the birth of this poem, he presents as a prerequisite for a dialogue between his work and the work of Piranese:

> un travail [...] de déindividualisation de l'oeuvre visuelle (85)

> [an effort (...) of disindividualization of the visual work]

Garelli is referring to a process similar to the de-conceptualization of language which must take place if a poet is to mold it to his own purposes, but it does also suggest that he needs to forget the person behind the work. If he were unable to do this his creativity would presumably be inhibited. He explains that in the case of this poem, inspired by the etchings and Aragon's words

> il s'agissait de faire entrer en accord et en résonance ces deux données, à première vue étrangères, l'une visuelle, l'autre, musicale et signifiante, qui énonce l'impérative nécessité de feindre et de se faire autre. (87)
>
> [I needed to harmonize these two elements, at first glance so different, one visual, the other, musical and meaningful, expressing the imperative necessity to feign and to make oneself other/different.]

Garelli then not only draws on other works of art in order to enrich his own, he also suggests a certain amount of continuity among both different time periods and different forms of artistic endeavor. He also makes it clear that these artists share ideas with him (the use of "man" to represent all of humanity in the quote from Aragon is significant in this regard) and these ideas are presented as inevitable by the totalizing discourse Garelli uses: "l'impérative

nécessité." The use of "résonance" also brings to mind Gilligan's evocation of a voice falling in a space where it is "resonant with or resounded by others" (xvi), rather than falling on deaf ears.

In Difficile séjour (dedicated to Gonzalo Fonseca), published with L'Uiquité d'être in 1986, Garelli uses a similar strategy. Although Fonseca is a contemporary of Garelli's, I am including their cooperative effort here because it displays some of the characteristics we find in the relationship with predecessors. Garelli once again prints photographs of the artist's work and then enters into a poetic dialogue with these works. The poet immediately makes it clear that his undertaking is not that of a conventional art critic:

> Une chose est de parler des pierres. Une autre de fonder le verbe en leur lieu. (61)
>
> [It is one thing to talk about the stones. Another to found the word in their place.]

His work is thus parallel to, not subordinate to, the work of the sculptor. "En leur lieu" even suggests a displacement of the original work, despite his work being inspired by that of the artist:

> l'oeil, qui scrute, provoque tôt ou tard la voix, qui prend en charge ce qui ne sera jamais un retour. (61)
>
> [the eye, which scrutinizes, sooner or later provokes the

> voice, which takes charge of what will never be a return/ a turning back.]

The expression "tôt ou tard" once again suggests that this process is inevitable and the poet makes it clear, once again, that his production will "never" be a looking back. Once the voice takes over, his production will be original. But the works are nevertheless produced side by side, complementing each other.

Lejeune's works, on the other hand, are occasionally accompanied by her own works of art: a painting in Le Pourpre (1966) and photographs in several of her other works. She also draws attention to the continuity created by her successive publications, starting with L'Oeil de la lettre (1984) in the following way:

> L'heure est venue de composer le prologue de ce neuvième livre, de m'imprégner du sens commun des écrits qui balisent le chemin parcouru depuis la dernière page de L'Issue (13)
>
> [The time has come to write the prologue to this ninth book, to absorb the common meaning of the writings which mark out the road traveled since the last page of L'Issue]

La Quadrature is published along with L'Issue in 1980, and of this work Lejeune says:

> La Quadrature est le maillon qui manquait entre Mémoire de rien (1972) et L'Issue. [...] Entre la quadrature et l'issue, il y eut le passage obligé par L'Atelier. (11) [La Quadrature is the missing link between Mémoire de rien (1972) and L'Issue. (...) Between the squaring of the circle and the exit, there was the inevitable passage through L'Atelier.]

She is of course referring to the development of her thought but this constant preoccupation with the progression from publication to publication and with the counting of her books (in the "Préambule" to Age poétique, âge politique she says "A l'heure qu'il est, je vois ce livre à venir -- le dixième" [By now, I see this future book -- the tenth] (9)) does signal almost an obsession with continuity.

Although she is thus creating a personal heritage to compensate for her sense of exclusion from the literary tradition, her poetry is not devoid of references to other poets: there are allusions to Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé and Valéry in La Geste. It is only in late works such as Age poétique, âge politique that the allusions are supplemented with epigraphs. It is as if having become more confident of her identity, she can take her great precursors on directly. And this is what Lejeune seems to be doing, albeit in a theoretical text.[16] She takes Henri Michaux's words "Elle s'est enfuie à la faveur de la nuit" [She fled under cover of darkness] and they become a title on an essay: "A la faveur

de la nuit, elle eut à s'achever" (33) [Under the cover of darkness, she had to complete herself]. In addition to a reversal of word order, the negative "flight" is replaced by the positive assumption of responsibility for her own destiny. She also rewrites and merges the myths of Don Juan and Ariadne:

> Ainsi s'engagea le dialogue entre un mythe féminin païen et un mythe masculin chrétien. (65)
>
> [Thus began the dialog between a feminine pagan myth and a masculine Christian myth.]

The invocation to Ariadne in the following text becomes a rallying call to all women who are engaged in subverting Patriarchy:

> Qu'Ariane dérobe une parcelle de ce temps dû au service de la Maison du Père pour l'affecter à la filature de soi, au détricotage de ce texte sacré dont elle est prisonnière. (100)
>
> [Let Ariadne steal a bit of the time owed to the service of the Father's House so that she can allocate it to the spinning of herself, to the unraveling of this sacred text of which she is a prisoner/which keeps her imprisoned.]

The play on words in this context shows her confidence in the tool she uses to undermine "la Maison du Père": language. The common etymology of "texte" [text] and "tissu" [fabric] (implied here) is well-known and the play is reinforced by

"filature" [spinning], "détricotage" [un-knitting]and "soi[e]" [self/silk]. The invented word "détricotage" draws attention to knitting, which is usually a harmless (woman's) activity which here becomes subversive. She also evokes Don Juan's "Commandeur" -- the incarnation of Patriarchy for her -- and "le fluide glacial qui distille son discours [...] qui m'a si souvent paralysé la langue" (36) [the icy fluid which distils his discourse (...) which has so often paralyzed my tongue]. But now, it has the opposite effect:

> Au lieu de me faire avaler ma langue, voici que le froid la délie. Le poison serait-il devenu potion magique? (36)
>
> [Instead of making me lose my tongue, now the cold is loosening it. Could it be that the poison has become a magical potion?]

Although the conditional and the question mark attenuate the effect, she has managed to turn the situation to her advantage, magically turning the poison into a potion (the words share the same etymology). The same images of cold appear in Le Dernier Testament (1969) in a context which places her explicitly in the literary tradition, the "Poète" that she is referring to presumably being her collective precursors:

> O Poète, je disloque l'hiver héréditaire où tu me scelles, toi, glacier menacé par un noyau de feu. Je

> travaille à fondre tes murailles, j'oeuvre à mon jaillissement. (31)
>
> [Oh Poet, I dislocate/dismantle/smash the hereditary winter in which you seal me, you, glacier threatened by a core of fire. I endeavor to melt your walls, I work toward breaking out.]

Since Lejeune is not "clothed" in the same way as Garelli, her very nudity seems to become her defence:

> Sous leurs yeux, sous la pointe de leurs épées. Ce sont leurs yeux qui s'éteindront, leurs épées qui trembleront sous la lumineuse nudité de la cible. (Geste, 7)[17]
>
> [Under their eyes/gaze, under the point of their swords. It is their eyes which will be extinguished, their swords which will tremble when faced with the luminous nudity of the target.]

Her goal is "la rupture de la chaîne de transmission du sens de l'Histoire, tradition que garantissait l'absence de testament féminin." [the breaking of the chain of the transmission of a sense of History, a tradition that has been guaranteed by the absence of feminine witness] (Age, 31). It is in the disruption of this tradition that has excluded her that she finally starts feeling as if she herself belongs to a tradition:

> j'assistais à l'effondrement d'une Histoire minée de galeries souterraines [...] Pour la première fois, je me sentais activement présente au sein de l'Histoire,

> spectatrice en même temps que coresponsable de son éventration. [...] M'autographiant ponctuellement, je sais maintenant que j'authentifie l'histoire anonyme de l'Autre; [...] je participe au minage décisif des fondements bibliographiques du Patriarcat (31)
>
> [I witnessed the collapse of a History riddled with underground tunnels. (...) For the first time, I felt actively present in the bosom of History, a spectator while at the same time coresponsable for its rupturing. (...) Conscientiously autographing myself, I now know that I authenticate the anonymous history of the Other; (...) I participate in the decisive undermining of the bibliographic foundations of Patriarchy.]

Her insistance on the "bibliographic" nature of her subversive activities and the reference to autographing, i.e. signing her books with her name, reminds us of the question of signature discussed in the first chapter. In addition to suverting the existing inheritance, she now also feels that she has a message to pass on to later generations:

> je vous lègue un peu de présence posthume [...] De quoi faire la soudure entre mon siècle et le vôtre. (91)
>
> [I bequeath a bit of posthumous presence to you (...) A means of bridging the gap between my century and yours.]

Her penchant for aphorisms seems particularly suited to this didactic purpose, since they are associated with universal

truths. The use of impersonal expressions, reflexive verbs and infinitives reinforces the impression of objectivity and universality. But with the exception of "Scories" [Slag] in La Geste which presents several pages of isolated aphorisms, they are scattered throughout the text, and a pattern emerges: she alternates the maxims with her personal experiences:

> Mourir c'est se consacrer au présent.
>
> J'ai choisi d'être présente... (45)
>
> [Dying is devoting oneself to the present.
>
> I chose to be presente...]
>
> Le soi est inhabitable, on s'y consume. C'est dans les autres qu'on demeure.
>
> Je me suis un enfer mais je suis ta demeure. (53)
>
> [The self is uninhabitable, one consumes oneself there. It is in the others that one lives.
>
> I am a hell to myself but I am your dwelling.]
>
> La mort dans l'âme prend le visage de la vie. Elle ordonne l'action.
>
> Je me défais de moi. (53)
>
> [Death in the soul takes on the face/countenance of life. It commands action.
>
> I get rid of myself.]

This alternation suggests that what she has learned from her personal life is also true for others. The role of the poet is therefore partly didactic, but never divorced from her

intimate experiences. She manages to bring together the "feminine" (personal) and the "masculine" (universality).

Prager does not make overt feminist statements as does Lejeune. How does she deal with her predecessors? Obviously one cannot read the title of her poem "Le Cygne" [The Swan] (Rien ne se perd, 30) without thinking first of Baudelaire's poem by this title (dedicated to Victor Hugo) and then of Mallarmé's sonnet "Le vierge, le vivace, et le bel aujourd'hui." So Prager is deliberately invoking a symbol pregnant with connotations. Is she placing herself in this all-male lineage?

LE CYGNE

Le cygne est l'obstacle sur un socle
il ne s'est jamais libéré du mythe
La matière des mots-dits pèse
sur l'envol asymétrique

Du complexe cygne obscur en le dedans
de ce vaisseau de pensée rêvée
la présence qui osera l'affirmer

Le regarder dans une durée est
une brèche et l'eau ondule figée

C'est une eau défendue
mal volontiers on suppose un tête à tête

Qui croit avoir reconnu le cygne
demandera à se faire pardonner

THE SWAN

[The swan is an obstacle on a pedestal
it has never been liberated from the myth
The matter of the said words [assonantal pun on
"maudits" (accursed)] weighs
on the asymmetric taking flight

Of the obscure complex swan on the inside
of this dreamt thought vessel
the presence which will dare affirm it
Look at it for a duration of time is
a breach and the water undulates congealed

It is a forbidden water
a voluntary evil one supposes a tête-à-tête
Who believes to have recognized the swan
will ask to be pardoned.]

To whom does this "obscure complex" cygne/signe [swan/sign] pose an obstacle? To those that want to use the image? Does it represent the "tradition grown too wealthy to need anything more" which paralyzes the poet who is a late-comer in the tradition? If it does, where does the fact that Prager verbalizes this situation place her in this tradition? Several elements in the poem suggest the heavy immobility of this symbol: being on a pedestal (idealized?), being trapped

in myth, the weight of the words. The lack of symmetry also suggests that the swan is off-balance and that there is to be no flight. In addition to being weighed down, it is also shown to be unreal, since it is twice abstracted: "vaisseau de pensée rêvée." The odd preposition in the expression "dans une durée" seems to suggest that it would be taking the cygne/signe down from its eternalizing pedestal, replacing it within the realm of time, that causes a breach in the vessel. But even this gesture does not allow real movement: the "undulating" water is in fact congealed, frozen. Rather than be able to breathe new life into this symbol, this "forbidden water," the transgressor will be forced to expiate his or her fault.

Prager frames this poem with poems that indicate an awareness of its traditional symbolism: "Hermaprodite" (28) and "Narcisse" (31). The swan combines a phallic neck with "feminine" delicacy and whiteness and grace, combining male poet and female muse, with the self-contemplating Narcissistic gaze of the neck inclined toward the water suggesting both sexual and intellectual self-sufficiency.

In her own work too the swan is an important figure, especially in the section of Rien ne se perd entitled "Autopsie" in which the doctor is compared to a swan: "Lui c'est le cygne dans sa forme normale et menteuse d'oiseau normal." [He is the swan in his/its normal and illusory form of a normal bird] (44); "Moi j'ai froid. / M'éloigner du

cygne." [I'm cold. / Distance myself from the swan.] (45) She says that she wanted to get away from this image of the swan, the form that the doctor had taken on in her mind the minute he had walked in the laboratory. "Mais il n'est pas venu tout seul dans l'image, je l'avais aidé à y entrer" [But he did not come to this image by himself, I had helped him into it] (46) because this helps her to place him "dans un paysage reculé" [in a distant landscape] (46) and she is thus less fearful of him while conducting her "enquête" [investigation] (48) about the woman who had disappeared or died. The cygne/signe thus does not remain fixed in the configuration that she indicated in the poem with the same title: in her own work she has used it to other ends. No longer having the "matière" [matter] of connotations of previous usage weighing down on it, the swan can in fact be wrested from its pedestal for the purposes of her poem, to be inserted into a different context with a more discursive style.

Prager's context is not overtly feminist, and she presents herself as being responsible for the creation of the images:

> Moi je rêve, mais je reste responsable du tableau magique, elle peut rêver grâce à moi. (50)
>
> [I am dreaming, but I remain responsible for the magic painting, she can dream thanks to me.]

She does however draw the parallel between the girl's pose and the portrayal of women in literature.

> La jeune fille couchée, allongée, délaissée, accompagnée de recommendations, d'éloges dans toutes les attitudes que les récits romancés lui ont données, toujours dans la position horizontale, -- du lit -- du sarcophage -- sur un brancard -- dans l'herbe -- sur une table d'opération. (50)
>
> [The young girl lying down, stretched out, neglected, accompanied by recommendations, by praise in all the poses that she has been attributed in novels / romanticized accounts, always in the horizontal position, -- of the bed -- of the sarcophagus -- on a stretcher -- in the grass -- on an operation table.]

Prager does not deny that she is a woman when writing, but she does not exploit her gender in the overtly subversive manner that Plantier does. In La Portentule (1978) she displays her playful (in this instance) lack of reverence for age-old images:

> comme les cailloux blancs du Petit Chaperon Rouge (106)
>
> [like the Little Red Riding Hood's white pebbles]
>
> nous avons louvoyé comme des Don Juannes (107)
>
> [we hedged like Don Juannes]

Whereas a long history is usually a reason for valuing something, in "Inexorable parole" ("Unyielding words") Plantier spits on tradition:

> ça nous vient de très loin
>
> ce crachat des anc@tres (67)

[it goes back a long way

this spittle of the ancestors]

In "Now that the Muse is Writing", McLelland comments on three poems by Plantier. She says that Plantier's aim is to "show the ways in which languages and categories have co-opted women" (163) and then to subvert them. In "J'aurai mon heure" (Diégo) Plantier "turns and twists herself before the eye of the camera in defiance of the customarily photogenic role expected of women" (164):

J'attends qu'on me photo

graphie par le dos

par dessous

par la plante des pieds (Diégo, 26)

[I am waiting for them to photo

graph me from the back

from below

from the soles of my feet]

I would suggest that she is also alluding to women having been photographed for pornographic purposes, because of the connotations of some of the words in the poem, e.g. "micheton" which refers to a lover who pays for a woman's services. Obviously the title ("My time will come") makes it clear from the very beginning that the woman will not merely be a victim. The word "micheton" which is also defined in the Petit Robert as "Niais qu'on peut gruger, dépouiller sans crainte" [A simpleton who can be duped and stripped of his possessions

without fear] thus refers to the exploitation of women through prostitution while preserving the woman's autonomy. As McLelland points out, she "declares her intention to behave" (164) in a feminine manner:

> je ne me gratterai pas
> comme j'en ai l'habitude
> je me distinguerai
> je serai une larve exquise (26)
> [I will not scratch myself
> as I usually do
> I will distinguish myself
> I will be a perfect specimen (an exquisite larva/grub)]
> (Trans. McLelland, emendations in parentheses)

McLelland claims that the imperative of the end of the poem is aimed at the "one-of-them" readers (164):

> rendez-lui [à la mort] Flore en ses confesses et ses fesses
> en attendant
> découpez-lui un bel oiseau. (26)
> [give her back Flora with her confession fads and fannies
> in the meantime
> cut her up a nice bird.]

Whereas references to mythical figures tend to be serious in tone, Plantier plays on the sounds, using an unusual plural for "confesse" in order for it to be parallel to "fesses," thereby desacralizing the Christian tradition while mixing it

with a pagan figure, the goddess of flowers. The command "découpez-lui in bel oiseau," as McLelland points out,

> could seem out of context, unless we realize the identification of the poet as photographic object with Flora, the mythological figure, and the correspondence Plantier wishes to draw between the intentions of those who would fix essences (either by image-taking or image-making) or despoil nature for sport. Thus, the squirming and mugging before the camera that Plantier engages in is not just infantile mischief. It is a form of subversion designed to expose the violent intentions of those who aim the seemingly innocent apparatus in her direction. (164, 165)

In "J'aurai mon heure," what is ultimately important is that the woman (writer) becomes the subject rather than the object of the poem. Plantier has stressed this in Discours du mâle:

> Seule méthode immédiate et par là médiate: nous déclarer Sujet. C'est une position politique. Constatant que le pouvoir viril langagier s'est attribué le rôle et les fonctions de Sujet, nous proclamons notre désir de nous soustraire à ce pouvoir qui nous a changées en une masse in-connaissante aussi amorphe que celle des animaux, des végétaux, des minéraux. (325)
>
> [The only method, one that is immediate and thereby mediate: to declare ourselves Subjects. It's a

> political position. (Pointing out) that masculine linguistic power has attributed to itself the role and function of Subject, we proclaim our desire to remove ourselves from this power which has changed us into an un-knowledgeable mass as amorphous as that of the animal, the vegetable, the mineral.]

McLelland points out that women's need to declare themselves Subjects is also a central concern in an untitled poem in Jusqu'à ce que l'enfer gèle which begins "Sacré cuitasse mon onfon" ("Holy coot drunk, my child") Here, however, it is the male subject, writing (to) a former lover, who ends up becoming "aware of himself as object" at the same time as he realizes that the woman is resisting definition:

> je t'écris la corde qui me pend, casse, tu me reçois en béance dans ta fente à feuilleter mes lexiques sans jamais y découvrir l'exacte définition qui te situe face à moi. (69)
>
> [I write you hanging here (the rope that hangs me), bust, you receive me gaping in your cleft leafing through my lexicons without ever discovering (in them) the exact definition that situates you opposite me.]

She concludes:

> His ultimate defensive gesture is to ascribe condemnation to the look he cannot bear to have fixed on him. In all, the female lover stands passively by while the male

writer runs through a gamut of responses to her and ultimately shuts himself off. (166)

Is Plantier also suggesting that a tradition which excludes women will suffer a similar fate?

In "Ode printanière" [Spring Ode] (Mémoires inférieurs, 139, 140), Plantier refers to Rodin's work "Les Bourgeois de Calais" (140) because of its connotations with the dignity of the common man. And she bemoans the lot of women who do not have a similar representation of themselves.

il ne m'arrivait jamais de me trouver face à face
ici à Marseille ou ailleurs
avec la statue pédestre d'une femme
en qui me reconnaître
nous n'avons jamais possédé une effigie à la hauteur
les matériaux n'ont pas reçu notre empreinte
[...]
vous me direz Jeanne d'Arc
mais je ne suis pas pucelle
et je sais de source sûre que les hommes ne statufient
que celles
qui auraient eu honte de les engendrer
les timides ou barrées stériles menteuses guerrières
(140)

[I would never find myself facing
here in Marseilles or elsewhere
the pedestrian statue of a woman

in whom I could recognize myself
we have never possessed an effigy at that level
the materials have not received our imprint/mark
(...)
you will tell me Jeanne d'Arc
but I am not a virgin
and I know from a reliable source that men only erect
statues to those
that would have been ashamed to bear/beget them
the timid or barred sterile lying warlike]

She is of course simultaneously using the title "Ode" ironically. Webster tells us that it this form is "expressive of exalted or enthusiastic emotion." Making her mark therefore assumes a two-fold approach: the subversion of existing structures and the construction of new images. The line "les matériaux n'ont pas reçu notre empreinte" can be read in two ways: the materials have not assumed the shape of the common woman, but also, women artists have not made their mark. But that is of course exactly what Plantier is doing, albeit in another medium. Her divergent attitude toward her predecessors is correlative to her solidarity with other women.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, Yvonne Caroutch's gender-neutral approach to her cultural heritage can perhaps best be summed up by one of her comments about astrology in Un

Saturne gai (a series of interviews she conducted with André Pieyre de Mandiargues):

> l'astrologie résume encore la survivance des grands mythes, des voyages initiatiques, des songes de l'humanité. Art de l'analogie, elle incarne une poésie en perpétuelle métamorphose, nourrie de symboles fonctionnant comme de prodigieux réservoirs d'énergie psychique. (26)
>
> [astrology still sums up the survival of the great myths, of initiatory voyages, of humanity's dreams. Being the art of analogy, it embodies a poetry in perpetual metamorphosis, fed by symbols operating as prodigious reservoirs of psychic energy.]

In her Ungaretti she intimates that the poet is not understood and appreciated because his/her contribution "est loin d'être reconnue d'utilité publique, puisque la notion d'oisiveté, de superflu, lui semble généralement attachée." [is far from being recognized as having any public use, because the notion of idleness, of superfluousness, generally seems to be associated with him/her.] (15) She is so sensitive to this image of the "poètes maudits" [accursed poets] that she feels that the very word "poet" is tinged "de nuances franchement péjoratives" [with downright derogatory nuances] and that "le terme serait à réhabiliter" [the terms needs to be restored to favor] (14). And although she usually does not differentiate poets according to gender, she cannot ignore the

particularization of women poets: "Quant au terme de poétesse, mieux vaut le passer sous silence." (14) [as for the expression "poetess," it's better not to comment]. When she then makes a general statement about poetry, backing up her conviction with a quote by another woman writer, she is perhaps also vindicating her own esoteric style of poetry:

> C'est la raison pour laquelle, fréquemment, la vraie poésie s'occulte; ses fervents la célèbrent dans des chapelles hermétiquement fermées au profane. "La poésie, comme la religion, doit demeurer obscure," prétend Marguerite Yourcenar. (15)
>
> [That is the reason why, frequently, real poetry hides away; its devotees celebrate it in chapels that are tightly closed to the uninitiated. Marguerite Yourcenar claims that "Poetry, like religion, must remain obscure."]

