SUBJECT AND TEXT IN RÉJEAN DUCHARME'S
L'AVALEÉ DES AVALÉS AND LE NEZ QUI VOQUE

By

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ABSTRACT

Although Réjean Ducharme is a major literary figure in Quebec, he is virtually unknown to English Canada. His novels L'Avalee des avalés and Le Nez qui vogue are important in the evolving literary tradition of Quebec because they foreground the functioning of language, but this tendency also explains why translation of Ducharme is a difficult undertaking. Thus, as of 1985, Le Nez qui vogue has not been published in English.

The purpose of this study is to examine L'Avalee des avalés and Le Nez qui vogue from two complementary points of view: traditional and metafictional. Both of these novels diverge substantially from the norms of verisimilitude while presenting a wealth of psychological motifs. The psychological coherence of the first-person represented in these texts points out the individual subject's dependence vis-à-vis social and cultural values, the relativity of the concept "subject," and its status as a social construct or "text" in its own right. In other words, the psychological representation of subject evokes the latter's status as fictional or constructed, within the text, as character, and outside of the text, as writer/reader. At the same time, the divergence of the novels from the norms of verisimilitude constitutes an interpretation and critique of those norms and of literary and expository discourse in general. L'Avalee and Le Nez are metafictions, or novels about fiction.

The image of subject in L'Avalee des avalés repeats the myth of schizoid deterioration presented in Laing's The Divided Self, while the subject in Le Nez qui vogue repeats Freud's obsessive self. In Part I,
I discuss these *rapprochements* in the light of a traditional interpretation of character. The description of the subject assumes the first-person narrator to be the origin of the discourse which becomes the novel. In Parts II and III of my discussion I reverse this point of view.

In Part II, I show how the language and structure of *L'Avalee* reveal the text as constituting a parody of the psychological novel, by using Linda Hutcheon's concept of parody as repetition with a difference. Semantic incongruity defines the parameters of the text, pointing to meaning as a complex or non-univocal structure, just as the schizoid subject caricatures the non-schizoid subject by never being at one with itself. The subject emerges as an image of the text as realized in the act of reading.

Part III of my discussion addresses the relations of subject and text in *Le Nez qui vogue*, which conforms to verisimilitude more than *L'Avalee*, by representing its own inscription as the narrator's practice of keeping a journal. Passages of nonsense and word play in the journal gradually give way to a narrative account of the subject's cure and separation from his alter ego. The discourse which produces the cure also performs a critique of discourse itself as tautological, a critique outlined in Patrick Imbert's discussions of Ducharme. This discourse can be displaced only by a recit which is ultimately included within the closed conceptual universe critiqued. The narrative of the alter ego's endangerment and death displaces the narrative of the subject's cure. Instead of reaffirming his cure, the narrator's neglect of textual practice in favour of narrative constitutes his entrapment within a
closed conceptual universe; and specifically within the ethos of castration which interprets the other as a degraded version of the same, the unknown as the already known. The possibility of this reversal of interpretation in \textit{Le Nez qui voque} accords a high-profile role to the reader by making overt the latter's responsibility in imposing closure on a text. The reduplicating of the narrator's conscious discourse by the unconscious discourse representing castration makes explicit his status as result rather than origin of discourse.

The pursuit of psychological subject in \textit{L'Avalée des avalés} and in \textit{Le Nez qui voque} leads one to appreciate subject as text, that is, as an interpreted plurality. It also leads one to recognize text as subject, that is, as realized by the reading process.
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"Ce jeune écrivain écrit comme on n'a jamais écrit avant lui au Québec," affirmed Jean Ethier-Blais in a review of Réjean Ducharme's first published novel, *L'Avalée des avalés* (1966). Fifteen years later *L'Actualité* could still describe Réjean Ducharme as "l'écrivain québécois le plus important de sa génération." To grasp the novelty Ducharme represented in 1966, one might mention the publication the previous year, by Marie-Claire Blais, of *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*. Both writers portray children or adolescents in a state of crisis and Ducharme dedicated his third published novel, *L'Océantume*, to Marie-Claire Blais. Unlike Blais, Ducharme portrays language in a state of crisis. The image of the subject in crisis serves as a stable point of reference in a discourse where form is represented as determining meaning. The subject is a node organizing utterances which otherwise would be difficult indeed to contextualize as a novel. When in doubt, one may interpret the discourse as the description of the subject. While an admirer of Blais, Ducharme has gone further than her toward representing the subject as the result rather than the originator of a discourse. He thus signals a shift in perspective away from traditional humanism which sees the individual as an essence, and toward a structuralism in the broadest possible sense.

This shift in point of view is confirmed by the author's abdication of public life and statements such as "Je ne veux pas qu'on fasse le lien entre moi et mon roman." That the shift was experienced in the form of a malaise by a segment of the literary public is attested to by "L'Affaire Ducharme," a controversy evoking the possibility of the author's non-
existence in the absence of any real evidence of his nonexistence. An assumption more in harmony with those of L'Avalée des avalés or Le Nez qui vogue would be that the person of the author is peripheral to the functioning of the text rather than the guarantee of its origin, and that the author has no absolutely necessary social responsibility to interpret or contextualize it for the public.

The problem of the "identity" of the subject was one of the first and most popular topics of comment in relation to Ducharme's novels. The foregrounding of the structure of language in the narrator's discourse also provoked comment, but at first defied analysis. Admiration for the author's verbal skill was moderated by a complaint that it was not made to serve the overall unity of the novels or even good taste. As the narrator of Ducharme's last novel says of himself, "All speed no control," and to make sure the irony is overt the author translates the remark in a footnote to which he appends his initials: "Tout [sic] vitesse pas de contrôle."

More recent comment on subject and language in Ducharme's novels includes Pierre-Louis Vaillancourt's equating of the extradiegetic subject (subject transcending text) with a perverse author:

... cette figure fantasmatique que l'auteur projette de lui-même... détruisant le Je de la confession et de l'autobiographie pour en garder le contentement à soi, la complaisance narcissique et compensatrice d'un Moi de l'auteur déjà tributaire d'un anonymat jalousement entre­tenu.

He quite appropriately identifies a double structure of threatened intra­diegetic subject (subject within text) and triumphant extradiegetic subject, but the present study prefers to consider the latter as the precedence
of the writing and subsequently the reading functions over the initial inscribing of the text.

According to Patrick Imbert, who situates Ducharme's novels in relation to ambivalence toward the French literary tradition in Quebec and in relation to the tautology of the conceptual universe, "les parcours sémantiques et syntaxiques nous enferment dans des modes de pensée préconstruits." He proceeds to choose the difficulty of circumventing the subject/object dichotomy as an illustration of the limiting shape conferred on thought by the semantically possible. Even though he does not go into the problem of the subject in Ducharme, his recourse to the novels as deconstructors of the commonplace suggests the importance of subject in Ducharme.

In her major study of Ducharme's novels, Renée Leduc-Park identifies in them a dionysian subject who triumphs through "dureté," "jeu," "démesure" and "androgynie." She also emphasizes the isomorphism of enunciation and enunciated; that is, the rehearsing of the same motifs by discourse and récit, and by signifiers and signifieds. Nonetheless in the case of the subject it may be that the triumphant mode emanates from the discourse but not, in every case, from the récit. In L'Avalee des avalés and Le Nez qui vogue, the decline of the character in the récit serves to evoke the pre-eminence of discourse or enunciation, thus sharpening the metafictional aspect of the texts.

Of Ducharme's six novels to date, four appeared between 1966-69: L'Avalee des avalés (1966), Le Nez qui vogue (1967), L'Océantume (1968), and La Fille de Christophe Colomb (1969). The author having a quantity of material on hand when first he approached the publisher Gallimard,
the order and dates of publication of the texts do not correspond to the order and dates of composition. As Alain Bosquet suggested of the first three novels in 1968, it seems appropriate to consider all four as aspects of a writing project rather than to trace an evolution in the author's concerns. In La Fille de Christophe Colomb the metafictional identity of the subject is evoked in the relations between the unnamed narrator and the protagonist, Colombe Colomb. Renée Leduc-Park points out the complementarity of the manipulative male narrator and the female anti-heroine, a duality similar to that of Le Nez qui voque where the narrator, on the other hand, does figure in the récit. Though a character sketch of the narrator would be possible, La Fille de Christophe Colomb rules out psychological interpretation of character in the récit because the tenor is hyperbolically parodic. L'Océantume, the third novel published, resembles L'Avalée in elements of character and plot to such extent that its critical reception suffered. The girl protagonist rehearses the uncertainties and intransigences of Bérénice in L'Avalée and the discourse of the novels is indistinguishable at certain moments:

Iode: Ouvrez-vous que j'entre! Et que ce gouffre dont vous écartez les bords afin que j'entre exerce sur moi des tractions.... Que cette bouche grande comme le néant m'attrape avec des mains et que ces mains tirent? Bérénice: Je veux bondir d'abîme en sommet. Je veux être avalée par tout, ne serait-ce que pour en sortir. Je veux être attaquée par tout ce qui a des armes. (AV, p. 30)

Since neither text represents its composition overtly, the same undecidability haunts the récit and confers an implicit metafictional identity on the subject in each text. L'Océantume is shorter and the récit more episodic than L'Avalée; thus the latter lends itself somewhat more
readily to a psychological reading of character. On the other hand, the *récit* of *L'Océantume* is more cheerfully carnivalesque and Iode Ssouvie passes through it unscathed.

In 1973 Ducharme published *L'Hiver de force*, a novel-length *récit* narrated by a subject who speaks habitually as "we" for himself and his female other, though distinguishing between "I" and "she" according to the contingencies of the *récit*. The two never conflict and they swear eternal loyalty. This dual subject's relations with others are fraught with the anguish that characterizes the earlier novels.

André Ferron - Nicole Ferron withdraw from participation in the social order with a view to consolidating their "vide qui se refait," a rather non-Cartesian identity. Their isolation is relative and the *récit* recounts their pursuit of an infatuation with a movie star. They recognize and caricature their child-like posture in the relationship. When she tires of them, "l'hiver de force," which is their essence, reasserts itself. After discovering their friend's departure André has hysteric and hits Nicole, but he recounts that, seeing blood on her face, "J'ai eu si peur de perdre ma Nicole que ça m'a comme dégrisé."  

One is reminded of a statement by the narrator of *Le Nez qui vogue*: "On souffre... quand on perd une illusion" (NQV, p. 140). Unlike Bérénice Einberg, Mille Milles or Iode Ssouvie, André Ferron does not hover indeterminately between omnipotence and the void. He constitutes an aspect of a stable interpersonal dual subject or intrapersonal split subject, conceived as structure rather than substance.

As his name implies and as Leduc-Park emphasizes, *L'Hiver de force* is the most coherent *récit* in Ducharme's texts. Although André-Nicole's
restoring the void evokes the textual functioning of the subject, incongruities of récit do not force the reader of L'Hiver de force to recontextualize subject constantly as metafictional. Neither subject nor text wars with itself as intimately as in the earlier novels.

The récit of Les Enfantômes (1976) is somewhat reminiscent of Le Nez qui vogue, since each unfolds a problematic relationship between narrator and female other. In Le Nez qui vogue the tension mounts until Chateaugué's death at the end of the récit. Her death constitutes a strong motivation for the reader to recontextualize Mille Milles and Chateaugué as a subject in whom communication between conscious and unconscious is blocked, producing fixation and neurosis. The narrator does not master his text; it masters him. The diary form affords the narrator only limited opportunity to construct a récit since his project is organized by rigid time constraints which represent the everyday lifeworld within the récit, but which may be read as a barred allusion to his status as the result rather than the source of the text.

The récit of Les Enfantômes could be read as a putting right of Le Nez qui vogue from the psychological point of view. The narrator, Vincent, is in a position of relative power since he knows the story before he begins to tell it. His decision to write memoirs suggests a desire to make amends for his responsibility in his sister's death, and to strengthen the bonds between self and other and maximize communication between conscious and unconscious. In each novel the sister's death limits the récit structurally. In Le Nez death terminates the récit, but in Les Enfantômes its narration is deferred indefinitely. Whereas Mille Milles is paralysed by the shape of the conceptual universe,
Vincent, as a literary subject, can open up the conceptual universe from within. In Le Nez the narrator seeks and finds truth which he cannot process. In Les Enfantômes the same truth is a given point of departure of the subject's apprenticeship: "L'avenir aux audacieux, et à moi, leurs restes, à moi les rêves baroques qui les endorment, les sentiments touffus qu'ils jettent, les rires hilares qu'ils laissent traîner par terre!"²⁸

Vincent, like Bérénice, suffers from incongruous discourse, but in his case the hyperbolic is naturalized as the inevitable sign of the literary not pertinent in the everyday lifeworld, as "tartelu."²⁹ In Les Enfantômes as in L'Hiver de force the ideal subject is dual, evoking a split consciousness in opposition to the monumental unitary subject for which the narrators of the earlier novels retain a measure of nostalgia. From the metafictional point of view, the discourse of the subject in the earlier novels remains riveted to the model of the literary as a refinement of the standard dialect, whereas the subject in the later novels subsumes a multiplicity of dialects evoking the spoken language.

The present study limits its scope to two novels, L'Avalée des avalés and Le Nez qui vogue, as providing an economical point of departure for interpreting the subject in conflict of Ducharme's earlier novels. The study proposes to explore: first, the psychological image of subject in the récit; then, its specific relationship to style and composition; a relationship which motivates recontextualization with reference to textual self-representation.

This study was first undertaken without specific concern for the metafictional. The first four chapters explore an initial preoccupation
with the representation of psychological type. As a point of departure, this perspective was no doubt inspired by the same sentiment as a reader of Ducharme who, resenting the author's reclusiveness, protested that "il faut... des jalons de chair et de sang." The first response to the novels' soliciting of contextualization by the reader is, in this study, to define the representation of conventional human likeness in the novels.

The psychological coherence evoked by the texts suggested parallels with two specific models of type. The first, which relates especially neatly to L'Avalée des avalés, is R. D. Laing's outline of schizoid processes in The Divided Self. The second, more specific and useful in interpreting the more developed and detailed mimetic coherence of Le Nez qui vogue, is Freud's description of the obsessive-compulsive personality in its relation to the castration complex.

The Divided Self is illuminating because it focuses on the evolution of a type which may encompass a more or less coherent, functional or fragmentary subject. Since the referential coherence of the récit in L'Avalée diminishes progressively, it is possible to read into it the deterioration of the subject. In invoking Laing's model, one is not committed, however, to retrieving from the récit a rigid progression of images of progressive dysfunction. The "divided self" retains an undecidability compatible with a fragmentary récit.

The narrator of Le Nez qui vogue alludes to Freud and the Oedipus complex, the unsuccessful resolution of which results in castration anxiety and obsessiveness. As a male subject this narrator is particularly susceptible to Freudian analysis if, as seems self-evident and as
posited by Luce Irigaray from a feminist perspective, the Freudian subject is always male. Indeed, Irigaray's analysis suggests that the female subject, defined by Freud as the absence of a male subject, would from within this male world view always represent a void experienced as the ontological insecurity underlying the schizoid withdrawal described by Laing. Thus the schizoid and obsessive types might be expected, in a very general way, to correlate with male and female types.

As the behaviour of the schizoid subject caricatures that of the non-schizoid subject, the discourse and récit of L'Avalée parody those of the traditional novel. Part II of the present study, inspired by Part I, examines the gaps of anomaly or semantic incongruity which set L'Avalée apart from the psychological novel and from itself as a psychological novel, even in spite of the isomorphism of disintegrating subject and disintegrating text. Linda Hutcheon's concept of a gentle parody emphasizing intertextuality permits L'Avalée's recontextualization as metafiction. There is an evolution in the discussion resulting from a shift in theoretical perspective.

Chapter V examines semantic incongruity as a constituting factor in the récit and discourse of L'Avalée. Riffaterre's analysis of contexts facilitates the distinction of mimetic and parodic effects within L'Avalée; for example, some elements of the récit tend to evoke traditional verisimilitude, others more to problematize it. At the level of discourse, stylistic devices mediate as well as complicate the reception of meaning. Logic, semantics, phonetics and syntax are aspects of discourse which, as identified by Groupe Mu's analyses of rhetoric, bring into play specific tactics for creating the space necessary to
parody within the text. The essential stylistic effect in L'Avalee is incongruity evoking the difference between this text and others. This parodic difference inheres even in the name "Bérenice Einberg," which emphasizes the fictional, literary and anti-classical parameters of the mimesis. Finally, hyperbolic anomaly of all sorts produces a carnivalesque inversion of the premises of traditional literary realism, and a foregrounding of text and subject as process. The possibility of euphoric identification of reader and enunciating process emerges in contrast to the image of schizoid deterioration identified previously with the récit.

The schizoid subject evokes, at a metafictional level, an anthropomorphic image of the text as polysemic, the language of the text constituting a corpus represented by the human form. Chapter VI outlines briefly the significance of the subject of L'Avalee in relation to images of child, of woman, of schizophrenic, and of writing subject, with reference to Derrida, Irigaray and Blanchot. In general, the deconstruction of subject as essence, of text as artefact, accompanies the valorization of process and of empty space, its enabling function.

Whereas L'Avalee provoked the reading of the text alternately as mimesis or as metafiction, Le Nez qui vogue traces the evolution of the one into or out of the other. Part III of this study distinguishes two moments of Le Nez; the first half of the text is dominated by discourse and textuality in the performance of the narrator's neurosis (Chapter VII of dissertation), and the second by récit and mimesis in the narrator's avowed cure (Chapter VIII of dissertation).

In Le Nez the fiction of the journal apparently contains and
naturalizes the functioning of semantic incongruity. While acting out his ambivalent oscillation in the journal the narrator inevitably rehearses the incongruities of the semantic universe. This performance is contextualized in the discussion with reference to speech act theory, and to the status of the fictional journal as a display text fulfilling a narrative contract. 38

In the second half of the novel, analysis of the conceptual universe subsides, evoking an apparent remission of the narrator's neurosis as his discourse attaches itself to the practice of exposition and, when solicited by events, of narration. However, a repetitive, gradated and symbolic récit impedes the reception of the text as cure and thus of the narrator as mastering the text. The narrator's lessening dependence on the journal, the unconscious and his other is reversed if the récit is read as determined by these factors; as it can be when the dénouement of the récit corresponds to the suspension of discourse. This latter is provoked by the discovery of castration in the description of Chateau-gué's body. The narrator's discourse can resume only to repeat the same récit.

L'Avalée invites interpretation of the decline of intradiegetic subject as affirmation of the text as process, and of reading as its mode of existence. Le Nez qui vogue solicits more attentive reading at the intradiegetic level where the conscious discourse of cure represented by the narrator is reversed by the unconscious discourse of neurosis constituted as récit. The widening gap between the two establishes a space for the extradiegetic subject, a second reversal of context, and once again the triumph of text as reading over a priori meaning. The narrator's
persistence in addressing the other (in this case woman), as a lesser form of the same (man), and the other of the discourse (nonsense), as a simple failure to make sense or exposit, effects a critique of the novel genre where the resources of language are contained by an esthetic of mimesis. Once again, the image of a flawed intradiegetic subject is appropriate from the metafictional point of view which problematizes mimesis in general.

In its pursuit of the subject the present thesis touches on important discussions which are central to its premises but too broad to be broached here in detail. The analysis of Ducharme's language requires a thesis in its own right, though probed effectively by Renée Leduc-Park in passing and in articles by Marcel Chouinard and Bernard Dupriez. The national context of writing in Quebec has been left more or less aside or rather implied. It is to be hoped that such an analysis will be pursued by a Québécois or by someone who has lived in Quebec extensively. It is also to be hoped that the feminist interpretation to be drawn out of Ducharme's texts will provide new insights, for rarely has a male writer so illuminated the role of the female persona.

It may at first seem incongruous in the era of post-structuralism to be determined to pursue extensively a discussion of the "subject," which means after all, of "person" as against non-person; but the individual subject is the filter through which texts must pass, a role as responsible as the traditional one of measuring all things. Then again, to see the subject in the text is to see, according to Groupe Mu's Rhetorique de la poésie, what one always distinguishes first in a zone of indeterminacy:
Dans le cas des champs perceptifs les plus vagues et flous, les premières conjectures sont anthropocentriques... Ces théories concernent la perception sensorielle mais elles sont applicables également à la lecture tant que celle-là est un cas particulier de la perception dynamique.
NOTES


4 See, for example, Susan Stewart's definition of "discourse" in *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 13: "... discourse, that is, language as social event; not language as some contained and abstract 'fact,' nor as a product of some individual psyche."


7 See, for example, Gaston Laurion, "L'Avalée des avalés ou le refus d'être adulte," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, 38 (1968), 524-41; and D. J. Bond, "Search for Identity in the Novels of R. Ducharme," *Mosaic*, n° 9 (Winter 1976), 31-44.


"Récit" is used to mean the subspecies of discourse which tells a story. See Gérard Genette, *Figures* III (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 72: "... notre étude porte essentiellement sur le récit au sens le plus courant, c'est-à-dire le discours narratif.... Je propose... de nommer histoire le signifié ou contenu narratif... récit proprement dit le signifiant, énoncé, discours ou texte narratif lui-même...." In one sense all discourse in the novel constitutes a récit; however, in discussing *L'Avalée* and *Le Nez* it is useful to reserve "récit" for discourse at the service of an histoire or story which conforms to conventional expectations of what a story is, and includes event, suspense, and logical coherence.


19 Leduc-Park, pp. 281-282.

20 See Alain Bosquet, "'L'Océantume' de Réjean Ducharme," and especially Jean Ethier-Blais, "Iode y est... Eh bien! qu'elle y reste."

21 *L'Océantume*, p. 185.

22 Leduc-Park, p. 56.
23 L'Hiver de force, p. 258.

24 L'Hiver de force, p. 181.


26 L'Hiver de force, p. 281.

27 Leduc-Park, pp. 18, 56.


PART I: THE SUBJECT IN THE TEXT

The first four chapters of this discussion focus on character in L'Avalée des avalés and then in Le Nez qui voque. Both are first person novels so the discussion begins with the narrator as character (Chapter I and Chapter III) and then the secondary characters in each novel (Chapter II and Chapter IV). It is a paradoxical characteristic of these texts that on the one hand the characters appear one dimensional, or parodic; on the other hand, they exhibit psychological coherence. The first section of this thesis attempts to define that coherence.

Constituting an image of psychological type in the text permits a clarity of focus helpful in approaching two texts as apparently diffuse and spectacularly polysemic as L'Avalée des avalés and Le Nez qui voque. These novels do not allow the reader to ignore their textuality. One dimension of their textuality is the subject as emerging from discourse. The psychological images provide a pathway to the redefinition of subject and text in L'Avalée and Le Nez.

CHAPTER I: THE DIVIDED SELF: "L'AVALÉE"

Freud, Laing and the Subject in L'Avalée

As Sartre said of the position of Marx in philosophy, Freud remains as a horizon in psychological theory, one which can be ignored but not yet got beyond. In considering Bérénice the argument relies little on Freudian texts while heavily exploiting The Divided Self, by R. D. Laing, whose argument, in spite of a critical approach to traditional psychoanalysis, is solidly constructed on Freudian foundations.
This reliance on *The Divided Self* can be justified in terms of the present purpose; first for a negative reason, because Laing's rhetoric is less problematic in the contemporary context than Freud's polemics. A student's introduction to Freud, for example, cautions one not to "take Freud's extreme formulations literally [but to] treat them as his way of calling your attention to a point, [to be] benignly skeptical about Freud's assertions of proof that something has been established beyond doubt." The psychology of woman poses more substantial problems in Freudian theory than male psychology does, and also provokes more complex and convoluted explanations: "We have, after all, long given up any expectation of a neat parallelism between male and female sexual development" wrote Freud in 1931. One might regret that he did not give it up sooner and more completely. Generally, we are cautioned that "Freud was overfond of dichotomies, even when his data were better conceptualized as continuous variables"; in other words, even when the data show many shades of grey, they are explained in terms of black and white. Thus, for example, Freud's essential interpretation of "masculine" and "feminine" corresponds to "active" and "passive". On the whole, his descriptions of human behaviour take the behaviour of men as prototypic, with that of women figuring as a derivative variation of secondary interest. Power and integrity are defined as the fantasized corollaries of possessing the phallus, and even, in certain statements, as the real corollaries of the penis. For this reason it is simpler to leave aside Freud's pronouncements about women and to refer instead to *The Divided Self* which describes male and female experience in much the same terms. It is interesting to bear in mind, however, that a
Freudian interpretation tends to describe the female persona as ultimately powerless.

Another reason for using *The Divided Self* is the importance it accords to point of view, in the sense that is meant also in referring to point of view in a novel. The Freudian approach regards the female as the other, the object, thus the third person, and even as the Other, the unconscious as personal and collective. Another problem with psychoanalytic interpretation is its tendency to present the subject as an immutable collection of symptoms. Laing, on the other hand, does attempt to understand and explain the subject's experience from the point of view of the subject, that is, by applying a phenomenological approach to the study of psychology:

... existential phenomenology becomes the attempt to reconstruct the patient's way of being himself in his world, although, in the therapeutic relationship, the focus may be on the patient's way of being-with-me.... (DS, p. 25)

This approach is compatible with the reading of a text in which the narrator does not distinguish between the roles of protagonist and of narrator and thus in which the reader must take responsibility for the existence of the story as a text which is not explained or naturalized by the narrator. The reader is implicated in the creation of the fiction, which exists only in its being-with the reader.

More startling than the choice of female narrator in *L'Avalée des avalés* is the choice of a child narrator, who is nine years old at the beginning of the récit and later as old as fifteen. Without even considering implications of this choice in literary terms, it is significant in terms of modern psychology, beginning with Freud, which generally
sees the child as the prototype of the disturbed or neurotic adult:

A formula begins to take shape ... that the sexuality of neurotics has remained in, or been brought back to, an infantile state. Thus our interest turns to the sexual life of children, and we will now proceed to trace the play of influences which govern the evolution of infantile sexuality till its outcome in perversion, neurosis or normal sexual life.9

It is here in Three Essays on Sexuality that Freud develops the theory of the pregenital phases of psychosexual development in children. There are two of these phases which correspond in a most obvious fashion to dominant themes of L'Avalée des avalés. Freud describes the first phase of infancy as the "oral" phase, during which the subject is learning (in recognizing the time interval between feeling hunger and eating) that he has a personal existence distinct from that of the nurse or mother and that a desire is qualitatively different from its satisfaction, a fantasy experience is different from a real experience. Freud subdivides the oral phase into a first, passive phase and a later "oral sadistic" phase, as feeding evolves into aggressive efforts to suck, swallow or devour. In L'Avalée des avalés, as the title indicates, eating, swallowing, and regurgitation are the central motifs of the text and the protagonist's most important preoccupations: "Voilà ce qu'il faudra que je fasse pour être libre: tout avaler, me répandre sur tout, tout englober,... tout incorporer" (p. 160).10

Later, at about age two, according to Freud, there is "a second of these pregenital organizations characterized by sadism and anal eroticism."11 Preoccupations he associates with this period include the will to control the body, to control others, to control processes in the world, to possess or give away objects. He suggests that at this
time the young child learns social values, bodily control, goal-oriented action. Though consistently "oral" in outlook, Bérénice Einberg also adopts an "anal sadistic" approach in her desire to control and possess others:

Tu ne peux te réaliser pleinement en tant qu'individu qu'en soumettant tous les êtres humains... Qui ne veut pas d'une ville au lieu d'une hutte, d'une jungle au lieu d'un chat, d'un harem au lieu d'une épouse? (p. 245)

In a neurotic adult or child, Freud continues, sexual and emotional frustrations have caused the libido to vanish from conscious activity while reinvesting these two pregenital phases, with the result that sexual energy becomes fixated on the oral and anal preoccupations of infancy. Thus a child protagonist is a convenient medium for exposing and analysing the obsessions of a neurotic adult. One point must be clarified however. Freud hypothesizes that by the age of five the child has a basically adult personality and has not only forgotten but repressed the experiences of the oral and anal phases. Freud's theory of early childhood experience determining personality and its evolution is cogently restated by Bérénice Einberg:

On ne naît pas en naissant. On naît quelques années plus tard, quand on prend conscience d'être. Je suis née vers l'âge de cinq ans, si je m'en souviens bien. Et naître à cet âge c'est naître trop tard, car à cet âge on a déjà un passé, l'âme a forme. (pp. 142-143)

Since the pregenital experience is forgotten almost by definition, as a child of nine Bérénice Einberg stands between child and adult, associated metonymically with the oral and anal phases while illustrating the continuum of experience. The real birth, she explains, is the birth of the soul, as memory, and comes after childhood. In this
particular passage "childhood" refers to a mythological period, the pregenital period: "... cette âme dont on parle, ne pourrait-elle pas, plus simplement, s'appeler mémoire? En naissant, un homme n'a pas d'âme; il n'en aura une qu'après l'enfance" (p. 270).

Thus, for Freud, the really significant differences between adult and child, as opposed to infant, are not in personality but in physical capabilities. The childhood years, say from the age of five to twelve, are described by Freud as a latency period and a period of practical apprenticeship, that period which especially corresponds to Bérénice's text:

Je me tiens dans ma main en attendant d'être assez forte pour me lancer au travers du firmament. (p. 52)

J'attends que mes forces soient faites.... (p. 70)

L'abbaye est à Chat Mort. Je n'y vis qu'en attendant, qu'en latence. (p. 25)

The activity of those [infantile sexual] impulses, does not cease even during this period of latency, though their energy is diverted, wholly or in great part, from their sexual use and directed to other ends.13

Imagery of Schizoid Fear

We have seen that L'Avalée des avalés exploits Freudian themes of childhood and neurosis, but to describe the heroine's personality we will turn to The Divided Self, with the assumption that Bérénice Einberg has the same claim to be discussed as a formed personality that any narrator has. However, we will emphasize how she is neurotic, as an adult might be. In The Divided Self Laing traces the development of a "schizoid" personality which resembles that which we attribute to Bérénice Einberg: notice here also the acknowledgement of infancy
as formative:

The initial structuration of being into its basic elements occurs in early infancy.... In the schizoid character... there is an insecurity in the laying down of the foundations [of character] and a compensatory rigidity in the superstructure. (DS, p. 77)

Laing describes the basic characteristic of schizoid personality as "ontological insecurity", insecurity of being suggesting that the subject usually feels tense, uncomfortable, ill at ease and rather unhappy. One can almost say that his or her sense of identity is a feeling of inadequacy, a fear that there is no self: "The ontologically insecure person is preoccupied with preserving rather than gratifying himself: the ordinary circumstances of living threaten his low threshold of security" (DS, p. 42).

Certain passages of L'Avalée des avalés can be read with direct reference to Laing's analysis. A person who feels so insecure does not enjoy the companionship of others, which is the usual solution to loneliness, and loneliness is the experience of Bérénice. In this context, the following two passages are important, coming at the beginning of the novel where the reader forms impressions about the character:

On regarde, tout autour, comme si on cherchait. On regarde... on ne voit rien de bon.... on s'aperçoit que ce qu'on regarde nous fait mal, qu'on est seul et qu'on a peur. (p. 8)

Quand on veut savoir où on est, on se ferme les yeux. On est là ... dans le noir et dans le vide.... Il ne se passe rien dans le noir et dans le vide. Ça attend qu'on fasse quelque chose pour que ça se passe, pour en sortir. (p. 9)

Such sentiments are totally divorced from a very productive concept of solitude which Laing identifies as essential to the development
of a more normal sense of self:

... in childhood, adults were at first able to look right through us, and into us ... what an accomplishment it was ... the discovery that we are irredeemably alone.... within the territory of ourselves there can be only our footprints.... This genuine privacy is the basis for genuine relationship. (DS, p. 37)

Where this assurance is lacking subjects describe their fears and inadequacies with reference to three images of being destroyed, which occur frequently in many literary contexts, as in L'Avalée des avalés: engulfment, implosion, and petrification. The first discussed by Laing is the threat of engulfment, especially by being swallowed, and relates to the Freudian oral phase. Engulfment fantasies are frightening because of the loss of orientation and points of reference and the possibility of attack from more than one direction at once:

Tout m'avale. Quand j'ai les yeux fermés, c'est par mon ventre que je suis avalée, c'est dans mon ventre que j'étouffe. Quand j'ai les yeux ouverts, c'est parce que je vois que je suis avalée, c'est dans le ventre de ce que je vois que j'étouffe. (p. 7)

A schizoid person may have a problematical relation to what exists outside the self but also with the self at the same time. This means that the fear attached to the three images, and particularly to the first, engulfment, may be experienced by the sufferer as caused now by something in the world outside, now by something within the self or the body.

The second cluster of images identified by Laing relates to the fear of being squashed or suffocated by forces pushing in on one, fear of implosion (DS, pp. 45-46). L'Avalée des avalés describes such a fantasy in the following lines:
The name "sarcophagus" for the stone coffin of the Ancients came from the Greek meaning "eater of bodies" since, according to Pliny, limestone was thought to dissolve the body quickly. Thus the image may allude again, unintentionally, to engulfment. The "wings" may be the handles used for lowering the coffin into the earth.  

As engulfment may come from within or without, so may implosion; the self may be destroyed by a force pushing out from within: "Il faut que je retienne ma raison à deux mains... pour qu'elle reste, pour qu'elle ne se volatilise pas; pour qu'elle ne s'enfuie pas de moi comme le gaz d'un ballon qui se fond" (p. 195). The theme of implosion or suffocation is not initiated in Quebec by Ducharme; quite the contrary, it occurred frequently in the poems of Anne Hébert and Saint-Denys-Garneau, but is less apparent after 1950 with the approach of the Quiet Revolution. 

A third form of threat of the self is described in images of metamorphosis where the subject becomes an inanimate thing, frequently a stone (DS, p. 46). For example, in the sarcophagus fantasy cited above, the "Avalée" is flattened and suffocated and finally turned into a fossilized residue: "Je suffoque. Je suis étranglée.... Je me décompose. Je me liquéfie. La vie me déserte, s'écoule de moi comme d'un tamis. Je durcis. Je me fossilise. Je suis pétrifiée" (p. 86, following previous quotation). The sarcophagus seems to be of the Egyptian type, like that of Tutankhamen, which imitates the
contours of the human form. Inside, the human body was mummified, and so in the image the attribute "stone" is transferred from the container to the contained; it engulfs the human remains. In *L'Avalée des avalés* the underlying perspective is engulfment, the shifting of perspective; thus the frequency and extravagance of mixed metaphors, and of some other fantasy being resolved into a fantasy of engulfment.

Laing describes the fears symptomatic of "ontological insecurity" as provoking an offensive defence, in which the victim "who is frightened of his own subjectivity being swamped, impinged upon, or congealed by the other may be found attempting to swamp, to impinge upon, or to kill the other person's subjectivity" (DS, p. 52). The aggressive and violent tenor of *L'Avalée des avalés* is unmistakable; the narrator alludes to the possibility of her swallowing the world (p. 160), but her habitual assault against individuals consists of reducing them to plant or animal matter, objects or mere appearances:

Il y en a qui ont des pommiers... chiens... singes qui savent manger avec un couteau et une fourchette. Moi,... j'aurai un être humain: mon frère Christian. (p. 71)

Christian! Constance Chlore... Que sont-ils? Je suis le général et ils sont les forteresses à prendre.... Il faudrait que je ne connaisse d'eux que leur visage. (pp. 32-33)

The motif of petrification, of people turning into matter, is an anal motif in the Freudian sense and it can develop into a confusion in distinguishing "what is dead and what is living.... more exactly, what is autonomous and what is controlled by another as a thing would be." It remains a secondary threat to that of dissolution by engulfment since things, although not alive, maintain separate identities.
The Fragmentation of Self

Underlying the offensive defences, the simplest and most effective protection for the fragile self is isolation from all contact, contamination or attack by others: "Quand je ne suis pas seule, je me sens malade, en danger... (p. 15). Ça m'isole et ... tout ce qui isole délivre" (p. 44). In order to isolate the self effectively, the ontologically insecure subject may devise a false front to present in the social world. Laing sees the traditional dichotomy of mind and body as the natural point of departure for the first schism of the personality into a false front and an isolated but authentic inner self. This division of mind and body is not unknown to L'Avalée:

Instead of being the core of his true self, the body is felt as the core of a detached, disembodied, "inner", "true" self looks on at with tenderness, amusement or hatred. (DS, p. 69)

Les blessures corporelles ne sont pas affaire d'âme à âme, mais de chose à chose. Personne n'a de pouvoir sur moi que moi même. (p. 191)

The false front complies with what others want and tries to resemble what others are thought to want it to be: "This does not necessarily mean that the false self is absurdly good. It may be absurdly bad" (DS, p. 98). Thus Bérénice exaggerates her interest in her brother, recounting a scene between them as a performance for the benefit of the gullible parents. The caricaturing of the role defines the false front, and Christian, who is not astute, nonetheless explains that Bérénice is playing a role:

On dirait que tu te forces pour m'aimer, que tu te crois obligée de m'aimer. Into the original appearance of normality ... there creeps à certain oddity, a certain
On dirait même que tu as une mauvaise idée derrière la tête. (p. 138)

compulsive excessiveness in unwonted directions which turns into a caricature. (DS, p. 103)

Instead of appearing evil, however, she appears slightly bizarre. Her evil acts like killing the cats or Gloria simply remain unknown to others. The attempt to impose herself by polarizing good inner self and false outer self passes unnoticed and the schizoid process proceeds without an explicit external yardstick. If one mode of being something is to adhere to one term of a binary opposition, she fails to become such a something in the eyes of others. She falls between categories as merely strange or silly. To the extent that such an assessment is inherently condemnatory, she embodies this marginally evil status. Her evil is in being both unspontaneous and inconsistent.

