A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF THE WORKS OF ART IN TWO NOVELS BY MICHEL BUTOR

by

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF THE WORKS OF ART IN TWO NOVELS BY MICHEL BUTOR

In L'Emploi du temps (1956) and La Modification (1957) Michel Butor continues the exploration of novelistic form begun in Passage de Milan (1954). In these and his later works, he seeks to answer the fundamental questions: What is the role of the novel as an art form? How do we represent time and space in the novel? A study of the works of art in L'Emploi du temps and La Modification, their role and their interrelationship with each other, with the central characters, and with the reader, shows how he explores these questions. For Butor the novel is a means of transforming the way in which we see the world and therefore of transforming the world. For, as the novelist experiments with new structures he creates new relationships which change our perception of "reality."

The introduction of works of art - imaginary but based on some of the archetypal stories of western civilization (Theseus, Oedipus, Cain) in L'Emploi du temps, real (the Aeneid, the Sistine Ceiling, the Last Judgement) in La Modification - extends the temporal and spatial scope of the two novels. This allows Butor to create intricate structural patterns which in turn create complex interrelationships in the text. Through the works of art, the key periods of western civilization - ancient Greece and Rome, early Judaic

and Christian times and the Renaissance - are restructured and re-presented to Jacques Revel, Léon Delmont and the reader. In this re-presentation, all the major artistic forms appear: tapestry, stained glass windows architecture, literature and film, in L'Emploi du temps; architecture, sculpture, painting and literature in La Modification. Music is absent from the content but present in the form of both novels whose mathematical structure, "reprises" of specific scenes or phrases and temporal flexibility find their origins in musical form.

Butor's use of works of art and, through them, of myth and history demonstrates his view of the novel as an encyclopedic work whose purpose is to remind the reader of the ongoing influence of his cultural background and to involve him in the novelistic process. By restructuring the universal stories of mankind through the works of art and by demonstrating their influence on the stories of Jacques Revel and Léon Delmont, Butor shows us that in order to understand himself and his universe, modern man must explore, acknowledge and integrate his colelctive past. In Butor, this is accomplished through the act of writing.

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INTRODUCTION

L'Emploi du temps (1956) and La Modification (1957) are the second and third novels written by Michel Butor. They continue the exploration of novelistic form, of the representation of reality in fiction, begun in his first novel, Passage de Milan (1954). In that novel, set in a seven-storey Paris apartment block in the twelve-hour period between seven in the evening and the same time the next morning, Butor uses temporal and spatial constraints to experiment with novelistic structure. He uses a similar temporal and spatial framework in the two novels discussed in this study. In L'Emploi du temps the time frame is one year and the action is confined to the imaginary city of Bleston in northern England. In La Modification space and time are limited to the confines of the third-class railway compartment of a train travelling from Paris to Rome, and to a period of twenty-one hours thirty-five minutes - the time it takes to complete the journey. However, in both novels, through the introduction of works of art which incorporate myth and history, the temporal scope is extended to encompass the myths of ancient Greece and Rome, early Judaic and Christian times as well as the Renaissance.

These key periods of western civilization recur as themes, not only in the two novels that I propose to study, but also in Butor's subsequent works. They are themes with

which we are familiar but of whose details, like Jacques Revel in L'Emploi du temps, we have but a hazy recollection. The emphasis placed on them in Butor's novels re-awakens us to the continuing role these periods play in the present.

Obviously for Butor the purpose of literature goes beyond simple entertainment. He writes that, while "il y a certes un roman naïf et une consommation naïve du roman"[1], great literary works play quite a different role: "elles transforment la façon dont nous voyons et racontons le monde et par conséquent transforment le monde."[2] It is this transformation that he seeks to achieve through his novels and which we shall study in L'Emploi du temps and La Modification.

In "Le roman comme recherche", Butor states that the novel is "le lieu par excellence où étudier de quelle façon la réalité nous apparaît ou peut nous apparaître. . . ."[3] Since the way in which reality is represented affects our perception of it, we can understand his conclusion that: "Le travail sur la forme dans le roman revêt . . . une importance de premier plan."[4] It is of primary importance because, as the novelist experiments with new structures, he creates hitherto unrecognized relationships which change his as well as the reader's perception of reality: "Des formes nouvelles révéleront dans la réalité des choses nouvelles, des liaisons nouvelles. . . ."[5] This is the reader's experience with L'Emploi du temps and La Modification in

which, as we shall see, Butor's experimentation with new temporal structures, in Dean McWilliams' words, "force[s] us to recognize the relationship between seemingly isolated moments in the past and in the present"[6].

In writing about the theory of the novel, Butor has discussed the problem of the treatment of time in the novel. He finds a strictly chronological narrative to be inadequate because, amongst other factors, it makes impossible any reference to history or to the characters' past. After exploring other possibilities, he finally proposes a "quadruple journal" in which:

> on va remonter le cours du temps, plonger de plus en plus profondément comme un archéologue ou un géologue qui, dans leurs fouilles, rencontrent d'abord les terrains récents, puis de proche en proche, gagnent les anciens.[7]

The result of this temporal organization is that the narrative "n'est plus une ligne, mais une surface dans laquelle nous isolons un certain nombre de lignes, de points, ou de groupements remarquables."[8] The first chapter of this essay will examine, through a study of the role of the works of art and their interrelationships, how he has put this theory into practice in L'Emploi du temps.

Time, Butor contends, must also be seen in terms of space for, "C'est en déplaçant le regard sur un espace clairement imaginable que nous pourrons véritablement suivre la marche du temps. . . ."[9] Thus he sees the journey as the ideal means of restructuring time:

> Les lieux ayant toujours une historicité, soit par rapport à l'histoire universelle, soit par rapport à l'histoire de l'individu, tout déplacement dans l'espace impliquera une réorganisation de la structure temporelle, changements dans les souvenirs ou dans les projets, dans ce qui vient au premier plan, plus ou moins profond ou plus ou moins grave.[10]

This is the situation that we observe in La Modification in which Léon Delmont, as he travels between Paris and Rome, not only reviews the memories of a twenty-year span but also projects himself into the future and, through the works of art, develops a new perspective on "l'histoire universelle."

In his exploration of the connections between past and present, Butor uses the interrelationships of the works of art, fictional in L'Emploi du temps, real in La Modification, to re-structure the universal stories of mankind. These universal stories, "l'histoire universelle",[11] constitute, as he has stated, the main theme of his work. By reconstructing the stories and myths of western man, he changes the relationship of these universal myths to each other, to the central character in each novel, and to the reader. What is the role of the works of art in this reconstruction? This is the question I propose to address.

Notes to Introduction

[1] Michel Butor, "Recherches sur la technique du roman," Repertoire II, (Paris: Minuit, 1964), p. 90.

[2] Butor, Répertoire II. p. 90.

[3] Michel Butor, "Le Roman comme recherche," Répertoire (Paris: Minuit, 1960), p. 8.

[4] Butor, Répertoire, p. 8.

[5] Butor, Répertoire, p. 9.

[6] Dean McWilliams, The Narratives of Michel Butor: The Writer as Janus (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1968), p. 4.

[7] Butor, Répertoire II, p. 92.

[8] Butor, Répertoire II, p. 92.

[9] Butor, Répertoire II. p. 96.

[10] Butor, Répertoire II. p. 96.

[11] Jean Gaugeard, "Michel Butor: Répertoire II", Les Lettres francaises, no. 1022 (26 March, 1964), p. 4.

CHAPTER I

L'EMPLOI DU TEMPS

In L'Emploi du temps Jacques Revel's first preoccupation is to regain control of his own consciousness through a systematic exploration of the seven months which have elapsed since his arrival in Bleston. As the examination of the past proceeds, the temporal structure of the novel becomes increasingly complex and certain works of art play an increasingly important role. These works range in origin and subject from the ambiguously titled novel within the novel, "Le Meurtre de Bleston", which acts as a guide to the city and to the art of writing for Revel, to the Harrey Tapestries, woven in eighteenth-century France and depicting the adventures of Theseus.

Another work of art, the Murderer's Window, housed in Bleston's Old Cathedral, originated in sixteenth-century France and portrays the story of the first fratricide, the murder of Abel by Cain. Revel will identify with Cain as he has done with Theseus. The innovative architecture and statuitry of the nineteenth century New Cathedral contrast with the traditional design of its predecessor. As Revel explores these two structures, they become much more than two interesting historic buildings and their influence is reflected at both the psychological and structural levels.

However, while Revel is fascinated with the higher forms of Blestonian culture, the only art form popular with the people of Bleston, who pay little attention to the tapestries, the Cathedrals, or the "Meurtre de Bleston", are the films shown in Bleston's cinemas. Revel is a frequent patron of one of these cinemas whose films about Ancient Greece and Rome are of particular interest to him. What role do these various works of art, widely separated in form, origin and theme, play in the development of L'Emploi du temps? At first glance they are a series of mirrors each reflecting one aspect of western man's history. However, as the diary progresses, the images become more complex and we find, in each work and interwoven throughout the diary, reflections cast by the other works. It is these interrelationships and their significance to Butor, to Revel, to the reader, that we propose to study in this chapter.

"Le Meurtre de Bleston"

The novel within the novel, "Le Meurtre de Bleston", is introduced in the diary entry of May 30th following Revel's description of his first visit, in October, to the Old Cathedral, a visit during which he paid little attention to the Murderer's Window. The words "Le Meurtre de Bleston" announce the fictitious novel before Revel purchases it. They appear on a newsvendor's billboard and a second time, moments later, as the title of a Penguin detective novel in a

bookstore window. The Frenchman buys it towards the end of October, when he is feeling increasingly isolated and alienated from himself:

> Je me suis senti tout contaminé de brume gourde, abandonné loin de moi-même, loin de celui que j'avais été avant de débarquer ici, et qui s'effaçait dans une immense distance.[1]

It is the first book which he has bought since his arrival in Bleston and represents his first attempt to shake off Bleston's effet of "enlisement".

Revel is initially attracted to the novel by the ambiguity of the words "Le Meurtre de Bleston" which, by reflecting his nascent desire to destroy that city, seem to offer him a vicarious revenge. Not only does the title present the fictitious novel's principal theme, murder, it foreshadows all the murders narrated in L'Emploi du temps: the fratricide of Cain by Abel depicted in the Murderer's Window, the murder of Aegeus by Theseus portrayed in the Harrey Tapestries, the suspected attempted murder of George Burton, the murder in effigy of Bleston symbolized by Revel's burning of the map of that city, and the "murder" of traditional literature by Butor himself. In J. C. Hamilton, and "Le Meurtre de Bleston", Revel seeks:

> non seulement un amuseur, mais, sur la foi de son titre, un complice contre la ville, un sorcier habitué à ce genre de périls, qui pût me munir de charmes assez puissants pour me permettre de traverser victorieusement cette année. . . (p. 57).

Revel, the modern mythological hero[2], sees in the as yet

unknown author of "Le Meurtre de Bleston" someone who will protect him from the "sorcellerie" of Bleston and guide him through his year's exile in that city. At a more pragmatic level, "Le Meurtre de Bleston" supplements the map purchased from Ann Bailey, thus providing Revel with a much clearer picture of Bleston's geographical configuration: "Ce qui avait fait pour moi l'importance du "Meurtre de Bleston", c'était la précision avec laquelle certains aspects de la ville s'y trouvaient décrits, la prise qu'il me permettait sur elle . . ." (p. 65).

The novel also serves as a catalyst for much of Revel's future explorations of Bleston's works of art through which he plumbs not only the depths of Bleston's past but those of modern western civilization:

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

However, it is only by following this trail, by making this journey through his own and man's past, that he can hope to escape from the labyrinth of his year in Bleston.

It is through the copy of "Le Meurtre de Bleston", lying on the table at the Oriental Bamboo, a restaurant to which the novel has led Revel, that he meets its author,

George Burton. As a result of this meeting, the novel within the novel's role is expanded: In addition to serving as a geographical and historical guide to Bleston, it becomes a guide to the art of writing and a vehicle for Butor's thoughts on the treatment of time in literature. It is no accident that Burton is almost an anagram of Butor.

The novelist, George Burton, takes over from the novel within the novel as guide during Revel's Sunday visits to his home in May when the theory of the detective novel is the topic of discussion on three consecutive Sundays. In the course of one of these discussions George Burton states that:

> dans le roman policier, le récit est fait à contre-courant, ou plus exactement qu'il superpose deux séries temporelles: les jours de l'enquête qui commencent au crime, et les jours du drame qui mènent à lui, ce qui est tout à fait naturel puisque, dans la réalité, ce travail de l'esprit tourné vers le passé s'accomplit dans le temps pendant que d'autres événements s'accumulent (p. 171).

Revel uses this temporal structure in the account of his first month in Bleston. The symbolic burning of the map of Bleston on April 30th constitutes the "crime" which stimulates Revel to conduct an "enquête" in the form of a retrospective diary. The chronological account, written in May, of the events of the previous October, represents "les jours du drame qui mènent à lui" (the "crime").

In the diary entry dated May 19th, the day following George Burton's acknowledgement that he is in fact J. C. Hamilton, Revel states "C'est maintenant que commence

la véritable recherche." (p. 37).[3] This statement refers not only to Revel's research into the previous seven months which he has spent in Bleston, but also to the exploration of novelistic form upon which he is about to embark. Although for the moment the Frenchman continues with the chronological account of his first month in Bleston, by the end of May he finds himself "perpétuellement sollicité par des événements plus récents qui proclament leur importance . . ." (p. 50). This prompts him, in the second chapter, to adopt Burton's "deux séries temporelles," adding an account of certain events which occurred in June to his record of the events of November. In particular, Revel's "betrayal" of George Burton to the Bailey sisters is described. However, the influence of "Le Meurtre de Bleston" and its author on Revel's diary extends beyond the dual temporality of the second chapter. The way in which Revèl builds up the suspense in the July entries prior to the announcement of Burton's accident is in true detective novel style. This new development, which is to affect the structure of the diary and Revel's perspective on events and people, occurs immediately following the account of Burton's discourse on the theory of the detective novel:

> il saluait l'apparition à l'intérieur du roman comme d'une nouvelle dimension, nous expliquant que ce ne sont plus seulement les personnages et leurs relations qui se transforment sous les yeux du lecteur, mais ce que l'on sait de ces relations et même de leur histoire . . . (p. 161).

This juxtaposition leaves the reader in little doubt about the connection between Burton's theorizing and Revel's writing. As Revel re-examines past events in the light of the hit and run accident in which Burton was almost killed, he remembers aspects of these events which he had omitted when he first recorded them and finds that:

> le récit n'est plus la simple projection plane d'une série d'événements mais la restitution de leur architecture, de leur espace, puisqu'ils se présentent différemment selon la position qu'occupe par rapport à eux le détective ou le narrateur . . . (p. 161).

Thus, in July he discusses the events not only of December but also of May, making several references to May 31st, the date on which he divulged George Burton's name to James Jenkins. From this point on the temporal structure of the diary becomes increasingly complex as Revel develops a temporal structure in which he interweaves not two but five "séries temporelles"[4] thereby surpassing his mentor.

In addition to acting as a guide to Bleston and to the art of writing, "Le Meurtre de Bleston" is closely linked to the other works of art in L'Emploi du temps. We have already noted that Burton's incorporation of the Murderer's Window into his novel has led Revel to revisit the Old Cathedral in order to examine this work in detail. Butor, by linking the two fictional works of art linguistically through the term "meurtre" and thematically through the crime of fratricide, has created a bridge between Burton's novel and

Judeo-Christian mythology. The crime of fratricide committed in the "Le Meurtre de Bleston" is rooted in the murder of Abel by Cain whose story, told in the stained glass window, prefigures all the other murders committed in Bleston, "cette ville hantée de meurtre" (p. 149). Moreover, the connection between the novel within the novel and the Murderer's Window is emphasized when the second, "purifying" murder of the fratricidal Bernard Winn by the avenging detective Barnaby Morton is committed in the Old Cathedral beneath the stained glass portrayal of the murder of Abel by Cain.

Burton's statement that "Le détective est le fils du meurtrier, Oedipe, non seulement parce qu'il résout une énigme, mais aussi parce qu'il tue celui à qui il doit son titre . . . " (p. 148) links the novel within the novel with the scene in the tapestries depicting Theseus offering shelter to an outcast, Oedipus. It also creates a link with the guilt-stricken Revel who, seeing in Burton a father and mentor, identifies with the patricidal Oedipus after Burton's "accident." Similarly, the labyrinth depicted in the eleventh panel of the Harrey Tapestries is evoked in Revel's description of his exploration of Bleston's works of art which was set in motion by his reading of "Le Meurtre de Bleston" and which he describes as "une piste tracée à mon intention,. . . une piste pour mieux me perdre." This is the only panel whose theme Revel recognizes on his first visit to the Museum.