Caroutch thus includes herself in the community of poets, believing that

> le langage des symboles et des mythes met en lumière tous les aspects de l'individu (Saturne, 9)
>
> [the language of symbols and myths brings to light all the aspects of the individual]

and in no way feels these symbols and myths to have been "contaminated" by the fact that they were "man made"; she identifies herself primarily as a poet and not as a woman. If she appears to want to breathe new life into language, as

Garelli did, it is a gender-neutral desire which will clear the way to another, timeless world:

> Quels bras quelles pierres quels songes
> purifieront la bouche du royaume
> de ses alluvions millénaires (Portiques, N. pag.)
> [What arms what stones what dreams
> will purify the mouth of the kingdom
> of its millenial alluvial deposits]

But even when she explicitly refers to language, as in the following quote, it is not really language itself she is trying to change.

> le dire [...] ronge, vers et rouille [...]
> son sextant le guide au coeur de l'impénétrable noyau
> de vie
> [the statement (...) gnaws, worm and rust (...)
> its sextant guides it to the heart of the impenetrable
> core of life]

The words seem able to accomplish the impossible, i.e. to penetrate the impenetrable. Language is therefore deemed adequate to perform its task, which is to

> Entre les buissons d'énigmes
> et l'intuition béante du roc
> découvrir la mosaïque céleste
> l'éternel sous le provisoire
> [Between the bushes of enigmas
> and the gaping intuition of the rock

to discover the celestial mosaic

the eternal under the provisional/temporary]

No divergence from the male tradition is detectable in Caroutch's approach. Does this mean that she has disassociated herself from other members of her low-status group, siding rather with other male poets such as Ungaretti whose works she translated?

Although several of the poets (Bonnefoy, Jaccottet, Caroutch, Plantier) have translated the works of other poets, Du Bouchet's treatment of Hölderlin in L'Incohérence (1979) (N. pag.) also allows us a glimpse of his relationship with his predecessors. In a section entitled "L'Unique" he presents us with a translation of the German poet's poem "Der Einzige." This is followed by a text entitled "Hölderlin aujoud'hui" which was read in 1970 to commemorate Hölderlin's birth; it is dedicated to Paul Celan. Finally two more versions of the poem "Der Einzige" follow, this time without Hölderlin's name printed at the end. These two versions start out following the original text relatively closely, but then turn into poems by Du Bouchet himself, wandering in various directions. The German poem ends on the words "Die Dichter müssen auch / Die geistigen [sic] weltlich seyn." [The poets, the spiritual / Too, must be worldly.][18] In Du Bouchet's first version he faithfully reproduces these lines: "Les poètes, aussi, doivent, / eux de l'esprit, être du monde." In the

second version, he starts taking great liberties from the fifth stanza on and ends with the following words:

> Tombés sans nombre. Ainsi en était-il, quand
> de la terre ici le père apprête ce qui perdure
> dans les orages du temps. Mais cela n'est plus.
> (N. pag.)
> [Innumerable fallen. Thus it was, when
> of the earth here the father prepares that which lasts
> in the storms of time. But that is no longer.]

The third version starts deviating from the original as from the sixth stanza, and as in the previous version the changes in content are also accompanied by a markedly different typography. This final version ends on the words

> Grand bien produit
> la terre. A fraîchir. Toujours, pourtant
> [The earth produces
> a great good. To be freshened. Always, nevertheless]

In addition to ending the poem with a conjunction, the lack of punctuation and the adverb indicate a refusal of closure and the possibility of an infinite number of versions and variations. Once alerted to Du Bouchet's extravagance (in its etymological sense), we notice that even in the first, most faithful version he has taken liberties: in the fourth stanza he has used "richesse" [wealth] instead of sadness, "Trauern" (188). What Du Bouchet seems to be suggesting is that there is no such thing as a "faithful" translation and also that the

original work is a source of great wealth (the "richesse" which he slipped in?), of all kinds of possibilities. It does not appear to be a case of the good poet stealing while the poor poet betrays influence as Eliot intimated (quoted by Bloom, 31). Du Bouchet seems to be telling us something about the very nature of language: "Langages -- et routes, chemins encore..." [Languages -- and roads, more ways...] as he states in his address on Hölderlin. Here, appropriating and revising, rather than demonstrating antagonism (as would be the case in a feminist text), seem to imply shared wealth, the word property being inappropriate because "en formation toujours, comme pluriel à l'infini, une parole sans trêve se dédouble et se multiplie" [always developing, as if infinitely plural, words are unceasingly unfolding and multiplying]. The presence of a multiplicity of versions of course clashes with the title "L'Unique." This to a certain extent reflects the end of Hölderlin's poem with its reference to poets (plural), thereby already undermining the uniqueness evoked in the title. Also, by singling out Hölderlin in order to praise him, Du Bouchet is indirectly suggesting that his forebear is unique, and then subverting this implicit assertion by providing more than one version of the poem, each time taking more liberties. These versions are ultimately more reminiscent of musical variations on a theme rather than of literary practices.

In opposition to this reworking of a precursor, Bonnefoy's Début et fin de la neige (1991) presents us with the simplest of poems, all dealing with images of snow, which at first glance suggest a total lack of preoccupation with tradition and cultural heritage. The first two stanzas of the first poem are indicative of the tone of the volume:

Première neige tôt ce matin. L'ocre, le vert
Se réfugient sous les arbres.

Seconde, vers midi. Ne demeure
De la couleur
Que les aiguilles de pins
Qui tombent elles aussi plus dru parfois que la neige. (13)

[First snow early this morning. Ochre, green
take refuge under the trees.

Second, toward noon. Of the color
Remains only
The needles of the pines
That are also falling, sometimes more heavily than the snow.]

In the poem "La Charrue" ["The Plow"] he presents a small child's wonder at the snow:

Et cet enfant
A toute la maison pour lui, désormais. Il va
D'une fenêtre à l'autre. Il presse

Ses doigts contre la vitre. Il voit
Des gouttes se former là où il cesse
D'en pousser la buée vers le ciel qui tombe. (15)
[And this child
Has the whole house to himself, henceforth. He goes
From one window to another. He presses
His fingers against the pane. He sees
Drops forming where he stops
Pushing its condensed vapor toward the falling sky.]

The run-on lines, all ending in verbs, reinforce the impression of the child's movement from window to window. On another level, this formal element contrasts with the simple portrayal of an everyday occurrence. It also suggests that the poet himself is like a small child filled with wonder at the workings of the universe. The formal elements have alerted us to the poetic mastery underlying the so-called spontaneity and in the untitled poem following "Le peu d'eau" the first classical allusion appears, placing Bonnefoy, even in this seemingly simple little volume, in the line of great authors:

Circé
Sous sa pergola d'ombres, l'illuminée,
N'eut pas de fruits plus rouges. (17)
[Circe
Under her pergola of shadows, the visionary woman,
Did not have redder fruits.]

This comparison is soon followed by a metaphor equating the warm blanket of snow with "La Vierge de la miséricorde" [Our Lady of Mercy] (18) and a few pages later he aligns himself with the father of poetics, overtly condemning what he considers to be inadequate readings.

> Et Aristote le disait bien,
> Quelque part dans sa Poétique qu'on lit si mal,
> C'est la transparence qui vaut,
> Dans des phrases qui soient comme une rumeur
> d'abeilles, comme une eau claire. (23)
> [And Aristotle said it well,
> Somewhere in his Poetics which is so often misinterpreted /badly read,
> It is transparency which is important,
> In sentences which are like the murmur
> of bees, like clear water.]

More classical references ensue: the following poem bears the title of Lucretius' famous "De Natura Rerum" and he starts out the poem indicating his agreement with the Latin poet: "Lucrèce le savait" [Lucretius knew it] (24). Another Latin title follows, but this time in the Christian tradition: "Noli me tangere," (Chpist to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection as told in John 20:17: "Don't touch me.") Christian and pagan worlds therefore come together in poems that still deal with the falling snow. After some longer, more discursive poems, he ends his volume with the poem "La

Seule Rose" in which he evokes works of arts and childhood memories but finally negates these:

Mais ce que je regarde, c'est de la neige
Durcie, qui s'est glissée sur le dallage
Et s'accumule aux bases des colonnes
A gauche, à droite, et loin devant dans la pénombre.
Absurdement je n'ai d'yeux que pour l'arc
Que cette boue dessine sur la pierre.
J'attache ma pensée à ce qui n'a
Pas de nom, pas de sens. O mes amis,
Alberti, Brunelleschi, San Gallo,
Palladio qui fais signe de l'autre rive,
Je ne vous trahis pas, cependant, j'avance,
La forme la plus pure reste celle
Qu'a pénétrée la brume qui s'efface,
La neige pietinée est la seule rose. (50)

[But what I am looking at, is some hardened
Snow, which has slipped onto the tiled floor
And is piling up at the bases of the columns
To the left, to the right, and far into the half-light.
Absurdly I can look at nothing but the arch
That this mud traces on the stone.
I attach my thoughts to that which has
No name, no meaning. Oh my friends,
Alberti, Brunelleschi, San Gallo,
Palladio, beckoning from the opposite bank,

I am not betraying you, nevertheless, I go forward,

The purest form remains the one

That has been penetrated by the evanescent mist,

Trampled snow is the only rose.]

He considers his fascination "absurd" because apparently cultural products are superior to accidents of nature, presumably because humans distinguish themselves from other animals by their capacity to dominate nature. Why then does the poet use words such as "arc" (which evokes an architectural structure) and "dessiner" (which suggests the guiding hand of an artist) to describe these "accidents" of nature? Even while reassuring his artist friends that he is not betraying them, he is aware of the paradoxes inherent in comparing natural phenomena to artifacts. His insistence on that which has no name, no meaning, reminds us of Garelli's efforts to experience the world in a preconceptual way. The snow is, however, trampled, i.e. it speaks of human presence. And rather than with a simple notation of the appearance of the snow, the poem ends with an image which suggests the greatest beauty, a rose. The rose, although natural, paradoxically evokes, in this image, the highest aesthetic achievement.

John E. Jackson (in La Question du moi) reminds us not only of the rich tradition that Bonnefoy inherited, but also his allegiance to this tradition:

> dans la poésie française de l'après-guerre, le vers de Bonnefoy est resté fidèle aux grands rythmes qui ont modelé le visage de la tradition prosodique française: octosyllabes, décasyllabes et surtout alexandrins.
>
> [in post-war French poetry, Bonnefoy's verse remained faithful to the great rhythms which shaped the face of the French prosodic tradition: octosyllables, decasyllables and especially alexandrines.]

This constitutes

> à la fois un rappel de poésies antérieures auxquelles il est fait allégiance (Baudelaire et Mallarmé surtout) et le signe d'une confiance réitérée en l'efficace et la beauté de ses formes canoniques. (246)
>
> [both a reminder of earlier poetry to which he pays allegiance (especially that of Baudelaire and Mallarmé) and the sign of a repeated confidence in the effectiveness and the beauty of its canonical forms.]

Jackson quotes the following lines from Hier régnant désert (1958).

> Que l'oiseau se déchire en sables, disais-tu,
> Qu'il soit, haut dans son ciel de l'aube, notre rive.
> Mais lui, le naufragé de la voûte chantante
> Pleurant déjà tombait dans l'argile des morts. (167)
>
> [Let the bird break up into sand, you used to say,
> Let him be, high in him dawn sky, our shore.

But he, the shipwrecked of the melodious dome

Crying was already falling in the clay of the dead.]

The critic interprets the stanza thus.

> La voûte chantante [...] est le lieu de toute la tradition poétique qui a fait de l'au-delà le vrai lieu de la parole. Inversement, cette rupture [de la chute dans une finitude concrète] n'en est pas moins aussi une forme de continuité. S'il contribue à définir une poétique nouvelle, ce "naufragé" reste avant tout l'héritier du lieu il a fait naufrage -- tous les écrits de Bonnefoy peuvent en témoigner. (278)
>
> [The melodious dome (...) is the place of all poetic tradition which has made the beyond the true place of words. Conversely, this break/rupture (of the fall into the finite, concrete world) is nevertheless a form of continuity. Even though he is contributing to the definition of a new poetics, this "shipwrecked" being remains above all the heir of the place where he went aground -- all Bonnefoy's writings can attest to this.]

Jackson concludes that when Bonnefoy cites another poet's line, he is doing it "en signe de fidélité ou d'allégiance" [as a sign of loyalty or allegiance] (328).

Caroutch's poetry is convergent with her tradition: apparently not intent on subverting age old myths, she considers them elements of a universal language that enables

humans to discover eternal truths. Prager revises and appropriates the symbol of the swan, but her context is not overtly feminist despite the body examined in "Autopsie" being that of a woman. Although she paints an unflattering portrait of the indifferent doctor, she too is guilty: "C'était dans un climat factice que j'avais logé la jeune fille" [It was in a factitious climate that I had lodged the girl] (Rien ne se perd, 54). It is in fact the girl who has the last word ("De ma rigueur elle s'était vengée" [She has avenged herself for my harshness] (54)) and she is not dead, she lives on (56). She ultimately becomes a Subject, as does the addressee of Plantier's untitled poem: in both texts a woman resists attempts to confine or define her. Plantier's approach is of course more openly subversive than Prager's, whose rewriting of "Le Cygne" takes place in a gender-neutral context; nor does the latter ever create the impression that she is writing for the Other in the same way that Lejeune and Plantier do.

There seems to be more homogeneity among the reactions of the male poets. When Garelli uses a line from a predecessor it is not to subvert or revise it; he integrates it positively to enrich his own work as if it is common property. Du Bouchet's translations of Rilke assumes a similar approach as does Bonnefoy's loyalty to his predecessors. Jaccottet's relationship with tradition is more complex, but is there not a tinge of false humility in his self-effacing demeanor? Despite affirming their uniqueness vis à vis both their

precursors and their contemporaries, there seems to be a greater sense of belonging *as artists* to a community among the male poets we have studied than was to be found among the women. Caroutch, who ignores her sex, feels unappreciated and misunderstood as a poet. Where there is a sense of community (in Lejeune and Plantier), it is one of women, not of poets.

NOTES

1 Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

2 Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979); Susan Gubar, "'The Blank Page' and the Issues of Female Creativity," ed. Elaine Showalter, The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985): 292-313; Joanna Feit Diehl, "'Come Slowly--Eden': An Exploration of Women Poets and Their Muse," Signs 3 (Spring 1978): 572-87.

3 Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," On Lies, Secrets, and Silence (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979): 33-50.

4 Nancy J. Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering (Yale University Press, 1989).

5 Carol Gilligan, In A Different Voice (1982; Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1993).

6 Michelle Cliff, "The Resonance of Interruption," Chrysalis 8 (1977?): 29-37.

7 Cheris Kramerae, Women and Men Speaking: Frameworks for Analysis (Rowley, MA: 1981).

8 Howard Giles, "Social Psychology and Applied Linguistics: Towards an Integrative Approach," ITL: Review of Applied Linguistics 35 (1977): 27-42.

9 Quoted by Florence Howe, "Eliot, Woolf, and the Future

of 'Tradition'," Tradition and the Talent of Women, ed. Florence Howe (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1991): 1-33.

10 Elizabeth Abel, ed. Writing and Sexual Difference (University of Chicago Press, 1980).

11 Alice Fox, "Literary Allusion as Feminist Criticism in A Room of One's Own," Philological Quarterly 63.2 (Spring 1984): 146-161.

12 Laurence M. Porter, "Poetess or Strong Poet? Gender Stereotypes and the Elegies of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore," French Forum 18.2 (May 1993): 185-194.

13 Elaine Showalter, ed., "Introduction: The Rise of Gender," Speaking of Gender (New York: Routledge, 1989).

14 Laurence M. Porter, The Crisis of French Symbolism (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990): 161.

15 It is true that in Brèche this is not yet the case. Two poems are dedicated to people who are identified only by their first names.

16 The epigraph to Age poétique, âge politique by Hubert Aquin indicates her subversive stance: "Quelque chose d'autre m'importe, un au-delà littéraire [...] qui est la destruction du conditionnement historique qui fait de moi un dominé." [Something else is important to me, a realm beyond that of litterature (...) which is the destruction of the historical conditioning which makes a dominated person of me.]

17 Compare the protective sincerity of the Rousseauistic

confession.

18 Michael Hamburger, trans., Poems of Hölderlin ([Kingsway, UK]: Nicholson and Watson, 1943): 192, 193.

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commonplaces are not the cause: they come after, and are used." (99) This latter aspect is the one linguists concentrating on the negative semantic space that women inhabit tend to study. Wittig has of course also pointed out the particularizing effects of grammatical gender in "The Mark of Gender" (see Introduction). After an almost euphoric presentation of language as a place in which "we are all free and equal" (93) and as a "paradise made of visible, audible, palpable, palatable words" (94), she comes to a rather pessimistic conclusion which smacks of nostalgia for a pure, original language:

> Any social actor makes use of this weapon of commonplaces, whatever his situation, for it is the debased form of reciprocity that has founded the exchange contract. But the conflict due to the confrontation of the two modes of relation to language (locution and interlocution) remains, nevertheless, insurmountable, from whatever point of view. (100)

Resigning herself to the idea that words are inevitably "bludgeons" (98) when one is occupying the addressee's position, she concedes that "the paradise of the social contract exists only in literature." (100) She reiterates the position that the artist has to reduce language to its materiality (as she had in "The Trojan Horse," 71, 72), returning it to a state "in which meaning has not yet occurred," a state which allows the writer to "take, use, bend

[it] toward a meaning." (93) If the "paradise of the social contract exists only in literature," most speakers, and more specifically women, are left disempowered, doomed to repeat "the grand ordinance, the bringing into line of a strict meaning, of a social meaning" (98).

But even in literature, anticipating antagonism from readers can be inscribed in the written text despite the absence of an immediate interlocutor. Signs of such influence are rhetorical questions, prolepsis (an anticipation of the arguments of your hearers), and in general, *captatio benevolentiae*.[3] In "Silence à deux voix"[4] Marina Mizzau deals explicitly with the relationship between interlocutionary partners.

> Toute parole rencontre sur son trajet la parole d'autrui, attendue et prévue, qui l'oriente et la détermine. (41)
> [All speech encounters the speech of others, expected and anticipated, which orients it and determines it.]

(Although she uses the word "parole" [speech] she analyses this phenomenon in a literary text.) Women writers in general have been subjected to a plethora of derogatory labels with which they are surely familiar. How does this influence the representation of others in their work? Mizzau stresses that each message has two aspects: the explicit content and

> celui de la relation, qui exprime la manière dont chaqueinterlocuteur s'envisage lui-même et envisage l'autre,comment il pense être vu par l'autre, etc... (41)

> [that of relationship, which expresses the way in which each interlocutor views himself and views the other,how he thinks he is seen by the other, etc...]

She explains what kinds of effects this anticipation can have on the productions of the speaker.

> L'autre est dans la parole du narrateur qui anticipe continuellement la réaction de l'interlocuteur. Cette anticipation désagrège la parole, la réfracte, la dédouble dans une polémique avec l'autre, réel ou imaginaire, parfois l'autre-moi. (44)
>
> [The other is in the words of the narrator who continually anticipates the reaction of the interlocutor. This anticipation breaks up the words, refracts them, divides them in a polemic with the other, real or imagined, sometimes the other-me.]

The relationship she is outlining appears to be antagonistic. If the speaker were expecting a positive endorsement from the person s/he is addressing, might the effect not differ from the one described by Mizzau? A woman such as Caroutch who does not write as a woman may distance herself from pejorative labels, but are comments such as the following taken from Dale Spender's work not likely to make women defensive? She quotes some outrageous examples of reactions based on stereotypical expectations of women writers. Cathy Davidson states that she never had a woman professor in graduate school and that she read only two books by women in her entire

graduate career (Spender, Writing 198). She also makes the following observation (in March 1988):

> My husband, literary critic Arnold E. Davidson, has published many articles on women writers. Even when he has articles rejected, he has never *once* been advised to send his work to a feminist journal, nor even had his work identified as feminist. In contrast, until recently I have had articles returned with the suggestion that Signs or Women's Studies would be a more appropriate forum (the buzz word) for my work. This has happened enough times for us to be convinced that the different response is not subject or ideology, but that his name is "Arnold" and mine is "Cathy." Whether we like it or not writing by women (including women critics) is peripheralized. (Spender, Writing 199)

Susan Koppelman talks of the reaction of a famous man returning their first class assignments at Barnard who regretted that "girls" could never have the "kinds of experiences that catalyze talent into genius":

> The experiences he was bemoaning our absence of access to were: war, whoring, the good fellowship of men reeling drunk down dark mean city streets and the hunt.
>
> That was 1958 or 1959. Fifteen or so years later, at an MLA forum, I listened to Erica Jong tell the same story, almost word for word. She had been at Barnard when I was, a member of the class a year younger. I

> assumed her teacher had been my teacher but to check it out I asked her in private, after her talk. "No." she told me, "It wasn't Professor X; it was Professor Y".
>
> I began to wonder then if it *wasn't* a geniune conspiracy... (Spender, Writing 200)

Writers can of course quote or refer to real reactions to their work (as does Lejeune) but the presence of the other is more commonly discernible through the rhetorical devices of apostrophe (an address to someone not present, or to a personified object or idea) and prosopopeia (representation of an imaginary, absent, or deceased person as speaking or acting). It can also be asserted that prosopopeia, because if gives a voice to the other, suggests a more direct confrontation with the other than does apostrophe. When the other is a part of the poet, as in the works of Bonnefoy and Caroutch, we can try to determine whether gender plays a role in the presentation of this other. Of course in all cases the context will reveal whether the relationship with the other is one of support and solidarity or of antagonism. We shall, however, also go beyond these intratextual devices to see whether there is evidence of dialogue with real people, e.g. other artists, in the texts. We know that men, writing within a tradition which supports them and does not question the validity of their viewpoint, are using a language, which, if not forged by them, at least valorizes terms which are associated with men and masculinity.

We shall start with the interlocutionary partners men anticipate for themselves starting with André Du Bouchet because he makes some theoretical statements about this very issue. After examining the works of the male poets, who can be expected to be less defensive, we shall study Caroutch, who tends to be gender-neutral, before exploring the works of the other women poets, ending with Lejeune who also explicitly addresses the question of interlocutors.

The title Matière de l'interlocuteur (1991), is indicative of Du Bouchet's preoccupation with the destination of his words and with the act of reading. In three of the five essay/poems he is the reader of Pierre Reverdy's work and the words in italics seem to be quotes taken from Reverdy's work. He makes provision for an interlocutor within the very structure of his poetry.

> Place dans la phrase -- c'est de l'air vide -- au destinataire anticipé. (N. pag.)
>
> [Room in the sentence -- it is empty air -- for the anticipated addressee.]

The addressee's place is empty air, i.e. not predetermined, presumably leaving space for his/her own contribution to the poem. But by making the space/place part of the text itself, does this not imply that the poet is preempting any potential contribution? Ross Chambers in Mélancolie et Opposition: Les

Débuts du modernisme en France[5] warns that once the text has produced itself as meaningful in the context of reading, then

> la fonction narrative fait partie du texte mais comme objetde lecture; elle ne doit plus se confondre avec un acte decommunication réel dont le lecteur serait le destinataire direct. (17)
>
> [the narrative function becomes part of the text, but only as an object of reading; it is no longer a true communicative act having the reader as its direct addressee (2)[6]

That would mean that the blanks left in Du Bouchet's case are to be read as spaces allowing for the participation of the addressee, not as an actual opportunity for the reader to contribute to the creation of the poem or to respond to the poem. The text determines the meaning of these spaces. It still seems valid, however, to ask how the anticipated reception could influence the character of "la fonction narrative."

