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The poetry of Jacques Dupin: A reader-response approach

Fetzer, Glenn Williams, Ph.D.

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THE POETRY OF JACQUES DUPIN: A READER-RESPONSE APPROACH

by

GLENN W. FETZER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1988

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The City University of New York

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"D'un fil à l'espace, interminablement."

(Une Apparence de soupirail , 9)

To approach the essence of poetry is to participate in its own displacement. The poetry of Jacques Dupin typifies modern poetry's obsession with Being, an obsession which stirs the poet to plumb the depths of language in an attempt to transcend to a consciousness incapable of being expressed in words. For Dupin the aim of poetry parallels that which is stated by Valéry: "L'objet propre de la poésie est ce qui n'a pas un seul nom, ce qui en soi provoque et demande plus d'une expression. Ce qui suscite pour son unité devant être exprimée, une pluralité d'expressions."/1/ It is from poetry's nameless focal point that the plurality of Dupin's poetic expression arises.

One of the major poets of postwar France, Jacques Dupin, born in Ardèche in 1927, follows the example of René Char who, in rejecting a poetry devoted to the recording of feelings and emotions, chooses rather to engage in a poetry which is none other than a meditation on the poetic process or the embodiment of poetry's struggle to engrave its

presence on the world. Unlike Char, however, who writes on behalf of the world, Dupin writes for the sake of poetry itself. Dupin is a poet's poet. His poetry, with its limited range of imagery and its syntactical imaginativeness, questions the nature of poetry.

Characterized neither by the innocent optimism of Jacob, nor by the classical values of Ponge, nor by the cosmic aloofness of Saint-John Perse, the poetry of Dupin centers on itself, and from this self-reflective obsession emerges a sense of deep anguish and volatile energy. The language of this poetry is richly textured, a language which draws on the mundane, material world for its referents, and yet a language in which the sounds merit equal importance as their sense.

Formally Dupin's poetry resembles that of his contemporaries: his early collection Gravir (1963), reflects the influence of Char; his later poetry, especially Dehors (1975), De Nul lieu et du Japon (1981), and Contumace (1986) resembles the poetry of du Bouchet by its linguistic sparseness and by the favor it grants to the whiteness of the page. Although he often writes in free verse or produces pieces in an aphoristic style, Dupin is also a practitioner of prose poetry and it is in prose poems such as Le Soleil substitué and Moraines that we

find the most metapoetic of his texts.

Dupin's search for the essence of poetry is not limited to free verse or to prose poems but finds expression in his art criticism as well, for Dupin not only writes poetry but also writes about art. The two interests did not develop concurrently for him./2/ Poetry attracted him from his youth, and although Dupin settled in Paris in 1945, studied law and political science but subsequently turned to the world of art for his vocation, poetry dominated his attention. Dupin's position as editorial director for the Galérie Maeght Lelong publications in Paris has afforded him the opportunity to publish studies on a wide range of artists including Miró, Giacometti, Tapiès, Braque, Ernst, Calder, and others--studies which have brought him widespread critical acclaim as an art critic.

Like fellow poets Bonnefoy, du Bouchet, Ponge, and Char who are also fascinated with art, Dupin's interest in art informs his poetry and his poetry contributes to the originality of his art criticism. These two creative expressions-- poetry and art criticism-- become at times indistinguishable. Dupin, like du Bouchet, practices <u>poésie critique</u> , that unique genre which takes as its object a work of art and adopts as its expression, poetry. Although Dupin personally disavows any relationship between

his poetry and his art criticism,/3/ both bear witness nonetheless to a similar aesthetic. To study Dupin's poetry requires, therefore, attention to his art criticism and to his poésie critique , for in these we find expression of the true sphere of Dupin's poetry.

The words of the epigraph summarize Dupin's poetic endeavor: "From a thread to space, interminably." Regardless of the particular expression by which poetry chooses to validate itself at any given moment, the awareness of a creative space-- inaccessible and yet inescapable-- pervades the poetic process. One word suffices to inaugurate a quest for poetic fullness, but each quest inevitably breaks down, giving rise to another attempt. The space of fulfillment always lies just beyond the juncture where each attempt falters and another begins. Repeated efforts to accede to a poetic consciousness which lies in, through, and beyond language always arrive at the brink of success but end, interminably, in failure.

The entire movement of Dupin's poetry is toward its essence, that is to say that his creative enterprize can be seen as a hastening towards the center of the work: towards that point which Maurice Blanchot in L'Espace littéraire describes as the point which cannot be reached but which is the only

one worth reading/4/--that point which constitutes poetry's truest reality./5/

Since that central point-- that essence-- of poetry can be neither articulated nor understood (for understanding implies domination), the question of poetic space invites endless commentary. Blanchot, for one, speaks of literary space as the distance of the work with respect to everything external to itself as well as with respect to itself./6/ In other words the work is separated from itself or "not quite itself."/7/ We may read this space (or this distance) as an opening or a vacancy which perpetuates the expression of the work.

Although this elusive space in Dupin is sometimes perceived as the unknown terminal point of the poetic quest, Blanchot prefers to speak of it as the separation (or vacancy) the poet first enters into in order to become attuned to what he writes./8/ This space, then, is that which draws the writer to the work and which, having succeeded in attracting him, keeps him writing. This is the space from which the poem opens, the space which persists when the poetic force wanes, the space which includes language but which also embraces the silence which precedes (and follows) its articulation. This is the space of writing.

The last line of Dupin's poem "Malévitch",

"l'attente / l'attentat de l'impossible espace",/9/ signals the ambiguity of this space. This is an impossible space for which one waits, or hopes, or expects ("l'attente. . . de l'impossible espace), as well as a space of violence or criminality ("l'attentat de l'impossible espace"). But the phonemic repetition in the words "l'attente / l'attentat. . ." permits us yet another reading: in the crime of the impossible space we may also read "l'attente a (l'attentat) de l'impossible espace": "waiting has impossible space." The space impossible to attain appears not only as the goal of waiting and the object of hope but also as an intrinsic characteristic of waiting and of hope.

It is the space of Dupin's poetry, that "infinitely futile wherewithal to start over and over again,"/10/ which will provide the subject of this study.

The writer alone is not sufficient in opening the space of literature. Blanchot traces the origin of the poem back to a word which can be opened only by someone who is there to write it and someone there to read it. The reader, he maintains, is the one who gives the work an existence beyond the author. To the question, "What is a book no one reads?" Blanchot replies, "Something that is not yet

written."/11/ It is the reader, he asserts, who allows the book to be , to exist all by itself, without anyone having written it./12/

This awareness of the necessity of a reader in fulfilling the experience of literature does not originate with Blanchot, however, nor does it find full expression with him. Valéry, for one, in distinguishing poetry from prose points to the reader as the place where poetry's form (sound, rhythm, accent, etc.) is communicated./13/ The radical change which poetry has undergone in this century has heightened, rather than diminished, the attention paid to the reader, and this emphasis on the role of the reader deserves a reconsideration of both the part played by the writer and the nature of writing.

Traditionally, writing demonstrates the absence of a speaker. The written word is a mere substitute for and thereby inferior to vocal utterance./14/ According to Saussure, speech--not writing--must be used in analyzing a linguistic model, and this attitude reflects traditional western thought. We could say that the work, in representing something external to its own presence, has no intrinsic value in itself. However, in the nineteenth century French poets begin to stray from the rigid structure of the phonic mode of poetry. Poets begin to experiment with poetry which grants importance to the physical

presence of the individual word, a word void of meaning but a word which finds its worth in transmitting its own literary reality.

The privileging of the written word introduced a graphocentric literature-- that literature which for Jacques Derrida can only be written. Much of Dupin's poetry is by nature graphocentric, as the following passage from "Trait pour trait" illustrates:

L'erratique le profond
à contre-pente où se croisent
rien que souches
et volets
le règne différé de la surface
une cervelle de reptile
ne l'eut pas évincée de
ses calculs de mon souffle
écrire, ne pas écrire
alternative inconséquente --le poison
ne transporte
que des débardeurs étanches
coeur littéral
boue solaire
de l'écriture du corps
entaillé, fuse
le dehors
l'énergie dispersante du dehors
à la trace volatile
le réel étant le désir, même/15/

This excerpt, by its opaqueness and its resistance to explanation, points to writing as

its model. This poetry can not be expressed in terms of feeling, portraying, or telling but only in the act of writing itself. The arrangement of the words in groups and of the groups on the page, and the fragmentation of expression-- all serve to underscore the poetry's illisibilité and to identify it as that which is graphocentric.

Consequently, modes of writing depend heavily upon the reader's ability to naturalize the text, to perceive the poetic context, to uncover its possible systems of meaning. Although both reader and text are co-partners in the field of literary communication, the reader is the only means by which the text is fully achieved. For this reason, an account of the reader's activity in uncovering the logic of the text is crucial to opening the space of poetry.

The first four lines of Dupin's poem "Trait pour trait" illustrate the necessary presence of the reader. The arrangement of the words on the page-- snatches of phrases both attracting and repelling one another-- militates against excluding the reader from the process of literary communication. Between the third and fourth lines we must not ignore the break between "souches" and "volets". Coordinating conjunctions such as "et" join equals and put

them on the same footing; yet the setting apart of "et volets" serves to identify it as something added on, almost as an afterthought. The physical placement of the phrase--lower and to the right of "souches"--not only fosters a break in the reader's eye movement but also suggests that that which is ostensibly a grammatical equal is, in effect, only an inferior addition.

Without the account of the reader's attentive progress through the text, the poem remains closed. It is the reader who allows the poem to be ; and Dupin's poetry, belonging to the canon of graphocentric literature, needs the reader's active participation in order to unlock the poems' potential. Therefore I propose to undertake this study of the space of Dupin's poetry from the perspective of the reader.

Recent studies of the reader-response approach to literature delineate more completely the reader's role in producing literary communication and therefore deserve attention. For Stanley Fish, the key question of reading is "What does this word, phrase, sentence, paragraph do?; and the execution involves an analysis of the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed one another in time."/16/ Fish argues that the apprehension

of meaning usually originates in the utterance itself. Such a view perceives meaning as that which is extracted from the utterance and implies a reductionist view of literature. In opposition to this traditional view stands the reader-response methodology-- which, by emphasizing the changing responses of the reader in actualizing the text, stresses the temporal flow of the reading experience and focuses on the process rather than on the crystallized result. Now, in speaking of the developing responses of the reader, Fish rejects the purely affective responses implied by Wimsatt and Beardsley in The Verbal Icon (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1954) in favor of the more cognitive reactions; those including 1) a projection of syntactical and/or lexical probabilities, and 2) their subsequent occurrences or non-occurrences, 3) the attitudes towards persons, things, or ideas, and 4) the reversal or questioning of those attitudes./17/ In our reading of Dupin's poems, we shall appropriate these cognitive reactions suggested by Fish in recording our responses to the texts.

One of the major objections confronting the reader-response approach to literature is its alleged failure to define the type of reader who reads. In his book On Deconstruction: Theory and

Criticism after Structuralism , Jonathan Culler notes that "to read is to operate with the hypothesis of a reader, and there is always a gap of division within reading."/18/ He argues that Fish's experience of reading is contrived rather than an honest account of one active reader, and thus does not admit that gap within reading. He faults the Fishian reader for his protracted ignorance in reading, never learning from one experience to the next but always stumbling over the same pitfalls and constantly being fooled by literary techniques similar to one another. In addition Culler finds the issue of control to be a major problem: stories of reading tend to praise the creative role of the reader in producing the texts, and yet the text is often seen as provoking and directing certain responses. Culler finds this shift between freedom and restraint, between reader and text, to be contradictory and at times self-defeating. To compound the problem, Culler notes that "theories of reading demonstrate the impossibility of establishing well-grounded distinctions between fact and interpretations, between what can be read in the text and what is to be read into it. . ."/19/ He comes to the conclusion that there will always be dualism--"an

interpreter and something to interpret."/20/ According to Culler, another major proponent of reader-response criticism, Wolfgang Iser, accepts too readily this dualism of perspectives as being theoretically sound.

For his part, Iser contends that both text and reader are essential to communication, which he explains as the process relating one concept of reality (that of the text) to another context (that of the reader). In his view, if both reader and text are the components of communication, then the concern of the critic will no longer be the meaning of the text, but its effect./21/ Rather than positing himself as the purveyor of meaning, the interpreter should concern himself with revealing "the conditions that bring about its [the text's] various possible effects./22/

Likewise our concern with studying the space which engenders Dupin's poetry will not focus on interpretation but rather on the effects of poetry's space. The task of the reader, rather than that of "extracting" meaning, will be the revelation of the logic which governs the texts. That revelation can only be produced, in Iser's words, by "an analysis of what actually happens when one is reading a text, for that is when the

text begins to unfold its potential; it is in the reader that the text comes to life."/23/ And we might add: it is in the reader that the space of poetry--that domain which literature introduces in place of the place it occupies--opens./24/

Indeed, since the essence of Dupin's poetry remains hidden, all that can be perceived are those effects which the poetic space produces. From examining those effects we shall try to define some of the conditions which point back to that lack from which everything arises.

Etat Présent

Within the last twenty-five years only a dozen or so articles and essays have appeared on the poetry of Dupin, and although the most recent five years have witnessed an increase in critical attention to his work, scholarly interest in Dupin remains low. For many, Dupin is simply another poet to be relegated to anthologies and book reviews. And yet the favorable critical response with which his work has been met testifies that Dupin is sorely underrated as a poet and that his poetry is unfortunately neglected. To date only two book-length studies

of his poetry have been published, and they provide a solid foundation for Dupin studies.

Georges Raillard's volume Jacques Dupin (1974), which appears in the series "Poètes d'aujourd'hui", serves as a fine (although dated) introduction to Dupin's poetics in Gravir and L'Embrasure . Through explication of several poems and by means of sensitive interpretations, Raillard undertakes to isolate several "zones" or stages of development in Dupin's poetry. The value of his study rests primarily in the establishment of Dupin's poetic heritage. Especially important is the attention which Raillard gives to the relationship of Dupin's poetic development to the poetry of René Char.

From Char, Raillard maintains, Dupin learned the principle that above all else, poetry always presses on ahead. This forward motion, linked to an advance of the body, the mouth, desire, and greed, cannot be a lesson learned once and for all. Raillard explains that this principle constitutes an ongoing exercise: "Elle exige une mise en jeu de la totalité de la personne, une manoeuvre sur soi: exploration des cavernes, excitation de la peau, regrattage des murs, musculature."/25/ Dupin's poems open on this concept of a search which involves the poet's

entire being and invites a probing of all avenues open to investigation. With this emphasis on the poem as the evidence of a quest, Raillard's work anticipates our present concern with the space of Dupin's poetry.

The most comprehensive study to date of Dupin's poetry is Dominique Viart's L'Ecriture seconde: la pratique poétique de Jacques Dupin (1982). Viart undertakes a study of Dupin's écriture by exploring the poet's imaginary universe. That universe, he maintains, corresponds to the structure of the text and by studying the imaginary universe one can understand the ways in which that which wants to be written attracts writing.

In defining Dupin's écriture as the encounter between poetry ("l'écriture première") and criticism ("l'écriture seconde"), Viart proceeds to read Dupin's oeuvre as the joint endeavor of both écriture première and écriture seconde . The strength of the study lies in the attention it pays to Dupin's poésie critique from which Viart identifies tensions, qualities, and preoccupations characterizing Dupin's poetry. Viart divides his study into several sections: one of the gestation and emergence of the poetic parole , another on the experience of space,

another on l'écriture seconde , and a final segment on the visible and the readable. Within these division he addresses themes such as the opening, the return, and critical writing, and techniques such as repetition, difference, and contradiction.

In reading Viart's work, we gain an appreciation of the forces, movements, and elements undergirding Dupin's oeuvre ; yet we come away from Viart's study without a sense of having experienced Dupin's poetry. We perceive that Viart's assessment of Dupin's poetics, although thorough and insightful, nonetheless emerges from a concern with validating proposed assertions about the poetry by means of gathering and arranging proof texts. In other words Viart's attention to Dupin's "imaginary universe" often overlooks the poems themselves. Certainly Viart does not account for the part the reader plays in literary communication. He neglects to consider the recall or conservation of the poem's form, which according to Valéry, in expressing the state or thought it has provoked in the reader, constitutes the mainstream of poetic power./26/

Another noteworthy study can be found in Maryann De Julio's dissertation, "Expressivity and Indication in Michaux Reverdy and Dupin."

Asserting that the use and presentation of language in the writings of the three poets coincides with a change in the notion of self, De Julio demonstrates this change as a move from a poetry of expression (which she defines as that which generates feelings, thoughts, and sensations by creating relationships between words) to a poetry of indication (in which language is auto-referential and is involved with the act of concretizing itself). Her emphasis is on the poet's perception of self as is evidenced in the language of the poet.

The chapter on Dupin illustrates a practice of writing which develops from an initial focus on the self as the perspective from which the poem takes form, to a focus on the act of writing in which the concept of self is absent. In Dupin, she claims, "the relation between language and the self evolves from that of presentation to transgression and eventual displacement of the self as subject of the text."/27/ This diachronic examination of Dupin's writing via the notion of self is useful in understanding Dupin's unfolding interest in the practice of writing.

Among the short pieces concerning Dupin, we find an enlightening introductory note to his poetry in Paul Auster's "The Cruel Geography of

Jacques Dupin's Poetry" (in Books Abroad , 47: 1. 76-78). Auster, one of Dupin's translators, maintains that appreciation of Dupin's poetry demands of us "not so much of a reading as an absorption."/28/ In dismissing the expressive or emotive as possible characteristics of the poetry, Auster underscores its destructive tendencies, asserting that it is the field "in mental space where a struggle is allowed to take place-- between the destruction of the poem and the quest for the possible poem; for the poem can be born only when all chances for its life have been destroyed."/29/ Auster sees the poet's purpose as that of a harmonization with his surroundings rather than a subjugation of them: much of the earlier poetry is rooted in a landscape, and each poem is but the account of the poet's movement through its terrain.

In yet another important essay, Robert W. Greene/30/ observes that Dupin's entire oeuvre can be seen as the movement towards entropy. Beginning with a review of the poet's involvement with L'Ephémère and the impact of the magazine on his poetry, Greene underscores the importance for the poet of Giacometti's principles of creative destruction-- namely, the assertion that "the artist must engage destruction itself in its

enterprise"./31/ The poetic art fuses destruction with construction, demolition with edification-- polar opposites which, far from being mutually exclusive, depend on each other for their continuing existence.

Greene also comments upon Dupin's interest in the poetry of Reverdy and Char and demonstrates from Gravir the poet's affinities with the latter. In a brief discussion of Dupin's second collection, L'Embrasure , Greene highlights the significance of language and addresses the question of ontological transcendence, which he perceives both in the imagery denoting breaking open and in the poet's conscious attention to the process of writing. In a lengthy reading of "Un récit" (Dehors), Greene suggests that an appropriate way to read that poem is as a first person singular caught in the act of disintegration. Thus supported by close readings of selected poems, this article stresses the entropic, destructive tendencies of Dupin's poetry.

Mary Ann Caws reads the poems in Gravir as the venture of the occult-- that "mysterious unsayable and dark unthinkable"/32/-- which, she affirms, takes place on the vertical plane. Reading Gravir as a mountain text, Caws observes

that the path is established by thirst and difficulty, that in "Cendrier du voyage" the climb is identified with the metaphor of struggle, and that in the nine prose poems of Lichens the metaphor of ascent leads to illumination.

A later, more comprehensive essay by Mary Ann Caws focuses on the metaphor of passage./33/ One among several essays conceived to draw attention to the building that connects individual texts to a larger whole, the Dupin essay is situated under the rubric of a metapoetic consciousness which signals the conclusion of a temporal passage between the surrealists and the present time. In particular, Caws chooses to discuss certain poetic phenomena: writing as rupture (with examples from Gravir and L'Embrasure); tension-- between the break and the breaking, the split and the split apart; the interval, or the gap; and the gravity of the poetic word, among others. In the course of the discussion Caws notes that the complex violence of L'Embrasure gives way to the more ambiguous Dehors , whose poems seem to embody a turning inside out.

One of the most significant articles to appear to date concerning the relationship

between Dupin's poetry and his art criticism is Michael Bishop's "Jacques Dupin: Art and Poetry" (in Contemporary Literature . 21:4, 1980, pp. 611-31). In stating as his goal the nature of the "artistic enterprize as perceived at once in particular instance and in its generality,"/34/ Bishop sets out to discuss the theory of art which emanates from Dupin's writing on art. He then discusses the poetics of the poetry, and subsequently illustrates that Dupin's creative work embodies the principles elucidated in his art criticism. Bishop begins by mentioning those painters whose work interests Dupin-- Giacometti, Nicolas de Stael, Valério Adami, Malévitch, Joan Miró, and Riopelle-- artists whose common characteristics include the jaillissement , the explosive, and the breaking actions.

Perhaps most crucial to his discussion of Dupin's poetic praxis is his assertion that "art, for Dupin, involves no avoidance of reality or matter, but a working through it, into it, in it. Yet most fundamentally. . . art endeavors to express what is beyond discourse, what is beyond realism, beyond representation or figuration of any flatly articulated kind, beyond anecdote and reduction."/35/ Bishop's article, with its source material relative to Dupin's art criticism

in L'Ephémère , its evaluation of the poet's theory of art, and its elucidation of the poetics of Dupin's own work provides an invaluable addition to the body of Dupin criticism.

In an essay of more limited scope, Richard Stamelman draws attention to qualities in Giacometti's paintings which Dupin's poetry reflects./36/ By the discontinuities of its forms, Stamelman asserts, the poetry of Dupin "imitates the realities of loss, vacancy, and indeterminacy that define mortal existence and modern consciousness"/37/, realities represented by Giacometti's figures-- realities of profound loneliness and isolation.

In the same issue of L'Esprit créateur , Mary Ann Caws expresses interest in the inferences between the seer, or the poet, and the seen, or the visual object. In a section entitled "More on Color" Caws talks about Dupin's poem on Malévitch-- a poem full of "a pure slippage which permits not just the confrontation of red and white, but and more memorably, the cutting of the black into the white and the interface of the two."/38/ This essay illustrates the potential for practical readings of poetry which are based on theories of art criticism.

The variety of critical and introductory studies on Dupin indicates the richness of his poetry. Whether primarily linguistic, thematic, textual, or theoretical, the studies evidence the diversity of perspectives which his poetry invites. Within this pluralistic framework of criticism, there exists room for the present study of Dupin's poetic space from a reader-response point of view.

In this thesis I shall attempt to show that the response of the reader to Dupin's poems informs the space of his poetry. That is to say that by means of the experience of reading we may induce formative principles or characteristics of that hidden, inaccessible space of poetic creativity. That space of literature cannot be named; it cannot be seized; nor can it be reduced. It can only be approached by experiencing the displacement it produces. Therefore I shall prefer to emphasize the process of reading rather than the result, the changing responses of the reader in making his way through the text to summarily drawn conclusions based on fragments of poetry gathered from various texts. Consequently I shall rely heavily upon explication as a means of inducing the effects of the space of poetry.

The scope of my study consists of Dupin's major collections of poetry: Gravir (1963), L'Embrasure (1969), Dehors (1975), De Nul lieu et du Japon (1981), Une Apparence de soupirail (1982), De Singes et de mouches (1983), Contumace (1986); his play, L'Eboulement (1977); and selected pieces from his poésie critique . The organization of my thesis originates in my earlier perceptions of the dominant forces, images, and themes present in Dupin's poetry: nature imagery, night, violence, gaps, fissures, labyrinths, and desire.