In his praise of the Old Cathedral, Burton shows that he is a champion of the old order while his scathing comments on the New Cathedral testify to his opposition to change and innovation. There is, therefore, a dichotomy between Burton's apparent espousal of a new literary order when he discusses the theory of the novel with Revel and Lucien, and his obvious hostility towards change and innovation as expressed in his opinion of the New Cathedral. It is because of this dichotomy, because of Burton's failure to break out of the constraints of tradition, that Revel must continue his exploration of literary form alone:

> Je débouchais là sur un territoire dans lequel ce J. C. Hamilton, qui m'avait si bien dirigé jusqu'alors, ne pouvait plus me servir de guide, où il me faudrait m'aventurer seul (p. 122).

The Harrey Tapestries

The Harrey Tapestries, depicting the myth of Theseus, are located in the Bleston Museum which is built in the Greek Revival style. Its "chapiteaux ioniques, aujourd'hui recouverts par la suie..." (p. 257) form an ironic contrast to their original Greek counterparts, emphasizing how far removed Bleston is from its Greek cultural heritage and how it has deformed that heritage. The museum, built to house the tapestries which form its central exhibit, consists of nine rooms arranged in chronological order. The first contains various archeological objects:

> La première, archéologie (deux ou trois scarabées égyptiens, un vase grec, un

> fragment de tissu copte, une poignée de monnaies romaines, et surtout quelques monuments funéraires grossiers trouvés dans le sol de Bleston, datant du deuxième ou du troisième siècle . . .) (p. 70).

As Jennifer Waelti-Walters notes, "the origins of Western Europe are present for all to see in the objects from Ancient Egypt, Greece, Christian Egypt-Arab tradition and, Rome. . . ."[5] The second room houses seventeenth-century clothes and furniture. Then, "in the rooms between the important numbers of three and seven,"[6] we find the Harrey Tapestries. These are flanked on the other side by a modest collection of nineteenth-century art and an exhibit of twentieth-century paintings. The windows of rooms three to seven look out on the streets with their ugly buildings and on to the railway line which forms a tenuous link with the tapestries' (and Revel's) country of origin. On one of his visits to the museum Revel punctuates his perusal of the panels with comments on what he sees through the windows, creating a connection between the tapestries and the city.

Described in the entry of June 4th, Revel's discovery of the tapestries on November 3rd, like his discovery of "Le Meurtre de Bleston," is accidental and results from his summons to Bleston Police Headquarters to apply for his "carte d'identité." However, Revel will not find his identity in Bleston through a photograph affixed to a piece of yellow cardboard; instead he will seek it by identifying

with the hero of the tapestries on which he stumbles that afternoon.

The panel to which Revèl is drawn most strongly, and which is the only one he recognizes on November 3rd, portrays Theseus slaying the Minotaur and his subsequent escape from the labyrinth. This panel has been announced several times in the text prior to its appearance. Revel's attempt to go for a walk in the country has a labyrinthine quality as he finds that:

> C'était comme si je n'avançais pas; c'était comme si je n'étais pas arrivé à ce rond-point, comme si je n'avais pas fait demi-tour, comme si je me retrouvais non seulement au même endroit, mais encore au même moment qui allait durer indéfiniment, dont rien n'annonçait l'abolition . . . (p. 35).

This statement introduces not only the idea of being lost in space but also that of being lost in time, which is fundamental to the novel. Later on the same day Revel has "l'impression qu'une trappe venait de se fermer . . ." (p. 35). We recall this image when we read his description of the panel depicting Theseus imprisoned in the labyrinth. On another of his weekend outings, Revel visits Lanes Park where he sees "le jardin des sentiers, qui comporte un petit labyrinthe agrémenté de rochers en ciment, fleuri alors de chrysanthèmes aux toisons de béliers et de chèvres . . ." (p. 49). This is the first time that the word "labyrinthe" appears in the text, prefiguring the labyrinth of the tapestries. The "chrysanthèmes aux toisons de béliers"

suggest another of Theseus' adventures, his sailing on the Argos with Jason in search of the Golden Fleece. Thus, although the tapestries are not overtly announced in the text, as are the Murderer's Window and "Le Meurtre de Bleston," oblique references to its themes (even Revel's favourite restaurant is "The Sword") set the scene for their introduction.

Since the tapestries originated in France, they provide Revel with a link with his native country. As far as can be ascertained they are not based on an existing work of art.[7] The trees in the panel depicting the death of the four bandits are for him the "peupliers, trembles ou chênes" of the Ile de France. At the same time they are reflected in the trees in Bleston's parks. Through the story told in the tapestries, the Frenchman is also linked with ancient Greek culture and with the warm sunny climes for which he longs.

Certain themes related to Revel and to the other works of art appear in the tapestries. The theme of the eleventh tapestry, the story of the slaying of the Minotaur and Theseus's elopement with Ariadne, finds its counterpart in Revel's life. He sees himself as Theseus following his own Ariadne's thread (the map sold to him by Ann Bailey) through the Blestonian labyrinth, to find and slay the monster that lurks there. Similarly, he sees the love triangle which he has created in his mind between himself, Ann, and Rose in terms of the story of Theseus, Ariadne and Phaedra.

The Frenchman identifies with Theseus and uses him as a model. Like Theseus, he is an exile on a foreign island. Like Theseus, he is thrown into a labyrinth full of menace from which he imagines being rescued by his own modern Ariadne whose map of Bleston is the "fil d'Ariane" which shows him the way through the maze. Furthermore, Ann gives him a calendar, which, symbolically, he keeps in his guide book to Bleston in the section on the tapestries. This calendar, through his diary, is to become Revel's Ariadne's thread as he moves back and forth across it in order to unravel the web of his year's exile in Bleston. At each stage of his relationship with Bleston and with the Bailey sisters, he sees in the tapestries a mirror of his own experiences. Lucien, his friend and fellow exile, becomes Pirithous; Rose Bailey is his Phaedra for whom he deserts Ann his Ariadne. There is, however, an ironic reversal in Lucien's role as Pirithous, for it is Lucien/Pirithous who escapes from Bleston/Hades and Revel/Theseus who is left behind.

By drawing parallels between the events of his year in Bleston and the scenes depicted in the tapestries, the Frenchman weaves the Theseus myth into the fabric of his diary. Following George Burton's accident, Revel identifies himself with Theseus, who was rendered "traître et aveugle" by "cette Rose, cette Phèdre pour laquelle il avait abandonné Ariane, cette femme dont il ne réussissait pas à se protéger . . ." (p. 174). For it is in order to impress

Rose/Phèdre for whom he has abandoned Ann/Ariane that he divulges Burton's name. The Frenchman also identifies with Oedipus, seeing himself as possessing the characteristics of this hero also. On May 25th, Burton had said, "Le détective est le fils du meurtrier, Oedipe, non seulement parce qu'il résout une énigme, mais aussi parce qu'il tue celui à qui il doit son titre . . ." (p. 148). Since Revel compares his research into the past year with the work of the fictional detective Barnaby Morton, and since he sees Burton as his mentor, it is easy for him to identify with the detective, the "fils du meurtrier" who kills "celui à qui il doit son titre." Revel's identification with Oedipus is further emphasized by his several references to himself as "aveugle" and by his desire to blind himself on learning of Ann's engagement to James, "J'aurais voulu brûler mes yeux qui n'avaient servi qu'à me leurrer . . ." (p. 252).

Like Theseus, Revel must travel the path through "separation-initiation-return"[8] - his physical separation from France and his cultural alienation in Bleston; initiation through his dream of the New Cathedral; and his return to France at the end of his year in Bleston. Like Theseus, Revel "ventures forth from the world of common experience into a new realm where he is tested and wins a victory for himself and his community."[9] He becomes the modern mythic hero. However, he can only emulate Theseus to a certain point, after which he must find his own way.

Just as the threads of the tapestries are interwoven to form the pictorial story of Theseus, the tapestries are themselves "interwoven" with the other works of art. Revel's visit to the Murderer's window on the day following his first visit to the tapestries creates a link between these works of art. This is emphasized by the resemblance between Cain and Theseus:

> Caïn tuant son frère Abel, Caïn dans une cuirasse lui moulant le ventre avec des rubans flottant sur ses cuisses comme Thésée, presque dans la même attitude que Thésée aux prises avec le Minotaure, penché comme lui, le pied gauche posé sur la poitrine de sa victime allongée, mais relevant la tête, nue, déjà blessée, si différent pourtant, brandissant un tronc aux racines échevelées sur le ciel rouge (p. 2).

Cain, the founder of the first city and therefore the father of Bleston, is, through his murderous act, the brother of Theseus. The red sky which forms the backdrop to the scene in the Murderer's window recalls the scene in the Tapestries where Theseus flees a burning Athens. Greek and Judeo-Christian mythology meet in these two works, both of which have been created by French craftsmen. Similarly, the Tapestries, Plaisance Gardens, "Le Meurtre de Bleston" and the New Cathedral are linked through the motif of the tortoise:

> Je suis allé revoir la tortue-luth énorme par rapport à la tortue vivante que j'avais vue le dimanche précédent à Plaisance Gardens, comme celle-ci était énorme par rapport à celle que j'avais dessinée sur l'exemplaire du "Meurtre de Bleston" que j'avais prêté le lundi à James et qui, de nouveau se trouve entre

> ses mains, taché de boue, mais petite
> elle aussi par rapport à cette tortue que
> j'avais décidé d'aller revoir le
> lendemain, monstrueuse et carnassière,
> dans la troisième tapisserie de
> Musée (p. 152).

The tapestries constitute a "mise en abyme"[10] of the temporal structure adopted by Revel following his realisation that the detective novel form is too restricting. This temporal system reflects "cet examen zigzagant" of the tapestries during which Revel gradually makes sense of them. The juxtaposition, in the tapestries, of events which are connected but separated in time, is reflected in the increasingly complex structure of the Frenchman's diary, in which the events of one month are recorded alongside other previous events which are related but separated in time. As the diary progresses, one month is added to each new chapter until in the fifth and final chapter a complex arrangement has been developed.

Certain images, found in the tapestries are repeated throughout the text. The thread guiding Theseus out of the labyrinth is "un fil épais comme une artère gorgée de sang . . ." (p. 71). This metaphor of the thread as a life-giving force is repeated in Revel's reference to the act of writing as a "fil d'Ariane parce que je suis dans un labyrinthe, parce que j'écris pour m'y retrouver . . ." (p. 187). The diary is his life line, guiding him through the labyrinth of his time in Bleston. The imagery of the labyrinth is

repeated on various occasions in the months following the Frenchman's first visit to the Museum. He sees his time in Bleston as a journey through a labyrinth. This is expressed through the complexity of the temporal structure of the diary and in his comment that through his diary he is searching for himself in "le labyrinthe de mes jours à Bleston" (p. 187). The labyrinth is also expressed spatially. When he learns of Ann's engagement to James Jenkins, Revel wanders alone in the Blestonian labyrinth:

> Je me suis enfoncé dans les rues, me hâtant sans destination, comme tourmenté par une rage de gencives, tournant et retournant, emprisonné dans ce grand piège dont la trappe venait de claquer, parmi les meules des maisons qui crissaient les unes contre les autres . . . (p. 260).

The impression that he is lost in a labyrinth is intensified when he passes Lanes Park whose ornamental labyrinth he had visited in October.

Certain colours which appear in the tapestries recur in the text. The blue of Ariadne's dress and the blue of the Athenian skies are reflected in the blue skies of the films of Ancient Greece and Rome which offer Revel an escape from Bleston's smoke and fog (pp. 224-225). This colour is significantly absent from Bleston's actual skies which are constantly obscured by a pall of cloud and smog. The silver threads woven into Ariadne's dress reappear in the wallpaper of his new room.

The flames of Athens are echoed in the numerous small outbreaks of fire that plague Bleston. The Amusement Arcade boasts a game whose background is a burning city, an ironic reminder of how Bleston has debased its Greek heritage. On his first visit to Horace Buck's room, Revel is offered rum, a symbol of fire.[11] The Murderer's Window reflects the red of the Athenian fires when the sun shines on it. Horace Buck's voice is "comme brûlée" (p. 96). "Le Meurtre de Bleston" inflicts a "brûlure" on James Jenkins. Revel is haunted by the fires of Bleston and by his own desire to contribute to them. We recall how he burned the ticket to Plaisance Gardens and how he was tempted to burn the photographic negative of the Burtons prior to his symbolic burning of the map. We should note that, in alchemy, fire is the instrument of purification and renewal.[12] Thus, the act of burning the map of Bleston reflects not only Revel's desire to destroy Bleston, but also his desire for its renewal, a renewal which can only be achieved through weeding out the city's evil and by integrating all of its historical heritage.

The tapestries are important at both the personal and the collective levels. At the personal level they serve as a guide and model for Revel, and, at the collective level, they form a link between Bleston and its mythological roots. However, in both capacities, they are just one piece of the mosaic and can only be fully understood when they are

integrated into the whole framework of western man's culture. Just as Horace Buck and George Burton are found lacking as guides, so too are Theseus and Oedipus. An understanding of his Greek heritage can only take Revel part of the way on his journey towards self knowledge.

The Murderer's Window

The Murderer's Window is situated in Bleston's Old Cathedral which is built on the site of a Roman temple of war. Thus a connection is established, through geographic location, between the Murderer's Window and Roman Britain. By the nature of its composition it is the "lieu de rencontre de l'extérieur et de l'intérieur", at one and the same time part of the Cathedral's interior reflecting Bleston's spiritual and mythological heritage, and of the exterior, reaching out towards the worldly city.[13] This reaching out is symbolized in the artist's use of the Bleston of his time as a model for Cain's city and by the view of the modern city through the plain glass window. The attempt at integration, however, is ignored by most Blestonians, who are much more interested in the attractions of Plaisance Gardens, the entrance of which ironically bears a close resemblance to "l'anticathédrale . . . qui règne sur la ville de Caïn dans le Vitrail . . ." (pp. 141-142).

Although Revel does not visit the Murderer's Window until Sunday November 4th, a visit described in the entries

of June 6th and 7th, it is announced in the text prior to these dates. The most obvious reference occurs in the May 30th entry in which the purchase of "Le Meurtre de Bleston" is described. The first sentence of that novel, "L'Ancienne Cathédrale de Bleston est célèbre par son grand Vitrail, dit le Vitrail du Meurtrier . . ." (p. 57), introduces the Window to Revel. By calling the stained glass window "le Vitrail du Meurtrier" rather than "le Vitrail de Caïn," Butor emphasizes the theme of murder and the link between Burton's novel and the Murderer's Window.[14]

The first bus, Number 17, that Revel catches, and which he will catch every morning for the duration of his stay at the seedy hotel appropriately called the "Ecrou", bears the sign "Old Cathedral." The frequency with which this bus appears in the text prior to the June 6th and 7th entries testifies to the importance of the Old Cathedral. It is one of the signs marking the way for Revel through his labyrinth. One sunny October Sunday, he is overcome with a desire to go for a stroll in the countryside, and sets out from Bleston only to find nothing but a series of suburban housing schemes stretching endlessly before him (pp. 33-34). Significantly, it is Number 17 which takes him back to the city centre, towards, but not to, the Old Cathedral.

The reference to the Murderer's Window in "Le Meurtre de Bleston" and the sign on the Number 17 bus

announce the Old Cathedral and its Window very clearly. A study of the first chapter reveals many other more subtle reflections of the window.[15]

In the opening paragraphs of the novel, Revel is seated, "près de la vitre noire couverte à l'extérieur de gouttes de pluie . . ." (p. 9), an image which we recall when we read the following: "le vitrail, ayant perdu toute transparence, semblait une mosaïque de lames de charbon polies" (p. 80). The rain-spattered window also foreshadows the constant rain which plagues Bleston - rain which is later described as black and maleficent, echoing the "pluie de soufre" (p. 78) in the Sodom and Gomorrha window. Similarly, Revel's description of the Bleston air as "ces vapeurs sournoises" (p. 10) whose deposits are "les points noirs des escarbilles qui tombent encore de mes cheveux" (p. 15), prefigures the scene in the Murderer's Window in which the smoke from Cain's offering "envahit tout le ciel au-dessus de lui et retombe pour l'envelopper" (p. 73).

Just as the atmosphere of Hamilton Station reflects the Murderer's Window, so also does its architecture; the "immense voûte de métal et de verre" (p. 10) anticipates the vaulted transept of the Old Cathedral, while "la grande horloge au cadran lumineux" (p. 10) announces the luminosity of the central circular window on Revel's first visit to that neglected place of worship.

Historically, the Murderer's Window, like the

tapestries, is rooted in several key periods of western civilization. The Cathedral's location on the site of an ancient Roman temple of war links it, as previously mentioned, to the Roman occupation of Britain and thus to Imperial Rome. The story depicted in the Murderer's Window, the account of the first fratricide, goes back to Genesis, to the beginnings of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Janet Paterson notes the interesting connection between the first sentence of L'Emploi du temps, "les lueurs se sont multipliées," and Genesis I where God says "Que la lumière soit."[16] The connection between the window and Christian Rome is further underlined in the quotations from the Vulgate which accompany the pictorial history of Cain. The comparison of Cain with Theseus establishes a link with Ancient Greek mythology. Likewise, through the illustration of the inscription, "et aedificavit civitatem"(p. 74) which is based on Sixteenth Century Bleston, another key period in Western history is represented. The unfinished and damaged windows testify to this strife-torn period when the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism was coming to a climax. The glimpses of modern and ancient Bleston through the clear panes of the destroyed windows, the sound of the rain on them, the dissonant sound of "la profonde crécelle d'un camion" (p. 75) - all bring the various periods evoked by the window into contact with modern Bleston.