The text does include another image of the inner, true self of "L'Avalée," in private thoughts and feelings. The written text is a structure where what is real is not referentially true: "Pour parer à l'insuffisance qui ne me permet pas d'agir... je les [choses et activités] définis noir sur blanc sur une feuille de papier" (p. 153).

Indeed, at first the division of roles between narrator and protagonist seems to stand for the inner self monitoring the false front:

Whereas all exchanges with the other may be fraught with pretence... the individual seeks to achieve a relationship with himself that is sinceré, honest, frank. Anything may be concealed from others, but nothing must be hidden from the self. (DS, p. 83)

La vie ne se passe pas sur la terre mais dans ma tête. (p. 33)

Le seul moyen de s'appartenir est de comprendre. Les seules mains capables de saisir la vie sont à l'intérieur de la tête.... (p. 142)

A second schism exists within the true self which becomes both
the observer and the one observed. Since no one else is allowed to perceive the true self, it must become its own object. In a state of insecurity, the self sees others as threatening, and when it becomes its own observer, that observer also threatens and bullies: "the part of himself who looks into him and sees him has developed the persecutory features he has come to feel the real person outside him to have" (DS, p. 117). In this predicament, the enemy is internalized, a malevolent critic reminiscent of Freud's archaic "super-ego", behaving "in a sadistic manner toward the subject." Laing cites references to the sun as symbol of consciousness: "the schizoid individual exists under the black sun, the evil eye, of his own scrutiny" (DS, p. 112). Thus in the sarcophagus fantasy, the wings make no shadows. More specifically, "L'Avalée" describes the paralysis of consciousness and the realm of experience as frozen, motionless and dead; it is a deadly calm with the two aspects locked into one perception which destroys the potential of fantasy: "La lumière s'est fait forme, est hors de l'océan d'air.... Le soleil a des rayons de fer. La lune a des rayons de bois, comme une roue de carriole. Je suis calme" (p. 141). The experience of the true self is limited to fantasy, memory and abstract thought, and is deprived of sensory imput which occurs via the body, or false self:

Phantasy, without being in some measure embodied in reality, or itself enriched by injections of "reality", becomes more and more empty and volatilized. (DS, p. 85)

Quand on s'est compris, on peut courir dans l'immense sphère armillaire et s'im- aginer que, comme l'écureuil dans sa cage, on joue, on se joue. (p. 142)

In this context, to understand oneself is to turn oneself into a thing. To the rational, mechanistic self of Descartes corresponds the universe
of Ptolemy. For Ptolemy the earth is the focal point, for Descartes the rational individual ego.

The defensive reaction of isolating the core of being tends to result in self-objectification, as is on occasion clearly stated by "L'Avalée": "Afin de me faire une âme j'ai brûlé ce que j'avais de spontanéité" (p. 93). According to The Divided Self there is long-term ambivalence to the schizoid process as in L'Avalée des avalés. A conviction of innate personal worthlessness accompanies ontological insecurity, and is reinforced by the observer persona of the fragmented personality, as we see in the middle of L'Avalée des avalés: "Dans le coeur d'une laide comme moi, d'une mise au monde rien que pour souffrir comme moi, seuls haine et désespoir ont place" (p. 140). As Laing says, the subject feels unworthy to exist and even more guilty that he is afraid of life.

The process of writing and reading, which might be expected to effect a compromise allowing relative isolation and mediated contact is, in L'Avalée des avalés, tainted by implication in the process of withdrawal and fantasy; for example: "Dans un livre, on est seul. Dans un mauvais livre il y a des meurtres, des cochonneries, tout ce que je souhaite au monde" (p. 170).

The evil of the false self ultimately contaminates the true self, and the text; moreover, Laing says that it is inevitable that the true self become charged with hate. The hatred comes from frustration at not being able to take anything in, since all experience, except self-awareness, has been relegated to the false self. Like the fragmentation of the personality, this shutting out of experience sets in motion a
spiral of impoverishment and debilitation in the self. The subject becomes incapable of what was first refused deliberately; in anorexia, for example, a prejudice against eating may become the inability to digest food. "L'Avalée" proposes to incorporate the world into her self by devouring it, thus liquidating her dependency on others, but no sooner is this resolution articulated than it is rejected in favour of total destruction, including the voluntary annihilation of the self:

The only way of destroying and of not destroying what is there may be felt to be to destroy itself. (DS, p. 161)

Mais j'aime mieux tout détruire. Je ne sais pas pourquoi. C'est plus désintéressé .... Et puis est-ce que cette solution ne suppose pas l'identification de la plus totale victoire avec la mort? (pp. 160-161)

The underlying dynamic of L'Avalée des avalés remains that of eating, swallowing and vomiting. In the tradition of grotesque realism, one might be surprised to find these themes divorced from certain other themes of the body related to digestion or elimination. The "Avalée", on the other hand, cannot really incorporate anything; thus one of her most impressive fantasies concerns expropriating the digestive apparatus of others: "Je raffole des jejunums frais, des jejunums encore chauds de sang et frémissants de vie" (p. 245).

In L'Avalée des avalés we can trace a progressive psychic deterioration which is intelligible with reference to the schizoid processes described in The Divided Self. The dominant thematic perspective is deterioration, and this negativity inheres in the allusion to entirely passive agents in the title, an allusion betrayed in the English translation as The Swallower Swallowed. This is not to imply that the
text means something negative, but that, from the psychological point of view, and in spite of movements toward partial integration, the reader is exposed to the escalation of the schizoid defences: withdrawal, objectification of self and others, and the splitting of the self. The consequences for the little girl, Bérénice, are probably disastrous. All that remains unaltered by the process of sclerosis is an abstract will to escape: "J'appelle la guerre de l'homme contre ce qu'il a fait.... Il faut que je fuie comme un voleur et je n'ai rien pris d'autre que ma vie" (p. 90).

In describing "L'Avalée" we have cited incidents from the story, expository or pseudo-expository statements, and use of imagery, all with reference to a process of character development. We will later corroborate and round out this description by examining the story and distribution of secondary characters (Chapter II), always from a psychological point of view similar to Laing's:

Changes in the relationship between the different aspects of the person's relationship to himself are constantly associated with his inter-personal relationships. These are complex and never quite the same from person to person. (DS, p. 74)
NOTES

1 See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Questions de méthode* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 12: "... un argument 'antimarxiste' n'est que le rajeunissement apparent d'une idée prémarxiste."


5 Holt, p. 70.


7 Sigmund Freud, "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis," *Collected Papers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1949), III, 555: "We have been driven to assume that during the process of the dream he [the obsessional neurotic] understood that women are castrated, that instead of a male organ they have a wound which serves for sexual intercourse and that castration is the necessary condition of femininity." See also Luce Irigaray's rereading of Freud from a woman's perspective, *Speculum: de l'autre femme* (Paris: Minuit, 1974).

8 See Anthony Wilden, "Lacan and the Discourse of the Other," *The Language of the Self: the Function of Language in Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), p. 269: "The Other with a big '0' is the scene of the Word insofar as the scene of the word is always in third position between two subjects. If no man's actions are symbolic in themselves... then their symbolic nature is dependent upon the Other (upon the unconscious and the other)."


10 Norman N. Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 38: "Of all the different levels of fantasy in literature, the oral is the most common (at least in my range of reading)... in life the sense of trust and of self that we obtain in this first phase underlies all our subsequent development, so literature seems to build on orality."

Freud, "Childhood Memories and Screen Memories," SE, VI, p. 43: Memories of early childhood often seem detached and insignificant. For Freud such are screen memories: "The indifferent memories owe their preservation not to their own content but to an associative relation between their content and another which is repressed...."


Laing, in a note, p. 39: "Despite the philosophical use of 'ontology' ... I have used the term in its present empirical sense because it appears to be the best adverbial or adjectival derivative of being."


The theme of suffocation in this poetry seems to echo the isolationist trend of traditional Quebec. One poem in particular by Saint-Denys-Garneau is close to the imagery of L'Avalee des avalés:

Il me faut devenir subtil
Afin de, divisant à l'infini l'infini distance
De la corde à l'arc
Créer par ingéniosité un espace analogue à l'Au-delà
Et trouver dans ce réduit matière
Pour vivre et l'art.


Holland, p. 41.

Eidelberg, p. 279.


CHAPTER II: L'AVALEÉ DES AVALÉS: THE OTHERS

Nature as the Ideal Other

A reader presented with the record of the life of a child from the age of nine to sixteen might expect to trace a process of growth and development. Instead, read for its mimetic power, L'Avalee des avalés illustrates a process of schizoid disintegration above and beyond the persona of the child. Yet neither is the child confined to or defined as a symbolic, stylized representation of neurotic consciousness.

In the first moment of the text, particularly when Berénice is still at home, a wealth of haphazard and intermittent concrete detail engages the reader's attention and supports the reference to a little girl with her individual, albeit unlikely, family situation. Even when reason clamours that the vocabulary, the breadth of vision, must not be those of a child, les effets du réel compel interest and allow the gaps to be ignored.

In this chapter a realist perspective on the text is adopted again, by looking beyond the narrator to the secondary characters for a coherent mimesis. Yet, the psychological motifs organize them as a residue of what has already been described: one personal subject, idiosyncratic, non-universal, shuffling its aspects without regard to the lines which evoke the separateness of inside and outside.

These lines seem irrepressible when one is describing the social integration of an individual, but "L'Avalee" is present in or encompassing others rather than with them. In early chapters, like 9, 10 and 11, one recognizes the idyllic world of the romantic Rousseauist child. In this world the subject is defined first in relation to nature and only
subsequently in relation to others. One notes the facility and expertise with which Bérénice defines herself in relation to the cycles of nature.

In Chapter 9, for example, Bérénice and her brother Christian collect samples of marsh life. Christian is the initiator to a universe which, although baroque, is predictable: "Les bouts de jonc qu'il ramasse sont des maisons. Il les ouvre et on voit s'enfuir un insecte, un petit animal, une sorte de minuscule être humain, un rhinocéros pas plus gros qu'une tête d'épingle" (p. 34). In the worlds Christian knows, everything has its place, protected within something else, and the analogy with the human order is possible.

As in the case of the "pin-head" rhinoceros, or the spiders which fill Bérénice's eyes like "autant de navires," spatial perspectives are often altered or blurred. The narrative is reminiscent of Jung's equation of the smaller-than-small with bigger-than-big:

I have often encountered motifs which make me think that the unconscious must be the world of the infinitesimally small. It seems to me that this liking for the diminutive on the one hand and for superlatives -- giants, etc. on the other is connected with the queer uncertainty of spatial and temporal relations in the unconscious.2

The swamp serves as a catch-all image for what in the mind is not usually accessible to consciousness. The description of the children's dredging with a net suggests ritualized contact with the preconscious and the unconscious. Bérénice narrates in the present, but presents the scene as a repetition of many previous ones: "chaque fois," "je vois déjà," "j'en attends d'autres" (p. 35). Also, the net moves slowly and rhythmically so as not to frighten quarry. Psychic revelation occurs in a state of relaxation or hypnosis. Here it occurs in three stages: one first perceives the uncertain proliferation of species,
then the fragmentary or monstrous-seeming forms of the large tadpoles, and at last formal perfection in the "vrai petit poisson d'aquarium, un petit poisson transparent..." (p. 36); depicted as the highest of these life forms and for Jung a frequently invoked image of the self. The style suggests a set-piece written for school, and a facility corresponding to the mastery of a convention.

In Chapter 10, Christian and Bérénice light a fire to burn off the dead grasses; the flames scattered can be said to represent "extremes of emotion and affect... which in ordinary life are prohibited, suppressed, hidden or altogether unconscious." One is reminded of Bérénice's hearing the rabbi read that "Les impies seront brûlés comme paille" (p. 11), and of her defiant commitment to be among them. Bérénice's fire is a purification, clearing the way for the new growth.

The choice of day for the fire must be dictated by the likelihood of rain in the wind; these elements will allow the children to exercise control over the fire. Nonetheless, the child comes into contact with a dangerous force, or passion, and this contact strengthens the self.

The idyll of childhood in L'Avalee includes a scene of summer, a scene of autumn, and a scene of winter, Bérénice's trial by ice which defeated her in the past. She stuck her tongue on a frozen iron knob, then yanked it away. Also when she ran out on the river ice,"comme nous étions ainsi qu'aujourd'hui en train d'essayer la glace, une sorte de tonnerre s'est mis à gronder sous nous... une large fissure... nous a couru sous les pieds" (p. 39). The ice supports the skater in the manner of a barrier separating self from other, conscious from unconscious. Previously in danger, this year the children run no risk of
falling into the mirror.

These chapters establish the health and integrity of the subject figuring as a primitive being, strong yet potentially defenseless in contact with a degraded society. One anticipates that her relations with others will be problematic.

_Growth as Disintegration_

The constellation of secondary characters is replaced twice, in conjunction with changes of setting which suggest, for convenience's sake, a division of the text into four sections. The first section, pages 7-138, covers the period when Bérénice lives at home; the second, pages 139-219, covers the period of her life in New York City with her father's relatives; the third, pages 219-241, a return home; and pages 242-282, the period in Israel.

In a familiar tradition of modern psychology, the child's family situation is accorded a determining role in his later development, even in psychosis. In later life in new situations, a troubled individual re-creates unfortunate patterns of previous family relations much as, in this text, any new characters introduced later resemble Bérénice's father, mother or brother, whence the importance of the family as a structuring principle of the text. However, the family as origin is known only as recreated by the articulate child.

Much has been said of the prominence of mothers in French Canadian writing up to the nineteen-sixties. In _L'Avalée des avalés_ the mother is not a psychological portrait of an individual, and only marginally a social study, as an inverted stereotype. Introduced as Madame Einberg
(p. 9), she has no given name and Bérénice never addresses her directly. It is startling when Bérénice's brother refers to her as "Maman" Brückner (p. 81). Dialogue, incidentally, does not play a large role in L'Avalee des avalés.

In the text the mother comes to be known as "Chat Mort," "Chamomor" ("chameau mort") and "Panthère." These names are not without a value judgment. The choice of the cat to represent a young mother, a choice familiar to Jung, emphasizes beauty, spontaneity and unselfconscious voluptuousness: "Elle me fait penser à ces gros chats trop paresseux pour se crisper" (p. 119). But the velvety presence has claws; indeed, she is evil because she relegates the child to the role of the bad seed. The reasons for her disguised attack in the following passage are clear:

[Bérénice]: je lui ai dit qu'elle ne serait jamais qu'une panthère, qu'une bête égoïste et solitaire, qu'un être sourd et aveugle.... - Toi, m'a-t-elle répondu en souriant et me caressant, tu ne seras jamais qu'un petit singe, qu'une petite bête laide, grimaçante, râlante et colère. (p. 101)

Bérénice is ugly because she is insightful; this ugliness is an attributed identity which she makes her own. The mother is beautiful but false, because frightened of self-awareness as of bright sunlight (p. 24). Her mother's falseness frightens Bérénice, who says her mother is a dead cat. From her influence, the child fears moral paralysis and confusion. In a passage where Bérénice explains how death might come to take her away, the reference of the pronoun "elle" slides between "la mort" and "Chamomor," who is standing watch to protect her from death:

Elle reste avec moi pour m'aider à repousser la mort si elle s'avisait de surgir, d'attaquer. Seule dans cette chambre, dans l'état où je suis, la mort aurait
beau jeu. Elle n'aurait qu'à entrer et me prendre. Elle est dans ma chambre. Elle est dans ma vie. (p. 91)

The visual metaphors which form networks in this text depict the deadness of Bérénice's mother; indeed, psychological interpretations can be checked against them:

En elle, toutes les portes et les fenêtres sont condamnées. En elle c'est comme une maison où il ne vit plus personne. (p. 21)

Je regarde ses yeux. Je regarde des yeux que leur regard tourné vers l'intérieur rend aveugles. (p. 102)

This text presents a variation on the romantic image of the child. Although Bérénice is all integrity, she is not beautiful, and is undermined by self-consciousness. The feline spontaneity of her mother conceals hypocrisy, fear and falsehood. The child explains the mother by comparing her to a child (pp. 106, 133). The mother and child taken together display the traits of the romantic child: beauty, spontaneity, integrity. Of these, the child Bérénice possesses integrity. Both lack self-assurance.

Bérénice's lack of self-assurance motivates her presentation of self as an authentic inner core concealed by false front. In situations of external conflict Bérénice also depicts relations between these aspects of her identity. She admires her mother as an analogue of this true self: she fears her as an adversary capable of stealing and appropriating this self. This equivocation, hesitation and uncertainty can be illustrated with reference to Etienne Souriau's schema of six dramatic functions. In his structural analysis of drama, a function represents "a dramatic role conceived apart from any particular characterization of it." In the capacity of narrator, Bérénice figures
will and energy informing conflict. Her interest in controlling others, her tense and coloured discourse, do suggest this image. A second function of Souriau's is the object desired. The one for whom the object is desired fulfills a third function in Souriau's schema. As the swallower, Bérénice herself includes all three functions within. Through her mother she seeks to legitimize her self; the mother's spontaneity, for example, is the desired object which is also her own self: "Quand je me réveillerai l'idylle avec la mère sera devenue douceur.... Elle ne pourra se continuer que de moi à moi.... dans les souterrains creuses dans la lumière et les ténèbres" (p. 109). Yet this mother is also an opponent, Souriau's fourth function, essential to the development of a dramatic conflict. She threatens the development and maintenance of Bérénice's self. Bérénice's dilemma here seems Promethean as she feels unable to obtain without stealing or to consolidate without undermining. How judgmentally one reacts to the mother depends on whether she is seen to wish to appropriate Bérénice or vice versa.

The mother's conflicting roles are manifest during Bérénice's hunger strike (Chapters 26-32) when she does not speak for a month and does not eat for longer than a month. For Freud this "anorexia nervosa" "signals a regression to the oral stage, wherein eating represents the act of devouring and food represents the preoedipal mother [earliest significant other]." Conversely an offer by the mother may constitute a disguised attack: "[Chamomor] c'est une bouteille pleine d'amour. Et cette bouteille, quelquefois, se lève, se penche au-dessus de moi, tend son goulot à mes lèvres. Je meurs de soif. Je ne boirai pas" (p. 99).
In *L'Avalée* the mother's attitude is ambivalent, and Freud also concedes that in general "it is impossible to say how often this fear of the mother is supported by an unconscious hostility on the mother's part which is sensed by the girl."\(^{10}\)

One begins to suspect that the elements of story in *L'Avalée des avalés* can be reduced to an oedipal configuration. However, opposite the mother we find no father figure emotionally implicated in Bérénice's development. Rather mother and daughter compete for the affections of the older child, Christian, who may easily be reduced to an image of Bérénice's inner self of pure potential, to be protected at all cost from impending destruction: "Ce n'est pas lui que j'aime... c'est l'idée que je me fais de lui, c'est ce que je porte dans l'âme et appelle Christian" (p. 54).

As a foil for Bérénice he shows the strength of the one-dimensional literalist (p. 52) who distinguishes reliably between fantasy and reality (p. 115), a derivative so-called adult personality in opposition to her identity which is Jewish (Christian versus Jew) and archaic in the Freudian sense.

Unlike the mother, Christian is non-threatening, but he is less vigorous and colourful. It seems the "inner self" is already no longer pure, Christian proving himself disloyal and cowardly; he abandons his injured rat to the trapper, his mother for his cousin Mingrelie, Mingrelie for his mother, and Bérénice for everyone: "Christian est doux comme une chose.... Il n'a pas de voix.... Il est mou, inconsistant" (pp. 10, 88, 70).

During the visit of her numerous cousins, Bérénice's rivals seem
to have multiplied by division, such a "plurality of children underscoring the as yet incomplete synthesis of personality." Withdrawing from direct intervention, she plays her mother off against her cousin Mingrélie. In accounts of her inner condition, the one who speaks is only marginally an agent: "On peut tout voir entre les planches... de la grange..." (p. 64).

This passivity is manifest in the rapport between Bérénice and the gardener, her "helper" in Souriau's schema. The gardener is the keeper of the island's earthly paradise, consulted as to when the ice is safe, when a grass-fire will be safe (pp. 57, 36). In Bérénice's world he is already obsolete: he serves the soup (p. 28). He is a retired fisherman reminiscent of the saviour-figures who no longer have power, who are fading away. He has become moody, taciturn and drunk. On the day that Bérénice kills the cat Mauriac II and allows the gardener to take the blame, she and her mother, seeking to confront him, find he has killed himself. One remembers warnings to children that their misdemeanours will cause pain and suffering for their guardian angel; however, the two deaths are merely juxtaposed in the text: "Un chat assassiné et un jardinier mort font deux morts" (p. 122); the subject's lack of emotion leaves the reader to speculate on her sense of guilt. On the other hand, it is also the gardener as guardian who has abandoned the child to evil since he is asleep when Bérénice does the deed. His death signals her passing from the cyclical mythical order of nature to the social order in which Einberg exercises authority.

Although her mother and brother are not entirely distinct from Bérénice, her father is not implicated in the play of projection and
introjection. His power is external to Bérénice and determines her
destiny by exiling her, once briefly, to California, later to New York
and to Israel. He fulfills Souriau's sixth function, the Arbiter, the
function which, contrary to her fantasies of power, is never inside
Bérénice. Einberg characterizes Bérénice as an innocent victim.

The portrayal of Einberg is fragmentary and caricatural, incon­
gruous with his power at the service of economic and ideological impera­
tives. He inhibits contact between Bérénice and the rest of her family
on religious grounds and dismisses her doctor on economic ones (pp. 94-
95). As Arbiter he simply represents the corrupt society of Lukacs'
theory of the novel. Bérénice's being given to this authority before
birth is scandalous: "ils se sont mis d'accord sur une sorte de divi­
sion des enfants... Ils ont même signé un contrat..." (p. 9). It is
also absurd since she is of no use to Einberg: "Il aimerait bien mieux
avoir Christian. Une fille ce n'est pas bon. Ça ne vaut rien. Einberg
n'a pas voulu laisser Mme Einberg me nourrir. Il était écoeuré que je
ne sois qu'une fille" (p. 16). Bérénice's insecurity of being has a
basis in her situation. Further, the text presents the effect of social
forces on the child as logically anterior to that of the parent.

The Second Stage: Repetition and Merging of Roles

When Einberg sends Bérénice away from Chamomor and Christian,
Chamomor provides Constance Chlore as a substitute companion for Bérénice
in exile (p. 137). This little friend behaves toward Bérénice as Bérénice
wanted her mother and brother to behave:

Tout ce qu'elle trouve, en elle ou ailleurs, qui puisse
faire ma joie, elle me le donne. (p. 165)
Constance Chlore trottine derrière moi. Quand je presse le pas elle trottine plus vite. Quand je change de trottoir elle change de trottoir. (p. 147)

Soul-mate of the inner self, she must see and know Bérénice truly. Her eyes are her distinguishing trait; she is "la véritable gazelle" (p. 84), the animal with the large soft eyes.

The contamination of the inner self previously discerned in Christian returns again in Constance Chlore. Also, the fantasy of wish-fulfillment steadily undergoes impoverishment. Constance Chlore's compliance is presented as excess; "molle" (p. 123) like Christian she lacks substance: "Constance Chlore, pâle comme les prairies de l'automne, comme le sable, comme la cendre, comme tout ce qui est stérile" (p. 145).

As Bérénice names her mother "Chamomor," she refers to "Constance Chlore" as to a formula the elements of which are not to be cited separately. As noted by Bernard Lombard in a review of L'Avalee, the name is that of a Roman Emperor of the fourth century and thus evokes the decline of the Roman Empire as well. Once, after Constance Chlore's death, Bérénice refers to her by a family name, "Cassman." Otherwise the name is Bérénice's and she changes it: "Si Constance Chlore vivait encore, je changerais son nom en Constance Exsangue. Comment ai-je pu, pendant cinq ans, lui conserver un nom aussi bête?" (p. 176). "Exsangue," "cadaverous," makes most explicit the ambivalence in Constance Chlore. She is "Constance" because of her even and stable disposition, but such a virtue behoves the dead: "Que fait Constance Chlore pour être si constante, si égale à elle-même...?" (p. 145). She is also "chlore," to close or terminate, and "chlore," chlorine, a bleach, a disinfectant
and a poison. A leeching effect, a poisoning is possible by contact with the unreal. The self's relegating of perception to a false self produces impressions of unreality: "Once he becomes aware of something it becomes unreal although 'I always feel that they [others] were once real and are now flitting away'" (DS, pp. 109-110).

"Constance Chlore" illustrates a convergence of "les noms propres grammaticaux et les descriptions définies," identifying the stock figure of the angelic child who dies... The ambivalence in the name indicates the decadence of the type. The narrator does not believe in it and it constitutes a threat to her, hence the connotations of bleach and greenish-yellow gas. For "L'Avalee" to be known by another is to be destroyed.

The narrative fastidiously prepares Constance Chlore's death which coincides with the passing of Bérénice's preadolescent childhood (pp. 162-163). Bérénice imagines Constance Chlore growing up. While she watches Constance Chlore, the latter appears enchanted: deep-asleep, in a poppy-print gown, with a beautiful, blind, dead face. Nonetheless Bérénice feels that she must save Constance Chlore by escaping out of time, or from the city. These two images orient Bérénice differently, resulting in paralysis, an impression of silence (pp. 166, 167) and density of the air (pp. 166, 167). Wandering the street the children are haunted by the uncanny: "Elle me fait voir loin en contrebas, là où plusieurs voies surélevées se croisent, comme un vaste envol d'oiseaux lumineux figé entre ciel et terre" (p. 166). This "V" represents the most total victory in life, a victory which Bérénice has previously identified as death (p. 161).
Constance Chlore must die to preserve her essence, to realize her essence, and to eliminate a threat to Bérénice. After the fact Bérénice has fantasies of controlling others' actions and arranging destiny:

Elle s'est supprimée pour me faire plaisir... Elle s'est fait tuer pour se conformer à un impératif mystérieux issu de ma volonté. (p. 169)

If there is anything the schizoid... is likely to believe in, it is his own destructiveness... his love is dangerous to anyone else. (DS, p. 93)

Her ambivalence toward Constance Chlore is the unfolding ambivalence toward the self of pure potential which moves from closure (clore) to fading out (exsangue).

Through her mother, Christian and Constance Chlore, Bérénice explores desired aspects of herself. After Constance Chlore's death she turns to Uncle Zio (tío, Zion) the patriarch of her father's family. Unlike the others he is not associated with the inner ideal, but with Bérénice's moral conscience which is becoming a hostile observer. In Zio Bérénice isolates an opponent function within herself. She protests against Zio's shutting her in her room (p. 197) and in the bathroom cupboard (p. 201), yet she walls herself in: "Je me suis si bien murée, j'ai tenu mes valves fermées si justes durant ces années d'exil, que cette nuit... je me meurs..." (p. 173).

Bérénice is concerned with rules about taking in light or food:

Le samedi, Zio s'abstient de toute nourriture.... Il se soude la bouche et se coud le nez pour ne pas avaler d'air. (p. 148)

Il ne faut pas toucher au réfrigérateur, à cause de l'ampoule électrique qui s'allumerait automatiquement à l'intérieur si par malheur on l'ouvrirait. (p. 148)
On the Sabbath, in prayer, the worshipper is to seek the divine light which in creation "is progressively screened so as not to engulf all in its tremendous glory so that creatures can appear to enjoy an independent existence. In reality there is nothing but God." Berenice, on the other hand, sees the hostile glare of the inner observer who would destroy her, using abstinence as a pretext. The concept of a rigid moral agency of childhood, whose continued efficacy is archaic, is put in parallel with the concept of God, and not flattering to the latter. Zio's rigidity approaches that of the stereotypic pharisee.

On the other hand, Zio would help Berenice, keeping her from the opponent with which she identifies him, for "a melancholy attitude of mind is anathema to Hasidism... even over his sins a man should not grieve overmuch": "Ils sont aimables à mort. Ils sont heureux à mort. Ils sont heureux à mort parce qu'ils sont saints à mort" (p. 139). Functioning in a context of traditional values, Zio is not limited to furthering immediate personal economic or emotional interests; his mandate is rather to "transform evil into good through an actual confrontation of evil in its own domain." However, the persona and the ideology are judged anachronistic, they abandon Berenice to herself and her father: "Zio m'abandonne aux acides qui me rongent.... Hier encore, il disait: "je te dresserai, dussé-je y perdre mon âme" (p. 271).

After Zio's defeat the possibility of a triumphant homecoming remains for Berenice. Her father's bad leg prevents him from physically coercing her to visit her ill and disfigured mother (p. 224) who, rejected by Christian, retreats into a traditional role of martyr: "une mère est
l'esclave enchantée de ses enfants" (p. 229). Bérénice fears pitying her, whereas Christian's broken leg allows Bérénice to be of service to him, making a claim on his love with her incestuous love which is also an acceptance and loving of the self. But her brother is not in love with her and once more, through the agency of Einberg, the incest taboo is enforced and Bérénice sent away. The physical-moral infirmity of the family in this episode puts the seal of finality on Bérénice's isolation. Left alone she continues to recreate an emptiness which was always already there: "Partir ce n'est pas guérir car on demeure" (p. 219).

The secondary characters in the last forty-page episode are more sympathetic than the original characters whose roles they recreate: for Einberg, the benign Rabbi Schneider; for the mother, his mistress Céline; for Christian, the brave young soldier Graham Rosenkreutz (compare with Christian Rosenkreuz, legendary founder of the Rosicrucians); and for Constance Chlore, Gloria, the anti-Constance Chlore. They have little importance for Bérénice, uncoupled from her immediate situation, drifting in memories and fantasies, aware of others mostly as aspects of herself or partial selves: "S'il n'y a personne que sont ceux que je me rappelle, que je vois et que j'anticipe? Ils sont illusions, mirages, imaginaires. Ce sont des points d'application imaginaires dociles du peuple de forces qui me hantent" (p. 266).

In Israel in a time of intermittent war with the Arabs, the Rabbi Schneider, whose hell-fire sermons frightened and repulsed the young Bérénice, has become an army colonel. Now that the violence has become actual, he struggles ineffectually to keep it untainted by the
personal frustrations which it is the function of religion to mediate. For him the status of autochthonous Israeli is a gage of ideological purity; yet Israeli autochthony is both political and religious, that is, for the ever-trenchant Bérénice, merely personal (p. 278). Though Bérénice remains critical of social practice, she accepts violence as her nature:

Je hais sans discernement à la seconde, tout ce qui saisit mon sens ou mon imagination. (p. 278)

In keeping with the nightmarish atmosphere, Bérénice's new alter-ego struggles toward an apotheosis in evil (pp. 256-257). Unlike the essentially good Constance Chlore, Gloria is ambiguous and not unreal. She is not even unsympathetic, and Bérénice announces: "je suis presque sûre que ses belles théories vicieuses ne sont que bluff" (p. 268). Perhaps in comparison to Gloria, Bérénice finds herself beautiful (pp. 259-260) and repeats Constance Chlore's very words without intending to (p. 254), even as her memory of Constance Chlore becomes ambivalent and the latter calls for Bérénice's destruction:

Dans le palais de justice où les voix se répercutent comme dans un tunnel, Constance Exsangue trône, aigrie... Que fais-tu là, Bérénice?... vite, suicide-toi! (p. 277)

The death of Gloria, with which the text ends, may be read as Bérénice's psychic crisis. As speaker and agent, Bérénice causes the
destruction of another who is her false front (helper and opponent) and her true self (desired object). A host of distant and manipulative observers are resolved to sacrifice the pair of girls; the speaker is never identified with this function. In over-reacting to an external threat Bérénice provokes attack and saves herself only by holding Gloria in front of her to be shot. The powerful false-front destroyed, a psychic integration is achieved; yet Bérénice's selfishness and deceit make one think of the incident also as her existential death, or at least her metamorphosis into a new and evil entity. As Gilles Marcotte says "tous les meurtres de Bérénice sont des suicides et ce qui meurt en elle, ici, c'est cela même qui la constituait, sa raison d'être."

For the psychological point of view it is consistent that the desire for integration and for annihilation should converge in a single act: "in one way, the schizoid individual may be desperately trying to be himself, to regain and preserve his being: yet it is very difficult to disentangle the desire to be from the desire for non-being..." (DS, p. 139).

In this récit the secondary characters are not even apparently separate from the narrator; we have said that it portrays a process of schizoid deterioration in the subject; we can also say that it parodies the concept of a narrator portraying a world outside of the text. Just as Bérénice feels herself swallowed up or swallowing up, the novel as an institution is deconstructed in the process of this particular novel's deconstructing of literary and social conventions, including the one analysed here, the character as agent.
NOTES


5 See Jean LeMoyne, *Convergences* (Montreal: Editions HMH, 1962), p. 105: "Je ne vois qu'un archétype à nos femmes imaginaires... c'est la mère. Seule en effet la mère peut rendre compte de l'interdit qui frappe nos héroïnes; la mère respectable, vénérable, sacrée, intouchable, imprenable...."

6 Jung, *Collected Works*, VI, p. 184: "Sometimes the Kore- and mother-figures slither down altogether to the animal kingdom, the favourite representatives then being the cat or the snake or the bear...."

7 Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1967), p. 31: "In a world given increasingly to utilitarian values and the Machine, the child could become the symbol of the Imagination and Sensibility, a symbol of Nature set against the forces abroad in society actively de-naturing humanity." See also p. 41: "Before Hume, Reason has been associated with Nature; after him, Nature became inextricably related to Feeling."


11 Jung, *Collected Works*, IX, p. 165. A "plurality of children" represents "an as yet incomplete synthesis of personality... an ego may be present but it cannot experience its wholeness within the framework of its own personality."

13 Georges Lukacs, *La Théorie du roman* (Paris: Editions Gonthier, 1963), p. 56: "Les structures que l'âme découvre... en tant que substrat et support de son activité parmi les hommes forment le monde de la convention; monde tout-puissant... dont les lois rigoureuses... s'imposent avec une nécessaire évidence au sujet connaissant mais qui... n'offrent ni un sens... ni un champ d'activité...."


18 Encyclopedia Judaica, VII, p. 1410.


CHAPTER III: THE OBSESSIVE SELF: MILLE MILLES

The Well-Defined Self

This analysis has as a second point of departure a second novel, Le Nez qui voque. Each novel portrays as narrator-protagonist a non-unitary subject, problematic and disturbed. It seems appropriate to examine two images of such a subject because they are in two texts by the same author and so may be attributed a global coherence. Each evokes a divided self, but the texture of the image in Le Nez qui voque is quite different. Although beginning the discussion anew interrupts the presentation of L'Avalee des avalés, it serves the overall project of establishing a double image of subject.

The analysis of Le Nez qui voque (1967) will follow somewhat the same lines as that of L'Avalee des avalés (1966). The order of presentation reflects the order of publication. Although The Divided Self has relevance for Le Nez qui voque, the Freudian reference seems more overt. The subject is a specifically Freudian subject because male. His motifs are less oral and more phallic, evoking specific castration anxiety which displaces generalized ontological anxiety.

Le Nez qui voque resembles a traditional psychological novel in that it is easy to relate its composition to character mimesis. The existence of the text is explained by the récit as a young man's writing a journal to understand himself in relation to the world. Subordinating composition to character mimesis in this way poses problems which cannot arise in L'Avalee des avalés. Both the problems and the advantages are manifest as the greater degree of individuation and verisimilitude.
of the narrator in *Le Nez qui voque*.