Almost twenty years before, in "Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous" (which is also the title of this 1972 volume dealing with the works of Alberto Giacometti [1901-1966]) Du Bouchet had already demonstrated a preoccupation with the space or the person to which the work of art addresses itself. Although he is dealing with visual arts, parallels do exist with the reception of writing. By putting "'nous'" in quotation marks in his text, he is implying that when a painting or a

sculpture seems to be directed at us, in fact it is turned, not toward us, but toward a place constructed by the work of art which we may or may not occupy, thus explaining the title "Which is not turned toward us." Is it this space that he is incorporating and presenting on the very pages of his poetry?

> Où une figure [...] s'inscrit [...] -- en 'nous' (38)
>
> [Where a figure (...) inscribes itself (...) -- in 'us']
>
> face à 'nous' (39)
>
> [facing 'us']
>
> l'emplacement que 'nous' occupons (39)
>
> [the place that 'we' occupy]

There are examples of this foregrounded pronoun on practically every page of this text. A "nous" without quotation marks does however appear. Du Bouchet thus distinguishes the space created by the orientation of the work and the actual person who occupies this space. The reader of "Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous" is presumably also included in the "nous" without quotation marks. Of course we can once again say that this pronoun does not refer to the actual reader, but to a position in discourse. But Du Bouchet apparently deems it desirable to rid oneself of the "'nous'":

> Dans cet océan de l'air, séparons-nous -- de 'nous'! (49)
>
> [In this ocean of air, let us separate ourselves -- from 'us'!]
>
> Où elle [la figure] vient à 'nous' -- comme en relief -- 'nous' disparaissons aussi (55)

> [Where it (the figure) comes to 'us' -- as if in relief -- 'we' disappear too]
>
> vient à 'nous' cela, que nous ne savons saisir, qui par nous se fait jour (57)
>
> [that comes to 'us,'(that) which we do not know how to grasp, which through us becomes clear]

Is he suggesting that once there is an interaction between the work of art and the spectator/reader, once that constructed space is filled by a real person, the "'nous'" disappears? This would be due to his inability to conceive of the observer as a monolithic, homogeneous entity:

> Ce 'nous', je ne le prononce pas sans le voir aussitôt comme concassé dans la singularité de chacun -- scindé... je le dis -- et nous vois aux sommet d'un même sol -- nous fractionnant... (63)
>
> [This 'us,' I do not pronounce it without immediately seeing it as if it is ground/crushed into each one's singularity -- split up... I say it -- and see us at the summit of the same soil -- separating from one another...]

Despite this willingness to preserve each person's individuality, Du Bouchet does appear to anticipate agreement among his readers. To use "nous" is to make a (rhetorical) appeal to the reader's benevolence, to a shared fate or experience, while the slippery nature of the first person plural allows the unsympathetic reader to imagine it as

exclusionary, as meaning "I and they but not you." In Matière de l'interlocuteur, when Du Bouchet does use a form of address which the reader could interpret as being adressed to him or her, there are occasionally sentences which presuppose a very casual interaction with the reader, which not only assumes shared experiences, but also seems to assume that the reader is also a writer (of poetry?). The question turns out to be a rhetorical question: it is assuming the possibility of sharing the sense of frustration in such a situation:

> vous êtes-vous déjà trouvé
>
> sur une route sans crayon?
>
> [have you ever found yourself
>
> on the road without a pencil?] (20)

The expression "n'est-ce pas" [is it not/not so?] in the following quote also assumes a connection between the poet and his readers. He assumes that they will agree. He does not anticipate a hostile or adversarial position from the reader.

> sans moyens, presque aussitôt c'est la chute, n'est-ce pas, au monde. (28)
>
> [without means, almost immediately it's the fall, isn't it, down to the world.]

In two of the rare instances in which the poet uses the first person plural without quotation marks, the referent is language:

ce que nous

-- et avec nous la langue, ne soutiendrons pas, est par tel vide à mettre au monde encore une fois. (27)

[that which we

-- and with us our language, will not sustain, is by such an emptiness to bring into the world again.]

un monde sans attache

dans lequel la terre débordée apparaît incluse, et qu'elle-même notre langue peut sur ses écarts être réduite à dire nul, se découvre prépondérant. (29)

[a world without

tie(s) in which the overflowing earth seems included, and which our language itself can concerning its deviations be reduced to calling void, reveals itself preponderant.]

In both cases, language is presented as communal property. Once again shared experience, a similar relationship to language is presumed. Du Bouchet does not seem to question the first contract in the way that Wittig does. He also shows evidence of an actual interlocutor, another artist, and seems to form part of a larger community of artists:

J'AIME TELLEMENT L'EAU. paroles

articulées par Pierre Tal-Coat, demandant à boire, dans l'après-midi du 9 juin 1985 (N. pag.)

[I LOVE WATER SO. words

articulated by Pierre Tal-Coat, asking for a beverage, in the afternoon of June 9, 1985.]

This concrete evidence of an amicable relationship is also manifest in his allusions to a visit to Giacometti's studio in Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous ("dans l'atelier de Giacometti" [in Giacometti's studio] (59):

> (rire ici, de Giacometti rapportant à propos de sculptures sur lesquelles son regard s'arrête, un mot de son frère -- 'les petits monstres'...) (64)
>
> [(a laugh here, Giacometti's recounting about sculptures on which he lets his gaze rest, a comment of his brother's -- 'the little monsters'...)]

Interlocution does not appear to be problematic for Du Bouchet. We see that this is also the case when he is in dialogue with himself. In his Carnets, 1952-1956 he concludes that the desire for unity is "le défaut de [s]on esprit" [the flaw of his mind]. But we soon see that this is not a true criticism. He states: "Je tiens à ce défaut." [I hold this flaw dear/I am attached to this flaw.] (6)

This kind of self-indulgence is not to be found in Jaccottet's journal. In La Semaison he makes the following statement (1964):

> A la place du sommeil, devoir regarder la nuit, la douleur qu'elle abrite.
>
> Alors, on ne peut plus avoir affaire qu'à l'impossible, opposer l'impossible à l'impossible. Il y a un moment extrême où cela devient nécessaire (je ne

parle pas de moi, seulement de ce que je devine et qui est commun à tous). (77)

[In place of sleep, being obliged to look at the night, the suffering that it shelters.

Then, one can deal only with the impossible, oppose the impossible to the impossible. There is an extreme limit where that becomes necessary (I am not speaking of myself, only of that which I guess/intuit and which is common to all.]

If this is a personal journal, presumably at first written for himself, why is he explaining himself and why is he stressing the universal character of his experience? "In fact," Chaim Perelman explains, "a judgment of this sort is deemed to be binding on everybody, because the speaker himself is convinced that it does not admit of any question" (32).[7] Jaccottet also often judges himself; it is as if he has internalized an anticipated reader and tries to preempt any objections that may arise. At other times in his journal he is simply revising previously made claims, as in the following reference to the death of a loved one, to the fragility of life:

Tant de peine pour un noeud d'air! si vite, si aisément dénoué! (110)

[So much effort/suffering for a knot of air! so fast, so easily undone!]

In the next entry he comments on this image; he corrects himself, a rhetorical device which, paradoxically, emphasizes his freedom of choice and his mastery of language.[8]

> Ce n'est pas tout à fait exact. "Noeud d'air" est vite dit. Vu de loin, peut-être. (110)
>
> [That is not quite correct. "Knot of air" is easy to say. Seen from afar, maybe.]

He is his own reader, his own interlocutor, which is normal for a diary. But at other times, the critical side of himself seems to incorporate the judgment he anticipates from others and not only his own opinions. Whom does he imagine reading what he writes?

> Si absurde que ce soit, le mot "amitié" me revient à la bouche. (116)
>
> [As absurd as it may seem, the word "friendship" comes to mind.]

Absurd to whom? Whom does he imagine judging the supposedly unsophisticated poetic associations of his youth? What standards has he internalized?

> Iris. Les grands vergers d'iris des maladies: ai-je vraiment écrit, ou lu ce vers, autrefois? Voilà longtemps, je me rappelle avoir associé ces fleurs à des désirs plus ou moins troubles: sottise, littérature. (158)
>
> [Iris. The large iris orchards of illness: did I really write, or read this verse, in the past? A long time ago,

I remember having associated these flowers with more or less disturbing desires: foolishness, literature.]

These texts have been quoted from his journal. Does his poetry display similar patterns of interaction with himself and with a virtual audience?

Jaccottet rarely addresses the reader or even an unspecified "tu" in Airs (1961-1964). The reader is included in the "nous" referring to all human beings, who are presumed to share many of his experiences. If a "tu" appears in his text, he tends to specify to whom or what he is referring, e.g., in the poem beginning "Vérité, non-vérité" [Truth, non-truth] (with its evocation of eternal, abstract truths?) he addresses the world, returning once again to the ephemeral character of human life and the inevitability of death:

Monde [...]
passer en toi, c'est fêter
de la poussière allumée (12)
[World (...)
passing through you is celebrating
illuminated dust]

Does qualifying the dust as "allumée" point to the illusion we tend to have about life (we see the light not the dust; or we see the dust transfigured by the light) or is it a way of valorizing the dust similar to how Pascal valorized his "roseau pensant" (we are nothing but dust, but at least we are illuminated)?

The lack of certainty suggested by the very posing of questions, such as the ones appearing in the first poem of the section entitled "Oiseaux, fleurs et fruits," [Birds, flowers and fruits] is reinforced by qualifiers, or hedges, such as "peut-être" [maybe]. In another case he asks a question, "qu'est-ce qui se passe ainsi d'un corps à l'autre?" [what happens thus between one body and another?] and then proposes a tentative answer. Do the two images suggest two possible answers or are they simply two ways of expressing the same reality?

Une source échappée au bercail des montagnes,
un tison? (23)
[A spring escaping from the fold of the mountains,
a brand?]

Either way of course he is incapable of giving a univocal answer and the hesitancy of his answer is reinforced by the question mark. At other times he uses totalizing discourse ("Toute fleur" [all flowers], "n'est que" [is nothing but]). Presenting this assertion as a fact rather than as a personal evaluation indicates that he does not expect disagreement from his readers.

Toute fleur n'est que de la nuit
qui feint de s'être rapprochée

Mais là d'où son parfum s'élève
je ne puis espérer entrer
c'est pourquoi tant il me trouble

et me fait si longtemps veiller
devant cette porte fermée

Toute couleur, toute vie
naît d'où le regard s'arrête

Ce monde n'est que la crête
d'un invisible incendie (24)
[Each flower is a little night
pretending to draw near

But whence its scent rises
I cannot hope to enter
which is why it bothers me
so much and why I watch so long
before this closed door

Each color, each incarnation
begins where the eyes stop

This world is merely the crest
of an unseen conflagration][9]

Although he is speaking here of his personal frustration (indicated in the longer second stanza by the personal pronouns: "je," "me," "me") his use of totalizing discourse does not allow the reader to disagree with what the poet regards as a fact: there is a world beyond this one that we as mere mortals are incapable of ever reaching. All we can do is, like the lyric self, wait and wonder in front of the

closed door. The frustration of not being able to know is framed by the expressions of certainty. The last two stanzas expand the first stanza. This time "toute" appears twice, each instance reinforcing the other. The poem ends with the expression in his unfaltering belief that there another dimension to the world and that we are irrevocably unable to attain it, the certainty of expression paradoxical in this context of our inability to know.

Another poem also begins with a certainty, a definition of the eye:

L'oeil:

une source qui abonde (29)

[The eye:

an abundant spring]

This statement is however followed by a conjunction which introduces a question:

Mais d'où venue?

[But where does it come from?]

The superlatives, instead of providing an answer to the question, serve only to remind us that we are incapable of ever finding an answer, because the answer lies entirely beyond our reach, beyond either our experience or our powers of comprehension:

De plus loin que le plus loin

de plus bas que le plus bas (29)

[From farther than the farthest

from lower than the lowest]

Although he does not explicitly differentiate himself from his readers the certainty with which he expresses himself at times does seem to present him as a being who is in a privileged position and therefore capable of enlightening the reader about the nature of the world. He reinforces this impression when he says:

Je crois que j'ai bu l'autre monde (29)

[I think I drank the other world]

but the avowal is of course qualified; he is not sure. He has nevertheless made the assertion. Because in the next poem "nul ne sait" [no one knows] is followed by the conjunction marking opposition ("mais" [but]), the poet is once again creating the impression that he knows more than we, more than the average person. But once again his pronouncement is modified: he knows only the shadows, some surface manifestations, not the profound depths of the earth:

Où est l'oeil de la terre
nul ne le sait
mais je connais les ombres
qu'elle apaise (47)
[Where is the earth's eye
no one knows
but I know the shadows
that it (the earth) pacifies]

He soon renounces this position, acknowledging that he has "de la peine à renoncer aux images" [has a hard time giving up images] (53) and he suggests a remedy:

Il faut que le soc me traverse
miroir de l'hiver de l'âge

Il faut que le temps m'ensemence (53)

[I need the plowshare to pass through me
mirror of age's winter

Time needs to sow its seeds in me]

This resignation not only constitutes a poetics, it also implies that he has to accept the human condition, the fact that he cannot know certain things and that he needs to accept the passage of time. Such submission to the inevitable will presumably make a better, more fertile poet out of him.

Is it this newfound awareness of his limitations that accounts for the numerous occurrences of the expression "peut-être" [perhaps] (55, 56, 63) in the next few poems? He now states:

Peu m'importe le commencement du monde

Maintenant ses feuilles bougent
maintenant c'est un arbre immense
dont je touche le bois navré (66)
[The beginning of the world is not important to me

Now its leaves move

now it is an enormous tree

whose afflicted wood I touch]

This personal poem is followed by one using "on," now including others in his conception:

On avance peu à peu

comme un colporteur

d'une aube à l'autre (67)

[We go forward little by little

like a door-to-door salesman

from one dawn to another]

Despite the very personal nature of his experiences, he believes it possible to extend them to all of us. In this poem the "colporteur" becomes a kind of Everyman. The poet is once again generalizing about our day-to-day life with all its uncertainties. This inclusion of others in his vision is explicit toward the end of the volume. The "Lever du jour" [Break of day] section ends with a series of four questions about the nature of the world. The last question uses "nous":

Quels yeux nous faudra-t-il

[...]

pour voir le jour? (76)

[What eyes do we need

(...)

in order to see the day/light?]

It is significant that he ends with a question. Having now included all human beings in his vision, he is no longer attempting to provide answers but rather is leaving the question open so that we can try to answer it to the best of our ability. By coming back to himself, is he modeling what each of us needs to accomplish as individuals?

> Peut-être en mêlant peu à peu
> la peine avec la lumière
> avancerai-je d'un pas? (79)
> [Perhaps by mixing little by little
> pain with light
> will I go forward one step?]

The connotations of the question and the adverb reinforce one another to create a sense of uncertainty. The use of hedging, of tentative expressions including adverbs such as "perhaps" is part of what has been labeled "women's speech" or "powerless speech" by linguists such as William M. O'Barr and Bowman K. Atkins.[10] Although the characteristics of Jaccottet's poems that we have highlighted here do not correspond exactly to the criteria originally set out by Robin Lakoff, there are enough similarities for us to be able to draw parallels. O'Barr and Atkins in "'Women's Language' or 'Powerless language'?" came to the conclusion "that the sex of a speaker is insufficient to explain incidence of WL features" (102). In their examination of speech styles in courtrooms they found that the status of the speakers was a more

important factor than gender, leading them to speak of "powerless" rather than of "women's" language. In the realm of literature we would then expect powerless speech to issue from, among other possibilities, anticipated antagonism. But as we have seen, in Jaccottet's case the doubts he expresses come from the nature of the questions he is asking and from what he considers to be the nature of the world, not from a kind of prolepsis. In his relationship to the reader of his poetry he does not seem to be as defensive as he is in his journals. This may be because originally the keeper of a journal does not expect it to be read by a wider public; when s/he realizes that such intimate writing may be exposed to a less intimate and presumably more critical public, anxiety could result. O'Barr and Atkins had noted that

> speakers using a high frequency of powerless features, whether they be male of female, tend to be judged as less convincing, less truthful, less competent, less intelligent, and less trustworthy. (110)

Perhaps then, knowing from the beginning that his poetry would be read, and wishing to adopt for a wider public an aphoristic, not a purely exploratory mode, Jaccottet suppressed traces of uncertainty from the declarations of his public persona. Distinguishing between prose and poetry, rather than the diary and the poetry, a critic reaches a similar conclusion in an attempt to explain the preponderance of light in the poetry:

> Entre la prose et la poésie, il existe surtout une différence de degré, le poème manifestant, par sa ligne mélodique et la musicalité du vers, le triomphe précaire de la lumière. (Clerval, 63)
>
> [Between the prose and the poetry, there is above all a difference of degree, the poem manifesting, through its melodic line and the musicality of the verse, the precarious triumph of light.]

Both Du Bouchet and Jaccottet represent the outside world in their poetry quite often and as we have noted in the chapter on space they either tend to present open spaces or an interplay between outside and inside spaces. Garelli's poetic world, in contrast, tends to be closed. There is always an "I" even in a third person narrative as Ross Chambers points out, but the role of the "tu" is to "recevoir, sinon de partager, les perceptions/productions du monde qui définissent le sujet narratif." [receive, and even to share, the narrative subject's "perceptions" -- that is, his or her productions of the world. (16; 1). Although the "tu" and "nous" of Du Bouchet's and Jaccottet's poetic universes may simply be a function of the "fonction narrative," they do allow for some form of identification on the behalf of the reader. Whom does Garelli address in his poems and what effect does his choice of addressee have on the reader?

In Récurrences du songe Garelli explains the inspiration and origins of three of his poems in Archives du silence: "Transit de la Lumière" [Light in Transit], "Incurables Transferts" [Incurable Transferts] and "Boîte Postale: Cent Mille Milliards d'Années de Lumière." [P.O. Box: A Hundred Thousand Billion Years of Light]. It is on the last poem that we wish to concentrate since in this poem he presents a specific interlocutor whom he addresses as "Madame." In these poems "dédiés à la nuit" [dedicated to the night], of which "Boîte Postale" is one, he places the human figure in a "cadre cosmomorphique" [cosmomorphic setting] so that a variety of questions can be asked (103): Are people happy in the nebula "Tréfide?" Who cries in "les Dentelles du Cygne"?, etc. He explains:

> Ainsi m'est venue l'idée de traiter la nuit, en ses perteset ses fuites [...] comme une gigantesque Névrose dontl'absence de titulaire signerait la démesure de la Folie. [...] Or, si le ciel en son énoncé, est du genre masculin,la femme, de toute évidence, en ses mystères est nocturne!J'ai tenté, dès lors, de marier la Folle avec elle-même,c'est-à-dire avec les astres cannibales, qu'elle expurge deses nébuleuses et qui se nourrissent de ce qu'elle dévore. (105, 109)
>
> [That's how I got the idea of treating the night, in itslosses and its flights (...) as a gigantic Neurosis whose lack of an official occupant would indicate the

> excesses of Madness. (...) Now, if the sky in its utterances is of the masculine gender, woman, quite obviously, in her mysteries is nocturnal! I had attempted, consequently,to marry the Madwoman to herself, i.e. with the cannibal stars, whom she expurgates from her nebulae and who feed on what she devours.]

Not only is Garelli reinforcing conventional oppositions which associate women with darkness and mystery and men with light, he is, by associating the feminine with madness and the absence of reason, further emphasizing the derogatory aspects that often accompany such polarization. Words such as "garces" [bitch/slut] and "folles" [madwomen] had already appeared in "Incurables Transferts" (Archives, 36). This poem also ends with the following call: "Allez, Patron! Ce soir, on débauche." [Go on, Boss! Tonight we're going to party.] (37) Women, in this case, seem to be the objects rather than the subjects of pleasure.[11] In "Boîte Postale" he addresses "Madame" in an imperious tone: "Dès lors, je vous convoque ici. Vous comparaîtrez nue" [From now on, I summon you here. You will appear naked] (66). She is accused ("Vous avez tué en moi une musique" [You have killed a music in me] (66)), insulted ("Madame, qui souffrez sans doute, d'un déficit dans l'âme" [Madam, who no doubt suffer from a deficit of the soul] (68)) and compared to Medusa or a dangerous hydra ("vos têtes" [your heads] (68); "à têtes mutantes de sauriens" [with

mutating saurian heads] (72)). Even when he addresses her in order to institute an exchange of views, she is belittled.

> Aussi, Madame
>
> Descendez de vos charrettes. Echangeons un instant nos rubriques et nos langages. Ceci n'est pas un piège.
>
> Investie de mes paroles, vous allez quêter nos regards et ne serez pleinement vous-même, que par les décrets qui viennent d'en bas! (73)
>
> [Therefore, Madam
>
> Get down from your carts. Let us for an instant exchange our rubrics and our languages. This is not a trap.
>
> Invested with my words, you are going to seek our gazes/sights and will be wholly yourself only by the decrees coming from below!]

Rather than wanting her to share the secrets of her world with him, he wants to fill her with his words so that she can better understand his world. Is "Ceci n'est pas un piège" not reminiscent of Magritte's "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," insinuating on the one hand that the suggestion is not as innocent as it seems (because Magritte does present us with a picture of a pipe), and on the other hand that language is inadequate because of its apparent inability accurately to name objects. In the second part of this poem (II, 75-79), he no longer addresses her except at the very end. In one instance he does evoke another interlocutor, this time using the informal form of address: "Prends cette femme [...] s'il

te plaît d'aspirer l'odeur des noires épices!" [Take this women (...) if you like inhaling the fragrance of black spices!] (79) Once again, women, because they are the objects of the verb and the action, are excluded from the interlocutionary situation, as they had been at the end of "Incurables Transferts."

Garelli's reaction when faced with the unknown is much more aggressive than Jaccottet's. By giving a name ("la Folle," "Madame") to the nocturnal mysteries, and attributing characteristics to them, Garelli may feel better able to control them and ultimately they become his creation, as the end of "Boîte Postale" demonstrates:

> Madame,
>
> Qui n'êtes pas, ne fûtes, ni ne serez jamais (79)
>
> [Madam,
>
> Who is not, never was, nor will ever be]

This is no doubt partly because she (the night sky) can never be pinned down and made to enter into the realm of time (suggested by the three tenses) but it is surely also because he created this image of her as a gigantic neurosis. Since the definition of neurosis includes the absence of objective evidence of disease, she becomes doubly his creation. Despite his inclusion of photographs of nebulae and galaxies in Récurrences du songe, it is as if he created his great "Névrose" out of nothing.

This preoccupation with female figures can be found elsewhere in Garelli's work. In Les Dépossessions (1968) the lyric self addresses himself to a personified Beauty ("Beauté," 15), reminiscent of course of Baudelaire's poem.[12] A significant difference is that instead of allowing Beauty to speak as had Baudelaire, Garelli either addresses her or talks about her, "la femme de bronze" [the woman of bronze], "La troisième roue dentée qui marque au zénith le mal." [The third cogwheel which, at the zenith, marks evil] (18). Like Baudelaire's Beauty, she too is cruel.

> A chaque révolution, des hommes sous-équipés, à ses genoux, tombent. (18)
>
> [With each revolution, underequiped men, at her knees, fall.]

An altercation between Beauty and the poet ensues, with him threatening her: "Tu vas mourir, ma folle!" [Your are going to die, my mad one] But, unintimidated she replies "à mi-voix" [in a low voice]:

> "Je sais. Tu viens de la branche obscure du reposoir. Ta maison est un chat. On y pénètre à l'aube. Ton regard scellé, un antre. Quand tu marches, ta jambe de droite miaule." (19)
>
> ["I know. You come from the dark branch of the portable altar. Your house is a cat. One goes into it at dawn. Your sealed gaze, a cave/lair/den. When you walk, your right leg mews."]