The central theme of the Murderer's Window, the story of

Cain and Abel, the crime of fratricide, is reflected in the murder of Johnny Winn by his brother in "Le Meurtre de Bleston", and in all the murders which haunt the city. As with the tapestries, the themes of the various scenes are reflected either in the other works of art or in Revel's experiences. The scene depicting the smoke from Cain's offering falling back on him is repeated throughout the novel as Revel is enveloped in Bleston's smoke and fog. Another theme, fire, is expressed in the "poutres flambantes" (p. 78) of the destruction of Sodom, and in the crimson glow which suffuses the Murderer's Window. The theme of exile, already expressed in the tapestries, reappears in the window in the scene illustrating the inscription, "profugus in terra."

Janet Paterson sees in the Murderer's Window "un centre de concentration et d'explosion dans lequel convergent et d'où se multiplient toute une constellation de cellules génératrices."[17] A study of the text shows this to be true. At both the thematic and semantic levels, the Murderer's Window is closely interconnected with the rest of the text. We have already noted the similarity between the title of the stained glass window and the title of the novel within the novel, both of which immediately evoke the other murders in the text. Revel describes the Murderer's Window as "l'un de ces deux grands hiéroglyphes qui inscrivent le meurtre au front de Bleston, au front de cette ville hantée de

meurtre . . ." (p. 149). It is in front of the Murderer's Window that the detective, Barnaby Morton, kills the fratricidal Bernard Winn in the fictional novel. James Jenkins, whom Revel at one point suspects of the attempted murder of Burton, is seen outside the Cathedral, looking at the Murderer's Window "son regard étonnamment rempli de haine" (p. 149). Revel himself is branded on his June 1st visit:

> Le sang s'est mis à couler jusqu'en bas, comme une lente averse dans tout le ciel rouge de la cité, . . . même sur mes mains, surtout sur mes mains couvertes, teintes, imprégnées de cette épaisse couleur lumineuse, comme des mains de meurtrier, comme si j'étais condamné au meurtre, mes mains au centre de la flaque, mes mains au centre de la tache projetée par la scène d'en haut dans le silence. (p. 197)

The circular shape of the window depicting the murder of Cain by Abel is repeated in the spherical mirrors in the homes of the Burtons and the Baileys. These mirrors, symbols of "mise en abyme," of the self-reflective nature of the novel, give Revel a different perspective on the reflected scene, just as his diary, which he describes as "ce miroir piège pour te prendre, Bleston . . ." (p. 275), changes his perspective on past events. Revel sees in the Burtons' mirror, "l'image d'Ann, de dos, toute petite, comme si elle était déjà très loin de moi, comme si nous étions déjà séparés par la mer . . ." (p. 273). Later, he sees "les deux images des fiancés entre les deux visages des époux qui nous recevaient, les images d'Ann et de James et la mienne aussi,

tout près du bord, minuscule dans l'embrasure d'une minuscule porte courbée . . ." (p. 287).

These two distorted scenes, from one of which Revel is entirely excluded, and in the other of which his reflection is distorted in such a way that he is minute in comparison to the other people, reflect the Frenchman's position as an outsider. The first scene is evocative of the scene in the tapestries in which Ariadne is separated from Theseus by the sea. Only in the mirror the situation is reversed; it is Ann/Ariadne who rejects Theseus/Revel, ironically blocking him out of the scene with a copy of "Le Meurtre de Bleston." Both mirrored scenes put into perspective Revel's relationship with Ann, James and the Burtons.

The mirrors and Bleston's windows, which often take on a reflective quality, are themselves metaphors for Revel's diary which he describes as "ce miroir piège" (p. 275). Just as the story of Cain and his descendants has been engraved on the transparent surface of the Murderer's Window, so Revel will engrave the story of his year in Bleston on the mirror of his page:

> pour me révéler peu à peu, au travers de toutes ces craquelures que sont mes phrases, mon propre visage perdu dans une gangue de suie boueuse, mon propre visage dont mes malheurs et mon acharnement lavent peu à peu le noyau de quartz hyalin, mon propre visage et le tien derrière lui, Bleston . . . (p. 276).

The temporal circularity of the diary reflects the circular

central window and, like the Cathedral windows, it remains incomplete.

The circular window is reflected at a more profane level in the ferris wheel at the fair, in "le grand huit" of Plaisance Gardens, and in the circular route followed by the fair as it moves from site to site around the city's perimeter. It is from the ferris wheel, "à la hauteur d'un quatrième étage" (p. 135), that Revel spots George and Harriet Burton, which leads to the betrayal of their identity to James and perhaps to the murder attempt on George Burton's life. Thus the shadow of fratricide cast by the Murderer's Window is extended to the fairground. The fair, site of a series of small fires, reflects the "cités maudites" (p. 77) portrayed in the Murderer's Window. Always crowded, in contrast to the empty cathedrals and Museum, the fair testifies to Bleston's abandonment of its spiritual inheritance in favour of more worldly pursuits.

The Murderer's Window is also reflected in the text through colour and imagery. The oil lamp in the choir is made of red glass echoing "le ciel rouge" which forms the backdrop to the scene of Abel's murder. The light shining through Abel's blood projects a red stain on to the floor of the transept, evoking the scene in "Le Meurtre de Bleston" in which Johnny Winn's body is found. The triangles connecting the central window to the others are decorated by "des fleurs à six pétales qui sont peut-être des flammes" (p. 73). Red,

the colour of blood and fire, symbol of life and of death, of destruction and of purification, dominates the Window and echoes through the whole text. It is echoed in the fires, in the tapestries and in the films Revel watches. The portrayal of the burning of Sodom reminds the reader of the scene in the tapestry in which Theseus flees a burning Athens. These scenes are imitated and grossly distorted in the film "The Red Nights of Roma":

> C'était une sorte de 'Quo Vadis' superproduction en technicolor avec martyrs, fauves et bains des dames, avec de grandes flammes naturellement, dévorant les quartiers de carton, avec le reflet rouge de la destruction sur les nuages . . . (p. 227).

In the Amusement Arcade game in which Revel watches the pyromaniacal Horace Buck, "s'acharnant à tirer sur les images d'avions évoluant dans le ciel de verre peint au dessus de l'image d'une ville en flammes . . ." (p. 181), "le ciel de verre peint" reflects the "ciel rougeoyant" of the Murderer's Window and emphasizes Bleston's degradation. The link between the fires which haunt Bleston, the films and the other art works is apparent to Revel who, when he reads in the Evening News of yet another fire which occurred, "au moment même où nous contemplions sur l'écran du Théâtre de Nouvelles, sous le ciel pur et bleu du désert oriental, ces sombres flammes de pierre brillante, ces braises d'une ville romaine . . ." (p. 124), is prompted to think:

> aux flammes qui dévorent Athènes dans la dernière tapisserie du Musée, au ciel

> rouge derrière la ville de Cain dans le Vitrail de l'Ancienne Cathédrale, comme j'y avais songé, il y a quinze jours, lorsque j'avais appris la catastrophe du grand huit dans Plaisance Gardens (p. 124).

Revel cannot escape contamination by the "fléau de Bleston," as he finds himself more and more obsessed by fire. He burns a ticket to Plaisance Gardens and is tempted to burn the photographic negative of George and Harriet Burton. Towards the end of his stay in Bleston, the sight of the pages of his diary piled on his table plunges the Frenchman into such despair that he is "envahi d'une furieuse envie de les brûler complètement . . ." (p. 258). However, just as the fires of Athens and Rome have not erased our collective memory of our mythological heritage, neither will the burning of his diary erase Revel's year in Bleston: In fact it will simply plunge him back into the labyrinth, condemning him to begin his task over and over again and even more painfully.

However, the negative qualities of Bleston's fires are balanced by the fact that fire also has a purifying and regenerative function.[18] Out of the symbolic act of burning the map of Bleston comes Revel's decision to reclaim his life from the city's "sorcellerie" (p. 31) by writing a diary. Born of fire, the diary is marked by fire on the first evening of writing when the first page "s'est mise à brûler dans mes yeux . . ." (p. 185). The fire which dazzles him on this occasion emanates not from one of Bleston's malevolent

fires but from the sun, symbol of life and light. The act of writing, a metaphorical burning of the city, comes under the sign of destruction but, since it is also under the sign of the sun, it is an instrument of regeneration.

In the Murderer's Window, the red of Abel's blood is balanced by the yellow of "cette foudre, ce rayon jaune" (p. 74) which brands Cain as an outcast and at the same time renders him invulnerable. We should note that Revel's "carte d'identité" which he obtained on the day preceding his first visit to the Murderer's Window is also yellow. Like the mark of Cain, it brands him as an outsider. Revel is again identified with Cain following his night of initiation when he feels "au milieu de mon front comme la pointe d'un cautère s'enfonçant . . ." (p. 257), marking him with the sign of invulnerability. Again, in the scene in the Cathedral, on a day so bright that he remarks, "jamais je n'avais vu la nef si claire . . ." (p. 199), a trick of the light spreads the stain of Abel's blood to Revel's hands, thus branding him as a murderer.

The Frenchman is marked as a murderer on the afternoon of June 1st, the day following his betrayal of George Burton's identity to James Jenkins and the day on which he compounds that betrayal by making the same diosclosure to the Bailey sisters, thus setting in motion the "meurtre manqué" of Burton, his brother/father. In this visit to the Murderer's Window, which Revel made in order to refresh his

memory of the November 4th visit, we find an example of the temporal complexity of the text, as the memory of a still earlier visit, in October, is evoked. Through this memory, Revel realizes why he disclosed Burton's identity to the Bailey sisters.

The sunshine which illuminates the Murderer's Window on the two occasions which we have described is a rare occurrence in Bleston. The fog, smoke and rain into which the city's winter plunges Revel are reflected in the window. In one panel we see the smoke from Cain's sacrifice falling back down on him; in another we see the "pluie de soufre" (p. 78) falling on Sodom. In November Revel watches the street urchins burning their "guys" - effigies of Guy Fawkes - whose smoke descends and impregnates his clothes, reminding the reader of the scene of Cain's sacrifice in which the smoke from the altar "retombe pour l'envelopper" (p. 73). Revel is thus again marked as Cain's descendant.

The smoke from Cain's sacrifice merges with the "pluie de soufre" to form the dirty fog and rain which envelop Bleston during much of Revel's stay. From the first day of writing, the diary abounds in references to them: "ces vapeurs sournoises" (p. 10), "la nuit et la pluie noires" (p. 33), "une pluie bien plus froide, bien plus noire, bien plus sale" (p. 150), "cette écume de plomb qui tombe en fines gouttelettes sur ma vitre" (p. 176), emphasizing the interrelationship between the Murderer's Window and the text.

Even Bleston's snow is tainted: "la sale neige de Bleston" (p. 223), "les sales flocons tombaient" (p. 167), evoking the scene in which Lot's wife looks back at "la porte de l'enceinte de briques . . . les flocons jaunes et noirs s'abattant sur les poutres flambantes" (p. 78). This scene is reflected in "les sommets des poteaux calcinés du Scenic Railway" (p. 116), which links that fairground with the condemned cities in the Biblical narratives. Revel's reference to the source of the Slee as "cette mer morte" (p. 255) also creates a link with the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrha, which lie under the Dead Sea.

The Tower of Babel is reflected in Revel's difficulty in understanding the peculiar accent of the Blestonians and in communicating with them: "je ne comprenais ce qu'on me disait qu'au travers d'un brouillard . . ." (p. 184). Like the citizens of ancient Babylon, he is condemned to being surrounded by words that he cannot decipher. The other fragment of Babylon which remains in the Murderer's Window is "ce visage portant pour cheveux des plumes de corbeaux, celui du roi Nabuchodonosor changé en bête . . ." (p. 78). We identify Revel with this image when he describes himself as "un oiseau migrateur" and when he talks about how, once he has left Bleston, he will regain his human form: "quand je partirai en fin septembre, quand je m'arracherai enfin à Bleston, à cette Circé et à ses sombres sortilèges, quand enfin j'aurai possibilité, délivré, de retrouver ma forme

humaine . . ." (p. 115). Bleston is the modern Circé transforming her inhabitants into animals, as Circé transformed Ulysses's companions.

An important theme, expressed in both the Murderer's Window and the tapestries, is that of the wanderer and outcast. This theme is reflected in the fair which travels around Bleston's perimeter, and spends a month in each of eight locations before repeating the same trajectory. This self-contained community, is a descendant of Cain's wandering tribe. Another self-contained community, the prison where Bleston's outcasts are kept apart from the rest of her citizens, is shaped "comme une sorte de négatif de la marque éblouissante imprimée au front de Cain" (p. 262). The outcast and wanderer, Cain, is paralleled by Horace Buck who is marked as an outsider by his colour and his accent as he wanders the streets of Bleston. Branded as a foreigner by his yellow identity card whose colour corresponds, as previously mentioned, to the "foudre jaune" that imprints the mark on Cain's forehead, Revel too is an exile in a foreign land. Cain "édifiant un mur de briques" (p. 75) is echoed by Revel whose diary is "ce rempart de lignes sur des feuilles blanches" (p. 199). Cain's city walls become Revel's diary constructed to protect him from Bleston's "sorcellerie".

In Butor's work, the unstated is often as significant as the stated. This is evident in the Murderer's Window whose blank windows - replacing those destroyed by the sixteenth-century mob - create an imbalance which reflects the

imbalance of Bleston and all its modern counterparts. In reply to Revel's question, "Pourquoi cet immense vitrail consacré à un réprouvé?" (p. 75), the priest points out that "il n'était pas fait pour être vu seul" (p. 76). Thus the perspective presented by the Murderer's Window is distorted because it is removed from its context: It tells only a part of the story and can only make sense when seen in the context of the whole. This is a "mise en abyme" of Revel's diary in which isolated incidents only achieve true significance when seen in the larger context which surrounds them.

The key to understanding the Murderer's Window is provided through the writing of a sixteenth-century chronicler whose account of the feast day celebrating the installation of the windows included a detailed description of their subject matter. Thus Revel and the priest are enabled to reconstruct the Window's story. Similarly, through his own act of writing, Revel hopes to reconstruct his own, and Bleston's, story. Opposite the Murderer's Window and balancing it, Adam and Eve, the ancestors of humanity, should have been depicted with the infant Abel. In their place is the empty window through which can be seen "ces trois petites cheminées tordues" (p. 76), symbols of the smoke and fire which are Bleston's heritage. Also destroyed by the sixteenth-century rabble were the windows portraying Imperial and Christian Rome. Thus the Blestonians have cut themselves off not only from their Judaic heritage but also from their

Roman roots. Revel's view of the window (and therefore his interpretation of it) are distorted by another missing link: the Last Judgement which would have put Cain and his city to God's left and Abel to His right, correcting the imbalance which puts Bleston under the sign of Cain. Until that imbalance is corrected, until Bleston integrates its cultural heritage, it will continue to be a victim of its own "sorcellerie."[19]

The "vitres blanches" (p. 76) of the Abel window reflect the blank windows which line Bleston's streets and the blank square on the cover of the "Le Meurtre de Bleston". If Bleston is to regain its balance, its windows must take on the colours of the Murderer's Window in an acknowledgement of the city's past and as a commitment to the future. This is expressed in Revel's dream of the New Cathedral whose windows had also impressed him with their blankness.[20] In the dream, the windows" n'étaient plus blanches mais peintes de scènes changeantes avec des personnages beaucoup plus grands que nature devant des villes . . ." (p. 277). The static scenes of the Murderer's Window have been replaced by "des scènes changeantes" reflecting and recording the complexity of man's existence, just as the New Novel will replace the linearity of the traditional novel.

However, balance will only be restored to Bleston and to Revel when the descendants of Yubal can again make themselves heard. In reply to Revel's question, "Bleston, ville de

tisserands et de forgerons, qu'as-tu fait de tes musiciens?" p. 75), the only answer he receives is, "la profonde crécelle d'un camion" (p. 75). Revel is either surrounded by silence or by such dissonant sounds as, "le raclement d'une voiture de police s'arrêtant brusquement, puis sa sirène comme elle repartait . . ." (p. 197).