Each chapter opens on a theme or image which is then traced (or responded to) in selected poems. In order not to exclude from comment any of Dupin's major collections of poems, I have selected the themes and images to be discussed on the basis of their presence in complementary volumes of poetry. For example my readings of poems from Gravir are found in the chapter on nature imagery, my explication of poems from Dehors appears in the chapter on violence, my discussion of Contumace appears in the chapter on desire, and so on.

My concern in selecting the poems for discussion is to provide the most representative range of Dupin's poems as a source for inferring

the constituent elements of his poetic space.

As a point of entry into Dupin's poetry, Chapter Two focuses on the use of nature images in Gravir and Une Apparence de soupirail in announcing the space of poetry. By adopting the figures of nature as reference point and by attentively charting the nuances inherent in their presentation, I perceive the ambiguous nature of their role in forging a new poetic reality. The same nature images which signal the self-consuming universe of Dupin's poetry also participate in fueling the violence from which the creative force arises. In Chapter Three I read manifestations of violence from Dehors and De Singes et de mouches as the primary law of Dupin's poetic discourse.

One of the dominant images in Dupin's poetry is the breach, and in Chapter Four I study the evolutionary nature of the gap from its initial presentation as a figure of nature in Gravir , to its textual presence in promising poetic fulfillment, to its appearance as grammatical and syntactical fissures in Une Apparence de soupirail , to a final consideration of the notion of the gap as that which defines Dupin's poetry.

The ongoing quest for poetic space is often

presented as a labyrinthine course, and so Chapter Five focuses attention on the concept of the labyrinth as a model for the poetic endeavor. After studying the labyrinth image in L'Eboulement and reading it in terms of Bachelard's notion of the dream traveler, I proceed to apply Bachelard's observations on the nature of of the labyrinth to Dupin's sequence Moraines . Finally, from the point of view of experiencing Moraines as a labyrinthine venture, we begin to perceive in the quest for transcendence Derrida's concept of the supplement.

In the chapter on night I examine the role of the figure of night in passages from L'Eboulement , "Suite forestière," Gravir , De Singes et de mouches , De Nul lieu et du Japon , and L'Embrasure ; and after comparing and contrasting the multiple uses of the night image, conclude that the night figure may be read as a metaphor of the poetic act.

Finally, the last chapter in the body of my thesis addresses the presence of desire in Dupin's poetry. After presenting the Kantian concept of the frame, or parergon , and after attempting to illustrate the notion of desire as a frame in Dupin, I demonstrate the relevence of

the concept of the parergon to the poet's ongoing quest for space.

Notes

/1/ Paul Valéry, Oeuvres , ed. Jean Hytier, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1957)1:1450.

/2/ Jacques Dupin, personal interview, 19 May 1986.

/3/ Dupin, interview.

/4/ Maurice Blanchot, L'Espace littéraire (Paris: Gallimard, 1955) 56.

/5/ Blanchot 184.

/6/ Ann Smock, introduction, The Space of Literature , by Maurice Blanchot (Lincoln, NE: UP of Nebraska, 1982) 11.

/7/ Smock 11.

/8/ Blanchot 31.

/9/ Dupin, Dehors (Paris: Gallimard, 1975) 155.

/10/ Smock 10.

/11/ Blanchot, The Space of Literature , trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, NE: UP of Nebraska, 1982) 193.

/12/ Blanchot, L'Espace 256.

/13/ Valery 1331.

/14/ Ferdinand de Saussure, Cours de linguistique générale (Paris: Payot, 1973) 23-24.

/15/ Dupin, Dehors 86-87.

/16/ Stanley Fish, Is There a Text in This Class? (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1980) 27.

/17/ Fish 27.

/18/ Jonathan Culler, On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982) 67.

/19/ Culler 75.

/20/ Culler 75.

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Chapter 2

Rocks, Suns, Stones, and Stars: Constellations of Nature Images

Studded with rocks and stones, crisscrossed by crevasses, and overhung with stars, the rough terrain of Dupin's poetry steadily erodes. In writing about his poetry, critics have all noted the discourse tending towards entropy. Robert W. Greene views Dupin's entire work as "the inexorable movement toward and then through all that 'entropie' implies in the esthetic, moral and metaphysical realms./1/ The proliferation of words only results in the abatement of poetic fervor. And yet the struggle doggedly continues-- the struggle to create, the struggle to achieve the possible poem.

Dupin himself is conscious of the force of entropy; and in writing on the poetry of Reverdy, Dupin speaks of his own tendency toward entropy as much as he does Reverdy's: "De révélation nous n'acceptons que celle qui nous répète, jusqu'à l'incantation, que le monde dérive et se morcelle."/2/ The world of Dupin's poetry is a fractured world, one delimited by dislocation and fragmentation. His poems tend toward tabula rasa, that state of linguistic vacancy which immediately precedes pure poetry.

As in the poetry of André du Bouchet and René Char, night imagery figures high in defining Dupin's poetic arena, the "field" on which poetry is played out. In Gravir especially, the poet relies heavily upon the visually concrete elements of nature-- stones, stars, the moon, the sun-- to mark the boundaries of poetic space. Open air, rugged landscapes, sunshine and moonlight characterize this collection much as they recall du Bouchet's Dans la chaleur vacante and Où le soleil and Char's Les Matinaux and Retour amont . Dupin attributes his own preoccupation with nature to the years spent in the sun-bathed town of Sète, in Southern France. Such a preoccupation with one's physical surroundings offers to the reader a logical point of entry into the study of Dupin's poetry: key images of nature, while evidencing a thematic kinship with Char, go beyond the purely decorative in purpose and serve to mark out Dupin's own terrain of poetic creation. Rather than ask the meaning of these images, we may instead investigate the codes established by the imagery and from which the poetic space, in turn, is opened. The repetition of images leads us to consider the possibility of resultant patterns, not only in Gravir ,where these images abound but also in a volume representative of Dupin's more recent poetry, Une Apparence de soupirail (1982).

I. Gravir : Stones

The first nature image we shall discuss is the stone or rock, which Jean-Pierre Richard sees as the place where poetry begins for Dupin. The rock, Richard maintains, provokes in the poet his creative breath since it is the rock which presents the poet with his first obstacle to be surmounted./3/ In "Le Chemin frugal", the opening poem of the collection Gravir (1963), we find two lexical variants of "stone"-- "cailloux" and "fragment de quartz". By reading this poem closely, we may detect the underlying principle at work in the poem.

Opening the collection Gravir , "Le Chemin frugal" not only indicates the bareness of the footpath but also suggests a journey encumbered by difficulties. The very word "chemin" denotes the path traveled but also implies the place of origin, the destination, and allows the reader to anticipate a traveler. The first stanza,

> C'est le calme, le chemin frugal,
> Le malheur qui n'a plus de nom.
> C'est ma soif échancrée:
> La sorcellerie, l'ingenuité./4/

creates an aura of mysticism, a cloak of sorcery, and situates the path in a dark foreboding and in a dusk

of unhappiness. Onto this trail the reader is coaxed: from the third-person, objective stance ("C'est le calme, le chemin frugal"), the poetic world becomes more personal ("C'est ma soif échancrée"). With the second stanza come two imperatives in the form of an invitation to the reader to undertake the quest ("Chassez-moi, suivez-moi"), and from the troubled calm of the opening lines, the reader finds himself in full pursuit along the path strewn with pebbles and canopied by stars. The opening of the trail, writes Georges Raillard, recalls Rimbaud's invitation to join the conquering poetic quest in Les Illuminations; but unlike the Rimbaldian success, this Dupin poem ends far from achieving the absolute./5/

The last two lines, "Déjà les étoiles, / Déjà les cailloux, le torrent. . ." raises in the reader a sense of expectancy. "Already the stars, Already the pebbles, the "torrent" have done--what? But the ellipsis marks leave the expectancy unfulfilled and the reader is left disquieted as the thoughts trail off incomplete. With the ellipsis marks, the second stanza does not end, but rather, in suggesting continuation, opens the way to the third stanza which illustrates a return to constative discourse:

> Chaque pas visible
> Est un monde perdu,
> Un arbre brûlé.

Chaque pas aveugle
Reconstruit la ville,
A travers nos larmes,
Dans l'air déchiré./6/

[Each visible step
Is a lost world,
A burnt tree.
Each blind step
Rebuilds the city,
Through our tears,
In the torn air.]

The world which the path traverses is an isolated world, a used-up, consumed world marked by charred trees and torn air, a world cohesive only by means of that which is neither seen nor readily discernable.

The phrase "Chaque pas," repeated four lines after the initial line of the stanza, suggests another step in the journey--a journey comprised of the sum of the individual steps. The path exists not only as an entity in itself, but as a compilation of smaller units-- steps-- each having a value all its own, and each subject to definition and examination. When the eye reads the adjective "aveugle" (l. 4) it immediately returns to the first line of the stanza where the step is defined as being visible. And so the reading process permits the establishment of an antithesis on the optical level-- an antithesis between that which is seen and that which does not see-- an antithesis which highlights the individuality of the steps (one is a lost world, a burnt tree, and the other reconstructs the city).

With the repeated phrase "Chaque pas", similar to but yet different from the previous occurrence, a continuity is created across the archipelago of steps.

An incomplete adverbial clause opens the fourth stanza: "Si l'absence des dieux, leur fumée, / Ce fragment de quartz la contient toute". We expect the concessive clause to be completed, but no verb follows the subject of the "si" clause. What about the absence of the gods, their smoke? Instead of the awaited verb, the reader learns that this fragment of quartz contains it all. At the mention of quartz, the "cailloux" of stanza two and to a lesser extent the pathway itself are suggested. Stones and pebbles comprise the pathway. Or, we might say that the pathway-- "le chemin"-- contains the individual stones and pebbles. Yet paradoxically, although the path stands as the container-- as that which encompasses its constituent elements-- the fragment of quartz contains it all.

To conclude the poem, the opening stanza is repeated, indicating a return to the mysterious and bewitching calm from which the quest initially arises. And as the poem settles back into the stillness and unhappiness, the reader's trek along the footpath brings him back to where he began. The path, suggesting origin, destination, and the journey

from the one to the other, is securely anchored by the repeated lines.

The identical first and last stanzas frame the path and thus "contain" the implied journey within the confines of an eerie quiet. But the principle of containment has already surfaced-- in the center of the poem. The statement "Ce fragmant de quartz la contient toute" comes at the midway point of the poem's thirty-six lines, and the word "quartz" appears in the middle of the line. By its position as the hub of the poem, the quartz fragment-- just a piece of stone strewn along the trail-- actually contains everything.

And so the series of relationships-- that of container to contained-- is overturned. The poem contains, or encompasses the pathway, the "chemin frugal", which, in its turn, contains the individual stones and steps constituting the journey. But then one segment, a fragment of one of those stones-- a quartz-- usurps the position of container, reverses the hierarchical system of relationships, and effectively but unobtrusively dominates and engulfs the entire poem so as to become the container instead of the contained.

Elsewhere in Gravir rocks and stones indicate, to a greater or lesser extent, the code of containment. At times that which is contained

belongs to another category of natural phenomena. For example, the rock may be crammed with stars ("Entre ce roc bondé d'étoiles. . ."/7/), or may appear as the space upon which the sun chisels its path (". . .la racine du soleil creuse sa route dans le roc"/8/). As the territory of the quest for poetry, the rock forms the area where the route ends and the trip begins ("Le rocher, où finit la route et où commence le voyage"/9/).

Now, this sphere of rocks and stones must not be perceived as an assemblage of generic rocky material. Broader categories exist which encompass or even "contain" the specific. For instance, as a rubric, the title of one poem, "Le Règne minéral" implies the classification of all members of the mineral kingdom. The lexical space widens appreciably to include the following additional elements: quartz ("ce fragment de quartz la contient toute"/10/), gold ("J'écris pour enfouir mon or."/11/), and granite ("Ton corps plus nu / Que cette table de granit"/12/). With the proliferation of vocabulary comes the development of a hierarchical arrangement: contained within the spectrum of the mineral kingdom we find mention not only of rocks, stones, and pebbles, but also of specific mineral elements.

Although the nature of mineral deposits in Gravir constitutes one framework for the study of

rocks and stones, it is not the sole framework. From another level entirely, that of geological configuration, the study of rocks and stones supports the notion of container/contained. As the title Gravir indicates, the volume presents a climb, an ascent into a mountain range. Here again Dupin shows the influence of his mentor René Char, for whom the mountain image signals rigor and self-denial in the poet's attempts to gain new perspectives from the summit./13/ Just as tension and search form an integral part of Char's mountainous ascent, so also do they belong to Gravir .

From one poem to the next, the ascent intensifies, and the reader, as co-partner with the text in the literary experience, must pick his way over the rocks, following the stony path to the summit. With the ever-rising ascent comes a sense of cosmic constriction. The higher one climbs the lower the encircling horizon appears. Celestial bodies, both nocturnal and diurnal, surround the speaking voice from above as the rocky footing beneath steadily rises to meet the sky. Contained within such a hemisphere the mountains occupy an ever increasing portion of the total space. In following closely the developing theme of containment and the growing sense of restriction it produces upon the poet, the reader not only perceives objectively that

spatial constriction but enters into that bound poetic world himself. Poetry becomes for him not only the poet's endeavor but his own as well.

The mountainous terrain comes closer into view with the poem "Suite Basaltique". From the word "basalte"-- indicating hard, dense, volcanic rock-- we may imagine not only the present condition of the mountain range but also its violently eruptive past. Now the frame upon which the volcanic rock lies, the mountains once formed the caldron for the seething molten lava. "Lichens," another series of poems, opens with the words "Même si la montagne se consume, . . ."/14/. Even if the mountain burns up, presumably by volcanic fire, it continues to offer its slope to those who want sleep. Continuing with the volcano motif but using it as a metaphor for writing, the poet claims that "Au rebours des laves, notre encre s'aère, s'irise, prend conscience, devient translucide et brûlante, à mesure qu'elle gravit la pente du volcan"/15/. [Contrary to lavas, our ink is aerated, is made iridescent, becomes conscious, translucid and burning, as it climbs the slope of the volcano.] The opposite of what is said about ink stands true for lava: as it moves down the mountain slope, it becomes dense, dull, and cold. We might conclude that the mountain remains the point of reference, that the basalt, the hardened volcanic

rock, covers the mountain-- contains it-- just as once the molten lava was contained within the mountain.

Although announced by images of stones and rocks, the concept of containment, or encirclement, extends beyond the narrow limits of nature imagery. Stones and rocks are not alone in exhibiting the circumferential in Gravir . Among the many allusions to the image of the encircling, the poem "La Rose et le Rat" conveys a direct metaphoric presentation of the circumferential in nature. The stage is the universe: the images of earth and sky, by their constant mixing, stand as metaphors of inverted human experience. The second stanza best elucidates this turning inside-out.

> Tout vient de se mêler étrangement, de s'éprendre et de se détruire, de s'étreindre et de brûler. La terre encerclait le ciel, je n'ai pas su l'arrondir. Aujourd'hui tout est ciel, tout conspire à l'oubli de tout. J'ai joué pour perdre et j'ai gagné: je suis perdu./16/
>
> [Everything has just mingled strangely, fallen in love and been destroyed, been quenched and burned. The earth encircled the sky, I did not know how to make it round. Today everything is sky, everything plots the oblivion of everything. I played to lose and I won: I am lost.]

From the opening sentence one glimpses the upheaval of the poetic world. Everything ("Tout")

enters into the melange of cohesive and repellent forces until burning levels all. The reflexive pronoun "se" intensifies the reciprocity, and by its repetition, serves as a link among terms: from the broad term "se mêler" to the more specific terms of cohesion, "s'éprendre" and "s'étreindre," to the nihilistic "se détruire." Each verb depends upon the idiom "venir de" (to have just done something) and so each verbal unit is tied to the others both by the pronominal "se" as well as by their common point of departure "venir de". But by the time the reader reaches the end of the sentence-- the verb "brûler"-- the interplay of pronominal verbs comes to a halt.

In this poetic world, instead of the sky surrounding the earth, the earth encircled the sky./17/ With such a reversal of the relationship of natural phenomena, the code of mimetic representation is repudiated. But just as everything-- all forces and elements-- had once clashed, now the struggle is over and everything is one ("Aujourd'hui tout est ciel"). However the homogeneity is not one of peaceful constancy but one whose very existence is threatened, for the very next clause--"tout conspire à l'oubli de tout"--introduces the threat of oblivion, of nothingness. Thus everything ("tout") has played out its strength in the confines of a few short lines and has announced its own end. And

whereas the pronominal pronoun no longer presents reciprocity, the last clause considered ("tout conspire à l'oubli de tout") confirms a course of self-destruction.

But this iconoclasm extends beyond the realm of the natural world: it includes human experience, for the next sentence indicates that in this topsy-turvy universe, one played, not to win, but to lose. And he won. "J'ai joué pour perdre et j'ai gagné: je suis perdu." And so, the reversal of the circumferential model of earth and sky, along with its announced expectation of impending doom, becomes a metaphor for inverted human goals.

As an example of one of Dupin's earlier prose poems, "Le Rose et le rat" recalls other practitioners of prose poetry; namely, Baudelaire and Reverdy: Baudelaire, whose prose poems often illustrate by their titles the meeting of incongruous images ("Le Fou et la Vénus," "Le Chien et le flacon," etc.); and Reverdy, whose prose poem "Le Voyageur et son ombre" illustrates on the narrative level a surprise element of inversion. In that prose poem the figure of a traveler strips off his clothing article by article until finally, naked, he enters the city by the opposite door. There he find that "Il avait pris la place de son ombre qui, passant la première, le protégeait."/18/ Here, just as in "La

Rose et le rat", the displacement of syntactical subject and object mirrors an inverted human experience.

"Le Rose et le rat" is not alone in Gravir in its reference to the circumferential. In "Coagula Solve" the encircling arises initially from the effort of the poet-- viewed objectively as the "Il"--and then usurps the position of controller and encompasses the poet. And, as in "La Rose et le rat", nature images accompany the reversal of human effort. In that poem, however, the nature imagery, by its convoluted appearance, serves to represent metaphorically human goals, whereas in this poem, the nature images react with the human representative instead of apart from him. That is to say that in this poem the nature images are pitted against the narrative subject "Il". And whereas in "La Rose et le rat" the transmutation is provoked by means of pronominal pronouns, in this poem reciprocity is syntactical in nature.

From the very first sentence, "Il enferme l'eau dans sa tour"/19/ the subject "Il" acts upon the water-- controls it-- by closing it up, by surrounding it. Throughout the remainder of the first paragraph, the "Il" dominates, a control evidenced by the initial position of the pronoun in each sentence.

Once having emptied himself of his challenge, however,-- a futile conquered emptiness-- he finds that the horizons hem him in: "les horizons le cernent". Hemmed in and restricted, he loses the powers of which once he had been master, and he becomes the one being controlled rather than the one controlling. And so the conqueror becomes the conquered, confidence turns to fear and laughter to despair. Although the poet dominates the first stanza, the second finds him as the object of domination, and the force controlling him is, as is the case in "La Rose et le rat", the sky. In that poem the inverted juxtaposition of container and contained, of sky and earth, stands as metaphors of the reversal of human goals and leads to the dissipation of hope; in this poem the container/ contained technique dominates as well. However, rather than establishing a polarity of natural phenomena, this poem pits nature (the sky) against the individual, and rather than achieving total annihilation, this poem points to chance, to a gamble reminiscent of the die thrown by Mallarmé's hero in Un Coup de Dés .

But in addition to existing as frames, or the providing the stage on which poetry is played out, rocks and stones in Gravir often suggest expanding or contracting movements. That is to say that rocks

and stones often become the medium of displacement: the importance shifts from them as physical objects to the movement they undergo or provoke.

"Dans ce pays la foudre fait germer la pierre"/20/. Set apart from the succeeding lines of the poem, this assertion opens "Le Règne Minéral" and introduces the code of expansion. With the prepositional phrase "Dans ce pays" the poet fixes the boundaries of the sphere of poetry within which a force of nature, lightning, acts as catalyst in altering the status quo of the stone. In violation of the laws of nature, the stone breaks forth, contributing to the unrest and upheaval of the ascent which dominates the entire volume.

The quest presents itself not only by means of substantives but also by verbs, whose subjects and objects would seem to defy association with such verbs (stones which break forth?). But the breakage intensifies the dense fragmentation: the breaking forth appears not just as a semantic statement, but by the separation of this opening line from the rest of the piece, physically illustrates the breaking forth. Images of peaks dominating gorges overshadowed by the even higher ruined towers follow the statement about the expolsive stone. Mention of the instinct of death brought by great winds helps to announce cataclysm. The mineral world totters on the

brink of destruction. and even age-tempered granite threatens to shatter: "Toutes les veines du granit / Vont se dénouer dans ses yeux"/21/.

In yet another poem the following lines illustrate the violent wresting which results in the breaking apart of that which was formerly cohesive: "Et la dislocation du livre / Parmi l'arrachement des pierres"/22/. Here again the stones themselves do not form the focal point but rather the violent action itself commands attention. The proximity of "l'arrachement des pierres" to the phrase "la dislocation du livre" implies by association a throwing into confusion or a disordering which can only be degenerative. Despite the ever increasing stream of words the poetic space continues to shrink, and elements of the mineral world signal that constriction, that ceaselessly contracting sphere of poetry. By the end of the volume the rock is consumed by fire ("la roche brûlant"/23/), the mountain is marred ("la montagne défleurie"/24/), and the stones disjointed ("les pierres disjointes"/25/). The strong density of stone cannot resist fire, nor can the mountain peaks withstand erosion. The world of Gravir is a wasted one, one which resembles the denuded expanse of du Bouchet's poetic sphere in which natural sources of energy (primarily fire, wind, heat and light) reduce man's presence to near

absence/26/. Despite all efforts to expand and to break forth victorious, the territory of poetry must relinquish its vitality and gives way to the effusion of words.

II. Gravir : Stars

Like stones and rocks, stars in Gravir have no one unified role, or even easily classifiable roles. However, apart from a few isolated cases, stars in this volume fall into two general categories: those in spatial relationships and those with temporal connections. Suggesting cosmic aloneness and great distance, or agelessness and eternality, stars often indicate the boundaries of space and mark the perimeters of the plane on which poetry is created. The stars above and the rocks and stones underfoot conspire to form the poetic arena. Neither always occupies its own space: frequently the celestial and the terrestrial collide and vie for the same space. One rock has been assaulted by stars ("ce roc assailli d'étoiles"/27/); another crammed with them ("Entre ce roc bonde d'étoiles. . ."/28/). The sphere of poetry thus finds itself tightly sealed, not only by the conjoining of rocks and stars but by their overlapping.

Despite the many times we find the mention of stars throughout this volume, on only one occasion, in the poem "Grand Vent," do stars appear in configuration with one another:

> Nous n'appartenons qu'au sentier de montagne
> Qui serpente au soleil entre la sauge et le lichen,
> Et s'élance à la nuit, chemin de crête,
> A la rencontre des constellations.
> Nous avons rapproché des sommets
> La limite des terres arables./29/
>
> [We belong only to the mountain path
> Winding in sunlight between sage and lichen
> And hastening to darkness, mountain top road,
> To meet the constellations.
> We have brought the edge of our cornfields
> Close to the summits.]/30/

In opening the "Suite Basaltique" the poem situates the speaking voice, "nous", out in the sun on a serpentine mountain footpath bordered by sage and lichen. Rather than a trail offering itself simply to be trodden upon, the path carries the travelers along the mountain crest towards the night with such force as to propel them to the far-reaching constellations.