The present project is to discuss the narrator's psychological idiosyncrasies, and to begin one may cite briefly a trait he has in common with Bérénice of *L'Avalée des avalés*, and that is a preference for spaces enclosed in precise boundaries: bodies, rooms, buildings, islands and geographical territories. Even a temporal notation may be changed into a spatial location, as the following examples illustrate:

> Il a plu. Il va pleuvoir. Nous sommes donc entre deux eaux. Mon âme, elle, est entre deux os. (p. 38)

> On ne peut pas tous être contents de ce qui se trouve entre la peau du ventre et la peau du dos. (p. 135)

The self is something alien to the body and accidentally imprisoned in it; the bones are like the prison bars. This theme of the enclosed space is important in poetry before 1950 and one thinks immediately of Saint-Denys-Garneau's "je suis une cage d'oiseau / une cage d'os."\(^1\)

The body is the enclosed space which the self occupies, but is repudiated and defined as the source of instinctual drives which are ego-alien; that is, which do not really come from the self.\(^2\) The speaker here shares the point of view that body is not the self, a point of view which can serve as a point of departure for a split personality. The territory of the self represented by the body is spatially and temporally constricting; indeed it is the body which causes experience to be defined in spatial and temporal co-ordinates. The pun cited above creates a parallel phonetically and graphically enclosed space in the text. To define oneself as co-extensive with the body is to submit to a narcissistic mortification, and the narrator refers to himself as a body when dissatisfied with himself: "L'embarras va grandissant entre Chateaugué
et moi; et c'est l'inimité qui a été mise entre le corps et l'âme" (p. 177).  

For the narrator the room he lives in is, on the contrary, a safe and sure extension of the self: "Il ne faudrait pas sortir de notre chambre. Dans notre chambre je suis chez moi. Dehors je suis dans le vide" (p. 82). On one occasion strangers come into his room without his invitation, and he fears that their awareness will objectify and wither his self. It is as if they were judging him with an authority coming from inside him: "C'est comme si nos âmes étaient à nu et que le vent soufflait dessus" (p. 75). The text echoes the enclosed spaces in the rhymes and rhythm. This room is the centre of his universe; like the earth in the ptolemaic system his universe is made up of concentric circles bounded by the void. The room is safe because enclosed in "la maison de ma chambre" and the latter is isolated by the geographically defined limits of Montreal island. The air in his room smells stale after an excursion around the island, but the island too is a hermetic entity, as illustrated once again by the rhyme closure of the phrase "île-ville" (p. 38).

A third, collective territorialization of the self, the nation, is threatened and informed by implicit acts of violence interpreted by the subject as enacted on his physical integrity as well: "De quoi a-t-il l'air, le Canada, avec la pointe du Maine entrée jusqu'à Saint-Eleuthère, jusqu'au coeur... Le Labrador en vert couché comme un violeur sur le Québec en blanc...." (p. 19). Political boundaries define the nation as the physical self is defined by the limits of the body; for example, the infant as such is separate from the breast, the
source of nourishment. The ambiguous reference of the pronoun "il" in the following instance confirms the personal nature of the narrator's identification: "Pauvre Mille Milles... tout seul! Il revient de droit au Québec, le Labrador" (p. 12). Like his vision of Labrador as estranged from Quebec, the narrator is divorced from the social dimension of his self.

The ideal territory is vast, its boundaries indefinite; and most important, it includes empty space. It is the model of a subject sensitive to the impinging quality of frequent contact and which calls to mind Bérénice's "tous vont sans chercher à se heurter, comme des nuages" (AV, p. 57):

Je suis en ce pays de la race des seigneurs, des seigneurs en raquettes, seuls au fond du Minnesota, des seigneurs à la rame seuls entre les rives de l'Ohio, des seigneurs à la voile seuls dans l'Atlantique, des seigneurs à la bêche seuls sur un continent. (p. 19)

The subject locates himself in the context of New France and the eighteenth century, withholding his interest from the temporal coordinates of the story, which are nonetheless explicitly stated: "c'est le neuf septembre mille neuf cent soixante-cinq" (p. 10). This is not the will to transcend time and space, but rather the radical conservatism indicated by the status of the subject's house, and illustrating his fixation on childhood: "La maison de ma chambre reste debout... seule debout entre un parc de stationnement et un parc de stationnement.... Je ne veux pas aller plus loin: je reste donc arrêté" (pp. 11, 9). In the story the threat from which the subject protects himself is real: the collective territory and thus the existence of subject and text are described
as endangered:

[Mille Milles] - Ici, c'est le Canada, c'est mon pays...
Vous me savez étranger à vos langues et vous les parlez quand-même. C'est comme si vous m'exiliez de mon propre pays.

[Le patron] - Ici, ce n'est pas le Canada. C'est mon restaurant. (p. 221)

Perhaps in self-defence, the subject presents these demands of others as more anachronistic than his own: "J'ai dit aux Grecs et aux Romains ce que je pensais du libre-échange... Ils ne se gênent pas pour parler les langues mortes. [Ils se disent:] Honte aux colonisés... aux vagabonds qui traînent sur les routes de l'Empire grec" (p. 220).

Suspicious of spatial and temporal limitations, the subject remains vague and inaccurate when questioned about his *état civil* by policemen (pp. 14, 76), a manpower employee and a waiter:

[l'employée] - Où as-tu été baptisé?
[lui] - Le lendemain
[l'employée] - Oh... Le mot où, dit-elle, est un adverbe de lieu.

Mille Milles... a quitté le bureau de placement pour toujours. (pp. 14-15)

J'ai quarante-deux ans. Si je ne les paraïs pas c'est parce que je suis esquimau.... Si je n'ai pas l'accent... je l'ai perdu en traversant la baie d'Hudson. Si je n'ai pas de papiers... je les ai perdus en traversant le détroit de Béring. (p. 145)

In all these situations the emphasis is on the past. Haziness about the present precludes a clear, incisive analysis of the subject's physical, emotional and intellectual state at any given time and inhibits problem solving:

The creation of uncertainty is one of the methods employed by the neurosis for Il n'y a rien de plus in-franchissable que la confusión qui règne dans ma
Doubt and uncertainty are among the subject's most distinguishing traits and in the following section we will discuss how they are determined by and in turn determine his personality.

The Obsessive Vision of Mille Milles

As early as Chapter 2 in Le Nez the narrator announces his two principal conflicts. For one thing, he has decided to commit suicide, yet does not want to die: "Il ne voudrait pas se suicider mais cela s'impose" (pp. 13-14). Worse, he has strong sexual impulses which he repudiates. It is his inability either to suppress his sexual feelings or accept them which compels him to entertain suicide as a resolution to the problem. The positive aspect of his interest in death is thus that it represents an end to his dilemma. Freud described obsessional neurotics who "need the help of the possibility of death in order that it may act as a solution of conflicts they have left unsolved." In analysing Mille Milles, Freud's description of obsessional neurotics is illuminating. Mille Milles enthusiastically espouses the Freudian tradition, alluding to his own suitability for analysis (p. 129). It is not a question of schematizing the character in terms of Freudian commonplaces, for the subject in fact puts psychoanalysis in perspective by, for example, including the mythical Freud in the struggle to possess the phallus as the equivalent of all power: "Je crois aux théories de Freud: tout y est possible et prouvable. Freud! Monte sur ton obélisque! monte sur le sommet de marbre que je t'érige" (p. 164).
Mille Milles is analyst and analysand. His journal analyses Freudian theory, as he analyses himself.

A basic premise about himself in the first half of the novel is "je suis infecte" (p. 33), arrived at for two reasons which push him towards suicide: "J'ai perdu ma pureté de corps et ma pureté d'intention" (p. 33). Sexuality is seen as physical impurity and the conflicts it arouses, which lead to ambivalence, as a further justification of self-loathing.

In the Freudian perspective sexuality, as infantile sexuality, relates to self-loathing in a particular way:

... The sexual instinct is originally divided into a great number of components—or rather, it develops out of them—some of which cannot be taken up into the instinct in its later form, but have at an earlier stage to be suppressed or put to other uses. These are above all the coprophilic instinctual components, which have proved incompatible with our aesthetic standards of culture....

To equate sex with what is dirty, filthy or disgusting is to equate it with the function of excretion. In terms of Freud's "childhood stages" this equivalence suggests a fixation on the anal stage of development. In other words, sexuality is repudiated as unclean; the desires repressed are associated with the excretory function:

Quelque chose en moi de très séduisant m'ordonne de ne pas m'occuper des femmes. Autre chose, de très fort, me pousse à les idolâtrer, à descendre sous terre et aller les adorer là où elles sont groupées, là où tout moisit. La poubelle est pleine de cigares.... Nous en avons acheté autant qu'il fallait en acheter pour emplir la poubelle, pour rire.  (p. 63)

For Freud the coprophilic tendency was the prototype of interest in the accumulation of objects, illustrated here by the cigars and the
women as sexual objects. The origin of the impulse to collect is clearly indicated by the choice of object, cigars; and the place of storage, reserved normally for garbage. The women are stored in the underworld, corresponding, in the tradition of grotesque realism, to the "lower bodily stratum."  

The unclean contaminates all of reality, and the non-living contaminates the living. The women are objects representing sexuality, and they inhabit the realm of the shades. As mentioned previously, the anal vision fails to differentiate in a reliable fashion between the living and dead.

This confusion of objects and living beings accompanies the idea which Freud found commonly held by small children, that childbirth is the same as excretion. In French tradition the breast is a common symbol of motherhood: "O Canada, ma patrie, mes aieux, ton front, tes seins, tes fleurons glorieux!" (p. 121). In Le Nez qui vogue the buttocks become an image of motherhood:

Il y a dans la surabondance de chair des fesses des femmes, quelque chose de bon, de généreux, de nourricier, de secourable.... Songeons à la Vénus Callipyge, et recueillions-nous.... Les fesses sont ce qu'il y a de plus maternel chez la femme, en particulier lorsqu'on la voit de dos. (pp. 163-164)

After evoking the buttocks as a symbol of Maternity, Mille Milles broaches the theme of the mother as object of desire.

In Le Nez qui vogue the subject associates sexuality with an interest in the process of excretion, an association which has important corollaries in Freudian theorizing. During the anal stage the infant learns to monitor the body's functions; during an anal fixation a subject
may desire to manipulate others sadistically. Control of self is ex-
tended to control of others:

Je tenais la porte de mon âme ouverte une seconde, puis
je la refermais, d'un coup de colère spasmodique, puis
je ne laissais plus rien passer. J'avais envie d'écraser
sa main abandonnée comme on a envie d'écraser la chenille
jaune et orange, comme on a envie de faire souffrir la
grenouille qu'on attrape. (p. 173)

This sadistic tendency may turn against the self, taking the
form of a rigid moral conscience. The "archaic super-ego" hates the
self and wants to destroy it, as Mille Milles hates and wishes to de-
stroy himself. It becomes rigid in the endeavor to control or suppress
aggression or sadism directed toward others.

The anal fixation thus implies more than a preoccupation with
what is usually considered unclean or disgusting. There is also the
will to treat people like things and for the subject to treat himself
like a thing, without respect. This abuse amounts to an act of aggres-
sion, and for Freud the anal complex really represented fear of aggres-
sion. Freud further maintains that the active and passive poles of
aggression and submission cannot be divorced from each other; thus,
fear of aggression means both fear of hurting someone and of being
hurt by someone. Because Freud analysed behaviour in terms of male
sexuality, aggression means castration; thus, here, fear of castration
and of castrating. He relates this fear to the biological differences
between male and female: the female perceived as a mutilated male, a
castrated male. The subject fearing castration experiences loathing
and horror of the woman's genitals as a lack thereof: "La vue d'une
vulve nue coupe le souffle... La fourrure de la vulve de la femme est
attachée au corps imberbe de la femme comme un reste de chair au menton d'un squelette" (p. 264). Such a sight causes the beholder to suffocate, as the difficulty of articulating the description suggests. The choice of comparison is unequivocal: the flesh is unclean and rotting and what exists is a remnant of what existed previously.

To protect himself from the threat of castration, the subject simply ignores the physical differences between male and female, by regressing to the anal phase of development, in the context of which male and female are simply active and passive. Nonetheless, in the Freudian scheme regression does not resolve the problem; the neurotic remains cognizant of the female form which inspires anxiety and contempt. The subject equates sexual function with defecation and women with sexuality; and a paralysing fear of aggression motivates this outlook. As suggested in connection with the problem of aggression, the Freudian point of view tends not to consider one pole of a binary opposition without reference to the other. Thus, in identifying the anal preoccupation one also posits anti-anal motifs of purity, airiness, the ethereal. In *Le Nez qui vogue* one finds, for example, the sublimated version of anal birth: "Nous avons ouvert le vasistas, pour laisser entrer la chaleur. Laissez venir à moi les petits enfants par le vasistas. Je ne suis pas responsable de mes associations d'idées" (p. 129). The word "vasistas" derives from the German "What is that?" (Was ist das?); childhood curiosity and inquisitiveness are said to derive from the wish to know where babies come from. The problem of control is explicitly cited in the quotation above, and throughout the novel one finds a network of references to, and images of, doors that open and shut.
The woman who is the locus of the unclean in the anal vision may, however, also figure as perfect purity: "Il n'y a pas que vous, la fange. Il y a vous, les chastes, les doux, les vrais orgueilleux. Je ne vole pas où vous voulez" (p. 127). One cannot imagine that those who fly are the castrated ones; on the contrary they must represent the phallic women, or women with a penis. Thus the masculine grammatical form is used where the reference should be feminine.

Having cited an abundance of anal themes in the text, we will now try to describe their effectiveness as a point of departure for the story and the text itself, via the personality of the narrative voice. Of course, an anal attitude toward sexuality should protect the subject from the lure of sexual activity. More than this, fear of aggression, the subject's anxiety about monitoring his aggressive impulses, may ultimately make all action seem dangerous or problematic. Might not any act one commits provoke one's castration? This fear may extend to one's thoughts, wishes or intentions, conceived as tantamount to acts. To avoid the possibility of action or decisions leading to acts, the neurotic mind may cultivate its directionless confusion. Purposeful thought is supplanted by pure thought without reference to action, which becomes compulsive and abstract:

A thought-process is obsessive or compulsive when, in consequence of an inhibition (due to a conflict of opposing impulses) at the motor end of the psychical system, it is undertaken with an expenditure of energy which (as regards both quantity and quality) is normally reserved for actions alone.12
The Act of Writing

In *Le Nez qui vogue* the emphasis is on two activities which remain open to the disturbed narrator; these are writing, always in his journal; and masturbation, as is frequently the case in journal novels.\(^{13}\) It will be evident that this latter contributes directly to his self-loathing and he engages in it compulsively. On the other hand, writing is for him an extension of thinking as described above in the context of obsessive neurosis: "Ecrivons n'importe quoi. Ecrivons jusqu'à ce que le sommeil nous prenne.... Écrire est la seule chose que je puisse faire pour distraire mon mal et je n'aime pas écrire" (pp. 44, 59). It is to be expected that in his writing doubt and uncertainty will reign; yet, equally, that he will describe and demonstrate the exact nature of his fears. Leaving aside his sexual behaviour for a time, we will explore the content of his writing and his discussion of it as they relate to the neurotic vision.

By writing the narrator achieves a compromise, for the act both distracts him from his violent impulses and allows him to indulge them in a context separate from the real world. The subject of *Le Nez qui vogue* runs the risk of paralysis; either from simple fear or from the persecuting conscience symptomatic of uncontrollable self-awareness: "Allez dormir avec le soleil dans les yeux! Avec les rayons de soleil au travers du corps" (p. 43). The conscious subject is as passive and powerless as the lunatic Schreber being penetrated by the rays of God.\(^{14}\) He writes to dissipate fear and the intense unpleasantness of self-awareness. Much of the text could illustrate writing as a defence against psychic fixation and an accompanying demonstration of how
language works. We will discuss two examples in detail. Counting and enumerating function as defences to circumvent fear or evil thoughts which threaten to destroy the identity of the self, a threat which, as mentioned, takes the form of paralysis: "Un cheval. Deux chevaux. Une idée. Deux idées. Idée me fait penser à César. César fut assassiné aux ides de mars et il y a ides dans idée.... Ouach! Ouachington! Jefferson! Lincoln! Buick! Desoto! Chevrolet! Plymouth! En avant, maman!" (p. 133). Allowing a partial fixation to occur in the repetition of the message permits the conscious subject to overcome paralysis, by making direct contact with the process of the preconscious which is language, or is at the least represented by language. In terms of Jakobson's two dimensions of language we can say that a paradigm or group of semantically and structurally equivalent words is constituted into a sequence. In another context this little game could be a symptom of a disruption in the ability to combine different parts of speech into syntactically correct utterances. Because of ambiguities in the code; i.e., that "Lincoln" refers to a person and a make of automobile, the paradigm transforms itself. This movement is communicated to the conscious subject whose normal thought processes resume: "En avant, maman!" The aim of these special uses of language in this text seems to be to represent how sequence is produced: continuing sense of self in the subject and representation of events in the narrative. That the subject can tell a story proves his existence.

The most extreme example of repetition in Le Nez qui vogue is the following:

Je me répète dans ce cahier. Mais il y a beaucoup de
It illustrates literally the narrator's complaint of obsessive thoughts: "mes pensées m'étranglent le cerveau" (p. 43). Yet, as before, the narrator is cultivating a fixation of his thoughts (here, on his own identity), in order to permit the preconscious part of his self to liquidate the fear which threatens his identity. Once again this fear of aggression, and of sexuality as a form of aggression, itself constitutes the dangerous fixation.

Repeating the sentence "il y a beaucoup de place dans mon cahier et je ne suis pas avare de mon temps" gives the writer evidence of his temporal continuity, since, as always in the text, the temporal dimension becomes spatial and therefore more concrete. As Gérard Genette put it, the text borrows its time metonymically from the time of reading; and in this fictional example, from the time of writing.

On the other hand, for a hide-bound reader of novels, the narrator of this passage is indulging in perversity by failing to get on with the story as promised by the conventions of the traditional novel. Such a reader may even claim that the narrator is torturing him, like a man who kept insisting that his dinner guests eat more and more. At the beginning of Le Nez qui voque Mille Milles declares war on the reader who remains sentimentally entangled with the conventionally literary: "mes paroles... éloigneront de cette table... les amateurs et les
amatrices de fleurs de rhétorique" (p. 10). Thus for a certain reader a certain narrator is discharging aggression, and for this reason also the fixation is liquidated.

Perhaps for a more modernist reader the passage renews the self-sense as it does for the narrator. Roland Barthes muses on this type of possibility in *Le Plaisir du texte*: "on peut prétendre (néanmoins, ce n'est pas moi qui le prétendrait): la répétition elle-même engendrerait la jouissance.... répéter à l'excès, c'est entrer dans la perte, dans le zéro du signifié."\(^{17}\)

Aggression can be read into certain passages of *Le Nez qui volue* in more than one way, as directed not only against the person of the interlocutor, but against the code itself. For example, the narrator's fixation dissipates when he puts an "s" on "chers." In so doing, he has grammatically disfigured the code. It might be far-fetched to interpret the addition of an "s" as an act of aggression, were it not for the joy of hoarding one senses in the same passage: "J'ai mis un s à la fin de mon deuxième cher. Je ne suis pas avare de mes s. Uns. Deuxs. Troiss. Quatres. Cinqs. Sixs. Septs. Deux mille trois cent trente-quatre s! As-tu vu ce que j'ai fait de ce lac? Je l'ai rempli de s majuscules" (p. 103). This is surely an illustration of the Freudian principle of conscious denial as an admission of guilt, for the narrator indulges the urge to control and manipulate the code abnormally, thus disrupting the process of communication as if he could bring all communication to a stop by keeping all the "s's" in the world for himself.\(^{18}\) Such a delusion corresponds to the reality of the text that one can read only the words written there; one is a prisoner.
The prisoner is a volunteer who can opt out of the narrative contract and so it is unlikely that the narrator will abuse him indefinitely. Besides, ambivalence rather than hostility is the long-term norm of interpersonal relations. What *Le Nez qui voque* demonstrates without equivocation is ambivalence involving both code and interlocutors. The aggression we have tried to pinpoint has evaporated completely in the sentences immediately following the previous quotation: "Viens voir ce lac que j'ai rempli de s majuscules en or. Prends-moi par la main pour ne pas tomber; viens! viens! Regarde au fond de l'eau. Tous ces s en or. On dirait des clés de sol" (p. 103). Isolated from the process of discursive meaning, the sign "s" has, it turns out, been transformed into an object for esthetic appreciation. The metamorphosis of dross to gold has been effected for the pleasure of the interlocutor previously abused, and for whom the narrator expresses benevolent protectiveness.

One should not neglect, when taking for granted the presence of narrator and reader, to be insistent about how the specifically graphic identity of the text is still acknowledged. In appropriating Jakobson's terms "code" and "interlocutors" from the description of a speech act one must not forget that in the text, which is nonetheless an act of communication, there is no unmediated presence. The narrator's deviant "s" on "chers" is purely graphic; it cannot be heard in speech. For the narrator the esthetic "s's" are graphic and not phonetic signs; otherwise he would not think of comparing them to the treble clef, also a graphic sign. Here he suggests also that his esthetic object remains a signifier which can be withheld only temporarily from circulation.
Could it be withheld in the absolute it would become valueless and irrecuperably meaningless; he would destroy it just as he might kill existentially by reducing a person to the status of an object, a tendency we have already analysed.

On occasion the narrator openly steels himself against the hostile reception that his sadistic conscience has been provoking from the reader on his behalf: "Quelle sorte de littérature fais-je...? N'ajustez pas votre appareil. Cassez-lui la gueule et allez-vous-en" (p. 133). In this text there is intense contact with the reader. The narrator compares the text to a television set malfunctioning by citing the formula "N'ajustez pas votre appareil"; that is, trouble originates with the sender himself. With unconcern the narrator invites the reader to smash his image on the screen. Contrary to what we have just said about the graphic identity of the text, the comparison suggests the immediacy possible in the transmission of an oral and visual presence.

One might ask why the narrator continues after ordering his interlocutor to go away. What "goes away" is the image which has been smashed, the picture but not the words, the fixation but not the subject as a function. Once the mirror is smashed, traditionally the subject is free. Difficulties arise from the use of the first and second person which become telegraphic and metaphorical. The television smashed, a message is still received; perhaps it comes from within the interlocutor. In this sense the only real silence is death: we cannot shut out all messages because we have always already internalized some. This passage needs to be read not only as two persons interacting but also as each acting on self. What appears as a solicitation for punishment is also
the wish to be liberated; the narrator's desire to revolt against his super-ego. For the reader in his capacity as reader of literary texts, the "apparatus" to be destroyed is a set of norms and values as corrupt as the mass culture for which television is the vehicle.

It remains to be explained how the act of writing is related psychologically to the events and characters of récit. The repression of aggressive impulses motivates their displacement onto language:

... il a lancé à la tête de la menue Chateaugué un ultimatum de deux mille cinq cents livres, et Chateaugué n'a plus qu'à se tirer de cette impasse. J'aime les phrases qui boitent. Je suis sadique. Je les regarde boiter et je trouve cela drôle. (p. 186)

The logical disharmony resulting from the mixed metaphor "ultimatum" and "impasse" makes him think of a person limping and later in the récit he accidentally knocks Chateaugué down and she does limp. A will to damage and distort is evidenced by the "puissance désintégrante" of the narrator's discourse, the tendency for one word to be broken into several words, as in the title of the novel: "C'est une équivoque. C'est un nez qui voque. Mon nez voque. Je suis un nez qui voque" (p. 10). From the Freudian point of view, the first message having been cut up and destroyed, a ritual castration has occurred. But a new message has arisen; for although "voque" is not a word it could be a word, having the grammatical form of a verb and even closely resembling "vogue" and "vaque." Further, in speech, two minimal pairs distinguishes the two utterances; the two messages could be derived from one
sloppy utterance. The best reading of the text considers the two possibilities equally rather than the second as the replacement of the first. In the story, on the other hand, the message is not alternating; if Mille Milles knocks Chateaugué down and laughs at her, most readers will deduce that he has committed an aggressive act. As writing, his behaviour can remain ambivalent, but in other action he compromises himself.

In breaking down the message Mille Milles exaggerates a difference between spoken language, which seems to flow—in French more so than in English—and written language which separates words spatially. In the following passage we notice that not only does he sabotage the message, he responds verbally as if to a spatial, visual message, as if he did not distinguish between what someone says in the story and the written vehicle of the story:

[Chateaugué] - Veux-tu que nous nous appelions Tate et que nous additionnions nos âges?
[Mille Milles] - Est-ce que tu as vu les oignons dans additionnions? As-tu vu les lions dans appelions? As-tu vu la pomme dans appelions?
[Chateaugué] - Tu regardes ce que je dis. Tu n'écoutes même pas ce que je dis. (p. 85)

In the pun "appel-"/"apple" Mille Milles passes from one idiom to another without comment, a slip giving the reader pause to reflect that in Quebec, sometimes when discourse is less articulate and coherent one is feeling more strongly the influence of English. Perhaps there is a sort of aggression or castration threatening from without. The motif of foreign idioms has a social dimension suggesting a social interpretation to the narrator's obsession with disintegration.
The smallest unit of language to which the narrator reduces sentences or words is the individual letter; for example, in the fantasy about the letter "s." His interest focused on a single letter is like the passion inspired by one single feature of the beloved object:

Un u est-il plus joli qu'un i, un i moins bien tourné qu'un e? Un mot pour moi c'est comme une fleur. C'est composé de pétales; c'est comme un arbre: c'est fait de branches. (p. 21)

... tes oreilles goûtent le miel.... Toute ta peau est sucrée.... Tu as les lèvres gonflées de sang rose.... (p. 126)

This analytical point of view is never without a destructive necessity, for if the petal is separated from the flower, the flower has been destroyed. In his attitude toward the components of language, the narrator consistently exposes his impulses to objectify and to destroy, which continue to haunt his conscious behaviour toward himself and Chateaugué.

Obsessiveness is communicated in his aggressive impulse to break things down and apart. But another more indirect aggression shows through in the rigidity of his opinions and reasoning processes. Adopting the logical discourse of expository essays, his commentary is not without salient social insight; for example: "Les femmes d'aujourd'hui savent ce qu'elles veulent... [in text] Est-ce vrai? Non elles ont plus peur qu'avant; il y a moins d'hommes qu'avant" (p. 130). Though unjust and inaccurate, his focus on women and automobiles as the causes of social ills is not socially meaningless; however, his substitution of the form of rational discourse for its content may be perceived at once as delirious. "Je ne sais pas où je veux en venir mais je sais
que j'y arriverai" (p. 47): in fact it is the means which become the
end, as is symptomatic of obsessive thinking: "... it would be more
correct to speak of 'obsessive thinking' [than obsessive ideas] and to
make it clear that obsessional structures can correspond to every psy-
chical act." Here again, as the narrator portrays his personal neu-
rosis he simultaneously analyses and criticizes the functioning and uses
of expository prose by cultivating a mass of elucidations, generaliza-
tions and analogies, such as the following:

Les théories qui font du bruit sont de belles théories.
Ma théorie de l'arbre fera un bruit fou car c'est une
théorie très jolie. Ce n'est pas une théorie très claire,
mais les théories les plus jolies, comme les maisons les
plus belles, sont les plus obscures. (p. 41)

His fascination with the truth may be esthetic in that it precludes the
need or desire for goal-oriented behaviour; the more beautiful a theory
the less possibility that it can orient his behaviour in specific ways.
Mille Milles' speculations on truth are delirious in that "they accept
certain premises of the obsession they are combatting, and thus, while
using the weapons of reason, are established upon a basis of pathological
thought."22

On the one hand he wishes to eliminate ambiguity; on the other he
laments the restraints imposed by the principle of logical non-contra-
diction. Spellbound by its Aristotelian structures, his discourse at
certain moments condemns itself to repeat the discourse of philosophy,
sometimes choosing the negative pole of a conventional opposition, some-
times choosing impossible self-contradiction:

Il y a toujours quelque chose qu'il faut refouler, car
il y a toujours alternative. Mille Milles est d'avis
qu'on a plus de chances de devenir fou si on refoule
l'envie d'être chaste que si l'on refoule l'autre envie.  
(p. 51)

Chez les autres d'esprit plus pur, moins sclérosé, la possibilité d'une double action en sens contraires est parfaitement claire, saisissable, logique et comprise.  
(p. 20)

It may be that the subject seeks a truth which destroys the absoluteness of the binary opposition and thus his dilemma of death versus castration, self-castration versus castration, the principle of identity; the more concisely he formulates this project, the more absurd it appears. He wavers between self-castration and revolt expressed through derision:

Absurdity signifies derision in the language of obsession-al neurosis.  

On n'entend pas parler de ceux qu'on n'entend pas.  
Ceux qu'on n'entend pas meurent sans prestige. Par exemple, qui à jamais entendu parler de Rembrandt?  
(p. 104)

The repeated invocation of the rules of expository prose and the repeated failure to play fair with the rules suggest an act of aggression against the reader; or again, the narrator's self-abuse; or again, an attack on expository prose itself, with writer and reader present only as abstract functions.

Besides abstract reasoning, the text invokes other ineffectual truths ranging from the trivial to the obvious. To foreground the obvious is to destroy the notion of the obvious by finding the point of view from which it requires explanation; for example, here, the use of the definite article in the general sense, of what is singular to signify what is plural: "Presque tous les hommes portent le pantalon. Cependant, ils ne portent pas tous le même" (p. 132).

Mille Milles' truth and the defence of his disregard for truth--
"J'ai seize ans et je suis enfant de huit ans" (p. 9)--is that the truth is a convention. It can be a nasty little shock to discover how inaccurate his collection of trivia is: "Je ne possède pas la vérité mais j'en possède une bonne dizaine. Voici l'une d'elles: l'île de Baffin a 178.700 milles carrés..." (p. 132). Until a reader is accidently well-enough informed or wary enough to verify the information, it is true by consensus, by default. The narrator's fascination with the truth prevents him and protects him from acting, and his text is the history of a fascination with the truth.

This discussion opened with the suggestion that the narrator's writing served as a compromise for discharging aggression without threat of retaliation, and for avoiding decision-making and action. Several aspects of his writing have been shown to reveal a negative moment of aggression against himself, against imaginary readers, and also a positive analysis of conventions of truth and meaning which lend Le Nez qui vogue a specifically textual validity.

In his critique and analysis of the conventions of writing the narrator, as a character, runs a risk of surrendering so much of his self-conscious vigilance as to become dependent on the actual practice of writing as evidence of personal temporal continuity. In short, the need to write and the play of association of ideas could come to overwhelm and compel him in the way that he feels his fears and aggressive impulses might. The text includes formulas for ending by which the personal essence calls itself to order and in which the foreign language puts the damper on the flow of the native language:

Quand cesserai-je d'ergoter et de ratiociner? (p. 169)
Cesse d'ergoter et de ratiociner, ergoteur et ratiocineur. (p. 170)

Halte-là! Halte-là! Halte-là! (p. 37)

Basta, fou! (p. 106)

Basta con la luna! (p. 171)

Basta! Basta con la mar! Basta con il cha cha cha! Stoppe, cheval! Stoppe, antilope! (p. 179)

Perceived as a temptation and compromise with neurosis, the non-narrative portions of the text represent the result of "hortensesturbisme," a term which at first seems introduced simply to avoid the use of "masturbation" for the other activity the narrator practises compulsively:

[Mille Milles to himself]:
Pourquoi fais-tu cela? Est-ce pour le plaisir? On n'en éprouve aucun. Est-ce pour le dégoût? Ce doit être pour le coup de dégoût qui nous terrasse quand on atteint le sommet du plaisir. (pp. 129-130)

Masturbation may be used by neurotics as a proof of potency, a defence against aggressive wishes (mobilization of the opposite wish and self-castration), and a provocation for punishment (masochistic provocation). 24

Analogies have been drawn between writing and masturbation as substitutes for more real, immediate experience of living and acting. In Le Nez qui voque the non-narrative discourse may be read as illegitimate interference with the telling of a story or the building of a monument to childhood. But, like many other of his notions, "hortensesturbateur" is equivocal; it also signifies the one who remains attached to the static, univocal model, who believes in the truth value of language as a one-to-one correspondence of language and reality. When he repudiates the ideal of the static, monumental personality and
as his obsession with formal logic seems to abate, the narrator begins to lose interest in writing, as tainted by association with his neurosis. Language was used to recuperate the insecure subject as a negative essence, a "hortensesturbateur"; but this determination reinforced the tendencies toward psychological fixation:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Je suis un monstre, un hortensesturbateur invitérè, un obsédé sexuel bigot. (p. 94)} \\
\text{Si tu veux un moi fidèle à une définition, forge-t'en-un... crois, crois (surtout aux mots). (p. 197)} \\
\text{Mes réflexions sont des irréflexions... elles sont d'un être humain: elles ne peuvent pas s'enchaîner comme celles d'un être logique. (p. 229)}
\end{align*}
\]

The young man in \textit{Le Nez qui voque} seems to overcome his fear of life, to outgrow his text and leave it behind, perhaps after the fashion of the Saint-Denys-Garneau poem:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Afin qu'un jour, transposé,} \\
\text{Je sois porté par la danse de ces pas de joie,} \\
\text{Avec le bruit décroissant de mon pas à côté de moi,} \\
\text{Avec la perte de mon pas perdu s'étioquant à ma gauche} \\
\text{Sous les pieds d'un étranger qui prend une rue transversale.25}
\end{align*}
\]

Just as the poet did not believe this joy was really possible for him, a measure of corruption and false-consciousness shadows the repudiation of the text. To explain this assertion it will be necessary to examine specifically formal aspects of the text in a later chapter of this study.
NOTES


2. Ludwig Eidelberg, Encyclopedia of Psychoanalysis (Toronto: Collier-Macmillian, 1968), p. 119: "'Ego-alien' is denotive of those derivatives of the unconscious which give rise to neurotic symptoms, parapraxes, and dreams."

3. Ludwig Eidelberg, Encyclopedia of Psychoanalysis, p. 250: "Narcissistic mortification is the emotional experience that results from a sudden loss of control over external or internal reality, or both, with a resultant response of fright or terror."


6. Jean-Joseph Goux, "Numismatiques," Tel Quel, n° 35 (automne 1968), p. 87: "... si la marchandise choisie comme équivalent général est exclue de la consommation immédiate... inversement le choix du sexe comme équivalent général est le moyen de l'exclure de l'usage immédiat."


11. Freud, "Three Essays on Sexuality," SE, VII, p. 167: "In anyone who suffers from the consequences of repressed sadistic impulses there is sure to be another determinant of his symptoms which has its source in masochistic inclinations."

In the journal, writing is linked to masturbation in that subject and object, "je" and "il" are related to the same person. See Valerie Raoul, The French Fictional Journal: Fictional Narcissism/Narcissistic Fiction (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 72: "... a second shift must also be perceived within the fiction, as it is the source of the irony common to most modern diary-novels: that from "je" to "je-il" on the part of the narrator who speaks of himself also as protagonist."

Freud, "The Case of Schreber," SE, XII, p. 22: "God is from his very nature nothing but nerve. But the nerves of God... are infinite and eternal.... In their creative capacity... they are known as rays. There is an intimate relation between God and the starry heaven and the sun."

Roman Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disorders," Selected Writings (The Hague, Paris, New York: Mouton, 1981), III, p. 251: "The type of aphasia affecting contexture tends to give rise to infantile one-sentence utterances and one-word sentences. Only a few longer, stereotyped, "ready made" sentences manage to survive.... While contexture disintegrates, the selective operation goes on."


Freud, "Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis," pp. 221-222.

Freud, "Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis," p. 222.


CHAPTER IV: LE NEZ QUI VOQUE: THE OTHER

Other Versus Others

In *L'Avalée des avalés* the narrator persona engulfs the other characters, who remain fragmentary and episodic, or conversely, Bérénice fixates temporarily on these several fragmentary characters. In *Le Nez qui voque*, on the contrary, the narrator distinguishes carefully between his role as narrator and as actor in the drama, between himself and his subordinate female other, Chateaugué.

*L'Avalée des avalés* presents the child as the solitary locus of the interplay of social forces. Whereas in *L'Avalée* one wavers between the one and the many, in *Le Nez qui voque* one focuses on the poles of a binary opposition, ever constant, Mille Milles and Chateaugué. A discussion of secondary characters in *Le Nez qui voque* will be first a discussion of Chateaugué, and beyond the particular character of the concept of the Other, the feminine, the opposite. The second half of *Le Nez qui voque* analyses the character of Chateaugué, creating a two-dimensional illusion dissociating the character from her original significance for the narrator, a second dimension of fiction distinguished from the primary system of values which defines Chateaugué. Such an illusion is never exploited in *L'Avalée des avalés*.