After presenting these insults he sums up their relationship as follows: "Ainsi, d'elle à moi, un réseau mal planté" [Thus, from her to me, a badly set up network] (19). He also calls her "Sacrée" [Sacred/Damned One] (20); given the antagonistic relationship between them, it is difficult to ignore the possibility of meanings such as "confounded" or "damned." This difficult relationship with his muse and/or his craft leads him to express his frustration in a cry to be heard: "Oh qu'on m'entende!" [Oh let me be heard!] (25) He identifies himself with other writers, thus also addressing himself when addressing his kind: "Ecrivain" [Writer] (27) and he implores:

> Creusez les mots. Tournez vos langues.
>
> [Hollow out the words. Turn over your tongues /languages.]

apparently to no avail:

> Le même silence.
>
> De toute éternité. (30)
>
> [The same silence.
>
> In all eternity.]

He also invokes others and himself (repeatedly): "Ecrire!" [Write!] (32) This volume ends with another invocation to Beauty.

> Loquor! [...] non l'infâme mièvrerie [...] mais passionagie qui traverse -- Loquor -- la beauté ravagée de tonsexe mis aux voix [...] Où m'attendre, heureuse!

> [...]dressant la beauté d'un bronze corrompu, Toi, l'active,mon immonde -- radieuse -- sur ton corps renversé; quandfleureras-tu? Quand, répudiée [...] parleras-tu? [...] offrant ton sexe, quand viendras-tu? (47)
>
> [Loquor! (I speak) (...) not the vile sentimentality/insipidness (...) but enacted passion which crosses/goes through -- Loquor -- the hagard beauty of your sex put to avote (...) Where to wait for me, lucky one! (...) erecting the beauty of a corrupt bronze, You, the active one, my vile one -- radiant -- on your knocked down body; when will you yield your fragrance? When, repudiated one (...) will you speak? offering your sex, when will you come?]

The questions "Quand [...] parleras-tu?" and "quand viendras-tu?" do not have the same imploring tone as before: the future tense suggesting that he does not doubt that she will come but is only asking when she will return, and the repetition of "Loquor" shows that he is no longer a victim of "Le même silence. / De toute éternité." His virile writing is differentiated from the "mièvrerie" traditionally associated with women's writing and his muse is active and sexually brazen.

The feminine figure plays an important role in Bonnefoy's work as well. He assumes different stances toward her at

different times. I shall be concentrating on Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve. In his early work, for example in "Quel sens prêter à cela" in Anti-Platon, there is no "I" so both the man and the woman are objects in the poem but the man is a Pygmalion, an active artist, whereas the woman is a Galatea who is first created and then destroyed:

> un homme forme de cire et de couleurs le simulacre d'une femme, le pare de toutes les ressemblances, l'oblige à vivre [...]. Puis s'arme d'une torche, abandonne le corps entier aux caprices de la flamme (III, 11)
>
> [a man forms a representation of a woman with wax and colors, adorns it with all the likenesses, obliges it to live (...). Then arms himself with a torch, abandons the whole body to the whims of the flame]

In Yves Bonnefoy: Poèmes commentés[13] Olivier Himy asserts that this poem constitutes a "refus de la sacralisation du '*simulacre*'" [refusal to consecrate the '*simulacrum*' and that it demonstrates "la renaissance possible qu'engendre l'acte de destruction." [the possible rebirth that the act of destruction creates.] (27) We are of course familiar with this conception of Bonnefoy's which was discussed in Chapter 2 in the context of his poetics. Here, however it is the use of the Pygmalion myth with the correlative passivity of the female figure and its destruction in Bonnefoy's poem which interests us. In his next volume, Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve, Douve, although not specifically a

woman, is undoubtedly a feminine figure: the poet evokes her breasts, arms, legs; even when she is not human, she seems to remain feminine:

> Douve, lande résineuse endormie près de moi (IV, 48)
>
> [Douve (moat; drainage ditch), resinous moor sleeping close to me]
>
> Je vois Douve étendue. (XII, 56)
>
> [I see Douve stretched out]

John E. Jackson, in La Question du moi,[14] explains that in Bonnefoy's world consciousness is divided. He describes a simultaneous pull

> vers l'intemporel, le rêve (qui, comme l'on sait, ignore le temps), le nombre -- et vers la réalité, périssable et immédiate (249)
>
> [toward the timeless, dreams (which, as we know, are oblivious to time), numbers -- and toward reality, perishable and immediate.]

Jackson explains that this division is central to Bonnefoy's thinking,

> jusqu'à faire de cette opposition l'un des fondements de sa vision poétique et critique, et qui rend compte, peut-être, de l'opposition des genres entre le *je* masculin et Douve. (249)
>
> [making of this opposition one of the foundations of hispoetic and critical vision, and which explains,

perhaps,the opposition of the genders between the masculine *I* and Douve.]

In this volume, as we see, the feminine figure is not merely spoken of in the third person but is sometimes addressed. In "Vrai Nom" she is, like the effigy in Anti-Platon, destroyed:

Je détruis ton désir, ta forme, ta mémoire,
Je suis ton ennemi qui n'aura de pitié.

Je te nommerai guerre et je prendrai
Sur toi les libertés de la guerre (75)
[I destroy your desire, your form, your memory,
I am your enemy who will be merciless.

I will call you war and I will take
The liberties of war with you]

As Himey states "la nomination est un effet du 'je'" [naming is an effet of the "I"] (29). He further shows that at first this naming has a paradoxical effect:

Nommer, et surtout donner un "*vrai nom*", a donc pour première conséquence de faire disparaître l'objet même de cette nomination. (32)

[Naming, and especially giving a "*true name*" has therefore as a first consequence to have the object of this naming disappear.]

Once again this destruction is seen as a step toward something more positive: at the end the lyric self will have in his heart "ce pays qu'illumine l'orage" [this landscape

illuminated by the storm] (75). In "Vrai corps" (79) we have a similar progression: at first the lyric self and Douve are separated but then he says that he holds the dead Douve enclosed with himself. In the last stanza he addresses her:

> Douve, je parle en toi; et je t'enserre
> Dans l'acte de connaître et de nommer. (79)
> [Douve, I speak in you; and I hug you tightly
> In the act of knowing and of naming.]

This "knowing" of Douve in the Biblical sense leads to a rebirth which seems to be linked to the creation of meaning. Himey summarizes it thus:

> De la séparation à la réunion, du cri à la parole, en passant par le silence, de la mort à la résurrection -- puisque cette parole qui traverse le corps de Douve au dernier quatrain apparaît bien comme une renaissance (47)
> [From separation to reunion, from a cry to speech, passing through silence, from death to resurrection -- because this speech which passes through the body of Douve in the fourth quatrain does appear to be a rebirth]

Pointing out that the section entitled "Douve parle" [Douve speaks] is placed at the center of the work, Jackson insists that this brings about "l'inversion du *tu* en *je*, de "l'objet" en sujet." The critic interprets the fact that this section is "encadré par deux poèmes qui ressortissent à la voix princeps de *je*" [framed by two poems which originate in the

first voice of the *I*] as another manifestation of Bonnefoy's predilection for imperfection in addition to accentuating "la solidarité des interlocuteurs." [the solidarity of the interlocutors] (244, 245) But Jackson has himself pointed out the framing of Douve's voice, thereby insisting on her lack of autonomy and on the fact that "l'épreuve concerne au premier chef le *je*" [the ordeal concerns primarily the *I*] (248) What then is the role of the "tu"?

> Douve n'est pas seulement "l'objet" du *je*, elle en est le corrélat, l'interlocutrice ou, pour mieux dire, l'image différenciée. Douve est bien un double du *je*, elle en est, dirons-nous, la part extériorisée et soumise à l'épreuve de lamort -- la part que le sujet doit assumer pour advenir à sa "vraie vie". (248)
>
> [Douve is not simply "the object" of the *I*, she is his correlate, his interlocutor or, even better, his differentiated image. Douve is indeed a double of the *I*, she is the part of him, we would say, which has been exteriorized and subjected to the ordeal of death -- the part that the subject must take on in order to arrive at his "true life."]

This situation changes in later volumes: where the was solitude, there is now sharing.

> à la solitude si insistante des recueils précédents, solitude aggravée comme nous l'avons vu par les division internes du *moi*, succède dès Pierre écrite, et cela va de

> pair avec le sentiment accru de la *réalité*, le partage nouveau, et plus libre, d'un *nous*. (288)
>
> [the insistant solitude of the previous volumes, solitude aggravated as we have seen by the internal division of the *self*, is followed from Pierre écrite, and this goes hand inhand with a greater sense of reality, by the new and freer sharing of a *we*.]

This movement toward a greater sense of reality is pursued in Dans le leurre du seuil (1975) which is characterized by the frequent use of the first person plural, as a few examples will show: "notre rive" [our shore], "Faces tournées vers nous" [Faces turned toward us] (25); "Nous / Parmi les bruits, / Nous / L'un d'eux." [Us / Among the noises, / Us / One of them.] (30); "notre ressemblance" [our resemblance], "notre identité" [our identity] (49); "Loin devant nous'" [Far ahead of us] (54); "Nous jetons un filet" [We throw a net] (64); "Retrouvons-nous, prenons" [Let us find ourselves again, let us take] (67), etc.

In Caroutch's work we see at work a principle similar to the one that is operative in Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve: but presumably since she is a female she has chosen her double to be male. In Bonnefoy's work Douve took on the stereotypically female characteristics of relative passivity and is associated with materiality. Caroutch too does not deviate much from these stereotypes.

Lieux probables (1968), dedicated to Venice, starts out with a poem entitled "Lente cigüe" [Slow hemlock] which evokes the slow death predicted for the city. It is to the city that she addresses herself but the vocabulary can also suggest a love affair:

> Le plaisir t'assaille par vaguelettes innombrables, libère en toi des essaims de fougères. (9)
>
> [Pleasure assails you with innumerable ripples, liberates in you swarms of ferns.]
>
> Orgasme à cent pétales fleur de fumée plus dure que silex, ô le festin de la mort dédorée. Les doigts en sont comme frippés [sic] par l'eau de mer. L'envol d'un oiseau blanc parfois éclabousse nos draps. (10)
>
> [Orgasm with a hundred petals flower of steam harder than flint, O the feast of death which has lost its gilt. Its fingers seem to be wrinkled by the sea water. Sometimes the flight of a white bird splashes our sheets.]

Sexuality and death come together in images that exploit the fact that Venice is surrounded by water and is said to be sinking slowly into the sea. The rhythmical lapping of the water up against the sides of the city is compared to the ripples of an orgasm while the water is also the reason for its impending doom. The poet once again brings together the two realms in the image which equates the sheets of water to the sheets of the lovers' bed.

Later in the volume the "tu" takes on a more mythical character:

Prince de l'ombre [...]
Tu es la nuit solaire
[...]
Quelle buée encore emprisonne
le pur instant de la pure présence
qui bat à la tempe de l'aube (17)
[Prince of the darkness (...)
You are the midnight sun
(...)
What steam still imprisons
the pure instant of pure presence]

The task of this prince (is he the female poet's double as will be the case in Voyages du double?) is presumably to reach a timeless realm, to create something which can withstand the passage of time. The "nous" also later becomes a different couple: now the lyric self and her partner (like a Tristan and Yseut who have had "la sinistre chance / de boire le breuvage enchanté" [the sinister good luck / of drinking the magic potion] (36)) are looking at the city:

Nous scrutons la ville brûlante et glacée
comme une fièvre de mercure
dans un cercueil de cristal (19)
[We scrutinize the city which is burning and icy
like a mercury fever

in a cristal coffin]

Do these images evoke the reflection of sun on water? Images of the real city are also accompanied by images of invented spaces.

Nous vous cherchons [...]
nuits futures villes r@vées
terres inventées un soir de simulacre (22)
[We seek you (...)
future nights dreamt cities
invented lands one evening of enactment]

Later these daydreams resemble prophecies:

Voyante j'annonce l'étang futur (33)
[Clair-voyant I announce the future pond]

This imagined space becomes even more real, it is no longer just imagined, it becomes probable, foreseeable:

Un lieu probable nous attend (35)
[A probable space awaits us]

In Voyages du double (1989) Caroutch presents her vision of the world. Addressing her poetic double, she describes what is to be found and what the poet can bring to the reader.

Tu ouvres l'amour magique [...] Qu'y découvre-t-on? Qu'après notre dernier souffle, nos cendres, éparses dans la nature, pourront se rejoindre. Leurs molécules [...] recomposent un nouvel être tandis que le lecteur, un millième d'instant, plonge dans les profondeurs d'une autre vie. (IV, N. pag.)

> [You open the magic love (...) What does one discover there? That after our last breath, our ashes, scattered in nature, will be able to meet again. Their molecules (...) reconstruct a new being while the reader, for a thousandth of an instant, plunges into the depths of another life.]

The poet is then a seer, someone with extraordinary powers who can reveal a world that is normally unknown and inaccessible to ordinary people such as the readers. She does suggest that this poet is to be found in all of us, but that most of us do not welcome that part of ourselves, although it seems that we can never completely destroy it:

> Chaque jour, nous te tuons un peu au dedans de nous, mais tu renais toujours plus fort. (V)
>
> [Each day, we kill you a little inside of ourselves, but you always come to life again stronger than before.]

Identifying herself as a woman ("Femme sans visage et sans pensée, séparée de son cri" [Woman without face and without thoughts, separated from her cry] (V)), her double is male.

> Mon autre moi-même infuse l'allégresse dans l'immensité au-delà des corps unis, consumés, des mémoires polies pardes siècles de coquillages. Tu le sais, toi qui as tant erré sur les vastes terrasses de Saturne. T'aimer à genoux, sous le regard de ton sabre qui me scrute au plus profond. (X)

> [My other self infuses elation in the immensity beyond the united bodies, consumed, of the memories polished by centuries of shells. You know it, you who have wandered so much on the vast terraces of Saturn. To love you on my knees, under the gaze of your sabre which scrutinizesme in my most profound depths.]

The final image of this passage presents a strong polarization of masculine and feminine elements. Here it is of course the masculine figure penetrating (albeit figuratively) the feminine figure. In another text, the male double of the poet is seen to be penetrated by the drill of the gods:

> Qui est-il, ce double un peu trépané par le foret desdieux ouvrant la fontanelle voyante? D'où vient-il? [...] Aurait-il réalisé l'intégration entre le sang, l'esprit, le cosmos? Je le sens déjà bouger dans mes os tandis que son semen remonte, éclate silencieusementdans le crâne -- coupe dans laquelle il boit sa propre substance. [...] il sait transmuter les venins. (VIII)
>
> [Who is he, this double slightly trepaned by the gods' drill opening the visionary fontanel? Where does he come from? (...) Could it be that he has achieved integration with blood, spirit, cosmos? I already feel him moving in my bones while his semen rises up again, silently exploding in the skull-goblet from which he

> drinks his own substance. (...) he knows how to transmute poisons.]

Caroutch's creative double is male but she is careful to point out that he is part of her, in her. She ends her volume with a call to what she seems to consider a feminine element: "Osmose, ma soeur." [Osmosis, my sister.] and then shows that if one is unable to open oneself to this principle of interpenetration, if one remains "englué dans la dualité" [stuck in duality], one is doomed to "suce [r] le dur noyau de la disette" [suck on the hard pit of famine]. Invoking a female element ("Osmose, ma soeur") after having evokes her masculine "other" emphasizes that some form of androgyny is desirable: we are whole only when we acknowledge both the masculine and feminine parts of ourselves. Then only can we be receptive to the mysteries of the world. And she insists that voyages all over the globe can become nothing but "quêtes sans Graal" [searches without the Graal].

> Osmose, ma soeur. Ni à Trébizone, ni à Samarkande, ni àTaïwan, ni en Patagonie, ni à Thangboché, dans l'Himalaya, mais en soi. (XL)
>
> [Osmosis, my sister. Not in (a series of exotic place-names) but in oneself.]

Despite its nature as shifter, the "tu" in Caroutch's work, because it is usually addressed to a clearly identified person or entity within in the text, does not invite identification on the behalf of the reader. Her interlocutors often display

mythical characteristics, unlike Jaccottet's "colporteur" who is a common man. Chambers states that the perceptions / productions of the narrative subject define the narrative subject (16; 1). In Caroutch's work it is very difficult to do so: although one becomes more and more familiar with her world, one does not get the impression that this knowledge allows one to know either her lyric self or the poet.

While Caroutch's locutionary partners are others but also her double, a part of herself, Marie Françoise Prager (whose self is split too, as we saw in Chapter 1), tends to address herself to others outside of herself.

In "L'Autopsie" (a major section of Rien ne se perd), Prager provides an example of how the reaction expected from the interlocutor influences the speech of the speaker. The lyric self is speaking to the doctor from whom she would like to obtain information about the young woman ("La morte feinte [qui] s'est enfuie" [The woman feigning death (who) ran away] (47))

> Je fais des demandes à peine chargées d'indications. Ne pas accentuer une syllabe. Cela pourrait faire une brèche mal défendue dans mon enquête.
> Il faut être prudente. Je sais que le docteur tenait au cas. Un mot précipité -- et une surface signifiante pourrait être détruite, faisons des chaînes de mots

légers. Il s'agit de rester au niveau d'une animation en sourdine. (48)

[I make requests hardly tinged with indications. Do not accentuate a single syllable. That could create a breach in my inquiry which would be hard to explain.

I must be careful. I know that the doctor cared about this case. A single hasty word -- and a signifying surface could be destroyed, let us create chains of light words. It is a question of remaining at the level of a surreptitious activity.]

Gender does not seem to be a significant variable in this exchange. But it is an example of how we adjust our utterances depending on the reaction we expect from our interlocutor. It is Prager's express purpose in this text "de faire parler le docteur" [to make the doctor speak] (43). Does she achieve this? She gives us several examples of his speech along with her attempts to draw more out of him:

"J'ai connu une jeune fille" (il lève le drap, il raconte à côté d'une morte), "quand elle commençait à me parler c'était comme pour s'animer à s'aimer". (45)

["I met a girl" (he lifts the sheet, he relates next to a dead woman), "when she started speaking to me it was as if to come to life in order to love herself.]

"Le visage était si beau que je n'écoutais pas, je regardais le visage, je ne faisais que regarder". (47)

["The face was so beautiful that I did not listen, I looked at the face, I used to do nothing but look."]

It appears that the narrator has been listening very carefully and we wonder what her stake is in this inquiry.

"Vous souvenez-vous que vous avez eu des doutes? Vous avez dit que cela vous étonnait qu'elle était venue vous consulter, les plaintes étant insignifiantes." (47)

["Do you remember that you had some doubts? You said that it surprised you that she had come to consult you, since the complaints were insignificant."]

"Et qu'elle vous faisait don de petits objets"

"Cela arrive souvent, cela ne me dit rien"

"Et que sa soeur..."

"Ah, oui la soeur." (48)

["And that she used to give you little objects as gifts"

"That happens often, it doesn't mean anything"

"And that her sister..."

"Oh yes, the sister."]

As can be expected the lyric self identifies with the girl and we see them represented together. "Endormies" [Asleep], they are "les automates" [automatons] (51). When she reports a dream in "Les Héritiers" we suspect that she is both the object and the subject of the dream:

Sur la table une jeune fille était allongée. Que pratiquait-on sur elle? (53)

> [On the table a young girl was stretched out. What were they practicing on her?]

Her position as both subject and object becomes clear when she presents herself as the doctor's partner: "Les partenaires, le docteur et moi" [Partners, the doctor and I] (55). She has become complicitous in the treatment of the girl as an object. But as we had seen in the previous chapter, the girl escapes their efforts at definition. Although the doctor has the last word, his voice is flat ("mate"). His diagnosis has become meaningless:

> "C'est comme pour le népenthès au piège passif". -- quelle liqueur pour celui qui écoute -- "notez bien, dans ces cas la passivité est intacte, la pureté incurable". (56)
>
> ["It is as if for the nepenthe with the passive trap". -- what a liqueur for the one who is listening -- "take note, in these cases the passivity is intact, the purity incurable."]

This suggests that the girl, despite her lack of activity, has managed to escape them: both her passivity and her purity are intact. The listener -- here masculine to indicate the general rather than the specific? -- is relieved by this answer, perhaps because it augurs well for his/her own situation.

O'Barr and Atkins report Robin Lakoff's finding that direct quotations instead of paraphrases are a characteristic

of women's or powerless speech (96). But as we pointed out in the beginning of this section of "L'Autopsie," the lyric self is intent on making the doctor speak. In this case, tactfully and carefully eliciting statements from the doctor, the lyric self seems to have overcome her initial apprehension of dealing with the doctor. Has braving his presence helped her to do this? Of course we have dealt with a specific interlocutor in this instance. What do we find in her other poems?

In Narcose (1966), Prager directly addresses the reader:

> Je m'interromps, lecteur. (83) [I interrupt myself, reader.]

She then talks about the reader in the third person, presenting him as judgmental. This is supported by judiciary images:

> Ailleurs le lecteur, magistrat, s'impatiente; il prévoit le huis clos, mais le poète ne lui accordera pas cette faveur; le néant qu'il se propose nes'arrête pas aux balustres de la galerie. Un ange emmenotté s'exerce à la barre. (83)
>
> [Elsewhere the reader, in the role of a magistrate, is getting impatient; he foresees in camera hearings, but the poet will not grant him this favor; the nothingness that he proposes does not stop at the railings of the gallery. A handcuffed angel does his exercises at the bar.]

At other times, however, she presents intimacy with her interlocutor, e.g. in a poem from the same volume addressed to her husband ("à mon mari"). In this poem her husband seems to provide refuge from the world. Is the use of the formal mode of address indicative of her respect for him? Since there does not seem to be distance between them, it may also be attributable to his protective role.

> Pour fuir en vous je suis,
> en vous je vous oublie.
> Je couvre tous les bruits
> de sorte que j'habite
> la nuit de votre corps
> momie qui m'enveloppe. (25)
> [To escape I am in you,
> in you I forget you.
> I cover all the noises
> so that I inhabit
> the night of your body
> mummy enveloping me.]

Is she once again addressing him when she says: "Vous êtes [...] le seul qui me sait seule" [You are (...) the only one who knows that that I am alone] (27)? In the French of course their closeness is further emphasized by the sound echo between "seul" and "seule," lost in the translation.

The informal mode of address in a poem dedicated to Victor E. van Vriesland ("Nocturnal") also suggests intimacy. She seems to be alluding to a poem.

> De ton nonchaloir le verbe contrôlé
> et par quelle courbe savante d'un rêve chiffré,
> [...]
> comptes-tu nous mener? (44)
> [The verb controled by your indifference
> and through what learned curve of a coded dream
> (...)
> do you intend to lead us?]

The distance suggested in the first two lines ("indifference," "controled," "coded") disappears at the end of the poem. The impersonal language becomes the medium which allows the artist to share his visions with his readers. Her poem draws attention to the act of reading showing how the reader is led by the poet through the space of the poem. Although the reader of Prager's text does not have Van Vriesland's text in front of her/him, s/he can identify with the experience described by her and therefore feels included in this "nous." But of course both her poem and his mediate their exchange and there is no direct contact: there is both closeness and distance. The union suggested in the poem beginning "De lui et de moi" turns out to be a coming together at a distance: it is their "doublures" [understudies] that "s'affrontent" [confront each other]. Here of course the connotation is of

antagonism. In addition to this meeting through an intermediary, other words reinforce the distance: "simule" [simulate], "présumons" [presume], "substances feintes" [feigned substances]. When they do find each other at the end of the poem it is "dans l'étreinte de nos voix" [in the embrace of our voices] (13). One of the possible causes for such an imperfect union is revealed in the solipsistic nature of some of the poems.