Still on the mountain path the voice claims to have reached the summits which not only convey height but also, as we read in the re-naming of the peaks, represent the boundaries of workable land ("Nous avons rapproché des sommets / La limite des terres arables"). The close juxtaposition of the workable

lands with the constellations fosters a spatial polarity: in opposition to the boundaries on earth, the mention of constellations suggests celestial limits. Perhaps myriad in number and certainly separated from one another by great distances, the word "constellations" implies the far reaches of poetic space.

In the ongoing effort for transcendence, the path, in connoting the lower registers of the creative sphere, leads us to infer a system of polarities: sunlight versus night (with the implied dichotomy between obscurity and illumination); earth versus sky (with its implied duality between the known and the unknown, between certainty and doubt); matter versus spirit; and even contained versus container. The path, with its winding course indicative of the ineffectiveness of direct action, signals the circumlocutory nature of the quest to probe poetic space.

On another occasion two individual stars appear together:

> Les invités s'éloignent sous les arbres.
> Je suis seul. Une étoile. Une second étoile.
> Plus proche encore et plus obscure,
>
> Et leur complicité dans l'atonie
> Pour clouer le coeur./31/
>
> [The guests move off under the trees.
> I am alone. A star. A second star,

Closer yet and more obscure,

And their complicity in the atony
To nail the heart.]

Whereas other poems which include the star image frequently imply a poetic space external to the poem, the stars in this poem work internally to create a sense of cosmic isolation. The poem begins with the announcement of a frivolous twisting agony, and a woman frightened to grow younger. The speaking voice then questions the whereabouts of errant lightning. And then the guests move off under the trees, leaving the speaking voice alone, and aloneness demonstrated by the very brevity of the sentence "Je suis seul".

Existing as a compact syntactical unit, this sentence is in J. L. Austin's terms, constative. That is, it describes a state of affairs. But at the same time, the unit is also a performative-- it performs, by its brevity, its meaning./32/ Thus, the sentence enacts the solitude it asserts. But the utterance reinforces its isolation from the standpoint of genre since contemporary poetry tends towards the agrammatical in the expressions of its poeticity./33/ The fact is that the statement "Je suis seul" is not poetic, and its affinities with the prosaic only heighten its distinction from the context. By its anti-poetic nature the utterance signals to the reader a change in genre, a

prosaicness to which Dupin will turn with more frequency in Dehors and which will characterize his poésie-critique . Although the poetic mode in this poem reasserts itself finally with "Une second étoile", the intervening phrase "Une étoile" remains a hiatus, belonging neither to the poetic nor to the prosaic genres. In close juxtaposition with "Je suis seul," "Une étoile" profits from the sentences's semantic and formal isolation. And hemmed in by punctuation, the star is indeed set apart spatially from the surrounding utterances.

In presenting stars as delineators of space, the poet sometimes writes as if he has entered into complicity with the stars since they at times share qualities essentially human. A viper, the addressee of the poetic voice, is told that "Une dernière étoile embarrassée dans le feuillage te regarde souffrir"./34/ Here we find a pun on the word "embarrassée." The star is both caught in the foliage and is embarrassed. In reading the second meaning into "embarrassee," we sense that the poet not only perceives the star as watching the viper on earth, but associates the twinkling of the star from behind the foliage with the human condition of embarrassment.

In addition to simply attributing human qualities to stars, the speaking voice addresses them

directly at times. We find two instances of this personnification in the same poem, "Le Passeur". The poem, charged with vocabulary strongly suggestive of a seascape, situates the stars in a night sky, far above the earth. Addressing the stars directly, the speaking voice declares ". . .étoile, je sais ce qui vous surpasse en éclat: votre reflet sur des chaines brisées, votre infinie dans d'autres yeux comme une larme irremplacable"./35/ [". . .stars, I know what surpasses you in splendor: your reflection on the broken chains, your infinite in other eyes like an irreplacable tear."] Pale in comparison to their own mirroring upon earth, the stars, by means of reflection, establish links with the earth, thus helping to control the space they mark out.

The poem closes with another direct address. This time the poet calls upon the stars to grow old so that all that may be seen of the village are the roofs in flames ("Hâtez-vous de vieillir, étoiles, pour qu'on ne voie de mon village que les toits en flammes"). Such an invocation shifts attention from stars as luminous bodies in space to their influence on the human world. Accompanying the shift in spatial relationships, connections on the temporal level are created. Desiring the stars to grow old, the speaking voice, in effect, awaits the coming of the day when the red glow of dawn bathes the roofs in a

firey light. Stars in Gravir sometimes illustrate time, and this line conjoins the spatial interest of stars to their temporal importance.

In several instances stars indicate the passage of time--not simply the nocturnal as opposed to the diurnal, nor just a phase in the twenty-four hour cycle--but on occasion, the threshold between full daylight and darkest night or perhaps even the timelessness of eternality. Stars in the opening poem of the volume "Le Chemin frugal", suggest the imminence of night: "Déjà les étoiles / Déjà les cailloux" [Already the stars / Already the pebbles], as if one were not expecting nightfall so soon. In the poem entitled "Fidelite" the specific mention of asters conveys the notion of permanence as well as recently fallen night: "Les astres sont anciens / mais la nuit est nouvelle"./36/ [The asters are ancient but the night is new.] Two time frames in this utterance intersect: that of age, signaled by "Les astres sont anciens" and that of the day-night cycle, marked by the clause "la nuit est nouvelle." The juxtaposition of both clauses by means of the coordination conjunction of opposition permits a third nuance--that of an eternal recurrence. With the asters providing the anchor of age, and the newness of the night pointing to the succession of nights, we perceive a recurring temporal cycle within

a frame of eternality.

These close readings of poems from Gravir demonstrate that by means of careful observance of the presentation of selected images; that is, by comparing and contrasting what we read, we may arrive at certain principles at work in the poetry as the quest for transcendence continues. In not only Gravir but also in a later volume, Une Apparence de soupirail do we find nature imagery; and in the next section our focus shifts to the role of nature images in Une Apparence de soupirail in continuing to define poetic space.

III. Une Apparence de soupirail : Stars

Whereas an ascent up into craggy mountain peaks constitutes the dominant image of Gravir , the image of breathing through an air-hole governs Une Apparence de soupirail (1982). The first line of the volume sets the tone for the breaking through: "D'un fil à l'espace, interminablement."/37/ [From a thread to space, interminably] All the poems in this collection of short, untitled pieces are linked together by the urge to break into an open space, and in reading them, the reader partakes of the text's image of breathing to conquer that space-- a space

never clearly perceived. Mary Ann Caws articulates this theme as one of "breaking through to the urge toward some outside from some inside conceived of as imprisoning."/38/ Each poem adds it individually facetted angle to the entire construction and forms with the other poems a network of images, themes, and motifs. Among these we perceive characteristics common to Dupin's poetry: images of nature-- night, stars, sun, moon, stones; themes of language-- récit , writing, words; and concentration on violence, on exchange, on reciprocity, on emptiness.

Stars in Une Apparence de soupirail contribute to the oscillatory movement which is crucial to the poetry's dominant urge to break through to an outer space. Implicit in the oscillation we find antitheses, opposing forces, actions and reactions:

> Récit du voyageur. Ou de la mouette.
> Erigeant le temple. Annulant la mer. . .
> Dont ne subsistent que le mouvement des
> vagues, et l'étagement des terrasses. . .
> et le battement des étoiles contre
> le ciel. /39/
>
> [Story of the traveler. Or of the
> gull. Erecting the temple. Annulling
> the sea. . .
> Of which exists only the movement of
> the waves, and the staging of terrasses. .
> and the beating of stars against the sky.]

This story of the seascape-- replete with gulls, surf, and sky-- embodies the very essence of

antithetical, reciprocal movement. The participles "érigeant" and "annulant" illustrate this reciprocity: being erected is the temple, the staging of terraces, and being annulled is the sea, whose unrest cries out with the undulatory movement of the waves.

Stars complete the picture, with the mention of "le battement des étoiles contre le ciel." The choice of the noun "le battement" would seem to clash with the image of stars. One might well expect wings ("des ailes") instead of "des étoiles"; after all, the speaking voice mentions a gull, and the beating of wings against the sky is a familiar cliche while the beating of stars against the sky is not. Expectations aside, the image is that of stars beating against the sky. This image suggests the heights of the sky and contrasts sharply with the sea, thus creating, in addition to the horizontal plane established by the ins and outs of the sea, a vertical one whose poles consist of sky and sea. But even on this vertical network we find oscillation. Just as the movement of the waves provides horizontal reciprocity, so the beating of the stars underscores the persistent probing of the scene's furthermost reaches. Stars in this poem imply, therefore, the most spatially distant groping toward an outer space. Or we might say, they suggest limenality-- a poetic

no-man's land, the threshold of that which lies beyond poetry.

In yet another poem of this collection we find the same phrasing about stars: "Quelle créance claire oscille entre tes seins. . ./ Accompagnant, niant, le battement des étoiles contre la vitre. . ." /40/ [What clear credence oscillates between your breasts. . . / Accompanying, denying, the beating of the stars against the window-pane. . .] The beating of the stars once again appears in conjunction with the oscillatory movement characteristic of the poetry. This time, however, instead of beating against the sky, the stars beat against the window-pane.

But despite the difference, the function of the stars remains essentially the same: that of the margin, the threshold, the limen of poetry. Elsewhere in the works of Dupin, and especially in Dehors , the inscribed word edges ceaselessly towards the dividing line between the inside and the outside, and so in this poem the beating of the stars against the window-pane illustrates that constant probing towards the outside which permeates Dehors .

The image of stars appears but one more time in this volume: "Difficulté des étoiles à me suivre. / Allégresse du corps à les réfracter."/41/ On this occasion the speaking voice establishes a

relationship between itself and the stars. More specifically, it speaks of the difficulty of the stars in following it and then announces the happiness of the body in refracting the stars. All this follows, and is clarified by the first part of the poem: "Comme s'affile la lame, commence l'écoute, la dictée. . . / Quelques gouttes de sang, et cet étirement du vide entre chien et loup. . ." The listening post, the dictation (both implying human effort and non-existence apart from the human spirit) begins as the blade is sharpened. In this context of a cutting edge and of human activity, the stars have difficulty in following the speaking voice, presumably in its efforts (by means of dictation and of listening post) to break through to another poetic space. And the difficulty of the stars-- far flung across the sky-- to follow this attempt to transcend the poetic status quo only augments the near impossibility of such a task.

lV. Une Apparence de soupirail : Moon

Stars are not alone in announcing the outer edge of poetry. The image of the moon also suggests bordering, as in the following poem:

Un profil, et l'absence de récit. Je ne

meurs pas. Je ne dessine plus. J'émiette le trait à l'écoute d'un visage. Affilement de la lune à son premier quartier./42/

[A profile, and the absence of story. I do not die. I no longer trace. I crumble away the feature at the listening post of a face. The sharpening of the moon in its first quarter.]

Lassitude reigns in this poem. A figure of a profile appears and then the absence of any tale. The speaking voice expresses its current state--one characterized by a continuing existence, but one of relative idleness. In the midst of this idleness, the image of a moon approaching its first quarter breaks--its outline sharpening against the sky. What matters here is not simply the moon nearing its first phase, but the sharpening of its outline ("affilement de la lune"). Coming as it does at the end of the poem, this view of the moon is the one left with the reader; and in reading it, we may note once more the beginning of the poem: "Un profil,"--another outline. And so it is that the poem begins and ends on the cutting edge, the border between the written word and that which lies beyond. And the moon, the image which elucidates that dividing zone, belongs, along with the stars, to that vast corpus of nocturnal celestial bodies.

V. Une Apparence de soupirail : Stones

The image of the stone suggests neither force nor constructive power, but absence-- absence of all that lives, breathes, moves, and acts. In Une Apparence de soupirail , stones stand as monuments to the failure of all human efforts. The following poem illustrates the idea of the stone as representative of inertia:

> Maintenant je parle sans porte-voix. Sans ravin dans la poitrine. Sans éclisses dans le coeur. Je parle comme je respire. Je respire comme une pierre. /43/
>
> [Now I speak without megaphone. Without a gully in my chest. Without a wedge in my heart. I speak as I breathe. I breathe like a stone.]

The metaphors of the last two sentences stand out especially. The speaking voice likens its speaking to its breathing. In the same way that it breathes, so also does it speak. But the comparison extends even further. The speaking voice speaks in the same manner that it breathes, and it breathes similarly to a stone. The stone is the ultimate referent. Inert by nature, the stone is an end all in itself-- passive, sterile, devoid of any spark of life.

Coming as it does as the last word of the poem, "pierre" undercuts that which precedes. All promise of the speaking voice's success in asserting itself, in pushing beyond the confines of the "inside" to some freer "outside" suddenly falls flat. And the final word of the poem, "pierre," truly ends the poem, terminating all hope of its continuing effort to live.

In the following poem images of the stone reinforce and even expand the seme of the void:

> Dans cet oubli,--couvant la mort comme une pierre, attentif à ce tressaillement dans l'herbe--comme une pierre,--à la proximité de l'odeur de l'eau,--au scintillement des signes dans la profusion des cendres. . ./44/
>
> [In this oblivion,--sitting on death like a stone, mindful of the shuddering the the grass--like a stone,--in the proximity of the odor or water,--in the glittering of signs in the profusion of ashes. . .]

Beginning with the prepositional phrase "Dans cet oubli" and continuing throughout the poem, the emptiness of wasted, lifeless space-- suggested by the vocabulary "oubli", "mort", and "cendres", --hangs over each word. Within this framework, stone images intensify the negativity. The first image immediately follows the phrases, locating the poem "dans cet oubli". Separated from that phrase by a dash, as if to augment the space of the oblivion, the phrase "couvant la mort comme une pierre" implies by

association nothingness. The two components of this metaphor are not only semantically but also grammatically disparate:

$$\underset{\text{couvant la mort}}{\text{A}} \quad \text{comme} \quad \underset{\text{une pierre}}{\text{B}}$$

Component A, "couvant la mort" ("secretly nourishing death")--a verbal-- collides with a noun, "une pierre" (component B). Or, the juxtaposition can be seen as an intangible (A) with a tangible (B), or as conceptual (A) with physical (B). Left unanswered is the question of a grammatical subject: "Who (or What) is nurturing death?", and this lack of a subject insures that the composite scheme X (the product of A and B) remains ambiguous.

While the image of the stone enters into this metaphorical relationship with the effect of extending the condition of emptiness, another stone metaphor soon follows, widening the poetic void further: "attentif à ce tressaillement dans l'herbe--comme une pierre,--"(mindful of this shuddering in the grass--like a stone,--).

Just as in the previous metaphor, the elements of this one clash: an adjective ("attentif") with the noun "pierre." Whereas the first metaphor consists of fusing a participle and a noun, this one results from combining an adjective ("attentif") with

the same noun ("une pierre"). Here lies a potential problem. W.K. Wimsatt sees metaphor as "the process and result of using a term (X) normally signifying an object or concept (A) in such a context that it must refer to another object or concept (B) which is distinct enough in characteristics from A to insure that in the composite idea formed by the synthesis of the concepts A and B and now symbolized in the word X, the factors A and B retain their conceptual independence even while they merge in the unity symbolized by X."/45/

Now, the first metaphor (X) was comprised of elements A1 and B1:

$$\underset{\text{couvant la mort}}{\underline{\text{A1}}} \quad \text{comme} \quad \underset{\text{une pierre}}{\underline{\text{B1}}}$$

Because the second metaphor (X2) also contains the same element, "une pierre", the two metaphors clash:

$$\underset{\text{attentif à ce tressaillement}}{\underline{\text{A2}}} \quad \text{comme} \quad \underset{\text{une pierre}}{\underline{\text{B2}}}$$

Following a predicative formula ("A is B", etc.), these two metaphors would be tautological since both would share a common vertex. Under such a scheme, A1=B1, B1=A1, and for the second metaphor, A2=B2, B2=A2. Since both B1 and B2 are the same, then logically A1 ("couvant la mort") would equal A2 ("attentif à ce tressaillement dans l'herbe"). But a metaphor is not merely predicative, and is often

impervious to purely logical discourse. In fact, many critics maintain that it is the metaphor which distinguishes the poetic mode of vision from the logical mode.

And so the intersecting of these two metaphors broadens the possibilities for poetic refractions and reverberations. Grammatically, the substantive "pierre" stands as the pivot, out from which extend both the present participle (A1) (which, alone is unable to indicate tense and therefore excludes all time while, paradoxically, encompassing past, present, and future), and the adjective A2 (which without a noun to qualify, qualifies none and yet all). The incompleteness of elements A1 and A2 insures the profusion of possible completers: far from existing as a closed poetic system, these lines permit several grammatical and semantic choices.

Finally, an additional notation, the dash, extends the void even further. Although B1 is the semantic equal of B2, the typography of the page allows a not-so-equal relationship. Set off by dashese from the rest of the metaphor, the wording "comme une pierre" suggests, perhaps, an afterthought--as though it were tacked on to complete the image being proposed. Or, the reader may infer some underlying importance granted to the repeated image of the stone. However one reads it, this

phrase stands both equal and yet only similar to the prior mention of the stone. And in this similarity and diversity the seme of emptiness expands even more.

The association of stones with emptiness continues throughout Une Apparence de soupirail . At times the mention of stones serves as a commentary upon that void: the scansion of dry stones in a low wall, for example, helps define the void as evoking tenderness ("Tendresse du vide dans la scansion des pierres sèches du muret"/46/).

The image of stones often accompanies diminished human activity. In one poem the speaking voice admits to having strength only for sleeping ("Je n'ai de forces que pour dormir"/47/)-- for sleep snatched between the blows of the sledge-hammer and its stone temples,-- a sleep impossible to attain. The pounding blows hammer constantly, even ingeniously ("Frappant ingénuement") and absurdly ("Absurdement"), and their insistence strikes out at the life-giving sun ("Lapidant la lumière"). Significant by its implications of pelting with intent to kill, the verb "lapider" illustrates the repetitive violent acts which eventually snuff out life. Its semantic association with the noun "pierre" causes the verb to be pivotal in its context: not only does the image of the stone

dominate the poem, but the act of stoning conjures up a crushing, battering force whose end result is total annihilation.

Another poem exemplifies the correlation between the noun "pierre" and the verb "lapider".

> Pierres dressées, marches forcées. Il n'a jamais respiré plus librement qu'à travers cette lapidation immobile d'un corps, d'un autre corps contre le ciel./48/
>
> [Raised stones, forced steps. He never breathed more freely than through this motionless stoning of a body, of another body against the sky.]

The scene is that of a stoning. The figure doing the stoning is perceptible only by the stones lifted up to be hurled and his forced, almost agonized steps. And following along the volume's major image of breaking through to some freer outside space, the figure struggles to arrive at that outside space. To some extent, at least, its search has been successful since this motionless stoning of a body liberates its breathing.

In the epigraph to Une Apparence de soupirail , the poet rereads Rousseau's statement "Je puis bien dire que je ne commencai de vivre que quand je me regardai comme un homme mort"/49/. And so it is in this poem that a violent death inflicted by stoning provides the liberation so sought after. The emptiness suggested here by the stone image and even

furthered by the violent act of stoning is none other than the most extreme void-- death itself.

VI. Une Apparence de soupirail : Sun

Une Apparence de soupirail contains a few mentions of the sun, and each time the sun is linked to the volume's dominant preoccupation with a breaking forth. In the following two poems specifically, the sun image provides the backdrop for the violent tearing action inherent to breaking through.

> Livre dilacéré, dépouille ouverte. Source aiguisée à l'intérieur du sang. Et dans le sable ou l'eau de ta langue se perd, le long travail, l'interminable journée de soleil. . ./50/
>
> [Torn book, open hide. Sharpened source on the inside of the blood. And in the sand where the water of your tongue is lost, the long work, the interminable day of the sun. . .]

> L'eau ruisselle, je m'endors. Notre incursion réitérée dans la mort. Et le long trait bu--d'une déchirure dans le soleil. . ./51/
>
> [Water streams, I fall asleep. Our incursion reiterated in death. And the long draught drunk-- from a rent in the sun. . .]

In neither poem does the sun play a mimetic

role. Little does it matter what the sun represents (if indeed the sun does represent anything). But, we may note several similarities in both mentions of the sun image. First of all, the word "soleil" stands as the final word in each poem. Not only is it the final word, but it is punctuated identically in both poems-- by ellipsis marks. Thus, the poems resemble each other not only by their sharing a common final image but by their resistance to closure. Although the poems each terminate, they lack that element which would clearly define or delimit the unit as a poem. That which would constitute the poem's boundaries is absent, and the ellipsis marks announce that absence. Consequently the poems only trail off as if the sun were an image too vast to be fully comprehended.

Another similarity between the two sun images arises from the context: both poems establish their existence by violence, a violence not produced by beating or pounding, but a violence of lacerations. In the first poem the torn book, the open hide, the sharpened source at the interior of the blood all precede the sun image. And in the second poem the long draught gulped down seems to come from a rent in the sun. Roger Cardinal points to the sun as a focal image in the violent fracturing that leads to the creation of a poem. Drawing on texts other than

Gravir and Une Apparence de soupirail , he shows that the sun image "functions as the factor of illumination in a triple equation--sun = wound = text"/52/. The poetic act is one aggression, and the sun not only helps to delimit the space of poetry but does so in the cruel tearing of poetic perception.

The violence of both poems in Une Apparence de soupirail implicates not only the image of the sun but also that of water. Or perhaps it is the other way around: the link between water and the sun promotes the violence. Far from co-existing peacefully, the water and the sun play off one another with the water, in both instances, losing ground to the sun. In the first poem the day of the sun forms the temporal frame within which the water of the tongue is lost. And in the second the water consumed is that which is split from a rent in the sun. The sun image thus has the final say in this struggle to break forth. Gaining the upper hand in the combat, the sun forms the arena from which the violent energy is rent.

VII. Conclusion

An introduction to the poetry of Dupin, this chapter focuses on the use of nature images in Gravir and Une Apparence de soupirail in forging a distinct

poetic reality. That envisioned space of poetry remains elusive for in the headlong rush to probe the perimeters of the unexplored, the physical reality underfoot that anchors us to describable human experience crumbles. Gravir and Une Apparence de soupirail illustrate the dilemma of the poetic quest: that of carving a unique verbal space out of the same words that belong to common, everyday speech.

In examining figures of nature imagery, we learn that any search to detect systems and codes is doomed to failure because the poetry of Dupin overthrows clichés and resists metaphors. Understandably, then, the configuration of stars, moons, stones and rocks constantly changes when viewed from poem to poem. Although we looked only at Gravir and Une Apparence de soupirail , nature images appear in other of Dupin's collections, principally L'Embrasure and Dehors . A reader-response study of nature imagery in those collections would proceed in much the same way as we undertook this study; that is, by charting the nuances suggested by the images, by modifying our remembrance of past images and our expectations of future images, and then finally, by inductively drawing conclusions about the nature of the poetic quest. The movements and codes illustrated in Gravir and Une Apparence de soupirail -- containment, limenality, expansion, emptiness, and undulation--

are at best only suggested but never fully defined (or definable) by the images of nature.

Although Gravir presents a wasted, spoiled land, the physical markers that land are not simply inert. On the contrary, nature images participate in fueling the violence from which we catch glimpses of poetic fullness. Indeed, violence in Dupin's poetry is the sine qua non of artistic creation, and in the following chapter we shall examine this fundamental law of Dupin's poetic discourse as it is read in selected poems from Dehors and De Singes et de mouches .

Notes

/1/ Robert W. Greene, Six French Poets of Our Time (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978) 143.

/2/ Jacques Dupin, "La Difficulté du soleil," A la rencontre de Pierre Reverdy et ses amis (Paris: Galérie Maeght, 1970) 13.

/3/ Jean-Pierre Richard, Onze etudes sur la poésie moderne (Paris" Seuil, 1964) 272.