Revel identifies himself as a descendant of Cain, comparing his writing to the work of Yabal, Yubal and Tubalcain, "cette description exploratrice que je compose, forge et tisse, fils de Caïn" (p. 204). Revel is also the son of Yubal as the text's many musical metaphors testify. The novel as a whole, as Butor has stated, is "une sorte d'immense canon temporel"[21] within which are contained many musical references. Revel's desire for Bleston is that, "tes propres paroles atteignent enfin au chant brûlant" (p. 269). The exploration of his year in Bleston is described in musical terms, "chaque jour, éveillant de nouveaux jours harmoniques, transforme l'apparence du passé . . ." (p. 294). The relationship between the pieces of glass making up the Murderer's Window is described as follows: "ces moreaux de verre taillés et joints dans la France du seizième siècle dont les harmoniques historiques principales s'intercalent entre celles des tapisseries du Musée . . ." (p. 295). Revel is equally the descendant of Tubalcain when he describes his journal as, "cette longue chaîne réticulée de phrases, dont la forge m'avait épuisé . . ." (p. 256). The metaphor of the forge is repeated in the description of the New Cathedral as,

"un nouveau chaînon de cette piste intrigante, évasive, que je suivais depuis quelque temps . . ." (p. 113). Revel is a descendant too of Yabal as he weaves the "toile" of his diary.

It is clear to the reader that, as long as the imbalance reflected in the Murderer's Window remains unredressed and Bleston - the representative of the modern western city - refuses to acknowledge and integrate its Judeo-Christian and Roman roots, man's cities will be corrupt. Only when modern man has fully accepted his past and integrated the skills of all three descendants of Cain into his creative process, will he create a society free of the ills which presently plague it. Similarly, Revel will only be freed from Bleston's "sorcellerie" when he has understood and integrated his cultural heritage, only then will he be able to grow and expand into new forms of expression.

The New Cathedral

The New Cathedral is announced several times before Revel visits it. On his first attempt to visit the Old Cathedral, it is towards the New Cathedral that the bus takes him. James drives past it the first time he takes Revel to lunch at his home. His reading of the "Le Meurtre de Bleston" also introduces Revel to the New Cathedral but in such a way that he does not even consider it worth visiting for, in the novel, the New Cathedral is no more than, "un reflet amoindri de l'Ancienne" (p. 121). It is ironic that a

novelist who chooses Christ's initials for his own should disdain the New Cathedral, symbol of the New Testament, for the Old Cathedral on whose windows only the Old Testament stories are portrayed. It is on the advice of the priest in the Old Cathedral that Revel finally visits the New Cathedral and then it is more out of curiosity than interest and because it houses the bells taken from the Old Cathedral. Thus his discovery of this important work is, like his discovery of the tapestries, accidental. It is the next step in his exploration of the labyrinth, an important one in his exploration of Bleston and essential to his development of a new literary form.

Dean McWilliams suggests that Butor has based his imaginary cathedral on the Sagrada Familia church in Barcelona, designed by Antonio Gaudi, which McWilliams describes as the "most audacious and successful attempt to integrate natural forms into ecclesiastical architecture.[22] He further notes that while Butor was writing L'Emploi du temps he visited and admired this structure whose architect "resolved the tension between the modern age's scientific interests and its outmoded architectural decoration,"[23] and adds that "Gaudi attempted to integrate his church into the contemporary world by borrowing his decorative schemes from the natural sciences."[24] Butor's fictional architect, E. C. Douglas, observes similar principles in designing the nineteenth-century Cathedral. The architect has created "a kind of evolutionary museum"[25] in which are portrayed

the various stages of plant, animal and human evolution. Thus, in the New Cathedral the various elements from which the modern world has evolved are brought together to create an innovative new architecture. Contrary to Burton, who, in spite of his theoretical discussions, is entrenched in the traditional approach to art, Revel sees in the New Cathedral the beginnings of an exciting new art form:

> Car moi si neuf dans Bleston, j'avais bien décelé qu'il y avait tout autre chose qu'un démarquage dans cette bizarre construction, j'avais été bien obligé de sentir qu'un esprit d'une étonnante audace y dénaturait violemment les thèmes, les ornements, et les détails traditionnels, aboutissant ainsi à une oeuvre certes imparfaite, presque infirme, riche pourtant d'un profond rêve irréfutable, d'un sourd pouvoir germinateur, d'un pathétique appel vers des réussites plus libres et meilleures; oui 'a distorted shadow', une ombre déformée, comme dit J.-C. Hamilton, mais ce qu'il n'avait pas su voir, c'était combien précieuse était cette déformation! (p. 121)

The audacity of the New Cathedral, its orientation towards an integration of past, present and future, provides Revel with a model for his journal. "Imparfaite" and "presque infirme," it represents the novel which is taking shape through Butor's writing. George Burton has proved a valuable guide to Bleston and to the art of writing, but his refusal to recognize the value of the New Cathedral means that he must be abandoned and that Revel must continue his exploration alone: "Mais je débouchais là sur un territoire dans lequel ce J. C. Hamilton, qui m'avait si bien dirigé jusqu'alors, ne

pouvait plus me servir de guide, où il me faudrait m'aventurer seul" (p. 122).

Like the Old Cathedral, the New Cathedral is reflected in and interrelated with the rest of the text. We have already noted how the two are brought together, in "Le Meurtre de Bleston", through Bleston's buses and through their Roman foundations, the Old Cathedral being built on the site of a Roman temple of war and the New Cathedral on a Roman burial ground whose sarcophages are housed in the Museum. Dogmatically opposed, "les deux pôles d'un immense aimant" (p. 180), they are nonetheless connected. The transfer of the bells from the Old Cathedral to the New Cathedral maintains that link while suggesting that the restoration of Bleston's music should come from it. For the present, however, the only music it offers to the city is the four bars in which the same mistake is repeated over and over again.

The light in the New Cathedral falls on the spot, "à la croisée du transfert" (p. 82), where the body of the murdered Johnny Winn lay in the novel within the novel. Likewise, in the Old Cathedral it falls on the spot where the body of the murderer, Bernard Winn - slain by the avenging detective, Barnaby Morton - lay. In contrast to the Murderer's Window, which at times suffuses the interior of the Old Cathedral with red light, the windows of the New Cathedral are transparent, filling the transept with a

"lumière verticale verdâtre quasi sous-marine, pâle et très froide. . . ." (p. 113). The red-tinted light in the Old Cathedral, symbol of blood and fire, carries with it not only the threat of death and destruction but also the hope of purification and regeneration. The vertical green-tinged light of the New Cathedral offers the hope of new life and new growth. The Murderer's Window presents one perspective on man's past, while the transparent windows of the New Cathedral are waiting for the "scènes changeantes" (p. 277) of Revel's dream to portray man's future.[26]

Leafing through "Le Meurtre de Bleston" on December 2nd, following a visit to Plaisance Gardens, Revel is stimulated by the two words "Nouvelle Cathédrale," to draw a small tortoise in the margin. This drawing evokes not only the live tortoises in the Plaisance Gardens zoo but also the huge "tortue luth" of the New Cathedral, thus linking these two with "Le Meurtre de Bleston." On his December 8th visit to the New Cathedral, Revel makes a further connection when he compares the "tortue luth" to "cette tortue . . . . monstrueuse et carnassière, dans la troisième tapisserie du Musée" (p. 152). These tortoises come to life in the dream of August 31st-September 1st in which he lies sleepless beneath "le souffle de ce mufle taché de sang fumeux, de cette tortue monstrueuse aux écailles de briques et de fonte, aux cornes de taureau poussiéreuses, planant immobile, quelques centimètres au-dessus de moi . . ." (p. 255). The

tortoise, whose bloodstained jaws evoke Sciryon's tortoise, whose "écailles de briques et de fonte" evoke in turn Bleston's walls and foundries, is transformed into the winged tortoise, symbol of new beginnings, announcing Revel's night of initiation from which he will emerge with a new insight into his work.[27]

The New Cathedral is linked to the Jenkins and to George Burton by the image of the fly which is represented in one of the sculptures "que James lui-même m'avait désigné sur le chapiteau des insectes . . ." (p. 152) and in the frieze decorating the alcove which houses the statue of the Virgin. Already prefigured in the text on the evening of Revel's attempted escape into the countryside when he compares the halo of fog around the street lights to "un essaim de mouches blanches aux ailes irisées" (p. 35), the fly, symbol of incessant pursuit[28] and, by virtue of its connection with the New Cathedral, symbol of the New Novel, is also part of Bleston: "ces mouches qui t'appartiennent, Bleston, qui te sont attachées, qui font partie de toi" (p. 293).

The juxtaposition of Revel's purchase of "Le Meurtre de Bleston," which is to start him on his exploration of Bleston's historical sites, with his first sight of the fly encased in Mrs. Jenkins' engagement ring, creates a connection between the Jenkins and George Burton who stand at opposite poles in their relationship with, and attitude to, the New Cathedral. Burton can denigrate the New Cathedral in

his novel but he cannot escape the new artistic form which it exemplifies. This is made apparent on two occasions when the bedridden Burton - perhaps the victim of a murder attempt by James Jenkins - is tormented by a fly buzzing around his head. He can have the fly chased away but, like the new art form that it represents, it will continue to haunt him.

In his despair following the news of Ann and James's engagement, Revel wanders through the streets of Bleston, "comme poursuivi par un vol de taons blancs et sales aux ailes trempées dans l'eau de la Slee" (p. 255), a manifestation of Bleston's malevolence. Sleepless on that night of September 1st, he is haunted by a vision of the tortoise of mythological times, garbed in the bricks and cast iron of Bleston and supported in the air by the wings of the New Cathedral's huge fly while the waters of "cette mer morte que draine la Slee" (p. 255) cover him in a paralysing coat of bitumen.[29] Images from the Tapestries, the Murderer's Window and the New Cathedral, man's Ancient Greek, Roman Catholic and Protestant heritages all unite with Revel's memories of his past year in Bleston forcing him to:

> écouter tournoyer les jours et les rues et se répercuter le rire de maison en maison, d'âge en âge, lointainement vers d'autres villes et d'autres ères jusqu'à ces forêts cryptogames du carbonifère, profondément enfouies maintenant dans leur métamorphose en houille sous les régions avoisinantes, jusqu'à ces forêts de lépidodendrons et cycadées, jusqu'à ces palmes et ces fougères arborescentes oscillant au-dessus de leur humus fourré de charognes et de minerais qu'écrasaient les pas des reptiles, toute la nuit (p. 256).

Only after this rite of initiation, this symbolic journey not only into his personal past but also back to the very beginnings of life, can Revel break out of "cette couche de bitume qui m'enfermait comme une cuirasse de chevalier ou d'insecte . . ." (p. 256). J. C. Davies sees this dream as an "initiation ritual - a pattern of symbolic death and rebirth."[30] It is following this dream that Revel writes the words, "Nous sommes quittes" (p. 257) "indicating. . . . the transformation of his experiences in the city through the creative power of art."[31] Finally, after this night of initiation, Revel sees Bleston clearly and feels capable of turning its base metal into gold:

> Je vous vois maintenant, rues de Bleston, vos murs, vos inscriptions et vos visages; je vois briller pour moi, au fond de vos regards apparemment vides, la précieuse matière première avec laquelle je puis faire l'or; mais quelle plongée pour l'atteindre, et quel effort pour la fixer, la rassembler, toute cette poussière! (p. 271)

In a second dream, on the night following this insight, Revel is in the New Cathedral Square in front of the new department store. As he stands there the New Cathedral comes to life, engulfing the new department store and all else before it until, "sous une énorme mouche d'or et d'émail," which is seen by J. C. Davies as a symbol of "creative inspiration,"[32] the Cathedral is transformed into a completely new structure which Revel is unable to describe. He can only catch a glimpse of the new edifice,

"la poignée et la fente, au travers de la brume qui s'épaississait" (p. 278). This vision of an incomplete structure where only the doorway is visible symbolizes the New Novel which is to emerge from Revel's exploration.

"Le Meurtre de Bleston", the Harrey Tapestries and the Murderer's Window have formed part of the mosaic of Revel's diary, each taking him a step further along the "piste tracée à mon intention" (p. 81) of his exploration, but it is the New Cathedral which takes him out of the past and towards an understanding of Bleston's mysteries.

The Films

Reflecting the Blestonians' preoccupation with the worldly, and in contrast to the deserted Museum and Cathedrals, Bleston's places of entertainment - Plaisance Gardens, the fair, the amusement arcade and the cinemas - are always crowded. Of these, the cinema stands out as the home of an art form which has replaced the tapestries and the stained glass window as a visual narrative appealing to a much wider audience than traditional art forms. Situated close to the Town Hall Square and therefore near the centre of the city, the News Theatre offers an escape from Bleston's rain and fog.

The topics of the travelogues which are the main feature of the News Theatre's programmes range from man's ancient past, with films on Crete, Petra, Athens and Ancient Rome, to the New World represented by New Zealand, San Francisco and

the Canadian Great Lakes. For James Jenkins the travelogues offer an escape from Bleston and a window on a world he has never visited and probably nerver will. To Revel, they mean much more. Just the advertisement for the film on Crete, birthplace of Ariadne and Phaedra, evokes for him the scene in the eleventh tapestry portraying Theseus in the Labyrinth. Through his nostalgic longing for the clear, sunny skies of Crete comes his hatred of Bleston's winter: "ces semaines ici vouées au calfeutrement, vouées à l'asséchante haleine rouge des radiateurs à gaz . . . (p. 102). The "plages perpétuellement rendues brillantes par les baisers salés des lèvres bleues des eaux . . . (p. 101) form a marked contrast with the pavements on which the children play in summer on "la boue durcie des trottoirs dont les flaques se sont séchées" (p. 102).

As Revel watches a film on the Roman ruins he sees, through the Italian skies, the skies of Crete and "derrière les pierres et les peintures, celles du palais de Minos . . . (p. 224). This conveys the way in which the different ancient cultures overlap in man's consciousness to form a composite picture of a collective past that he cannot deny. During the film The Red Nights of Roma the blue sky is again emphasized, symbolizing not only the intermingling of different historical periods in our culture but also the non-linear quality of time: "sa permanence, sa continuité avec celui qui s'étendait, pur, bénéfique, immense, sur la jeunesse de ces palais et de ces temples" (p. 228).

In the description on August 26th and 27th of the films on Athens and Rome, seen respectively on August 26th and 19th, the blue sky once again serves to link the two periods. In Revel's mind the Roman sky superimposes itself on the Athenian one, stimulating images of the Roman Empire and of Rome. Similarly, the film on Athens retrospectively affects Revel's view of the one on Rome:

> L'amphithéâtre Flavien, les Thermes de Caracalla, le Panthéon et les ruines du Palatin me sont apparus au travers de leur écho dans Athènes (la Nouvelle Agora, le Temple de Jupiter, et la grande Bibliothèque) comme le foyer d'une gigantesque résonance, telle une flamme qui se multiplie dans une enceinte de miroirs en quantité d'images d'elle même, dont la chaleur est renvoyée de telle sorte que l'incandescence augmente. (p. 241)

Into this hall of mirrors crowd other images of even more ancient civilizations, Petra (the "rose red city") and Timgad, cities which had come under the rule of Rome, and Baalbeck which had been at different times of its history in the hands of the Greeks and the Romans and which reminds us of the azure sea and sky of Proust's Balbec.[33] These ancient cities, like Rome and Athens, are linked to Bleston through fire. At some time in their history, they have been the victims of violent destruction by fire.

Not only do the films on Athens and Rome evoke memories of the tapestries and the missing stained glass window, they go further into Bleston's past, linking that city with Rome through the images of: "ces sarcophages d'enfants morts de fièvre et de froid loin de leur grande ville

natale. . . (p. 244) found near the New Cathedral, and through the images of the model of the "Bleston, Bellista, Belli Civitas" (p. 244) of the Second Century A.D. This reconstruction of Bleston's history, this vision of its cultural background, brings Revel to see the city in a new light:

> et du même coup, cette ville, je l'ai vue elle-même dans une nouvelle lumière, comme si le mur que je longe depuis mon arrivée ici, par instants un peu moins opaque, soudainement s'amincissait, comme si une profondeur oubliée se déployait, de telle sorte que j'ai retrouvé le courage qui m'abandonnait, me sentant de nouveau capable, grâce à ces nouvelles lueurs, de m'en défier, de cette ville, de mieux lui résister jusqu'à cette fin de septembre où je la quitterai. . . . (p. 245)

Thus, through the filmic restructuring of ancient history, the works of art take on meaning as Revel discovers new patterns in the kaleidoscope of his experiences in Bleston. Out of these new patterns arises a clearer understanding of his own and Bleston's cultural heritage from which he can draw the strength to continue his struggle against that city.

The works of art form an integral part of the novel both in terms of Revel's immediate past and, more importantly, in terms of western man's cultural heritage. Their influence is apparent at the structural level, as Revel first models his diary on the "Le Meurtre de Bleston" then, as memories of different events jostle each other, creates a verbal tapestry in which scenes, separated in time, are superimposed on each

other reflecting the design of the Harrey Tapestries. In our next chapter we will see how Butor again uses a work of art - this time an existing work, the Sistine Ceiling - as a model for the temporal structure of La Modification.