Le temps se boucle.
Je me soumets à ses secrets.
Spontanées ondes à mes tempes
les souvenirs, à l'imprévue
rampe en spirale d'un espoir
qui ne pèse je glisse
et si j'ose, dérive,
m'étire de relatif en relatif
et ravie j'attends,
me mire en retrait. (36)
[Time closes on itself.
I submit myself to its secrets.
Spontaneous waves at my temples
memories, unexpectedly
crawl in a spiral of hope
which is weightless I slide
and if I dare, wander/drift away,
stretch myself from relative pronoun to relative pronoun

and delighted I wait,

I gaze at myself standing aside.]

Despite reaching out at times, Prager seems to be caught in her text (as the never-ending spiral we studied in the chapter on space suggested), stretching herself "de relatif en relatif." Her lyric self does however assume different poses toward interlocutors at different times.

Thérèse Plantier, who likes assuming a variety of voices in her works, also addresses herself to a variety of people in her texts. For example, when dealing with the issue of death in La Portentule (1978) ("une portentule étant, d'après le latin, un phénomène mystérieux et angoissant" [a "portentule" being, according to Latin, a mysterious and harrowing phenomenon] - back cover) she speaks to death, itself, to herself and to a friend.

mort mets ton clignotant et passe me dépasse (98)

[death put on your turn signal and pass, overtake me]

In "Laisse tomber" she tries to assuage her fears by talking to herself.

laisse tomber me dis-je la mort est en route (79)

[drop it I say to myself death is on the way]

And bringing the conventional *tempus fugit* topos into her meditation on death, she seeks the agreement of a friend.

si le temps n'est pas aux charniers

à qui est-il?

je te le demande

à toi mon ami. (101)

[if time does not belong to the charnel house

to whom does it belong?

I'm asking you,

you my friend.]

Mourning the loss of her mother in "Parle," she invokes her mother to speak, to make herself heard, even if she "brame, ameute déblatère" [bells/troats (like a stag), draws a crowd, rants].

Maman

qui vécut comme en punition

toujours confuse

et parfois confusément

exprime-toi enfin

qu'on t'entende

tu es morte? [...]

parle

du haut de ta grandeur écrasée

précipite sur nous ta couronne. (23)

[Mama

who lived as if in punishment

always confused

and sometimes confusedly

express yourself finally

let us hear you

are you dead? (...)

speak

from the height of your crushed greatness

throw your wreath down on us.]

As is typical of an elegy, Plantier is trying to recapture the past. But she is also invoking her mother to do something she never managed to achieve while alive: to speak and make herself heard. Significantly, her mother does not speak (e.g. through prosopopeia). Plantier's helplessness in the face of loss leads to a desperate plea at the end of the poem: if her mother still cannot speak, perhaps she can show some evidence both of hearing her daughter and of revolt through the gesture of throwing down her funeral wreath. The poem itself, of course, "erects a verbal memorial"[15] to her mother.

Another memorial poem appears in La Portentule. This poem, although also addressed to the deceased, does not contain the mournful invocations of the previous poem. Even the title "Le Rizotto," referring to a rice dish, sets a more lighthearted tone.

Père Haller aux cheveux d'un blanc électrique

qui boitiez

jamais je ne prépare le rizotto sans penser à vous

[...]

et qui m'avez appris à être économe

[...]

vous m'avez enseigné le cérémonial des humilités

[...]

m'entourant de signes fantômes

pour vous écrire à vous mort

[...]

qui aviez tant souffert par ces Bolchéviks

que je révérais

ce qui ne nous empêchaient pas de nous entendre

[...]

je vous aimais vous m'étiez supérieur (51)

[Father Haller with you electric white hair

who used to limp

I never fix rizotto without thinking of you

(...)

who taught me to be thrifty

(...)

you taught me the ceremonial of humilities

(...)

surrounding myself with phantom signs

in order to write to you, you who are dead

(...)

who had been made to suffer so much by the Bolsheviks

whom I revered

which did not prevent us from getting along

(...)

I loved you you were superior to me]

Although it also constitutes a way of preserving the past, more than the previous one this poem shows acceptance of death. The poet is thanking the old man for what he taught her, while also telling us something about friendship: that mutual respect can prevent opposing views from destroying friendship.

Another poem which assumes an imploring tone is addressed to someone who is alive. Her neighbor ("Mon Voisin") is presumably not a specific person. The poem is addressed to all the people who live their lives wrapped up in themselves, cut off from others. It is a cry for dialogue, for communication:

> Ne lis pas le journal
> dans le métro
> cesse
> lève les yeux
> arrache la machinerie incrustée sur ta peau
> crache du fond de ta gorge tes mots
> dans la mienne. (61)
> [Don't read the newspaper
> in the subway
> stop
> look up
> tear off the machinery embedded in your skin/coating your skin
> from the depth of your throat spit your words

into mine.]

Despite her oppositional stance vis à vis dominant values, Plantier evokes negative reactions from others less often than one might expect. There is however a text in which she tells of a bad dream. The title "A celui que je hais" [To the one I hate] makes the antagonist specific rather than general. In the dream itself -- framed by ellipsis -- the anxiety of rejection is obvious and rather than the male indicated in the title, she presents a woman who detests her:

> une femme âgée me détestant dans la chambre voisine rassemblait ses amis mes amis pour les ameuter contre moi... (75)
>
> [an old woman who hates me was assembling in the adjacent room her friends my friends in order to incite them against me...]

In another poem there is a reference to a real dialogue with a friend, even though it is an aside:

> -- à propos j'ai reçu votre lettre
> qui me remet en tête votre mélancolie
> moins de barbituriques je vous prie -- (102)
>
> [-- by the way I received your letter
> which reminds me of your melancholy
> fewer barbiturates I beg you --]

Here she reports that "aucun des animaux ne dit du mal de moi" (102) [none of the animals says anything bad about me]. This comment suggests that this is not true of human beings. In a

text from La Loi du silence (1975) the antagonism alluded to is made explicit:

> et moi je hais les bourgeois un à un ils me le rendent ils sont nombreux et parfumés aux herbes de Provence ma haine s'éparpille je tiens le rôle qu'au Moyen-Age jouaientlépreux et pestiférés. Aucune pitié. Je suis tellement accentuée que je redoute l'instant proche où je ne pourrai plus aller au village acheter ma pizza quotidienne. (38, 40)
>
> [and I hate the bourgeois one by one they get back at me there are many of them, smelling of Provençal herbs my hatred scatters/disperses I play the role that the lepers and the plague-stricken played in the Middle Ages. No pity. I am so marked that I am dreading the fast approaching time when I will no longer be able to go into the village to buy my daily pizza.]

Of course men too have assumed the pose of outcast (the "poètes maudits") and we saw that Caroutch also assumes this pose (Chapter 3), identifying in this way with her male counterparts. However, given Plantier's oppositional feminist stance, it places her in a slightly different position. The "poètes maudits" were not outcasts because of their sex whereas Plantier seems to be suggesting that it is because of her political views on women that she has been cast in this role. In La Portentule there are few directly political poems, but a poem such as "La Piscine" which shows two women

swimming together in a situation which is unequivocally sexual is likely to provoke strong reactions from readers:

tes seins pesaient sur mes paupières
tu m'aspirais
entre des eaux damasquinées
tu laçais au long de mon buste
de palpables courants glacés
[...]
j'étais saoule de ton indistinct contact
[...]
où seules nous nagions (40)
[your breasts were weighing on my eyelids
you were breathing me in/inhaling me
between the damascened water
all along my chest you were tying/lacing
palpable icy currents
(...)
I was drunk from your indistinct contact
(...)
where we were swimming alone]

Of course Plantier can also be deliberately provocative as when in La Loi du silence she subversively embeds vulgarities in the name of an honored French institution, referring to it as the "Acacadémie Francacaise," (39). Whom is she addressing? A direct insult to members of the institution, her poem provides support, albeit it in a rather controversial

way, to a group traditionally excluded from its hallowed halls: women. To date there are two "immortelles": Marguerite Yourcenar (1903 - 1987) (who does not consider her sex important in her writing) and the classicist Jacqueline de Romilly. She does however seek support from an important figure (whose works occupy a central position in current French theory despite his avowed homosexuality), Roland Barthes (1915-1980), by quoting his words in an epigraph:

> Le texte devrait être cette personne désinvolte qui montre son derrière au Père Politique.
>
> [The text should be this impertinent person who shows his behind to Father Politics.]

Again, it is necessary to keep in mind the different reception words tend to have depending on the sex of the speaker. It is likely that vulgarity will be judged more harshly when coming from a woman. Of course Plantier is aware of this and uses it deliberately to subvert stereotypes and show her defiance of norms of femininity imposed on women. The epigraph sets the tone for the rest of the work. Does not however the equation of the text with a person reduce the responsibility that the writer has to take for the content of his/her text?

In the poem attacking the Académie française Plantier also takes on institutions of learning and religion (their "importance" indicated by the use of capital letters):

> Oublié le chemin de l'Université
> inutile et sans avenir

[...]

& j'ai appris à lire

les décisions des Comités Centraux

qui interdisent aux poèmes d'êtres lus

décidée à braver les Eglises (39)

[Forgotten the road of the University

useless and without a future

(...)

& I've learned to read

the decisions of the Central Committees

who forbid the reading of poems

(I have) resolved to defy the Churches]

Plantier indicated the intersection of themes between the prose text and the poems in La Loi du silence. Here, on the facing page, we have an evocation of a woman called Claire, probably drunk, who has fallen and says of herself:

On ne m'a jamais dit que j'étais folle on m'a toujours trouvé un petit genre de navet blanc quéquétte de verrat (38)

[I was never told that I was crazy I was always found to be a small kind of turnip a boar's willy]

Is this broken woman the kind of woman Plantier is trying to speak up for in her poetry? And would this support allow a woman reader to identify both with Plantier's characters and the poet herself?

Whereas Plantier's poetry is seldom reflective, and she often speaks not only for herself, but also for others, Lejeune's quest always starts within herself before she turns her attention outward.

In her search for identity as presented in La Geste, Lejeune also has to reevaluate her relationships with others. Her ability to communicate with others in the voice which she finds within herself, which she can now call her own, needs to be put to the test. The words "soliloque" and "monologue" recur in her work but talking to herself is presented as a necessary step in her development: "Enclose dans la plus secrète tour. J'y forge la clef de la première porte, le monologue." (47) [Enclosed in the most secret tower. Here I forge the key for the first door, monologue.] She needs to find the tools inside herself before venturing outward, toward the real world, toward dialogue. The future tense in the following passage suggests confidence, not doubt, and she will not be alone on her journey:

> Quelqu'un m'attend de l'autre côté. Ensemble nous forgerons la clef de la porte suivante, le dialogue.
>
> Nous sortirons de la chambre. Nous entrerons dans la grande salle où d'autres se joindront à nous pour forger de multiples clefs pour de multiples portes... (47, 48)

> [Someone is waiting for me on the other side. Together we will forge the key for the following door, dialogue.
>
> We will leave the room. We will enter the large hall where others will join us to forge multiple keys for multiple doors...]

The ellipsis suggests endless possibilities in this context of hope, but her return to the starting point again -- "Depuis trois ans je soliloque" (48) [I have been soliloquizing for three years] -- effects closure once more and the positive impetus is revealed as a vision of the future. This rhetoric of certainty appears to serve the same function as repetition (very prevalent in her work):

> Je me répétais -- pour conjurer la peur, banaliser l'expérience et la mettre à portée d'écriture (Age, 20) [I repeated myself -- to exorcise fear, to make the experience common-place and to put it within the range of writing]

But who are the antagonistic "they" that keep reappearing in her text? Lejeune stutters in her attempt to reach others (readers? publishers? critics?) who turn their backs on her and shrug their shoulders in indifference:

> Oh, ce terrible bégaiement entre moi et les autres! Leur dos, leurs sourires, leurs haussements d'épaules... (Geste, 46)

> [Oh, this awful stuttering between myself and the others. They turn their backs, they smile, they shrug their shoulders...]

Obviously Lejeune is talking about her frustrations with writing ("cette peine que j'ai à m'exprimer!" (25) [the trouble I have expressing myself!]) but this presentation of the "they" also has to be seen in the context of the different criteria applied when a work is known to have been written by a woman rather than a man. In her 1979 volume, L'Atelier, she addresses this issue directly:

> Oser balbutier, cela ne se peut que dans *l'atelier*, si les coupeurs de langue n'y règnent plus. Tenter d'articuler l'insignifié, cela ne se peut qu'au sein d'une écoute chaleureuse, d'un climat d'amitié, non pas d'un accueil condescendant dont la politesse agacée ne trompe pas l'extrême susceptibilité d'un langage naissant! (47)
>
> [Daring to stammer, this can only be done in *the workshop*, if the tongue slashers no longer reign there. Attempting to articulate the unsignified, that can only be done inthe midst of a friendly audience, of a climate of friendship, not of a condescending welcome whose irritable politeness cannot fool the extreme sensitivity of a nascent language!]

When Lejeune does report a reader's reaction, it is a negative one:

> M'écrivant "tu n'as rien à dire au siècle", tu m'as donné mon renvoi[16] [...] Merci. Sans ta mécréance, le doute ne me serait pas devenu bénéfice. (Age, 37)
>
> [By writing to me "you have nothing to tell this century," you gave me my leave (...) Thank you. Without your lack of faith/misbelief, doubt would not have become a gain for me.]

In Le Dernier Testament Lejeune, as she is apt to do, turns a weakness (an anticipated small audience) into a strength:

> J'écris pour le plus petit nombre. Poésie pour un seul est transparence, seule recevable par tous. (31)
>
> [I write for the smallest number. Poetry for one person is transparency, the only kind which can reach all/everyone.]

The insignificance of "un seul" (once again her internalized interlocutionary partner?) is transformed by the totalizing discourse ("le plus", "seule", "tous").[17] The recalcitrent are disqualified from the elite audience, because they are implicitly stupid, but the elite audience will set the norm for the future. Thus "the elite is the vanguard all will follow and conform to. Its opinion is the only one that matters, for, in final analysis, it is the determining one" (Perelman, 33-34). Lejeune's assertion that poetry for one person is the only type which can reach everyone, is thus in the final analysis comparable with Hugo's "Quand je vous parle de moi, je vous parle de vous" [When I speak to you of myself,

I am speaking of you].[18] In addition to turning a weakness into a strength (thereby endorsing the proverb quoted by Kramerae: "Women are strong when they arm themselves with their weaknesses.", 122), she also overcomes her fear because her need for expression is even greater than her fear of an unsympathetic audience:

> Et le besoin de donner forme partageable à ce que ça me dit, à ce que ça me fait dire, devient plus fort que la peur d'avoir une fois de plus la langue coupée. (Atelier, 56)

[And the need to give a form which can be shared to that which it says to me, to that which it makes me say, becomes stronger than the fear of being silenced once more.] In the final chapter (Space), we shall return to this image of the gulf that Lejeune perceives separating herself from others once she has become whole inside and started using her own voice. Here this experience is placed in the context of her audience. Her extensive use of religious imagery when describing her encounter with the audience elevates her to the position of martyr.

> fossé circulaire isolant la sourcière, désignant l'étrangère, exommuniant -- *mettant à l'index* -- celle qui ne parle pas comme tout le monde (Atelier, 80)

[circular trench isolating the sourceress [sic], pointing out the stranger, excommunicating -- *putting on the*

blacklist -- the one who does not speak like everybody else.]

She has felt herself quarantined (81), ostracized. She explains that the logical principle by which either a proposition or its negation must be true is applied to her words, thereby explaining the devalorization of her assertions: if she is disagreeing with well-accepted premises, she must inevitably be wrong according to this principle.

> Telle est la destinée de cette juive universelle qu'est la pensée du tiers, toujours et partout exclue, exécrée (81)
>
> [Such is the destiny of this universal Jewess that the thought of the outsider constitutes, always and everywhere excluded, loathed]

Her totalizing discourse ("universelle," "toujours et partout") along with a word such as "exécrée" with its powerful emotional connotations, translate the intensity of her experience of rejection. She then bemoans

> l'absence d'oreille pour cette parole du désert dont la résurgence du tiers exclu est porteuse. (81)
>
> [the absence of an ear to hear these words from the desert for which the reappearance of the "tiers exclu" is responsible/a messenger]

Her words imply the topos of the *vox clamantis in deserto*, the unheeded prophecies of St. John the Baptist announcing a

greater truth to come. But once again Lejeune finds a solution and proposes the active creation of an audience for oneself:

> L'oreille conditionnée pour n'entendre que les généralités reconnues, formée à n'accueillir que les valeurs assurées, ne peut tout simplement pas s'ouvrir au singulier sans en être plus ou moins choquée, ébranlée dans ses habitudes. [...] Comme on dit que la fonction crée l'organe, une langue douée d'avenir, capable de *devenir*, suscite l'oreille qui doit s'éprendre d'elle, qui doit la séduire à son tour, pour qui elle ose se délier, se désintimider. (82)
>
> [The ear conditoned to hear only recognizable generalities, formed to hear only tried and true values, simply cannot open itself to the singular without being more or less shocked, shaken in its habits. (...) As it is said that the function creates the organ, a language endowed with a sense of the future, capable of *becoming*, creates the ear which must become enamored of it, which must seduce it in turn, for whom it dares to loosen, to no longer be intimidated.]

Even in this positive text the verb "to dare" shows that the first step is courage to face opposition. She concludes that resolving one's own problems could lead to problems with others. The battle, it seems, is an ongoing one...

> L'énigme résolue au dedans par le dessillement de la pensée mitoyenne lui [au franc-penseur] revient sous forme d'enceinte, problème d'audience à résoudre. Etre compris ne va pas de soi... (88)
>
> [The enigma resolved inside by the uncovering of the partitioned thought returns to him (the free-thinker) under the guise of a wall, the problem of audience remains to be resolved. Being understood is not a given...]

We have evidenced the assumption of a variety of positions vis à vis interlocutors, whether real or imagined. Although a more defensive stance can be expected from women poets than from men poets because of the hostility women writers have often had to face, this is not necessarily the case. There is no evidence of anticipated antagonism in Caroutch's text. One could speculate that her textual world is relatively closed in order to avoid issues of reception. But this cannot be attributed simply to gender, because Garelli also creates a textual world which is turned inward on itself, as Prager too is wont to do. Bonnefoy does not seem overtly preoccupied with questions of reception, Jaccottet's hesitant attitude is attributable to his view of the world, and Du Bouchet appears to welcome the reader in his text. Plantier's aggressive manner can be attributed to antagonism, but rather than assuming a defensive demeanor, she champions

the collective good of women. Lejeune is by far the most defensive and both her poetry and her theoretical works address the issue of hostile readers and listeners in a gender-specific context. However, gender is certainly not the only variable determining the constitution of interlocutionary partners.

An aspect that does appear to be related to gender is references to critics and other artists. Allusion suggests a common ground with the virtual audience, a feeling of cameraderie and mutual support. Moreover, "allusion increases the prestige of the speaker in possession of this treasure, and able to utilize it" (Perelman, 177). In Archives du silence there is proof of positive interaction between Garelli and his audience because he dedicates the poem "La Mort du simulacre" (24) to Marc Richir who has published several articles on the poet and he also quotes Richir in an epigraph to "Boîte Postale" (65). As we pointed out, Du Bouchet knew Giacometti (as did Bonnefoy -- he published a biography of the artist's works) and Jaccottet's A travers un verger (1975) contains three etchings by Pierre Tal-Coat. Even within their works this sense of belonging to a larger community of artists emerges. This is not true for the women poets. Although they do dedicate poems to other artists (e.g. Prager's "Message" [Rien ne se perd, 16] which is dedicated to the Algerian writer Kateb Yacine), the women poets seem more isolated from other artists and from each other than do the men, the

exception being Caroutch whose volume Paysages provisoires is accompanied by etchings by Vittorio Basaglia.

Although a sense of community or lack thereof may be reflected in the works, the array of attitudes manifested suggests that gender alone provides an inadequate explanation of interlocutionary relationships. The context of each utterance needs to be taken into account if we are to make sense of the variety of responses we have encountered.

NOTES

1 "Langue" refers to the the language as a structure whereas "parole" refers to utterances by individuals.

2 For Lacan this moment of entry into language constitutes entry into the realm of the Symbolic and is accompanied by an experience of alienation. Feminists have argued that this moment is doubly alienating for women since they are entering a language forged by men. In "Les Origines du genre grammatical" (Le Sexe linguistique, 15-34) Patrizia Violi states:

> A l'égard d'un système symbolique qui a déjà exclu et marqué l'espace féminin comme négatif, la parole des femmes est prise dans un mouvement double et contradictoire imposée par un discours qui a effacé sa différence et sa spécificité. (33)
>
> [With regard to a symbolic system which has already excluded and marked the feminine space as negative, the speech of women is caught in a double and contradictory movement imposed by a discourse which has erased its difference and its specificity.]

3 See Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyeca, The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation. (Notre Dame UP, 1969 [in French, 1958]), which focuses on the virtual audience.

4 Marina Mizzau, "Silence à deux voix," Le Sexe linguistique (Paris: Larousse: 1987) 41-53.

5 Ross Chambers, Mélancolie et Opposition: Les Débuts du

modernisme en France (Paris: José Corti, 1987)

6 Ross Chambers, The Writing of Melancholy: Modes of Opposition in Early French Modernism, trans. Mary Seidman Trouille (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

7 For the concept of the "universal audience," see Perelman, op. cit., 30-35, 66-73, and passim.

8 See Perelman, 171-74.

9 Derek Mahon's translation with emendations. Philippe Jaccottet: Selected Poems. Selected and translated with an introduction by Derek Mahon. (Wake Forest University Press, 1988) 73.

10 William M. O'Barr and Bowman K. Atkins, "'Women's Language' or 'Powerless language'?" Women and Language in Literature and Society, op. cit., 93-110. Characteristics of "women's language" are: Hedges, (Super)polite forms, Tag questions, Speaking in italics, Empty adjectives, Hypercorrect grammar and pronounciation, Lack of sense of humor, Direct quotations, Special lexicon, Question intonation in declarative contexts. (96)

11 What does one do with an image such the following one which evokes the way of the world, an apparent statement of fact?

> Ce jeu incongru qui veut que les bourdons bourdonnent, que les femmes au col d'acier prises de caresses se cabrent (Archives, 71)

[This incongruous game which decrees that bumblebees buzz, that women with a steel collar taken by caresses rear up/revolt.]

12 This poem can of course also be studied from the point of view of Garelli's relationship to tradition.

13 Olivier Himey, Yves Bonnefoy: Poèmes commentés (Slatkine, 1991).

14 John E. Jackson, La Question du moi (Neuchatel: La Baconnière, 1978).

15 Laurence M. Porter, The Renaissance of the Lyric in French Romanticism: Elegy, "Poëme" and Ode (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum, Publishers, 1978) 22.

16 "tu m'as donné mon renvoi" [you gave me leave] brings to mind the text by Rimbaud which serves as epigraph to "De la citoyenneté poétique" [Of poetic citizenship] (Age, 13):

Quand sera brisé l'infini servage de la femme, quand elle vivra par elle et pour elle, l'homme -- jusqu'ici, abominable, -- lui ayant donné son renvoi, elle sera poëte, elle aussi!

[When the infinite serfdom/bondage of woman is broken, when she will live through herself and for herself, man -- until now, abominable -- having given her leave, she too will be a poet!]