/4/ Dupin, Gravir (Paris: Gallimard, 1963) 9.

/5/ Georges Raillard, Jacques Dupin , Poètes d'aujourd'hui 219 (Paris: Seghers, 1974), 36.

/6/ Dupin, Gravir 9.

/7/ Dupin, Gravir 54.

/8/ Dupin, Gravir 35.

/9/ Dupin, Gravir 76.

/10/ Dupin, Gravir 9.

/11/ Dupin, Gravir 55.

/12/ Dupin, Gravir 94.

/13/ Mary Ann Caws, René Char , Twayne Series 428 (Boston: G.K.Hall, 1977) 32.

/14/ Dupin, Gravir 63.

/15/ Dupin, Gravir 87.

/16/ Dupin, Gravir 18.

/17/ Dupin, Gravir 18.

/18/ Pierre Reverdy, Plupart du temps (Paris: Gallimard, 1945) 19.

/19/ Dupin, Gravir 17.

/20/ Dupin, Gravir 26.

/21/ Dupin, Gravir 26.

/22/ Dupin, Gravir 55.

/23/ Dupin, Gravir 101.

/24/ Dupin, Gravir 101.

/25/ Dupin, Gravir 102.

/26/ Greene 126.

/27/ Dupin, Gravir 41.

/28/ Dupin, Gravir 54.

/29/ Dupin, Gravir 23.

/30/ Dupin, "High Wind," Anthology of Contemporary French Poetry , ed. and trans. Graham Dunstan Martin (Austin: UP of Texas, 1971) 117.

/31/ Dupin, Gravir 96.

/32/ J. L. Austin, How to do Things with Words (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975) 14.

/33/ Jean Cohen, La Structure du langage poétique (Paris: Flammarion, 1968) 57.

/34/ Dupin, Gravir 35.

/35/ Dupin, Gravir 79.

/36/ Dupin, Gravir 48.

/37/ Dupin, Une Apparence de soupirail (Paris: Gallimard, 1982) 9.

/38/ Caws, "Jacques Dupin: Access, or Speaking it Through," Poësis 5.3 (1984): 39.

/39/ Dupin, Une Apparence 21.

/40/ Dupin, Une Apparence 97.

/41/ Dupin, Une Apparence 92.

/42/ Dupin, Une Apparence 62.

/43/ Dupin, Une Apparence 35.

/44/ Dupin, Une Apparence 53.

/45/ W. K. Wimsatt, "Metaphor," Encyclopedia

of Poetry and Prose (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1965) 493.

/46/ Dupin, Une Apparence 65.

/47/ Dupin, Une Apparence 75.

/48/ Dupin, Une Apparence 63.

/49/ Dupin, Une Apparence 7.

/50/ Dupin, Une Apparence 30.

/51/ Dupin, Une Apparence 47.

/52/ Roger Cardinal, "Jacques Dupin," Sensibility and Creation: Studies in Twentieth-Century French Poetry , ed. Roger Cardinal (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1977) 227.

Chapter 3

Cataclysm and Cruelty: Texts of Violence

> Commencer comme on déchire un drap, le drap dans les plis duquel on se se regardait dormir. L'acte d'écrire comme rupture, et engagement cruel de l'esprit, et du corps. . .("Moraines", L'Embrasure , p. 76)

I. Introduction

The nature of poetry in postwar France has shifted from the strictly emotive and meditative to the embodiment of the ongoing struggle of the words to carve out for themselves a place in poetic space. The poetry of René Char, the eldest of these poets, is a poetry of roughly textured language imbued with a sense of new beginnings. Grounded in the austere natural settings of his native Provence, his poetry signals the preoccupation with the cruel engendering of art. Likewise Dupin, as Char's protégé, exercises a similar poetry, one which repudiates the recording of feelings as its sole end. For him the poem is the story of a mental struggle which must begin "Comme on déchire un drap. . ."

Presentational in nature, the epigraph allies itself with all of Dupin's poetry which describes its own engendering. From an initial state of dormancy, a linguistic tabula rasa, writing commences with

violence: "L'acte d'écrire comme rupture. . ." By tearing into the space of language, writing asserts itself; and the demands made on the poet by writing are not only mental but also physical. These short lines comprise the capstone to Dupin's poetic praxis. Writing for him results from the tortuous efforts of all one's capabilities. Act of violence, writing, for Dupin is also cruelty in the sense in which Antonin Artaud uses the term: cruelty in the all-encompassing sense of "to act'. Any act-- breathing, crying, creating-- is an act of cruelty./1/

Reflective of Artaud's perception of writing, Dupin's poetics of cruelty is not limited to his poems but finds reinforcement in his contributions as art critic. From the two faces of Jacques Dupin-- art critic and poet-- emerge a theory of aesthetics, a praxis of writing which, originating neither completely in his poetry nor in his writings on art, owes its sustenance to both.

One artist in particular to whose work Dupin has been attracted is Alberto Giacometti. This interest in the sculptor's works is not limited to Dupin: fellow poets Bonnefoy and especially du Bouchet have been influenced by him since the early days of their careers. In Giacometti's sculptures, paintings, and drawings, these poets have perceived attitudes

similar to their own toward the human condition and the nature of artistic representation./2/ One particular Giacometti principle which characterizes Dupin's poetry is that the artist, in an attempt to forge a new reality, must destroy that which lies in his path./3/ The making is possible only in the breaking. For Giacometti, writes Dupin, a vision of reality can be attained only after the artist totally cleanses away all convention and adopts a renewed look at the world. This look, however, has its price;

> Cette purification du regard, et la fraîcheur du monde qui lui répond, ne s'obstiennent qu'au prix d'un affrontement répété et violente avec la réalité, une lutte passionnelle incessante et incertaine qui tisse entre les protagonistes un lien privilégié, seul capable de mesurer leur éloignement et de signifier leur altérité essentielle. /4/

Just as for Giacometti, artistic transcendence is possible only through a violent and prolonged confrontation with existent reality: so for the poet Dupin, the act of writing demands as its base the rending upheaval of language.

In the same way that this violent linguistic turmoil demands of the poet an "engagement cruel de l'esprit et du corps", so the creative effort demands of the painter all of his forces. In a celebrated essay on Miró, Dupin observes that many of the

artist's paintings take their colors and forms not solely from the eye and the head but from the entire body: "C'est le corps tout entier qui a l'initiative et le contrôle de cette mise en liberté, de cet embrasement physique et mental."/5/ Dupin's sensitivity to the totality of the effort implicated in Miró's artistry reflects his own poetic creativity which demands of him intense physical effort. The poet's anguish in attempting to open up a new space of poetry finds expression in violence. In the following pages we shall study poems which illustrate Dupin's poetics of violence.

The scope of our study will be limited to the most representative poems which demonstrate violence as a means of transcendence; that is, selected poems from Dehors and De Singes et de mouches . In exploring the ways in which violence acts as a force engendering poetry, we shall observe violence on all levels: linguistic, semantic, and textual.

II. Linguistic Rupturing

To a greater extent than in the poetry of Char and du Bouchet, vehement turbulence and explosive breakage seem synonymous with the poetry of Dupin. On the one hand entire poems implicate the upheaval of natural phenomena and on the other hand, personal

injury: homocides, earthquakes, sodomies, tropical storms, assaults, and volcanoes. However the violence may be represented, the common denominator consists in the departure from the status quo, and in the rupturing of that which is considered to be "normal". In a poetry often dominated by clashing, jarring, tearing forces, we may find more subtle instances of equally insidious violations in places such as the first section of "La Ligne de rupture"./6/

The title is overtly descriptive of the poem: each line in the thirteen numbered segments in the group of poems is spatially separated from the other lines and forms the border of the "line of rupture", the gap which winds its way throughout the poem. The first line suggests stasis, as do other first lines of Dupin's poetry, for in asserting the lack of a destruction, the line affirms its wholeness. In conveying the state of poetic vacancy in negative terms, however, this first line sows seeds of disquietude and signals ominous violence ahead. The words suggest stillness, but as stillness which is uneasy-- a thin tenuous stillness.

In reading the second line we note the similarity between the words "l'alternance" and "l'altération". The first term, denoting repetition, and the second, modification, set the rules of the

game which is just beginning to be played--the game of turning-back-into-itself. The game, we read, "C'est la peau du dehors qui se retourne et nous absorbe"./7/ On second glance the two terms participate in the very game they describe: not only do the words announce a system of progression, but they embody that system. Signifier and signified become one as the second word, functioning as an alteration of the first, thus actualizes its own meaning by its alliterative and orthographic resemblance to "l'alternance".

Within the space of three short lines, therefore, the troubled calm is broken by a nascent game of poetry bent of disruption, a game which demands the transfer and intermingling of blank space and written word, of stasis and agitation, of constant progression and regression. Often this transfer or exchange occurs not between equals but consists in the overturning of clichés, the disruption of syntax, or the mixing of metaphors. For instance, the last line of the first segment reads: "la loupe asphyxie son maître, la fenêtre donne sur le talion"./8/ That the magnifying glass should asphyxiate its master shocks on two accounts: first, that a magnifying glass should in some way asphyxiate is to attribute to it a property not its own. A magnifying glass may cause to burn, may

enhance one's vision, but does not ordinarily asphyxiate. No respiratory functions-- only visual ones-- belong to the magnifying glass. Second, as an instrument, the glass serves its user; it can not initiate action on its own.

The second half of the line violates its semantic limits as well: "la fenêtre donne sur le talion". A window may overlook a street, a river, a courtyard, a valley, etc., but not a retaliation. In a surrealistic juxtaposition, an intangible concept replaces the tangible object which we expect to find. The subject-verb sequence "fenêtre donne sur" directs the reader's attention away from that window and towards the direct object complement. That direct object, "le talion", jolts the reader in his complacency and "retaliates" by forcing his attention back to the subject, thereby perpetuating by violence the game recently begun.

Thus the principle of poetic violence is inaugurated, operating on a linguistic plane. The rupturing evident in this initial poem of the series is of a syntactic rather than a thematic nature. In rebelling against linear, left-to-right progression, the poetry overturns traditional patterns of reading. Advances become possible only after constant, tortured regressions.

The poetic "game" of turning back onto itself,

the insidious practice of auto-destruction, resurfaces in the third poem of the series: the first line engages the reader in observing the cruel play: "Acquiescant pour disparaître, ou revenir, défalqué de la somme"./9/ Here we find two groups of exchange, the more obvious being the exchange of absence for presence (pour disparaître, ou revenir). Juxtaposed in the center of the line and linked by the conjunction "ou", these two verbs play off one another, each one cancelling the other. A second exchange, at opposite ends of the line, pits convergence against divergence. The word "acquiescant" implies a union of that which previously had been divided and most frequently denotes assent. But this unity is nonetheless incomplete, for it is "défalqué de la somme". The acquiescing is, therefore, undermined by fragmentation. The four terms-- "acquiescant", "disparaître", "revenir", and "défalqué"-- form a chiasmus, with each term annulling its counterpart.

But violence operates even between the chiastic pairs. The figure of that which comes together in acquiescence exists only to disappear, or when it comes back, is only incomplete and fragmentary. The words inscribed do not succeed in reaching fullness; each attempt ends in failure, the victim of inflicted violence. Indeed, the entire poem exists only as a

fragment of an undefined whole. Were lines and spaces to converge, the poem would disappear. Those lines which we read comprise only a part of that which is deducted fron the sum total.

Writing, mentioned overtly for the first time several lines later enjoys a false sense of security as a purveyor of truth: "nous ne nous trompons pas écrivant, n'écrivant que / les ôtages jumeaux dont l'intervalle est un masque"./10/ What are these two hostages which are penned, whose gap, or interval, is a mask? Can they be lines of writing separated by empty space? And if so, what can the intervening space be masking? Or does identicalness necessitate that the alternating spaces stand as the twin hostages, in which case the intervening line of poetry masks a hidden truth? Whichever reading is preferred (and both are equally possible), the turning inside out of poetry reveals an ambiguous alliance between truth and falsity, certainty and uncertainty. The stance of confidence in writing ("nous ne nous trompons pas écrivant") crumbles away with the insistence on the presence of the hidden ("un masque"). Confidence in the written word is violated and poetry, far from free expression, is shackled as a hostage.

In "La Ligne de rupture" the assault upon poetry has been insidious, intensifying gradually until at

the beginning of the fourth segment, the volatile force of writing unleashes all its pent-up energy: "Détruire l'écriture de cet espace oppressif et se perdre en / l'écrivant"./11/ By its proposal of annihilation, this opening line presents the antidote to the desire for destruction with which the poem begins. The initial quiescence has succumbed to a spreading infection. The space of poetry, conceived of originally as an innocuous gaming arena ("la surface du jeu"/12/) has become the oppressive space doomed to destruction.

Line succeeds line in a kaleidoscope of seemingly unconnected images, images often distorted by oxymoronic contradictions. By the time we read "nous errons dans le froid de plusieurs soleils"/13/, we realize without a doubt that the poetry has gone off course and that poetic logic, however faint to begin with, has been violated irreparably.

Although in another poem we read that it is the crossing which scands us and the trajectory which measures us/14/, discord soon corrupts the imagery so that the poetic "we" becomes the measure of the crossing and the scansion of the trajectory, thus illustrating the instability of the poetic image.

In subsequent poems, the search for a poetic logic is conducted within the lines of a pulverizing context: "dans la logique du récit la pierre

désirable roule au torrent inintelligible / inscrite en faux dans le contexte harassé qui la broie"./15/ Finally, the reader, co-partner with the poetic voice in the quest undertaken amid thick shadows of night, falls victim to the poetic word. Wounded, bleeding, chased by fire, he never quite succeeds in escaping the confusing obscurity.

The linguistic rupturing present in this poem creates a language of cruelty, a language pushed beyond all limits, a language evocative of Artaud who advocated a new poetic language destined for the senses rather than for the mind. According to Artaud, this language "permet la substitution à la poésie du langage, d'une poésie dans l'espace qui se résoudra justement dans le domaine de ce qui n'appartient pas strictement aux mots"/16/ Reflecting an explosive energy bent on destruction, the language of "La Ligne de rupture" approaches that space of language envisioned by Artaud--that space which does not belong strictly to words but to a total experience.

III. Initial Violence

Whereas "La Ligne de rupture" demonstrates primarily the internal linguistic dislocation to which the individual line is subjected, other texts

write the story of poetry as being the consequence of initial violence. In a thematic study of Dupin's poetics, Dominique Viart points to "Ballast" and "Un récit" as examples of stories of initial violence--that terrible rupturing prerequisite to the birth of the poem. But initial violence does not stop with the poem's inception. Once unleashed, it produces further disruptions which multiply endlessly. According to Viart,

> loin de produire la continuité d'un discours traditionnel, et même d'un discours de forme poétique, l'acte d'écrire, issu d'une rupture et rupture lui-même, engendre-t-il à son tour des saccades et des cesures, aussi bien dans la disposition typographique que dans la suite logique des phrases de tel poème en prose./17/

This concept of initial violence is not unique to Dupin's poetry: as art critic, he perceives the same principle in the work of others. About Miró, Dupin writes:

> De même les ruptures incessantes dans la manière d'aborder la toile ont pour fin de briser la linéarité de l'écriture, de faire éclater l'inscription, le foreclos, et de laisser affluer le vivant dans sa différence, le présent dans sa nudité, par les brèches ainsi ouvertes. L'apparence de désinvolture ou de négligence, et ce que la spontanéité du geste apporte, contribuent à démystifier les procédés traditionnels, y compris ceux de Miró, et à mettre à nu, à mettre en crise, les éléments de toute peinture./18/

This might easily be a self-reflective commentary on his own poems which, with their appearance of off-handedness and negligence, contribute to the demystification of the traditional ways of undertaking the writing of poetry and expose the elements of all poetry.

In telling the story of writing, the thirty-four paragraphs of the prose poem "Le Soleil substitué" (Dehors , 1975) demonstrate the metapoetic praxis of initial violence, from its inception to its agonizing irruption, and beyond. We encounter first of all the figure of a hand erasing a board. As signs and calculations are effaced, the empty slate becomes the screen upon which will be inscribed the impressions, alterations, and complications of the imminent poem.

The paragraphs which follow illustrate the process of poetic creation which must include fear: a fear on the part of the poet of silence and a fear that success will never come. From this stance of fear, poetic perception demands total elimination of all distractions so that the growing unrest underground may be felt, heard, and answered./19/

The fourth paragraph expresses this unrest: a rumbling in the basement, a desire to rise up, to be written, to attract writing and to inject it with incoherence. Sensory verbs such as "sentir" and "entendre", followed by ellipsis marks, link together

disparate ideas. As the initial words, not only in the fourth paragraph but also in the fifth, they bridge the succession of images and maintain a link with the initial state of devastation from which all violence must emerge. This initial condition of nothingness helps us to feel and to discover (in the language of the poem) that which is, that which already was, and that which would not be written were it not for an opening caused by a surge of madness. Writing is possible only through the frenzied tearing into reality. The text cannot be written "sans orgasme et sans blessure" (p. 26).

This account of writing continues with the reader joining forces with the poet who claims that we are the non-place and the non-object of a gravitation of meaningless signs. Without our knowledge, clashing forces are at work which threaten to rise up and to deliver space. We learn that we constitute that devastated field upon which the meaningless signs, converging and diverging, burst apart.

Infinitives, recalling the initial stage of destruction, appear again: "rompre, feindre. . . mourir, répéter. . ." They point to future action, to a slipping towards the enemy camp. With a mounting sense of danger, the images stumble headlong over each other, impervious to restraint, and the

jumbling of pronouns prohibits smooth reading. Despite syntactical completeness of individual sentences, any logical progression between sentences is only illusory.

Indicators of violence multiply. To a series of incomplete images including betrayals, blood, scars, and drowning figures; the inexplicable shifting of personal pronouns (from "elle" to "moi" to "nous" to "lui") renders the sense of the following paragraph impenetrable. The conventional syntax and the paragraph form of the poetry only heighten our perception of language's failure to convey meaning. Were we to find shifting margins and broken lines interspersed by ample white space, we would expect the incomprehensible. But empty signifiers arranged in a form which ordinarily signals coherence only increase our frustration.

Paul Auster aptly categorizes Dupin's poems as "tightly sprung, . . .dazzling in both their energy and their anguish"/20/: the verbal density and incoherence of these paragraphs evidence an anguished, frenzied groping for transcendence. What is significant about this section is that the sense of anguish is carried not only be the imagery but by the confusion inherent in the juxtaposition of pronouns. Dupin's poetry is a poetry of frustration, a poetry so obsessed with breaking forth into a new

space that the mounting pressure under which the poetic process is undertaken threatens to destroy that very process.

Unable to sustain the high level of intensity, the poem breaks down: "la paroi de son inscription éclate, se dissout--, et ce vide écrit encore. . ." (p. 29). With an explosion the poetic energy subsides, lapsing into silence. Ironically, the verb "écrire" is used here not in reference to language but in relation to emptiness. Language, battered and torn, now has a competitor in silence, whose status is raised from passive to active. Silence is no longer perceived as being the emptiness to be overcome (as darkness is dispelled by light), but rather as a force equal to writing in a violent contending for space.

Several paragraphs later, the question of writing is broached openly:

> Avons-nous commencé d'écrire? Quelqu'un s'éloigne-t-il quand nous écrivons? Le sol s'est-il affermi, le feu rapproché? Qu'est-ce qui commence quand je cesse d'écrire, moi, mort, déjà, considérablement? Qui se tait avec violence, à ce point? (p. 30)
>
> [Have we begun to write? Does someone move away when we write? Has the ground hardened, the fire near? What begins when I cease to write, I dead, already, considerably? Who falls silent violently, at this point?]

Such introspection only focuses the reader's

attention more than ever on the unraveling story. For fear that we remain ignorant of, or indifferent to, its progression, these questions rivet our thoughts to the status quo of the nascent poem and heighten our expectations of the "fire" to come, the creative burst to follow.

The leitmotif of a rumbling in the basement reappears, giving rise briefly to a surge of violence before settling back into a lassitude rendered hollow not only by the choice of vocabulary but also by the punctuation, alienating words and phrases from each other: "Cela qui se dessine, et s'élève, à peine, sur le trait d'une illisibilité éphémère, et sa place, vide, gardée, dans le texte substitué du soleil. La tête. . . se détache lentement. . ."(p. 30). [That which is outlined and rises, scarcely, on the stroke of an ephemeral unreadability, and its position, empty, kept, in the text substituted for the sun. The head. . . is detached slowly.] The rate of reading slows appreciably, reflecting the textual interruptions. The physical positioning of the statement, "The head is detached slowly", a phrase recalling Apollinaire's "cou coupé" from "Zone", graphically illustrates the separation it denotes. The reader now operates in slow motion as if mesmerized by his surroundings.

Writing and readability once again dominate. We

learn that everything derives from a former, opinionated error of language (p. 30). But perhaps more far-reaching is the assertion that the threshold of readability is displaced ("mais le seuil de la lisibilité se déplace"), the victim of an unnamed repression. So great is the dislocation that writing, "n'est lisible que dans le rayon de son agonie, dans le souffle anticipé de son explosion" (p. 30). In reinforcing the inherence of violence to writing, this statement links reading as well to violence. Not only is the text created in agony but the reader as partner with the text in the process of communication, also suffers the agony of écriture .

The following paragraph focuses more overtly on the distinction between écriture and poem. Without defining the difference, the passage indicates that the poem interacts with writing, here joining it, there departing from it, and again replying to it. We read that the poem remains the axis of the reversal of reality ["l'axe du renversement du réel"(p. 31)]. As such the poem occupies that elusive space created by the dislocation of reality. That is to say that in the quest for transcendence, the poem is the place where reality is overturned. The poem does not itself constitute the space of poetic fullness but only, always, borders it.

This precision of the identity of the poem as

the cutting edge of reality helps us understand the very next word: "Poème"(p. 31). Isolated from the previous paragraph by a wider than usual blank space, capitalized, and punctuated by a period, this word suggests autonomy--as if in one word is located the essence of the poem. The idea of a poem as that which forms the edge of the other side of reality can be reduced to this one word. However, the preceding clarification of the nature of the poem prevents us from mistaking this word for the signifier of the desired poetic space. That space, which the poem announces and approaches, constantly eludes us.

In the following paragraphs the breaking apart necessary for the emergence of poetry intensifies extending even further this story of writing. As the winds pick up and blow ominously, the poem continues both to weave and to undo its own composition (par. 26). The poetic voice questions the nature of the newly-sprung poem, but no answers can be given. Of the poem we know nothing: "Rien encore, ni comment. . . Ni ce qu'il déplace, ou étreint. Ni vers quelle cible il est lancé pour ne pas l'atteindre, bifurquer, et une autre ouverture éclairer"(pp. 31,32). [Still nothing, neither how. . . Nor what it displaces, or grips. Nor towards which target it is flung in order not to attain it, to fork, and another opening to illuminate.]

Although the subject of writing doggedly persists, the poem does not fade away. In the final paragraphs we can perceive a constant interplay between poem and writing, an interplay fueled by violence. Explosive forces similar to those which brought into being the poem now sustain it: "linges que éclatent, têtes qui s'égouttent" (p. 32), "Le spasme d'un éclair" (p. 33), ". . . le glissement, la dérive, la migration se poursuivent et s'amplifient. . ."(p. 33).

Before the poem came into being it was described as the axis of the reversal of reality, thus serving as the turning point, the threshold, the cutting edge, between reality and its displacement. Continued identification of the poem depends upon the perception of that axis. Therefore we perceive the poem in reading of the "ligne double, esclave et maîtresse, relief et gravure"(p. 32), in the reciprocity implicit in the statement "Nous mangeons la terre que nous mange"(p. 33), as well as in the sun metaphor: "Ou le soleil s'obstine à demeurer la metaphore enjouée de soleil, le spectre éblouissant de sa substitution"(p. 33).