The Origin of Chateaugué

The narrator defines Chateaugué by reference to spatial coordinates. The first name by which he refers to her refers to a settlement of the northwest tip of the land mass of New Quebec, "Ivugivic" (p. 10). The name "Chateaugué" (p. 17) suggests a homonym of "Châteauguay" county in
the Eastern Townships. The narrator has been discussing the translating of English place names in Quebec into French. His enthusiasm includes some irony, inasmuch as the locales in questions are inhabited mainly by Inuits: "J'ai lu... que Port-Burwell, où Ivugivic est née, a été traduit en français par le ministère toponymique... J'ai hâte de voir le visage qu'elle fera quand je lui apprendrai qu'elle est née à Havre-Turquetil" (p. 13). This settlement often figures on maps with the Inuit name "Tilliniq."

The narrator invokes irony with respect to the appropriation in which he is engaged, of "Ivugivic" as "Chateaugué." This appropriation presents a point of view on the narrator's activity in general. On the one hand, it is never a question of inventing the character out of thin air. Of course, such a possibility would undermine the fiction of the journal, since the journal in principle merely records and transmits meaning which develops elsewhere. On the other hand, the narrator is not an innocent inscriber because in changing a name he self-consciously alters what he appropriates.

"Mille Milles" evokes a series of manoeuvres to be executed by the subject in the discourse, a distance to be covered in contrast with attribution of static or place names to the third person.

Mille Milles explains the change of name for Chateaugué as inspired by his reading of the memoires of Lemoyne d'Iberville, a soldier and adventurer of New France, recounting the following incident: "Le quatrième, mon frère Chateaugué enseigne du Sr. de Sérigny estant à la garde du fort ennemi (Nelson) pour les empescher de faire sorty y fut tué d'un coup de mousquet" (p. 17). During the seventeenth century,
the French and English struggled for control of the fur trade in the north. Fort Nelson (York Factory), on the Manitoba coast of Hudson Bay, passed several times from one group to the other. In 1694, Lemoyne d'Iberville took the fort for the French at the cost of his youngest brother's life. However, it was of course to the British that this territory was granted definitively, with the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.

This personal and historical reference for Chateaugué does not negate what has just been said of her being identified with places. "Chateaugué" the historical personnage presumably is designated by the name of a property rather than the family name, in keeping with aristocratic practice. As a matter of fact, the "de Sérigny" referred to by d'Iberville was his and Chateaugué's brother also. The place name "Chateaugué" exists in France. "Châteauguay" county is said to have been named by the first seigneur of the domain for a place in France. It would seem likely that the name was first descriptive, referring to the proximity of a "Château" and a "gué" or ford.

The likely association of Chateaugué with "Châteauguay" confirms the name's heroic dimension, evoking the 1813 victory of Canadiens over Americans. It is not surprising that Chateaugué should have a specifically historical rather than literary ascendancy, since the point of view just associated with the narrator would negate radical differentiation of history and fiction in favour of relativism, according to which it is possible to represent neither uninterpreted truth or pure fabulation. It is also the case that history has been acknowledged as a source of literary tradition in Quebec and that literary manuals cite François-Xavier Garneau's L'Histoire du Canada (1845-48) as a first
major literary text in Québec. The most disturbing aspect of Chateaugué's association with the text of Lemoyne d'Iberville is the implication by the narrator, in repeating "le quatrième mon frère Chateaugué" that he envisages sacrificing Chateaugué in some sense to his own adventure, as d'Iberville did his brother.

Discussion of where Chateaugué comes from involves more than her names. She does not appear until Chapter 6, where Mille Milles unexpectedly announces that he has fetched her from the Sorel Islands so that she can live with him in Montreal. As he has been writing she has been sleeping on the bed and has just awakened: "Elle vient juste de se réveiller. Quelle drôle d'expression. Je me demande où je l'ai pêchée. D'où viens-tu Elphege? Je viens de me réveiller Brunehilde" (pp. 21-22). At the moment he announces her awakening his attention slides from his narrative to the process of enunciation itself, a change of focus which highlights the illusion of Chateaugué as deriving from the words on the page, from the text or act of reading, "le lit," which is also the bed where Chateaugué lies, the place where dreaming and the manifestation of the unconscious occurs. In reading or in dreaming the past comes back as evoked by the archaic names "Elphege" and "Brunhilde."

The Other as Spirit or Body

In the first half of Le Nez qui voque Mille Milles creates an image of Chateaugué which he then calls into question and dissociates from the character. In discussing this image of Chateaugué one cannot avoid indirectly discussing Mille Milles, since it is his image of her.
Younger than Mille Milles, Chateaugué is introduced as an allegory of his past, summing up his image of childhood. In Chapter 1, Mille Milles says he has decided to stay "behind" (behind everyone) to safeguard and protect his child self; then, in the sixth chapter, he brings into his present a figure of purity and innocence:

Ch. 1 Je reste loin derrière,
    avec moi, avec moi l'enfant, loin derrière, seul,
    intact, incorruptible;
    frais et amer comme une pomme verte, dur et solide
    comme une roche. (p. 9)

Ch. 6 Même le poil sous ses bras, blond comme sa peau, à l'air enfantin, enjoué, inoffensif;
    doux et innocent comme l'agneau naissant. (p. 24)

Chateaugué will represent, above all else, the purity the narrator feels he once possessed and has lost; as a critic has put it: "Mille Milles considère la pureté de Chateaugué comme une qualité ontologique." Monique Genuist puts her finger on the great prominence of courtly themes in the portrayal of Chateaugué. Following Denis de Rougemont's analysis of the tradition of courtly love in L'Amour et l'Occident, one might see the poet as essentially riven into three entities: a body and a soul, but also a pure spirit which has remained in heaven, with which he longs to be united: "Il est important de mentionner ici la vénération manichéenne s'adressant à la "forme de lumière" qui dans chaque homme représente son propre esprit (demeuré au Ciel, hors de la manifestation) et qui accueille l'hommage de son âme par un salut et un baiser." It is this spirit which the woman as loved object may represent, and with which the lover may desire to be united in this life.

De Rougemont identified the Manichean heresy as important in the courtly tradition; it claims that the world is the work of the devil, not of God. This thesis is compatible with Mille Milles' complete pessimism.
about adult life in *Le Nez qui voque*.

Since the material world is the work of Satan, chastity is recommended and all sexual activity condemnable. The incarnate Mille Milles must transcend his sexual nature to reproduce as closely as possible the asexuality of the Spirit. Clearly, he will have a problem in reducing Chateaugué to the Spirit if he presents her also as incarnate. Physical manifestation is by definition evil. Mille Milles rehearses an eschatology as pessimistic as the Manichean explanation of creation:

Dieu ne saurait être l'auteur du monde, de ses ténèbres et du péché qui nous enserre. Sa création première dans l'ordre spirituel, puis animique, a été achevée dans l'ordre matériel par l'Ange révolté... Pour mieux séduire les Ames, Lucifer leur a montré "une femme d'une beauté éclatante, qui les a enflammées de désir". Puis il a quitté le ciel avec elle pour descendre dans la matière et dans la manifestation sensible. Les Ames-Anges, ayant suivi Satan et la femme d'une beauté éclatante, ont été prises dans des corps matériels, qui leur étaient et demeurent étrangers... L'âme, dès lors, se trouve séparée de son esprit qui reste au Ciel.8

The evil in sexuality is that of the physical manifestation as it inheres in the body. For Mille Milles, sexuality is unclean; sexual love is coprophilia. Just as Chateaugué stands in for his Spirit, woman's body stands for sexuality, the most unclean, the procreative force of Mille Milles. The presentation of Chateaugué as spirit must deny in some significant way that she has a woman's body. In *Le Nez qui voque* the myth of woman as "being of light" is recontextualized as the Freudian
myth of the phallic woman.

The Phallic Woman

Chateaugué ne se prend pas pour une femme et ne veut pas être prise pour une femme. (p. 46)

La beauté de Chateaugué n'a rien de féminin. (p. 176)

Mille Milles does indeed have an occasional tendency to refer to Chateaugué in the masculine, as in "Chateaugué est ici, assis sur le lit (assis rime avec ici, mais point assise...)" (p. 21). Indeed, he portrays her as not quite a woman and perhaps a hermaphrodite, if one is sensitive, in the Freudian tradition, to his interest in any part of her body which might be imagined to substitute for the phallus as a fetish:

The child believes that it is only unworthy female persons that have lost their genitals... Women whom he respects... retain a penis for a long time.9

La nuit elle met les pieds sur moi. (p. 40)

Chateaugué qui a toujours les jambes froides et les pieds secs bien qu'il fasse chaud et humide. (p. 44)

Chateaugué's body is a spirit-body, complete unto itself, unaffected by external conditions. On the contrary, woman's body is a fragmentary creation wrought by the devil and therefore imperfect, as a male form without the phallus.

Yet it appears that in a Manichean world the male form too is mutilated, castrated in a sense. Sexual potency, which shows desire for something beyond the given, becomes a measure of one's incompleteness. For the incarnate man the real equivalent of power is not the phallus as his actual penis, it is the spirit. Thus in his adult physical form Mille Milles experiences his body as distorted:

Mes genoux se dressent à la face de mes jambes, comme des
montagnes rocheuses à la surface d'une île. J'ai les genoux affreux parce que je me suis mis à genoux trop souvent... Chateaugué a de beaux genoux, on ne s'aperçoit qu'elle en a que lorsqu'elle se plie les jambes. (p. 62)

His knobbly knees protrude in a manner suggestive of the male sexual function, whereas the young girl conforms to the classical aesthetic of the individual as a complete and separate entity independent of its context. Be it the young man's body, the political boundaries of Quebec or the title of the book, Le Nez qui voque communicates an anxiety about the grotesque, incongruous, incomplete, mutilated, and even castrated: "l'homme est incomplet, est une créature à laquelle il manque de tout, est un parasite" (p. 41). Physical manifestation is a misfortune corresponding to the Manichean separation of man and spirit and to the Freudian obsession with castration:

It has been quite correctly pointed out that a child gets the idea of a narcissistic injury through a bodily loss from the experience of losing his mother's breast... from the surrender of... faeces and, indeed, even from his separation from the womb at birth. Nevertheless one ought not to speak of a castration complex until this idea of loss has become connected with the male genitals.10

For Mille Milles, the ultimate and radical solution to this problem lies beyond chastity in suicide.

Pure Intentions

Whereas the man is a composite creature, the Spirit is one. Beyond the purity of the body, Mille Milles cannot recuperate unity of purpose while fragmented between forces of good and evil, evil being firstly sexual desire. This struggle provokes opposing desires even in relation to Chateaugué: "Des fois il m'arrive de ne voir en elle...
qu'une âme, qu'une façon d'être. D'autres fois, le désir chasse tout mon sang à ma tête" (p. 56). This oscillation in feelings spreads out from the sexual fixation and colours all his thinking so that he cannot commit himself to an opinion or course of action. He loses his appetite and nothing satisfies him. Mille Milles falls into a state of paralysis from which the only salvation would be death, but in death he lacks the compelling faith of the hero of romance:

Dans d'amers déboires d'amour, angoisses, lourdes peines et tourments, ce qu'ils font pour s'y soustraire, s'en affranchir et s'en venger les asservit d'un lien plus inextricable encore.... Celui qui tend tous ses désirs vers un bonheur inaccessible, celui-là met sa volonté en guerre avec son désir.\(^{11}\)

Suffering refines his ennui but reveals nothing; even in his secret purpose he is hamstrung between life and death: "'Boredom' ... at least in neurotic exaggeration is a state of excitement in which the aim is repressed; anything the person can think of doing is not adequate to the release of inner tension."\(^{12}\)

On the contrary, Mille Milles sees Chateaugué as incapable of evil, and demonstrating exceptional instinctual energy which, ironically, lends an erotic colouring to her behaviour. As he writes, broods, falls into insomnia, she is sleeping like a log: "Chateaugué qui dort, la bouche ouverte, comme un bébé, immuable, repue, invulnerable, se rechargant de faim..." (p. 37). In all activity she plays, manifesting a form of being without intent to modify reality or obtain anything: she stomps on the mattress (p. 111), hides under the bed (p. 129), shouts
"eeee" until hoarse (p. 194). Indeed, her access to discourse is not from necessity: "elle ne parle que pour rien dire quand elle parle" (p. 67). For the narrator, on the other hand, writing as a form of discourse is a necessity which reveals his impure nature:

Tout ce qui est satisfait et parfait se tait. (p. 42)
Il faut la laisser être.
Il faut la regarder en gardant l'anonymat. (p. 56)

Sur son piédestal la femme trône, belle, pure et silencieuse, tandis que l'homme à ses pieds s'analyse. La science de l'homme progresse, la femme reste murée dans le silence de la pierre.13

In the first half of Le Nez qui voque the female character is fused to the mythical presentation of the ideal; the reader is unequivocally warned of this connection. Chateaugué's real name is not Chateaugué; she is Mille Milles' sister but not his real sister; she may or may not be an Inuit (read: original man); in short, she seems rather than is (pp. 31, 44): "Chateaugué... a eu l'air de comprendre, a paru aggressivement d'accord. Son enthousiasme, feint ou authentique, était quelque chose à voir" (pp. 22-23). Though Chateaugué does not become as realistic in the conventional way as the narrator, in the second half of the text the mythical image recedes, leaving Chateaugué in fragments—in Questa, her children, and even a mannekin wearing a wedding dress. The one-dimensional purity of the other is shattered.

A Psychology of Chateaugué

Even though the narrator has a vision of Chateaugué as the ideal or spirit she also remains a particular individual, "Chateaugué," whom the reader tries to know just as the narrator often chooses not to know her: "Je ne sais pas ce qu'elle pense, à quoi elle pense, ce qu'elle
pense de moi et de toute cette mise en scène..." (p. 67). Chateaugué seems not to know who she is and expresses distress in perceiving herself other than as defined by him: "Tu as les yeux fermés, tu es parti. Il n'y a plus de Tate. Il n'y a plus de Chateaugué. Il n'y a plus que moi" (p. 112). Thus one sees her as dependent on him for an identity. The narrator devotes a special chapter to reminiscing about his childhood with Chateaugué, and makes it clear that he has always taken the place of family for her: "Ses parents adoptifs ne s'occupaient pas d'elle. Moi, je m'en occupais. Personne ne voulait d'elle. Personne n'a jamais voulu d'elle" (p. 139). Most important, perhaps, is the casual way in which he indicates the excessiveness of her dependency on him. Her need of his approval is suggestive of the relation between a schizoid child and its mother: "A l'âge où on est indocile, Chateaugué obéissait à tous mes ordres. A l'âge où on ne se soucie de personne, elle me poursuivait, elle s'était attachée à mes pas" (p. 138). Rather than growing up with free will and a sense of self, she exists in fantasy as part of an encompassing being, together with Mille Milles. She says they are "Tate," an entity apparently like that of mother and infant together: "Prends-moi dans tes bras comme si tu étais ma maman, comme si j'étais ta petite fille.... Mouche-moi. Je ne suis qu'un petit enfant. Quand tu ne prends pas soin de moi, j'ai peur" (pp. 114, 108). She wants his permission to express negative emotions and his protection from their possible negative consequences:

Je n'ai jamais hâï personne. J'ai toujours eu peur de hâir. J'ai aimé tous ceux que j'ai connus. (p. 137)

Elle sait que le méchant, le traître et le vil la guet-tent, se jetteront sur elle et l'empoisonneront, attendent qu'elle soit seule. (p. 130)
According to the Freudian dialectic, aggression which does not turn outward will turn inward, thus motivating such an observation by her as "J'ai toujours eu envie de mourir" (p. 137).14

A first psychological sketch of Chateaugué suggests a gloomy prospect. While for Mille Milles she represents the ideal of the self-contained individual, we see her also as devoid of selfhood and unable to perceive Mille Milles as an equal. As he says in a moment of disillusionment: "Débarque-moi de sur le dos..." (p. 131). On the other hand, another aspect of the character, which may at first seem merely playful, sheds a less personal light on her idiosyncrasies. Chateaugué is also an Inuit, portrayed as a noble savage. The self-sense of the traditional Inuit bears little resemblance to that described by Freud and which Mille Milles turns this way and that. In the traditional life it was important to have a special person to sleep with, without the relations necessarily being sexual (p. 112). The Inuit language possesses dual person morphemes, a special word form for two things together, just as "Tate" designates Mille Milles and Chateaugué. Most important, shyness about showing negative feelings is not pathological in a society whose language, according to one interpreter, had no word for "hate." The Inuits' amazement at the apparently demonic aggressivity of whites has become a cliché.15 To sum up, Chateaugué's asthenia is related to chronic acculturation, whether that of an Inuit or that of a traditional French Canadian.

Other Side of the Coin

As a very private character or as a type of the displaced person,
Chateaugué is dissociated from the univocal angelic image. The discrepancy becomes most explicit when the narrator emphasizes as intolerable shortcomings the former virtues with which he has adorned her. Where the earlier Chateaugué was loyal, spontaneous and affectionate, the later Chateaugué is portrayed as silly, stubborn and cloying. For example, her innocent obsessiveness when under the influence of alcohol is chaplinesque in an early episode:

Quand elle a bu, la folie de laver la prend.... Tout à l'heure, juchée sur la commode, son torchon à la main, elle lavait le plafond. Tout à coup elle est tombée et la commode est tombée sur elle. Cela ne l'a pas découragée. Elle s'est relevée, a relevé la commode, a ramassé son torchon, elle est remontée sur la commode, et comme si de rien n'était, sans changer d'air sans que son air absorbé change, elle a continué à torcher le plafond. (p. 61)

The narrator's style suggests the great concentration of energy she brings to mundane activity. Repetitions, gradations and rhymes abound; for example: "Chateaugué... calmée... tranquillisée, en a eu assez, recouchée" (p. 111) and "Chateaugué... épouvanté... épouvantée... tremblant d'épouvante" (p. 179). On the other hand, when she returns fifty miles on foot to Montreal to be with him, she becomes tedious, pathological or maddening. Her failure to exercise her intelligence makes her as vulnerable as the narrator's pet dogs, the last of which made a fatal habit of sitting in the middle of the road. Seeing her hand on the floor next to his foot the narrator remarks: "Je pensais à une main comme la sienne que quelqu'un de confiant comme elle avait posé devant la roue d'un train la veille de partir" (p. 173).

As his disillusion progresses, Chateaugué feels more insecure, diffident and needy. According to the narrator her self-effacement
provokes a sadistic streak in cranks like the shopkeeper (p. 210) and the man with sensitive ears (p. 226). Although one cannot distinguish perfectly between changes in Chateaugué and changes in the narrator's point of view, she does react to Mille Milles' neglect with masochistic complacency and some anger: "Je crois que je commence à te haïr. On ne sait pas ce qu'on risque à prendre l'air avec un sans-coeur comme toi" (pp. 242-243).

The narrator's need to withdraw from his life with Chateaugué hinges on his awareness of how vulnerable she is. The spirit-as-woman, the form of light, would be impervious to his mortal and errant behaviour. Chateaugué, on the contrary, solicits his protection against what is vile and traitorous in the world and in herself. But her fears are Mille Milles' own. Her desire that he protect her compounds his fears, and, thinking of her, he feels himself particularly vile. This vileness reminds him of his other, sexual vileness—sexuality being vile by definition and indistinguishable from aggression. In order to spare himself the necessity of suicide or action he withdraws, from his ideal because he has no one to whom to attach it, and from Chateaugué because she needs him. The aggression waiting to escape from inside him, and in particular his resentment at Chateaugué for calling his bluff, are much in evidence when he affirms her diffidence to be a masochistic provocation, when he imagines stomping on her hand.

The Wedding-Dress Mannekin

At the point where Chateaugué is no longer only the true spirit for Mille Milles, other characters appear in the story. The others are
also female, but do not capture the reader's emotional interest as Chateaugué does. Chateaugué's presentation is fragmentary, but other characters are thematic fragments of her. The theme of the unreality of the other grows explicit in the episode of the store-window mannekin, which precedes Mille Milles' discovery by Questa, Chateaugué's alleged successor in his affections.

A relative high point of adventure in *Le Nez qui voque*, the mannekin incident invites scrutiny. Confirming the motif of death as transfiguration, Mille Milles offers Chateaugué a new dress which she is to wear at their death. However, her choice of dress dismays him: "Les mains collées comme des ventouses, le visage tout écrasé contre la cloison de verre, elle éprouvait des bonheurs épouvantables, des envies effrayantes" (p. 89). In this case her enthusiasm is alarming to Mille Milles because of its object: a wedding dress. She wants to wear a wedding dress to her own suicide. He responds with the colloquial accusation: "*Tu es complètement folle. C'est une robe de mariage*" (p. 90, my underlining). As the pages follow he feels more and more out of harmony with Chateaugué. He senses a rift indicating two difficulties with her choice. First, she equates death with sexual union, which his death is to repudiate. Second, she can wear the dress only in special circumstances and so her choice is impractical. By implication, his commitment to suicide is less than total. She commits herself entirely in play while he maintains an unspoken reservation. For him play exists in contrast to socially committed behaviour; but for her life is play. The rules of her game are personal, yet because the consequences she must take are real, the dress she chooses is that of an adult. He
accepts her choice as valid, however, as is acknowledged even in the decision to steal rather than purchase it: it is removed from the circuit of exchange and relativity.

However, as the narrator recounts the theft, its object changes: "Nous n'emporterons pas que la robe; nous emporterons le mannequin aussi. Nous ne sommes pas pour nous mettre à la déshabiller sous les yeux des rares automobiles et des derniers passants" (p. 97). This unobtrusive rational remark shifts the focus from dress to mannekin, from Chateaugué now to the future.

In order to steal the dress the two must pass through a basement skylight in the pitch dark. Approaching the building the narrator is engrossed in a fantasy of descent:

Les édifices noirs qui se dressent des bords de la ruelle s'élèvent jusqu'à la surface du firmament de la nuit; nous sommes comme au fond d'un abîme au fond de ces constructions qui se dressent presque côte à côte, et qui baignent dans le liquide noir et volatil de la nuit. (p. 96)

The narrative becomes mythical; that of a hero descending to the earth's core, doubled by the Freudian myth of children giving birth to their mother. Mille Milles has to throw himself through a sort of vagina dentata and fight his way up to the window: "Je m'engage, les pieds les premiers, dans la gueule armée de dents de vitre et je saute.... Un croc de vitre est resté pris au travers de ma joue; je l'extrais d'un coup sec" (p. 96). His entanglement with the Freudian myth suggests a distortion of the original intent; after the theft Chateaugué is displaced by the still-born mother, who is their child also:

... ils le déposent sur la banquette arrière du taxi avec soin, comme si c'était un bébé. (p. 98)
La présence de la mariée dans notre chambre est comme un soleil. Elle est tellement insolite qu'elle force et fixe le regard.... Chateaugué dit que c'est dommage que ce ne soit pas une Vierge Marie. (pp. 101-102)

Although beautiful and astonishing, she indicates their failure to act, the impossibility of the status quo, and the distance between them.

Questa

As long as Chateaugué does not take the dress for her own self, the mannequin overshadows her, as evidenced by the social authority Questa exercises over both Mille Milles and Chateaugué. She materializes from the rift between the two, like a coming to life of the wedding-dress mannekin. As the rift fills with others it becomes impossible to mend: "Il faudrait faire couche la mariée avec nous. Mais sa robe se fripperait. Elle se lèverait avec la robe en accordéon.... (p. 112) Nous avons oublié Questa.... --Nous couchons avec elle. --Il va falloir que je la déshabille. Sa robe se fripperait" (p. 219).

Mille Milles attributes his adventure with Questa to Chateaugué's failure, beginning his entry "Tout a commencé avec la toux de Chateaugué..." (p. 143). Her cough is a sign of the ultimate weakness which the narrator cannot tolerate. On the other hand, "l'atout" is her trump card, the possibility which he either cannot conceive or will seek elsewhere. Questa tells Mille Milles,"Je m'appelle Questa, rien que pour toi... Ça veut dire: Cette chose-là, cette grosse chose là" (p. 146). She chooses the name, colluding in the fantasy of the evil woman, unclean and castrated; as she says also: "J'ai dix ans de mariage, dix ans de prostitution" (p. 149). An Eve figure, Questa is Mille Milles'
"special type of object choice made by men":

The person [man] in question shall never choose as his love-object a woman who is disengaged.... A woman who is chaste... never exercises an attraction that might elevate her to the status of a love-object.... The man is convinced that without him she would lose all moral control....

The humorous aspect of this obsession comes out in the narrator's descriptions of the two women; Questa, the actual object, and Chateaugué whom, in spite of her interest in the wedding dress, he will limit to the role of ideal object: "Questa vient se rasseoir sur mes genoux. Peu à peu, la chair abondante et molle de ses fesses chauffe mes genoux.... Les fesses sont ce qu'il y a de plus maternel, chez la femme, en particulier lorsque qu'on la voit de dos" (p. 164). He warns Chateaugué that she must not continue to live, because she would develop enormous buttocks (p. 102). Chateaugué remains bound to the other pole of the fixation: viewed from in front, the breasts are the woman's most prominent maternal feature. Her breasts have for him a fascination suggestive of envy: "J'ai tellement envie d'embrasser ses petites mamelles que les oreilles me bourdonnent" (p. 92).

His distinction between erotic interest and affective interest inspires the partial substitution of Questa for Chateaugué. The real bride is for him the mannekin, an alien fantasy which, even battered by her trip out of the skylight, cannot be made real. Chateaugué, for example, once touched by him sexually, could not exist; only Questa could exist. Spatially and temporally, front and back, in youth and in middle age, he sees his female persona as still shots. As he insists to Questa: "on ne devient pas ce que tu es; on l'a toujours été" (p. 153).
In his obsession, movement does not occur and time's passing is reflected in mirror images.

Questa, as his protégée, blends into Chateaugué. With Chateaugué gone Questa sleeps in the bed while Mille Milles writes in his journal. In her own style, each gets drunk, vomits and breathes on him (pp. 113, 161). He kisses Questa on the lips and Chateaugué merely on the knee, with the same effect; his mouth feels as if it were full of ether (pp. 193, 257). Questa substitutes for Chateaugué; his reference slips from one to another in a conversation with Questa (p. 192). But since Questa is bad ("la fange" in opposition to Chateaugué "le pur"), she is in exactly the same position as Mille Milles.

The Object as Subject

Questa herself has a story which reflects that of the narrator. A poetess in the pejorative sense, Questa chatters and purges herself of reified language, reminding one of Mille Milles' caution: "Quand j'ai quitté l'école, j'étais plein de noms comme on est plein de scarlatine. J'ai de la misère de m'en remettre, à tenir debout sur mes pieds pas célèbres" (pp. 104-105). Years, dates and numbers fascinate and confound her; ambivalent oscillation plagues her discourse: "Le secret du bonheur des enfants, c'est leur chasteté... Ça n'a aucun sens. Je renie tout ce que je viens de dire" (p. 181). In Questa Mille Milles' neurotic tendencies live again. Her drunkard's condition is the result of motherhood: "Je ne suis ivrognesse que depuis que je connais mes petites filles fourmis" (p. 147). Though she worships their innocence, she experiences them as a virus, weakening and destroying her as it
reproduces itself. The children, like her own chatter, have become monstrous, a spider with many eyes which the youngest sees in her mother's throat (p. 150). A vision of degradation and guilt, Questa condemns herself to the reproductive function, merely reproducing obsolete discourse and the same child, or rather three copies of an archetypal child: Anne, Anne and Anne. Questa bespeaks the urgency of disposing of illusions; but also, true to the myth of the "special object choice," she will improve herself through her association with him: "Ma soeur Questa. Dieu doit être gêné d'entendre rire si fort une femme... qu'il a fait vieillir" (p. 261); though like Chateaugué's disgrace, Questa's improvement results also from changing point of view.

Dialogue occurs between Mille Milles and Questa, and her children are relegated to Chateaugué "murée dans le silence de la pierre." The reproductive force, "le ça" (Questa) attaches the children to her: "Elle les mérite et c'est elle qu'il leur faut" (p. 253). From this nightmare logic Chateaugué is rescued by a deus ex machina: "Mardi soir, le père, un homme que Chateaugué a trouvé grand, beau et poli, est venu reprendre les Anne" (p. 254).

Chateaugué's Death

The first half of Le Nez qui vogue presents an ideal Chateaugué, and a psychological Chateaugué overshadowed by the narrator's unreliability. The text subsequently distorts the idealist vision while depicting a parallel change in Chateaugué, who is seen as and is becoming, discouraged, tenacious, masochistic. She never does become really ignoble and reproaches the narrator only when he abjures the suicide
pact (p. 190), after he neglects her once (p. 242) and after he does not let her into his room (p. 262). She does not bear a grudge for long, but is drifting into an independent, adult existence when with no apparent forewarning Mille Milles finds that she has killed herself. For his part he has continued to make assumptions about her, for example: "Si nous parlions d'une façon pessimiste, ce n'est pas parce que nous étions convaincus de ce que nous disions..." (p. 89).

The wedding dress which she wears signals the intent of her death as a ritual of transfiguration, in the idealist traditions with which the narrator has been flirting and which the text parodies: "Nous retournons, purs et... forts, vers ce qui nous inspire l'héroïsme vertigineux de l'affronter" as Axel said or Mille Milles could have said. Mille Milles' opting out of the pact has provoked the most extreme distress imaginable in Chateaugué:

\[
\text{Elle s'est mise à gesticuler, comme si elle avait été prise de haut mal. Elle s'est mise à pousser des cris de mort en s'arrachant les cheveux à pleines poignées... Elle se prenait tellement au sérieux qu'elle était en train de se tuer à force de crier. (p. 190)}
\]

The possibility of union in death with Mille Milles has been destroyed for her; but equally the erotic aura which hovers over her attachment to Mille Milles will not be realized. Not once does she discuss sex; not once does she discuss death. As the narrator points out: "Elle a l'air de tout comprendre, de prendre part. Peut-être ne comprend-elle rien" (p. 67). She has chosen a wedding dress; she interprets the word "mourir" as "mou rire" (p. 116) and remarks elsewhere that skin is "mou" (p. 90). Embracing the narrator she announced the appropriateness of the moment, as one who, like a knight of romance, has accomplished
the rites of purification:

Si nous ne mourons pas tout de suite, il va falloir repartir à rien, marcher... dans les épines, marcher sur nos coeurs, jusqu'à ce que ça revienne, ça, ce silence éclatant, être étourdie dans tes bras, avoir peur dans tes bras. (p. 116)

On the contrary Mille Milles himself is not ready for any cosmic reunion. Death for him represents a theoretical solution, a pose invoked to ward off despair. To be ready for death is to overcome his fear of life, and the converse; but his actual dilemma is impotence, fear of castration or existential death. As Chateaugué's naïveté is beginning to sour, the narrator is opening to challenges; but as Chateaugué is seen not to have changed profoundly after all, so it is with Mille Milles. He tells her death through the grid of his fears, as a vision of blood and mutilation not distinct from the minor accidents which befall her; and therefore, although the book ends with Chateaugué's death, Mille Milles' story has no true beginning or end.

In L'Avalée secondary characters adhere more closely to the conventions of fantasy, as related to a schizoid narrator persona, than to conventions of interpersonal verisimilitude. In Le Nez the situation is more complex. The presentation of Chateaugué is readable as a psychological image of the female other remaining within the "oral" perspective of non-individuation which informs L'Avalée. In Le Nez the female subject is excluded from the discourse and her actions negate her independence from the narrator. Chateaugué is also readable as the narrator's fantasy of a phallic woman disguised as a Rougemontian being of light. The tension between these dimensions points up the narrator's avowed unreliability, and finally calls into questions his cure for the following reason: if
cured the narrator would not abandon Chateaugué and not present her death as an image of castration. The polyvalent and fragmentary context in which Bérénice presents herself reinforces an image of psychic disintegration in which inside resembles outside. The two-layered context in which Mille Milles presents himself evokes a neurotic but functional subject in whom fantasy and reality vie for dominance. Although the latter gains momentum in the narrator's discourse, the former returns to close the récit. Thus the particular reading of Ducharme's portrayal of character suggested is that L'Avalée represents the limiting case, schizophrenia, and Le Nez, the other limiting case, functional neurosis.
NOTES

1 This is probably a quotation from Lemoyne d'Iberville, "Relation de l'expédition et prise du fort Nilson," BN Clairambault 881: 170v. See Guy Frégault, Iberville le conquérant (Montréal: Editions Pascal, 1944), p. 185: "Le commandant note le fait [mort de Chateaugué] en deux mots, dans le plus pur style militaire." See also Encyclopedia Canadiana, "York Factory" (Ottawa: Crolier Society, 1965), X.


3 Gérard Bessette et al, Histoire de la Littérature canadienne-française (Montreal: C.E.C., 1968), p. 338, discuss the nouvelle about the Battle of Chateaugué in À la brunante (1874) by Faucher de Saint-Maurice. This battle is important in popular tradition as a compensation for the conquest when the Canadiens lost.

4 See Bessette et al, p. 39: "... Garneau représente un seuil à partir duquel la littérature canadienne-française prit conscience d'elle-même et, partant, commença à tirer de son âme profonde des thèmes de plus en plus en harmonie avec la nature et la civilisation des Canadiens."

5 Pierre Larousse, Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle (Paris: Larousse et Boyer, 1870), VII, p. 388: "Elphège or Alphège, a saint and martyr of the Catholic Church (954-1012 A.D.): "Il fut tiré de la retraite qu'il s'était choisi et où il se livrait, avec de nombreux disciples, à d'incroyables austérités." Brunehilde is the daughter of Wotan in the Nibelungen.


8 de Rougemont, p. 65.


11 de Rougemont, p. 112.


13 Genuist, p. 61.


PART II: SUBJECT, TEXT AND PARODY

The schizoid subject caricatures the Cartesian image of subject. Independence, self-control, self-consciousness become for the subject represented in the text the absolute goals of a quest which may destroy the schizoid self by reducing it to a schizophrenic hypostasis. The focus on schizoid self in the text satirizes a monolithic, unitary concept of self, especially since the former is represented as subject of the discourse and récit. Bérénice's insecurity is valorized, for example, in relation to Zio's self-assurance.

Unlike Le Nez qui voque, L'Avalee des avalés does not represent explicitly the existence of the written text. L'Avalee is naturalized neither as Bérénice's journal nor as stream-of-consciousness discourse. Considering it as the latter might provoke the reader to receive the text as a parody of stream-of-consciousness. The text does not reveal a "true" self of the schizoid whose discourse consists of grammatically correct sentences and bears the rhetorical trappings of artifice. The image of the schizoid self may be perceived at this point as a result of the text, not its origin, and as an allusion to the fictional, constructed status of the psychological novel character in general. L'Avalee parodies the image of psychological character considered as natural rather than cultural. It parodies the texts of modern psychology like Freud and Laing, denying absoluteness to their expository as opposed to fictional status. Unlike the obvious ridicule of the Cartesian subject in L'Avalee, this parody relativizes but does not dismiss the psychological. Linda Hutcheon's analysis of modern literary parody seems
to apply exactly to L'Avalée: "there is critical distance but little ridicule of the texts backgrounded." She repeatedly employs the term "incorporation" to describe what the parodic text does to its parodied intertext, but stressing the incorporation as a means to achieving distance and separation.² In other words, the parodic text is described as performing some of the same manoeuvres as the schizoid subject in establishing its identity. The discussion which follows will examine the discourse of L'Avalée as parody of an intertext (Chapter V), and return to focus on the subject in particular as a parodic image (Chapter VI).

CHAPTER V: PARODY OF WRITING AND WRITING OF PARODY

What Parody Does to the Subject

In this section we will investigate an aspect which is more radical in L'Avalée des avalés than in Le Nez qui voque, an aspect which makes the former more difficult to read as a novel. In Le Nez qui voque one may cling to the narrator as to a buoy in the ocean, or perhaps the floating object evoked in the title. Analysis of the process of writing and reading may be explored within the fiction of the narrator's writing in his journal.