On the personal level it is through an examination of the works of art and an understanding of their interrelationships that Revèl regains control of his own consciousness and frees himself from Bleston's "sorcellerie". Until the Frenchman sees the individual works as interconnected parts of a vast tapestry, they fail to provide him with the answers he seeks. "Le Meurtre de Bleston" is abandoned as a model for the temporal structure of the diary and Revel's path soon diverges from those of Theseus and Cain. It is only when he sees beyond individual guides and models that he begins to understand his, and western man's, past. While each work of art is complete in itself, it is only when it is seen in relationship with the others that its role in the novel can be fully understood. Just as Revel finds that he cannot examine individual memories of his year in Bleston without taking into account earlier or later events, creating an "immense canon temporel", so each of the works of art is interwoven with the others to produce a textual tapestry of European history.

In his search for meaning through the act of writing, Revèl has discovered that his Greek, Roman, and Judeo-Christian heritages must be considered, not as isolated units

of history but as complementary parts of his cultural heritage. Like Bleston, the symbol of modern Western Europe, he will remain fragmented until he recognizes not only his own immediate past but the past of western man and integrates it into his present and future. This is a lesson which he is only beginning to learn as his year in Bleston draws to a close - a lesson which has only become clear to him through the act of writing.

Notes to Chapter I

[1] Michel Butor, L'Emploi du Temps, (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1956), pp. 55-56. Subsequent references to this work will be noted in the text.

[2] Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 30. Revel, like the hero of the "monomyth" goes through the rites of: "separation-initiation-return".

[3] Revel's role as a searcher is emphasized in his name which can be said to derive from rêve, réveil, révéler. We note also that George Burton, who reveals the theory of the novel to Revel and is his friend and mentor, is given the initials J. C. (Jesus Christ) and the surname Hamilton. (Hamil - I am Javeh, -ton - town/yours, H(ami)lton - ami).

[4] Georges Charbonnier, Entretiens avec Michel Butor, (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), pp. 106-109. In this interview Butor describes L'Emploi du Temps as: "une sorte d'immense canon temporel" in which five temporal series are superimposed on each other like the parts of a canon.

[5] Jennifer Waelti-Walters, Michel Butor: A Study of his View of the World and a Panorama of his Work, (Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis Press, 1977), p. 65.

[6] Waelti-Walters, p. 65.

[7] However, Beauvais was the centre of a booming weaving industry in the 18th Century and its cathedral is famous for fine examples of gothic art including tapestries. Like Bleston, Beauvais is now a highly industrialized centre with an emphasis on the textile, chemical and metal working industries. Historically the tapestries originate in two key periods of the evolution of Western civilization: Ancient Greek mythology, in which we find the foundation of our civilization, and the beginning of the 18th Century.

[8] Campbell, p. 30.

[9] Dean McWilliams, The Narratives of Michel Butor: The Writer as Janus, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1968), p. 6.

[10] Lucien Dällenbach, Le Récit spéculaire, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977), p. 52. Lucien Dällenbach defines the "mise en abyme" as follows: "est mise en abyme tout miroir interne réfléchissant l'ensemble du récit par réduplication simple, répétée ou spécieuse."

[11] Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, ed., Dictionnaire des Symboles, (Paris: Seghers and Jupiter, 1 (1973), p. 37. "L'alcool réalise la synthèse de l'eau et du feu."

[12] D. Meakin, E. Dand, "Alchemy and Optimism in Butor's 'L'Emploi du Temps'," Forum for Modern Language Studies, 15 (1979), p. 271. In this article Meakin and Dand state that: "What at first appeared to be destructive turns out - thanks to the power of art - to be creative; the apparent desire for death in Bleston ("qui au fond désires ta mort autant que moi") is really a desire for purification and resurrection."

[13] Janet M. Paterson, "Le Vitrail de Caïn: L'Engendrement textuel dans L'Emploi du Temps de Michel Butor," Romanic Review, LXX (1979), p. 381. Paterson states that the glass of the Murderer's Window "représente le lieu de rencontre de l'extérieur et de l'intérieur."

[14] Paterson, p. 381. The relationship between the Murderer's Window, the "Le Meurtre de Bleston," and the other murders: "Titre: Le Vitrail du Meurtrier, au lieu du Vitrail de Caïn, réunit d'emblée le Vitrail au "Meurtre de Bleston" et à tous les autres meurtres."

[15] Paterson, pp. 378-380.

[16] Paterson, pp. 376-377.

[17] Paterson, p. 376.

[18] Dictionnaire des Symboles, p. 37.

[19] McWilliams, p. 25. McWilliams points out that the destruction of the Abel windows "produced an effect opposite to that intended by Bleston's Reformers. Radically separating the human and the divine, far from purifying and elevating Bleston, left it with no models but those of the profane cities."

[20] Els Jongeneel, "Un Meurtrier en cause - La Fonction du "Vitrail de Cain" dans L'Emploi du Temps de Michel Butor", Neophilologus, 64, No. 3 (July 1980), p. 364. Jongeneel notes the significance of the cathedral windows seen in Revel's dream.

[21] Charbonnier, p. 106. See note 3.

[22] McWilliams, p. 27.

[23] McWilliams, p. 27.

[24] McWilliams, p. 27.

[25] McWilliams, p. 27.

[26] Jongeneel, see note 19.

[27] Dictionnaire des Symboles, 4, p. 312. The tortoise in an engraving of "une femme tenant dans une main une paire d'ailes déployées et dans l'autre une tortue" is interpreted as "le symbole de la matière de l'Art. Après sa préparation, elle devient, en effet, aux yeux des alchimistes, première matière de l'oeuvre. On rejoint ainsi l'interprétation chinoise: la tortue apparaît comme le point de départ de l'évolution. Au lieu de marquer une involution, une régression, elle est au contraire l'un des termes, le commencement d'une spiritualisation de la matière; les ailes déployées évoquant l'autre terme, l'aboutissement de cette évolution."

[28] Dictionnaire des Symboles, 3, p. 245.

[29] The term "mer morte" evokes the scene depicting the destruction of Sodom, the site of which is believed to lie under the Dead Sea.

[30] J. C. Davies, "Butor and the Power of Art: the Quest of Jacques Revel", Australian Journal of French Studies, XVI parts 1 and 2, (1979), p. 114.

[31] Davies, p. 114.

[32] Davies, p. 115.

[33] Marcel Proust, A la recherche du temps perdu, (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), I, p. 383.

CHAPTER II

LA MODIFICATION

The opening pages of La Modification reflect the first few paragraphs of L'Emploi du temps. Our first meeting with Jacques Revel occurs as he enters Bleston by train, seated in "ce coin de compartiment . . . face à la marche,"[1] to begin his year in Bleston. A year in which, through an exploration of the Greek and Judeo-Christian mythology expressed in Bleston's works of art, he will embark on a process of self-discovery and transformation. This process will be charted in his diary. The reader meets Léon Delmont in similar circumstances - as he enters a third-class railway compartment in another grey, northern city, Paris, and seats himself in "le coin couloir face à la marche."[2] Thus begins Léon's "modification" as his journey from Paris to Rome develops into an exploration of certain of those cities' works of art which have a special significance for him.

As his physical and psychological journey progresses, these works take on a new meaning. Embracing art, architecture and sculpture as well as myth, literature and music, they, unlike the works of L'Emploi du temps, are all verifiable. Historically they are centered on the Classical, Renaissance and Baroque periods which have profoundly influenced the development of western civilization. They range from classical mythology as expressed in the Aeneid, to Michelangelo's masterly union of classical and Christian

themes in The Last Judgement and the Sistine Ceiling. Spatially they are organized between Rome, whose modern side is significant by its absence, and Paris, whose modernity is a little more evident, but still subordinate to Leon's nostalgia for ancient times.

In this chapter we propose to study the works of art, their relationship to each other, to Léon, and to modern man. Since the works are divided between Rome and Paris, we will categorize them as follows: Rome in Paris, Classical Rome in Rome, and Renaissance and Baroque Rome. Our fourth section will study the role of the works of art in the dream sequences which constitute the "lieu de rencontre" of the myths, literature and works of art.

Rome in Paris

Léon Delmont can be described as a man at the mid- point of his life who is torn between two women: his Parisian wife, Henriette, and his Roman mistress, Cécile; two cities: Paris and Rome; two cultural heritages: classical antiquity represented by Ancient Rome, and Christianity represented by the Roman Catholic Church. His name, which when spelt backwards becomes Noël, is that of a long line of popes thus announcing his Christian background - a background which is emphasized in the name of his mistress, Cécile whose namesake was an early Christian martyr. His presence in a third class compartment of a train other than the one he

habitually takes for his frequent business trips to Rome at the command of his Italian employers, testifies to his decision to abandon his dreary pretence of a marriage in favour of a sparkling new life with his mistress whom he proposes to bring to Paris to live with him. This journey, made on November 15th and 16th 1955, is a final attempt to bring Rome to Paris, a Rome in which Léon has chosen to seek out only those aspects of art and the arts which remind him of the ancient Rome of his dreams. A city in which, in spite of the pervasive presence of that city within a city, the Vatican, and the Catholic tradition that it represents, Léon and Cécile are drawn to the artifacts which remind them of that other great root of Western Civilization - Classical Rome. Léon and Cécile's obsessive interest in the works of art of ancient Rome reminds us of Jacques Revel's fascination with the Theseus myth, as depicted in the Harrey Tapestries, and with the films of ancient Greece and Rome which feed his nostalgia for that culture.

In Paris, likewise, Léon is drawn to those works which depict, evoke or imitate Ancient Rome. Whether he is in the Louvre, in his apartment at "15 place du Panthéon" (p. 14), or in the streets of modern Paris, he only sees those things, whether they be posters, paintings or buildings, which remind him of ancient Rome. His wife and family are eclipsed by the

shadow of the Pantheon, his office is surrounded by Italian travel agencies whose posters proclaim the glories of ancient Rome and his visit to the Louvre is dominated by works depicting that city. However, in spite of Léon's préoccupation with ancient Rome, he cannot escape the reminders of Christian Rome which are often contained within the very works which for him symbolize pre-Christian Rome. On his return from the trip to Rome which preceded the present journey, instead of slipping back into his usual routine, he tries to maintain his hold on the magic of Rome by pretending to be a Roman tourist in Paris. This fantasy is enhanced by the unseasonably bright and warm November day - more typical of Rome than Paris - which allows him to stroll round the city humming an Italian operatic air, with his coat unbuttoned as it would be in Rome (pp. 63-64).

On his way to the Louvre, Léon pays little attention to "les trois mauvaises statues représentant les fils de Caïn" (p. 66) nor to the "aiguille grise de l'obélisque" (p. 66) symbols of those two other key periods in the development of western civilization - early biblical times and Ancient Egypt. He spares no more than a passing glance "aux sarcophages et aux copies en bronze des antiques du Vatican" (p. 66), nor does he pause at the "Victoire de Samothrace" (p. 66) - the former evocative of Christian Rome, the latter of the Golden Age of Greece.[3] He passes quickly through the Egyptian rooms to arrive at the eighteenth-century rooms

where, ignoring the array of works by such major artists as Goya and David, he stops in front of "deux grands tableaux d'un peintre du troisième ordre" (p. 66), Pannini. These paintings "galerie de vues de la Rome moderne" (p. 67) and "galerie de vues de la Rome antique" (p. 67) reflect the "constant défi jeté par l'ancien Empire à l'actuelle Église . . ." (p. 67). That Léon chooses to stop in front of the painting in which the architecture of Ancient Rome is depicted, testifies to his fascination with that period. We should note also that it is this side of Rome to which Cécile has introduced him. Indeed, much of their time together in Rome is spent seeking out and visiting ancient Roman monuments. However, even in this painting dedicated to Ancient Rome, the Church imposes itself - Léon describes "le portique du temple d'Antonin et Faustine avec la façade de l'église que l'on avait construite à l'intérieur et que l'on n'a pas encore démolie . . ." (p. 67). This image of the church constructed within the walls of a pagan temple draws our attention to the nature of the relationship between these two crucial periods in the history of man. The enclosure of the church within the walls of the pagan temple symbolizes man's relationship with his pagan and Christian heritage. Just as the temple contains the church, so man within him, in that part of his self which Jung calls the "collective unconscious," contains the memory of all of his cultural heritage.[4] Seen in this light it is not surprising

that the church within the temple has not been demolished. History cannot be reversed, ancient Rome cannot eliminate Christian Rome. Nor can modern man demolish the structure of his Christian background. This is a lesson which Léon will learn in the course of his journey between Paris and Rome.

Commenting on the composition of the two Pannini paintings, Léon remarks that:

> il n'y a aucune différence de matière sensible entre les objets représentés comme réels et ceux représentés comme peints, comme s'il avait voulu figurer sur ses toiles la réussite de ce project commun à tant d'artistes de son temps: donner un équivalent absolu de la réalité, le chapiteau peint devenant indiscernable du chapiteau réel, à part le cadre qui l'entoure, de même que les grands architectes illusionnistes du baroque romain peignent dans l'espace et donnent à imaginer, grâce à leurs merveilleux systèmes de signes, leurs agrégations de pilastres, et leurs voluptueuses courbes, des monuments rivalisant enfin dans l'effet et le prestige avec les énormes masses réelles des ruines antiques qu'ils avaient perpétuellement sous les yeux et qui les humiliaient, intégrant méthodiquement les détails de leur ornementation comme base même de leur langage (pp. 66-67).

In Pannini's attempt to represent reality, the viewer cannot distinguish between the "real" and the "painted"; reality and the representation of reality merge into one.

Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon remarks that, while La Modification does not present us with "un équivalent absolu de la réalité" (p. 67), the description of the Pannini

paintings and the reference to "les grands architectes illusionnistes du baroque romain" (p. 67) emphasize "l'importance qu'il faudra accorder aux moyens mis en oeuvre dans le roman pour susciter l'illusion de réalité."[5] The spectators in Pannini's "Galerie de vues de la Rome antique" (p. 67) are at the same time part of the composition and viewers of it. Contained within the physical confines of the picture frame while viewing the pictures within the picture, they reflect Léon and Cécile as the latter view the works of art of ancient Rome in Rome. Similarly through his use of the second person plural Butor has placed the spectator/reader within the work so that he is drawn into the text. The reader is at the same time a spectator of and an actor in the novel, for, from the moment when he reads the opening lines: "Vous avez mis le pied gauche sur la rainure de cuivre . . ." (p. 9), the reader is implicated in Léon Delmont's experience. It is he who enters the railway compartment for the journey from Paris to Rome. The "vous" makes him the speaker and at the same time the one being addressed in a dialogue which will continue until the train draws into the Stazione Termini in Rome. As with Pannini's paintings, the boundary between reader and text is not clearly defined, the reader is in the text.

Léon pays little attention to the "Galerie de vues de la Rome moderne" (p. 67) whose only appeal is that it reminds him of Cécile. Instead he chooses to spend the few remaining

minutes of his visit in two other rooms where ancient Rome is again portrayed. The first is the room housing works by Poussin and Lorraine "ces deux Français de Rome" (p. 71), the second contains Ancient Roman works. As with the Pannini canvases, Léon is attracted to works depicting scenes of Ancient Rome. In particular he is drawn to the painting of the forum "ce marché aux bestiaux qu'était devenue l'épine dorsale de la capitale du monde . . ." (p. 72). The other paintings by the two Frenchmen in Rome which our "touriste romain" recalls, also depict scenes from Ancient Greek and Roman history.

In the second room, which he makes a detour to visit in spite of realizing that "vous auriez pu descendre et sortir beaucoup plus vite que vous ne l'avez fait . . ." (p. 72-73), he is attracted by the portraits of women of Nero's reign and by that emperor's statue. Again, it is the artifacts of an ancient, pagan Rome, dating from a period notorious for the persecution of Christians and for its promiscuity that Leon seeks out. For Léon, Nero and his women represent a freedom and sensuality which he has lost with Henriette and which he hopes he has re-discovered with Cécile. Although the Louvre offers him a wide inventory of works from all ages and cultures, our Roman lover has eyes only for those works which evoke his chosen city.

Léon's pursuit of Rome in Paris continues following his visit to the Louvre. The "arc de triomphe du

Carrousel" - (p. 73), that great nineteenth-century monument to the power of the French Empire, is barely visible through the rain, and the obelisk, representing that other cornerstone of western civilization - Egypt - is totally obscured. Thus, the supremacy of Ancient Rome is again underlined.

Even Léon's lunch of "spaghetti à la bolognese" (p. 73), the espresso coffee he drinks and the Italian cigarette which he lights - but which is symbolically put out by the Parisian rain - continue the theme of Rome in Paris. However, the spaghetti and coffee are but poor imitations of true Roman fare as is the Roman bar he repairs to. This bar, peopled by ladies of dubious repute, who reflect much more realistically the women of Nero's time than do their portraits in the Louvre, has a "cadre antique, aussi loin que possible des bars actuels de la capitale latine" (p. 76), and is at best a caricature of the Roman cafés in which Léon and Cécile delight. The second-rate pictures depicting Messaline dans un vénérium and L'Entrée triomphale de Néron à Rome (p. 77) do not reflect the glories of Ancient Rome but:

> cette liberté morale fastueuse et brumeuse à la fois, de cette espèce de dévergondage grandiose dont rêvait, comme de sa réalisation ouverte et magnifique, le libertinage étrique des Parisiens du temps de la "Belle Epoque" (p. 77).