Most tropes consist of an equivalence between two dissimilar terms such that the concept of one term synthesizes with the concept of a distinctly different term to form a unique composite idea. This

so-called metaphor, however, posits no two dissimilar concepts (the sun persists in remaining the playful metaphor of the sun; ie. itself); thus, that which is stated as a metaphor is not one. In addition to the violence in "Le Soleil substitué" represented by imagery (language denoting injury, death, etc.) and violence illustrated by disjointed figures (images which lack cohesion and register no meaning), we now perceive the violating of figurative language itself, which becomes the poem's latest ploy in attempting to transcend to another space.

Any attempt to create a metaphor with the use of a single term instead of two different ones results in ambiguity, an ambiguity present in the title "Le Soleil substitué". Is the sun substituted for something else, or does the title refer to that which is substituted for the sun? Both ways of reading the title are possible, and since the poem is recognizable by its reversibility, it is only fitting that the crystallized metaphor chosen for the title should reflect the identifying essence of the poem.

The poem ends with the following lines:

> . . . Roc d'un dogme brisé dans la mer, afin de nous détruire ensemble, juchés là, à ce point toujours en recul sur l'excès d'épuisement,--et resurgir encore, de sous la terre sans pensée, la terre qui se dérobe,--en jachères, et fleurs, et aridité,--notre sang pour tain de ce miroir: écrire . (Dehors p. 34)

[. . . Rock of a dogma crushed in the sea, in
order to destroy us together, perched there,
at that point always moving back on the excess
point of exhaustion,--and to surge forth again,
from under the earth thought-lessly, the earth
which gives way,--fallow, and flowers,
and dryness,--our blood for silvering of this
mirror: writing .]

Although the poem ends, writing continues. The threat of destruction is not new; we have learned that oppression and imminent danger, far from impeding writing, actually infuse it with renewed force. The surging power felt in this final paragraph draws its energy from the initial rupturing from which the poem arose and by which it has been sustained. The poem and writing intersect once again in the figure of a mirror which takes blood as its silvering.

Nowhere is the principle of initial violence more clearly evident than in "Chapurlat":

L'éclat--l'enfance--
des calcaires
après l'orage, l'éclat
d'une récitation de pierres
au sommet des labours. . ./21/

[Burst--childhood--
of limestone
after the storm, burst
of a recitation of stones
at the summit of a ploughing. . .]

By its initial position and by its repetition in the first stanza, the word "éclat" establishes itself as

the primal force of the poem, whose dominant image is that of a burst of lightning spreading across the sky. Unlike that of "Le Soleil substitué", the creative energy of this poem is not the result of a long agonizing struggle to burst forth. Here, no void offers itself as the gaming table for the imminent combat. No subterranean rumblings gradually gather steam before exploding. In the very first word, all the strength of the pent-up, kinetic energy is realized.

From this explosive point onward, the burst seeks its outlet in jagged markings across the sky. Graphically, the poetry reflects those surges: unlike the prose paragraphs of "Le Soleil substitué", this poem is built of lines of varying lengths, some of which trail off by ellipsis marks and others which dangle, suspended by dashes. About this initial flash, we can note its personnified nature. "L'éclat" becomes the grammatical subject (expressed later as "il") governing verbs such as "marcher" ("il marche"--p. 61), "compter" ("il compte"--p. 61), "aller ("il va"--p. 62), "suivre" ("il suit"--p. 62), and "monter" ("il monte"--p. 63). The stark combinations of the personal pronoun "il" and the present tense verb suggest an ominous splintering, a threatening yet strangely silent advancement. These pronoun-verb formulas act as rechargers, infusing the

poem with additional power and carrying it further along.

In the wake of the continuous barrage of energy follows the ruined, destroyed aftermath of the explosion. The traces of the spent energy, "le débours de son pas détruit. . ." and "les barreaux détruits, / à voix basse, déchirée. . ."(p. 61) suggest waste but actually serve to advance the splintering crack of lightning. We can detect the powerful surge in the havoc it wreaks. Among the first monuments to the destructive force are the chestnut trees: "Les grands châtaigniers fendus. . . ancrés sur l'abrupt, enracinés." (p. 63). As quickly as it strikes, the flash moves off, leaving behind its imprint on the sky: "--et le ciel se découvre. . . / et craquent les coutures du temps / dans les branches de châtaignier. . ." (p. 63). Violently destructive in its course the burst is at once self-consuming and self-perpetuating.

The trope of childhood provides discernable organization to the poem. By the use of dashes, "L'enfance," the second word of the poem, establishes itseslf as the appositive to "éclat", thus identifying itself with the initial burst. References to childhood reflect the progression of the lightning: the "rire d'enfant secouru [qui] écroule" (p. 62) resembles the splintering bolt of

electricity as it seeks new paths. But the violence with which the poem was inaugurated subsides quickly with the indication of the death of childhood ("mais la calculatrice est sourde, l'enfance morte. . ."p. 64). The image of childhood, which accompanied the initial poetic burst, now serves to mark the end of the first part of the poem.

New momentum is established in the second part as the image of lightning flashes restore breath to the genistas. This renewed surge of energy, however, is undermined by the figures of a widening abyss and fading laughter. Instead of evidences of a constant renewal, such as those found in the opening segment, we read of increasing rottenness and decay. The stage shifts from that of natural phenomena to the personal: the abyss, once associated with a rocky ravine, now seems to be a gaping wound whose stink permeates and corrupts. As the winds relent and as pains become more acute, disorder takes over--a disorder characterized by a troubling calm. The final image of the poem is that of a battered body, whose slash marks leave their inscription in blood against the wall. The poem-- begun in an explosive burst of lightning-- finds its culmination in a bloody disfiguring. As such, this poem bridges the gap between Dupin's works arising from the eruption of natural forces and those works whose violence

centers on personal injury.

IV. Textual Violence

Dupin's interest in plastic forms of expression and his curiosity about the experimentations of other artists regarding space results in the broadening of his own critical/creative efforts. Among Dupin's works belonging to this genre we may note "Arctique"-- texts presenting the paintings of Jean-Paul Riopelle [in Espace autrement dit , pp. 239-241], "Malévitch"-- texts presenting the works of the Russian painter Kasimir Malévitch [in EAD , pp 285-292], "La Rivière souterraine"-- texts presenting the paintings of Joseph Sima [in EAD , pp 211-213], "Couleurs à l'improvists"-- a collection of poems inspired by Miró [in EAD , pp 157-164], and more recently, De Singes et de mouches -- a volume of poems accompanied by illustrations by Pierre Alechinsky [Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1983]. Our present interest in textual violence draws us to one of these texts-- "Malévitch".

The paintings of Kasimir Malévitch (1878-1935) constitute a study in abstraction. His fascination with pure forms led him ultimately to Suprematism-- the practice of attempting to reduce the whole

pictorial field to its barest elements. After experimenting with configurations of multi- colored soaring rectangles and other geometric figures, Malévitch culminated his efforts in 1918 with the series "White on White". Despite the austerity of each canvas with its single white square floating on a shaded white background, the series surprizes by the possible variations of so naked a theme. The Dupin text entitled "Malévitch", rather than describing or explaining the art of the suprematist, simply presents the artist's obsession with forms. The paintings, prime examples of abstract art, have no external referents. Some of Dupin's poems on the other hand, especially the earlier ones, reach to the outside world of nature-- to rocks, trees, and suns-- for their reference. Others, in feeding on their own engendering and development, are autoreferential. The poem "Malévitch", in referring to the painter's canvases, finds its point of reference outside itself, and is, thus, representational. Unlike the closed pictorial art of the painter, the Dupin poem opens on Malévitch.

But in addition to being representational, the poem is also presentational in that it expands its own poetic reality far beyond the perimeters of the paintings. Like many other Dupin poems, this one is a meeting place for key systems and figures:

alternation, repetition, the search for space, and the gap. Despite the presence of these elements and codes, which are examined elsewhere, we shall discuss only the force of violence which dominates from the beginning of the poem:

> Fatal / comme en un glissement pur violent/
> premier visage diagone
>
> percer ce rempart et jaillir / que le
> rouge et le blanc s'affrontent / et
> s'annulent
> que le noir coupe le
> blanc / et que le blanc revienne du bord / ou
> de l'absence de limites / compact signifiant
> que les couleurs
> écrasées s'éteignent se retirent / nous
> hantent desormais comme exclues de l'oeil
> infaillible /22/

Just as in "Chapurlat" the first word of this poem announces violence. However, if we consider the opening word to be indicative of initial violence, we immediately note some differences from the two poems just studied: "Le Soleil substitué" and "Chapurlat". In the former the reader must follow the pre-eruptive rumblings through all their agonized and tortuous efforts in order to achieve climax; whereas in the latter, the reader is thrust without advance preparation into the poem by the explosive "éclat". By the initial position of the word "Fatal", the poem "Malévitch", with its violent beginning, resembles "Chapurlat". But by the ominous threat inherent in

"Fatal", the poem recalls "Le Soleil substitué". Despite the resemblance to the other poems, the opening word of "Malévitch" announces a distinctly different initial violence. Synonymous with the words "doomed" and "condemned" and denoting that which is fraught with acts or potential acts of fate, the word "fatal" suggests impending ruin or destruction--even death. Although in reading "Le Soleil substitué" we are aware of an increasingly menacing fear, the threat does not carry the same sense of predestined obliteration which the word "fatal" conveys. Thus, one word-- the opening word--bears the promise of a calamitous end.

Stylistically the poem accommodates sharp, piercing violence. The telegraphic style,-- isolated words, snatches of phrases, and incomplete clauses--all separated by slashes,-- effectively highlights the notion of violence. Consequently words such as "Fatal", "percer ce rempart", and "et jaillir" derive their force, in part, from the style. The poem resists smooth reading. Here we find no lilting verse, no easy prose, no rythmic cadences. Instead, words, space, and slashes collide, forcing the reader to make his way laboriously across the page. Read aloud, the poem advances in jerks, and the moments of split-second silence are as essential to the poetry as are the bursts of articulation.

The interplay of silence and speech (or of blank space and written word) is not new to Dupin's poetry. What is new, however, is the part played by the slash, whose audacious and insistent cutting into the terrain of poetry wins it a place among the inscribed words. With the entry of the slash onto the page, writing gains a foe as well as a partner-- a co-engraver and a would-be supplanter. In the course of the poem the vocabulary may lose its biting, violent edge, but the violence inherent in the harsh diagonal markings refuses to cede any of its force.

The presence of the dash signals a poetry which no longer privileges the written word. It announces a poetry of cruelty in the sense in which Artaud uses the word: any action destined for the senses rather than for the mind. Just as the theater of cruelty which Artaud envisioned is not a theater of representation but rather one of experience-- of life itself-- so the poetry of Dupin does not represent, but <u>is</u> . The dash, as the place in which signified and signifier are indistinguishable, repudiates the poem as mere representation, since unlike the written word the dash has no referent. In deviating from a poetry of words, the dash initiates-- in violence-- a new dimension in the quest for poetic space.

Verbs of confrontation help to sustain initially the violence with which the poem begins. Verbs such

as "percer", "jaillir", "s'affronter", "s'annuler", "couper", "s'éteindre", and "se retirer" suggest combative manoeuvres: bold initiatives, feisty reprisals, and hasty retreats. Just as the obliquely positioned rectangles in the Malevitch paintings create the impression of movement and reciprocity, so the arrangement of infinitives on the page suggests similar configurations. More specifically, we are aware from the beginning of violent slippages ("comme en un glissement pur violent"), whose sharp, penetrating bursts are accentuated by the slashes as well as by the uneven lines. Since the slashes and the unevenness continue throughout the work, the sense of displacement is ever present.

From the first page we realize that the poetic reality extends beyond a mere description of the Malévitch paintings. The mention of color-- red, white, and black-- recall the painted rectangles; and the text creates an ambiance of unsettled motion. Yet the poem adds another dimension not perceivable on the canvases: mood-- that discourse about a subject which reveals the attitudes of the speaker towards the subject. The subjunctive clauses "que le rouge et le blanc s'affrontent / et s'annulent", "Que le noir coupe le blanc / et que le blanc revienne du bord" illustrate the subjective attitude of the poet/reader. Pure objectivity is tainted by the

human wish or desire that the red and the white face each other / and annul each other, that the black cut the white / and that the white return from the edge. Volition implies a look toward the future, an expectation of an outcome coupled with a declared preference for a particular outcome. Expectation necessitates waiting, and waiting belongs to the temporal plane. Thus the poem departs from a concentration solely on the pictorial level and embraces the volitional and the temporal.

In the course of his wait, the reader follows a succession of images. An immense unitary energy lays bare the air by the inscription-rupture of a fulgurating geometry (p. 150). Indeed, in the brief instances provided by sudden, unexpected rupturings, we catch glimpses of the paintings: reconquered decentered canvases, surges of color, squares detaching themselves from the paintings. But along with these impressions arise a growing preoccupation with space, an increased awareness of violence tempered by moments of silence, and the consciousness of writing.

The typography of the page reflects this consciousness of writing expressed as "des angles les traces obliques les récits tronqués les scissions d'espace" as well as by "un intervalle de blocs disjoints / appareillés" (p. 151), phrases which may

refer not only to the Malévitch paintings but also to the poem itself, whose angles, oblique tracings, truncated narratives, and scissions of space create an interval of disjointed blocks fitted alongside one another.

Among the constellations of poetic utterances;, certain units stand out because of their aggressive overtones. Violence dominates the following segment:

> la croix pervertie / son rire / la sauvage
> et quadruple trace de la mort déjà couchée
> --quand l'énergie potence en
> effigie renonce / ou presque le sourire de
> celle qui / ou d'un air trouble / d'une
> multitude d'accords
>
> l'angle très ouvert des cuisses étant /
> recoupé par la constellation / le déferle-
> ment de figures dans le delta / actives
> blanches dans le neutre blanc
>
> ainsi je suis dehors les obliques /
> interrompues / traversent le double masse
> verticale de la potence érigée sur mon
> poing / faucon / fatal
> (Dehors , p. 152)

Not only does the poet transcribe the geometric figures from the canvases onto the paper, but he attributes intention to those figures: in this case, a sinister intent. The first image, that of a perverted cross, suggests a violence of deviation, with the adjective "pervertie" indicating either misinterpretation or moral deviation. The subsequent succession of impressions-- laughter, the wild and

quadruple trace of death, etc.,-- intensifies the sinister tone. After casting brief glimpses at the geometric figures from various angles, the speaking voice extracts itself from the imbroglio and, adopting a more objective stance, observes the vertical mass of the gallows erected on his fist. The juxtaposition of the final two words of this section, "faucon" and "fatal" with the image of the gallows enlarges the reader's perception of violence. The same hand which holds the gallows also holds the bird of prey: impending doom cannot be far away.

As the violence intensifies, so the preoccupation with opening new space looms greater and greater. In fact, the attempt to gain more space triggers aggression, and aggression is read more and more frequently in terms of the Malévitch paintings. Nonetheless the written word continues its refusal to grant supremacy to pictorial art. The canvas, territory of the melange of angular shapes and conflicting colors, finds itself inscribed upon the blank page. Subservient to the written word, the canvas finds its identity thsu compromised, its boundaries violated by the poem. And so poetry and art vie for the same space, each struggling with the other for complete domination, yet each unable to unseat the other. The finale reads as a rush of color:

le conflit encore
qui se projette blanc et noir / ou inversement
blanc sur blanc / hors du rouge surgi refoulé

du rouge pousse au blanc cristal abstraction
carré du sang arraché à sa douleur

l'attente / l'attentat de l'impossible espace
(Dehors , p. 155)

The conflict projects itself as white and black, or inversly white on white, exterior to the surge of red pushed back from the red pushed to the white, crystal abstraction, square of blood torn from its pain. Only upon reading this finale can the reader understand the importance to the poem of color, geometric figures, the interest in writing, and space. The last line, "the wait / the crime of the impossible space", designates space as the ultimate goal-- the goal still unattained. We realize finally that the quest for poetic space provides the major impetus for the creation of the poem. Both poetry and pictorial art seek their own terrain, and that search originates in, and is sustained by, violence.

In this poem, then, violence is but the means to an ever-elusive end. The search for space, doomed from the beginning, continues endlessly. This struggle is not without blood-letting, since in the course of the poem the color red becomes a metaphor for personal injury: phrases such as "l'obliquité du

sang" (p. 154) and "carré du sang" (p. 155) illustrate that the nascent ill-will has developed into explosive hostility. In imposing upon the reader an even longer wait and in subjecting him to further crime, the last line promises no relief from violence.

This poem, representative of all of Dupin's poetry, reaffirms the position of Dupin among fellow poets Char and du Bouchet for whom violence is the sine qua non of artistic creation. Even more fundamental to Dupin's literary heritage is Artaud, whose importance is not that of a poet but as one for whom life and writing are indistinguishable. In recording the mental and physical struggle which writing demands, Artaud sees life as intrinsic to writing-- life not in the sense of biography or external events but as a process of intimacy of thought and feeling before the advent of language./23/ As such, Artaud forms part of the literary context in which we find Dupin, a context in which all that is not dormant is cruel and where writing is the foremost cruelty.

V. Violence of Personal Aggression

Not only in "Malévitch" but also in "Le Soleil

substitué" do we encounter the personalizing of violence. There the image of blood, in forming the silvering of the mirror, connotes the ultimate sacrifice requisite to writing. In both poems the blood image does not appear until the end, thus signaling its degree of importance in the advancing struggle to transcend to poetic truth. Since blood, more than any other image which Dupin uses, designates the essence of human life; then bloodletting, as a personalizing of aggression, closes the gap between text and reader and induces in the reader the same agony as that which is perceived in the poem.

Many of Dupin's poems exhibit this physiology of violence, a violence which, in originating in blood, embraces all forms of personal aggression, including rape, sodomy, and murder. In a study of the poetic perception of being in Dupin's poetry, Roger Cardinal focuses on the image of the female body as representation of an imaginary incarnation of reality as the poet perceives it. Crucial to the illumination of being, Cardinal writes, is the tearing of flesh and the shedding of blood. After commenting on the poetic voice's numerous sadistic assaults on the woman, Cardinal shows that the figure of the female body constitutes a metaphor for poetry, and that violence is necessary for one to accede to

the heart of being. The act of writing, he asserts, "has become one of fracture and ravage, a destruction aimed at triumphant renewal, as if the disfigurement of the naked body, of speech, were the only way to ensure an intensification of poetic insight."/24/

From Dehors poems such as "L'Onglée", "Le Lacet", and "Ou meutres", as well as the recently published De Singes et de mouches all represent the forms of personal violence. The poems of the series "Ou meutres", numbering sixteen in all, exist as short bursts of energy, resembling in form the poetic moments of epiphany in Max Jacob's Le Cornet à dès or Pierre Reverdy's La Plupart du temps . Unlike Jacob's poems, however, the Dupin series does not constitute a group of autonomous units, and unlike those of Reverdy, the Dupin poems do not appear dreamily translucent. The thematic cohesion of "Ou meutres", dominated by references to violence, contributes to the intensity of the sequence. Upon first reading we notice several semantic groups: one pertaining to the body, another to guilt and criminality, and another to writing.

In the first category we find the following references to body images: "le bras est plus lourd que l'ombre"/25/,"bras amers"(p. 119), and "bouche/ blessée" (p. 119). The unusual characteristics of the figures of arms (an arm heavier than a shadow and

a bitter arm) signal that something is amiss. The reference to the wounded mouth implies an act of disfiguring. Together these images point to physical abnormalities, perhaps resulting from some form of violence. References to a body hint more overtly at violence: "Extraire le corps / de sa gangue de terre" (p. 121) and "un détournement violent de ton corps" (p. 124). Yet another group denotes guilt and criminality. In addition to the mention of guilty words (p. 116), we read of murders: "meutre non savoir" (p. 120), "meutre mouvement", and "meutre solsticiel" (p. 125).

The subject of writing, comprising another group of words, creates a strange alliance with the references to the body and to crime. Words, sentences, books, and reading no longer enjoy an existence of objectivity but emanate guilt and duplicity and draw their significance only from a criminal context. We read of guilty words wrenched from the sea, the execration of the mask of that which is written, the fall of any book closed again, full silence of the words, and a solstitial murder unreadable both before and after: images suggesting a violated language-- one stripped of its power to signify. In fact the last poem of the group claims a notch on a box-wood to be the only sign. Any attempt to find a well organized system of signification is

doomed to failure.

But violence in these poems surpasses the obvious. The turning, wrenching motion indicated by lines such as "A la mer c'est un arrachement" (p. 124) can be read less overtly elsewhere. We have just remarked the importance attributed to the notch on the box-wood. As the only specified sign in the poem, the notch is that space created by the cutting out, the excision, of wood by a wresting action. The setting apart of the notch as the sole sign leads us to wonder of the poetry contains other, perhaps less readily distinguishable notches, and in rereading the sequence we become aware of a notch of a different sort-- one woven into the fabric of the text. Although bypassing the imagery of a notched space, the following lines nonetheless suggest a linguistic notch:

> Foudre masquée
> physicienne devenue folle
> par exécration du masque
> de l'écrit
> excrémentiel (p. 117)
>
> [Masked lightning
> woman physicist become mad
> by execration of the mask
> of the excremential
> writing]

The consonance and assonance sequences /ɛKS/ and /e/ draw our attention to the last three lines, and we

note that by its repeated occurrence, the prefix "ex"-- signifying "out of"-- does stand out, as if extracted of excised from the text. These linguistic notches, however, form both notch and filler-- both the space left after the wrenching as well as the words which are to be cut out.

This excision takes on a slightly different form with the line "Une goutte de ton sang" (p. 118), a phrase which by the mention of blood evokes the bloodletting associated with the carving out of space and which, by the precision of one drop, suggests a painful extraction. We detect further wrenching in the image of extracting a body from its ganglion of burnt earth ("extraire le corps de sa gangue de terre brûlée", p. 121) and return to the sense "out of" expressed by the prefix of the words "excentrique" and "exclamation". By its position in the context "excentrique vol exclamatoire" (p. 124), the word "vol"-- wedged between two prefixes conveying excision-- hints at the possibility of its own excision, its own flight from the page.

While the violence in some Dupin poems arises from internal eruptive forces, the violence in others, such as in "Ou meutres", results from irruption-- that sudden forcible entry into another sphere. Frequently this irruption implies an initiator and a receiver, an aggressor and a victim.

Those poems which take as subject social crimes of violence-- murder, rape, and sodomy-- find their violence in irruption. This collection of poems, with its imagery of violent thrusting and wrenching, and with its textual notching, presents both victims and tools of aggression.

The sequence "L'Onglée" (Dehors , 1975), comprised of seven poems numbered in descending order, presents a yet more ominous cruelty. The numbering of the poems resembles a sinister countdown signaling the imminent disruption of order. In reading the texts we immediately note the broken lines of words and the gaps separating seemingly senseless phrases. In fact, the poems themselves seem to be constructed from opaque language in which meaning is repudiated and randomness embraced. We cannot read these lines without becoming aware of a wrenching violence, one which, rather than reflecting a pre-conceived thought, is read in the very density of the word itself.

Here, as elsewhere, the subject of writing surfaces, annonced from the beginning by the word "Lettre". In the next segment we sense a limitation imposed by the writing process:

Ses largesses

évitant l'embuscade et les fièvres

mais restreinte en même temps
par la procédure écrite /26/

[Its bounty

avoiding the ambush and the fevers
but restricted at the same time
by the written procedure]

Whereas in other poems writing proves to be the exercise requisite to expansion, here the process of writing is confining. The indicators of violence, "l'embuscade et les fièvres", lie outside the perimeters of writing. In fact, in the following segment we read of violence which is "hors-temps hors-texte" (p. 53). Yet the link between writing and violence is strong. In reading of the "trébuchet de la terreur d'écrire" (p. 52), we sense the captive, stifling isolation which is the terror of writing.