In L'Avalée des avalés the subject and text do not define their mutual relationship. The parody of writing does not present itself within the fiction of a narrator's journal, as in Le Nez qui voque. The psychological subject drifts toward schizophrenia while, on the metafictional level of interpretation, this "character" may be read as
an anthropomorphic image of the text. The tension between psychological and metafictional readings constitutes an interpretation of the incongruity realized by various techniques at various levels as a generalized parodic effect. By parody, in reference to *L'Avalée des avalés*, is meant an often humorous critique or relativizing of the coordinates of the semantic universe. Specific instances of incongruity may or may not imply satire of social norms. In general, the exploitation of nonsense which by definition departs from the norms of common sense, stands in a relationship of parody to the traditional psychological aspect of the novel. However, in the metafictional context where the reader's expectations constitute the text as play and nonsense as an important element of play, it would be inappropriate to attribute to the text the intent to ridicule anything in particular. It is difficult to see the text as metafictional and psychological representation at the same time. The possible bridge between the two is clearly discernible in *L'Avalée*, where the psychological deterioration of the narrator parallels the deterioration of text as *récit*. The concept of parodic writing suggests a text which overtly retains a measure of incoherence or "semantic incongruity": "L'incohérence sémantique s'établit entre un signe et ce qui se trouve autour de lui: c'est-à-dire entre une expression linguistique et son contexte."³

Michael Riffaterre distinguishes among three levels of context.⁴ "Context" in one sense refers to the literary, historical and social circumstances in which the text is transmitted and received. A second or "macrocontext" within the text surrounds and contrasts with the sign or signs being identified as a stylistic device. A third or
"microcontext" includes the unmarked or unremarkable elements included in the stylistic device. The role of microcontext is important in the altered clichés of _L'Avalee des avalés_; for example, the expression "geler à pierre fendre" turns up as "en santé à pierre fendre" (pp. 123-124), an image which evokes a psychological motif of the threatened explosion of the schizoid subject. The image evokes the metafictional excesses of the text which sabotage its own fiction, and more generally, the dominance of polyvalent meaning in the text.

In _L'Avalee des avalés_ incongruity and anomaly operate not only intertextually, in relation to the tradition of psychological realism, for example, but also intratextually in that more realist or lyrical passages alternate with more fantastical or grotesque passages. As Marcel Chouinard says of the inconsistencies in Ducharme's writing, quoting Ducharme himself: "Successivement, l'écriture de Ducharme 'marche bien droit' puis 'manque de tomber sur le dos'". The macro-contexts in _L'Avalee_ are the less parodic elements. They prevent parody from saturating the text, and preserve the intratextual effect of difference or divergence. The text parodies itself, in Hutcheon's sense of "parody," by including elements which impede or problematize aspects of its functioning. We will take a brief look at three levels where semantic incongruity manifests itself, each time focusing mainly on the role of incongruity in relation to the text as a whole, rather than on intertextual allusions to other works.
The referential world of *L'Avalee des avalés* undergoes progressive impoverishment, a greying effect. The reader loses touch with the concrete persona of the child narrator; the secondary characters disappear and reappear in trivialized versions; the text includes progressively less narration and more pseudo-introspection. This impoverishment can be naturalized as a representation of schizoid consciousness. The particularly marked incongruity of specific episodes or dialogues may reinforce the greying effect, or may heighten both the pathos represented in the story and the playfulness of the anti-realist text.

The fragmented imaginary world of *L'Avalee des avalés* is fraught with unsurmounted and unrecognized suffering, as in this narrative of Bérénice encountering Einberg:

> Soudain, les yeux flamboyants de cris d'Einberg se fixent sur moi, ... il avance vers moi, me tendant les bras.... Il dégage une odeur forte, fétide. Il tombe à genoux.... Il se relève. Il fait un bond en avant. Il est tout près de moi, bras grands ouverts, riant à pleine bouche. Il va tomber sur moi. Je m'enlève. Il tombe avec fracas et dans un rot formidable, se décharge à mes pieds de tous ses viscères. (p. 156)

This scene evokes the narrator's shock as well as Einberg's degradation. The style conveys the tension which characterizes the narrator in the series of simple sentences beginning with "il." Superlatives and hyperboles are frequent throughout *L'Avalee des avalés*, and notable in this passage in the choice of "se fixent," "flamboyants," "fétide," "bras grands ouverts," "à pleine bouche," "avec fracas," "rot formidable," "tous ses viscères." Gradations and repetitions of similar ideas are also typical, as here in "une odeur forte, fétide."
shift to the immediate future tense signals the climactic moment: "il va tomber sur moi." Nightmarish urgency and fascination are conveyed by omitting logical transition between the preceding and the resulting action: "Je m'enlève." Bérénice's discourse possesses hyperbolic norms and constitutes a "nonce standard" of preciousness, displaying ingeniousness which is both brilliant and cloying. Nonetheless, the passage concerning Einberg evokes fear and disgust, unequivocally rather than parodically.

Pathos is evoked in other scenes in spite of the blatant incongruity of details in the narrative situation. In a discussion between the parents, the style of argument, with each party exaggerating his innocence and the other's perversity—without regard to fairness—connotes realism; on the other hand the facts of the case, which tax credence, render the scene humorous. Countering the reader's temptation to see the child narrator as exaggerating the facts is the absence of evaluative commentary on her part:

[Einberg] - Tu n'étais pas si dédaigneuse quand je t'ai trouvée, à Varsovie, dans l'égout. Tes frères, MM. les colonels, collaboraient. Tes frères, MM. les Polonais, venaient de te violer... Je t'ai donné du chocolat. Tu avais si faim que tu l'as mangé dans ma main.
...

[Chamomor] - J'étais folle, Mauritius Einberg! Le désespoir m'avait rendue folle. J'avais treize ans.... Vous avez abusé d'une petite fille de treize ans qui, en plus, avait perdu la raison!
...

[Bérénice] - Ça les reprend. Ils se repenchant sur leur passé.
(pp. 77-78)

It is a hard world, in which the characters do not realize that their power to brutalize the other is minimal in comparison with the brutality
of the fate they endure. The black humour of the parents' altercation is repeated in the mother's adventure with the white octopuses (p. 228), and in the baroque diction attributed to Einberg: "Je t'ai ordonné de monter voir ta mère. Mon ordre sera exécuté, dussé-je avoir recours à un escalier roulant, à un transporteur aérien à monorail!" (p. 223).

As a point of contrast this diction calls to mind a passage in *Le Nez qui voque*, when the boss goes hysterical over Chateaugué's blackened mouth:

- Si demain tu me reviens avec un rouge à lèvres aussi voyant, je te chasse.
  Là ne furent pas ses exactes paroles. Je l'aurais trouvé drôle, si c'était cela qu'il avait dit. N'em-pêche; c'est cela qu'il voulait dire et qu'il aurait dit s'il avait eu le sens de l'humour, tant soit peu. (NQV, p. 186)

In *Le Nez qui voque*, Mille Milles tells his audience how to read him; Bérénice declines.

Fantastical elements reinforce the narrative impoverishment when the incidents recounted are unbelievable and the tone unemotional. In contrast to early chapters where Bérénice describes her life in nature (for example, Chapters 9 and 10), the withholding of evaluative commentary, and the summary presentation of incidents such as her jumping out of the window (Chapter 57), or confinement in a cupboard (Chapter 58), leave the naive reader with a desire to re-evaluate his earlier response. The colourful world one saw beyond Bérénice may now be a grey world; Bérénice, a child in a referential universe, has become a universe in herself, a microcosm which cannot be known until it is put in relation to something outside, by the reader. The enunciating subject has become a text, to be interpreted by the reader. In the first
chapter of this discussion the circuit was defined as a mimesis of psychic deterioration. When Zio shuts Bérénice up in a cupboard, one interprets that the subject is withdrawing as a defence, with resulting emotional impoverishment and repudiation of the conventional limits between shared and personal experience. This reading is not invalid, but cannot account for the text as a whole. Bérénice's least acceptable experiences, from the point of view of common sense, include the following two episodes:

Zio se met à me séquestrer, à me murer pour des jours sans plus de pain et d'eau que de vent et de soleil. La porte de ma chambre est barricadée comme contre une garnison entière. Une seule issue! la fenêtre...

Je saute! ... au lieu de mourir, je m'affaisse dans un monticule de neige.... Je marche.... J'atteins la frontière canadienne. Là faute de meilleur pays que le mien, ... je décide de revenir sur mes pas. (pp. 197-98)

Ils m'ont enfermée dans l'armoire de la salle de bains. J'ai mal aux reins, aux reins. Depuis deux semaines je suis prisonnière de l'armoire de la salle de bains.

On ne me délivrera que lorsque j'éprouverai quelque repentir sincère au sujet de ma conduite. (p. 200)

Some readers argue that the situations depicted are not literally impossible; one may identify with the urge to lock Bérénice in a cupboard. In a text which poses extreme mimetic disharmony between the speaker and her diction, some readers find it idle to isolate particular instances of narrative incongruity. A reader who does not consistently hold the fiction of Bérénice in abeyance and who involves himself in the récit, is confronted with the most marked narrative incongruities.

Non-narrative Discourse

A second area of most obvious incongruity in L'Avalée des avalés
is Bérénice's pseudo-introspective, pseudo-expository discourse. It has been suggested that, for the reader intent on the récit, the referential world beyond Bérénice collapses into Bérénice to re-emerge as subjective and fantastical. In the passages devoted to her thoughts and feelings a similar discomfort is evoked for a different reason. Her inner world is impersonal; for example, the illusion of spontaneity is destroyed by the rhetorical organization and presentation of internal analysis in L'Avalée des avalés.

Bérénice's internal analysis includes a parody of the rhetoric of the seventeenth century as learned at school and reproduced anachronistically and incongruously by the student, a style known as grandiloquent. This rhetoric displays rhetoric as an end in itself by means of intense repetition and absurd ideas. In a passage concerning eyes (p. 102), seven sentences begin with "c'est par les yeux," one with "C'est avec les yeux," one with "C'est après les yeux." The speaker exhumes the "dis-je" figure of hesitation, of feigning to qualify one's thought on the spot while in fact assuring that the audience's attention remains riveted to one's rhetoric: "C'est lorsque les yeux se sont ouverts que la vérité, que le mensonge, dis-je, a éclaté, que l'illusion a envahi l'homme, que les pires hallucinations se sont mises à grouiller dans sa profonde montagne de ténèbres...." (p. 102).

When she manipulates abstract ideas, and particularly the concept of logical or natural necessity, one can imagine Bérénice as something appearing to Descartes in a nightmare. According to Peter France, philosophers and scientists of the seventeenth century "mocked at the precocious ability of children to juggle words before they had any ideas
to express and they exposed the distortion of simple truth in the name of fluency and elegance. Bérénice violates the syllogism, putting grandiloquence at the service of blatantly specious reasoning:

Les poissons vivent dans l'eau et en meurent. Les êtres humains vivent dans l'air et en meurent. Il y a l'eau, l'air et la lumière. L'eau et l'air sont vénéneux. La lumière reste seule. (p. 250)

Je pris garde que, pour la logique, ses syllogismes et la plupart de ses autres instructions servent plutôt à expliquer à autrui les choses qu'on sait ou même... à parler sans jugement de celles qu'on ignore, qu'à les apprendre.

Whereas Descartes claimed that errors in reasoning resulted when willfulness outstripped understanding, Bérénice claims that for psychological reasons willfulness must outstrip understanding: "Je donne arbitrairement une autre forme à toute chose qui, par son manque de consistance ou son immensité, est impossible à saisir..." (p. 153).

Her arguments might be poetic commonplaces. In the story of water, light and air, quoted above, the natural order is presented as cruel. In a poem one might read "light" as the poem itself which constitutes a lasting trace of the human. In the context above "light" is associated with logic, in accordance with the classical tradition which is, by implication, presented as specious. Poetry, on the other hand, posits language as mediating all contradiction. In Rhétorique de la poésie, it is suggested that the harmony created by the rhetorical power of language to mediate contradictions may be experienced as false and more intolerable than what it remedies. Bérénice's abuse of logic, by means of inflated, self-interested rhetoric constitutes a mise en abyme of the poetic principle on which many other passages of the text depend. Returning to the story of trees and eyes, one finds
familiar themes: "C'est parce qu'ils n'ont pas d'yeux que les arbres ne marchent pas et ne parlent pas. C'est par les yeux seuls qu'on peut choisir qui haïr, qui aimer" (p. 102). "Tree" is an element in the series: body, island, boat, self. "Eye" is an element in the series: window, door, mouth, outside. Making free with the use of "parce que" and "seul," the speaker affirms as logical necessity what is more appropriately a poetic theme. First, as a tree, the human is assimilated to the natural; then, in the subsequent development, "eyes" cause the human to separate from the natural order; separation of anthropos and cosmos is, for the authors of Rhétorique de la poésie, the most general form of contradiction which rhetorical language, in the broad sense, is called upon to mediate.  
Just as Bérénice is suspicious of her mother's external beauty, one is invited to be suspicious of poetic language even, for example, that of the description of her mother's eyes which provokes the tree and eye tirade: "Ses yeux d'une transparence hyaline et d'un bleu lunaire embrassent fixement la tempête. Ses yeux sont aquatiques. Ils luisent comme deux trous d'eau à la surface de son visage" (p. 102). This language of harmonious metaphors and sounds constitutes a threat which is the fascination of the engulfing mother, and the closed conceptual universe.

By exploring the concrete aspect of language there lies, in parodic grandiloquence, a path to understanding:

Mais il y a un remède. Il y a un remède. Il s'agit de le trouver. Déblayons ces ruines et mettons-nous-y. Mettons-nous aussitôt à quatre pattes et cherchons. À l'oeuvre! À l'oeuvre! Au travail! Nous savons tous quoi faire maintenant. (p. 231)

Rhythmic repetition and apostrophe co-habit with the familiar "mettons-nous à quatre pattes." To assess one's position now, one is invited
to examine the evidence of texts left by the past. Meaning develops out of language, and the incongruous emerges in contrast to what is perceived as coherent and harmonious. To emphasize rhetoric is to render as contingent the ideas the rhetoric was first conceived as serving. *L'Avalée* parodies the *ethos* of expository prose by the foregrounding of rhetoric, which negates ideas as natural truths anterior to language. Language defines as well as mediating the opposition of *anthropos* and *cosmos*, defines the subject as well as mediating the isolation of the subject. All language is poetic in the sense that it creates as well as transmits meaning.

**Stylistic Devices**

In parodic grandiloquence, where rhetoric's role is to construct expository truths, one may see an expanded metaphor of the functioning of the figures or stylistic devices, which compel the interest and attention of the reader regardless of narrative context.

*L'Avalée des avalés* is conspicuously weighed down with traditional stylistic devices such as metaphor, syllepsis, paronomasia. Some motifs—the house and boat for example—occur in the *récit* but also serve as explicit metaphors for the self, and so contribute to the psychological coherence of the text. The proliferation of these devices in clusters also contributes enormously to semantic incongruity. Although not all the striking figurative passages create such an effect, it is probably this effect which calls attention most forcibly to the stylistic devices. A stylistic device or figure has been described as the alteration of
a norm, or rather, to avoid the prescriptive connotation of "norm," a departure from a "zero degree" of expressiveness.\textsuperscript{16} The rhetorical zero degree has been defined thus: "Le degré zéro d'une position déterminée c'est ce que le lecteur attend dans cette position."\textsuperscript{17} A stylistic device surprises the reader, calling attention to the language of the text itself, and away from one's anticipation of discursive meaning. A highly rhetorical text requires more effort of its reader because its predictability is less than that of a non-rhetorical text. In L'Avalée des avalés the reader may hesitate between two interests: on the one hand psychological coherence, on the other formal coherence. Rhetorical figures play on these two aspects.

By the stylistic device, the enunciating subject signals his relation to the discourse. The proliferation of devices evokes a self-conscious subject's defence against an oppressive intertext. As the devices themselves become literary norms or clichés, incongruity remains as a distance to be inserted between subject as text and intertext. As Chouinard says "L'irruption brusque du discontinu dans le continu suffit à détruire l'ordre du système clos."\textsuperscript{18} At one and the same time, incongruity signals the passage of the subject and his decenteredness or inessentiality in relation to the discourse.

Although it is when clustered together that the figures make the most unmistakable impression, it is useful to distinguish the four categories of figures described in Groupe Mu's Rhetorique générale, because these categories show how different types or levels of functioning can be effected by stylistic devices. Métalogismes and métasémèmes act on the signified, the semantic information to be expected in the
context; métataxes and métaplasmes act on the phonetic and graphic aspects directly. The earlier discussion of logic and rational discourse has already dealt with alterations of thought patterns expected or métalogismes (p. 117). However, one fanciful example will illustrate this type of figure operating concurrently with a metaphor when, Bérénice says: "Mûre, la citrouille tombe de l'arbre. Je me suis écroulée tout à coup" (p. 255). The incongruous pumpkin may arise from "citrouille" as a colloquial term for head, and "arbre" as correlative for the self.

Metaphors are a type of métasémème or "trope" in the traditional sense, where one semantic unit is substituted for another. In L'Avalée des avalés one may be disoriented by the ubiquity of mixed metaphors, especially ones which contribute to the topos of movement versus stasis, inside versus outside or same versus other: "Mais pour perpétrer mon enlèvement, les deux époux avaient compté sur l'absence de Zio qui, soudain, comme un cheveu sur la soupe, arrive et serre tous les freins" (p. 179). Not infrequently the mixed metaphors play on confusing a part and the whole, especially when this effect violates the integrity of the human body:

On peut voir leurs coeurs ouvrir une énorme gueule armée d'épées, une benne préneuse faite pour dévorer vif. (p. 139)

Je sens mon cerveau perdre pied, ne tenant plus qu'à un fil, mon cerveau s'échappe. (p. 156)

Le mufle humide et les pieds froids de Constance Exsangue crient de plus en plus fort, appellent d'une façon de plus en plus brutale. (p. 203)

These samples come close to the heart of bad taste, as Todorov finds the traditional rhetorician Fontanier describing it: "A ce coeur qu'il
vous laisse, osez prêtez un bras: Quoi de plus absurde, s'exclame
Fontanier, qu'un bras prête à un coeur... l'absurde est au niveau des
sens propres."21 When fossilized metaphors like "serrer les freins",
"perdre pied" or "prêter un bras" are brought back to life by contact
with other elements in the sentence, one often slips from figurative
to literal, much as one's attention slips between the récit and the
process of its enunciation in reading the text.

As images of the body are manipulated in L'Avalee des avalés, the
point of view regress; a part becomes a whole having parts each in
its turn a whole. This pattern of metamorphosis valorizes a baroque
world view in opposition to a classical view. Chouinard says of Ducharme's
writing in general: "Nous sommes en plein univers baroque et l'écriture
de Ducharme est celle de la prolifération."22 There is an implicit
analogy of assimilation of body to text as a concrete entity. A classical
text is characterized by formal balance and harmony, polish and complete-
ness. L'Avalee des avalés revels rather in the process of emerging from
and merging into other texts, in the process of meaning emerging from
language rather than language as manifesting meaning. The subject
represented by L'Avalee as divided is not inherently nonfunctional but
portrayed as such, as schizoid, in relation to a classical world view
which gives rise to realism and the psychological novel.

Semantic incongruity may arise from quantitative rather than
purely qualitative factors, though the two types are not entirely dis-
tinguishable.23 The recurrence of conventional metaphors such as "mettre
des bâtons dans les roues," "perdre les pédales" and "bouché à l'émeri"
calls attention to their literal meaning, developing the motif of motion
versus stasis. The repetition of "rire dans sa barbe" suggests incongruity itself as a topos:

Christian rit dans sa barbe. (p. 61)
Chamomor doit rire dans sa barbe. (p. 100)
Je m'approche de la table en riant dans ma barbe. Je jette un coup d'oeil à Einberg: il rit dans sa barbe. (p. 130)
Il me fait des réflexions qui me font rire dans ma barbe. (p. 137)
Je lance un regard du côté de Zio. Il attendait ce regard.... Il rit dans sa barbe. (p. 187)

[Zio] s'imagine que par l'entremise de... sa longue barbe artisonnée... il contribue à relever le niveau de bonheur des êtres humains. (p. 186)

The beard in the cliché, which is a sleeve in the English "to laugh in one's sleeve," becomes an incongruous common denominator signifying the independence of the text vis-à-vis any primary reality except language, and the nonessentiality of the individual self. The reason for Zio's having a beard seems to be the expression "rire dans sa barbe," rather than the Hassidic practice of wearing beards.

Incongruity through quantity, or repetition, often results from métaplasmes including rhyme, alliteration, assonance and paronomasia. The clustering of these devices tends to set up a linguistic rhythm in the text, savoured independently of the narrative. One can relate this style to the child's parody of the high tone. For example, rhyme and regular rhythm have traditionally been seen as lamentable in prose, as explained by Cressot in Le Style: "De tout temps, on a recommandé aux prosateurs... d'éviter l'égalité syllabique entre les éléments rythmiques ou les groupes rythmiques, d'éviter également la
The frequent occurrence of rhyme and intrusive rhythm in *L'Avalee des avalés* creates a nonce-standard peculiar to Bérénice. Captivated by what sometimes seems to resemble a speech impediment in the text, one is sensitized to the presence of sound repetitions, which are usually not perceived or perceived only as they relate to meaning. Thus one may come to regard the pure excess of repeated sounds as representing the motif of explosiveness. In the following examples the theme of excess is explicitly stated:

Zio semble s'interroger au sujet du surmenage que ma voracité m'impose. (p. 190)

Après avoir complété un cours de cor anglais j'en entreprends un de clairon. (p. 162)

Repetition of sounds sometimes develops into a true play on words, in which the phrase or sentence as a microcontext breaks lose from the discursive macrocontexts, like a side path turning back on itself:

Bérénice ma fille méfie-toi. (p. 56)
La vie est difficile pour les filles faciles. (p. 136)
Il y fait doux comme dans une nuit d'août. (p. 118)
J'ai autant de dents que d'ans maintenant. (p. 259)
Je fais ma diarrhée de jérémiades. (p. 145)

The setting apart of the microcontext from the larger context is typical of a chapter beginning, since it is physically set off from what precedes. The puzzling aspect of some chapter beginnings in *L'Avalee des avalés* results from word play and intertextual allusion as well. Chapter 63, for example, begins with an altered cliché: "Partir, ce n'est pas guérir car on demeure. Revenir, c'est pareil" (p. 219).
The commonplace "Partir, c'est mourir un peu" is the first line of a sentimental poem:

Partir c'est mourir un peu:
C'est mourir à ce qu'on aime
On laisse un peu de soi-même
En toute heure et dans tout lieu.26

The renewed cliche hesitates between "mourir" (negative) and "guérir" (positive). In addition, "car on demeure" evokes "Le temps s'en va et je demeure," from Apollinaire's "Le Pont Mirabeau." The subject suffers from the impoverishment of experience in schizoid withdrawal, a psychological dimension in harmony with the repetitious aspect of the discourse which has difficulty saying other than what has already been said. The discourse literally impedes the subject, who wants to start anew. In a closed conceptual universe, all beginnings are problematic.

The motif of departure figures frequently at the beginning of chapters, always evoking the paradox of beginning anew: "Me jeter sur une épée. Tomber dans une embuscade. Prendre le quai. Prendre la gare. Prendre la route. Partir" (p. 88). In this case, repeating the word allows for a change in meaning rather than the contrary, which is also frequent in L'Avalée des avalés. "Prendre" slips from literal to figurative meaning. The subject solicits its own destruction in the interest of change. The impulse may be that of a self-destructive schizoid subject seeking to escape from a prison of its own design; but may also evoke an empty, dynamic concept of subject as pure function, a subject as purely the result of the functioning of language and without conceptual content.

Incongruous sound repetitions in L'Avalée des avalés call attention
to the language of the text, to meaning as developing from the way
language presents itself rather than as predetermined. In this text, métalogismes, métasémènes, métaplasmes contribute to the foregrounding
of language as a creative force, not an embellishment. To the extent
that one senses the subordination of narrative logic to language, incon-
gruity is manifest.

Of the métataxes or figures of syntax, it is the humorous, con-
trived and unsubtle syllepsis and zeugma which, together with the general
abuse of logic, particularly affects the "fausses fenêtres" of rhetorical
language as mediator and harmonizer. The following passage refers to
Christian, Bérénice's brother, whose identity is rigid and unchanging:
"Il y en a qui, comme Léandre, traversent l'Hellespoint à la nage,
d'autres qui traversent la Manche à la nage. Christian, bien assis dans
sa chaise, traverse une crise religieuse" (p. 121). Like Christian,
Uncle Zio is incongruous because he is not incongruous. His consistency
is built on rhetorical sophistry, exposed by recourse to a classic
example of zeugma: "vêtue de probité et de lin blanc": "Parti d'Arménie
et de haillons, il [Zio] dirige maintenant, vêtu d'un complet de fin
lainage britannique et chaussé à l'italienne, une importante société
de prêts sur hypothèque" (p. 178).

It is not the case that L'Avalée des avalés is saturated by semantic
incongruities, that the tone becomes naggingly facetious. In spite of
Bérénice's diction the grotesque alternates with or even co-habits with
the pathetic or tragic:

Quand j'ai les yeux fermés, c'est par mon ventre que je
suis avalée, c'est dans mon ventre que j'étouffe. Quand
j'ai les yeux ouverts, c'est parce que je vois que je suis
avalée, c'est dans mon ventre que je suffoque.... Que j'aie les yeux ouverts ou fermés, je suis englobée: il n'y a plus assez d'air tout à coup, mon coeur se serre, la peur me saisit. (p. 7)

The text describes itself foundering between an irrelevant literary tradition and a decentered reality; it imposes a centre which is the narrative voice and the person of the narrator. The incongruousness of the center is portrayed as suffering, that is, translates both the striving of the enunciating subject and its inevitable decline toward a stabilized text and an unproblematic identity. From the textual point of view, the subject's tragedy lies not in the diffuseness of its identity but in its condemnation to mimic a unified identity. From the psychological point of view, the subject's tragedy lies in ignorance of the point of view that "... identity itself... is always an artistic construct," as Hutcheon puts it. The text sacrifices the subject of the récit in order to make visible its conceptual shape.

Proper Names as Intertext

Proper names attempt to make an individual unique and personal, but Bérénice's names also make her seem a textually constituted person, participating in literary tradition and in an as yet imperfectly mediated social reality. The name "Bérénice" first appears in Chapter 6 where the gardener is calling "Mademoiselle Bérénice" to come to dinner. One thinks immediately of the noble, classical world of Racine's Bérénice (1670) and Corneille's less fortunate Tite et Bérénice (1670). C. L. Walton, in his commentary on Bérénice, makes the following statement: "The enchanting name Bérénice has been described as 'harmonieux comme un chant de flûte' (A. Hallays, J. Débats, 14 jan. 1894). It recurs
in the text 45 times, 14 times at the rhyme and 10 times with its final e unelided within the body of the line." This "enchanting" name becomes parodic in the context of *L'Avalée des avalés*: "Bérénice Einberg, as-tu du coeur? J'ai plein de peau mais pas de coeur, Monseigneur" (p. 186). In *Le Cid* the hero who must sacrifice sentiment to duty asks himself: "Rodrigue, as-tu du coeur?" To be noble in Rodrigue's sense one must deny the dictates of the heart in the romantic sense. In Racine's play, Bérénice and love are sacrificed to the interests of the state.

With the reference to "Monseigneur," *L'Avalée* recontextualizes Corneille in relation to the rigorism of traditional clerical ideology which functioned as the ideology of the state in Quebec until the Quiet Revolution. The heart as sentiment camouflages the will to sin, and is defined in opposition to spirituality. The importance of the mind versus body dichotomy in traditional Quebec is presented by *L'Avalée* as fostering schizoid withdrawal and fragmentation: "Afin de me faire une âme j'ai détruit mon coeur, j'ai brûlé tout ce que j'avais de spontanéité" (p. 93); "... Mon coeur je l'arrache, le jette dans le fleuve" (p. 26). By envisaging the ultimate negative consequences of the traditional point of view, *L'Avalée* participates in the ethos of the Quiet Revolution. As Racine's Bérénice is sacrificed to the state, Ducharme's is sacrificed to a *reductio ad absurdum* of a social ideology. The sacrifice of Bérénice's versimilitude, on the other hand, allows the functioning of representation in the novel to be made obvious. She is associated with the flesh, which at the textual level means the materiality of language; the passage cited above continues with a gradation foregrounding the
tautological aspect of language: " Ça m'est venu comme ça, petit à petit, peu à peu, au jour le jour, sans que je m'en aperçoive" (p. 186).

Although a queen is identified by her given name alone, Bérénice Einberg is identified by a family name which sounds somewhat like her first name turned back to front. The Jewish surname undoes the gallicism of the given name. "Einberg" is parodic in itself, meaning "a mountain," "one mountain," the nonexistent and unmarked term of the series "Eisenberg" (iron mountain), "Goldberg," and no doubt most immediately for most readers "Steinberg" (stone mountain), referring to the owners of the supermarket chain. For an anglophone reader "Einberg" may evoke "iceberg." Whereas "Bérénice" has obvious literary associations, "Einberg" has social connotations, situating the literary as dependent upon a social context which renders it problematic and incongruous.

The Jewish subject of the récit rehearses the rapprochement of Québécois and Jewish people as oppressed minorities, as illustrated by the reedition in Quebec of the Portrait du colonisé (1972) by Albert Memmi, also the author of Portrait d'un Juif. One must also allow, however, that Einberg's Jewishness, as representative of phallogocentrism, may be construed as anti-Semitic. By recommending avoidance of non-Catholics, the clerical ideology of Quebec left itself vulnerable to criticism as fostering xenophobia and, in the context of a high profile Jewish presence (for example, Steinberg's supermarkets), especially anti-Semitism.

Though engaged in a struggle with classical rhetoric, the Bérénice of L'Avalée never mentions Corneille's or Racine's play, and deliberately seeks a namesake among historical and literary curiosities:
Je cours après toutes les Bérénice de la littérature et de l'histoire. J'apprends que Bérénice d'Egypte a épousé son frère, Ptolémée Evergète et s'est fait assassiner par son fils, Ptolémée Philopator.... Bérénice, fille d'Agrippa Ier, me plaît moins, quoiqu'elle ait assisté sans broncher à la condamnation d'un des apôtres du Christ. A lire et relire la Bérénice d'Edgar Poe, de faire ce qu'elle fait, d'être comme elle est. L'influence qu'exerce sur moi ces Bérénice n'est pas à négliger. (p. 161)

Rather than the classical models, Bérénice situates herself in relation to the Gothic, the exotic, even the seedy underside of high culture. Specifically, the historical Bérénice who saw the apostle Paul in prison (Acts XXVI) was also the Bérénice who loved Titus: "The historical Bérénice fades into obscurity in A.D. 70, only to be reborn in Racine's poetry as 'la vraie Bérénice', as the symbol of pure and sacrificial love." It is the shadow which Bérénice Einberg seeks, the one who, according to a certain Isidore Loeb of La Grande Encyclopédie: "a réuni dans sa personne, tous les vices de la famille d'Hérode: l'amour du faste et du pouvoir, le goût de l'intrigue et des tripotages politiques, l'égoïsme sans scrupules, la passion sans frein." On the fringes of the supposedly ordered Roman world tottered the dynasties of Ptolemies and Herods. Beyond historical anecdote, Bérénice in L'Avalée des avalés alludes to an "outside" in relation to which order is defined, that which Racine evoked in the phrase "l'orient désert." One thinks of Corneille's and Racine's Bérénice as a glorious classical figure, but a figure which all the same represented some elements alien and perhaps unacceptable to the classical ideal.

Closer to the contemporary period one finds the classical name "Bérénice" reappearing in the romantic tradition; in Poe's short story, "Bérénice" (1835) and, almost a century later, in Maurice Barrès'
The emphatic allusion to Poe in Le Jardin de Bérénice (1921). The emphatic allusion to Poe in L'Avalee des avalés (p. 161) seems in keeping with the text's insistence on intensity and nostalgia for the spontaneous. In Baudelaire's famous translation the narrator says of Bérénice: "Elle, agile, gracieuse et débordante d'énergie; à elle le vagabondage sur la colline.... elle, errant insoucienne à travers la vie, sans penser aux ombres de son chemin ou à la fuite silencieuse des heures au noir plumage." In Poe's tale such an image of innocence exists only in relation to the horrible fate of innocence:

Un mal fatal s'abattit sur sa constitution comme le simoun; et même pendant que je la contemplais, l'esprit de métamorphose passait sur elle et l'enlevait, pénétrant son esprit, ses habitudes, son caractère, et de la manière la plus subtile et la plus terrible, perturbant même son identité.

She comes to be the one who is both herself and another, both alive and dead.

Gilles Marcotte points out that the fascination for Bérénice's "teeth" in Poe's story develops concurrently with a fascination for script which is visual and provokes the subject's experience of reduplication, distance and space. Thus Bérénice in L'Avalee resembles Poe's Bérénice as a divided subject associated with textuality. It is difficult to summarize Poe's story without provoking laughter: fascinated by the sight of Bérénice's teeth, the narrator rends them from her mouth while she is in a coma. The text was probably intended to be parodic. As a parody of Gothic romanticism Poe's "Berenice" resembles Bérénice Einberg as a parody of the psychological character.

Much later but still, it seems, in the tradition of the young woman as a child (who stands for the self in a state of nature), is
Barrès' Bérénice:

L'âme populaire, âme religieuse, instinctive... et pleine d'un passé dont elle n'a pas conscience.41

... cette part du moi que l'intelligence n'embrassera jamais, cette part secrète qui communique directement avec les forces de la nature et l'âme du monde.42

Not once does our Bérénice mention Barrès' heroine; however, the narrator of Le Nez qui voque attacks Barrès the writer:

Ecrire rend digne d'amour, comme dit Barrès. Savez-vous pourquoi Barrès écrit? C'est parce qu'il n'a pas pu se débarrasser de l'influence de ses professeurs, qu'il est resté un enfant d'école.... Monsieur Barrès... si vous n'êtes pas mort et si vous êtes blessé de ce que j'emploie votre nom dans un sens péjoratif, vous n'avez qu'à ne pas laisser votre nom courir les rues. (NQV, p. 106)

Perhaps it is in L'Avalée des avalés that Barrès' name, i.e. "Bérénice," is most taken in vain. In Bérénice Einberg one may choose to see some parody of the classical heroine and also of the romantic child-woman; yet equally one may feel the affirmation of process as an ideal. Barrès' Bérénice says: "Reconnais en moi la petite secousse par où chaque parcelle du monde témoigne l'effort secret de l'inconscient. Où je ne suis pas c'est la mort; j'accompagne partout la vie."43 Ducharme's Bérénice transcends this self-effacing femininity and obfuscation of the interpreted, textual aspect of the subject and text—as is evident in her assuming the discourse of Nerval's "Desdichado": "Je suis le ténébreux, le veuf, l'inconsolé / Le prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie," which becomes: "Je suis la grande Bérénice, la vainqueuse, la témérêtre, l'incorruptible. Je suis Bérénice d'un bout à l'autre du fleuve Saint-Laurent, d'un bout à l'autre de la voie lactée" (p. 135). Like Nerval's
"je," Ducharme's is empty but triumphant.

"Bérénice" comes from a name meaning "bringer of victory"; in her one may respond to a positive force. The active dominates the passive, although the good does not dominate the bad. From a discussion of generalized incongruity in the text we have returned to a discussion of parody in relation to a specific tradition, romantic in a broad sense, and to a discussion of a positive narrator figure. Our next chapter will reinterpret the parodic subject of L'Avalée.

Conclusion

To see semantic incongruity as a structuring principle of L'Avalée des avalés is not to invalidate reading the text as a mimesis of psychological type, but merely to recontextualize this psychological aspect. The text includes a coherent and tragic account of schizoid disintegration. The ludic aspect of the text does not mock, ridicule or trivialize this representation. The ludic aspect of the text accomplishes two major functions with respect to the psychological representation. First, it makes explicit the function of the text, in accordance with literary tradition, as recreative and pleasure-giving while reacting against the possible masochistic disguise of pleasure in the representation of suffering. Second, it describes the identity of the subject as a relative and fictional construct; it posits a subject in process associated with the enunciating subject and dissociated from the subject as enunciated, and particularly hypostatized as character.

The incongruousness of the child narrator's voice facilitates the reception of an enunciating subject not solely defined as a character.
The emptiness introduced into the "I" of the text allows the reader to replace the enunciating subject, sharing a euphoric sense of mastery evident in the foregrounding of the phonic and graphic aspects of language. The subject enunciated as character is a schizoid subject. The global subject is split in a more optimistic mode. The enunciated subject cannot correspond even mimetically to the enunciating subject. The latter is not one but plural because it stands also for the readers of L'Avalée.
NOTES


2 Hutcheon, "Parody without Ridicule," pp. 205, 206, 208, 211.


6 For discussion of "saturation" of context, see Riffaterre, "Stylistic Context," p. 216.

7 See Bernard Dupriez, "Ducharme et des ficelles," Voix et Images du Pays (Québec), 5 (1972), p. 174: "Si Ducharme hésite à répéter mot pour mot... il n'hésite guère... à revenir plusieurs fois sur la même idée, en des termes plus ou moins différents. C'était du reste une figure que les anciens appelaient commoration et que les rhéteurs français appelent demeure. Il s'agit, en somme, de demeurer longtemps sur le même sujet, d'y revenir, d'allonger la sauce."