17 Or course Stendhal had also believed that since he was ahead of his time he could only write for the "happy few."

18 Preface to Les Contemplations.

CHAPTER 5: SPACE

Exploring the spatial imagery of a poet has been considered an effective means of entry into his/her world by several recent critics. In his La Poétique de l'espace (1964),[1] Gaston Bachelard categorized the works of poets according to the kinds of spaces they evoked. In addition to examining images of different parts of the house, and the relationship of the closed space of the house with the outside world, he also explores the connotations of images of nests, shells, corners, drawers, etc. Akin to his phenomenological approach of the experience of space are Jean-Pierre Richard's studies. One of Richard's more recent collections of essays bears the title Pages Paysages (1984), positing a relationship between the words on the page and the world created by these traces. Although neither Bachelard nor Richard includes gender as a category of their analysis, the spaces they evoke can be studied in the light of another approach: that of sexual analogies. The kinds of spaces that are associated with the imagination of men and women respectively have been attributed to physiological differences, or "the morphology of genital differentiation itself" as in the case of Erik Erikson's observations of children's play.[2] Although Erikson's study was conducted in in 1964, it presents us with an extreme form of notions that still underlie distinctions we make today. An example of this is Donna Bassin's 1982 study: "Woman's Image of Inner Space: Date Towards Expanded

Interpretive Categories."[3] She proposes a different female-centered interpretation but she does not question the basic morphological distinctions. The full results of Erikson's study are provided in the footnote. Here I shall simply quote the summary his findings:

> The male and female spaces, then, were dominated, respectively, by height and downfall and by strong motion and its channelization or arrest; and by static interiors which were open or simply enclosed, and peaceful or intruded upon. (591)[4]

Erikson's findings concentrate not only on the spaces themselves, as can be seen, but also on *how* they are inhabited. This can be determined by looking at how men and women move in space and what postures and gestures reveal about their relationship to their world and to each other. As we will see, there are poets for whom the evocation of space seems irrevocably linked to relationship.

Several critics and theorists also draw on phenomenological approaches when discussing poetry, always without addressing gender. Iris Marion Young's "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality"[5] helps us to better understand how women's experience of space may differ from that of men. After presenting Young's rereading of Merleau-Ponty, we will first examine the imagery used by critics when describing the poetic process, before analyzing the worlds created by the

poets themselves in the light of the theories of Erikson, Merleau-Ponty and Young. What will become apparent is that the spatial imagery found in poetry does not necessarily correspond to the clearly drawn distinctions prevalent in theoretical discourse.

Young uses The Phenomenology of Perception and the distinction that De Beauvoir draws in The Second Sex between immanence and transcendence to show that women experience a tension between these two poles since woman = object and human = subject.[6] She explains that Merleau-Ponty gives a unifying and synthesizing function to the body: it unites the self with its surroundings;

> through the vectors of its projected possibilities it sets things in relation to one another and to itself. The body's movement and orientation organizes the surrounding space as a continuous extension of its own being. (149)

But since women also experience themselves as objects, the "je peux" of a woman becomes problematic. As Young points out, for her the "je peux" becomes both an "I *can*", i.e. it is a possibility for someone, and an "*I* cannot," i.e. others may be *able* to but I cannot (149). In addition to this "inhibited intentionality" (147) women also experience a "discontinuous unity" (147) with their surroundings. Young explains that as

> the origin and subject of spatial relations the body does not occupy a position coequal and interchangeable with

> the position occupied by other things. (152)

But since a woman is more likely than a man to experience her body partly as an object (due to societal objectification of women's bodies and, we may add, a literary tradition which tends to present women as objects rather than as subjects), she becomes situated in a way that a man is not and she therefore lives

> space as *enclosed* or confining, as having a *dual* structure, and the woman experiences herself as *positioned* in space. (151)

Instead of experiencing herself as a subject who organizes space as a "continuous extension" (149) of her own being, she feels an "existential enclosure between herself and the space surrounding her." (151) This serves as a form of protection against potential aggression, but "the projection of an enclosed space severs the continuity between a 'here' and a 'yonder.'" (151) By projecting a barrier, the woman imagines for herself a small area where she is a subject. (155) There is some correspondence between Erikson's and Young's findings. However, the interpretations of these results differ dramatically. This experience of space as confining, which may well be reflected in the spaces women poets choose to represent, is not attributed to biological factors; it is seen as the result of the way women are perceived in our society, of an attempt to fulfill expectations of "femininity," of women having learnt their "place."

Having established these differences in the experience of space, let us now examine how critics (and poets) describe the relationship between space and the poetic process, paying particular attention to the "masculine" or "feminine" character of the images deployed. We shall be concentrating on images that evoke actual spaces, but also on images that suggest the creation of a space (for action or relationship). Recurring spatial images are of course often reinforced by contextual clues or related images. When evocations of space are contradicted by other kinds of images, this is taken into account in order to expand our understanding on the world the poet inhabits or creates.

The title of a conference held in France in 1984, Espace et Poésie, is indicative of the considerable attention that issues of space have received in recent discussions of poetry. At this colloquium both Garelli and Bonnefoy delivered papers and the works of Du Bouchet and Jaccottet were discussed., as we mentioned in the Introduction. Michel Deguy also delivered a paper. No women poets were discussed.

In a paper bearing the same title as that of the conference, Henri Maldiney states that man's "experience" (*Erfahrung*) of the world is presented as "une traversée", according to the Greek etymology of the word "une percée qui ouvre le passage" (86) [a break which opens the way]

> l'homme se signifie comme un être de traversée, toujours à la recherche d'un passage à l'autre côté. (86)

[man creates meaning for himself as a being of crossing, always searching for a passage/way to the other side.] The modality of his being in the world is active, he is the agent of the "percée." Maldiney draws heavily from Merleau-Ponty's work, as is obvious from the following passage:

> Premièrement l'homme est capable de l'espace sous la forme d'un "je peux". Sa capacité de présence recèle une capacité d'action, que nous a révélé le vocabulaire de l'expérience. Debout et à travers, il a vue sur un monde comme ce sur quoi il peut opérer. Etre au monde, c'est être en puissance d'un espace qui se déploie de toutes parts: *allerhand*, ici dans le sens de "à toutes mains". En ce sens nous sommes en prise sur des choses maniables, disponibles, *zuhanden*: à notre main. (87)
>
> [Firstly man is capable of space in the form of an "I can." His capacity for presence conceals a capacity for action,which the vocabulary of experience has revealed to us. Vertically and horizontally, he sees the world as that on which he can act. Being in the world, is having under one's control a space which unfolds in all directions: *allerhand*, here in the sens of "within grasp." In this sense we have a hold on objects, they become manageable, available, *zuhanden*: at hand.]

Verticality and motility ("Debout et à travers") are qualities usually associated with masculinity. This text is also reminiscent of discourses telling of man's taming / conquering

of nature: "capable", "capacité", "action," "opérer", "en puissance," "en prise sur"... Jacques Benay's question to Michel Deguy in an interview with the poet also reinforces this vision of conquest and possession:

> Le grand dessein (ou rêve) du poète ne serait-il pas ce désir (ou ce besoin) de vouloir tout à la fois prendre et comprendre? Prendre dans le sens de posséder; de s'emparer du mystère, de ce mystère qu'est la vie... (21)
>
> [The great design (or dream) of the poet would it not be this desire (or this need) to want simultaneously to take and to understand? Take in the sense of possess; to seize the mystery, this mystery that is life...]

Julien Gracq evokes similar images:

> Tout grand paysage est une invitation à le posséder par la marche: le genre d'enthousiasme qu'il communique est une ivresse de parcours. Cette zone d'ombre, puis cette nappe de lumière, puis ce versant à descendre, cette rivière guéable, cette maison[7]
>
> [All large landscapes constitute an invitation to possess them by walking: the type of enthusiasm which they communicate is the exhilaration of the journey. This area of shade, thispatch of light, then this slope to go down, this fordable river, this house]

Although Maldiney uses the word "homme" in the sense of "human," the association of men with motion and verticality and the emphasis on these two elements in his discourse, as

well as Young's demonstration that this kind of phenomenology of the body does not account for the experiences of women, creates the impression that women are not included in this conception. Does the poetry itself bear out the masculinist rhetoric of the theoretical discourse?

At a first glance, the crossing or passage evoked by Maldiney always seems to be accomplished with some amount of violence in André du Bouchet's work. Although he reneges on some of his initial judgments about the poet's work, Jaccottet sees Du Bouchet's continual quest as violent:

> un cheminement qui est une agression inévitable, une intrusion quasi mortelle (Entretien des muses, 264)
> [an advancement which is an inevitable aggression, a quasi-mortal intrusion]

He quotes Du Bouchet:

> Comme si, pour rester debout, j'étais tenu d'avancer...
> [As if, in order to remain upright, I was obliged to go forward...]

"[D]ebout" and "avancer" once more restate, almost word for word, the image used by Maldiney: "Debout et à travers". Jaccottet again:

> Le passage d'un élément à l'autre [...] se fait toujours avec décision et brusquerie, comme s'il fallait le surprendre: il y a dans la nature très fine du poète une sauvagerie, une violence qui tient peut-être de sa situation exposée. (266)

> [The crossing over from one element to another (...) is always decisive and abrupt, as if it had to be done by surprise: there is in the refined nature of the poet a savagery, a violence which is perhaps attributable to his exposed situation]

Playing on the word "jour," Jaccottet shows how the formal elements of Du Bouchet's poetry reinforce the content, because even the syntax is "toujours hachée, abrupte, "ajourée" (271) [always staccato/jerky, abrupt, perforated/pierced"].

As the topography/typography of his poetry and his preoccupation with walking demonstrate, the issue of space is fundamental in André du Bouchet's work. For him, space is something of which the active male body takes possession. Two of the elements Cixous cited as stereotypically masculine (See Introduction), "step," and "advance," are omnipresent: "sous le pas" [under the footstep], "quand on marche" [when one walks], "en marche" [on the move], "Doublant mon pas" [quickening my pace], "un pas" [a step], "foulée" [stride], "avance" [advance] are all found in the first few pages of Laisses (1979). In Air, 1950-1953 (1977) (N. pag.) we also find "je marche" [I am walking], "Nous marchons" [We are walking], "Les rocs blancs tintent sous les pas." [The white rocks ring under the footsteps]. And in "Le Moteur blanc" (Dans la chaleur vacante, 1961) the poet says: "Ce sont des morceaux d'air que je foule comme des mottes" (N. pag., II) [They are bits of air that I tread upon like sods of earth]

In Laisses the air moves and animates: "souffle" [blow/breath] appears six times there, together with "orages" [storms] and the air(s) "transhument" [move to summer pastures]. The water that Du Bouchet evokes is also often in motion: "ruisseaux, torrent" [streams, torrent]. In addition to compact substances such as rocks and stones, water also regularly appears in the form of glaciers (also associated with light and the reflection of light) and even air can be hard: "l'air qui heurte" [the air which strikes], "marteau d'air" [hammer of air]. Adjectives that qualify this elemental world, add to the harshness of Du Bouchet's universe, notably in the poem "Le Révolu" [The bygone days] in which the sound of the recurring "r" complements the meaning of the words: "r@che" [rough/harsh], "râpeux" [rough], "rugueux" [rough/coarse/rugged], "La couverture râpeuse de l'autre souffle" [The rough blanket of the other breath (of air)], "le soleil rugueux" [the rugged sun]. The language seizes, grasps, crumbles: "déchirure" [tear] twice; "arrachements" [wrenches]; "friable" [crumbly/flaky] The very title, Laisses [high-/low-water marks], evokes the traces left on the passive beach by the dynamic waves. These images are reinforced by a vocabulary of "routes" [roads] and "chemins" [ways]:

> il faut plusieurs routes
> pour avancer (Air)

[several roads are needed

in order to advance]

This constant horizontal exploration of space is complemented by phallic verticality: there are repeated references to being upright, as in these examples from Laisses:

Que

reste dans ma vertébre

la brusquerie

debout.

[May

the brusqueness

remain in my vertebra

upright.]

Que ma vertèbre se ferme, et sous mon pas je redécouvre la route vide.

[May my vertebra be firm, and may I rediscover under my footstep the empty road.]

Such "masculine" appear constantly in Laisses. In addition to the incessant evocation of motion, the images are primarily associated with light and hardness. In Du Bouchet's world "jour" more often denotes light than it does a period of time and it can also be found on almost every page. It also brings together the elements of Jung's identification of "consciousness-light-day" with the masculine[8] (21). The light

of day goes hand-in-hand with being outside, traditionally the domain of men.

This gender-bound association is reinforced at the start of Air in which a woman appears. Women are seldom represented in Du Bouchet's works. Here the female figure is closing the curtains and lowering the blinds. The closure is also accompanied by a descent: from "très haut dans la maison, au niveau du soleil" [very high in the house, at the level of the sun] to "l'étage du bas" [bottom floor]. The circumscribed space becomes an ever-tightening circle: "Pupille d'oiseau" [Bird's pupil]. The veiling of the light is also pursued in the ocular imagery by "la taie" [the cataract]. The woman retreats into the feminine realms of interiority and darkness. She occupies this space in opposition to the (presumably masculine) lyric I in the next poem who is "Dans le pré" [In the meadow] and "dans le jour" [in the light]. Whereas the window in the first poem was being closed, the door in the second poem "démasque l'air," i.e. is open(ed) in order to show the air, the daylight. According to Jaccottet, this light is only ever made visible "par ce mouvement de traversée qui s'enfonce dans le paroi de l'air." (Entretien des muses, 270) [by this crossing movement which penetrates the air's resistance.] This polarization would seem to correspond to the characterization of the poet's activity as predominantly masculine.

But Du Bouchet's lyric self does not always remain in the outdoor space associated with men. From the third poem in Air, "Amont," onward, there is a play between inside and outside: the poet evokes furniture, trees, and door shutters. The separation between inside and outside is no longer clear, as is also demonstrated by the final image that merges the two realms: "les lucarnes des glaciers". In "Le Moteur blanc" this same dialectic between inside and outside reappears:

Je sors
dans la chambre

comme si j'étais dehors

parmi des meubles
immobiles

dans la chaleur qui tremble

toute seule

hors de son feu

il n'y a toujours
rien

le vent. (V)
[I go out
in the room

as if I were outside

among the furniture
immobile

in the trembling heat

all alone

outside of its fire

there is still
nothing

the wind.]

The words "sors," "dehors," "la chaleur qui tremble" and "le vent" all suggest that the poet is outside. But he says that he goes out *into* the room, *as if* he were outside. This contradiction if also suggested by "meubles / immobiles," since the word for furniture also means "moveables," true to its etymology, "mobile." The predominantly "masculine" imagery in Du Bouchet's poetry would lead us to expect a clearer dichotomy between "masculine" and "feminine" spaces, but as the example from "Le Moteur blanc" demonstrates, these inner and outer realms cannot always be clearly delineated or characterized.

In opposition to this world with all its natural elements and real spaces, Claire Lejeune tends to present inner spaces. Rarely, if ever, does she evoke everyday, habitable spaces both in her poetry and her theoretical writings. She does,

however, use spatial imagery to represent psychic space and the space of relationship with others.

Often using birth imagery, she posits the necessity of closure:

> La clôture provisoire est condition d'ouverture. Un ventre ne produit jamais un enfant vivant que moyennant son hermétisme. (Atelier, 98)
>
> [The temporary closure is the necessary condition for opening. A womb never produces a living child without its hermetism.]

She seems to be reverting to sexual analogy, but does the use of the (specialized) noun "hermétisme" rather than the more common adjective "hermétique" not already indicate her intention of generalizing this situation to a broader philosophical one? It also suggests the relationships she perceives between apparent opposites. The distance between depth and height disappear in the following image, the unusual word "rejointoyés," rather than "rejoints" perhaps stressing the spatial aspect of the image:

> Le puits et la voûte en moi rejointoyés: crypte achevée pour être berceau de la joie. (Mémoire de rien, 61)
>
> [The well and the vault regrouted in me: crypt completed in order to be cradle of joy.]

It is within her that this transformation takes place, that the space of death becomes that of birth. The images of death and birth recur frequently in her work:

> C'est quand l'enfant rompt ses amarres au large de notre ventre que la chair vit sa plus belle mort! (62)
>
> [It is when the child breaks loose from its mooring in the open sea of our womb that the flesh lives its most beautiful death!]

She once again draws attention to the spatial by comparing the womb to the ocean, also suggesting that closure does not necessarily imply a restricted space. But most of the time, rather than evoking real spaces, she seems to have a predilection for geometrical shapes when explaining her spiritual "voyage" to selfhood. Insisting that the voyage is not the distance covered between the point of departure and the point of arrival, she uses the image of the spiral to represent the successive ascending circles which lead to her rebirth.

> Franchi le seuil, plus de ressort nerveux. Je participe au ressort de la fatalité. La spirale s'accélère. Sans frein, direction brisée, je roule à pneu plat vers le fond du précipice, vers le point du jour. (34)
>
> [Having crossed the threshold, no more nervous energy. I give in to my fate. The spiral accelerates. Without brakes, with a broken steering and a flat tire, the car is coasting to the bottom of the precipice, toward the break of day.]

Here the image of the spiral trajectory of her journey is again placed in a context in which a transformation takes

place. Although she seems to be plummeting to her doom, she is in fact approaching a breakthrough. As one must die in order to be reborn; she has to reach the very bottom of the abyss in order to come up and see the light of day again. For her the voyage is

> la mise en circuit de soi à partir d'une position devenue invivable, vers une destination inconnue. Cette distance-là [...] se laisse éprouver [...] en anneaux fondant les sites entre eux. Ainsi le voyage est-il génération, révélation continue du commerce secret de l'espace et du temps: instance spirale où je nous vis à en mourir! (69)
>
> [is putting oneself in circulation from a position which has become untenable, toward an unknown destination. The distance (...) has to be experienced (...) in rings that establish the sites between them. Thus the voyage is generation, continuous revelation of the secret dealings between space and time. Spiral where I could die from living us!]

Circulation (also suggesting a circular motion), rings and the spiral are all part of the imagery of circles that recur in her work. Whereas on the one hand she needs to break out of circles, she also needs to get into them. When talking about the book she is producing in writing <u>Mémoire de rien</u>, she states:

> Le livre ainsi se préfigure en moi, se préface en anneau, en couronne... (85)
>
> [In this way the books foreshadows itself in me, prefaces itself in the form of a ring, a crown...]

Despite the statement "Je suis le champ du verbe" (63) [I am the field/ground of the verb], as the completion of the book draws closer, she says:

> Quand le jour se lèvera il faut que je sois dans l'enceinte. (86)
>
> [When the sun rises I have to be in the enclosure.] (with a pun on the meaning "pregnant")

that is, she needs to have placed herself within the confines of the pages:

> Jusqu'ici j'étais séparée de l'ordre par une cloison circulaire. Jour après jour j'ai cerné l'ordre. Il me faut maintenant pénétrer dans ma propriété première. Nulle autre voie que le texte! (86)
>
> [Until now I was separated from the order by a circular partition. Day after day I was circling/outlining/delimiting the order. Now I have to enter my first property. No other way but the text!]

But here again, the dichotomy is by no means simple. This closed space that she needs to penetrate is within herself, while at other times she needs to break out of a circle which can be inside or outside of her: both internal and external space seems more and more to resemble the series of rings that

she evokes when talking of the journey toward selfhood: "Cette distance [...] se laisse éprouver [...] en anneaux fondant les sites entre eux." (69) She describes how the finding of her voice through writing initially created distance between her and others:

> Mais au moment même où j'éprouve que mon écartèlement intérieur s'est converti en source de lucidité, je vois se radicaliser la faille *autour* de moi. Croix changée en cercle, fossé circulaire isolant la sourcière (Atelier, 80)
>
> [But at the very moment that I feel that my quartered inner self has been transformed into a source of lucidity, I see a fault splitting open *around* me. Cross becoming circle, circular ditch/rift-valley isolating the water-diviner] (play on "source" [well] and "sorcière" [witch])

This description seems to correspond to Young's description: instead of countering the experience of "discontinuous unity," becoming a subject, i.e. acquiring a voice, exacerbates this experience of separation. But she does not consider herself irrevocably trapped in this enclosed space. She sees herself as having to pass through a series of closed doors for which she has to forge keys:

> Et chaque fois qu'une de ces clés tourne dans sa serrure, elle libère en nous l'énergie qu'il faudra pour vaincre

> la résistance suivante, pour surmonter l'épreuve à venir. (118)
>
> [And each time one of these keys turns in its lock, it liberates in us the energy necessary in order to conquer the next obstacle, to overcome the following trial.]

As she has done in other instances, here too Lejeune takes a negative experience, falling, and points out its salutary value. The "nous" is important here because it shows that a singular experience, her descent, her enclosure and the subsequent ascent and liberation are "human" experiences that we can all benefit from. She goes even further, making these experiences of space necessary for us to become truly *human*:

> Nul ne s'humanise s'il n'a compris la portée résurrectionnelle de la *chute* (76)
>
> [No one becomes human if one has not understood the resurrectional significance of *falling*]

To become human, she points out, we need to find a balance between opposites. Just as birth and death go together, so-called opposites are both needed. "Relativité" here refers to relationship, which in her view defines the human condition.

> Les deux absolus entre lesquels toute la relativité humaine devient concevable... Se réduire à l'un de ces absolus -- inertie ou énergie -- c'est se minéraliser [...] Se réduire à l'extase matérielle ou à l'extase spirituelle, c'est tendre à s'inanimer. (86)

> [The absolutes between which all human relativity can be conceived... Reducing oneself to one of these absolutes -- inertia or energy -- is mineralizing oneself [...] Reducing oneself to material ecstacy or spiritual ecstacy, means tending toward the inanimate.]

The "inertia" and "energy" can also be seen as immanence and transcendence with which women and men are respectively associated, and her message is clear: polarizing dichotomies dehumanize us.

Although in other ways they have little in common, the worlds of both Lejeune and Bonnefoy are unimaginable without relationship to other people. Bonnefoy's world in Pierre écrite is one inhabited for the most part by two people. Although the "nous" is not always explicitly presented as a couple, the context often suggests this. Their relationship to each other and to the world is described. The first poem "L'Eté de nuit" is relatively typical: it presents an aspect of the world, normally seen as indifferent to humans, as friendly without being entirely personified: "le ciel étoilé, s'élargissant, / Se rapproche de nous" (11) [the starry sky, growing wider, / Draws closer to us] The sky's distance and enormity are stressed, thereby making the "gesture" all the more striking. The couple's happiness is also presented though a spatial image, that of the return to Eden:

Il me semble, ce soir,

Que nous sommes entrés dans le jardin, dont l'ange

A refermé les portes sans retour. (11)

[It seems to me, this evening,

That we have entered the garden, whose doors the angel

Closed forever.]

This ideal, closed space can be compared to the womb, a typical feminine image. The following poem takes up the edenic imagery again. The fruit of the tree of knowledge (Or is it of life? This is what the poem seems to suggest.) is shared by the couple, but contrary to the biblical version with its connotations of sin and the Fall and the antagonism between Adam and Eve, they remain in the garden and maintain their harmonious relationship:

Et je t'offrais le fruit qui illimite l'arbre

Sans angoisse ni mort, d'un monde partagé. (12)

[And I offered you the fruit which unlimits the tree

Without anguish nor death, of a shared world.]

Another typical image is introduced in this poem, that of a ship or boat floating on water and the woman "comme à la proue" ["as if at the prow"]. Although she is upright and poet is "couché" (17), lying down, she a "figure de proue," evoking the female figures that used to adorn the prow of ships. When she does guide the ship, it is only because of the verbal fiat of the male poet:

Je te disais ma figure de proue

Heureuse, indifférente, qui conduit,

Les yeux à demi-clos, le navire de vivre (13)

[I called you my figurehead

Happy, indifferent, who guides,

With half-closed eyes, the ship of living]

The woman then also seems to become the figurehead of the earth, which the poet invokes in the fourth poem, thereby taking on cosmic dimensions:

Terre comme gréée,

Vois,

C'est ta figure de proue (14)

[Earth as if rigged,

See,

It is your figure-head]

But the movement suggested by these images is countered in the second poem, and immobility is added to the closure of the image of the garden:

Le mouvement

Nous était apparu la faute, et nous allions

Dans l'immobilité comme sous le navire

Bouge et ne bouge pas le feuillage des morts. (13)

[Movement

Seemed to us to be a sin, and we went

In immobility just as under the ship

The foliage of the dead moves and does not move.]