In addition to the violence associated with the writing process, we read of violence in other figures: of striking in "son frappement minuscule" (p. 51); of emprisoning, in "les nombres ont cadenassé ses rivales" (p. 51); and of tearing, in "elle éclaire ce qu'elle déchire" (p. 52). But the most abusive instances of injury are the personal ones, those evoking assault and murder. The figure of

a face is linked to the rehearsal of a murder ("visage lié à la répétition / d'un meutre" [p. 53]), a rehearsal which, being repeated in the following section, actually becomes the first of two rehearsals and permits the reader to anticipate the criminal act itself. The final segment of the poem provides the scenario for the murder:

> mais la table sur laquelle ton corps se
> casse est de pierre, est immense est torride
> est battue par un vent qui ne
> faiblit pas
>
> à partir d'une impropriété tout devient
> nourriture foudre paresseuse autour de tes
> chevilles (p. 57)
>
> [but the table upon which your body is
> broken is of stone, is immense is torrid
> is beaten by a wind which does not
> abate
>
> from one impropriety everything becomes
> nourishment lazy lightning around your
> ankles]

This is no ordinary murder. The predominance of the stone slab suggests a sacrificial rite, an attempt at appeasement. We read that from one impropriety everything becomes nourishment: it is this nourishment which justifies the brutal slaying.

Thus far, in all the poems we have examined from Dehors , writing and violence are closely allied. Although violence may implicate much more than the subject of writing, writing begins in violence. Some

poems, such as "Le Soleil substitué", are but stories of writing, and in reading them, we find ourselves in the very process of écriture . The nature of violence varies from the strictly natural forces of lightning claps, thunderbolts, and volcanoes to the more personal incidents of aggression. Indeed the image of blood (especially in "Le Soleil substitué" and in "Malévitch") connotes the ultimate price paid for writing.

A later collection of poems, De Singes et de mouches (Montpellier; Fata Morgana, 1983) also illustrates the relationship between violence and writing. Unlike the earlier poems, those in this collection seem playful. As the title suggests, the two major images are monkeys and flies, and the texts present these dancing figures in their lively games of mimicry, their naughty puns and slapstick humor. But the facade of saucy antics only veils an underlying ill-will which grows more sinister as the poems progress. Words denoting crimes-- sodomy, rape, and murder-- and the attendant stranglings, induced deaths, and stabbings, quickly transform the innocent monkeyshines into a nightmare of diabolical terror. Here, just as in "Le Soleil substitué", fear is said to precede writing, for the speaking voice asserts:

. . .j'écris quand

dans la distance
sous les engrais de l'angoisse

gicle la peur

qui n'a plus que mots
que couteaux

pour étalonner la douleur /27/

[I write when

in the distance
under the fertilizers of anguish

fear spurts out

which no longer has but words
but knives

to gauge pain]

Constative in nature, these lines state the condition of fear and pain from which writing arises. The fear which spurts up in an atttempt to gauge pain serves to trigger writing. The fear itself, we read, is expressed by words which are but knives. Thus violence resides in the text, not only in those signifiers of violence, but in the sharp, cutting edge of the words themselves.

Even in this passage we may detect traces of the blood image so crucial elsewhere to writing. The verb "gicler", used here in connection with fear, invokes by its accustomed usage in relationship to blood, as sense of chilling cruelty. Although not explicit in these lines, blood is nevertheless present metaphorically. Carrying the idea of blood,

the verb "gicler" thus imposes upon the signifier "fear" a meaning other than its own. Once this metaphorical relationship between fear and blood is established, we may read the subsequent references to fear and its lexical variant "terror" as similar metaphors of blood.

Just as fear and blood join together metaphorically, so the link between the blood image and writing tightens. In the following lines, the two past participles "écrit" and "versé" create, both by their linear contiguity as well as by their similar grammatical function, a mutual identity:

> tant que le sang
> écrit versé
> dehors
>
> continue
> de couler dedans (p. 35)
>
> [While the blood
> written spilled
> outside
>
> continues
> to flow inside]

Blood, no longer a property solely of the veins, writes. Blood spilled in violence is also blood spilled as ink. From another perspective, we could say that writing, that irruptive force acting upon an outside, is but that energy which flows ("couler") internally.

Lest we think the identification of blood and ink to be arbitrary, we have only to read elsewhere to be assured that the identification is deliberate. In a passage which conveys the uneasy calm surrounding a disaster, we read that poison will never be rectified, nor will its underlying meaning be established "dans le sang bifurqué / du singe hurleur / dans l'encre du scribe absous" (p. 20). The repetition of the preposition "dans" permits us to detect a syntactical relationship between the divided blood of the howler monkey and the ink of the absolved scribe. The howler monkey, terrorized and tortured, and the scribe, the perpetrator of cruelty, seem to become one under the united forces of blood and ink.

De Singes et de mouches stands as a synthesis of all the elements of personal aggression read in the preceding poems. In this collection, just as in the poem "Ou meutres", we discern the personalizing of violence both from the perspective of aggressor as well as from that of victim. The sinister tone of predestined fate in "L'Onglée" reappears in De Singes et de mouches . In fact, the terror expressed in "L'Onglée" is the same terror, only heightened, found in the more recent poems. What distinguishes De Singes et de mouches from "Ou meutres" and "L'Onglée" is essentially the intensity of the

violence of the former, an intensity strengthened by metaphorical discourse. Whereas in the other poems the ideas of writings, blood, guilt, and force may each be considered in isolation, the same notions in De Singes et de mouches merge, by means of metaphor, into a spreading morass of violent currents and countercurrents, a morass in which the component elements blend indistinguishably.

VI. Conclusion

Michael Bishop notes that art, for Dupin, whether it be the art of Kandinsky, Miró, or Giacometti, "involves no avoidance of reality or matter, but a working through it, into it, in it."/28/ This perception of others' artistic endeavors finds expression in his own creative work. Exhibiting a dynamism motivated by a desire to express what lies beyond representation and beyond discourse, the poetry of Dupin works through, into, and in reality with relentless violence.

To study violence in Dupin's poetry is to study writing, since Dupin's poetry does not exist apart from violence. Just as for Giacometti a new vision of artistic reality can be reached only after a total razing of traditional expectations and procedures, so for Dupin can the search for a new poetic space be

conducted only be means of violence. Indeed, violence, as prescribed modus operandi, constitutes the fundamental law of poetic discourse.

With its fracturing of logical syntax, the poem "La Ligne de rupture" demonstrates the internal linguistic dislocation necessary for the staking out of new poetic territory. This poem stands in contrast to those poems which tell the story of writing. Violence in the latter group is read as the progressive development of forces and images culminating in the creation of the poem, whereas in "La Ligne de rupture" violence targets not the anticipated poem as a whole but rather the foundational lines themselves. The result is a poem which finds its unity, paradoxically, in its succession of disjointed, pulverized utterances.

As exercises in initial violence, "Le Soleil substitué" and "Chapurlat" present nuanced stories of writing. Both draw their impetus form violent forces but each records that tearing into another poetic reality differently. Perhaps more importantly, both illustrate the self-perpetuating nature of violence, which acts not only as catalyst-- as the initial spark in the writing process-- but also as sustaining energizer in the quest for the poem. More militant than these, the poem "Malévitch" is not content to be the passive victim of violence but readily engages

its very textual markings in an active combat with violence in an attempt to carve out its own space. Under the threat of impending doom writing unleashes its attack upon the blank page, employing as tools of aggression arms heretofore insignificant: geometric forms, color, and allusions to personal crime.

The physiological manifestations of violence in "Ou meutres", "L'Onglée", and De Singes et de mouches introduce to the study of Dupin's poetry a heightened sense of anguish from which even the reader is not exempt. In shifting the theater of violence from the strictly natural to the personal and social, these poems close the gap between text and reader, thereby implicating the reader in the writing process. Bloodletting in particular, the sign of ultimate torture and pain, doubles as the supreme, excruciating force which writes. The search for poetic space-- no longer the concern solely of the poet-- becomes the campaign of the reader, a campaign which, conducted in fear and fraught with hardships, never quite reaches its goal.

Notes

/1/ Bettina Knapp, Antonin Artaud: Man of Vision (New York: Avon Books, 1969) 107.

/2/ Richard Stamelman, "The Art of the Void: Alberto Giacometti and the Poets of L'Ephémère ", L'Esprit créateur 22.4 (1982): 17.

/3/ Robert W. Greene, Six French Poets of Our Time (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978) 142.

/4/ Jacques Dupin, "La Réalité impossible", Saint-Paul-de-Vence, Fondation Maeght July-Sept. 1978, rpt. in L'Espace autrement dit (Paris: Galilée, 1982) 55.

/5/ Dupin, "Les peintures récentes de Miró au Grand Palais", Paris: Editions des musées nationaux, 17 May-13 October 1974, rpt. in L'Espace autrement dit , 179.

/6/ Dupin, Dehors (Paris: Gallimard, 1975) 9.

/7/ Dupin, Dehors 9.

/8/ Dupin, Dehors 11.

/9/ Dupin, Dehors 11.

/10/ Dupin, Dehors 12.

/11/ Dupin, Dehors 9.

/12/ Dupin, Dehors 13.

/13/ Dupin, Dehors 14.

/14/ Dupin, Dehors 22.

/15/ Dupin, Dehors 22.

/16/ Antonin Artaud, Le Théâtre et son double (Paris: Gallimard, 1964) 55.

/17/ Dominique Viart, L'Ecriture seconde: la pratique poétique de Jacques Dupin (Paris: Galilée, 1982) 26-27.

/18/ Dupin, "peintures récentes" 181.

/19/ The page numbers for all of the references

to "Le Soleil substitué" (Dehors) are indicated in the text.

/20/ Auster, ed., introduction, The Random House Book of French Poetry (New York: Random House, 1982) xviv.

/21/ Dupin, Dehors 60. The page numbers for all of the subsequent references to "Chapurlat" are indicated in the text.

/22/ Dupin, Dehors 149. The page numbers for all of the subsequent references to "Malévitch" are indicated in the text.

/23/ Auster, Random xli.

/24/ Roger Cardinal, "Jacques Dupin," Sensibility and Creation: Studies in the Twentieth-Century French Poetry , ed. Roger Cardinal (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1977) 220-240.

/25/ Dupin, Dehors 115. Subsequent references to this collection are indicated in the text.

/26/ Dupin, Dehors 52. Subsequent references to "L'Onglée" are indicated in the text.

/27/ Dupin, De Singes et de mouches (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1983) 9. Subsequent references to this collection are indicated in the text.

/28/ Michael Bishop, "Jacques Dupin: Art and Poetry," Contemporary Literature 21 (1980): 616.

Chapter 4

Gaps, Fissures, and the Promise of Space Beyond

Par une brèche dans le mur,
La rosée d'une seule branche
Me rendra tout l'espace vivant
("Le Prisonnier", Gravir ,p.56)

I. Introduction

If, in Dupin's poetics, violence is that force from which all writing emanates; then gaps, fissures, and all other images and textual manifestations of openings are witnesses to that force. The ongoing struggle to create poetic space demands energy--energy spent in testing every barrier, every limit, for weaknesses through which writing can pierce in its attempt to accede to a fresh space. In the epigraph we read that the breach in the wall promises access to living space; likewise, textual gaps and images of gaps stand as those passageways forged by violence which ultimately lead to another reality.

By its reliance upon gaps and breaches as those conduits to another reality, Dupin's poetry resembles that of Reverdy, for whom the figure of the hole--"le trou"-- indicates ontological fullness./1/ In Reverdy's collection of poems La Lucarne ovale , poetry finds its essence in the passage through the gaping hole afforded by the dominant image of a

dormer window. But whereas for Reverdy the poem is the crystalline product of the almost mystical encounter of the natural world with the spiritual, for Dupin the poem results from the hard-fought physical struggles of a richly textured language seeking a new language. The gaps and fissures testify to the existence of the propelling force of poetic creation.

We must not assume that every opening will lead us closer to the desired space; the quest is not that simple. Just as writing may be approached only by repeated tearings into the unknown and only after exhaustive circuitous efforts-- both mental and physical,-- so must we explore numerous fissures and experience countless dead-end passageways before reaching the unknown. In an essay on the artistry of Kandinsky, Dupin, as art critic, regards the painter as "le créateur solitaire pour lequel chaque tableau marque un commencement, un nouveau départ dans l'inconnu, et dont la marche en avant se poursuit quand les théories et les constructions de l'esprit cessent d'être un viatique suffisant."/2/

The poet himself undertakes his search in much the same manner-- groping, with false starts, forced repeatedly to begin over and over again. The ever present images of openings, besides testifying to the violent engendering of the poetry, evidence the

continuing attempts for a successful beginning.

Since the goal exists only as an unfocused target, all attempts to reach that target are but shots in the dark, a catalog of overlapping, even contradictory, utterances. As such, the poems resemble the drawings of Alberto Giacometti, about which Dupin writes:

> Dans les dessins, l'imprécision due à l'approche et à la distance dicte la multiplicité des lignes qui se cherchent et s'éprouvent sollicitent la ressemblance sans délimiter de contour ni arrêter la forme; elle commande le trait lacunaire, l'immensité de l'espace; elle appelle les traces de gomme ouvrant des brèches dans le reseau des lignes pour la circulation du vide et la pénétration de l'air./3/

Likewise in Dupin's poems, especially in those appearing as a series, the multiple occurrences of images of breaches and fissures obscure the nature of the desired poetic space; and the textual gaps, in permitting the free circulation of emptiness among the inscribed words and markings, create of the individual poems a loose network unanimous in its endeavor to achieve a reality beyond.

The proliferation of figures of openings merits our attention, and so we shall begin this chapter by considering those images, commencing with poems from Gravir and progressing to examples from L'Embrasure . Perhaps more important to the quest than the images

of breaches and gaps are those instances of textual gaps. After establishing the importance of reading those textual fissures, we shall note their occurrence in "Saccades" (Gravir), "Malévitch" (Dehors), and in Une Apparence de soupirail , and elsewhere.

II. Images of Gaps

Dupin's first major collection of poems, Gravir (1963), reveals the poet's obsession with transcending to another world. Situated amidst a backdrop of craggy peaks, sunlit slopes, and rushing torrents, the poetic voice undertakes an ascent suggested by the title of the collection. The impetus to attain dizzying heights, the heady realm of poetry, remains unfazed by the difficulties encountered-- thirst, fatigue, storms, and the unevenness of the pathway. Despite all, the climb continues. The energy to push forward never subsides, and the expectation of eventually reaching another sphere never wanes. In her collection of essays situated around the metaphor of passage, Mary Ann Caws charts the passage in Dupin's poetic landscape. Taking as her point of departure Gravir , Caws reads Dupin's poetry as an arduous uphill climb./4/

Climbing presupposes the existence of a trail,

and the opening poem of the collection "Le Chemin frugal", with its open invitation "Chassez-moi, suivez-moi"/5/, extends the quest to the reader who, along with the poet, finds himself treading upwards upon the twisting pathway.

By no means easy, the trail is ridden with pitfalls. The poems, some written as free verse, others as prose poems; some brief, others lengthy sequences; create by their dissimilarity the rough terrain to be climbed. The figure of the trail recalls the poetry of Reverdy. Jean-Pierre Richard notes that for Reverdy, the poem is itself a trail, "un chemin qui ne va nulle part", a trail whose structure "réflète celle de l'expérience qu'il nous oblige en même temps à traverser: suite discontinue d'images, kaléidoscope de sensations"./6/ Similarly for Dupin the image of the trail reflects the helpless wanderings suggested by the individual poems. The quest to accede to a new space of poetry continues, and consequently, the trail upon which the reader climbs leads nowhere.

It is in this world that we find gaping holes and threatening fissures. Vestiges of past violence as well as simply signs of decay, these openings testify to the ongoing attempt to transcend to another reality. Even nature itself engages in this endeavor, for we read that the sun hollows out its

route into the rock ("Parmi les Pierres Eclatées", G 35). The verb employed to indicate the hollowing out, "creuser", appears in another poem. In the following lines, "Mon corps, tu n'occuperas pas la fosse / Que je creuse, que j'approfondis chaque nuit" (G 102), the speaking voice, rather than a force of nature, governs the verb "creuser". The process of carving out a space implies aggression, and this aggression draws its strength not only from external energies (such as the sun) but also from within. As the quest is shared by both poet and reader, the reader finds himself to be an accomplice of the poetic voice, in pursuing the same goal by the same means.

We must not assume that the aggression is always perpetrated with confidence. Indeed, on occasion the poetic voice admits to self-doubt. In one of the darker moments of the quest, the speaking voice paints a fatalistic scene, one which he claims is not exempt from ruptures, felonies, and tremors; or, in other words, from his own imprecations and crossings out (G 47). Thus, ruptures and gaps may signal the indecision of the poet who, despite his great desire for transcendence, knows not how to proceed, and, consequently, is constantly obliged to begin again.

The poetic enterprise, while fraught with difficulties, also has its treasured moments. From

time to time in the midst of the arduous climb, we catch a glimpse of the promised land in the image of the beacon light shining in the darkness. Moments such as these come as refreshing breezes, enabling the poet to lift his eyes from the stony trail and to renew his vision. "O cendre éprise sous la langue, / Brèche dans l'horizon!" (G 54). Resounding with grandeur common to the songs of Saint-John Perse, these lines invoke for a fleeting instant the breach in the horizon which leads to hope.

But only for a brief instant, since in the very next line our attention turns again to the path underfoot, to ". . .ce roc bondé d'étoiles et son sosie le gouffre." The rock crammed with stars has as its double an abyss. The exhilaration of hope is countered by the pit of despair. And so, by the close juxtaposition of these two images of openings--the breach and the gulf,-- we realize the complexity with which this movement toward transcendence advances. Roger Cardinal considers the image of the gap to be the point of juncture between a restricted, finite consciousness and an absolute, more meaningful reality. For him the gap gives the poetic voice hope in achieving contact with distant space.

The varied representation of the gap, introduced in Gravir , undergoes some changes in Dupin's next major collection, L'Embrasure (1969). The very title

of the volume opens on the figure of a gap but expands that image through its polyvalent associations. An "embrasure" may refer to an opening in the wall, to a window recess, to a window-seat as the privileged place for an intimate tête-à-tête, or even, in a military context, to the notch in the wall of a fortress. Obviously, the image of an opening or a breach, with all of its attendent implications, dominates the collection in much the same way that the image of a dormer window dominates Reverdy's La Lucarne ovale .

After reading Gravir , we may well wonder if the importance of the gap in promising access to poetic space is maintained in L'Embrasure . Already from the first poem of the collection, "Le Raccourci", the image of the breach is perceived differently from in Gravir , not as an unapproachable, distant opening but as a passageway tested and experienced:

> Franchi le soupirail,
> Passé le raclement des pelles
> Et l'écume des tombeaux,
> J'écrirai comme elle jaillit,
>
> Vertigineuse, gutturale,
>
> Debout contre ce bois qui se fend,
> Ma table renversée, la porte du toril.
>
> En effet la fraîcheur est tirée. . ./8/
>
> [The air-hole crossed over,
> The raking of shovels past,
> And the foam from the tombs

I shall write as it springs forth,

Vertiginous, guttural,

Standing against this wood which splinters,
My table overturned, the bull-ring door.

Indeed the coolness is drawn. . .]

The title denotes an abridgement or a short cut, and all of the manifestations of the opening appear, in one way or another, shortened and crossed over. The initial image, that of a casement window which has been traversed, signals a change in the poet's perspective: in Gravir the images of opening indicate possibilities for future transcendence to another reality; here, however, we read of openings through which the poetic perception has advanced. The distinction is a temporal one: the figures in Gravir anticipate passage whereas the images in the poem recall passage.

The key movement in "Le Raccourci" is one of progression across or through-- either time or space,-- and all of the images in the poem suggest this movement. The second figure implies a crossing through, since the shovel, tool for digging holes, may also be employed to cover them over. But the shovel image does not stand alone. Added to it is a raking motion-- a repeated scratching over-- which, by its situation in the past, evokes a bridging over time.

Implicit in the speaking voice's promise of springing forth is the presence of a gap, of an opening through which writing will breathe. Even this implied breach is not free from traversal, since the adjectives associated with the gushing forth, "vertigineuse" and "gutturale", span the axes of space. The first, in suggesting dizzying heights, establishes the upper limit; and the second, in semantically connoting origins or sources, sets the lower limit. Moreover, the line, separated from both the preceding and following lines, stands at the mid-point of a gap in the text, bridging that breach. But we can even read a traversal within the line itself: the comma, while separating the two adjectives, also serves as the link between the polar opposites.

The following lines imply further gaps. The speaking voice finds itself surrounded by confusion. We read that the speaking voice stands against a wood which splinters, his table overturned, in the presence of the door of the bull-ring. With the accession of freshness to the poetic arena, the poem ends on a note of subdued optimism: optimism because the poem has succeeded in reaching a new freshness; but subdued since the ellipsis marks signal a trailing off into the uncertain terrain of the new reality. This poem announces the irony inherent to

the creative process of poetry: the image of the gap, ostensibly the juncture between the ordinary and the sublime, offers, when crossed, only a partial success-- an achievement undercut by a continuing lack. Thus, the passageway,-- tested and experienced-- brings us no closer to anticipated fullness than does the image of the gap yet to be traversed.

The nature and importance of the gap image in L'Embrasure is not always as readily accessible in the remainder of the collection as it is in "Le Raccourci". The more somber, lengthier sequence "La Nuit grandissante" shrouds the image of the breach in ambiguity. Comprised of sixteen pieces in free verse, "La Nuit grandissante" resembles Gravir in many ways. Both share a rocky, wind-swept mountainside as setting, and both convey a sense of alienation, a cosmic confusion about origin and destiny. Equally common to both is the stony trail winding its way up toward the mountain peak, although the path, clearly distinguishable in Gravir ,appears much less so in "La Nuit grandissante".

In fact, in the latter the movement towards the summit fades in comparison to the progressive approach of nightfall. The poems in "La Nuit grandissante" revolve around the desired darkness. From the initial impression of a whirlwind and the

resultant chaotic disorder, the first poems recount violent movements "contribuant à la nuit" (E 44). Beginning with the line "Comme pour hâter la tombée du jour" (E 45), the following poem suggests waning daylight. The figure of a rock shadowed on one side by the departure of the sun's rays announces the approaching dusk. In this context of falling day we find the first reference in the sequence to an opening: "la lumière dévore, ou son absence de limites, / un espace franchi pauvrement" (E 45), [the light devours, or its absence of limits / a space poorly crossed over].

Previous images are of little help in attempting to discern the origin and nature of this barely traversed space. The word "franchi", in recalling the phrase "franchi le soupirail" leads us to expect "espace" to be analogous to the air-hole. That is to say that by association, the space designated by "l'espace franchi" would constitute the space of an opening, a passageway through which to travel. Or are we to understand this space as that outer domain of poetry towards which the poet aspires?

The ambiguity of this figure persists on the syntactic level. Should we consider the image of space to be the direct object of the devouring light, in which case we would understand that the approach of night devours and eliminates space? Or does the

reference to space stand in apposition to light thereby creating a relationship in which barely traversed space actively consumes or diminishes that with which it comes into contact.