8 See Riffaterre, p. 217: "... nonce-standards, the fragmentary language systems which the author uses to suggest the speech of one of his characters or to parody a style. These can be seen as special contexts developed by saturation from SDs [stylistic devices]...."

9 Peter France, Rhetoric and Truth in France: Descartes to Diderot (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 139: "The repetitions, the enumeration, the gradation, the beautiful effects of balance, the sonorous harmony, these are the qualities which in a debased form have made formal eloquence so ridiculous and even repulsive in our day. Yet this sort of eloquence can work, and it does work in Bossuet in that it often compels our attention and makes his sermons satisfying and memorable experiences, however little we may be in sympathy with his message."

10 See Tzvetan Todorov, Littérature et signification (Paris:
Nous pouvons passer maintenant au deuxième grand type d'expressions figurées, aux figures proprement dites. Dans ce cas la figure ne s'oppose pas à une règle mais à un discours qu'on ne sait pas décrire....

3. SEMANTIQUE. . . . (la sémantique est loin d'avoir répertorié les différents types d'énoncés; c'est pourquoi nous pouvons nous arrêter plus longuement sur les propositions venant de la rhétorique.) On y distingue... la correction ('L'héritier... ose applaudir, que dis-je? ose appuyer l'erreur...')."

11 Chouinard, p. 115, emphasizes elements of Biblical parody in this passage: "Non seulement la démarche du récit de la création de Ducharme est-elle calquée dans sa structure sur celle de la Bible, mais aussi le vocabulaire de ce passage est apparenté sensiblement à celui du récit mythique."

12 France, Rhetoric and Truth in France, p. 27.

13 Descartes in the Discours, quoted by France, Rhetoric and Truth in France, p. 44.


15 Jacques Dubois et al, Rhétorique de la poésie, p. 88: "l'effet proprement poétique correspond selon nous à deux conditions:
1. manifestation, directe ou indirecte, d'une isotopie cosmos et d'une isotopie anthropos
2. médiation rhétorique, explicite ou implicite, entre les deux isotopies."


17 Jacques Dubois et al, Rhétorique générale, p. 37.

18 Chouinard, p. 129.

19 Jacques Dubois et al, Rhétorique de la poésie, pp. 35, 46.

20 Todorov, p. 99. Tropes = "figures qui comportent un changement de signification."
21 Todorov, p. 105.

22 Chouinard, p. 111.

23 Yoshihiko Ikegami, "A Linguistic Essay on Parody," *Linguistics*, n° 55 (1969), p. 15: "If an expression or expressions are used in a given context so frequently as to be judged inappropriate, then we have a case of incongruity in terms of quantity."


31 For a discussion of virulent anti-Semitism in Quebec during
the thirties, see Bernard Saint-Aubin, *Duplessis et son époque* (Montréal: La Presse, 1939), pp. 84-87.

32 C. L. Walton in introduction to *Bérénice*, p. 27.


35 Edgar Allan Poe, "Berenice," first published in *Southern Literary Messenger*, 1, n° 7 (March 1835), 333-36.


40 See, for example, G. R. Thompson, *Poe's Fiction: Romantic Irony in the Gothic Tales* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), pp. 167-68: "'Bérénice' (1835) actually lampoons its literary type... It has been his [the narrator's] perverse misfortune to have been both born and brought up in a library, and thus he has become totally imbued with the Gothic horrors and weird philosophical (transcendental) mysticism of the day."

41 Barrès, *Le Jardin de Bérénice*, p. 68.


CHAPTER VI: THE SUBJECT AS DIVERGENT IN L'AVALEE DES AVALES

Parody in L'Avalee des avalés involves a reworking of a vast intertext, not only literary, but including the text of common sense "a domain of situations in the everyday lifeworld," as Susan Stewart describes it in her analysis of nonsense.\(^1\) From the Québécois perspective, Patrick Imbert describes this generalized intertext as the global tautology of the semantic universe of Indo-European languages.\(^2\) Parodic writing as an analysis of the cultural "given" which the writing subject brings to the text is also parody of the subject as part of that given. In this chapter we will examine some aspects of the parodic subject as revealed in the narrator-protagonist of L'Avalee des avalés. The parodic subject in L'Avalee constitutes a point of view in relation to a tradition concerning child, woman, schizophrenic and writer.

The Child as an Impossible Trace

Peter Coveney sums up the modern tradition of the child figure in European literature in his The Image of Childhood. He cites Rousseau's *Emile* as the inception of this tradition: "Tout est bien sortant des mains de l'Auteur des Choses; tout dégénère entre les mains de l'homme."\(^3\) Rousseau begins the Romantic era, inspiring such poets as William Wordsworth whose infant comes into the world "trailing clouds of glory." In Poe's and Barrès' Bérénice one found the Romantic image of the innocent childlike woman. Coveney explains that the thrust of high Romanticism is to show in the child a potential which is, or should be, also present in the adult: "In talking of childhood, the great Romantics were, in
a very real sense, talking of the whole condition of Man.... the child was an active image, an expression of human potency in the face of human experience." 

Psychoanalysis echoes this common thread in, for example, Jung's interpretation of the child motif:

The occurrence of the child motif in the psychology of the individual signifies as a rule an anticipation of future developments, even though at first sight it may seem like a retrospective configuration.... the child paves the way for a future change.

Coveney identifies Freud as stressing a continuity between child and adult that is faithful to the Romantic ideal. This continuity has been touched on by the present study in the discussion of neurosis and the stages of childhood development. The energy and dynamism of Bérénice in L'Avalée des avalés also are faithful to the Romantic tradition, but in her case the incoercible forces that possess her threaten her existence: "Une force volcanique m'habite, une force douloureuse que rien au monde ne peut déclencher, assouvir" (p. 156). In addition to the little girl speaking, something speaks through her: "Le cyclone sans issue me gonfle, me secoue, me fait souffrir et suer comme une femme en gésine.... J'ai choisi toutes les fleurs, tous les champs. Je n'ai rien à faire dans ce nid" (p. 269).

The grotesque motif of possessed child may constitute a humorous allusion to the origin of the subject in "difference" and "deferral." Derrida criticizes the transcendent status of the signified in the sign, arguing that the trace or movement of "difference" logically precedes all acts of meaning and that the possibility of individual consciousness requires the other as its context:
L'"immotivation" du signe requiert une synthèse dans laquelle le tout autre s'annonce comme tel--sans aucune simplicité, aucune identité, aucune ressemblance ou continuité--dans ce qui n'est pas lui.... Il faut penser la trace avant l'étant.6

In a similar vein, Jean-Joseph Goux writes of a "productive force" in the signifier, underpinning the process of discursive meaning but obscured by it:

La notion de valeur... se superpose, en la masquant (par l'intermédiaire de l'argent) à celle fondatrice de travail, comme la notion de sens se superpose en la masquant (par l'intermédiaire de la parole) à celle fondatrice de la production de la trace.7

As a split subject, Berenice also represents the functioning of language in L'Avalée des avalés as irreducible to that of discursive prose. In addition, the incongruous presentation of subject depicts the derivation of fictional subject from text. Finally, absence of intradiegetic allusion to the existence of the written text of L'Avalée des avalés, in conjunction with Berenice's peculiarly literary discourse, can be read as a grotesque representation of "writing" or inscription as a difference logically anterior to speech. Derrida sees "writing" as a manifestation of origin as difference:

Si l'écriture signifie inscription et d'abord institution durable d'un signe (et c'est le seul noyau irréductible du concept d'"écriture"), l'écriture en général couvre tout le champ des signes linguistiques.8

Immotive, tout signe serait impensable sans une institution durable: c'est-à-dire sans l'instance de la trace... qui par "une structure de renvoi" fait apparaître la différence.9

Berenice's discourse has been criticised from the point of view of verisimilitude:
Si elle existait vraiment, Bérénice serait certes capable de sentir ce qu'elle sent dans L'Avalée, et sans doute de concevoir une bonne partie de ses pensées; mais elle ne pourrait pas élucider ces pensées ou ces sentiments, et encore moins les formuler avec autant de précision et de brio.\textsuperscript{10}

Conventional expectations of the performance of a child writer may be illustrated by the conclusion of Daisy Ashford's *The Young Visitors*, written when the author was nine years old:

Ethel's parents were too poor to come so far [to her wedding] but her Mother sent her a gold watch which did not go but had been for some years in the family and her father provided a cheque for 2£ and promised to send her a darling little baby calf when ready.\textsuperscript{11}

The calf represents a highly desirable acquisition from the child's point of view, but would make a grotesque wedding present from the adult point of view. Such blurring of perspective is expected from a child, but absent in *L'Avalée*.

On the other hand, in contemporary commentary on the child myth, Kristeva notes the tendency to project adult discourse onto the child:

"... ce démontage du mythe chrétien-rousseautiste de l'enfance s'accompagne d'une homologation problématique: on y trouve projetés au lieu supposé de l'enfance... les traits propres du discours adulte."\textsuperscript{12}

Bérénice's incongruity results from her being presented simultaneously as child and as not child. Since the child-adult distinction is temporal, it is not surprising to find that time references play a significant role in provoking this effect.

In *Huckleberry Finn*, *Zazie dans le métro* or *What Maisie Knew*, the reader accepts the child as narrator or focal point without question.\textsuperscript{13}

These figures represent childhood integrally and their ages are never
mentioned. In *L'Avalee* the mention of Bérénice's age obtrudes incongruously at several points in the text. *Zazie dans le métro* ends with a witticism, when Zazie announces after passing twenty-four hours in Paris: "J'ai vieilli." To the child, time passes relatively slowly, and to the adult, the child evolves relatively rapidly. The discourse of Bérénice, however, is the same at the beginning of *L'Avalee* where she is described as nine years old and at the end where she is at least eighteen. The static quality of this voice counters mimetic expectations more brutally than the precocity of the fictional narrator. The dynamic force of Bérénice is not that of a character maturing; the character deteriorates: "J'ai quinze ans, pas toutes mes dents et pas tous mes cheveux" (p. 233). The corruption of Bérénice in *L'Avalee* has always already begun, just as the process of representation has always already begun, as Derrida puts it: "La présence, pour être présence et présence à soi, a toujours déjà été entamée. L'affirmation elle-même doit toujours s'entamer en se répétant."15

**The Child's Fate**

Coveney presents a second image of the child, a derivative image and for him a perversion of high Romanticism. This second child is doomed to corruption and better off dead than left to deteriorate in the society of degenerates:

... the emphasis shifts towards the state of innocence itself, not as a resilient expression of man's potential integrity, but as something statically juxtaposed to experience, and, ultimately... something not so much static as actually in retreat.... at worst, the positive assertion of life becomes a negative assertion of withdrawal and death.... the image is transfigured into the image of an innocence which dies.16
The bipolarity inherent in this image is illustrated by the alternative readings of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, in which the two children are seen either as helpless innocents or as demons. In *L'Avalée des avalés* the decadent image is made manifest in the personae of Constance Chlore, the good, and Gloria, the bad. According to Julia Kristeva, the progress of the novel consists in the settling out of a non-disjunctive or ambiguous character into univocal elements such as good and evil. The elimination of Bérénice's personae empty her of content so that her structure as a non-disjunctive suspension of elements becomes visible.

**Narrative as Subject**

The narrator represents the conventional source or origin of the text intradiegetically. The events and characters of Bérénice's récit repeat themselves and they repeat her in the recurrent configuration of secondary characters. In insisting upon the phenomenon of repetition, the text foregrounds a paradox upon which the conceptual universe rests, as Susan Stewart explains:

> Ironically, repetition, whose nature is seen as ongoing, can only achieve this quality of ongoingness by "swallowing" the ongoing quality of context, by holding context still. The machine's threat is the disregard of context, ... the blindness characteristic of the "mechanical application" of any rule.

The explicitness of the narrator's repetitions in *L'Avalée* illustrates the premise that narrative and all representation imply repetition.

The narrative turns into a description of the narrator:

> Le moteur qui me fait fonctionner échappe à mon intelligence et à ma volonté... S'il ne m'obéit pas, à qui
d'autre obéit-il?... coup de hache après coup de hache, je romps l'étincelle, la gazoline.... je mets mon épaule à la roue et je pousse. Nous n'irons pas loin Bérénice, mais nous irons par nos propres moyens. (pp. 93-94)

Plus dégourdie qu'une grelée de plombs, je peux vouloir contre l'élan... mais mon sang et mes chairs sont remplis d'une direction et je ne peux plus en changer qu'une bouteille ne peut changer de contenu. (p. 142)

Bérénice reveals the nonessentiality of the child's purity as the representation of an origin. As "force of meaning" or signifier, the force which possesses Bérénice is confined, limited and momentarily suppressed by the process of representation, by representation of the subject. The theory of the subject rests on representation; for example, internalization of the concept of self through a mirror image, commented on by Stewart: ".... by means of repetition, the integer--the object--is made to appear. What is repeated is what is, a parameter defined in spite of time." Derrida makes the same point in a philosophical perspective: "Autre nom de la répétition représentative: l'Etre. L'Etre est la forme sous laquelle indéfiniment la diversité infinie des formes et des forces de vie et de mort peuvent se mêler et se répéter dans le mot." In L'Avalée, the narrator, who is by definition the intradiegetic origin of the récit, turns out to be the shape of the récit. One may say that the récit bares its structure since extradiegetically Bérénice is an effect of the text. One may also say that the text presents an extradiegetic model of its functioning; one which presents the writer (scripteur) as both origin and effect of text, considering "to write" as a "verb of middle voice"; one whose subject is "simultaneously agent and patient."
Schizoid Subject and Text

In *L'Avalée des avalés*, the specifically textual aspect of play of signifiers corresponds to the subject's unconscious. Writing as an activity in this context is incompatible with the subject as agent. A subject apparently absent from the domain of representation is generally called schizophrenic: "Ce que le schizophrène vit spécifiquement, génériquement, ce n'est pas du tout un pôle spécifique de la nature, mais la nature comme processus de production." Schizophrenia, in a special sense as intertextuality, constitutes the subject and is imminent in his functioning because imminent in the functioning of his discourse. In the commonplace sense, as a negative hypostasis of the absent subject, schizophrenia is deferred in *L'Avalée* in order to allow the performance of a *récit*. The psychological deterioration of the subject of the *récit* in *L'Avalée* is also a metafictional deconstruction of character.

One may impose closure on this text by saying that at the end of the *récit* the narrator becomes schizophrenic; at that moment Bérénice is an anthropomorphic form without content. Then again, one may suggest that the novel's abrupt ending solicits a rereading before the reader can impose closure on his reading, and thereby illustrates reading as a potentially interminable process, like schizophrenia as process. The subject of the *récit*, fragmented and tormented, represents both the impossibility of the novel's dispensing with the subject of the *récit*, and the subject's fictitious status both intra- and extradiegetically. What Roland Barthes said of the text in general is obviously the case for the novel or *récit*: "Le texte a besoin de son ombre: cette ombre
c'est un peu d'idéologie, un peu de représentation, un peu de sujet."

To borrow Leduc-Park's terms, in L'Avalée the subject is aware of her essential "néant" which in the mode of lack or inadequacy is portrayed as ontological insecurity:

Il ne faut pas s'occuper de ce qui arrive à la surface de la terre et à la surface de l'eau. Ça ne change rien à ce qui se passe dans le noir et le vide, là où on est. Il ne se passe rien dans le noir et le vide,... ça attend qu'on fasse quelque chose pour que ça se passe. (p. 9)

At the same time, emptiness is valued positively in relation to potential content as alien, inauthentic and inescapable: "Si les hommes perdaient la vue on les verrait bientôt s'arrêter, se taire, se fixer dans le sol.... leurs montagnes fermeraient leur fausse porte à la fausse lumière du soleil" (p. 163). The narrator portrays the subject as self wedded to non-self and order wedded to disorder. To move toward any original purity (or the "force" behind meaning) requires the destruction of subject and novel, which is impossible, since one is reading a novel. From the perspective of common sense, "no one" answers the narrator's call to anarchy and disorder because, outside of this perspective, there is not "one" entity or identity to respond: "J'appelle le désordre. Mais personne ne vient. Il faut que je fuie comme un voleur et je n'ai rien pris d'autre que ma vie... quelqu'un qui fuit avec sa vie fuit en même temps avec la vie de tous les autres" (p. 90). The child subject as associated with the "force of meaning" does not escape representation and therefore destruction. Finally, the violence of the subject, directed against the human form, relates to the destruction of the subject as shape or closure of L'Avalée. The "I" evokes process in opposition
to a closed structure of récit and of character, and thus may be associated with a text and a discourse which are at odds with the conventions of the novel. The destructive bent attributed to the "I" emerges in this metafictional context of opposition and illustrates Jean-Louis Baudry's description of a typical representation of the process of inscription:

Voilà ce qu'il faut que je fasse pour être libre: tout avaler.... imposer ma loi à tout.... Mais j'aime mieux tout détruire. (p. 160)

L'écriture comme travail, comme travail manifesté...
se trouve condamné comme l'irruption d'un dehors violent dans un dedans sans défense.26

J'ai le goût d'arracher des ongles avec des tenailles,
de scier des oreilles avec un rasoir, de tuer des êtres humains.... (pp. 143-144)

The Feminine of the Subject

In Speculum: de l'autre femme, Luce Irigaray argues that "toute théorie du 'sujet' aura toujours été appropriée au 'masculin'."27 From this point of view, the choice of female subject as narrator in L'Avalée des avale contributès significantly to the text's parodic dimension.

According to Irigaray, the woman as subject of the discourse is often heard as a child or equated with a child:

Ainsi s'amuse-t-on d'un enfant qui proclame bien haut les folles ambitions que les adultes taisent. On sait son inaptitude à les réaliser. Et qu'elle exhibe aussi naïvement leurs fantasmes de puissance leur sert de ré-création dans leur course au pouvoir.28

In Bérénice's discourse this tendency is taken to the extreme of stereotyped phallic images and flirtation with triumphant machismo; for example:
Irigaray emphasizes Freud's view of the child as masculine: "LA PETITE FILLE EST ALORS UN PETIT HOMME," and shows that the female is nowhere defined other than by negative comparison to the male. In L'Avalée the tension between explicitly feminine and implicitly masculine subject is never more manifest than when the narrator adopts the discourse of ideologues and visionaries: "J'appelle la guerre de l'homme contre ce qu'il a fait" (p. 90). Beyond the humorous or narrowly satirical, the narrator's tirades point up the marginal position of woman in the discourse: "Arrêtez tous les trains.... je vois la chose comme si j'y étais. Tout est arrêté. Et il se lève, le véritable Adonai. Il parle. Il nous parle" (p. 231). "Il" refers to Bérénice who concludes her peroration: "C'est Bérénice Einberg qui vous le dit. Et Bérénice Einberg, la voilà grosse Bérénice Einberg comme devant" (p. 232). By invoking her name and thus her sex, she contextualizes what precedes as nonsense.

To posit a female subject is to posit a textual subject if, as Irigaray claims, woman does not speak of or from herself but is possessed and spoken through by a phallocentric intertext: "la femme serait le support, l'espace d'inscription, des représentants de l'inconscient masculin."30

For the subject of L'Avalée seeing oneself from the outside is a problem. Her others are fragmentary and male (Christian) or are her
mother (Constance Chlore). Irigaray contends that the woman cannot identify herself as female except as an inferior male (that is, castrated), or as a mother not distinct from her own mother:

Elle [tout ce qui est femme] fonctionne comme un trou... dans l'élaboration des processus imaginaires et symboliques. Mais cette faille, ce défaut, ce "trou," la femme dispose justement de trop peu d'images, de figurations, de représentations, pour pouvoir s'y représenter.31

For L'Avalée, the "trou" is the image of subject and text, with their expanding and contracting movement, including and excluding what is always already there. The impossible origin is also "l'autre femme" and "l'Autre, femme" underwriting a conceptual system in which she is suppressed.

The Writing Subject

The representation of female child in L'Avalée conspires in the representation of a split subject without an essence and potentially without identity. This choice posits a subject who is not the master of his (her) language (doubly so if female), but through whom an inter-text manifests itself. A third aspect of the narrator, as writing subject, might seem incompatible with the image of a subject undergoing deconstruction, since the fictional journal represents the writing process as an aid to mastery of neurosis.32 However, the subject of L'Avalée does not refer to the inscription of the text, does not read it, and cannot strictly speaking be described as a diarist. The reticence of the text regarding its inscription invites an extradiegetic consideration of the narrating subject. Her lack of self-consciousness regarding the writing process points up her fictitious status in relation to a
male writing subject whose name appears on the cover of the book. A traditional analysis would allude to the persona, Bérénice, as the author's unconscious or his inspiration. A feminist point of view, like Irigaray's, might see the persona as an acknowledgement of the female as place of inscription of the other and of the intertext.

In any case the text suggests tensions at play in the activity of writing and shows the intertext commanding the text, and functioning as content of the writing subject. In 1955 in *L'Espace littéraire* Maurice Blanchot probed the status of the literary text and its author. His assertion of the retreat of personal identity from the writing subject parallels the concept of deconstruction of subject. One comes across passages of *L'Espace littéraire* which are very close to the text of *L'Avalée des avalés*. For example, the isolation and insecurities of Bérénice at the beginning of *L'Avalée* echo Blanchot's description of the writing subject at the beginning of *L'Espace littéraire*:

> Je suis seule. Je n'ai qu'à me fermer les yeux pour m'en apercevoir. Quand on veut savoir où on est, on se ferme les yeux. On est là où on est quand on a les yeux fermés: on est dans le noir et dans le vide. (p. 8)

> Là où je suis, le jour n'est plus que la perte du séjour, l'intimité avec le dehors sans lieu et sans repos. La venue ici fait que celui qui vient appartient à la dispersion, à la fissure où l'extérieur est l'intrusion qui étouffe... où l'espace est le vertige de l'espacement.

Self as loss and the tension of shifting perspectives are intimately related to the act of writing as envisaged by Blanchot. The writing subject is removed from the domain of common sense to that of its underpinnings, and instead of text as space confronts the process of spatial definition (*espacement*). This process inspires anguish similar to the
malaise attributed to Bérénice. Consciousness turning in on itself encounters what is alien and becomes a process of willing and focusing what causes its own malaise:

Tout m'avale. Quand j'ai les yeux fermés, c'est par mon ventre que je suis avalée, c'est dans le ventre de ce que je vois que je suffoque. (p. 7)

Car le regard, quand il est seul, est une brèche faite à soi-même, une reddition inconditionnelle, un relâchement des mailles qui permet à la ville d'entrer en soi comme le vent par les fenêtres ouvertes et de mener en soi le bal. (pp. 152-153)

Bérénice says that in seeing (that is, in focusing attention on a phenomenon) there is a risk of fascination and engulfment. Fascination, "l'autre mort" of Blanchot, inspires the writing subject who becomes the process of defining text and context: "Qui veut mourir, ne meurt pas, perd la volonté de mourir, entre dans la fascination nocturne où il meurt dans une passion sans volonté."36

The fictional subject of L'Avalée accepts the challenge against her will, although as the voice defining the circle of the text she also parodies the writing subject falling prey to an illusion of power as described by Blanchot:

C'est à moi le soleil, c'est moi le créateur et le possesseur du soleil. (p. 55) ... parce que l'écrivain croit rester l'un et l'autre--l'homme qui dispose des mots et ce lieu où l'indisposable qu'est le langage échappe à toute division...
As the subject of the discourse, Bérénice is masculine; just as Blanchot's writing subject believes himself to be both "l'homme" and "le lieu" or "la femme-mère," in Irigaray's terms.

The empty circle of *L'Avalee* tends toward a vanishing point which is an ideal of the literary work for Blanchot: "l'extrême que l'art puisse atteindre... le point profondément obscur vers lequel l'art, le désir, la nuit semblent tendre." Indeed, the image of form as circular in *L'Avalee* calls to mind Blanchot's reference to the circle as image of a closed conceptual system: "Chaque fois que la pensée se heurte à un cercle, c'est qu'elle touche à quelque chose d'originel dont elle part et qu'elle ne peut dépasser que pour y revenir."

It may seem that any rapprochement of *L'Espace littéraire* and *L'Avalee* is merely an unknowing allusion to the philosophical heritage shared by both; nonetheless, it is unusual to find such striking parallels between a critical text and a novel, parallels which suggest that Ducharme and Blanchot are addressing the same problem of the writing subject.

**Conclusion**

In *L'Avalee* the incongruity of enunciating subject and subject enunciated creates an empty space into which one may read various critiques of the subject. The parody of child narrator both satirizes the concept of origin as essence and incorporates the motif of child as dynamic recommencement. The choice of female subject includes a
self-contradictory element from the point of view of feminist critique of discourse, and reduplicates the choice of child since in texts like Barrès' Bérénice woman is expressly equated with child.

Bérénice in L'Avalée is a victim of diminished momentum, intensified fragmentation and stasis, motifs evoking a closed conceptual universe into which a dynamic subject is integrated. In the context of the récit the subject's momentum is represented as a destructive force which prevents integration, a "difference" which impedes her functioning with self-assurance, and provokes aggressivity. The persistence of this force effects a hypostasis of the subject as schizophrenic, thus at least preventing hypostasis as a Cartesian unitary subject.

If one takes a metafictional point of view, the blatant incongruity of subject and discourse in L'Avalée facilitates contextualization of récit as play and produces a text more obviously festive than does the naturalization of récit in Le Nez qui vogue.
NOTES


2 Patrick Imbert, Roman québécois contemporain et clichés (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1983), p. 22: "Nous vivons dans un univers où le taux de redondance est des plus forts et où on dit fondamentalement la même chose même si une myriade de détails, provenant d'oppositions paradigmaticques simples, masquent les axes sémantiques communs."


4 Coveney, p. 192.


8 Derrida, De La Grammatologie, p. 65.


11 Daisy Ashford, The Young Visitors; or, Mr. Salteenas' Plan (London: Chatto and Windus, 1919), p. 78. Punctuation as in original.


16 Coveney, pp. 192-193.

17 Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (New York: Scribner's, 1908).


19 Stewart, p. 121.

20 Stewart, p. 121.


Irigaray, p. 175.


Irigaray, p. 138.

Irigaray, p. 85.

Raoul, pp. 29-31.


Blanchot, p. 24.

Blanchot, p. 25.

Blanchot, p. 128.


Blanchot, p. 227.

Blanchot, p. 110.
PART III: SUBJECT, TEXT AND DISCOURSE

Unlike L'Avalée des avalés, Le Nez qui vogue presents the text as the discourse of a writing subject. The obsessive narrator apparently masters the discourse and emerges from his journal writing cured. However, the optimistic preliminary interpretation of character becomes problematic when reviewed with reference to the presentation of secondary characters in Le Nez qui vogue. The narrator fails to abandon his vision of the other as either Ideal or degraded, and rejects his other in favour of this abstract binary system in which the real is degraded by comparison with the Ideal which is unreal. Chateaugué's death is portrayed as the realization of castration, the violation of the Ideal by the real.

The problematic relation of narrator and other reopens the question of the nature of his relation as subject to the discourse. He achieves a measure of mastery in the discourse, yet he is not cured, but remains under the sway of the castration complex. The following discussion will consider first the triumph of the discourse (Chapter VII), then the triumph of récit in Le Nez qui vogue, and finally the redefinition of the subject in light of the tensions between the two modes of the text (Chapter VIII).

CHAPTER VII: PERFORMANCE AND TEXTUALITY IN LE NEZ QUI VOUGE

Non-narrative Discourse in Le Nez qui vogue

Chapters 1-25 of Le Nez may be described simply as "waiting for
the money to run out," the actions serving to illustrate habits or develop Chateaugué's character. Only three chapters recount dramatic events: in Chapter 16, Chateaugué is hurt in a bicycle accident; in Chapter 17, Chateaugué and Mille Milles steal the wedding-dress mannekin; and in Chapter 19, they spend a day in bed, a dramatic enactment of inertia. One brief chapter portrays the evolution of the childhood friendship between Mille Milles and Chateaugué in iterative narrative, in accordance with the tendency of the text to repeat and comment on an earlier text.

Much of Chapters 1-25 constitutes an account of the narrator's thoughts and feelings at the time of writing. This non-narrative discourse is not homogeneously expository, if by expository is meant "the process of making something intelligible, or saying why certain things are as they are, or the account used to do these things."\(^1\) In fact, the expository is not the dominant mode of the discourse, which tends to evolve into nonsense; and when one considers the novel as a structured whole, "nonsense" itself requires explanation. As an example of what happens, here is a series of expository statements which come to be dominated by the expressive element: "Je n'ai plus de vie dans le corps. Je n'ai plus rien dans le corps. Je suis torture. Mon âme, en plein vide, suffoque. Mon souffle me met la bouche en feu. Mes pensées m'étranglent le cerveau" (p. 43). The frequency of repetitions of words, semantic elements, or phrase structures begins to saturate the context, in Riffaterre's sense.\(^2\) At times the concept of parodic writing discussed in connection with L'Avalee des avalés (Chapter V of thesis), is applicable, as when the passage above continues with
the altered clichés: "J'ai mangé à pierre fendre. J'ai bu comme un
loir" for "geler à pierre fendre" and "dormir comme un loir." This
is a type of context in Ducharme's writing described by Marcel Chouinard
also: "Les nouveaux mots ne sont motivés que par l'ampleur de ceux
qui les précèdent, si bien qu'au bout du compte, cette progression
débouche sur une écriture hyperbolique très éloignée de l'objet initial
de la description."3 The distortions are progressive and cumulative.
The speaker seems frustrated, but instead of describing this feeling,
he acts it out. This performance characterizes the non-narrative,
nonexpository discourse. At the level of narration and writing the
narrator provides scene as well as summary. This discourse is also
reminiscent of what Julia Kristeva defines as the polyphonic novel,
which according to her includes "hieroglyphic" elements and spectacle.
The drama can be interpreted in terms of the narrator's neurosis, but
the hieroglyphics in Le Nez qui vogue come to the fore when the personal
"I" recedes into the background. If the referential drama of writing
consists especially in the performance of feelings of ambivalence,
the impersonal "I" (that is, the "I" considered as enunciating function
rather than person) is characterized by ambivalence in the sense of
multiple values and meanings as described by Kristeva:

Le terme 'd'ambivalence' implique l'insertion de l'histoire
(de la société) dans le texte, et du texte dans
l'histoire; pour l'écrivain ils sont une seule et même
chose.... l'écriture comme lecture du corpus littéraire
antérieur, le texte comme absorption et réplique à un
autre texte.4

In the narrator's pseudo-expository discourse, the reader responds to
intertextuality more immediately than to the referential fiction whose
immediacy the intertextuality usually disrupts. At such a moment the performance or spectacle shifts to the text's display of its functioning. When traditional verisimilitude is the dominant principle, the text neither shows nor tells of its functioning. In this text, however, autoreferentiality outweighs versimilitude and becomes what the text is "about."

Disruption of Reference as Birth of Text and Subject

In a context where generalization is not limited by specific reference, reference in general breaks down. The enunciating subject portrays clerical rhetoric as pseudo-philosophical in a series of rhetorical questions beginning "Pourquoi" and "Qui." These are followed by a series of assertions concerning "on," beginning, "On peut être chaste ou paillard.... On peut être fort ou lâche" (p. 50). He focuses particularly on the either/or binary opposition and it is to this structure that the passage finally refers. One may read the passage as referring to the narrator's obsessional neurosis which drives him to escape from the here and now into the domain of generalities and which prohibits the choice between alternatives. At the same time the identity of the narrator, or even of the clerical persona ("Je parle comme un vicaire," p. 50), fades into the text of the semantic universe, where the prestige of popular wisdom is seen to derive from its reliance on binary oppositions.

In the citing of particulars, emphasis on literal meaning may be used to mock popular wisdom: "Qui ne souhaite pas être fort? Les gymnases, les gymnastes, les gymnasiarques et Monsieur Amérique ne
sont que quatre des milliards de faits et exemples qui plaident en
faveur de ma théorie" (p. 50). In other cases the progression is not
based primarily on what is semantically literal. Repetition of phonemes
and rhythms is seen to determine meaning: "On suit. On se laisse
glisser à la suite des autres" (p. 51). This example evokes moral
laxness as responsible for language's active role, an interpretation
in keeping with the narrator's psychology, and probably with a common-
sense point of view as well.

One of multifarious other breakdowns of referentiality occurs
at the beginning of Chapter 18, where the narrator again escapes into
the realm of ideas: "Pasteur, en 1495, inventa le prototostéate de
pentacléine. En 1497, on le trouva dans son cercueil; .... Qui n'a
pas entendu parler de Pasteur, le malfaiteur de l'humanité?" (p. 99).
Through the speaker there re-emerges a familiar essay or public lecture
style, reminiscent of the Grand Larousse's reference to Pasteur as
"un des plus grands bienfaiteurs de l'humanité,"5 inverted in keeping
with the narrator's Weltschmerz. It is, however, the reduplication
of "to" which in "prototostéate" suggests parody of scientific jargon,
or at least mimesis of the layperson's attempt to enunciate it. "Pro-
totostéate de pentacléine," without being a scientific term, alludes
to one, since the prefix "proto" refers to certain chemical compounds
and the root "stéat" means "consisting of grease or fat." The text
displays its relatedness to scientific discourse. The passage also
manages to allude to history without simply including a historical
element. "On le [Pasteur] trouva dans son cercueil" suggests that
Pasteur expired in his coffin, just as one might say of a man that
he "was found dead in the bathtub." This metalogical figure opens up uncertainty in the heart of the commonplace. Furthermore, the Pasteur of the historical text could not have been found in his coffin 325 years before his birth. The text merely alludes to the use of dates in constituting biography.

Etymology, with its promise of revealing origins, also comes in for scrutiny: "Le mot cocon ne vient pas du mot con mais du mot coco" (p. 44). Again, the text displaces the decoding process by invoking the literal: cocon = co + con or coco + n. Spleen is vented against school experience by introjecting into learned discourse the obscene "con" and the familiar term of endearment "coco." Sound determines sense and furthermore a term of the standard dialect is seen to derive from what it excludes rather than vice versa. The choice of "Coco" ridicules a schoolmasterish aversion for impropriety, "con" being more logical since, like "cocon," it evokes an enclosed space; and phonologically the reduplication of "co" is perceived as more plausible than the suffixing of "n." Elsewhere etymology does reveal a hidden dimension of truth: "Texaco vient du mot Texas. La gazoline Texaco est une gazoline canadienne. Est-ce que cela tient debout" (p. 123)?

The relation of the enunciating subject to "truth" by this point in the discussion cries out for clarification. He goes some way to providing it:

Je ne possède pas la vérité mais j'en possède une bonne dizaine. Voici l'une d'elles: l'île de Baffin, dans l'océan Arctique, a 178 000 milles carrés. En voici une autre: Les Chinois sont nombreux. En voici une troisième: Le centre biologique du Québec a une collection de 240 espèces de poissons. Je vous en confie une dernière: Jeanne d'Arc est morte depuis 1448.... (p. 132)
The truth relevant to the project of the journal is truth about the narrator. In the absence of availability of such truth, any available information is both relevant and irrelevant. As the speech philosopher Austin says of truth:

> It is essential to realize that "true" and "false"... do not stand for anything simple at all; but only for a general dimension of being a right or proper thing to say as opposed to a wrong thing, in those circumstances, to this audience, for these purposes and with these intentions. The truth or falsity of a statement depends not merely on the meanings of the words but on what act you were performing in what circumstances.⁶

One must assume that the literary speaker in the above passage from *Le Nez qui vogue* is, as Mary Louise Pratt claims of all narrative display texts, "not only reporting but also verbally displaying a state of affairs, inviting his addressee(s) to join him in contemplating it, evaluating it, and responding to it."⁷ The interesting, tellable aspect of the material cited is that the historical, the scientific, the conventionally "true" is not tellable or interesting; or to put it another way, what can be asserted cannot automatically be displayed. It will by now not be surprising that the information presented as true in the passage is once again not true—or not in conformity with the standard social text. First, the assumption behind "Jeanne d'Arc est morte depuis 1448" is clearly "Jeanne d'Arc est morte en 1448"; whereas dictionaries and other impedimenta of the standard social text give 1431 as the date of her demise. Second, the area of Baffin Island (and there are contexts where it matters) is usually given as 183,810 square miles. Rather than making true statements, the text endeavours to leave no doubt that it is displaying the true not only as a function
of relevance but as a function of belief. It would thus seem to suggest the primacy of the fictional. The narrator, manoeuvring to avoid truths about himself, denies the possibility of truth independent of his will. From the textual point of view, this text asserts mastery of the intertext.