They are but a poor caricature of the moral freedom enjoyed by the ancients, a freedom which Léon seeks in his Roman liaison with Cécile. Ironically, Léon's affair with Cécile,

furtively carried on in Rome out of sight of his employers, is more akin to the "libertinage "étrique" of the early twentieth-century than to the free and open sensuality of Ancient Rome.

Loath to end his Roman day in Paris, Léon takes a less direct route home to "15 Place du Panthéon" (p. 78) in order not to stop and gaze, but simply to "frôler ces murs de briques et de pierres qui subsistent de ces thermes que connaissait Julien l'Apostat" (p. 78). Delmont sees these baths as yet another symbol of the supremacy of Ancient Rome and its invincibility to Christian attack. What he fails to acknowledge is that, on the site of these baths the abbots of Cluny built their residence and that today there is "a museum to medieval Christian France" on the spot.[6] Léon identifies with Julian whose letters he often reads during his journeys to Rome; furthermore, as his single-minded pursuit of the art of ancient Rome testifies, he dreams of following Julian's example by abandoning Christianity and embracing paganism. He may be unaware of the irony of Julian's baths forming the foundation of a Christian monastery but the reader is not. Like Julian, Léon cannot turn back the clock and deny his Christian heritage in favour of the religion of ancient Rome.

Try as he may to see only Ancient Rome in Paris, the influence of Christianity pervades much of what he seeks out. Among those viewing the paintings in Pannini's "vues de la Rome antique" (p. 67) are clergymen. The Pantheon, that

imitation of an ancient Roman temple on which Léon gazes while at home in the evening was built to serve as a Catholic church. Not only was the Pantheon in Paris built to house a Catholic Church, its Roman counterpart provided the brass for the baldachin designed for St. Peter's by Bernini.[7]

Not content to seek out Rome in the art and architecture of his native city, the lover of Rome has brought the city of his dreams into his livingroom in the form of literary and artistic works. On the evening of his Roman days in Paris, he seats himself in his armchair from which he can see "la frise illuminée du Panthéon" (p. 83) and gazes at "les deux eaux fortes de Pireanese une des prisons et une des constructions . . ." (p. 83). We recall that, two years previously, on his first morning in Rome with Cécile, they looked out on "la construction de Dioclétien." The music to which he listens is Monteverdi's Orfeo whose story anticipates Léon's journey.[8] Like Orpheus, Léon will venture into the underworld - physically by passing through a series of railway tunnels, psychologically by journeying into the depths of his own subconscious - and, like Orpheus, he will lose the one whom he has set out to rescue. The book that he chooses from the "petite biblothèque d'auteurs latins et italiens que vous vous êtes constituée depuis le début de votre liaison avec Cécile" (p. 83) is the first volume of the Bude translation of Virgil's Aeneid. It is understandable

that, at a time when he is seriously considering starting anew, Léon should choose to read about a hero "who left behind the wreckage of an earlier life to begin a new one in Italy."[9] The sixth book, describing Aneas's descent into the underworld in search of his father and his future, will echo through the series of dreams which haunt the Frenchman during the journey to Rome which forms the framework of the novel. Ironically, Virgil, whose epic poem the Aeneid is a song in praise of Rome's pagan religion, was embraced by Christianity. "Because his fourth ecloque was taken as an announcement of Christ's coming"[10] he was regarded as the "pagan prophet"[11] during the Renaissance.

Léon's attempt to inject some of Rome's magic into Paris by bringing Cecile to his native city a year after he first met her, is also ill-fated. Their spirits dampened by the Parisian rain, they had spent what little time they had together seeking out Rome in Paris. The Frenchman was such a stranger to all but the Roman aspects of Paris that he was quite incapable of acting as Cécile's guide to the city. The landmarks which imposed themselves symbolize a heritage which cannot be ignored. The "Arc de triomphe du Carrousel" (p. 176) reminded them at the same time of the

power of Imperial Rome and the power of Napoleonic France; "l'obélisique de la Concorde" (p. 176) recalls the obelisks taken to Imperial Rome by the victorious Emperors; and the towers of Notre Dame reminded them of their Christian heritage. Thus, although the highlight of their afternoon in the Louvre was:

> les statues romaines, les paysages de Claude Lorraine, les deux toiles de Pannini que vous avez amoureusement detaillés (p. 185).

which bring Rome to Paris, those other works, looming in the background, testify to the impossibility of ignoring a cultural background which is inextricably woven into the fabric of the lovers' world. It is their refusal to integrate all aspects of that background into their lives which dooms Cécile's visit to Paris, as well as the future of their relationship, to failure.

Although Léon can find reflections of Pagan Rome in Paris through the many imitations and representations of the Imperial city's art and architecture, he cannot deny the influence of Christianity on these artifacts. Nor can Pagan Rome be brought to Paris in the person of Cécile. If the Rome of his dreams exists at all, it must be sought in the classical temples and statues of the Italian capital.

Classical Rome

As he travels towards Rome, on November 15th 1955, Léon clutches his railway timetable as if it were a talisman: "Il était comme le talisman, la clé, le gage de votre issue, d'une arrivée dans une Rome lumineuse, de cette cure de jouvence . . ." (p. 41). He leaves behind a dismal marriage and a dark and dreary Paris where he has led "cette existence larvaire, crepusculaire" (p. 41) to seek rejuvenation in a "Rome lumineuse." The Rome of his dreams is the Rome of Virgil and of the pagan Emperors. Untarnished by the taboos and hypocrisy of the Catholic Church, it is a city protected by Venus, goddess of love and beauty, mother of Aeneas. This is the Rome that beckons to the middle-aged Frenchman. It is a city in which he imagines that erotic love, beauty and sensuality flourished. A city in which he can recapture his lost youth and bathe in the splendour of a distant age.

Until his meeting with Cécile two years earlier, Léon had been a stranger in Rome. Only after meeting her does he begin to know and love that city: "C'est avec elle seulement que vous avez commencé à l'explorer avec quelque détail . . ." (p. 63). She is his doorway to Rome and, in particular, to pagan Rome. For, although they visit certain Christian churches and monuments (with the exception of the Vatican which Cecile refuses to enter), they are always drawn

back to:

> cette partie de la ville où l'on rencontre à chaque pas les ruines des anciens monuments de l'Empire, ou l'on ne voit pour ainsi dire plus qu'eux, la ville moderne et la ville baroque se reculant en quelque sorte pour les laisser dans leur solitude immense (p. 87).

Léon's first meeting with Cécile comes under the sign of Ancient Rome and her goddess. Seated opposite his future mistress in the train, the Frenchman catches sight of the planet Venus in the early morning sky and immediately afterwards recognizes "la gare de Tarquinia" (p. 112), birthplace of one of the early kings of Rome. The only landmarks which he recognizes on their arrival in Rome are Cestius' pyramid, "puis la porte Majeure et le temple de la Minerve Médecin . . ." (p. 113). Even the breakfast they share is eaten while they contemplate "derrière les grands panneaux de verre les ruines de la construction de Dioclétien illuminées par le jeune soleil superbe . . ." (p. 113). The ruins which dominate their first meeting reflect Cécile's hatred of Christianity - both Cestius and Diocletian persecuted the Christians - and the return to Pagan Rome which the lovers seek.

Léon and Cécile's love flourishes as they explore ancient Rome. The night they become lovers follows an evening spent on the Via Appia where they watch the sunset near the tomb of Cecilia Metella (p. 123). Although in the

early days of their love affair they spent some weekends visiting certain Baroque and Renaissance works of art, they devoted most of their time to exploring the ruins of the Ancient Roman Empire: an Empire dominated by pagan emperors who at best tolerated the Christians and at worst persecuted them. Wandering among the ruined palaces and temples, and in the Forum, the one time center of the Roman world, Léon and Cécile are no longer surrounded by ruins but rather are in the rebuilt Ancient Rome of their dreams: ". . . mais au milieu d'un énorme rêve qui vous était commun de plus en plus solide, précis et justifié à chaque passage" (p. 167).

The monuments which the lovers seek out during their peregrinations through ancient Rome are those erected by or for Emperors who were notorious for their persection of Christians. Nero's Golden House, Cestius's pyramid and the Coliseum, scene of the martyrdom of thousands of Christians, are all sites to which Léon and Cécile are drawn, and which reflect Cécile's hatred of Christianity. The lovers' closest moments are spent exploring these ancient monuments: following the tension created between them by Cécile's visit to Paris, the previous year, the reunited lovers spend an evening "serrés l'un contre l'autre" visiting their beloved ancient Rome (p. 263).

However, as the lovers gaze at the various monuments which they see as symbols of their love for each other, the

reader is aware of a more sinister message. The two-headed Janus overseeing the crossroads of the Roman World symbolizes the crossroads in Léon's life (p. 263). The youthful face of Janus will give way to that other, old man's face in spite of Léon's attempt to forestall this through his affair with Cecile. The temple to Vesta, goddess of the hearth, is a reminder of Henriette, the keeper of Delmont's hearth, and home to whom he will return. The Palatine Hill is home, not only to pagan temples and monuments, but to several Christian churches reminding us of the victory of the Church over paganism. Similarly, Caelius' Hill is dotted with churches and convents. The lovers are blind to the threat to their dream implicit in these sites and see only what they want to see. For them, Nero's golden house is a romantic symbol of the freedom and voluptuousness of ancient Rome, rather than a reminder of the debauchery and barbarous cruelty which were perpetrated within its walls. It is inevitable that this romantic vision of ancient Rome must crumble.

While Leon pursues Classical Rome with Cécile, he is aware that something is missing. In order to complete his exploration of Rome, he must also explore Christian Rome:

> Une fois vos pérégrinations, vos pèlerinages, vos quêtes vous avaient menés d'obélisque en obélisque, et vous saviez bien que pour continuer cette exploration systématique des thèmes romains il vous aurait fallu aussi aller, une fois

> d'église Saint-Paul en église Saint-Paul, de San Giovanni en San Giovanni, de Sainte-Agnes en Sainte-Agnes, de Lorenzo en Lorenzo, pour essayer d'approfondir ou de cerner, de capter et d'utiliser les images liées à ces noms, portes de bien étranges découvertes à n'en pas douter sur le monde chrétien . . ." (pp. 167-168).

However, Cécile, his "porte de Rome" will only guide him through ancient Rome since she refuses even to enter the Vatican, "cette poche de pus si stupidement, dorée" (p. 168), as he sees the site where Michelangelo's genius succeeded in bringing together pagan and Christian mythology. This denial of her Christian heritage dooms Cécile's love to failure, as Henriette's excessive piety has doomed hers. The two women, at opposite poles with regard to Rome, symbolize the tension within Léon as he is torn between the two cultures. Venus smiles on him as he and Cécile explore Ancient Rome but, when he voices his desire to visit Christian Rome he meets with his mistress' resistance. The Church of "Sainte-Marie-des-Anges" (p. 72), built within Diocletian's baths, houses "cette horrible statue de saint Bruno par je ne sais quel sculpteur français" (p. 172). She sees the only gothic church in Rome - Sainte-Marie-sur-la-Minerve (p. 173) as "une des plus laides du monde" (p. 173). Only in the art of ancient Rome does Cécile see beauty. Their visit to Michelangelo's Moses is marred by Léon's sense that something is missing:

> vous sentiez en allant d'un lieu à l'autre, d'une oeuvre à une autre, que

> quelque chose d'essentiel vous manquait, quelque chose qui était à votre disposition mais qu'il vous était interdit de voir à cause de Cécile, dont vous ne vouliez pas lui parler, mais dont vous saviez bien qu'elle y pensait aussi, hantés tous les deux par ces prophètes et ces sibylles, par ce Jugement absent . . (pp. 173-174).

At the beginning of their liaison the exploration of ancient Rome was all that Léon needed, but as their relationship progresses the denial of Christian Rome and the Vatican creates a gulf between the lovers, since Léon becomes increasingly aware of a missing link in his explorations and in his life. This gulf cannot be bridged until, like the artists of the Renaissance, they integrate the two cultures. In order to do this, they must visit not only the Renaissance works but, in particular, those of Michelangelo (scattered in various Roman churches and museums) and especially his two great works - the Last Judgement and the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Through Michelangelo's resolution of the dichotomy between pagan and Christian mythology, Léon will be enabled to move towards his own resolution.

Renaissance and Baroque Rome

As Léon seeks out Ancient Roman works, he cannot ignore the art and architecture of Renaissance and Baroque Rome which sometimes exist in harmony with the monuments of

Ancient Rome and sometimes have replaced them. Though classical themes predominate in these works, they are not mere imitations, since they reflect the artists' desire not merely to equal the works of antiquity but to surpass them. Ancient Roman art served not as models to be copied, but rather as a basis for the creation of new art forms.

In Annibale Caracci we find such an artist. His vault frescoes for the Farnese Palace reflect his artistic heritage - Ancient Roman and Renaissance - creating "something entirely new in the history of art."12 Although Léon does not describe the interior of the Farnese Palace, it is significant that Butor has chosen it as Cécile's workplace. Famous for its gallery, built to "display some of the great antique statues in the Farnese collection,"[13] it is a fitting place for such a lover of Roman antiquity to work. Even more apt for a woman who has already been placed under the sign of Venus is the fact that the theme of Caracci's vault frescoes in the Gallery is the universal power of love - a power in which Léon believed at the beginning of his journey to Rome.[14] Unlike Michelangelo's ceiling in the Sistine Chapel, which inspired Caracci's design technique and in which pagan culture is brought together with and subjugated to Christian theology, Caracci's ceiling is a series of "illustrations of profane love."[15] Nowhere do we find even a hint of Christian philosophy in this work which portrays such scenes of love from Roman antiquity as Venus entering "the bed of the mortal

Anchises,"[16] and whose central painting is the Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne. That Léon does not describe this ode to the triumph of sensual love which dominates Cécile's workplace places the love affair under a negative influence. For the reader who knows Rome, the absence of this work from the text anticipates the failure of a love which places itself solely in the hands of the Ancient Roman Gods. It is even more surprising that Caracci's Gallery vault is not mentioned when we realize the parallel between the architectural space of La Modification and that of Caracci's vault. Where the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is "a kind of picture -and sculpture - bearing facade on the surface of the ceiling at which the spectator looks . . . Annibale's is, by contrast, a unified architectural space containing pictures and sculptures, in which the spectator stands."[17] Is this not Butor's aim in La Modification? - to bring the reader into the text? Thus, by its very absence, the missing Farnese Gallery vault plays a major role in the novel, reminding us that, with Butor, the unsaid is often as important as the stated.

One of Cécile and Léon's favourite meeting places is the Piazza Navone, scene of their first prearranged rendez-vous. Constructed on the site of an ancient Roman circus, the square is flanked by Borromini's Baroque architectural masterpiece, St. Agnes in Piazza Navone. The reader familiar with Rome knows that, seen from the square, the facade of the church blots out the view of the dome of St. Peter's,

creating a physical emanation of the barrier Cécile has placed between Léon and the Cathedral. The centrepiece of the Piazza Navone, designed by Borromini's rival, Bernini, is the Fountain of the Four Rivers. Built around an Egyptian obelisk, the fountain is, for the lovers, "cette épine dorsale de votre Rome" (p. 99). Representing the four major rivers of the Renaissance world grouped around the obelisk, the fountain symbolizes the world with a center - Rome - which the Parisian seeks. Like Rome, the Fountain is luminous, "La Fontaine des Fleuves ruisselait de soleil" (p. 156), promising Léon a life of light and happiness with his Roman mistress.

Interestingly, the Fountain of the Four Rivers is the only work by Bernini which Léon and Cécile visit and admire. The taboo which Cécile has placed on the Vatican prevents them from seeing the finest examples of his art - the tabernacle of St. Peter's and the bronze Throne of St. Peter - which testify not to Rome's secular power, but to her religious might. The lovers may see in Bernini's fountain Rome's dependence on her ancient Egyptian and Roman heritage but they, and in particular Léon, cannot ignore the other, Christian culture glorified in many of Bernini's works.