Whichever way we choose to read the text, the phrase "espace franchi pauvrement" forms a juncture--a gap-- the point at which the real and the unreal collide. The potential of this figure to signify rests in the space of its ambiguity, in the slippage of meaning which it conveys. This breach announces a new perspective on the nature of the gap, a perspective further developed in other poems. In signaling an absence (of articulation, of discourse, of meaning, etc.), a gap connotes negative space; but by virtue of its presence in the fabric of the poem, the gap stands as a positive entity in the poem. In other words, the ambiguity (or absence of determined meaning) in the phrase "espace franchi pauvrement", actively works in furthering the space of poetry.

The relationship between approaching night and the opening provided by the barely crossed over space finds elucidation in the remainder of the poem: as the light fades, the settling dusk continues to spread its cloak of stillness and uncertainty until finally, from out of the gloom, nightfall succeeds in appointing for itself a stony path. The path, with all of its attendant significance as the metaphor of

the poetic quest, finds in darkness a space all its own.

As if to emphasize the relevance of the gap to night, the following piece in the sequence opens with a gap of its own:

> Ouverte en peu de mots,
> comme par un remous, dans quelque mur,
> une embrasure, pas même une fenêtre
>
> pour maintenir à bout de bras
> cette contrée de nuit où le chemin se perd,
> (E 45)

> [Opened in few words,
> as if by an eddy, in some wall,
> an embrasure, not even a window
>
> to hold at arm's length
> this night country where the path
> disappears,] /9/

Before we become aware of the nature of the breach, we learn something of the stark manner by which it is opened. First of all, whether the gap is made through words ("en peu de mots") or within words is unclear./10/ Its origins, however, are austere and the mode of its opening is likened to a wash or an eddy. Suggestive of violent swirling movements, these latter images recall the initial poem of the series; more specifically, its figure of some doubtfully visible deposit in a whirlwind. The term used in that context, "tourbillon", may also signify an eddy, and thus, the terms "tourbillon" and

"remous" are but variant signifiers of the same signified. Consequently, when we read the first poem of the series in retrospect, we perceive that the image of the whirlwind leads only temporarily to chaos, and that from these or from similar swirling movements will eventually emerge an opening.

The gap forced open by a few words proves to be an embrasure-- not even a window. The phrase "pas meme une fenêtre" redirects our attention back to the embrasure which, in suggesting a sharp, forceful motion (as in the passage through the crenel of a fort), testifies to the abruptness and violence with which the breach is brought into existence. The verbal sparseness underlying its engendering accompanied by suggestions of piercing, vivid force demonstrate the fashioning of the gap to be an efficient operation.

The next two lines, "pour maintenir à bout de bras / cette contrée de nuit où le chemin se perd" (E 46) situates the purpose of the gap in relationship to night. The breach, we read, has been opened in order to maintain a distance from the obscurity of darkness in which the path disappears. The gap, rather than forming an alliance with night as seems to be the case in an earlier section of "La Nuit grandissante", here seeks to elude night.

The apparent dissimilarity between the image of

the gap which finds room for expansion in the darkness and the gap figure which keeps at arm's length the night region gives rise to yet another gap: a breach inherent in conflicting interpretations. This more subtle gap is intrinsic to poetry, for in the space of this gap, poetic force finds its outlet. The space afforded by this gap is the space within which the poem flourishes. In resisting limited significance, the figure of the breach forms the point at which poetic consciousness is probed again and again.

In the framework of impending natural upheaval, we note one final gap image in "La Nuit grandissante", which arises in the fleeting instant bounded by the imminence of the anticipated poem and by its expected demise:

> Entre la diane du poème et son tarissement
> par une brèche ouverte
> dans le flanc tigré de la montagne
>
> elle jaillit, l'amande du feu,
> la jeune nuit à jeu
> derrière la nuit démantelée (E 57)
>
> [Between the diana of the poem and its drying up
> by an open breach
> in the striped mountain slope
>
> it bursts forth, the fire's almond,
> the young night fasting
> behind the dismantled night]

The first several lines contribute to a mounting

suspense: in reference to the poem, the first delineates the moment (yet unmeasurable) of that which is about to transpire. The second and third bring that moment of epiphany even closer by designating the breach opened in the side of the mountain as the escape channel. Only in the fourth through sixth lines do we realize that the increasing pressure finds release in an explosion of fire bursting out into the night. After so many images of obstructed gaps and would-be openings in "La Nuit grandissante", this image of the breach is complete. But the success of the breach as passageway must direct our attention to the fire, since the victory of opening up the gap has been won only by intense eruptive force. The opening, therefore, is but the witness to the magnitude of the power behind the formation of the gap.

Once the explosive burst is past and the summit has been attained, nothing remains but the descent. As the poetic energy subsides, the night, whose terrain has been violated by the burst, reasserts its dominion. The stormy outburst serves to reinforce the darkness, to restore night to night:

> l'ouragan fait souche
> un éclair unit
>
> la nuit à la nuit
> (E 57)

[the hurricane takes root
a flash unites

night to night]

Up until this point we have not distinguished between the levels of night. As presented in "La Nuit grandissante", night appears not as a uniform state but rather as variations of darkness: from dusk (E 45), obscurity (E 47), and freshly-fallen night ("la jeune nuit à jeun") to dismantled night (E 57). These are the nights which the explosive flash brings together into one. By a metathesis in the text we perceive the relationship between breach and night, for in reading "un éclair unit / la nuit à la nuit", we realize that by splitting the word "unit" and by rearranging its letters, we get "nuit" from "unit". By means of a textual breach, that which signifies unity also signifies night. In this poem the spreading darkness owes its continuing existence to the gap. The struggle to break through leads to a schism, and through the breach night is united to night.

From observing the gap image in these poems, we may conclude that the movement towards transcendence depends as much upon the reader as it does upon the poem; for without the reader's active tracing of the occurrences and changing contexts of the gap, the

opening itself would remain of little consequence. Only when we notice the repetition and subsequent alterations of the breach images, and when we re-evaluate former images in light of latter ones, do we begin to appreciate the functioning of the gap image in the pursuit of space.

From Gravir to L'Embrasure we perceive a deepening importance of the gap figure. In the former volume the image generally anticipates and promises a future state of poetic fulfillment, whereas in the latter the gap image-- viewed from varying perspectives and changing contexts-- no longer is content simply to represent and announce another consciousness but rather actively explores that consciousness.

III. Textual Breaches

Dupin is in direct line of descent from Mallarme and Apollinaire who, in straying from the strict confines of the phonic mode of poetry by experimenting with poetry's visual possibilities, ushered in the grapho-centric mode of literary communication, the mode about which the writings of Derrida and Barthes stand at the forefront.

The poetry of Jacques Dupin belongs to the canon of grapho-centric literature, that literature in

which the written word, an object in its own right and existing independently from any meaning ascribed to it, serves but to transmit its own literary reality. Therefore any attempt to read Dupin's poetry demands careful attention not only to the presence of phonic indicators but also to their absence; that is, to all breaches, interruptions or omissions in the text, graphic as well as lexical. Any discussion of the relationship of gaps in Dupin's poetry to the desired space of fulfillment would be wanting without a consideration of textual breaches.

The importance of these textual gaps is noted by Roger Cardinal who, in a discussion of the image of wind in Dupin's poetry, likens the efficacy of the wind in clearing away extraneous matter to the blank spaces around the phrases of the poems which, he maintains, "are intended to sharpen and stress the particles of expression, sweeping them clear of redundancies."/11/ Thus the blank spaces act as a positive force in purifying and elucidating the fragments of poetic discourse.

One of the most striking examples of poetry evidencing textual gaps is "Malévitch", a poem whose violent engendering has been already considered. In our discussion of violence in the poem, we noted the ongoing, obsessive struggle to achieve artistic space, a quest ultimately frustrating in its failure

to attain its ever elusive goal. In its own adaptation of the painter Malévitch's experiments with geometric forms, the poem presents geometric figures, positioned in all possible arrangements in an attempt to read the totality of a nascent space ("lire l'espace naissant")/12/.

But beyond the overall preoccupation with reaching a new poetic space, fissures and gaps may be presented implicitly in the midst of the shifting rectangles. In one of the rare occasions in the poem when we read a lexical opening, we read of an endlessly changing slippage of colors and angles which uncovers a breach in the negation of the oscillating wall ("corps démembré reconcilié vacant / offert / comme / une brèche dans la négation du mur oscillant" [D 150]) and of the inscription- rupture of a fulgurating geometry ("l'inscription-rupture d'une géométrie fulgurante" [E 150]). With its link between inscription and rupture, this last figure is especially important since that inscription is itself an act of breaking.

Audacious and insistent in its claim upon the terrain of poetry, the presence of the slash can be identified as co-inscriber of the written word. With this most recent juxtaposition of inscription and rupture, we may begin to read all inscriptions as ruptures, and thus we become aware of rupture/gaps

not only in the displacement of the shifting geometric forms but also in the shifting components of those forms-- the words themselves.

For a different perspective on textual gaps, we might consider the poems of De Nul lieu et du Japon in relationship to the accompanying illustrations by Jean Capdeville. As is the case with De Singes et de mouches , this collection has been published in an illustrated edition, and although Dupin insists on the absolute autonomy of the poems (they were in no way inspired by Capdeville's paintings)/13/, the fact that they are juxtaposed with selected ilustrations permits us to read each art form in light of the other. Our interest in the illustrations is further heightened by Dupin's own reading of Capdeville's quest for pictorial space:

> Peintre de l'ouvert, Jean Capdeville est parvenu d'abord à révéler l'espace dans son surgissement, dans sa fugacité, en transposant d'infimes détails du paysage intériorisé, cailloux et brindilles, rameaux de rêve éveillé, minuscules richesses à fleur de terre et de peau. La toile était l'écran qui les arrêtait, la nappe qui les recueillait. La forme rompue et émiettée laissait le champ libre à l'expansion d'un espace purement pictural. /14/

Considering the bursts of impetuosity with which the interior landscape of De Nul lieu et du Japon is sketched, could we not easily substitute the name

Jacques Dupin for that of Jean Capdeville, and the medium of the page for that of the canvas? Consequently, reading the poetry could be an exercise similar to the reading of the paintings.

Dupin speaks of the canvas as being violated, lacerated, and left scarred-- no longer the untouchable, authoritarian medium traditionally designated to record the artist's vision, but now simply ordinary material, woven by humans and subject to violence. Likewise, instead of considering these poems as texts arranged on a page, we could think of them from the point of view of the paper slashed, torn, and left inscribed by graphic language. By shifting our perspective of the poems from that of the text transcribed to that of page violated, our perception of the blank spaces also changes. The blank spaces, the gaps in the text, do not function as they do in other poems, as simply brief moments of dormency or quick, short breaths caught in the onslaught of poetic text. Rather, these breaches form the screen which catches the words as they spring forth.

In one poem we read "le vide est plénitude."/15/ If the void truly is fullness, then the words, by their inscription upon the canvas of the page, are themselves the gaps, the openings forced onto that void. Here is the paradox. In other poems the

absence of words constitutes the gaps. Here however, the words themselves are the gaps.

IV. The Gap Implied

In addition to images of gaps and explicit textual breaches readily perceivable throughout the poetry, we sometimes encounter more subtle gaps--those which, although implicit, testify nevertheless to the quest for space. Much of Dupin's poetry seems to be carried along by innumerable thrusts into the unknown. At some points these bursts of writing veil only negligibly the seething violence from which poetic energy emerges. Where the violence is the strongest, images of gaps and textual fissures are the most clearly defined; where violence is abated and subdued, breaches are indistinct and are able to be discerned only through careful reading.

We have already noted the dominant image of Une Apparence de soupirail -- that of breathing through an air-hole in an attempt to break forth toward some outside from some inner imprisonment. The endeavor to accede to a new reality embraces the testing of every possible limit in hopes of finding room for advancement, and in the following passage the speaking voice gropes for space in grammatical time: "Souffrant. Ne souffrant presque plus déjà. .

.J'écris le plus, le presque, le déjà,-- de la mort déçue. J'écris au passé infini, enfantin , d'un rayon brisé. De la lumière ouverte. . ."/16/. [Suffering. Suffering almost no longer already. . .I write the most, the almost, the already,-- about death deceived. I write in the never-ending past, childlike , about a broken ray. About open light. . .]

The stringing together of the adverbs "plus", "presque", and "déjà" heightens the idea of suffering, stretching it in all temporal directions, all the while wrenching it from any fixed point in time. But in the combination of adverbs we notice the failure of language to express timelessness adequately: in designating one phase of grammatical time, each adverb remains nevertheless isolated from the others.

In the poetry's attempt to break through temporal boundaries and to reach another time, we perceive gaps-- slippages in the onslaught of time indicators through which the poem lives on. Within the larger context of the collection's major figure of breathing through an air hole, we could conclude that these fissures within the very temporal fabric of the text, while signaling the poem's inability to attain to another reality-- to break forth to some outer unknown-- result nonetheless in continuing the poetic expression already begun.

The gap concept as one on which poetry opens also operates on the syntactical level; that is, the testing of the bounds of writing sometimes involves the omission of a unit of syntax. In much of contemporary poetry it is not unusual to find breaches which could qualify as syntactic. Those which appear in sequences, however,-- and which occur in prose poems-- are perhaps the most significant. In another poem from Une Apparence de soupirail we may observe the gaps in syntax which, far from limiting the poem's potential, actually enhance it: "Et reculant sur l'échiquier enfantin. L'absence de sujet déchire le sommeil de tous. Perd du terrain. Tire un oiseau en vol"/17/. [. . .And drawing back on the infantile chessboard. The lack of subject rips into everyone's sleep. Loses ground. Shoots a bird in flight.]

The only complete sentence in this poem provides the commentary: "The absence of a subject tears sleep from all." Read retrospectively, the opening fragment demonstrates this absence and implies an unknown. In fact, at least three elements in this fragment work to suggest the unknown. First, the ellipsis marks, generally used following a word or group of words to indicate omission, here appear at the beginning so that the fragment, instead of announcing that which trails off, constitutes in

itself the trailing off.

Second, the coordinating conjunction "Et" links together grammatical equals. Followed closely by the present participle "reculant", the coordinating conjunction therefore implies the existence of some prior participle. Lastly, the participle itself, "reculant", denoting a drawing back, leaves open the possibility that (given the collection's major image of breathing in and out) the missing word could have been an opposite-- perhaps conveying the contrasting idea of pushing ahead. Triggered by the missing element, the possibility of reading an opposite into the poem finds reinforcement in the word "échiquier", in which we may read all those reflective actions inherent to the game of chess: moves contemplated, begun, and perhaps even withdrawn.

With the commentary on the missing subject we begin to look for examples of a missing subject and find the next two fragments incorporating this gap in syntax. What (or who) loses ground, we do not know. Perhaps the fragment belongs in the context of a chess match-- the battlefield of minds, the arena for strategy. Or perhaps is refers to the sleeplessness invoked by the absence of a subject and connotes a general growing hopelessness in uncovering that subject. The fragments "Loses ground" and "Shoots a bird in flight" can be read as substitute predicates

for "tears sleep from all", thereby taking as their subject the phrase "The absence of subject". In any case the breach in syntax has afforded the poem an opening through which it can expand beyond its perimeters. Despite the possibilities of expansion, however, the poemn's tone militates against ever achieving poetic fulfillment. With the final fragment, suggesting interruption and incompletion both by the absence of a subject as well as semantically, the poem stops, its movement towards further expression abruptly cut off. Once again the gap-- here, syntactic in nature-- provides room for poetic experimentation but ultimately falls short in its effort to help the poem reach the space beyond.

In De Nul lieu et du Japon the quest for poetic reality is low-key and the barely perceptible gaps testify to that quest. Inspired by the poet's trip to Japon in the early 1970's, the poems of De Nul lieu et du Japon sketch with delicate movements enigmatic impressions of an exotic land-- one which is Japon and at the same time, no place (Nul lieu)/18/. Reading through the poems we glimpse fleeting suggestions of the age-old Japanese archipelago: images of the sea, waterfalls, bamboo, and flickering candles mingle with those of silk worms, tea ceremonies, white rice, Sumo wrestlers, and Shinto shrines. None of the images are sustained

nor given comment; no sooner are they encountered then they fade away, giving place to other, equally ephemeral images: those of emptiness, death, night, and death again and again.

Stylistically the poems in this collection represent a marked difference from those in Gravir , L'Embrasure , Dehors , or Une Apparence de soupirail . Unlike the density of his prose poems or the crysatalline hardness of his free verse, the poems in De Nul lieu et du Japon evidence the poet's withdrawal from linguistic intensity and demonstrates a sparseness which resembles the later poetry of du Bouchet. For both poets, verbal economy and increased deference to the white space of the page cement their poetic independence from the style of René Char.

Just as the poems in Une Apparence de soupirail present, by the major image of breathing through an air-hole, a broken series of efforts to attain poetic plenitude, so do the poems in De Nul lieu et du Japon testify to continual beginnings by their juxtaposition of opposites: "Sur le neutre de la flute / où ta lèvre attiré / et creuse une flamme d'air"/19/. [On the flute's neuter / where your lip attracts / and opens up a flame of air]. Here the light in and out breathing which produces a note on the flute evidences a barely perceptible gap, a break

between two opposites-- breath first drawn in and then breathed out.

This collection of poems contains other similarly subtle breaches-- most of them occurring as the moment of divergence or the instant of slippage. A few additional excerpts will suffice as examples:

> L'archipel et les constellations
>
> qu'on me lie à cet attelage au savoir
> au non savoir. . . (DNL 3)
>
> [The archipelago and the constellations
>
> let me be linked to this harness
> to knowledge
>
> to non-knowledge]

These lines permit us to read gaps on several levels: first, inherent to the word "archipelago" is the idea of separation, since the term "archipel" designates a composite whole comprised of individual, distinct units, each linked to the next by a "breach". Second, the spacing between the first and second lines, and that between the words "attelage" and "au savoir" qualify as textual fissures. Third, the contiguous terms "au savoir" and "au non savoir" evidence a subtle gap in the very assertion of a concept and then its immediate reversal. The fissuring occurs as the moment of slippage between affirmation and negation-- in the abrupt

discontinuance of one proposed thought and the unexpected substitution of its inverse. In "La Ligne de rupture" we encountered the"game" of turning-back-onto-oneself, the "alternance" and "alteration" by which the poem advances, techniques which, by their similarity to the affirmation / negation model, also illustrate poetic breaches.

The conclusion of the poem just cited from De Nul lieu et du Japon focuses the reader's attention on a minuscule movement which provokes a resoundingly shattering reaction: "dont l'infime secousse d'un seul / de tes cheveux / en se brisant perpetué / l'éclair" (DNL 3). [whose infinitesimal shaking of a single one / of your hairs / while breaking perpetuates / the flash]. Clearly scaled down from the violent manifestations of energy expended in earthquakes, volcanic action, and lightning bolts; this image of the shaking of a single hair and of the subsequent breaking up of that strand contains strength enough to perpetuate a lightning flash. Despite the almost microscopic breaches implicit in the breaking up of the hair-- gaps which might belie any existent poetic energy-- writing nevertheless surges ahead, perpetuating the poetic flash.

But such forceful poetic fervor is uncommon to a poetry of negligible gaps. Most of the breaches discernable in this collection testify not to

cathartic upheaval but rather to milder, sustained energy. In considering the following lines we note once again the adjacent positioning of contrasts:

Les mains lisses de terre humide
un potier tourne de l'aube

à la nuit l'instant différé de sa mort
(DNL 9)

[Hands smooth with wet earth
a potter turns from dawn

to night the delayed instant of his death]

Just as in other cases, the gaps here are textual as well as contrastive. The vertical spacing between the lines containing the references to dawn and to night and the positioning of these time indicators at extreme opposite ends of their respective lines serve to isolate them from each other. Graphically polarized on the page, these two ideas are separated by a textual breach. In addition, their opposing signifieds cement that separation.

To support our assumption that in this collection the presentation of opposites permits in a moment of slippage a renewed effort to pursue the poetic quest, let us examine one further example:

L'un tombe l'autre
non
les deux sont
un

l'unique
est multitude
ou
liseron (DNL 15)

[One falls the other
doesn't
the two are
one

the only one
is multitude
or convolvulus]

Sparse in its lexical entries, this poem spreads sixteen words over eight lines. Two unknown figures take the stage of the opening line; one falls, the other does not. This divergence, rendered definitive not only by the negation but also graphically, finds itself undercut by the succeeding lines: "les deux sont / un". Suddenly the two contrasting verbals are united, and the gap which had arisen in the splintering of predicates now collapses. At this point the moment of slippage seems to have lost its capacity to begin once again, and yet the poem continues. From the single one, we read, the one and only, emerges the multitude. Or the convolvulus. Conceptually the word "multitude" designates a plurality of members constituting a whole, and in this plurality-- this union of separate entities-- persist subtle gaps, margins of difference between members of the collective groups. As if to deny any cessation of poetic activity, the final word,

"liseron", suggests the promise that the poem will continue to trail along just as the bind-weed does. In this poem, therefore, the breach between the opposing verbs, although initially disappearing, soon manifests itself again to provide impetus for the emerging poem.

V. The Existential Fissure

In one of Dupin's collections of poetry, we read a breach of a different type: the existential fissure-- the gap between the real and the simulated, or between that which is and that which is pretended. While the intense personalizing of aggression in De Singes et de mouches progressively deepens, the initial poems of the collection create a playful atmosphere in which images of monkies and flies mimic each other saucily, their vulgar dances, grimaces, and exaggerated contortions becoming a blur of perversion. The games of mimicry involve not only the flies and the monkeys but extend to include the speaking voice as well, which ever present during the spirited antics, remains nonetheless the outsider, the presence agonized by the burden of writing.

The mimicry begins on the lexical level where words play off each other, their phonemic differences accentuated by their phonetic likenesses. From the

very first lines of the collection the linguistic game of shuffling and repeating phonemes sets the tone for the aping to follow: "jusqu'au borborygme / jusqu'à l'onomatopée /des singes"/20/. These lines hold interest for reasons other than simply the mimetic quality of the syllable /bɔr/ and of the phoneme /ɔ/ (in "onamatopée"). In order to more fully grasp the nature of the existential gap as the opposition between original and imitation, we might consider the signification process of the two words "onomatopée" and "singes".

The word "singes" refers both to monkeys and to the concept of mimicry, thus creating an open sign--one in which one signifier has more than one signified. Semioticians have postulated that a signified may be redoubled as a signifier having, in its turn, another signified and so on ad infinitum . So, as one of the signifieds of the signifier "singes", the concept of mimicry may be a signifier taking as its referent the act of imitating or closely resembling.

As a sound-image unit, the word "onomatopée" denotes the formation of a word that sounds like its referent. In other words, the signifier "onomatopée" connotes mimicry-- in linguistic terms, the phonetic imitation on the part of a word (a signifier) of that word's referent (its signified). And so as signs,

the words "onomatopée" and "singes" share a comomon signified, that of mimicry. On the basis of these shared signifieds, we may therefore legitimately reduce the phrase "jusqu'à l'onomatopée / des singes" to its semantic kernel, "until the mimicry of mimicry." Imitation of an imitation, simulation of a simulation-- these lines launch a series of reverberating, never-ending resemblances where the model and its copy are indistinguishable. The failure of signifieds to produce closure results in the possibility of the sign's continual duplication.

If the existential gap-- the difference between the original and the imitation-- is born as the opening of the sign, then the endless replication of the sign indicates that the occurrence of gap, too, is endless. The ensuing diabolical dance, with its display of puns, verbal gymnastics, and phonemic scrambling, creates a superstructure of loosely connected, nonsensical images and, at the same time, generates poetry. The reader has but to read lines such as "de quelque guenille ou guenon"(DSM 7), "l'évidence de soi / tapissant de suie"(DSM 9), and "angle écartelé / ange négatif"(DSM 19), to be aware of the attempts at mimicry-- the similarity of sounds intent on reduplication but ultimately bowing to phonemic alteration.