Motion, a "masculine" attribute, is therefore not positively valorized.

Gestures evoked also suggest a more "feminine" than "masculine" universe. The volume of poems is filled with images of supportive gestures, either between the couple or from surrounding nature, the elements, or even deities: "L'été de nuit / Portait l'été de jour dans ses mains" (16) [The summer of night / Carried the summer of day in its hands]; "La déesse se tient au sommet de l'arbre, / Elle incline vers eux l'aiguière d'or." (35) [The goddess is standing on top of the tree, / She bows down to offer them the golden ewer.]; "Ange ... porte-nous" (78) [Angel... carry us]. The abundant images of hands, although mostly presented as immobile ("mains pensives" [thoughful hands], 60), revealing the attitude or the thoughts of the poet or his companion, often reinforce the supportive gestures: "ces mains qui se reprennent" (23) [these hands that hold each other again]; "Dieu qui n'es pas, pose ta main sur notre épaule" (63) [God you who do not exist, put your hand on our shoulders]; "Cette main qui retient une autre main rocheuse" (73) [This hand which holds back another rocky hand]. Toward the end of the volume, hands whose gestures suggested the relationship between the couple and their world now become the very space they inhabit:

Imagine qu'un soir
La lumière s'attarde sur la terre,

Ouvrant ses mains d'orage et donatrices, dont
La paume est notre lieu et d'angoisse et d'espoir. (77)
[Imagine that one night
The light lingers on the earth,
Opening its stormy and generous/giving hands, whose
Palm is the space of both our anguish and our hope.]

This is of course a very different relationship to space than the one described by Maldiney. Rather than manipulate objects within their grasp, the hands in Bonnefoy's poems reach out to others in order to provide support and comfort. Relationship, not mastery, characterizes his experience of space and it is also this connectedness that creates the space of his poetry.

Although his evocations do not have the fantastic or nightmarish qualities of Caroutch's and Prager's, Bonnefoy does present us with images of sleep and dreams. What is common to these images is of course that they necessarily refer to an inner space. What is of interest here is the way these three poets characterize the worlds of sleep and dreams and how the spaces are related to the outside world.

Caroutch often evokes altered states of consciousness and the very titles of Yvonne Caroutch's volumes of poems reveal her preoccupation with space from the beginning of her career until very recently: Paysages provisoires [Temporary Landscapes] (1965),[9] Lieux probables [Probable Places] (1968),

Portiques du sel [Salt Porticoes] (1978) and Demeures du souffle [Dwellings of the breath (of air)] (1992). As these titles also suggest, she often places us in a space other than the objective outside world. The provisional character of her landscapes suggests either the movement of crossing successive landscapes ("Terres nouvelles" [New lands] (17);[10] "Que de chemin parcouru de pays découverts" [So many roads travelled and countries discovered] (22); "des pays étrangers" [foreign lands] (24)) and imaginary, dreamt landscapes. In Paysages provisoires, the first words of the first poem (the poems bear no titles but are numbered 1 through 32 and are interspersed with etchings by Vittorio Basaglia) present immobile travelers, "gisants" [reclining figures], "circulant à la vitesse des rêves" [circulating at the speed of dreams]. Lieux probables once again places us in the world of dreams. From the very beginning, in the first poem, "Lente cigüe," the vocabularies of dreams and desire are intertwined:

> Le temps stupéfié creuse davantage ses reins de succube. L'éclair des caresses troue les parois de la nuit tapissées d'allégories jamais décryptées. (9)
>
> [Stupefied time further hollows out its succubine loins. The lightning flash of the caresses perforates the night's partition-walls papered with never deciphered allegories.]

The evocation of orgasm is followed by a request which, while still mingling the realms of dreams and desire, uses an image

which in context suggests male sexuality because the etymology of "fouiller" is "to pierce":

> Ne cesse jamais de fouiller l'espace de mes rêves (10)
>
> [Never cease to search the space of my dreams]

As she had in Paysages provisoires, Caroutch presents the search for "une vie antérieure" [a former life] in Portiques du sel. This volume (also unpaginated) once again plunges us into the world of dreams ("fresques vivantes sur l'écran du vide" [vivid frescoes on the screen of the void]), enigmas ("les massifs d'énigmes" [massifs of enigmas]; "les buissons d'énigmes" [thickets of enigmas]), and portents ("l'unique lueur du présage" [the portent's unique glimmer]; "l'inaccompli fuit les présages" [the unaccomplished flees from the portents]). The character of the inner spaces of Portiques du sel is suggested by two lines from the first poem of the volume:

> -- architectures vertigineuses
>
> géométries hallucinés --
>
> [-- vertiginous achitectures
>
> hallucinated geometries]

These inner spaces include corridors, labyrinths ("le dédale ombrageux" [the shady maze]), a "cercle enchanté" [enchanted circle], "Sphères inquiètes" [uneasy spheres and wells]. In Paysages provisoires we find more images of spaces which lead nowhere: "Un labyrinthe d'incertitude" [A labyrinth of incertitude] (2), "Voici les corridors où la joie erre sans

lanterne" [Here in corridors the joy wanders without lantern] (3), or images of possible closure: "carreaux" [window-panes] (3), "Derrière les vitres" [Behind the glass-doors] (4), "les venelles" [alleys] (4) and "la nuit s'abat comme une cloison" [night drops like a partition] (5), the night which is "sans âge" [ageless] (7). Time has also stopped, it is no longer lived time but that of "l'âge d'or" [the golden age]: "Mythologies de pierre à vos frontons / que de soleils de préhistoires" [Mythologies of stone / so many prehistoric suns at your façades] (4). Similar images will appear in subsequent poems: "la rigueur des fables" [the rigor of fables] (5), "Ville serrée dans ton armure de bruits / à l'orient de tes fables / jamais rien ne s'altère" [City enclosed in your armor of noises / in the orient of your fables / nothing ever changes] (6). But there is also resistance to this fixity and closure, even in this dream world:

> Au bois sec de l'oubli
> écoute le cri de l'entaille
> qui ne veut pas se refermer
> qui regrette la hache (8)
> [Near the dry wood of oblivion
> listen to the cry of the cut
> that refuses to heal
> and regrets the blow of the axe]

This call is repeated in the poem that follows: "rendez-nous nos terres craquelées / le tranchant des couteaux" [restore our cracked earths / the cutting-edge of knives] (9). But despite the evocation of "grandes fenêtres / ouvertes sur l'orage" [large windows / open to the storm] the lions are still of stone and their calls are "de longs appels d'eau sculptée" [longs cries of sculpted water] (10). And like the fables, they represent the stoppage of time: they are "sans avenir" [without hope/future] and "sans mémoire" [without memory] (10). But there is to be a "fêlure de l'eau durcie" [crack in the hardened water] (11) which allows an opening up of space which also corresponds to the awakening of the dreamers: "l'espace / brusquement distendu" [space / suddenly swollen] (11), "l'espace se déploie" [space uncoils] (13). When the dreamers awake, that is when "le ciel sera blanc" [sky will be white] they will enter "le temps des autres" [the time of others] (14). Before evoking the awakening in Portiques du sel, let us examine an image common to Caroutch and Bonnefoy. The space of sleep is also presented in Portiques du sel as a (descending?) staircase, suggesting Piranese's engravings in, e.g., I Carceri [The prisons], familiar to Baudelaire and the Romantics and which Garelli uses as a source of inspiration for a poem as we have seen in Chapter 3):

> le songe qui n'en finit pas de rebondir au long d'escaliers sans fin. (N. pag.)

[the dream which never stops rebounding along never-ending staircases]

Bonnefoy, in "La Lampe, le Dormer" (Pierre écrite), equates sleep with descending staircases ("marches descendantes") and with an abyss ("gouffre") (24). Despite the space being inside of him ("en moi"), it is experienced as overwhelming and he needs the lamp to guide him "sur les voies du trop vaste sommeil" [on the ways of too vast sleep]. The same is true of Caroutch: although the space of dreams can expand, it nonetheless remains an interior space. In terms of expansion the space of sleep and that of waking life become relational; upon waking, light pushes back the darkness. In the second to last poem, sleep is addressed thus:

Fuyant les eaux sans rivages, tu voyages dans un vaisseau fantôme qui régresse vers l'enfance du mythe.

[Fleeing the shoreless waters, you travel in a ghostly vessel which regresses toward the childhood of myth.]

Does the dream here become the vessel (reminiscent of the Flying Dutchman) / the means by which sleep flees the boundless space of the waking world? Picking up the image from the previous poem, the last poem represents awakening as a pushing back of "les rives du sommeil" [the shores of sleep]. Waking is also seen as a rising above the labyrinth of sleep and an emerging from "ravins insondables" [fathomless ravines], and in contrast to the closed space of dreams and sleep,

Dehors la nuit se répand sans limites

[Outside the limitless night spreads itself out]

The poem (and the volume) ends with the following image:

Dans sa matrice d'or sa crasse luxuriante une molécule d'éveil tressaille

[In its golden matrix/womb its luxuriant dirt a molecule of awakening quivers]

The massive potential of a minuscule element is suggested by the vibration (being an intermediary state -- between motion and immobility -- it suggests the potential for movement) and the precious metal. The image of the womb and the fertility suggested by "crasse luxuriante" makes these two lines a rich mixture of metaphors, all pointing to and reinforcing one another: images of birth, fertile earth, energy... The relationship between the inner world of dreams and that of the outer world, or real world, is perhaps also indicated in this image: does the dream world not appear to provide ressources for the waking life?

The enormous potential to be found in a tiny particle is analogous to the expansion that can be found in an enclosed space. We have already seen how the inner world of dreams can expand endlessly. Bonnefoy too, in "L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie,"[11] presents a different kind of space that has a similar quality, that of the temple.

Mais au secret du temple, sur l'autel ou dans une crypte, l'imprévisible est présent. Rien qu'un reflet sur un

> visage de pierre, mais tout l'orage à nouveau dans au sein de la symétrie, c'est comme si un puits avait étéforé dans cet enclos de lumière pour retrouver les fonds inconnaissables du lieu. (Improbable, 156)
>
> [But in the secret heart of the temple, on the altar or deep in a crypt, the unforeseeable is present. Just a gleam on a stone face -- but it reawakens all the storm within the symmetry, as though a well had been pierced in that luminous enclosure to reveal the unknowable depths of the place.][12] (Act and Place, 104)

This opening (up) at the innermost point of the temple is signaled by (masculine) light: "gleam," "luminous." Here depth rather than wide open space represents the infinite. Since mystery is usually associated with feminine principles, do "unforeseeable" and "unknowable" suggest the disruption of masculine reason? And although closed spaces are generally associated with women, here the symmetry of this closed space and its opposition to the "unknowable depths" end up making the enclosure a masculine space.

We return to the world of sleep with Prager's first volume, Narcose (1966). Her frequent reporting of dreams and her statement that she no longer wants to talk about her dreams ("cette fois aucun rêve ne me fera parler" [this time no dream will make me speak] (86); "l'enquête fermée (quant au rêve)" [the case closed (so far as the dream is concerned)]

(64)), as well as a reference to "mon cas" [my case] also perhaps suggest a psychoanalytic situation. Dreams are like texts: "le texte fugitif, lu en moi pour dire ce qui ne se dit -- ne s'intercepte -- ne se pose" (57) [the fugitive text, read in me in order to say that which is not said -- not intercepted -- not claimed]. Whereas in Lejeune closure is necessary, salutary and temporary, Prager seems trapped in an inner space, a spiral which never leads to the outside she is seeking:

> En suivant le tracé d'une spirale il me paraît qu'à jamais inconsolée j'obéis à des lois immémoriales vers un dehors toujours à remettre. (52)
>
> [By following the line of a spiral it seems to me that forever disconsolate I obey age-old laws toward an outside always postponed.]

Nevertheless, from the very first poem of Rien ne se perd (1970) the importance of movement is evident: "le corps voyage" [the body travels]; "les crins planent" [the mane soars]; "transport;" the horizon "se glisse" [glides]; "en fuite" [fleeing]; "déplie" [unfolds]; "en vol" [in flight]... But as the title suggests, despite the movement in space ("en d'autres lieux" [in other places], "Ailleurs" [elsewhere]), nothing is lost, "rien ne s'altère" [nothing changes]. Nothing deteriorates, it simply changes form:

> La forme a henni
>
> elle obéit

rien ne se perd et rien n'est à défendre (7)

[The form neighed

it obeys

nothing is lost and nothing needs to be defended]

In contradiction with the evocation of open spaces such as the desert, the formal aspects of the poem suggest closure:

Le temps chimique est sans cours

les crins planent sur le désert

la corne d'une mémoire dure

et avec les mêmes racines

se refait corne et chevelure

en d'autres lieux

rien ne s'altère (7)

[Chemical time lacks any free play

the mane hovers over the desert

a memory's horn endures

and with the same roots

materializes once more as horn and hair

in other places

nothing changes]

The chiasmus (albeit with slight modification: "crins" becomes "chevelure"), "crins" - "corne" - "corne" - "chevelure," creates a closed space, the form thus reinforcing the content of the poem, i.e. the assertion that nothing changes. In Narcose Prager explicitly longs for closure which will ensure durability, memory:

> Et je voudrais être la momie de moi-même, immobile, couverte de cette bâche préparée et durcie de la passion, soumise à la chimie de la conscience. (81)
>
> [And I would like to be my own mummy, motionless/unmoving, covered with this prepared and hardened sheet of passion, submitted to the chemistry of conscience/consciousness.]

Is this consciousness the writer's? And do death and immobility, thanks to the longevity they are accorded in art, become a different kind of life? Is this another way in which nothing is lost? Does art become a form of memory? The second poem of Rien ne se perd not only takes up the question of memory again, it also reiterates the lack of change: "rien / dans ces parages n'a changé" [nothing / in this region has changed] and "le paysage [est] intact" [the landscape (is) intact" (9). In this poem, "Une cause," [A cause] the emphasis on night and the phrases "en nous" [in us] and "à l'intérieur d'une vision" [inside a vision] once again suggest that "la voie à parcourir" [the road to be traveled] and "le paysage" [the landscape] are not real but are the space of memory, "dans le passé" [in the past], the preposition in this context also assuming a spatial rather than a temporal tenor.

How do memory and preservation relate to Prager's recurrent evocation of the space of sleep and dreams, since references to these appear in almost every poem?

Les yeux fermés m'habite
une bête héraldique
sommeil dans le sommeil
dans la fourrure interne
cruellement hiberne (27)
[With its eyes closed,
an heraldic animal inhabits me
sleep within sleep
in the internal fur
cruelly hibernates]

If we exploit the syntactical ambiguity the closed eyes could also refer to the dreaming poet. The stanza would then once again effect a kind of closure: at the beginning the lyric I is presented as sleeping and at the end the fictional creature is asleep. The central line itself is enclosed on itself because of the repetition of "sommeil." A sort of mirror image results from the nesting boxes of compound chiasmus: asleep (eyes closed) - animal (bête) - sleep - sleep - animal (fur) - asleep (hibernates).

Perhaps the closure is also intended to preserve the words of dreams, so easily forgotten:

> Les mots du rêve -- je puis encore les prononcer, mais déjà ils se mêlent et dans un fil s'étirent sur le réseau placide de l'oubli. (Narcose, 59)

[The words of the dream -- I can still pronounce them, but already they mix and in a thread stretch out over the placid network of forgetting.]

Deguy's pronouncement that poetry "lutte contre l'entropie"[13] [struggles against entropy] seems to be ratified in the context of Prager's poetry. He is using it in the sense of the need for differentiation and this is what Prager appears to be trying to accomplish: preventing the words of the dream from mingling and becoming indistinguishable from the words of previous dreams, and maybe even the system of language itself, and thus being forgotten. In this poem, capturing the words of the dream in her hands, she even seems able to capture them alive:

Jadis l'on m'encourageait à ne pas ouvrir la main sur l'oiseau captif, à "ne pas avoir peur".

Les mots du rêve sous les doigts, à l'annulaire je sentis un coeur minuscule palpitant. (59)

[In the past I was encouraged not to open my hand holding the captive bird, "not to be afraid."

The words of the dream under my fingers, at my ring finger I felt a tiny heart beating.]

But images of mummies and cemeteries outweigh images of life in Prager's work and we rarely get a glimpse of an extra-textual reality, as we so often do in Thérèse Plantier's poems.

Plantier's title Chemins d'eau (1963) evokes movement; both that of the voyager on the path and that of the liquid. The first poem in this collection suggests that the "chemin d'eau" flows past not only exterior spaces, but also an interior space: "ma géographie / où les reliefs sont en dedans" (7) [my geography / where the contours are on the inside]. Even though she seems to be in a "real" space (a dwelling with a door) in the third poem, the images, such as "J'étendis la nuit sur ma corde à linge" (9) [I hung the night on my washing line], suggests that the poem is creating its own, surreal space. More often, however, in keeping with her overtly political stance, Plantier's spaces are those created by patriarchy and social inequality. Her mostly urban settings reflect human suffering, as the following examples from C'est moi Diégo show. In "La Voie," she uses her normal biting tone to portray the lot of the poverty-stricken homeless, for whom a run-down train has been provided for shelter.

ils sont jolies les bidonvilles (17)

[they are pretty the shanty-towns]

The make-shift arrangement does not provide adequate protection from the Mistral and from the rain, however, and Plantier's last remarks emphasize the utter lack of basic facilities:

où ils [les habitants] pissent je n'en sais rien

peut-être dans les bardanes qui

pour se venger

les mitraillent de petites graines (18)

[where they (the inhabitants) piss I have no idea

perhaps in the burdock which

in revenge

peppers them with small seeds]

In "Ishtar," the space of the degradation of women is represented by the "Effeuilleuse" [Strip-tease artist]:

Elle se prostitue à la ronde

se pavane (38)

[She prostitutes herself all around

struts about]

In a poem from Chemins d'eau, Plantier also presents us with an image of someone in an asylum. In addition to the color of the room and the apparent lack of freedom of the subject, she evokes "le roulement perpétuel / de la tête au sol" [the perpetual rolling / of the head on the floor]:

dans la chambre de lait

où l'on te tient assise (56)

[in the milky room

where you are kept sitting]

When Plantier does evoke a mythical space, that of paradise in "Totem," it is to evoke an all but heavenly space for women. The ritual sacrifice ends up being fatal to women, rather than salutary:

c'est que la grosse vache tuée

dans le paradis

écrasait de son ventre des milliards de femmes

(Diégo, 35)

[it is because the large cow killed

in paradise

crushed millions of women with its stomach]

In Jusqu'à ce que l'enfer gèle, she once again presents an image of paradise, a story told from a child's point of view, and this time it is clearly the private hell of a woman caught in a cycle of waiting for an unfaithful husband and having his children.

alors on le fait ce petit Paradis?

[...]

VIRIL

que je suis disait mon papa familias

on rigolait ferme à la maison

ma maman dans tous les coins

à espérer le retour du familias en goguette

parti pour l'instant à la course aux dames

mais il reviendra dans son familias

VIRIL

[...]

faut pas rater son coup qu'il disait

surtout lorsqu'il pleut

faut filer à sa belle-soeur des enfants

et neuf soeurs à moi

pour obtenir la médaille

bale

la victoire n'est pas ver mais réelle

sur cette planète à

démocrates pissocrates [...]

venez à moi les nuisettes qu'il disait

alors on fait ce petit Paradis? (60, 61)

[so shall we create this little Paradise?

(...)

VIRILE

as I am my daddy familias used to say

we used to have a lot of good laughs at home

my mum in all the corners

wishing for the return of the familias out on a spree

gone for the moment running after dames

but he will come back to his familias

VIRILE

(...)

can't miss a chance he used to say

especially when it's raining

has to give some children to his sister-in-law

and nine sisters for me

in order to win the medal

bal

but the victory is not ver but real

on this planet with its

democrats pissocrats (...)

come to me (diminutive for night?) at night he used to say

so shall we create this little Paradise?]

The dislocation of the word "verbal" emphasizes that the space created by this poem should only serve as a reminder of the conditions of women in the real world. The repetition of "familias" which draws attention to the juridical entity under Roman Law also operates as a reminder that there are still remnants of the unrivaled power of the master of the household in our day. With her usual defiance Plantier once again demonstrates her continual preoccupation with women's "place" in Chemins d'eau:

De quel droit t'installes-tu là, T.P.?

[...]

Il s'en faut que tu sois à ta place, T.P.

Je ne l'ignore pas et en jouis

je l'ai usurpée cette miniscule place (64)

[What right to you have to be there, T.P.?

(...)

You are far from being in your place, T.P.

I am aware of that and I am enjoying it

I have usurped this tiny place]

Having usurped it for herself, she also helps to create a space of resistance for women in general.

Garelli is on the opposite side of the spectrum from Plantier. Whereas she often evokes real spaces, and keeps bringing us back to the real world and its political implications, Garelli's spaces tend to be created by the poems themselves. The title Lieux précaires shows a preoccupation with space (another being Difficile séjour, "Poème composé sur l'oeuvre sculpturale de Gonzalo Fonseca" [Poem written about Gonzalo Fonseca's sculptures]). But his spatial imagery does not create an easily identifiable space. The poem "Dans l'infime catastrophe gelée du sens" [In the lowly/tiny frozen catastrophy of meaning], seems to characterize the space of meaning negatively as

Ni lieu du tendre ni champ du vrai (Lieux précaires, 18)

[Neither the place of tenderness nor the field of truth] Does "lieu de tendre" bring to memory the "carte du tendre," Mlle Scudéry's map of the amorous sentiments, the literary reference making the space less real? Both words referring to space, "lieu" and "champ" are often used in metaphorical expressions and therefore do not readily evoke concrete spaces. Despite the negation, the poem defines meaning in spatial terms. In the next poem, "L'ours et la belle au château menu," the breaking up of frozen/fixed meaning, makes it flow, and once again spatial terms define the future projects of the poet:

La pensée coule la mer ne porte plus territoires
annexés tout chemin est à reprendre (19)[14]

[Thought flows the sea no longer carries annexed territories all routes are the be traveled anew]

At times there are references to or evocations of real spaces, as in the following cases taken from Brèche (1966): "Le monde, c'est notre hôte." (12) [The world is our host.]; Dans les rues sordides (13) [In the sordid streets]; "au trottoir" (22) [on the sidewalk]; "terres apprivoisées" (40) [tamed land]... But ultimately, it is significant that the realms of space and poetry are intermingled as in the quotes taken from Lieux précaires, because, as Garelli himself states, his poem "ne conduit à rien, sauf peut-être à lui-même." (Brèche, 27) [leads nowhere, except perhaps to itself]. Therefore, a space such as "cette ornière, que creuse ma parole" (24) [this rut, hollowed out by my words], is more typical in Garelli's work and even the title of the volume apparently refers to a breach in the space of language: "Langage en brèche." (20) This assault on / of language is also represented in the poem "Babel," (49) the title again significantly bringing together associated spatial and linguistic elements. In addition to the tower itself, the images include those of the explosion of "la géométrie de l'oeuvre" [the geometry of the work] and the ruin of "les bienfaits calculés de l'édifice" [the calculated / planned benefits of the edifice]. The poem does however end with a call to overcome the obstacles posed by "les mots décousus" [the disconnected words]:

> Corps entêtés, restez fidèles. Contre la pluie et les grêles, allez bâtir votre maison! (Brèche, 49)
>
> [Stubborn bodies, remain faithful. Against the rain and hail, go and build your house!]