Forbidden to him in Rome, these two works invade his railway compartment, together with biblical figures from Rome's Renaissance and Baroque works of art. To pass the time he names his companions after some of these works. A

little boy is named "André" after the church Saint Andrea della Valle which is situated near Cécile's apartment and houses copies of Michelangelo's most famous statues. The newlywed "Agnes" is named after Borromini's St Agnese in Piazza Navone, while her groom, "Pierre," is given the name of Rome's great church. In some of his travelling companions, Léon sees a resemblance to certain figures in the the Last Judgement and the Sistine ceiling. A bearded, elderly man in the compartment doorway reminds Léon of the prophet Ezekiel (p. 183). When we recall that Ezekiel despised hypocrisy, we can understand why his appearance is particularly fitting. The elderly couple who take the place vacated by the clergyman, representative of the Vatican, are described as,

> Un vieil homme avec un longue barbe blanche comme Zacharie . . . une vieille femme avec un nez un peu crochu comme la sibylle persique (p. 191),

reminding the reader of Michelangelo's Zacharias and sibyl on the Sistine Ceiling. Each time that Léon rouses himself from his dream, he is aware of Zacharias' eyes on him, judging and condemning him.

In his tours of Rome with Cécile, however, these figures from the Vatican are out of bounds and Léon has to be content to seek out Michelangelo's works in other churches. The work

which is most important to him outside of the Vatican and St. Peter's is the statue of Moses designed for the tomb of Julius II. Léon recalls having seen it with Henriette on their visit to Rome four years previously, in such poor light conditions that the most striking features were the horns which were illuminated in such a way that "ses cornes semblaient véritablement des cornes de lumière" (p. 172), giving an ethereally religious impression. On his second visit, in the company of Cécile, during his last weekend in Rome, he has to wait, listening to the sounds of Mass being celebrated, before he can enter the church. This time, in spite of the candle lit altar, the incense and the devout at prayer, Léon sees not the stern defender of the faith, but a Moses "dont le marbre semblait couvert d'huile ou de graisse jaune comme la statue d'un dieu romain d'autrefois" (p. 172). The statue no longer belongs to the Judeo-Christian tradition, but, with its Pan's horns, reflects Léon's fascination with, and nostalgia for, pagan Rome. However, visited at San-Pietro-in-Vincoli, on the following day in broad daylight and uninterrupted by religious ceremonies:

> la statue était la comme un fantôme dans un grenier et surtout, vous sentiez en allant d'un lieu à l'autre, d'une oeuvre à une autre, que quelque chose d'essentiel vous manquait, quelque chose qui était à votre disposition mais qu'il vous était interdit de voir à cause de Cécile, . . . hantés tous les deux par ces prophètes et ces sibylles, par ce Jugement absent, . . . (pp. 173-174).

The statue is like a long forgotten ghost in an attic which, once disturbed, haunts Léon, reminding him "que quelque chose d'essentiel vous manquait" (p. 173). The sense that something is missing results from Léon's refusal to integrate his Christian and Classical heritages. It is, therefore, not surprising that he is huanted by the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and the Last Judgement. Like the Pieta that they were unable to see in the Villa Sansavarino, the Moses cannot fill the void left by the unvisited Sistine Chapel.

In spite of Cécile's efforts to exclude the Vatican from Léon's life, it is never far from his consciousness in the course of his journey from Paris to Rome on November 15th/16th 1955. From the moment he enters the compartment, whose vaulted shape reflects the shape of the Sistine Chapel (as do the tunnels, both real and oneiric, through which he passes in his dream-filled night), and sits down opposite a priest, Léon is haunted by Michelangelo's two great works. We have already noted how a bearded man becomes Ezekiel and an elderly couple are compared to Zacharias and a sibyl; likewise Agnes and Pierre in their young, newlywed innocence can be compared to the Adam and Eve of the Sistine Chapel. The "tapis de fer chauffant," (p. 179) which undergoes several transformations during the journey, at one point gives the Frenchman the impression "que les losanges ondulent comme les écailles sur la peau d'un grand serpent" (p. 179).

This evokes the snake in the Sistine panel depicting the temptation and expulsion of Adam and Eve. Similarly, the boats depicted in one of the photographs in the compartment bring to mind Charon's boat in the Last Judgement. In his ruminations about his marriage, Henriette's desire to drag him down into bourgeois boredom is compared to "le morose plaisir des damnés à entraîner quelqu'un d'autre qu'eux dans leur marécage de poix et d'ennui . . ." (p. 82), reflecting the fall of the damned in the Last Judgement. Remembering his return journey to Paris the previous week, Léon recalls that he was seated "en face d'une photographie en couleurs représentant un des détails de la Sixtine, un des damnés cherchant à se cacher les yeux" (p. 102). We see in this figure a reflection of Léon's attitude to life. Prior to making the decision to leave his wife for his mistress, he has adopted an ostrich-like position vis-a-vis his wife, his family, his job and his Catholic heritage, condemning himself to a life of boredom and dissatisfaction. However, the decision to flee into the arms of a mistress who rejects Christianity is equally damning, as it requires that he cut himself off from his Christian roots. Thus, the reproduction of "un des damnés" not only reflects his past but foreshadows his future. This is ironically underlined by the Frenchman's choice of reading material. In order not to have to contemplate the reproduction which might force him into the introspection which he has been avoiding, he plunges into the

letters of his Roman hero, Julian, whose motto was "know thyself".

However, the influence of certain works of art extends beyond Léon's psychological journey, to be reflected in the architecture of the novel. While the structure of L'Emploi du temps is based on the form of the musical canon, that of La Modification is modelled on the structure of the Sistine Ceiling and Dante's Divine Comedy, whose influence is evident in the the Last Judgement.

The Divine Comedy is divided into nine chapters, Michelangelo's ceiling depicts nine scenes from Genesis, and Butor has chosen to divide La Modification into nine chapters. The choice of this number, whose square root is three, symbol of the Trinity, is yet another reminder of the Christian heritage from which Léon cannot escape. As Michelangelo makes use of the architecture of the ceiling to frame and separate the various scenes he depicts, so too Butor makes use of blank spaces and short passages in the present tense to create an architectural division in the text between Léon's various pasts and futures. This device, coupled with such key phrases as "de l'autre côté du corridor" (p. 62); "au delà de la fenêtre" (p. 43), indicates to the reader that Butor is shifting from one time frame to another without interrupting the flow of Léon's thoughts, just as Michelangelo used the structural divisions of the Sistine Ceiling to shift from one subject and timeframe to

another.[18] In his discussion of the Sistine Ceiling, Charles Seymour observes that:

> the ceiling . . . presents a completely new sense of scale . . . What we find . . . is a unity on a hitherto unprecedented grandeur of scale . . . We find . . . an overwhelming totality of extraordinarily diverse, yet closely interlocking images, motives and shapes . . . The first scene of the Genesis story that meets the observer's eye inside the original entrance is The Drunkenness of Noah, which is actually the last unit in the narrative sequence as shown; and the last vault composition to be seen, immediately before the altar, is The Separation of Light and Darkness, the first in the Genesis narrative sequence depicted . . . By this device, which in effect reverses the expected chronological order of events, the artist in a visual sense lifts those events out of time and into a whole new context of sensation and ideas.[19]

Similarly, the traditional, chronological approach to the past is reversed in La Modification. In the course of his journey to Rome, Léon's thoughts range from the immediate past (Paris, May 11th - 15th, 1955) to his honeymoon with Henriette in Rome in the spring of 1936, and from the immediate future (his weekend with Cécile) to a more distant future in which he imagines life in Paris with his Roman mistress. The juxtaposition and interweaving of these temporal elements reflect the impression of the "overwhelming totality of extraordinarily diverse, yet closely interlocking images, motives and shapes" that Seymour notes in the Sistine Ceiling.[20] The complex temporal structure of Butor's novel,

like Michelangelo's masterpiece, "lifts [the] events out of time and into a whole new context."[21]

In painting the Sistine Ceiling, Michelangelo modelled his figures on the works of Ancient Rome, and in both the Sistine Ceiling and the Last Judgement the influence of Classical art and sculpture is clear. However, he certainly did not slavishly copy the classical forms, but developed his own style from them. In spite of having to work within very clearly defined architectural and ideological limits, he succeeded in creating a masterpiece whose innovative brilliance provides "a standard of excellence never superseded."[22] The temporal structure of La Modification is equally complex. In each of the nine chapters three different times (present, past and future) are juxtaposed with increasing complexity. This is combined with the manipulation of space through the device of the train journey, which at the same time frames the action of the novel and gives it freedom. The novel's density is increased by the use of references to the works of art which, unlike those of Passage de Milan and L'Emploi du temps are real and not imaginary. Finally the inclusion of the reader in the text through the use of "vous" adds a further dimension as does Butor's use of imagery. All these elements combine to create a work whose richness and innovation reflect Michelangelo's two great works.

The Sistine Ceiling and the Last Judgement influence not only the architecture of the novel but also its impact on the

reader. As these works move in and out of Léon's consciousness, they are a constant reminder, to him and to the reader, of western man's need to integrate his cultural heritage into his present. Although Léon perceives himself as happiest walking among the relics of pagan Rome, this need is emphasized by the constant presence of the Sistine Chapel in which, according to Jennifer Waelti-Walters, "are united the pagan and Christian worlds in all their wisdom, sibyls and prophets together."[23] If we see the Sistine Chapel as "the place where the idealistic and the realistic can be synthesized into one magnificent whole, where the Christian present manifests its pagan origins and the legitimate development from one to the other is obvious,"[24] then we must realize that only when Léon can achieve this synthesis can he hope to move into the future.

The Dream Sequences

It is in and through his artistic endeavours that man's subconscious processes are expressed and the collective memory of his race is accessed. It follows, then, that Léon's train journey with its many tunnels, symbolic of a journey into the subconscious, should be peopled, first at a conscious level, in his reminiscences of Rome and Paris, then at a subconscious level, in his dreams, by those works of art which have particular significance in his search for self-knowledge. Just as the train links the two centers, so

the dreams link his conscious and subconscious realities. His journey from Paris to Rome is, at the mythological level, a journey of initiation.[25] Like Aeneas he must descend into the Underworld in search of the foundations of his race. A study of the dream sequences, the myths and elements of the works of art portrayed in them, shows how Léon makes this journey.

As the Frenchman travels through the forest of Fontainebleau on his return journey to Paris on November 11th, he imagines he sees "la figure d'un cavalier . . . dont vous avez même l'impression d'entendre la célèbre plainte: 'M'entendez-vous?'" (p. 116). This first imaginary glimpse of the "Grand Veneur" whose questions haunt Leon, is a precursor of the dream sequences.[26] Symbol of that ultimate moment of truth which is our death, the Grand Veneur poses the questions which Léon is afraid to ask himself:[27] "Où êtes-vous?" (p. 152), "Etes vous fou?" (p. 182). Finally, in his dream-filled night, the Frenchman clearly hears a person "qui a les mêmes vêtements que vous, mais intacts, porte à la main une valise du même modèle que la vôtre, semble un peu plus âgé que vous." (pp. 251-252). This double repeats the Grand Veneur's questions: "Qui êtes-vous? Où allez-vous? Que cherchez-vous? Qu'attendez-vous? Que sentez-vous? Me voyez-vous? M'entendez-vous?" (p. 252). As night falls Léon can no longer avoid facing these questions and seeking answers to them. He contemplates the book which

he had bought hurriedly at the station bookstall before leaving Paris, and which he has not read, and realizes that, if it were to interest him at all "ç'aurait été qu'il se serait trouvé dans une conformité telle avec votre situation qu'il vous aurait exposé à vous-même votre problème . . ." (p. 178). As he continues his musings on the possible contents of this book which symbolizes "ce livre futur et nécessaire" (p. 283) that he will begin to write on his arrival in Rome, he imagines that it tells the story of "un homme perdu dans une forêt qui se referme derrière lui sans qu'il arrive . . ." (p. 202). The plight of the "homme perdu" is also Léon's plight and, as imagination gives way to dream, the middle-aged Frenchman embarks on the search for self which he has so assiduously avoided in his waking state. In fact, through the use of "il" in the dream segments, which effectively dissociates him and the reader from the experiences of the protagonist, Léon continues to avoid his inevitable "prise de conscience."

The forest, in which the dreamer finds himself, evokes the forest of Fontainbleau, home of the Grand Veneur, and the sacred forest of the sixth book of the Aeneid which Léon had read on his return from Rome on November 11th. As the dream progresses, the reader is struck by other echoes of the Aeneid. Aeneas continuing his journey towards the Underworld, "aux premier feux du soleil levant" finds the earth rumbling and trembling beneath his feet.[28] Similarly,

as he continues his journey, the Léon of the dream also finds that:

> . . . les plantes auxquelles il veut se retenir se déracinent; les pierres sur lesquelles il veut poser les pieds s'effritent, se déchaussent, et roulent d'étage en étage jusqu'à ce qu'il ne puisse plus distinguer le bruit de leur chute au milieu du bourdonnement général qui vient d'en bas (p. 206).

We also find in this description a reflection of the Fall of the Damned in the Last Judgement, as the dream, which at first resembles Aeneas's journey into the Underworld, is gradually invaded by elements of Michelangelo's work. The old woman in the cave with her "respiration lourde, rauque" (p. 214) recalls Virgil's description of the Sibyl of Cumes, "sa poitrine halète . . . sa voix n'a plus un son humaine."[29] Her question, "T'imagines-tu que je ne sais pas que toi aussi tu vas à la recherche de ton père afin qu'il t'enseigne l'avenir de ta race?" (p. 214), coupled with the gift of "ces deux gâteaux brûlés dans le four" (p. 215), leaves us in no doubt that she represents the Sibyl of the Aeneid. However, this "vieille femme immobile qui regarde un grand livre" (p. 214) also reflects the Sibyl of Cumes of the Sistine Ceiling. Léon's journey may reflect Aeneas's journey into the underworld, but it cannot parallel it. Aeneas had set out in search of his father and the knowledge of the future of his race, Léon denies this: "je ne veux rien,

Sibylle, je ne veux que sortir de là, rentrer chez moi, reprendre le chemin que j'avais commencé . . ." (p. 215). These words evoke the damned in the Last Judgement frantically trying to climb back up whence they came. The "personnage emmitouflé, qui tire une lampe torche de sa poche . . . puis se recroqueville à l'intérieur de sa logette semblable à une énorme motte de terre . . ." (p. 202) is seen by Patrice Quéréel as being "l'un des démons placés au bas du Jugement Dernier."[30] It is not difficult to recognize in the "barque sans voiles avec un vieillard debout armé d'une rame qu'il tient levée sur son épaule comme prêt à frapper" (p. 219) the ferryman depicted in the bottom right corner of the Last Judgement. By his stance and the way in which he holds his oar, he reflects Michelangelo's work, his beard and his eyes: "il n'y a point d'yeux mais seulement deux cavités semblables à des brûleurs avec des flammes sifflantes . . ." (p. 219) mark him as the Charon of the Aeneid. As with the Sibyl, pagan and Christian mythology which have been brought together by Michelangelo's works in the Sistine Chapel, are intertwined in Léon's subconscious where they finally are expressed in his dreams. Although, in the dream sequences, Léon, like Aeneas, has received, "ces deux gâteaux brûlés dans le four" (p. 215) from the Sibyl, he is refused the aid of the golden bough which, he is told is "point pour toi, point pour ceux qui sont aussi étrangers à

leurs désirs." (p. 215). Unlike Aeneas, Léon does not know what he is looking for on this journey. His path thus diverges from that of Aeneas - it is not towards the Elysian Fields that the Fenchman will be taken in Charon's boat but towards judgement by his pagan and Christian ancestors. This is emphasized by the appearance, in the course of his dream voyage, of metal amplifiers and of a "fine pluie de goudron qui devenait de plus en plus blanc comme de la neige, de plus en plus sec comme des bribes de pages déchirées . . ." (p. 222). The metal amplifiers evoke the angels of the Last Judgement awakening the dead with golden trumpets while, in the "bribes de pages déchirées", we see the pages of the Holy Scripture which they are dropping on the dead. They are a symbolic reminder of Léon's Christian heritage.