So far, the pseudo-expository discourse of *Le Nez qui voque* has been seen to do nothing else: popular wisdom is stripped to the tautological bone; sense is lucky to emerge from sound; the true is a structure which threatens even its own functioning.

*Le Nez qui voque* includes various *mises en abyme* of narrative which, not surprisingly, strive desperately to provoke the "so what?" response that "natural" narrative strives desperately, according to William Labov, to forestall. The following typical example might function effectively as a presummary or abstract of a narrative: "A Halifax pendant la grève des pilotes de l'isthme de Chignectou, une petite femme et un petit homme s'embrassèrent" (pp. 42-43). It is rich in elements of orientation: "Halifax," "la grève des pilotes." The "la" is problematic in the present context, however, since it must presuppose familiarity with the strike or be elucidated in the course of the narrative, which aborts. A "complete" narrative as defined by Labov "begins with an orientation, proceeds to the complicating action, is suspended at the focus of evaluation before the resolution, concludes with the resolution, and returns the listener to the present time with the coda." The Halifax narrative, like others of its type in *Le Nez qui voque*, is minimal since it lacks evaluative elements and is therefore devoid of tellability, or substantial narrative
interest in Labov's sense. Like facts, storytelling lacks relevance in *Le Nez qui vogue*, which thus presents itself as a post- and meta-narrative text, the discourse of the subject proper emerging subsequent to the narratives which open Chapter 13 and, most remarkably, Chapter 1.

The extensive portions of *Le Nez qui vogue* which the narrator devotes to his reflections of the moment effect altered performance of several types of text, including narrative. Thus attention is drawn to the performance aspect of social discourse, that is, to a meaning actualized through a subject and emerging from context and interpretation. It can be suggested, and has been earlier in this discussion, that the text represents a fictional narrator discharging his aggression by violating social norms of the truth. It can also be said that through the fiction of the narrator, a display text is asserting power over and against social, historical and other literary texts.

While making an inventory of the text as performance one may cite not only the psychological acting out and the textual actualizing of the intertext, but also the representation of the "performative" aspect of discourse in the language philosopher's sense. According to Austin's first formulation, performative utterances do not "(a) 'describe' or 'report' or (con)'state' anything at all, are not 'true or false'; and (b) the uttering of the sentence is, or is part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as, or as 'just,' saying something." One should acknowledge that it is widely held today that all utterances encompass a performative aspect. S. Fish's commentary is perhaps the most familiar in literary
discussion of the subject:

... ordinary circumstances, circumstances in which objects, events, and intentions are transparently accessible, are shown to be an impossible ideal the moment the absolute (as opposed to conventional) distinction between constatives and performatives can no longer be made.¹¹

One must also admit that in considering a text to be literary one probably classifies it as essentially performative. Nonetheless, it is interesting simply to note how Le Nez qui voque exploits language events traditionally identified as performative. The imperative form, where "do X" is said to imply the overt performative "I order you to do X," occurs frequently in the narrator's discourse, for example:

Aimez-vous Brahms? Oui? Vous aimez Brahms? Eh bien, embrassez-le! Allez-y. Ne soyez pas timide. Il ne vous mangera pas; ce n'est pas un carnaval, ce n'est pas un anthropologiste, ce n'est pas un numismate. C'est mon cahier, et j'écrirai ce que je voudrai dedans. (p. 133)

Disruption of Reference and the Game of Verbal Jeopardy

In citing the imperative, one raises the whole specter of the second person. The narrator of Le Nez qui voque addresses a "you" who is not necessarily only himself because, for example, he describes his journal as a "chef-d'oeuvre de la littérature française" (p. 44). That "you" may directly refer to a reader or audience is significant here, because the narrator violates rules governing narrator-audience relations. He superimposes the conversational model on the narrative model; in conversation each interlocutor has a turn, whereas the readers of narrative have voluntarily abrogated their turn.¹² One thus senses the inconsistency (and in the written context, the absurdity) of inviting
dialogue. The problem is not affected by allowing that the reader and not the author constitutes the text, if the present reader is invoking another implied reader. Returning to the traditional point of view, it is further obvious that, liking Brahms, the reader invoked here represents the norms of official high culture.

Why should this individual be instructed to kiss Brahms? It is because the author is firmly entrenched as origin of the work, commanding respect in his person; the transfer of respect from work to person is made explicit in the command "Embrassez-le!" Considered as a performative utterance, the command must misfire because the individual Brahms does not exist and cannot be kissed. In context, one responds to the command instantly as an attack against a hidebound middleclass reader. One may imagine this reader's identity as implied by the reformulation of "Aimez-vous Brahms?" as "Vous aimez Brahms?", the former being interpretable as an obvious allusion to Aimez-vous Brahms? by Françoise Sagan.

"Allez-y. Ne soyez pas timide" mitigates the abrupt "embrassez-le"; the reader depicted is a real sycophant. Fortunately for the actual reader, the sycophant is, unlike him, also an ignoramus who cannot navigate polysyllabic words ("carnaval, anthropologiste, numismate"). In fact, this straw man functions to reassure the actual reader of whom the text makes considerable demands. In a text where the subject is undergoing deconstruction, the narrator nonetheless manages to orient the reader and consolidate the narrator-audience bond. In this light the metaleptic "C'est mon cahier et j'écrirai ce que je voudrai dedans" squarely recognizes that the narrator appears to violate the
narrative contract.

This single example of the imperative has entailed rules of speech act theory (the performative), as applied to narrative. A published written text provides the privileged context for flouting these rules since, according to Pratt, its very existence assures the reader of its ultimate interest and worth.  

The narrator's contradicting himself may appear to jeopardize communication, as in the following:

Ceux qui parlent ont bien plus de prestige que ceux qui se ferment la gueule. On n'entend jamais parler de ceux qu'on n'entend pas. Ceux qu'on n'entend pas meurent sans prestige. Par exemple, qui a jamais entendu parler de Rembrandt? (p. 104)

The subject of the enunciation is here in process; it is not a Cartesian subject. In the construction of this subject, rhetoric, representing the tautology of the semantic universe, is overtly determining meaning. Catachresis replaces any ultimate formulation of truth: "On n'entend jamais parler de ceux qu'on n'entend pas." Chouinard says that in Ducharme's texts: "Les langages ne parlent pas le monde, ils se parlent. Paradoxalement, la parole de Ducharme apparaît comme une mise en doute de la parole."  

Allowing free reign to the Doxa allows its contradictions to become explicit and the subject to instate a measure of monitoring. The Self/Other split is portrayed as fundamentally intrasubjective and not congruent with narrator/audience. The reader can read the split intra-subjectively; thus it seems misguided simply to interpret the contradiction, which is absurd, as derision of the reader. The narrator's "Ce n'est pas un carnaval" (p. 133), is quite inappropriate if interpreted
in light of Julia Kristeva's use of the term "carnavalesque":

La structure carnavalesque est comme la trace d'une cosmogonie qui ne connaît pas la substance, la cause, l'identité, en dehors du rapport avec le tout qui n'existe que dans et par la relation.\textsuperscript{15}

One may charge that the concept of subject in process does nothing to defuse the maliciousness of the lie (a violation of what Pratt terms the "Cooperative principle" in speech acts), in a passage such as this:

Les poules en savent bien plus long que les savants au sujet des œufs.... Tous les traités que j'ai lus, au sujet des œufs, concluent en affirmant que les œufs sont bien des œufs. Quel profit pourrais-je tirer de pareilles lectures? (p. 224)

Nonetheless, the apparent lie clearly alludes to the closed, tautological structure of the conceptual universe, of which Patrick Imbert sees the texts by Ducharme as an exposé: "les œufs sont bien des œufs."\textsuperscript{17} In other words, it is unnecessary to read a treatise on eggs in order to read or predict the semantic structures on which the treatise will rely.

If at times the subject's handling of the interlocutor is brutal, so is his handling of self:

Mille Milles passe son temps à dire des sottises; mais il ne le regrette pas... Je suis le roi de la bêtise et j'en suis fier parce que la bêtise est très répandue. Le roi des Etats-Désunis est bien plus fier d'être roi que le roi des Esquimaux.... les Américains sont bien plus répandus.... (p. 106)

Nonsense or "bêtise" is a key to sense, in relation to which sense may be grasped. Susan Stewart states that "Nonsense, play, and paradox, as activities that discourse on the nature of discourse, are built into the generic system as methods for innovation and evaluation."\textsuperscript{18} The epithet "roi de la bêtise" is not as deprecatory as one might
unthinkingly assume. In the pseudo-expository discourse of Le Nez qui vogue, "I," "you" and the topic are in a state of flux, as nonsense invites reassessment of an argument or of the context of a text. Neither Americans nor Eskimos have a king, but the expression "King of Alaska" has a history in philosophical discourse. A. R. Lacey's A Dictionary of Philosophy refers to a discussion of a similar phrase, "King of Alaska" ("roi des Esquimaux," in Le Nez, p. 106): is it "suitable for mentioning a real king if there were one" or is it that it "mentions that non-existent king?" 19

Inasmuch as the massive non-narrative material in Le Nez qui vogue is related to a psychological naturalization, it portrays the narrator performing his neurosis. Inasmuch as it lays bare the underpinnings of narrative and meaning in general, it dramatizes the text/intertext relation. Finally, in its portrayal of speech acts and narrator/audience relations, this material imitates a breakdown of communication intradiegetically while extradiegetically it merely plays at verbal jeopardy, since we do read it, with pleasure.

The Novel Begins: Performance Holds Its Own

In Le Nez qui vogue the performative mode of discourse does not appear to dominate in the entire text; event intrudes into this idyllic discourse in Chapter 16, where Chateaugué has a bicycle accident, constituting the beginning of a récit. Until Chapter 16 the performative mode does dominate but with the understanding extradiegetically that the text is a novel and will include a récit. The first section of Le Nez, dominated by the performative mode, nonetheless prepares the
récit in two stages. Chapters 1-5 constitute an introduction to the opposition between discourse and récit, between enunciating and enunciated subject; and Chapters 6-15 describe the narrator's preliminary manoeuvre to preserve the supremacy of subject as discourse, or enunciating subject, in opposition to subject as récit, or enunciated subject. With the first event of the récit, Chateaugué's accident, the journal loses its relative autonomy from the realm of sense and necessity.

Chapters 1-5 begin with Mille Milles' arrival in Montreal and end with Chateaugué's arrival. This introduction proceeds apace on two levels: that of the narrative and that of the performative as specifically literary presence of language. At its beginning the text throws out a welter of cultural allusions which disorient the reader instead of orienting him in a coherent fictional universe, as tradition requires. In the world of the text the familiar and factual may become problematic: "Le soir de la reddition de Bréda, Roger de la Tour de Babel, avocat au Châtelet, prit sa canne et s'en alla. En 1954, à Tracy, Maurice Duplessis, avocat au Châtelet, mourut d'hémorragie cérébrale; célèbre et célibataire" (p. 9). The first sentence evokes the high literary tone. In "La reddition de Bréda" we may discover an allusion to the historical surrender of Breda (1625) or Velasquez's canvas representing it (1634-35), an allusion to the gap between art and life. The name "de la Tour" seems generated by the allusion to art however. In this text, furthermore, "de la Tour" becomes "la Tour de Babel"; the historical and cultural codes babble at each other inconsequentially; the gap is destroyed.
In the second sentence of the introduction the setting of the story nonetheless becomes specifically Québécois. The one and only Maurice Duplessis, premier of Quebec, died at Schefferville from a brain hemorrhage on September 8, 1959. Frequent references so specific and specifically inexact challenge commonplace notions of true and false.

The actions described in the first two sentences are actions of bringing to conclusion, signalling the end of something. They suggest less the possible adventure of the banal "La marquise sortit à cinq heures" than a true sense of ending. The novel begins on a note of modernist pessimism, implying that where the novel begins it might as well end; although the text may also suggest that adventure begins where the novel as récit ends.

Before being defined in relation to the intimate world of Mille Milles, the text appears as a backdrop against which fragments of previous texts collide. This is a beginning in medias res in a performative mode, in which language is prevented from functioning as a reference to extra-linguistic reality.

By the third sentence, the personal subject "I" has appeared to occupy center stage henceforth. His first statement prevents his being perceived as a coherent personality: "J'ai seize ans et je suis un enfant de six ans" (p. 9). Beyond romantic nostalgia for childhood, the narrator posits himself as contradictory, uncertain, even denying his status as an apparently personal narrator. In the two pages following, it is difficult to situate narrator or text in space or time.

The narrator plays with shifting temporal perspectives, and with
reduplication of self as subject in the process of enunciating and subject of the statement enunciated, as subject writing and read. The narrator narrating is enunciating subject; but the reader confronts both an enunciating subject, one in process, and an enunciated subject, one represented by a finite number of propositions. The former moves through the text as a linear sequence leaving the latter like a geological deposit. The act of written enunciation is depicted as fixing and determining the enunciated subject who, subsequent to the suicide or silence of the enunciating subject, becomes the subject in the absolute:

Je ne veux pas aller plus loin: je reste donc arrêté.
(p. 9)

Je les laisse tous vieillir, loin devant moi. Je reste derrière, seul, intact, incorruptible. (p. 9)

Indeed, the enunciating subject is only the function of an act. His silence is his encapsulation within an interpretation or reading of the text, as subject of the enunciation.

Because his text is finite, that is, social and historical, it too is affected and can be destroyed by time's passing, if only in the sense that, as time passes, the probability of its being read decreases. Thus the narrator's project is also futile from the outset: "Je veille, le ventre dans toute la cendre avec des cadavres qui me laissent tranquille, avec tout ce qui est cadavre, seul avec l'enfant moi, seul avec une image dont le tain s'use sous mes doigts" (pp. 9-10). "Je" is the enunciating subject as not yet encapsulated in the completed act of enunciation, intradiegetically, the fictional journal. He depicts what informs him, the sum of all possible acts of enunciation he can perform, as already having been enunciated by absent others of whom he,
as subject of the enunciation, will be one: "une image dont le tain
s'use sous mes doigts."

One immediately perceives *Le Nez qui voque* as beginning *in medias
res*, the question being to identify the *res*. The text displays this
problem as an enigma to be resolved. A charming aspect of the narra-
tor's discourse is the frank and concise assessment of possible reader
competence and expectations. After just twenty-seven lines of inter-
textual virtuosity one encounters the following no nonsense orientation:
"Je ne suis pas fou. Je sais ce que je fais et oû je suis. C'est le
neuf septembre mille neuf cent soixante-cinq" (p. 10). Chapter 2 thus
provides the traditional flashback in which the narrator's present
circumstances are explained and a sense of beginning emerges with Mille
Milles' life in Montreal, in competition with the sense of an ending
in Chapter 1.

However, the narrator again evokes ambivalence toward the text
and evokes its problematic status at the beginning of Chapter 2: "Ils
ont des tâches historiques. Sans accent circonflexe nous obtiendrons:
ils ont des taches historiques" (p. 10). The text is intuited as a
project (tâche) producing residue (tache) rather than monument. The
speaker also seems to ally himself with the enunciating rather than
enunciated subject: "Mon nez voque. Je suis un nez qui voque" (p. 10),
possibly from the Latin "vocare," "to call." 

Chapter 3 promises to develop two traditional narrative themes,
sex and death: "Mille Milles... vient de terminer la lecture d'un
livre sexuel.... Il ne voudrait pas se suicider, mais cela s'impose"
(pp. 13-14). The pessimism of the first chapter, the sense of an ending,
is related to the narrator's personal situation. He is preoccupied by sex and suicide. However, his discourse is determined by what he has read; he cannot avoid reproducing an intertext which is that of the novel as a genre. Throughout Ducharme's novels, Gilles Marcotte has commented on the equation, of literature (and therefore the novel) with pornography: "On ne fait pas ce qu'on veut quand on écrit un roman. On fait ce que veut le roman. Et le roman veut... le sexe."27 As pornography is not disinterested esthetic contemplation, neither is the discourse of the novel in general. It is determined by a particular conceptual universe and an ideology. The narrator's sexual preoccupation may be read as a textual preoccupation despairing of the possibility of transcending ideology in the discourse. In other words, the text begins by acknowledging the subordination of the performative mode to the narrative mode, to be confirmed by the events of the récit.

Two minor aborted narratives rehearse the motif of impasse. First, the narrator recounts a failed departure from Montreal which fails because, as a cyclist, he cannot cross the river via an automobile bridge. This incident indicates his lack of suitability as a subject of the récit. Second, he recounts an interview in a placement bureau, also engineered to present him as not socially recuperable. He deconstructs the interview, by responding to the conventional questions with conventional but inappropriate answers. His speaking in quotations and failure to integrate socially confirms the portrait of an introvert who withdraws into journal writing, and of a would-be clown whose talents receive no social recognition. These incidents may be read as a meta-fictional allusion to the narrator as an effect rather than a source
of the text, but also to the subject (intra- or extradiegetically) as constructed by language.

A Reprieve for Text and Textual Subject: Récit Displaced onto Chateaugué

In beginning a novel, which supposes a récit, the discourse condemns itself to espouse "sense" as opposed to "nonsense," and to serve coherence, verisimilitude and a tautological conceptual universe. Thus Le Nez begins by evoking endings and envisages its own destruction, that is, the total transparency of its discourse as univocal meaning. Concurrently, the discourse introduces a narrator and a setting of a récit. On the one hand, this narrator favours play, nonsense and evanescence and abhors convention, goal-oriented activity and commitment. Thus he illustrates a textual or ludic point of view toward everyday life. On the other hand, initially, he states his adherence to the child-self as an absolute good.

In Chapter 4 a second character is introduced to represent the child-self, protecting the ludic or textual identity of the narrator and dramatizing the internal schism of enunciating and enunciated subject. In Chapter 5, the consequences of commitment to an Ideal are taken upon himself succinctly by the narrator: "... A l'instant de sa conception, l'idée se dédouble... si nous ne la jugeons pas, ne la freinons pas, elle nous emporte avec elle dans les deux sens" (p. 20). His "idea" is a binary structure of opposition. As a textual or playful subject his first commitment must be to deconstruct the conceptual universe; otherwise he is defined by it entirely, enunciated rather than enunciating. In order to preserve his own status he will sacrifice an other,
who inasmuch as she represents an ideal represents its negation.

Introducing a third person into the discourse, the subject lessens his identification with enunciated rather than enunciating subject and identifies Chateaugué officially as enunciated subject. The choice of her name, associated with a martyr, suggests that the enunciated subject is associated with the récit, with meaning as fixed and ideologically determined. This reducing of the other to the status of an object is compensated to the extent that she is associated with the most highly prized of objects, the child-self. Nonetheless, she is excluded from access to the discourse as an interlocutor in order to forestall the narrator's reduction to enunciated subject or subject of the récit. He uses her as subject of the récit in order to reserve an explicitly textual domain to himself, and thus a reprieve for performative discourse in its struggle to occupy the discourse of the novel, ultimately reserved for narrative.

Thus, in the section which begins with the arrival of Chateaugué and ends with her bicycle accident, the narrator does not dominate the text, which remains under the sway of the performative mode. The narrator can wait for something to happen to Chateaugué and, indirectly, to himself. His suicide is implicitly the abdication of personal identity in the writing process. Chateaugué's suicide represents her role as subject of the récit who must be objectified. In his association with the text, the narrator assures himself a marginal social identity as a writer.

This section of Le Nez qui voque is rich in the parody of commonplace, aphorisms, the high style and even expository prose. The
discourse restates aggressively what has been said, heard and written in a new context where it becomes incongruous in ways which have been discussed. In Chapters 6-15, other styles of discourse, including narrative, word play, straightforward non-narrative commentary, and comic reflexive statements, relieve the intensity of the incongruous rehearsing of a closed conceptual universe.

The narrative of Chateaugué's activities in his presence provides a spatial and temporal frame to the performance. Her activities are either iterative or playful and thus do not at this stage constitute a récit which threatens the performance. Another distraction from the serious rehearsing of clichés originates with the narrator who describes his own discourse as nonsense and disclaims it. These reflexive remarks recontextualize the discourse as a critique. A third sort of interruption comes from the opposite direction, that is, either from the narrator's preconscious, according to a psychological interpretation, or from the phonological aspect of language as it reorganizes the semantic aspect in word play. This latter interpretation especially can be described as the text's reorganizing the intertext and constitutes the specific identity of Le Nez qui vogue as not just the reactivation of a set of commonplaces associated with the novel genre. Word play represents the harmonious triumph of both the subject in the text as character, and of the text as subject, in the act of reading, mastering an intertext.

Various types of discourse cohabit, and in this section dominate the ostensibly narrative text of Le Nez qui vogue. The intimate record of urges and hesitations resolves itself into social commonplaces,
cultural allusions and word play. The subject represented in the text as individual is also represented as a social construct. As a fictional character, he is the result not the origin of discourse; but also, the very idiosyncratic image of the obsessive self is seen to result from a social construct. The personal unconscious is represented as an intertext. Just as the subject calls into question the distinction of true and false perceived as natural rather than cultural, so the text calls into question the casual acceptance of the "individual" as natural rather than cultural.

A brief survey of Chapters 7, 8, and 9 will show how the various types of discourse mesh. The principal idea discussed and deconstructed in Chapter 7 is death, particularly as acculturation. The least acceptable form of assimilation is the conscious attempt to adopt French cultural values (p. 28), as the voice propounding this point of view is interrupted by another explaining: "De quoi a l'air un pissenlit qui se donne des airs de dahlia? Ce pissenlit a l'air d'un Canadien français qui se donne des airs de héros de films d'avant-garde made in France" (p. 28). This dénouement suggests that imitating the French will not prevent assimilation by English elements since "films d'avant-garde" are "made in France." A less despicable solution is the isolationism of traditional nationalism: "Restons en arrière, avec Crémazie, avec Marie-Victorin, avec Marie de l'Incarnation, ... avec Iberville et ses frères héroïques" (p. 29). This solution is, however, recontextualized as the acceptance of inevitable death: "Couchons-nous sur nos saintes ruines sacrées et rions de la mort en attendant la mort. Rien n'est sérieux. Tout est risible" (p. 29). The final solution offered
here is textual rather than political, because the text is represented as the domain of play. The text is not committed to the traditional values politically: it is committed to not neglecting them as its intertext. In the journal the narrator washes his hands of the law of noncontradiction in general, and in Chapter 7 his devotion to the past is balanced by his revolt at having to carry a bicycle around his neck up several flights of stairs: "C'est l'ère des machines; ce n'est pas l'ère des bras. Il va falloir que nous changions d'ère" (p. 30).

Reflexive comments, word play and narrative all contribute to developing the motif of death. The journal maintains a commitment to account for the everyday reality of the narrator's life which he displaces partially onto Chateaugué, identifying himself as closely as possible with the text: "Devant moi, les jambes ballantes, Chateaugué est assise sur la table" (p. 30). He represents the text, but a text ultimately subordinated to the everyday lifeworld which at this point conforms to his requirements that it resemble a ludic text. One of the protagonists' chief activities is reading. The intimacy of life and art is suggested by the narrator's brusque transitions from his performance to a narrative account: "Ou l'amour est malheureux à mourir, ou l'amour est ennuyeux à mourir, à dormir debout. Jusqu'à dix heures, nous avons lu ensemble, dans le même livre, à la bibliothèque Saint-Sulpice" (p. 29). This transition terminates a page of non-narrative discourse without even a change in paragraph. The most extraordinary event of the day involves the photographing of Mille Milles and Chateaugué's bicycles by a French moviemaker, in other words, involves life's becoming art.
The opening paragraph of Chapter 7 illustrates the interplay of the semantically given, of word play and of reflexive comments. The basic semantic given consists of binary oppositions of content: "Ce qu'il faut savoir. Ce qu'il ne faut pas savoir," and of form: "Ce qu'il faut savoir, ma noire. Ce qu'il ne faut pas savoir, le soir" (p. 26). The narrator identifies the latter, in a reflexive comment, as a privileged means of undoing fixation on the former: "J'aime cela quand cela rime" (p. 26). He posits the text as a privileged domain for undoing cultural oppression, perhaps even in its political aspect: "Accaparons-nous de l'Alaska. L'Alaska fait partie du Canada comme le pied du panda fait partie du panda. Panda rime avec Canada et avec Alaska" (p. 26).

Chapter 8 (pp. 31-33) is denser than Chapter 7 (pp. 26-31). The performance of the text is more intense since narrative is left aside in favour of the unfolding of the sexual theme which is also a theme of ambivalence and illustrates the interdependence of opposites: "Quand je regarde Chateaugué, je me dis que je ne veux pas la toucher, la polluer.... N'est-ce pas assez sexuel? Tout est sexuel, même la pureté incarnée" (p. 33). Sex is the concrete, compelling manifestation of "affection," in the meaning of being affected by something, and therefore also belongs to the domain of relativity and interdependence. The narrator is afraid of polluting Chateaugué, but in making love to her he would become a subject of the récit like her, losing his illusion of inconsequentiality.

The following entry, Chapter 9 (pp. 34-36) returns predictably to a lighter interweaving of narrative and word play. The presence of
language, anterior to meaning, asserts itself in the unanticipated remark: "Quant à l'emploi du mot hostie, j'y reviendrai" (p. 34).

As announced and without further justification, this word motif reappears two pages later in a paragraph-long development, apparently motivated by the narrator's epithet "hostie de comique" (e.g., p. 13), which occurs many times throughout Le Nez. Chouinard interprets "Hostie de comique" as a reflexive commentary:

Le leitmotiv'Hostie de comique,' pour sa part, apparaît généralement comme la sanction finale réservée à toute parole qui se veut réflexive; plusieurs passages dans lesquels Mille Milles tente de rendre le monde intelligible... se terminent par ce slogan.29

One can venture to say that "la parole qui se veut réflexive" includes the rehearsing of the semantically given and that functional reflexive commentary in Le Nez qui vogue instructs the reader to contextualize the former, the pseudo-expository, as nonsense or a game.

Patterns emerge in the narrative. The iteration of daily activities such as eating, drinking, smoking, reading, suggests a narrowing sphere of existence for the narrator outside of the textual. A long walk with which the characters refresh themselves in this chapter serves also as a break from pseudo-philosophy in the text, a break which refreshes the reader.

The preceding discussion suggests with what finesse the narrator apportions his text to different and traditionally incompatible types of discourse. In the chapters which follow (10-15), the text immerses itself in a world less and less narrative which is not a pure exploration of language or of ideas. This purgatory is again relieved by gusts of insight ("Je dis cela parce que j'en ai envie" (p. 27)), by
poetry ("Nous irons à Trois-Rivières en rivière" (p. 26)), or by human interest ("Devant moi, les jambes ballantes, Chateaugué est assise sur la table" (p. 30)). The intensification of the performative mode occurs in response to the irruption of narrative event which displaces it as dominant structuring principle of the text.
NOTES


9 Labov, p. 369.

10 J. L. Austin, p. 5.


12 See Pratt, p. 105.


14 Chouinard, p. 117.

15 Kristeva, p. 453.
16 See Pratt, pp. 129-130.


19 Lacey, pp. 183-184.


21 "Breda (la Reddition de)," Grand Larousse encyclopédique (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1960), II: "... dit aussi les Lances..., l'un des plus célèbres chefs-d'oeuvre de Velasquez... peint vraisemblablement en 1635."

22 "La Tour (Georges de)," Grand Larousse encyclopédique (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1962), VI: "Ses oeuvres ont été longtemps attribuées à différents peintres caravagistes, et même, son fameux Jouer de vielle ... à Velasquez, Zurbarán ou Murillo"; "Patrice de la Tour du Pin," Grand Larousse, VI: "Une somme de poésie (1946) réunit ses oeuvres antérieures; elles expriment... l'inquiétude métaphysique d'un chrétien qui cherche à découvrir le mystère du monde."


24 See Jean Ricardou, Pour une théorie du nouveau roman (Paris: Seuil, 1971), pp. 76-77; and André Breton, Manifestes du surréalisme (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 15: "Par besoin d'épuration, M. Paul Valéry proposait dernièrement de réunir en anthologie un aussi grand nombre que possible de débuts de roman, de l'insanité desquels il atten- dait beaucoup. Les auteurs les plus fameux seraient mis à contribution. Une telle idée fait encore honneur à Paul Valéry qui, naguère, à propos des romans, m'assurait qu'en ce qui le concerne, il se refuserait tou- jours à écrire: La marquise sortit à cinq heures. Mais a-t-il tenu parole?"

25 The beginning of Le Nez qui vogue may serve as an example of what Gérard Genette, Figures III (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 79, called
"ces ouvertures à structure complexe, et comme mimant pour mieux l'exerciser l'inévitable difficulté du commencement.... On sait que ce début in medias res suivi d'un retour en arrière explicatif deviendra l'un des topoi formels du genre épique, et aussi combien le style de la narration romanesque est resté sur ce point fidèle à celui de son lointain ancêtre, et ce jusqu'en plein XIXe siècle 'réaliste....""


29 Chouinard, p. 125. See also Dupriez, p. 175: "Un autre genre de commoration est le refrain.... Le même procédé s'étend d'un bout à l'autre du roman de façon plus typique encore: c'est le mot hostie.... Cela donne une sorte de leitmotiv qu'on retrouve toutes les vingt pages: 'hostie de comique'...."
CHAPTER VIII: THE APPARENT TRIUMPH OF THE NOVEL: DISCOURSE AT THE SERVICE OF SENSE, RÉCIT AND IDENTITY

The Persons in Place

The tendency to defer the récit in the first 15 chapters of Le Nez qui vogue corresponds to a prolonged presentation of the narrator and his other, establishing the relations of each to the text. Before analysing the emergence of récit in Le Nez, and the apparent subordination of the performative, ludic mode of the text to the novel, it is relevant to review the roles of first, second and third person in Le Nez qui vogue. The analysis of traditional novel structures in Le Nez qui vogue begins with these structures firmly in their place. Mille Milles conforms to the tradition of real and fictional diarists cited by Valerie Raoul:

The impression which is left by studies of real French diarists... or by an anthology of their writings such as the one edited by Maurice Chapelan, is summed up by Romberg, with reference to fictional journals: 'the commonest type of diary narrator is the lonely, unhappy human being who cannot attain contact with others and turns inwards upon himself.'

Raoul claims that the schizoid tendencies recognizable in fictional diarists derive from the internal communication model of the diary form: written by subject, about subject, for subject. Thus, unlike the subject of L'Avalée, Mille Milles is presented in distinct roles as "enunciating subject" and "subject enunciated." In addition, he will be presented as the reader of a portion of his diary in Chapter 44.

From the outset, however, Mille Milles is in search of an audience for whom he intends to leave a testimony: "J'ai besoin des hommes. Je
rédige cette chronique pour les hommes comme ils écrivent des lettres à leur fiancée. Je leur écris parce que je ne peux pas leur parler, parce que j'ai peur de m'approcher d'eux pour leur parler" (p. 10).

The fictional journalist here specifically identifies his journal as a speech act which is second-best to face-to-face communication, and invites the reader to project an intradiegetic narratee. He plays at jeopardizing the narrative contract situation by invoking the command form. Nonetheless, the narrator does not explain how his journal might come to be read by others.

The Third Person

The narrator makes a point of giving referential coordinates to his récit, introducing himself and establishing his personal identity for the reader: "Mon cher nom est Mille Milles. Je trouve que c'est mieux que Mille Kilomètres" (p. 10). He flaunts the improbability of his name. From time to time he self-consciously refers to himself in the third person; for example, in presenting himself as a character in a ditty like "Malbrough s'en va-t'en guerre": "Mille Milles s'en va-t'en guerre. Mille Milles s'en va-t'au Système, à bicyclette, voir Marlon Brando dans The Young Lions" (p. 13).

The third person, because removed from the instance of discourse, manifests a more timeless, ideal entity. In the novel, as is common knowledge, "d'ordinaire, le 'je' est témoin, c'est le 'il' qui est acteur." In Chapter 6, the narrator does not resist the temptation to shore up his journal and his life as récit, by reduplicating himself, in his role as subject enounced, with a conventional third person
protagonist. In spite of Chateaugué's ideal status as actor, Mille Milles is explicit about her textual or interpreted status also, as she is to represent the historical figure of D'Iberville's brother Chateaugué. Thus, in *Le Nez qui voque* the proprieties of "je" in the discourse, seconded by "il/elle" in the récit, are respected intra-diegetically.

However, the fashion of Chateaugué's insertion into the text makes completely explicit what Kristeva has said of the process of signification in the novel: "Son dynamisme est suturé par le sujet (écrivant) qui exprime un signifié antérieur à son expression, et par le principe de cette expression même fonde le signe." The explicitness of this process reflects on the referential integrity of the narrator who further acknowledges constituting his third person as a split entity; on the one hand real, unknown and whom he prefers not to know; on the other, ideal, unknowable and whom he wishes to know: "J'ai souvent l'impression de laisser la vraie Chateaugué là, de m'accrocher intentionnellement à une autre Chateaugué, une Chateaugué que la vraie Chateaugué fait éclater de toutes parts" (p. 177). The secondary characters in *L'Avalée* repeat fragments of the subject. In *Le Nez qui voque* the other is envisaged alternately as symbolic and psychological. Mille Milles distinguishes between the person—a material substratum—and her function as signifier in his life and text. He tends to limit her to an equivalent in the series child-purity-Ideal, in the tradition of the "symbol," described by Kristeva:

La sémiotique du symbole caractérise la société européenne jusqu'aux environs du XIIIe siècle... C'est une pratique sémiotique cosmogonique: ces éléments
Chateaugué is explicitly acknowledged as both symbolic, the being of light, and as an evolving character whom the narrator does not wish to interpret. The symbol does not function as personal double or alter-ego of a psychological narrator. Chateaugué is especially represented as that which is transcendental, "beyond the limits of human reason altogether," as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary.

When elements of a récit invade the journal, Chateaugué is the immediate cause. She thus becomes associated with external necessity in everyday life, which the narrator seeks to master in the journal. The events of the récit, which are associated with a real other, must be associated with the Ideal which he assigns Chateaugué to represent.

The Irruption of Narrative

The performative mode is pushed to the background by narrative in Chapters 16-19. At the opening of Chapter 16, a dramatic event has transpired in the lives of the characters. A car collides with Chateaugué's bicycle; she is knocked unconscious; Mille Milles momentarily believes her dead. The distress caused him by the accident subsides, and is replaced by intense disquiet. During his brief absence, the police have arrived at the rooming-house to interview Chateaugué. He reacts to this intrusion as a violation. He and Chateaugué have avoided social contacts and existed apart from the social order until the police's presence forces this contact on them. It seems an inattention on the part of the narrator has allowed a major narrative event, heretofore banished, to usurp
the space of the text. Yet the narrator wholeheartedly meets the challenge of story-telling, and summons the resources of suspense.

This motif of inattention appears in the narrative of the accident. In crossing the street, Chateaugué is following Mille Mille. Like a mythical hero, he accepts the challenge of a test in order to pass a threshold of existence: "[La rue Craig] un autre de ces fleuves et c'est le pire: feux verts ou feux rouges, les automobiles, toutes en même temps, s'élancent là, à l'assaut des trente points cardinaux" (p. 72). Following his lead, Chateaugué is injured in his place. He allows her to be sacrificed and at the same time to replace him as the focal point of narrative. "La rue Craig" is like a River Lethe; the hero looks back twice:

J'ai vite regardé en arrière, vu Chateaugué arrêtée, repris mon calme et repris de la vitesse. (pp. 72-73)

J'allais m'effondrer ou narguer quand, soudain, tournant la tête, tragiquement, le souvenir de Chateaugué m'est revenu. Une automobile rouge... s'abattait sur Chateaugué. (p. 73)

In interpreting backwards from the dénouement, the accident takes on its significance as foreshadowing Chateaugué's death. The récit's coherence is constructed by the reader's inevitable "looking back" and reinterpreting what he has read.

The theft of the wedding-dress in the following chapter may be read, on the other hand, as a response to the threat posed by the intrusion of "la police et la médecine" (p. 74), as well as by the possibility of Chateaugué's death. The parallels suggests the equivalence: social integration-castration. By committing a theft the pair become officially
anti-social. However, the object of the theft is symbolic. The theft is more playful than practical and as such in harmony with the playful, textual mode which the narrator affects. However, instead of affirming the inconsequentiality of their acts, the mannekin evokes the unrealized act of sexual union, and the incest taboo that Mille Milles invokes in his relations to Chateaugué. This taboo is a social imperative but Mille Milles supposedly ignores social imperatives.