It is interesting that he uses the word "maison" with its domestic overtones rather than the word "tower" which would be more conventional in referring to the story of Babel.

The relationship between words and space is made explicit in the poem "Annexion" (63): "Tout poème doit annexer un paysage" [Every poem has to annex a langscape]; "le poème fonde" [the poem founds/establishes]. These words remind us of the colonizing discourse of Maldiney, Benay and Gracq. But what it establishes is a space "de fusion" [of fusion] and "de rencontre" [of meeting], words generally associated with feminine qualities. However, these words evoking relationship are soon replaced by a return to the image of disruption suggested by the title.

> C'est la zone dynamique qui gronde vers un terme toujours futur. C'est le monde aveugle du squale qui bourdonne dans l'assourdissement du plongeon. (63)
>
> [It is the dynamic zone which rumbles toward an end which is always to come. It is the deafening noise of the diver plunging into the sightless/dark world of the shark.]

In opposition to Garelli's auto-referential poetry which establishes its space through the violence it does to fixed meanings, Jaccottet's aim is rather to establish links and to harmonize various elements. His lyric self is for the most part seen walking in nature or sitting behind his desk looking out of the window. The preponderant role air plays in his works is an indication of the valorization of wide open spaces. Closed, narrow spaces tend to have negative connotations.

> L'air entoure, c'est quelque chose qui n'est pas, c'est de la place, de l'espace, c'est une absence d'oppression et de murs: l'air *libre*.
> (Semaison, 222)
> [The air surrounds, it is something that is not, it is room, space, it is an absence of oppression and of walls: *free* air.]

When expressing his dissatisfaction with writing in his journal, La Semaison, he uses images of sterile, closed spaces. He depicts his frustration as stemming from having to choose between two evils ("dégoûts"): to write what one writes or to do nothing at all.

> Les paroles devraient donc se frayer un chemin entre ces deux insatisfactions, dans un étroit espace où elles trouvent peu d'aliment, peu de feu. (214)
> [The words then have to clear a path for themselves between these two dissatisfactions, in a narrow space

where they find very little nourishment, very little fire.]

This claustrophobia is also associated with darkness. And in this world sounds, light and space interact. Just as birds can create space by their movements in the air, their singing can also make holes in the prison walls of the night:

> Les oiseaux vont venir; ils sont comme des ouvriers levés très tôt qui ouvrent des brèches et dont le zèle grandit à mesure que le travail avance. Quelquefois, on les entend comme le prisonnier les clefs de l'élargissement. Un tintement dans l'étroit couloir. (242)
>
> [The birds are going to come; they are like workers who have risen very early and who are making an opening and whose zeal increases as the work advances. Sometimes, one hears them as the prisonner hears the keys of release... A clinking in the narrow corridor.]

In addition to these basic associations with different kinds of space, two experiences have had a marked effect on Jaccottet's representation of space: death and age.

In "Les 'paroles dans l'air' de Philippe Jaccottet,"[15] although he is specifically looking at the space of *writing*, Jean-Claude Mathieu describes a change in the poet's conception of space. In his early writings, the poet has great confidence in his ability. Mathieu characterizes the space of this poetry as that of "la fable" [the fable] or of

"l'hymne du deuil" [the hymn of mourning] (39), perhaps thus stressing their conventional quality. This space

> croyait pouvoir comprendre la mort, tracer des lignes d'écriture comme des routes conduisant jusqu'aux morts. (39)
>
> [thought it possible to understand death, to trace the lines of writing like roads leading to the dead.]

After experiencing the death of someone close to him Leçons and Chants d'en bas "parleront au contraire de la mort comme de ce qui est hors-lieu, hors distance." (39) [will on the contrary speak of death as that which is outside of space, out of reach.] In the first poem of Leçons, he accuses himself of having believed himself capable of giving guidance to the dying and the dead, of tracing "des routes jusque-là!" [roads all the way there!] (11) He presents his new relationship to space thus:

> A présent, lampe soufflée,
> main plus errante, qui tremble,
> je recommence lentement dans l'air. (11)
>
> [Now, my lamp extinguished,
> my hand more shaky, wandering,
> I slowly start again in the open air.]
>
> (Trans. Derek Mahon, 95)[16]

Whereas in earlier writings Jaccottet often evoked outside spaces (fields, orchards...), a more recent volume, Pensées sous les nuages (1983), describes the more

circumscribed space of age, reminding us once more that Jaccottet tries to write as closely as possible to what he has "vécu, senti et compris" (Comments after Requiem, 38) (1990) [lived, felt and understood]. The old man is shown "Derrière la fenêtre," (Pensées, 13) [Behind the window], i.e. indoors, and his head is bent over a letter or a newspaper. The poet then also calls upon the wall of the domestic space of home to safeguard him from the elements and from the night, both literally and figuratively:

> Gardez-le, lierre et chaux, du vent de l'aube,
> des nuits trop longues et de l'autre, éternelle.
> (13)
> [Keep him, ivy and whitewash, from the wind of dawn,
> from the too long nights and from the other, eternal
> one.]

The dwindling space is mentioned again, this time by his interlocutor (his wife, the aging woman looking in the mirror in an earlier poem?), who mocks him.

> -- Mais où donc pensiez-vous aller encore, avec ces pieds usés?
> Rien que tourner le coin de la maison, ou franchir, de nouveau, quelle frontière? (20)
> [-- But where did you think you were going, with those worn-out feet?
> Just around the corner of the house, or crossing, again, which border?]

And the old man thinks of the wide open spaces of his youth,

> Lui qui ne va plus même jusqu'au fond de son jardin. (28)
>
> [He who no longer even goes to the back of his garden.]

As he recreates the spaces of childhood in his memory, so too the writing of poetry creates its own space. But Jaccottet does not feel comfortable with the space that he creates, because he feels that in some way it removes him from the real space he inhabits.

> On voit une feuille qui tombe d'un sarment de la vigne, et aussitôt il faut qu'on la voie tomber sur la page blanche (Semaison, 221)
>
> [One sees a leaf falling from a vine shoot, and straight away one has to see it fall on the white/blank page.]

And despite his efforts to present what he sees as simply as possible, presumably as "naturally" as possible, despite his many condemnations of poetic images, he constantly reverts to images of man-made objects in order to describe natural phenomena:

> A la fenêtre, lire les signes, la page du ciel. (Semaison, 226)
>
> [At the window, reading the signs, the page of the sky.]

Using images that are reminiscent of the permeable spaces evoked in Du Bouchet's poetry, in Cahier de verdure (1990) Jaccottet describes an orchard as the perfect dwelling place:

> un lieu dont l'ordonnance est souple, les murs poreux, la toiture légère; une salle si bien agencée pour le

mariage de l'ombre et la lumière que tout mariage humain devrait s'y fêter, plutôt qu'en ces tombes que sont devenues tant d'églises. (31)

[a place where the layout is flexible, the walls porous, the roofing light; a hall so well arranged for the marriage of light and shade that all human marriages should be celebrated there, rather than in those tombs that so many churches have become.]

These images of harmony between different elements (light, shade, inside, outside...) reveal another preoccupation of Jaccottet's as well. His spaces, like those of Bonnefoy and Lejeune, are also spaces of relationship. In *Leçons* he states:

Entre la plus lointaine étoile et nous,
la distance, inimaginable, reste encore
comme une ligne, un lien, comme un chemin.
(17)

[Between the farthest star and us,
the distance, unimaginable, still remains
like a line, a link, like a path.]

Death, as we mentioned earlier, can then be only "dans un autre espace, / en dehors" (17) [in another space, / outside]. But he can conceptualize privileged areas where a link between the different realms becomes possible, as he explains in La Semaison.

> Qu'est-ce qu'un *Lieu*? Une sorte de centre mis en rapport avec un ensemble. Non plus un endroit détaché, perdu, vain. En ce point on dressait jadis des autels, des pierres. [...] Dans les lieux, il y a communication entre les mondes, entre le haut et le bas; et parce que c'est un centre, on n'éprouve pas le besoin d'en partir, il y règne un repos, un recueillement. (102)
>
> [What is a *Place*? A sort of center connected to a whole. No longer a detached spot, lost, vain. In the past altars and stones were erected in these places. (...) In these places, there is communication between the worlds, between high and low; and because it is a center, one does not feel the need to leave them, peace and contemplation prevail.]

Is this perhaps not also the kind of space Jaccottet would ideally like to create through his poetry?

Both Erikson and Young present women in enclosed spaces, the former contending that they tend to be static while the latter postulates an inhibited motility. Although Prager and Caroutch are inclined to inhabit dream worlds which are by definition interior spaces, their inhabitants are by no means immobile. Prager may be trapped in her neverending spiral, but when Caroutch's dreamers awake, the two realms become somewhat confused and since the energy generated in the dream seems transferable to the outside world, the partitions are

shown to be permeable. In Lejeune's world too the closed spaces are temporary or provisional stages on her journey of self-realization.

Bonnefoy's garden with its immobile couple in fact fits Erikson's description of feminine spaces the best, although of course his universe does allow for an interplay between spaces. Jaccottet, despite moments of claustrophobia, portrays the ideal space as providing shelter without closure, whereas Garelli is contained within the hermetic universe created by the language of his poetry. Even Du Bouchet who best fits Erikson's description of "exterior scenes" and "automotive objects" creates spaces in which the characteristics of interior and exterior spaces are fused and confused.

It is difficult to describe Plantier's world in these terms. When depicting the play between inside and outside spaces in the works of the other poets, we still remain within the world of the poem, whereas the spaces created by Plantier, because of their constant political import, involve the reader in a way that none of the other texts do: it is as if she throws us out of her text rather than inviting us to enter it. The lyric self in poems by Bonnefoy or Du Bouchet, for example, may enter and leave spaces evoked within the poems, but it is Plantier's reader who moves in and out of the text. The reader can periodically say (as does Lejeune at the end of

Mémoire de rien): "Je fus expulsé[e] de ce livre" (109) [I was thrown out of this book]!

NOTES

1 Gaston Bachelard, La Poétique de l'espace (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964).

2 Erik Erikson, "Inner and Outer Space: Reflections on Womanhood," Daedalus 91.3 (1964): 582-606.

3 Donna Bassin, "Woman's Images of Inner Space: Data Towards Expanded Interpretive Categories," International Review of Psycho-Analysis 9 (1982): 191-203.

4 I quote Erikson's results in full. Emphasis is provided in the original text.

> This then is typical: the girl's scene is an *interior* scene, represented either as a configuration of furniture without any surrounding walls, or by a *simple enclosure* built with blocks. In the girl's scene, people and animals are mostly *within* such an interior or enclosure, and they are primarily people or animals in a *static* (sitting, standing) position. Girls' enclosures consist of *low walls*, i.e. only one block high, except for an occasional elaborate *doorway*. These interiors of houses with or without walls were, for the most part, expressly *peaceful*. Often, a little girl was playing the piano. In a number of cases, however, the *interior was intruded* by animals or dangerous men. Yet the idea of an intruding creature did not necessarily lead to the defensive erection of walls or the closing of doors. Rather the majority of these intrusions have an element

of humor and of pleasurable excitement.

Boys' scenes are either houses with *elaborate walls* or *façades with protrusions* such as cones or cylinders representing ornaments or cannons. There are *high towers*; and there are *exterior scenes*. In boys' constructions more people and animals are *outside* enclosures or buildings, and there are more *automotive objects* and *animals moving* along streets and intersections. There are elaborate automotive *accidents*, but also traffic channeled or arrested by the *policeman*. While high structures are prevalent in the configuration of the boys, there is also much play with the danger of collapse or *downfall*; *ruins* were exclusively boys' constructions.

[...] here sexual differences in the organization of a play space seem to parallel the morphology of genital differentiation itself: in the male, an *external* organ, *erectible* and *intrusive* in character, serving the channelization of *mobile* sperm cells; *internal* organs in the female, with vestibular *access*, leading to *statically expectant* ova. (590, 591)

Erikson makes several troubling remarks. Although he states that

it must always be suspected that a special method bares truths especially true under the circumstances created by the method (593)

does he take this comment seriously in relation to his own findings? A lighthearted antidote to one of his assumptions is provided by Mary Ellmann in her chapter on sexual analogy in Thinking About Women:

> An immobility is attributed to the entire female constitution by analogy with the supposed immobility of the ovum. [...] In actuality, each month the ovum undertakes an extraordinary expedition from the ovary through the Fallopian tubes to the uterus, an unseen equivalent of going down the Mississippi on a raft or over the Niagara Falls in a barrel. (13)

Talking about emptiness as "the female form of perdition" Erikson also contends:

> Such hurt can be re-experienced in each menstruation; it is crying to heaven in the mourning over a child; and it becomes a permanent scar in the menopause. (596)

Is he not equating the healthy functioning of the woman's body with pathology? A few other statements:

> Woman [...] has *let* herself be incarcerated and immbolized, enslaved and infantilized, prostituted and exploited, deriving from it at best what in psychopathology we call "secondary gains" of devious dominance. (600) (Emphasis added)
>
> the mothers and grandmothers [of the "matrifocal" slave households in the Caribbean] provided the only superidentity which was left open after the enslavement

of the *men*. (602) (Emphasis added)

It is well known how many little white gentlemen benefited from the extended fervor or the nurturant Negro women -- southern mammies, creole das, or Brazilian babas. (602)

5 Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility and Spatiality," Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) 141-159.

6 The tension experienced between these two poles was also addressed in Chapter 5 which deals with the question of identity.

7 Quoted by Jacques Depreux in André du Bouchet ou la parole traversée (Paris: Champvillon, 1988) 20, 21.

8 Anne Dickason, "The Feminine as a Universal," "Femininity," "Masculinity," and "Androgyny": A Modern Philosophical Discussion, ed. Mary Vetterling-Braggin (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1982) 10-30.

9 Translations by Raymond Feder are included in this volume, but since I disagree with Feder on many points, the present translations, although similar to his, are my own.

10 This volume is unpaginated. Numbers refer to poem numbers.

11 Yves Bonnefoy, "L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie," L'Improbable (Paris: Mercure de France, 1959) 147-185.

12 Yves Bonnefoy, The Act and the Place of Poetry: Selected Essays (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989). Edited and with an introduction by John T. Naughton; foreword by Joseph Frank.

13 Interview with Jacques Benay, "La poésie dans la deuxième moitié du XXe siècle," 18.

14 The spacing in this quote follows Garelli's own. In this volume he consistently uses spacing to highlight phrases.

15 Jean-Claude Mathieu, "Les 'paroles dans d'air' de Philippe Jaccottet," Espace et Poésie: Actes du colloque des 13, 14 et 15 juin 1984, eds. Michel Collot and Jean-Claude Mathieu (Paris: Presses de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure, 1987): 35-48.

16 Philippe Jaccottet, Selected Poems, selected and translated with an introduction by Derek Mahon (Wake Forest University Press, 1988).

CONCLUSION: THE SPACE OF READING

Raising the question of lyric and gender, despite the use of textual analysis as a tool, remains a political gesture. Although in the abstract we tend to believe that we read men and women in the same way or at least that we ought to do so, in practice, substantively, this is not the case. The comparison of female and male poets (especially in the context of twentieth-century France where no woman poet has managed to achieve fame) acknowledges this differential approach and therefore places the emphasis on signature.[1] After briefly discussing the findings of the study with regard to the stereotypical expectations we bring to texts, I shall return to an examination of how we tend to approach the works of women and men differently and what can be done to work toward greater equality in our readings of the works of women and men.

In the Introduction I stressed that gender stereotypes inevitably inform our readings. In chapers 2 and 5 we examined the images and attitudes typically associated with men and women. We focused on images illustrating various aspects of the poetic process and on spatial imagery. The other chapters, although still concentrating on textual elements, examined differences that may exist between female and male poets regarding their relationships to other writers and to their audience and also how these relationships may influence their sense of identity and of voice.

A few examples will serve as reminders that close readings of the works of the eight poets have demonstrated that the clear demarcations and polarizations of our stereotypical expectations are rarely justified.

An exploration of the kinds of spaces that women and men poets represented in their poetry reveals that the most tightly closed worlds (associated with femininity) are the products of, respectively, a man and a woman: Garelli and Prager. Resemblance in this respect, however, is not replicated in other respects: whereas Garelli stresses the passive role of the poet at certain moments of the poetic process, Prager chooses rather to concentrate on her active role in the process. Du Bouchet's frequent evocation of open spaces makes him the most "masculine" poet in this instance, but he also presents a play between inside and outside spaces in his work, as do Bonnefoy and Jaccottet. This similarity in the evocation of space does not however allow us to predict the relationship that each of these poets has with tradition: Bonnefoy's confidence and Jaccottet's humility are, for example, on opposite ends of the spectrum.

Such findings, we know, cannot be interpreted in an absolute sense; the context needs to be taken into account as, for example, in Jaccottet's use of hedging, usually associated with women's speech or, more generally, with powerless speech. Comparing his journal entries with his poetry suggests that his use of hedging depends on the

anticipated audience as well as on the questions he is investigating.

Attempts at generalizations along gender lines prove unsatisfactory even where theorists expect a significant degree of homogeneity (cp. the question of identity among women poets examined in Chapter 1). Although three of the women poets studied address this issue, they deal with it in different ways: Prager manifests a split self (which cannot, however, unequivocally be attributed to questions of gender); Plantier assumes multiple voices; and for Lejeune writing is central to the forging of her identity.

What becomes apparent then, is that although we are all familiar with stereotypes when we approach texts, as we get closer to the text and enter deeper into the poetic universe, gender stereotypes tend to fall by the wayside and the uniqueness of each poet's vision comes to the fore. It appears that when we read closely, differences rather than similarities tend to surface. What does this tell us about reading?

In "On the Superficiality of Women"[2] Susan Noakes shows how women have traditionally not only been excluded as writers but also as readers. Including works by Bonaventure, Dante, Sterne, Rousseau and Flaubert, she traces the representation of women as bad readers (either because they read too superficially or because they project their own preoccupations into the text instead of being able to arrive at the author's

message) and arrives at the conclusion that "the female misreader is indeed a full-fledged topos within the Western literary tradition." (352) She reiterates that "reading is taught." (353) She describes the Platonic model of reading. Good readers

> will strive to identify the readings they produce with the ideas of the father-authors, an effort that is perceived as bringing them a share of the stature of the father-authors (345)

In other words, they try to determine the particularities of the author, reading the work in order to find the contribution that is unique to that author. The image Noakes uses to describe a good exegetic reading in the Christian tradition is that of going

> *through* the surface. Readings that remain *on* the surface, on the other hand, engage the reader's desires rather than the author's ideas. (347)

"Good" readers should then penetrate into the text and there attempt to get to know the world created by the author. In the context of contemporary criticism, "bad" readers would be accused of stopping at surface details (e.g. not seeing a negative portrayal of a woman as a necessary part of a greater whole or as a sign for something else) or bring their own preoccupations (e.g., feminist concerns) to the text .

If we now return to models of reading proposed by critics and poets, we find that the emphasis on spatial imagery

corresponds to a conception which invites the reader to enter into the universe of each poet to get to know it, and through an exploration of the "landscape," to know the poet. In his "Avant-propos" to Pages Paysages Jean-Pierre Richard states:

> On y tente une lecture qui se fonderait à la fois sur l'essence verbale des oeuvres littéraires (ce qui les constitue en *pages*), et sur les formes, thématico-pulsionelles, par où se manifeste un univers singulier (ce qui les organise en *paysages*). (7)
>
> [This is an attempt at a reading based on the one hand on the verbal essence of literary works (which constitutes the *pages*), and on the other hand on the thematic and libidinal forms, through which a singular universe becomes manifest (which organizes them into *landscapes*.]

In Prendre appui Garelli agrees with this conception:

> Le lecteur s'oriente entre les mots d'un poème comme le marcheur circule entre les arbres d'une forêt. (51)
>
> [The reader finds his bearing among the words of a poem as the walker walks among the trees of a forest.]

The important thing is to enter into this universe, to go "*through* the surface" in order to get to know the ideas of the author.

When we look at the kinds of comments that have been made about women's writings, the lack of interest shown in their writings and the generalizations made based on the sex of the

author, we realize that the kind of reading that has been attributed to women has in fact been practiced on women's writings. A few examples of answers given by male academics when asked by Dale Spender about how many books by women authors they had read will serve as a reminder that women are either not read as men are or are not considered worth reading in the same way.

> I think it's a case of if you've read one, you've read them all. (USA, 1986)
>
> Woolf, Lessing, they're interesting enough I suppose, but we'd have to put two of the men out to put them on [the reading list], and that wouldn't be justified.

(Australia, 1987)

> A few. Not as many as I'd like to, but there isn't the time to go into anything that isn't absolutely first rate. (Scotland, 1987) (Writing, 196)
>
> Well, I would have liked to have read more, but they're not available, are they? (Canada, 1987) (197)

Women, on the other hand, have been trained to read "like men" as critics such as Judith Fetterley[3] and Jonathan Culler[4] have shown. So in addition to the seemingly inevitable "immasculation" (Fetterley, xx) of being taught how to read like a man, of being "co-opted into participation in an experience from which she is excluded," of identifying "against herself" (p. xii); in addition to becoming a "resisting reader" when reading works by male authors as

Fetterley urges, woman critics need to justify being "good" readers when dealing with works by women authors.

Since we come to texts by women and men with different expectations, it seems we (both male and female critics) need to compensate our readings in different ways. We all tend to particularize works by women, concentrating on the sex rather than on the work. Encouraging "good" readings of women will help us differentiate among women writers; it will help us concentrate on their uniqueness rather than on their similarities that we assume can be attributed to their sex. We need to strive for readings that concentrate on the individuality of the poet rather than on the preoccupations and prejudices of the reader, readings that enter into the text rather than stay on the surface.

When reading texts by male poets, a different form of compensation is needed. We have been trained to consider works by men as representative of human and universal values. As we have seen in the Introduction, Monique Wittig has emphasized developing strategies for universalizing the particular because, she insists, a text by a minority writer "is effective only if it succeeds in making the minority view universal."[5] Turning Wittig's dictum around provides us with a useful strategy: particularizing the so-called universal in the works of male authors will be a step toward redressing the

imbalance in the way we read works by women and men. Wittig's emphasis on formal experimentation in her projects is perhaps also an indication that it is focusing on formal aspects in works by men that distracts us from paying attention to particularizing "masculine" qualities.

Although it would be difficult to remain on the surface (on the outside) when reading works by male poets, we can strive to be "bad" readers by bringing some of our extra-textual preoccupations into their texts. Reading men as men would also include consideration of socio-political factors such as the support provided by belonging to a broader community of artists. On the other hand, we need to give texts by women poets a fair chance. We need to become "good" readers of women by making an effort not to stay on the surface, not to see only the stereotypes, but to enter into the variety of worlds they have to offer. Once enough readers assume the task of surveying the underexplored terrain presented by women writers, perhaps the atlas of French poetry will begin to reflect the contributions of both female and male poets, and titles such as "twentieth-century French poetry" will no longer misleadingly imply works by male poets only.

NOTES

1 See Nancy Miller's "The Text's Heroine: A Feminist Critic and her Fictions" which we quoted in Chapter 1.

2 Clayton Koelb and Susan Noakes (eds.) The Comparative Perspective on Literature: Approaches to Theory and Practice (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988).

3 Judith Fetterley, The Resisting Reader (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978).

4 Jonathan Culler. On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1982): 43-64.

5 Monique Wittig, "The Trojan Horse," 64.

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