Aeneas's descent into the Underworld gives way in the dream sequence to the dreamer's arrival before "quelqu'un, nettement plus grand qu'un homme, avec non point un mais deux visages . . ." (p. 223). He is Janus, the Roman god of beginnings. Even in this pagan figure we can see an echo of the Last Judgement for, like Janus, St. Bartholemew, as he holds up his own skin, has two faces.[31] Janus is seated in front of "la porte majeure mais sans tramways sans chemins de fer, ouvriers, ni foule . . ." (p. 223). Léon has arrived in the ancient city of his dreams whose monuments he has visited and revisited with Cécile. His guide through the ancient

city is a she-wolf symbolizing a return to the very beginnings of Rome. However the she-wolf leads him not to pre-Christian Rome but to the catacombes where he sees "des gens en robes blanches qui portent des cadavres en chantant des cantiques . . ." (p. 232) It is following this dream sequence that he acknowledges "cette réorganisation de l'image de vous-même et de votre vie" (p. 235) and finally recognizes that the "il" of the dream is, in fact, himself and "il" becomes "vous".[32]

As the dream sequences progress, the distinction between dream and reality becomes less distinct; conscious thought stimulates new dream sequences. Thus, from the memory of being seated opposite a reproduction of Michelangelo's deluge, Léon's mind slips back into the dream where he is met by a procession of cardinals who ask him, "Pourqoi prétends-tu nous haïr? ne sommes-nous pas des Romains?" (p. 257) They are followed by the Pope who asks this man who is "veille par tant d'images, incapable de les ordonner et de les nommer, pourquoi prétends-tu aimer Rome? Ne suis-je pas le fantôme des empereurs, hantant depuis des siècles la capitale de leur monde aboli, regretté?" (p. 258). The Pope and his cardinals verbally deliver the message which Michelangelo has so graphically declared in the Sistine Ceiling and the Last Judgement - that it is impossible to separate the ancient, pagan world from the Christian world for the one has inherited the other. This is underlined by

the parade of pagan gods (pp. 265-266) followed by the procession of emperors. Before the "Roi du Jugement" (p. 259), who is not the benign figure of Cavallini's Last Judgement but rather the stern, forbidding figure of Michelangelo's Christ in his version, Léon finally has to face up to the fact that he is irrevocably linked to all of the past of his race and that he is dammed not by Christ but by "tous ceux qui m'accompagnent et leurs ancêtres, . . . tous ceux qui t'accompagnent et leurs enfants" (p. 260). All of the ancestors depicted in the Sistine Chapel, coupled with those who have been met in his dreams, condemn Léon. This condemnation reaches a climax when, in response to Léon's attempt to reason with them, the gods and emperors of Ancient Rome converge on him:

> C'est une foule de visages qui s'approchent, énormes et haineux comme si vous étiez un insecte retourné, des éclairs zébrant leurs faces et la peau en tombant par plaques (p. 268).

Damned in his dream by both the "Roi du Jugement" and the "Empereurs et dieux romains" (p. 268), symbolic representatives of the works of art which he has sought out either in reality or in his imagination, Léon must seek out and accept not only the gods of Ancient Rome but also his biblical ancestors. As in his dream, he must become familiar with the messages of both Virgil and Michelangelo, of paganism and Christianity. Only then can he begin to find

himself through writing, "ce livre futur et nécessaire dont vous tenez la forme dans votre main" (p. 283).

The works of art have influenced La Modification both in terms of the novel's architecture and of its psycho-social content. The conflict between the "mythe romain" (p. 276) and Christianity expressed through these works and Leon's reaction to them reflects not only the Frenchman's dilemma but the dilemma of modern Western man. At a time when the old, Catholic values are no longer valid and when he has not been able to replace them, Léon, literally strung between Paris, once the center of the Napoleonic Empire, and Rome, center of first the Classical Roman then the Christian Empires, epitomizes modern man's predicament. A product of both cultures, he no longer belongs to either, as he flounders in a constantly changing world, a world without a centre:

> Une des grandes vagues de l'histoire s'achève ainsi dans vos consciences, celle où le monde avait un centre, qui n'était pas seulement la terre au milieu des sphères de Ptolémée, mais Rome au centre de la terre, un centre qui s'est deplacé, qui a cherché à se fixer après l'écroulement de Rome à Byzance, puis beaucoup plus tard dans le Paris impérial, l'étoile noire des chemins de fer sur la France étant comme l'ombre de l'étoile des voies romaines.
>
> Si puissant pendant tant de siècles sur tous les rêves européens, le souvenir de L'Empire est maintenant une figure insuffisante pour désigner l'avenir de ce monde, devenu pour chacun de nous beaucoup plus vaste et tout autrement distribué (p. 277).

The Classical Roman, Renaissance and Napoleonic periods were eras which saw major paradigmatic shifts in society which were expressed in the literature and art of the time. A similar paradigmatic shift threatens the world of Léon Delmont whom we can see as a modern Everyman. Our reading of La Modification tells us that another paradigmatic shift is in process, as modern man tries and finds wanting the teachings of the Classical, Renaissance and Baroque periods.

However, it is not only Léon who undergoes a transformation in the course of his journey from Paris to Rome: The novel as an art form has also been transformed. For, as man's ideology changes so must the artistic and literary forms through which he expresses that form be changed. However, these necessary new forms cannot be created through a return to the past nor can they be created in a vacuum. Like the Sistine Ceiling and the Last Judgement, they must result from a knowledge and acceptance of his collective past. Only by exploring his past and recognizing all of his ancestors, as has Léon in his dream, by integrating that past into his present, can man begin his search for a new form. This will be expressed in "ce livre futur" (p. 283) which, like Pannini's view of Rome, will both be closed - within the frame of its covers - and open - the boundary between reality and fiction, between reader and text, will be fluid. It is "ce livre futur et nécessaire dont vous tenez la forme dans votre main" (p. 283).

Notes to Chapter II

[1] Michel Butor, L'Emploi du temps, p. 9.

[2] Michel Butor, La Modification (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1957), p. 10. Subsequent references to this work will be noted in the text.

[3] The Victoire de Samothrace is believed to commemorate a Greek naval victory.

[4] C. G. Jung, The Portable Jung trans. R.F.C. Hull, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: Viking Press, 1971), "In addition to our immediate consciousness which is of a thoroughly personal nature . . . there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals."

[5] Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon, Critique du roman (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 79.

[6] Dean McWilliams, The Narratives of Michel Butor: The Writer as Janus (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1968), p. 37.

[7] McWillilams, p. 37. "The Parisian Pantheon in whose shadow Delmont lives, is built in the classical style, but was intended as a Catholic church and has several times served that function. Its model, portrayed by Pannini as one of the glories of ancient Rome (52, 55), has fared no better: the Roman Pantheon's brass roof was melted down and used to cast Bernini's baldachin in St. Peter's basilica."

[8] Léon's choice of an opera is interesting in terms of the structure of the novel whose nine chapters are divided into three sections which can be seen as the three acts of an opera.

[9] McWilliams, p. 35.

[10] McWilliams, p. 36.

[11] McWilliams, p. 36.

[12] Donald Posner, Annibale Carracci: A Study in the Reform of Italian Painting around 1950 (London: Phaidon Press, 1971), p. 107.

[13] Posner, p. 94.

[14] Posner, p. 93. "The vault frescoes of the Farnese Gallery . . . celebrate the power and universal dominion of Love."

[15] Posner, p. 94.

[16] Posner, p. 94.

[17] Posner, p. 101.

[18] Van Rossum-Guyon, pp. 246-247. "Il suffit d'examiner le texte d'un peu plu près pour constater que les fonctions d'introduction et de liaison que l'on peut reconnaître aux strophes descriptives relèvent d'une motivation qui n'est pas réaliste mais compositionnelle . . . De même que les séquences relatives au passé avec Cécile et au passé avec Henriette sont associées aux motifs fixes: 'sur le tapis de fer chauffant' et 'un homme passe la tête par la porte', les séquences au présent au futur et au passé proche sont associées respectivement aux motifs: 'passe la gare de', 'de l'autre côté du corridor', 'au-delà de la fenêtre.'."

[19] Charles Seymour Jr. ed., Michelangelo: The Sistine Chapel Ceiling (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1972), pp. 84-85).

[20] Seymour, p. 84.

[21] Seymour, p. 85.

[22] Seymour, p. 73.

[23] Jennifer Waelti-Walters, Michel Butor: A Study of his View of the World and a Panorama of his Works (Victoria, B.C., Sono Nis Press, 1977), p. 50.

[24] Waelti-Walters, p. 50.

[25] Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), Léon goes through the rites of initiation described by Campbell: "separation ----initiation ---- return."

[26] "Légende du Grand veneur." Larousse du XXe Siècle, 1933 ed. "On nomme ainsi une légende répandue parmi les gardes et les bûcherons de la forêt de Fontainebleau. Autrefois, nombre de vieux forestiers prétendaient avoir rencontré ce Grand veneur, tout de noir vêtu, une plume rouge à son chapeau, sonnant effroyablement de la trompe et galopant derrière une meute sur un cheval noir aux naseaux flamboyants. Sa rencontre était toujours de mauvais présage. On lit, dans le 'Journal de Pierre de l'Estoile,' à la date du 20 août 1598, qu'Henri IV, chassant dans la forêt de Fontainebleau, fut tout étonné d'entendre le cor et les aboiements des chiens d'une chasse autre que la sienne, et que le comte de Goissons, étant allé, sur son ordre, à la

rencontre de ces chasseurs, vit distinctement le Grand veneur et sa meute, qui disparurent aussitôt: c'était le présage de la mort prochaine de Gabrielle d'Estrées."

[27] Patrice Quéréel, "La Modification" de Butor (Paris: Hachette, 1973), p. 76. Quéréel identifies the Grand Veneur as the symbol of death: "la mort elle-même représentée par le Grand Veneur."

[28] Virgile, p. 249.

[29] Virgile, p. 249.

[30] Quéréel, p. 76.

[31] Quéréel, pp. 76-77. ". . . et Charon fait place au douanier Janus avec son double visage. Mais saint Barthélemy, chez Michel-Ange, n'est-il pas, une réincarnation du dieu païen? Le saint lui aussi possède deux visages puisqu'il tient à la main sa propre peau d'écorché vif."

[32] Michel Leiris, Le Réalisme Mythologique de Michel Butor (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1957), p. 301. Leiris points out that it is at the moment when "l'égaré" becomes an "assoiffé" that the second person plural reappears.

CONCLUSION

From our study of the works of art in L'Emploi du temps and La Modification, we find that the two novels have much in common. From the "coin couloir face à la marche"[1], common to both travellers, to the rain which falls on Bleston and Paris alike, they reflect one another. The mirrors of Bleston's drawing rooms become the mirror in Léon's bedroom, not to mention the reflective windows of the Paris/Rome train in which he travels through the night. The vaulted roof of the dingy Hamilton Street Station is reflected in a grandiose fashion in the soaring architecture of the magnificent Statione Termini. Jacques Revel arms himself with a map for his year of exploration in Bleston, Léon carries a railway timetable. Both men are employed in monotonous jobs and feel as if they are being dragged down into oblivion: Revel by Bleston's "sorcellerie", Delmont by his meaningless job and dreary marriage. Although their overt reactions differ - Revel seeks to regain control over his life through writing a retrospective diary, while Delmont seeks renewal and rejuvenation in the arms of his Italian mistress - their journeys are essentially one and the same. They are both, at the beginning of the novels, setting out on a journey of self-reflection in which they will explore not only their individual pasts but the collective past of mankind. If they are to become "cet homme libre et sincère" (M. p. 155) which both dream of being, they must acknowledge and accept this

heritage as an integral part of their being. Their exploration of man's past is accomplished with the aid of the works of art which, as we have seen, represent key periods in the history of western man.

Christian history and classical mythology, through the medium of these works, weave in and out of both novels. In L'Emploi du temps the emphasis is placed on the Greek heroes, Theseus and Oedipus, and the story of Cain; in La Modification, on the Roman hero, Aeneas, on the story of Genesis and on the Last Judgement. Thus, between the two novels, the major periods of western civilization are represented. In both novels Butor uses the plastic arts: tapestry, stained glass, architecture in L'Emploi du temps; architecture, sculpture and painting in La Modification. In L'Emploi du temps these works, although based on classical mythology and Christianity, are fictional, while in La Modification they are all verifiable.[2] Literary works also appear in both novels - the fictional novel in L'Emploi du temps, Virgil's Aeneid, the Letters of Julian the Apostate and the unread novel in La Modification. Butor has described L'Emploi du temps as "une sorte d'immense canon temporel"[3] while La Modification may be seen as a three act opera.

At the thematic level, one of the major differences between the works of art in L'Emploi du temps and those of La Modification is that, in the former, the works of art,

although based on verifiable stories such as the Theseus myth and Biblical history, are all imaginary. In La Modification, moreover, the works as well as the myths are verifiable. Thus, in L'Emploi du temps the reader shares Revel's ignorance of the works of art and explores them with him. Revel's lack of knowledge extends from the works of art to the myths and history which they portray. As he admires the Murderer's Window he confesses: "Je suis d'éducation catholique romaine, mais il y a longtemps que j'ai laissé effacer en moi la plupart des rudiments d''Histoire Sainte' que l'on m'avait inculqués. . . ."[4] Revel's hazy recollections of the "Histoire Sainte" and of classical mythology bring him to the works of art with a more innocent and less selective attitude than we observe in Delmont. For, while Delmont's choice of reading material (Virgil's Aeneid and the Letters of Julian the Apostate) demonstrates his knowledge of, and interest in the Classics, his exclusive interest in the Classical period testifies to a certain closed mindedness on his part.

Just as Léon Delmont is more knowledgeable than Jacques Revel, so the reader of La Modification will benefit from bringing to his reading of this novel a wider cultural background than that required of the reader of L'Emploi du temps. Since, as we have noted, the works of art in the latter are all fictional, the only demand on the reader's cultural knowledge is that he have some familiarity with the

myth of Theseus and the Bible. However, Butor's use, not only of mythology, but also of real works of art in La Modification makes greater demands on the reader. In L'Emploi du temps the complex relationships of the works of art with each other and their influence on Revel can, as we have shown in our study, be traced in the text. On the other hand, in La Modification, if the reader is not familiar, at least with Michelangelo's two great works in the Sistine Chapel and with Virgil's Aeneid, in particular the sixth book, his understanding of the novel will be limited at best. To understand the dream sequences in La Modification, for example, we must be familiar with Virgil's sixth book and with the Last Judgement while in L'Emploi du temps, some knowledge of mythology is useful, but we can adequately interpret the dreams by referring to the fictional works described in the text.

In both novels, the complex interrelationships between one work and another, between the different works and Revel's and Léon's lives, as well as between the works and the dream sequences emphasize the complexity of Butor's fictive universe. It is a world in which we cannot confine ourselves to one particular period to the exclusion of all others - Revel's year in Bleston, Léon's nostalgia for ancient Rome do not form isolated units. Like the fictional characters, we are forced into the acknowledgement, acceptance and integration of our personal and collective past.

In his use of the works of art, Butor is exploring the role of the past in the present not only at the philosophical and psychological levels but also at the structural level. For, while we can say that the banality of his heroes and their situations brands them as Everyman, that banality can also be seen to put story in a secondary position leaving the true emphasis to be placed on form and experimentation with form. There is nothing new in the story of a man alone in a foreign city or of a middle-aged man torn between a dull marriage and an exotic mistress, these have been the basic building blocks of the story since man first filled his leisure hours with story telling. The challenge lies in how the blocks can be rearranged. Butor, in an interview with Georges Charbonnier, has commented: "Quand je réfléchis sur les livres que j'ai déjà faits, j'ai l'impression qu'ils sont presque tous pareils, je retrouve les mêmes thèmes dans tous ces livres. . . ."[5] This choice of the same or similar themes has left Butor free to experiment with form.

In both novels, therefore, Butor has sought to answer the fundamental questions: What is the role of the novel as an art form? How do we represent time and space in the novel? His use of myth and history, as we have seen, demonstrates his view of the novel as an encyclopedic work whose purpose is not so much to entertain as to remind the reader of the ongoing influence of his cultural background and to involve him in the novelistic process. The

use of the diary form with its concomitant use of the first person singular in L'Emploi du temps and of the second person plural in La Modification further the aim of reader involvement. Although, as we have noted, familiarity with the works of Michelangelo enhances the reader's appreciation of La Modification, Butor's choice of mythical and historical stories in both novels (Theseus, Aeneas, Cain, Genesis, the Last Judgement) is such that they could be expected to be recognized by the average French reader. The familiarity of the stories, like the use of "vous" in La Modification invites the reader's involvement. He must participate actively in these novels' construction.

Butor's use of the plastic arts and, in the structure and rhythm of the novels, music, testifies to his stated belief that, the novel is intimately linked with music in its exploration of time, and is closely related to the plastic arts in its exploration of space .[6] The mathematical structure, the reprises of specific scenes or phrases, the rhythmic cadence of the language which at times can be read like a prose-poem, the temporal flexibility of the novels, all these elements find their origins in musical form. This temporal flexibility is, however, achieved through the manipulation of novelistic space and references to works of art.

By re-presenting these representations of reality, by interweaving their stories with each other and with the

stories of Revel and Delmont, and by experimenting with their forms in the structure of his novels, Butor has succeeded in representing "reality" in a new way. The two works which we have studied, together with his later works, show that, although there is a finite number of stories available to us, there is an infinite number of ways of telling or structuring them. For Butor, the only way to explore these ways is through writing, for in writing he can bring all art forms and all of history together in an exploration which, as the arbitrary endings of both novels seem to say, could go on forever.

Notes to Conclusion

[1] Michel Butor, La Modification (Paris: Minuit, 1957), p. 10. Subsequent references to this work will be noted in the text as L.M.

[2] Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon, Critique du Roman (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), pp. 46-80. Van Rossum-Guyon discusses the "vérifiable" in La Modification in this chapter.

[3] Georges Charbonnier, Entretiens avec Michel Butor (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), p. 106.

[4] Michel Butor, L'Emploi du temps (Paris: Minuit, 1956), p. 74.

[5] Charbonnier, p. 99.

[6] Michel Butor, "L'Espace du Roman," Répertoire II (Paris: Minuit, 1964), pp. 42-43.

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