In Chapter 18, Mille Milles returns to the practise of writing as textuality. He attributes the corruption of nature to culture, and by extension the corruption of the text or esthetic function is also blamed on culture: "Combien, oh combien de musées sont prospères aujourd'hui, grâce à Vélasquez" (p. 100). The social order encloses bacteria in petrie dishes, paintings in museums, trees in boxes. The text must be capable of including and surpassing mainstream culture by its own persistence:

Il y a beaucoup de place dans mon cahier et je ne suis pas avaré de mon temps. Il y a beaucoup de place dans mon cahier et je ne suis pas avaré de mon temps. Il y a beaucoup de place dans mon cahier et je ne suis pas avaré de mon temps. (p. 103)

The events which he has recounted may also be considered as cultural constructs, as elements of a récit, the enactment of clichés which the text opposes. The tenaciousness of the performative mode in the text is no longer disinterested but defensive in the new context of text invaded by récit.

In the following chapter (19) Mille Milles does not respond to
Chateaugué's call for suicide. Events are evoked but do not occur. Chateaugué suggests spending the day in bed and she expresses the wish to die (pp. 113, 116). They do not kill themselves and they do not make love; Mille Milles holds Chateaugué in place so that she cannot move and in the evening they get up. In the preceding chapter he holds the text in place by repeating a sentence. This repetition may be called a suicide of the narrator or a surrender of the conscious self. But in the narrative the suppression of Chateaugué rather suggests homicide. From fearing her loss he has come in four chapters to desiring it: "Si tu n'es pas contente de ton sort, prends l'autobus.... Va te faire bercer ailleurs" (p. 111). Their conflict of interests has been made explicit. Chateaugué, by the narrator's decree, is responsible for the elements of récit invading the text, and in displacing this function onto her as subject enunciated, the narrator consents to sacrifice or eliminate her in order to escape responsibility for this function himself.

One may interpret these three narrative incidents with reference to tension between the text as performance and the novel genre. For Chateaugué to become the hero of a récit is for her to be sacrificed; hence the bicycle accident. A narrative recounted in accordance with the norms of verisimilitude cannot be undone by a symbolic event like the theft of a mannekin. Finally, recognizing the consequences attached to the events of a récit, the narrator both wishes to protect Chateaugué and to destroy her in order to destroy the further intrusion of event into text.
The Last Textual Interlude

At the end of Chapter 19, a rift between Mille Milles and Chateau­gué becomes manifest. This rift puts the suicide pact in question. However, the following five chapters, if anything, reinforce the pact, since practically nothing happens at all. This period of social in­activity coupled with textual activity could constitute a purification preparing for death as a transfiguration: "La vie, la vraie, est inté­rieure, tout intérieure" (p. 134). However, an expectation of anti­climax has been created by Chapter 19 where, as predicted by Chateaugué, "il va falloir repartir à rien" (p. 116).

The divergence between Mille Milles and Chateaugué is confirmed by physical separation in Chapter 26. In the preceding pages there is a respite, as the text makes a final excursion into the performative mode. The text leads gradually into and out of the performative passages of Chapters 21, 22 and 23, leaving the reader with a sense of completion.

In Chapter 20, after the account of his day in bed, the narrator explores a different mode of writing. In a limpid expository style he satirizes Canada and Canadiens. He posits "Canada" as an entity of nature rather than society, and assimilates his own existence to that of nature: "Ô Canada... Ô toi qui dors dans tes forêts comme l'ours dort dans sa fourrure.... Dors, Canada, dors; je dors avec toi" (pp. 121-122). His image of passing from social existence to nature reinforces the theme of death as transfiguration. The text has also been associated with nature, in opposition to a cultural norm; thus death as transfiguration may be interpreted as textuality. The earnest­ness in this chapter is offset by the absurdities of the following
chapter. The directness of Chapter 20 must be made relative in accord­
ance with a tendency of the text to relativize truth, to question non-
ambiguous meaning. Writing is represented as a process which purifies,
but as an artefact it is criticized. The narrator addresses someone,
apparently Chateaugué, thus: "Que fais-tu là, la bouche fermée, au-
dessus du lavabo? Vomis, que diable!" (p. 125). The process purifies,
though the traces it leaves are impure. In this chapter the narrator
goes farther than before in representing contamination. He evokes
sexual contact with Chateaugué, and himself as putrifying and alive
with swarming insects (pp. 126-127). In the process of representing,
the narrator as enunciating subject transcends his representation and
thus he seems less fearful or disgusted, enjoying a measure of detach­
ment: "Je ne suis rien du tout" (p. 127).

A light and playful tone results in the following chapter. Cha­
teaugué is assimilated, gently, to "Woman" as fostering the narrator's
sense of inadequacy: "Ne te donne pas à moi; ne me charge pas les bras"
(p. 131). She is separate from him; the child she represents elsewhere
is a fading image. Here the narrator invents another self-image, the
eagle, exploited in subsequent chapters: "Quelque chose en nous est
prisonnier et étouffe. Seul le branle-bras peut délivrer ce quelque
chose d'attaché en nous comme un aigle fixé par une patte...." (p. 134).
The eagle is in motion within the ambivalent narrator figure, unlike
the dead child, outside of and beyond him from the beginning. The
narrator's sin in surviving his goodness is compensated by Chateaugué;
thus the eagle inside, though suffocating, is alive. Its location
and his location shift in subsequent passages. In evoking this self-
image, the narrator decenters Chateaugué from primarily self to primarily other.

The résumé of his childhood with Chateaugué, in Chapter 24, reads like a funeral tribute, in the past tense: "Ce que j'aimais en elle, c'était son étonnement.... Ce que j'aimais le plus c'était son drôle d'air" (p. 139). Chateaugué does not appear in the following chapter, and in the chapter following that, is gone. At the end of his retreat, Mille Milles emerges solitary but tranquil, apparently having come full circle.

In these chapters the performative or parodic mode achieves its final substantial development, through the techniques noted in Chapters 6-15. Narrative shrinks to a trivialized possibility: "Chateaugué s'est cachée sous le lit et je ne l'ai même pas cherchée. Je l'aurais trouvée tout de suite, de toute façon" (p. 133). The narrator fumbles mockingly between the reality of Chateaugué and of his literary performance: "Que fais-tu là, la bouche fermée, au-dessus du lavabo? Vomis, que diable! Que cela jaillisse!... Plongeons dans la débauche, Chateaugué. Donne-moi la main, Isabelle Rimbaud" (pp. 124-126). The physical presence of language obtrudes into the transfer of meaning. The narrator pauses frequently to identify and criticize his performance. Previous reminiscences gel in the portrait of childhood in Chapter 24. The ambivalent, contradictory or even perverse qualities of his prose melt away now, leaving a stale and anti-climactic quality in the following hundred and fifty pages of text.
The Narrative Turning Point

The portion of the text included in Chapters 26-30 represents a crisis for Mille Milles, prepared by a lull, in Chapter 25: "Aujourd'hui je n'en ai pas gros à dire. Je suis heureux sans cause et j'ai été heureux toute la journée" (p. 140). Chapter 26 begins with a suggestive play on words: "Tout a commencé avec la toux de Chateaugué" (p. 143).

In the first chapters of Le Nez qui voque one notices references to things being over or coming to an end. Here in Chapter 26, a period has come to an end for the narrator and yet he speaks of "everything beginning." Back in Chapter 6, everything begins with "tout de Chateaugué," or "l'atout de Chateaugué": coughing or not coughing Chateaugué's presence is generally less than ideal. To make a long story short: "Chateaugué ne vaut rien. Elle a un sexe faible" (p. 21). The only accident which has befallen the protagonists is Chateaugué's bicycle accident and injury. Whether one chooses to see her as threatened with castration, or quite simply as dead, when she is dismissed, her impediment is dismissed without being righted. Although she is taken home to get well, the narrator imagines her dying from the cough:

Si c'était une pneumonie... si elle en mourait. (p. 143)

Chateaugué était seule et phtisique... Elle était en train de mourir de pneumonie. (p. 143)

The ambiguity as to whether she is alive or dead will be resolved by her return. Chateaugué's second arrival, in Chapter 30, is a mock-heroic return of the repressed:

J'ai ouvert la porte; je l'ai vue ressourdre....
- Tu n'as pas l'air surpris de me voir ressourdre,
a-t-elle murmure, le dos rond, les bras tombés du corps, 
là tête basse, les cheveux pleins de vent, les yeux cernés, 
le nez morveux et la bouche noire.  (p. 172)

Questa has visited Mille Milles since Chateaugué's departure; one might 
expect the "la" to refer to her, but the verb "ressourdre" puts too 
much emphasis on the idea of return. Chateaugué's return is more im­
pressive than Questa's would be, because of the effort required to 
dispose of Chateaugué.

At the beginning Chateaugué, as the child-self, is atemporal. 
The narrator played with conventional images of time passing, for ex­
ample, "Je les laisse tous vieillir loin devant moi. Je reste derrière, 
avec moi, avec moi l'enfant, loin derrière, seul, intact, incorruptible" 
(p. 9). At this beginning stage the self-referential time of the per­
formative discourse supplants linear chronology. The discourse both 
affirms and denies the possibility of change. In mid-text linear se­
quencing becomes more prominent:

Tout à coup, l'absence de Chateaugué m'est insupportable... 
tout à coup l'absence de Chateaugué m'indiffère... 
Tout à coup, je ris cyniquement. Tout à coup j'ai les 
larmes aux yeux.  (pp. 167-168)

Oscillations of feeling translate into a rapid succession of states. 
The discourse no longer acts out feelings, but instead tells about them. 
Like Chateaugué, Mille Milles is becoming the subject of a récit.

In Chapter 26 Mille Milles leaves the room, goes to a bar and 
meets Questa, a fallen woman. As he accepts changes in himself he 
accepts her and sees her as less degenerate; however, the transformation 
is never complete. The narrator's predicament appears to resolve it­
self. First he describes himself as the detritus of an absent child,
and as a corrupt vessel of life. Finally, the world—not he—is detritus:

Je vois mon mal sous la forme d'un aigle logé dans mes entrailles; je vois faux. C'est moi l'aigle; et les entrailles, c'est le monde... Je suis le poisson forcé du mal, pas du péché, mais bien du mal, du mal dont on souffre. (p. 159)

However, what remains of this text is decentered from the narrator. Chateaugué turns out to be its narrative enigma, which has not yet been resolved in the récit.

**Exposition Displaces Performance**

After Chapter 31, and in the last hundred pages of *Le Nez*, the major focus of the narrator's discourse is to explain, in the expository mode, his thoughts and feelings at the time and in so doing to analyse retrospectively and reinterpret his previous points of view in the journal. This exposition provides one with an interpretation of the performative mode as a therapeutic tactic which the narrator no longer needs, since his discovery of "la joie," first mentioned in Chapter 30 (p. 178), as a feasible approach even to unpleasant situations. By representing a ludic point of view to be adopted in everyday life, "la joie" represents an extension of the textual approach of the journal to everyday life. When knocked down by a single blow by a co-worker, he has the confidence to laugh at himself: "J'ai appréhendé, soudain, d'un seul coup, toute la richesse de ma honte, et j'ai lâché dans cette richesse, pour qu'il la dévore, le lion inassouvissable qu'est ma joie" (p. 216). As he welcomes inconsistency and textuality in his life, his style becomes consequential and coherent. He glosses what his discourse has previously performed:
Je suis une réaction violente, imprévisible. (p. 198)

Mes réflexions sont des irréflexions... elles sont d'un être humain... ne peuvent pas s'enchaîner comme celles d'un être logique. (p. 229)

He also recounts a number of events indicating a progressive separation from Chateaugué. He abandons the idea of suicide. He insists that Chateaugué move into her own room. The events he recounts often involve Chateaugué's being hurt. When he tells her to give up the suicide pact, she is so disappointed that she has a seizure:

Elle criait avec tellement de force que le sang a commencé de lui couler de la bouche et du nez.... Soudain, elle s'est affaissée. Recroquevillée, les yeux ouverts et révulsés, elle ne gesticule plus, ne crie plus.... Elle est crispée et roide comme un chien qui vient de mourir. (p. 190)

The onset of menstruation, a sign that Chateaugué does not correspond to the ideal child-self, makes her ill: "J'ai manqué de mourir, tellement j'ai eu peur. Je n'ai jamais eu aussi mal au ventre de ma vie" (p. 246).

The events of the récit of which Chateaugué is the subject recount the narrator's progressive detachment from her, or merely represent Chateaugué's being physically damaged. The separation of the pair may be deduced from his initially associating her with the récit and his predilection for a textual and ludic mode. While inviting interpretation, her physical vulnerability clearly foreshadows the dénouement.

One may ask why Chapters 42-48, the last six chapters of Le Nez, are included in the text. The performative mode subsists in trivialized form, for example, indirectly, in the narrator's recounting of playing verbal games (pp. 273-274). Nothing happens with regard to the récit.
except confirmation of the distance between the protagonists which is, however, compensated by a lingering solidarity.

The most significant single statement is that the narrator has read his journal: "Je ne suis pas aussi fidèle et attentif qu'avant à mon cher journal.... il me dégoûte. Je n'y reviens plus que par non-chalance" (p. 261). In addition to interpreting the lack of direction of the discourse, these comments justify one in seeing the narrator as betraying the text. The text distances him from the domain of récit and necessity. He no longer requires this distance either. He identifies himself totally with an enunciating subject or totally, having changed affiliation, with a subject of the enunciation. He affirms the former case but interpretation of the dénouement and a reexamination of subject in Le Nez qui voque also allow one to affirm the latter case.

The apparent emptiness of the final chapters provides a background contrast to the dramatic discovery of Chateaugué's dead body, with which the text ends:

Il y avait un lac de sang sur le carrelage.... Elle s'est tuée avec les deux poignards que nous avions volés.... Elle se les est plantés dans le cou, où c'est mou, où il n'y a pas d'os. L'odeur du sang m'a pris à la gorge.... (pp. 274-275)

This vision may be read as a more extreme version of several previous ones. The récit has two dimensions, one, the gradual separation of the protagonists presented as a logical linear sequence. The second dimension does not respect chronology or a regular incremental gradation, and consists of the repeated representation of Chateaugué's injured and bloody body. The last scene represents a culmination because she is dead, as opposed to appearing dead, and because of the amount of blood
and its odour.

This dimension of the récit suggests a continuing castration anxiety in the narrator; either the cure has failed or the trauma of Chateauguë's death reactivates the fixation. Her death also requires contextualization with respect to her role as subject of the récit.

To understand the relationship of castration to the récit it will be necessary to reexamine the metamorphoses of the subject in Le Nez.

The Other as Locus of Binary Oppositions

Since a récit is an abstract logical structure, appropriating the other as subject of the récit is a manoeuvre not incompatible with appropriating her as a symbol of the Ideal or as a fantasy of the phallic woman. The "real" other or potential interlocutor or enunciating subject, is transformed into an ideal binary structure, an object. The narrator implicitly accepts that in considering the other even as a highly valorized object he conceives the possibility of her as a degraded object:

... Au tout début, quand j'ai conçu l'idée de la pureté de Chateauguë, j'ai conçu, en même temps, l'idée de l'impureté de Chateauguë. J'ai choisi la pureté... Mais l'idée de l'impureté de Chateauguë continue de se faire vouloir. (p. 94)

To return to the textual dimension, a subject associated purely with récit, meaning and clarity, implies as its underpinning ambiguity, the physical presence of language and the intertext. The narrator's function is to occupy a space between the former and latter, between récit and nonsense, and to keep them apart. He identifies with the negative pole of the oppositions, but as narrator he always includes various oppositions in suspension. The "pure" is as intrinsic to him as the "impure,"
univocal meaning as intrinsic as polysemy.

This identifying of the other with a stable reference point facilitates his exploration of the dark, the repressed, the unconscious, which is also nonsense, the taboo and the intertext. The outcome of the exploration is determined by the nature of the original project: to consolidate one's mastery of language and the self, to reconstruct a more effective language and self without altering the preconceived conceptual models. The narrator's journal rehearses the project described by Irigaray for a divided but still phallocentric subject:

Comment maîtriser ces diableries, fantômes mouvants de l'inconscient, quand une longue histoire vous a appris à ne chercher et ne désirer que la clarté, le bien vu des idées (fixes)? Peut-être est-ce le temps de remettre l'accent sur la technique? De renoncer momentanément à la souveraineté de la pensée pour forger les outils qui aménageront ces ressources encore inexploitées, ces mines inexploitées. Peut-être faut-il abandonner provisoirement la contemplation sereine de son empire pour domestiquer ces forces qui pourraient, dé(sen)chaînées, en faire éclater la conception même.6

The novel ends with the failure of the supposed mastery of this "I." Having neglected the real other for the symbolic Other, the subject interprets the former's death symbolically, thus the defensive denial of involvement seconded by absence of a coda7 to the narrative. In denying any meaning at all to the other's death, the "I" ascribes it with significance as a limiting factor defining self as castrated. He denies his relatedness to the other, unwittingly submits to the dominance of the symbolic Other, and is recuperated by phallocentrism: "les formes peuvent varier, elles comportent toutes ce paradoxe de plier à la même représentation--celle du même--ce qui s'impose comme hétérogène, autre."8 Establishing the other as the locus of either/or oppositions reaffirms
the closed conceptual universe against which the text defines itself.

By establishing other as subject of récit, the narrator does not eliminate himself from that role, even though he tends to identify himself with the process of enunciation rather than the enunciated.

**Intradiegetic Subject and Text**

One aspect of the narrator's avoidance of his role as subject of the récit is ambivalence toward the concept of author. His projected suicide is the murder of the author as origin of text, accomplished by his assuming and rendering incongruous the authorial pose: "Je suis en train d'écrire un chef-d'oeuvre de littérature française. Dans cent un ans, les enfants d'école en apprendront des pages par cœur" (p. 45). The "author" dares to assume that he knows the future, a presumptuousness in keeping with the late nineteenth-century realist model of literature which is widely institutionalized. The narrator of *Le Nez qui vogue* wishes to avoid a consecrated style reminiscent of that cited by Barthes as universally considered to be literary:

- Ce que l'école admire dans l'écriture d'un Maupassant, ou d'un Daudet, c'est un signe littéraire enfin détaché de son contenu, posant sans ambiguïté la littérature comme une catégorie sans aucun rapport avec d'autres langages, et instaurant par là une intelligibilité idéale des choses.⁹

- J'écris mal et je suis assez vulgaire. Je m'en réjouis. Mes paroles mal tournées et outrageantes éloigneront de cette table, où des personnes imaginaires sont réunies pour entendre, les amateurs et les amatrices de fleurs de rhétorique. (p. 10)

In addition to this particular model, the man of letters to be assassinated by the narrator is the narrator himself to the extent that
he is recuperated by an academy. This problem of the prince turning into a frog is broached in *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*: "Chaque écrivan... ouvre en lui le procès de la littérature; mais s'il la condamne, il lui accorde toujours un sursis... il a beau inventer un langage libre, on le lui renvoie fabriqué..." The autochthonous literary model in *Le Nez qui voque*, aside from Crémaize and Félix Leclerc, is Emile Nelligan. Nelligan's life suggests the model of the self-consuming artefact, and the narrator laments not being programmed in the same manner.

The underlying problem with literary models in *Le Nez qui voque* is of course also that of autochthony. As Patrick Imbert writes regarding several generations in Quebec:

Il n'est pas besoin de commenter longuement les incertitudes qui assaillent les écrivains des années quarante, cinquante ou soixante encore... pour qui le langage fait difficulté. Ceci tient à des raisons historiques: d'une part... l'univers anglais, d'autre part l'impossibilité de maîtriser un langage, un discours qui ne sont pas d'ici, mais qui prennent racine dans une culture différente, celle de la France ou de l'Europe.

Thus, as late as the 1960s, class definition of the literary audience in Quebec is grotesquely underlined by identification with European culture:

Il y en a qui essaient très fort de devenir Canadiens, des durs à américaniser.... Que je hais ces Français manqués, ces espèces de pyromaniaques qui ont honte d'être nés sur ces rives,... qui regrettent de ne pas avoir plutôt échoué. (p. 123)

On the other hand, the space defined by the subject of *Le Nez qui voque* in his self-immolating, textual phase evokes a preclassical stage in the evolution of a national tradition, comparable to the preclassical
European tradition. This textual space is also that of contemporary metafiction. Both exploit the linguistic indeterminacy Barthes associates with preclassical language:

Tant que la langue hésite sur sa structure même, une morale du langage est impossible; l'écriture n'apparaît qu'au moment où la langue constituée nationalement devient une sorte de négativité, un horizon qui sépare ce qui est défendu et ce qui est permis, sans plus s'interroger sur les origines ou les justifications de ce tabou.  

The recourse to the literal and corporeal in *Le Nez qui voque* does not respect classical esthetics: "Je m'étends, je m'étire, je m'allonge; je ne vous épargne aucun détail. Je ne ferais pas un bon écrivain, mais je ferais une bonne écrevisse" (p. 146). This "I," as bahktinien image of the text, identifies, focuses, organizes meaning; thus in "écrevisse" one finds "écrou," "vis." Associating this license with the preclassical mode is in keeping with the narrator's passion for pre-conquest history:

Je suis, en ce pays, de la race des Seigneurs, des seigneurs en raquettes seuls au fond du Minnesota, des seigneurs à la rame seuls entre les rives de l'Ohio, des seigneurs à la voile seuls dans l'Atlantique, des seigneurs à la bêche seuls sur un continent. (p. 19)

However, the solitude as well as the indeterminacy of the encoder suggest a problem in identifying a decoder.

The Second Person

Raoul's internal communication model for the fictional journal shows narrator as "je," "il," and "tu," repeating the extradiegetic roles of author, character, reader. She points out that in a sense the narrator reads himself as he writes: "the diarist must 'register' what he writes, and he is the 'addressee' in so far as it is his own
reaction which determines the encoding of his account." Mille Milles acknowledges this function by his frequent reflexive comments; for example: "Tout ce que je dis est insensé, insignifiant, mal dit, message de haine aux automobiles" (p. 100). He continues because the discourse has an emotive function. At the intradiegetic level, is this discourse communicative? Talking to oneself may be intermediary between a communicative and non-communicative speech act.

That Mille Milles would like an audience is not surprising since Raoul maintains that even stereotypically introverted diarists do not want to write just for themselves:

The diarist, often having nothing particular to say, and no one to whom to say it, may write to reassure himself that the channel of communication is still open, that he could convey something to someone if the opportunity arose.16

The narrator also invites the reader to respond to him as a clown at certain moments: "Je suis le roi de la bêtise" (p. 105). By denegrating himself he gives himself permission, and asks the reader's permission, to continue and to recontextualize his performance as play. He identifies his utterances as ridiculous, and as such still worth hearing. He has other tactics for showing that he is not opting out of the communicative act; for example, he flatters the reader by identifying a common outgroup: "automobiles," meaning those intimately involved with cars (p. 12); and "amateurs et amatrices de fleurs de rhétorique" (p. 10). His assertion (p. 10) that he dare not confront humanity directly
partially disguises a ruse in that the hyperprotected literary speech act can assure an audience for this complex verbal behaviour. Since the fictional narrator never projects the actual publication of his journal, one might also apply this remark extradiegetically. Toward the end of the novel where he is more detached from the text, he also appears rather lukewarm toward the prospect of being read: "Mes amis les hommes.... Je leur parle, mais je n'ai pas besoin d'être vraiment entendu. Je parle en faisant semblant d'être entendu et faire semblant d'être entendu me suffit" (p. 248).

The diary form accompanies failure of a satisfactory intimate relationship with an other. In this case, Chateaugué is a barred or taboo narratee because the narrator rejects her function as real in favour of imaginary and symbolic functions: "Il ne faut rien dire avec elle.... Il faut la laisser être" (p. 56).

**Temporal Location of "I" and "You" in the Text**

In the journal, says Raoul, it is the subject's "here and now" which dominates. "You" is absent; hence the delayed communication form. The narrator insists on associating Chateaugué with an edenic past in spite of her physical presence. The absolute present of *Le Nez qui voque* is that of ritual play as set off from goal-oriented activity, and that of the liminal subject's impurity and invisibility: "Qu'est-ce que le présent? Voici le présent: je suis assis, bien assis, et tout ce que j'ai est fini" (p. 79); "Je ne suis rien. Je ne suis même pas vrai" (p. 80). In this present the subject has only his past as it is reduced to an objective correlative in Chateaugué.
Though isolated in the present, Mille Milles does not project himself into the future. His narrator persona remains in the text without relationship to a future self, first because he intends to commit suicide and then because he wants to divest himself of the narrator persona. Ironically, the character projected beyond the end of the récit is condemned by the past to repeat indefinitely the representation of castration. The narrator remains alone in his liminal condition of textual subject.

Possible readers are in the future, in relation to the narrator. The message-in-a-bottle presentation of the text depicts the circumstances of readership in Quebec in the 1960s: "Le Canada est un vaste pays vide.... Restons couchés, Canada, jusqu'à ce qu'un soleil qui en vaille la peine se lève" (pp. 121-122).

The Extradiegetic Problem: Readership

The fictional narrator's attitude toward Chateaugué reflects traditional messianism and Ultramontanism in Quebec, as analyzed by Denis Monière:

Le discours ultramontain est essentiellement axé sur la dénonciation et sur l'affirmation d'absolus. Dans ce contexte, le doute n'est pas permis, l'analyse des situations nouvelles y est absente et l'innovation est inutile, car le dogme est là qui fournit une interprétation toute faite de la réalité.20

In this context the text functions to restate dogma and straying from this function is reprehensible. The French Canadian tradition of isolation is valorized in _Le Nez qui vogue_ as a counterweight to acculturation, but not unconditionally. The fictional narrator's self-attributed
Impurity may be interpreted as his permeability to an intertext, represented in the performative mode of his journal. The deconstruction of the narrator as Cartesian subject is the deconstruction of the reader as subject. That the contemporary reader, represented by Chateaugué, is too innocent or fragile to endure the text conceals suspicion that this reader is inadequate to the task: "Le monde de Chateaugué est... si fragile qu'il sera emporté par un coup de vent, comme huppe de pis-senlit" (p. 202). Imbert discerns a problem of readership for writers like Ducharme:

Le lecteur est donc vu par les écrivains qui refusent de reprendre une écriture datée... comme un être ayant des besoins de sécurité tels qu'il risque d'empêcher le dynamisme nécessaire à l'élaboration de nouvelles formes.... il [l'écrivain] est déjà en train d'élaborer l'idéologie du dépassement, alors que la grande partie de la société est toujours dans la tradition.21

Unlike Mille Milles who hides the journal from Chateaugué, the author published his manuscript. By its existence the text defends its readers against assimilation as the most distasteful acculturation.

The Extradiegetic Subject

The reader of Le Nez qui voque is forced to question the narrator's self-proclaimed cure, and reconstruct his discourse; in other words, to reinterpret the intradiegetic subject. One possibility is to read into the repeating structure of the récit, as it concerns Chateaugué's death, the structure known as a traumatic amnesia. In this light, the death is an a priori of the récit, which represents the process of curing the amnesia caused by "an increase of stimulus too powerful to be dealt with
or worked off in the normal way."22 Chateaugué's adventures represent the mind's assimilating the finality of death. The narrator's denial of grief in the final scene triggers the récit but is represented as its resolution; thus narrator and récit are a closed and self-propagating structure. The trauma reactivates a castration complex whose endless cure is the text as récit. To identify Chateaugué as subject of the récit is in itself to identify her as dead, to sacrifice her to the endless cure which condemns the "I" of the text to be functional but neurotic. The sacrifice of the other stabilizes but also limits the self in an unproductive way.

The structure of the traumatic amnesia is not located explicitly within the narrator by the text. A significant motive to recontextualize the narrator is provided by his ultimate repudiation of the text, which is nonetheless a published novel. The récit requires interpretation but makes the reader's responsibility for it explicit, by sabotaging the narrator's authority without superimposing clear authorial interpretation.

The "I" of Le Nez thus reveals itself to be as empty as that of L'Avalée. The subject of the discourse figures as a space to be occupied by the act of reading. In reading a récit into the text, the reader consummates the endogamous union of Mille Milles and Chateaugué, of enunciating and enunciated subject, triumphant though divided.
NOTES


8 Irigaray, p. 170.

9 Barthes, Le Degré zéro de l'écriture, p. 25.

10 Barthes, Le Degré zéro de l'écriture, p. 28.

11 Patrick Imbert, Roman québécois contemporain et clichés (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1983), p. 64.

12 Barthes, Le Degré zéro de l'écriture, pp. 80-81.

13 Raoul, p. 72.

14 Raoul, p. 40.

Raoul, p. 65.

Pratt, p. 215.

Raoul, p. 38.


Imbert, p. 70.

CONCLUSION

This discussion has encompassed three distinct attempts to understand the representation of subject in two novels by Réjean Ducharme.

In the first place, "subject" has been interpreted as a self or character from a psychological viewpoint. This approach finds its inspiration in the intradiegetic representation of subject in each novel, and virtually ignores the writing or reading of the texts, except in that to reconstruct a character of a récit is to execute a traditional model of reading.

The subject of L'Avalée des avalés represents herself as a vacuum into which others who threaten to incorporate her also threaten to intrude. She proclaims the necessity of controlling others in order to forestall being destroyed by them. She does not influence her father, who determines the principal events of her biography and disrupts the continuity of her relationships with others, evoking the extradiegetic origin of the text. However, the rehearsing by the events of the récit of the narrator's fantasies suggests the former as not distinct from the latter. The murder which closes the narrative implies that the inner self both destroys and assumes the false self. It is thus possible to project that the integration of the subject is portrayed as more undesirable than the schizoid condition. Indeed, the integration of self may be evoked as a schizophrenic hypostasis rather than cure: "I" definitively becomes "the Other."

Le Nez qui vogue also evokes a neurotic personality in the process of becoming integrated. A guilt attached to sexual desire paralyses
the narrator, but he finds respite in journal writing. While he writes he becomes unstable, ungraspable and immune to the definitive judgment of self which plagues him. Halfway through the book, he begins to feel pleased with himself, but his interest in the journal abates, as it is associated with the obsession of impurity. He integrates himself into the mainstream by accepting a job, and detaches himself from his constant companion, ostensibly because she must find a husband and he a wife. He terminates the journal when she kills herself, at the same time proclaiming his indifference to her death. However, recurrent imagery as well as the presentation of minor events in the récit suggest that the narrator's paralysing guilt results from fear of castration and of women as castrated. His abandoning of Chateaugué proceeds from unwillingness to accept her as a woman and the decision to cleave to her as an asexual but hermaphroditic symbol. Her death imposes itself in the récit as an image of woman castrated, evoking a recrudescence of the obsession. In this case the récit is circular, the dénouement evoking a cure and a cure aborting in the dénouement.

The presentation of secondary characters implies a socially functional narrator in Le Nez qui voque but not necessarily in L'Avalée des avalés. In the former text, the narrator's companion is psychologically readable whereas Bérénice's entourage possesses little coherence without reference to her. The former subject uses "I" and "you" appropriately, but the latter uses the terms idiosyncratically also.

The second stage in the study of each novel turns to stylistic and structural aspects of the texts to confirm the original reading and in so doing necessarily qualifies the interpretation of subject as
character, without always acknowledging this manoeuvre other than as the traditional appeal to the text itself. It becomes apparent how ready an opportunity the two novels provide for examining the text as an instance of enunciation or reading. The enunciating subject contributes to the representation of a narrator-character but also is assumed extradiegetically by the reader who activates the instance of discourse containing "I."

In L'Avalée des avalés pervasive semantic incongruity heightens the indeterminacy of fictional discourse, evoking a metafictional status for the "I," and also disrupting the reader's identification with the subject as enunciated. For one thing, the inappropriateness of a child as origin of literary discourse profiles an author-father exiling the character from direct access to that discourse. Like the secondary characters, the récit is overtly tautological, thus alluding to the closed structure of the conceptual universe. As enunciating subject "Bérénice" is a carnival mask for the writer-reader who, taking pleasure in the text, participates equally in the barbaric world of Bérénice's mocking Saint Paul and the classical world of Bérénice's renouncing Titus. Paronomasia, word play and bad jokes which disrupt the transmission of information in the discourse also disrupt the identity of the enunciating subject as reader, who must recontextualize the discourse. The "I" as a tactic becomes plural. To sum up, a cursory examination of composition and style in L'Avalée des avalés leads one to appreciate Leduc-Park's contention that in Ducharme the subject triumphs by embracing its destruction. This point of view inverts that of discourse in the service of récit. It does not preclude the
representation of unhappy consciousness in the récit, though in L'Avalée des avalés a coherent mimesis of schizoid consciousness also signifies the multiplicity of texts implicated in a multiplicity of readings.

Initially such a reading of L'Avalée des avalés may seem more extravagant than any reading one could justify of Le Nez qui voque, which represents the composition of a text intradiegetically. Analysis of non-narrative passages suggests that in the writing process as he represents it, the narrator submits his identity to ambiguity and dispersal with therapeutic results. One might see for the reader no representation in the text, no role as enunciating subject, other than the narrator character. The performative aspect of the text displays the shape of the conceptual universe, and provides the reader as enunciating subject with an exhilarating sense of loosening its constraints. In spite of this euphoric dimension of performance, the narrator abandons it when his neurosis goes into remission. His devalorization of writing implies a devalorization of reading which distances the reader from him.

The narrator's role as subject of the text is called into question by Chateaugué's role as motor of the récit. As structuring principle external to the narrator, Chateaugué effects a metafictional reference to the writer-reader as enunciating subject. The narrator's neglect of the text parallels his neglect of Chateaugué. Her suicide as dénouement of the récit evokes the disappearance of a text which literally is not read. In abdicating Chateaugué-text, the narrator denies her (its) plurality, namely, of Chateaugué as other than univocal symbol and of text as other than determined by narrator as origin. The castration motif evokes the impossibility of maintaining control over Chateaugué-
text. Because he renounces nonsense and recourse to the Other of the discourse, the narrator experiences the tautological structure of meaning as a castration.

Both texts parody the image of an integrated subject. *L'Avalée des avalés* glorifies the plurality of a ludic enunciating subject whose reference is metafictional. *Le Nez qui vogue* presents a definitively neurotic subject who undertakes a cure in order to preserve the equilibrium of his neurosis, and satirizes the writer-reader who attempts to exploit textuality as entertainment or therapy, without relation to the assumptions of the everyday lifeworld.

In effect, the psychological image of problematic subject has prepared the reinterpretation of subject as text and text as reader which is a premise of this conclusion. In *L'Avalée des avalés*, the incongruous portrayal of the narrator-character represents the récit as fictional instead of natural. Within the récit, the presentation of child, of female subject and of schizoid subject, all explore the limits of a conventionally defined subject of the discourse. The schizoid subject is interpreted as a deferred schizophrenic, a deferred non-subject for whom "I" does not totalize consciousness, just as the "I" of *L'Avalée* does not totalize an image of the subject without at the same time making the image problematic. For Irigaray, the subject of the discourse is male; the female must speak through the male. This premise sheds light on the unspontaneous relation of Bérénice to the discourse in *L'Avalée*. A more concrete image of the plurality of the text inheres in the representation of the child as always already a split subject in whom self does not predate Other. The child's traditional purity
is reduced to the Other as a destructuring force repressed in the consolidating of the récit, but the loss of which entails loss of the function of subjectivity, which again may be interpreted as schizophrenia. The hyperbolic discourse evokes the distended body of a child, an image which lingers as the iconographic representation of a ludic and polysemic text. The loss of self in L'Avaleé may be related extradiegetically to the loss of composer in the act of writing, as conceived of by Blanchot.

In the récit of Le Nez qui voque the composer as narrator seeks only to find but not lose self, a project which culminates in a self cut off from its other. The narrator's avoidance of other as interlocutor intradiegetically is reversed extradiegetically by the interpretation of Chateaugué as a structuring principle of the récit and as the Other of the discourse. Avoidance of the interlocutor is also undone by the fact of reading. To the extent that the reader associates with the self-conscious narrator, the text may appear more didactic and less euphoric than L'Avaleé. The text invokes a reader who will negate the closure in the récit, keeping the "signifier afloat," as suggested by the title.

At the term of this investigation one may see the two texts as complementary text-subjects. In its metafictional phase neither negates or ridicules its representation of split consciousness as suffering. Each illustrates the functioning of the text, including in the mimesis of suffering, as pleasurable. The two constitute a holistic series of female/male, other/self, nonsense/meaning altercations, in which an element which claims to dominate is dominated by its other.
This study has lead from the consideration of the subject represented in the text as origin of the text, to an inverse point of view considering the representation of subject as produced by the text and dependent on it. This split subject is a textual constant of *L'Avalée des avalés* and *Le Nez qui voque*, inseparable from both *récit* and discourse. The psychological split in the subjects represented in these texts constitutes a *mise en abyme* of two points of view, mimetic and metafictional, which one may adopt as reader.
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