This characteristic of incomplete resemblance

applies not only to sounds but also to phrases where snatches of poetic expression sometimes appear, similar to but yet different from prior utterances. After a page of intervening text, the lines "Il tombe le météore / il éclaire le fond de me vie"(DSM 36) [It falls the meteor / it lights up the bottom of my life] reappear, altered, as "il tombe le meteore / il creuse la fin de la vie"(DSM 38) [it falls the meteor / it hollows out life's end]. The dissimilarity of the second to the first provides the space necessary for the extension of writing. That is, within the gap, poetry lives on. Situated differently, we could view the existential gap as one created by the juxtaposition of uneven bounds or the uneasy positioning of opposites. Reading the moment of slippage in this collection depends not only on the identification of original and imitation, action and reaction, presentation and representation, but also on registering the margin of difference between the two extremes.

The games of mimicry in De Singes et de mouches are joined by the presence of the speaking voice which establishes itself as a polar force in the development of poetry, the counterpart of the monkey, and becomes by association an accessory to the animal's obscene antics: "le jeu de l'anus et de la langue / d'un singe écarté de moi"(DSM 6) [the game

of the anus and the tongue / of a monkey kept off from me]. In fact, the distinction between the speaking voice and the figure of the monkey soon blurs as the former refers to the latter as his double kept off from him ("double écarté de moi"[DSM 6]) and the separate identities of the two fuse into one as the speaking voice subsequently refers to his "trente doigts d'homme-singe"(DSM 15). These fingers are the same ones which write and which inflict harm. In the chapter on violence we noted the relationship between blood and ink, and cited the lines "dans le sang bifurqué / du singe hurleur / dans l'encre du scribe absous"(DSM 20) as indicative of the union of the howler monkey and the absolved scribe. Now identified with the image of the monkey, the speaking voice/writer takes its place as participant in the deadly games of mimicry and by its burst of poetic fervor performs its own dance, thus perpetuating the gaping existential breach.

As a postscript affixed to the collected poems, the lines "battement de signes / et de bouche"(DSM 7) effectively extend the activity of mimicry from the property of the monkeys and flies to the poetic utterances themselves. By metathesis and substitution the subject "de singes et de mouches" is rewritten as "de signes et de bouche". Inverted as the word "sign", the signifier / signified "singe"

affirms its continuing presence in the signification process and assures once and for all the never-ending "mimicry of mimicry".

VI. The Gap in Dupin's Poetic Language

Finally, apart from all thematic and textual considerations of gaps in Dupin's poetry, we may address the notion of the gap in its relation, first of all, to the "poeticity" of Dupin's poems, and second, to the desired space of poetry. The question of the nature of poetic language has long interested literary theorists who, prior to the twentieth century, saw the opposition between prose and poetry as being a difference primarily of a phonic order. Jean Cohen was the first to define poetic language as a gap (écart) in relation to a norm. In maintaining the polar distinction between prose and poetry, Cohen offers poetry as antiprose-- the transgression against prose./21/ For him, therefore, the gap between the two genres is an absolute gap, an irreconcilable opposition./22/

In response to Cohen, Gerard Genette argues that poetic language consists not so much in a gap arising from a difference in form, but rather defines itself as the narrowing of a gap, or as a gap from the gap./23/ He asserts that what is defined by the gap,

and as gap, is not poetry but rather language itself which demonstrates the gap in its disjunction between signifier and signified. In other words the notion of the gap belongs not to a discussion of genre, but may be traced back to linguistics.

These observations prove helpful in isolating the poeticity of Dupin's poetry. Comprised of free verse and prose poems, his poetry resists definition based on the traditional prose/poetry opposition. What his poems do share, no matter what their form, is verbal richness which, instead of elucidating the poem's formal properties, highlights rather the primacy of language itself.

According to Genette poetry is the state of language which seeks to bridge the gap located in prose between signifier and signified. Poetry seeks to create a utopic language-- one without gaps, without linguistic shortcomings. On the basis of the acknowledged gap inherent in language itself, or the unavoidable space between what <u>is</u> and what is <u>said</u>, Genette thus concludes poetic language to aspire toward the narrowing of that gap./24/

When applied to Dupin's poetry, this theory of poetics allows for the varying forms of the poems while yet maintaining their poeticity. The idea of the gap existing in language is crucial to Dupin whose poetry, in a paradoxical effort to efface the

gap that makes language, actually finds its place where language falls short.

If poetic language or, to use Genette's terminology, "language in a poetic state," originates in a gap of language, then the poet's search for poetic space evidences the breach between that which is and that which is envisioned. In other words the poem (that which is) marks the gap between itself and the elusive space of poetry. For the poet, poetry remains indeterminate. Valéry affirms that the essence of poetry is hidden to the poet, or that of painting to the painter. For these activities--poetry and painting-- he maintains, the painter or poet must create the need, the means, and the goal./25/

In a passage about the experience of the artist, Maurice Blanchot speaks of the poet's ignorance of what poetry is and declares that its identification depends solely upon the poet's search. Furthermore he adds that every work and even "each moment of the work puts everything into question all over again."/26/ Whatever the poet does, writes Blanchot, "the work withdraws him from what he does and from what he can do."/27/ Thus the crafting of poems implies a gap, an abyss between the experiencing of the art and the essence of the art.

Dupin acknowledges the presence of the gap in

the work of painter Antoni Tapiès: "répétition spatiale, ou comprise entre deux cillements, le dédoublement d'un mot, l'insistance d'un signe à se laisser recourir et à transparaître sous le suivant, trame tendue et plissée de vides et de saccades."/28/ The art of Tapiès, characterized by repetition, reversals, and new beginnings, signals an absent truth of painting which the painter can pursue only through repeated attempts at approximation. In writing about Tapiès, Dupin uses over and over again vocabulary pertaining to writing: "language", "word", "poetic", etc., and we soon realize that both painter and poet proceed in much the same manner and seek similar goals. Thus, whatever the artistic mode-- painting or poetry-- and here, the poetry of Dupin; the reality of the experience differs from the illusory desired end, and that difference constitutes a gap.

This breach exists not only for the poet (or the painter) but also for the reader who, in continually modifying the text by his reading strategy, finds himself simultaneously being modified by the text. That is to say that just as the work, according to Blanchot, withdraws the poet from what he does and from what he can do, so it withdraws the reader from what he reads and from what he can perceive. Consequently, the gap in literature is ultimately the

gap in the reader.

VII. Conclusion

Promising eventual accession to a fresh space of poetry, the epigraph with which this chapter begins, "Par une brèche dans le mur / La rosée d'une seule branche / Me rendra tout l'espace vivant,"/29/ still holds, renewed in each of Dupin's collections of poems by additional perspectives on the origin and nature of the gap. From a foundational understanding of the gap image in Gravir as an indicator of the ongoing movement towards poetic transcendence; to encounters with gaps in various contexts in L'Embrasure as constituting active afforts to explore the space of poetry; to an observation of the graphic rupturing in the poem "Malévitch" (Dehors) and in De Nul lieu ed du Japon where, paradoxically, the inscribed words can be read as gaps; our study has led us to consider the grammatical and syntactical fussures in Une Apparence de soupirail and the juxtaposition of opposites in De Nul lieu et du Japon as moments of slippage in which poetry renews its fervor to pursue a new reality; to explore the existential gap in De Singes et de mouches where the gap between the real and the imitation, in defying closure, demands of the poetic force

continual regeneration; and finally, to discuss the notion of the gap which defines Dupin's work as poetry.

Despite the advances made in exploring the space of poetry, the possibility of yet further explorations of additional perspectives of gaps, renders the goal still elusive. Whereas this study of the many faces of the gap leads us closer to the promised space beyond, Dupin's quest for poetry takes on an additional dimension-- that of linearity. In the following chapter we shall focus on the linear extension of the gap-- the figure of the labyrinth.

Notes

/1/ Jean-Pierre Richard, Onze études sur la poésie moderne (Paris" Seuil, 1964) 28.

/2/ Jacques Dupin, "L'Univers plastique de Kandinsky," XXe siecle 27 (1966): n.pag. rpt. as "La Montée des signes" in L'Espace autrement dit (Paris: Galilée, 1982) 91.

/3/ Dupin, "La Réalité impossible," Saint-Paul-de-Vence, Fondation Maeght, July-September 1978, rpt. in L'Espace autrement dit (Paris: Galilée, 1982) 56.

/4/ Mary Ann Caws, A Metapoetics of the Passage:: Architextures in Surrealism and After (Hanover: UP of New England, 1981) 148-77.

/5/ Dupin, Gravir (Paris: Gallimard, 1963) 9. Subsequent references to Gravir will be indicated in the text with the abbreviation G .

/6/ Richard 28.

/7/ Roger Cardinal, "Jacques Dupin," Sensibility and Creation: Studies in Twentieth-Century French Poetry . ed. Roger Cardinal (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1977) 233.

/8/ Dupin, L'Embrasure (Paris: Gallimard, 1969) 9. Subsequent references to L'Embrasure will be indicated in the text by the abbreviation E .

/9/ Dupin, "Opened. . ." The Random House Book of Twentieth-Century French Poets , ed. and trans. Paul Auster (New York: Random House, 1982) 487.

/10/ Robert W. Greene, Six French Poets of Our Time (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978) 146.

/11/ Cardinal 233.

/12/ Dupin, Dehors (Paris: Gallimard, 1975) 150. Subsequent references to "Malévitch" are indicated in the text with Dehors abbreviated as D .

/13/ Dupin, personal interview, 19 May 1986.

/14/ Dupin, "La Coupure et la couture," L'Espace autrement dit (Paris: Galilée, 1982)253.

/15/ Dupin, De Nul lieu et du Japon (Mpntpellier: Fata Morgana, 1981) 2.

/16/ Dupin, Une Apparence de soupirail (Paris: Gallimard, 1982) 79.

/17/ Dupin, Une Apparence 14.

/18/ Dupin, personal interview, 19 May 1986.

/19/ Dupin, De Nul lieu 2. Subsequent references to poems in this collection are indicated in the text by the abbreviation DNL .

/20/ Dupin, De Singes et de mouches (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1983) 1. Subsequent references to poems in this collection will be indicated in the text with the letters DSM .

/21/ Jean Cohen, La Structure du langage poetique (Paris: Flammarion, 1968) 51.

/22/ Gerard Genette, Figures of Literary Discourse , trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Columbia UP, 1982) 96.

/23/ Genette 96.

/24/ Genette 97.

/25/ Maurice Blanchot, The Space of Literature trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln,NE: UP of Nebraska, 1982) 88.

/26/ Blanchot 88.

/27/ Blanchot 88.

/28/ Dupin, "Post-scriptum," Derriere le miroir 200(1972): n. pag., rpt. as "Avant toute lecture la déflagration," L'Espace autrement dit (Paris: Galilée, 1963) 56.

/29/ Dupin, Gravir (Paris: Gallimard, 1963) 56.

Chapter 5

Of Labyrinths, and the Quest for Poetry

I. Introduction

Greek mythology provides us with the archetypal labyrinth-- the infamous maze commissioned by Minos and engineered by Daedalus to imprison the Minotaur-- a network of blind alleys and endless paths from which no exit was possible. Young Athenians finding themselves shut up inside this system were assured of certain death at the hands of the half-bull, half-human monster. With this fomidable legend behind him, Dupin creates his own maze of poetry, one self-conscious of its confinement and bent on seeking an escape from itself.

The labyrinth image appears in Dupin's play, L'Eboulement (Paris: Galilée, 1977). Many of the motifs and themes present in his poetry are also present here: images of the sun and the pathway, the diurnal-nocturnal dichotomy, and the obsession with sterility and the preoccupation with waiting. In addition, the typography of the text, with its single and double slashed interspersed throughout the dialogue, militates against an oral interpretation of the play: like much of the poetry, the play is graphocentric, and a reading of the text demands a

reading not only of the words, but of the margins, the intervening space, and the accompanying marks as well.

The opening scene, set at nightfall, and the closing scene, at daybreak, situate the work in the space of one night. But despite the brevity of the actual, elapsed time-- the time "vécu",-- the dreams of the two principal woman characters, Ottilia and Gabrielle, open the way to an expanded, imagined time. The dream world and the world of the play subtly, yet audaciously, encroach upon each other's territory, and this confusing superimposition of the one upon the other provides the background for a future consideration of the mise-en-abyme relationship of the realm of sleep to that of wakefulness.

As the play opens, Gabrielle and Ottilia await the return of husband and brother, Thomas, all the while unsure of their reactions to his anticipated arrival. Before each woman lies a path to follow, an unknown route leading to an equally unknown (and unknowable) destiny. Snatches of conversation reveal this path to be labyrinthine, a course to be followed blindly ("Qu'on entre dans son labyrinthe / les yeux fermés")/1/. The women grope along this labyrinth from scene to scene, never understanding exactly where they are nor ever reaching their unknown

destination.

In order to better understand the nature of labyrinths and, especially, the perspective of the traveler in embarking upon them, we might consider the observations of Gaston Bachelard who, in his book La Terre et les rêveries du repos (Paris: Jose Corti, 1948), discusses the labyrinthine quest undertaken in a dream, such as that in L'Eboulement . Since a dreamer cannot foresee what lies ahead in the maze, Bachelard insists on the traveler's active participation in the unraveling of the labyrinth. According to him, perceiving the maze depends not upon seeing it, but upon experiencing it: "Ainsi, dans le rêve, le labyrinthe n'est ni vu, ni prévu, il ne se présente point comme une perspective de chemins. Il faut le vivre pour le voir. Les contorsions du rêveur, ses mouvements contournés dans la matière du rêve, ont pour sillage un labyrinthe."/2/ Unable to predict the imminent future, Gabrielle and Ottilia are condemned to wander in ignorance and uncertainty. Each step they take, however hesitating; each word they speak, however faulting; proceeds, nevertheless, to open up a serpentine furrow--a labyrinth.

Although Bachelard speaks only of the labyrinth dreamed, his comments on the necessity of experiencing the course may be applied to the reader

of modern art. While not specifically using the labyrinth image in his essay "Conjonction", Dupin, as observer and interpreter of modern art forms, nonetheless echoes Bachelard's insistance on the traveler's active participation in following the maze. Just as the traveler / dreamer depicted by Bachelard must live out the convoluted digressions of the sleep maze at each moment of its unraveling, so must the modern dancer confront unknown space at each step since according to Dupin, the dancer's body "se livre totalement et affronte la plénitude de l'instant unique."/3/

Viewing modern dance, contemporary music, and modern painting as artistic expressions in search of their essence, Dupin stresses the openness of each art form and its need to test its own limits. The call of the work in the process of its being performed "engage le spectateur qui devient le complice actif. . ."/4/ In fact, he affirms that modern music, in seeking a pure language by trying every possible means of exploring its own space, needs us as listeners in order to exist. So it is with Dupin's poetry-- another form of modern art-- which, in its search for expression, depends upon the reader's active engagement.

Just as in the play L'Eboulement , the labyrinthine quest in Dupin's poetry is always a

tortuous endeavor. Not without reason is the labyrinth claimed to be nightmarish. Bachelard pictures the traveler in the middle of a single road (imprisoned, in fact, by the confines of the path), caught between the anguish of past sufferings and the anxiety of future misfortunes. Similarly the modern dancer, according to Dupin, finds himself at each step on the brink of running his greatest risk and at the same time on the threshold of savoring his greatest victory. The fatalism of the maze, be it a dance, a measure of music, or a dream, only aggravates the condition of the performer: although he sometimes returns to the same point, he can never return there by retracing his steps. Such is the fate of the reader who, in fighting his way through the text, suddenly encounters reoccurring images and distinguishes familiar echoes, all the while unable to recollect and reconstitute his trail. For such a one, the labyrinth exists not as an orderly but intricate arrangement of paths perceivable as a complete entity, but rather as a moment of doubt and fear fitted between similar moments.

Each maze must begin somewhere, and Bachelard identifies the fissure as the point of origin: "La fissure est le début du rêve labyrinthique. La fissure est étroite, mais le rêveur s'y glisse. On peut même dire que dans le rêve toute fissure est une

séduction de glissement, toute fissure est une sollicitation pour un rêve de labyrinthe."/5/ If each fissure represents an enticement into a labyrinthine dream, then Dupin's poetry, ridden with gaps and breaches, should provide a vast network of serpentine attempts to transcend to another poetic reality.

"Le Chemin frugal", with its invitation "Chassez-moi, suivez-moi", illustrates the poet's desire for a new consciousness and sets the stage for Gravir 's dominant theme of climbing as a means of poetic transcendence. With its rocky ascent to the undefinable and unattainable, Gravir joins André du Bouchet's Dans la chaleur vacante and René Char's La Recherche de la base et du sommet as leading mountain texts of quest in contemporary French poetry. But although transcendence in Dupin's poetry often embraces the figure of a mountain, in only a few poems do we openly encounter the image of a labyrinth.

One series in particular, Moraines , stands out as incorporating many of the characteristics of a labyrinth as perceived by Bachelard and after the following lengthy description of one reader's reactions to the unfolding poems in that series, we shall attempt to define the quest undertaken, to consciously situate the reader in following the maze,

and to identify the limits of the labyrinth.

II. Moraines and the maze

Moraines, a geological term denoting an accumulation of rocks, boulders, and other debris swept along by glacier activity, here designates a collection of thirty-four prose poems of varying lengths, some of which, by their brevity, their lack of terminal punctuation, and absence of conclusion constitute fragments of poetry evocative of the natural phenomena from which the series takes its name.

The opening poem begins with a question: "Ecrire, est-ce un sommeil plus mobile et qui s'entoure de comparses?"/6/. From the very first word the subject of writing arises and with a Bachelardian echo, its possible identity as sleep is questioned. By raising further unanswerable questions subsequent lines sustain this interest in writing. In an atmosphere of imminent danger, figures and themes-- many of them familiar-- intersect: waiting, silence, celestial bodies. The poem ends with the subjugation of the poet/reader (the "nous" in the poem) to some external, controlling force: "Un astre sans préparatifs traverse la muraille. Nous sommes les

souffre-douleur de son matriarcat pervers. Notre respiration accordée à la sienne, nous restons prisonniers de l'odeur des mousses dans les fissures de son règne." (E 61) These concluding lines convey the first indications of a labyrinth with the wall ("la muraille") suggestive of the bounds of the maze and the fissures, the deep trail itself.

Most illuminating is the revelation of the poet/reader ("nous") whose presence in the fissures is not by choice but by coercion. Dominated by the perverse matriarchy of the wall, the poet/reader finds himself prisoner of its reign, victim of authoritarian restraint. If, indeed, the wall and the fissures represent a labyrinth, and the poet/reader the traveler, then the quest remains uncertain. Its goal, perhaps but not definitively implied by the attention to writing, continues to elude us. By the poem's conclusion we know nothing with certainty about the object of the quest or of the means by which the poet/reader enters the maze. We are aware only of a presence narrowly restricted by an outside, dominant force. Advancement or retreat along the fissures within the confined space is not even relevant here; that and other questions must be held for subsequent poems.

If we were expecting any answers in the following poem, we are disappointed since there we

read of little other than indications of death, thirst, and breath. The only word in this poem common to the first is "muraille", and in reading of this "wall of anguish" we might imagine a connection with the oppressive wall of perverted matriarchy in the previous poem.

Poem after poem slips by as if in a succession of apparently disconnected frames. On occasion snatches of poetry-- a few words, a line or two-- strike familiar chords, enabling us to make connections with previous texts in the sequence. From the third poem the following lines indicating space for living within the confines of a fissure allow us to experience a fleeting moment of a possible labyrinthine search: "Ici un lieu habitable à cet instant à cause d'une imperceptible fracture, de l'infime intervalle qui mesure ma liberté de mouvement et de don. . ."(E 63). Read with the opening poem in mind, these lines recall the initial indications of a labyrinth and of the speaking voice's confinement within that maze, and here loosens that tight sense of restriction to permit freer movement within the checked bounds.

"Car l'écriture ne nous rend rien. / La consummation même est imparfaite" (E 63). The final two lines of the poem redirect our attention back to the opening word of the sequence from which questions

on the nature of writing spring. What began as an exploration of writing now seems to be overcast with defeatism; even the figure of the fires of purification meets with failure and the poems ends, incomplete. Despite further glimnpses into the recurring themes, all additional evidence is but inconclusive.

The following piece signals self-deception; throughout the poem the speaking voice asserts its belief that it had transcended to another reality, that it had left its mark there, that it had crossed over (eyes open) the knot from which it was born. Implicit in the repeated use of the compound past tense "J'ai cru" is the sense of plans gone awry or of frustrated achievement: although the speaking voice believes itself to have acceded to a purer existence, it had not. With this new disclosure of the speaking voice's having fallen short of the mark, the reader may well wonder whether the speaking voice is to be identified as the persona of the poet and whether the elusive goal is poetry--questions rendered even more appropriate with the first line of the next poem: "Expérience sans mesure, excédante, inexpiable, la poésie ne comble pas mais au contraire approfondit toujours davantage le manque et le tourment qui la suscitent"(E 65). Arising from deprivation and torment, the elusive goal-- poetry--

is a nagging thirst which cannot be assuaged, a cunning taskmaster which drives his servants relentlessly, constantly promising rest and then cruelly withholding it.

For the first time in the sequence we read explicitly about the poet and his relationship with poetry. We learn that when the poet sets to his task, he does so not with the purpose of seeing poetry succeed, but with the desire that it fail along with himself: "Et ce n'est pas pour qu'elle triomphe mais pour qu'elle s'abîme avec lui. . .que le poète marche à sa perte entière, d'un pied sûr."(E 65) The poet, writes Dupin, is not a man weaker, poorer, or more ridiculous than others. What distinguishes him from the rest of mankind is that the poet's violence, weakness, and incoherence have the power to be reversed and in a moment of passing beyond the confines of the ordinary, succeed in renewing the fragile pact which makes the world livable for man.(E 65)

In Moraines , perhaps more than in any other of Dupin's poetic sequences, we perceive Dupin's personal obsession with transcendence through writing. The metapoetic nature of Moraines testifies to the primacy of language, and more specifically, écriture . The prosaicness of the texts and the directness of the questions posed concerning writing

lay bare the vulnerability of the poet in the face of the awesome task of searching for a new reality of consciousness. Passages such as this one from Moraines reveals the poet's deepest concerns and convictions about his art. For Dupin, as for Rimbaud, Reverdy, and Char, the poetic endeavor is one of Orphic expression.

After this aside on the metaphysical nature of the poet, we read in the following poem an enumeration of all the components of a mental machine beginning to start its operation. "Les treuils, les cordes, les poulies, les volants et les leviers-- les manettes, les trappes, les glissières-- la poussiere et les aboiements-- toute la machinerie du théâtre mental se met en marche. . ." (E 66). The mention of a mental theater permits us to expect an encounter with the director/actor-- the poet,-- an encounter actualized in the phrase "Tout ce qui roule entre mes tempes." The forehead of the speaking voice forms that mental theater housing the tools necessary for the process of poetry. A metaphor of the poet's mental capacities, the listing of equipment labels the work of the poet impersonal and mechanical, a mere exercise in the skillful manipulation of mechanized instruments. But is this all poetry is? Or have we just begun to observe the start of a complex process?

The next frame focuses the spotlight on two figures: "elle" and "moi". "She", invisible, occupies the whole of space and yet walks by "my" side. She lives in a place which is not, the second sky, the bared sky, the blueless sky. The two figures share an enigmatic relationship: one of mutual cooperation and dependence, for they work together--each for the benefit of the other; one of similar fate, for, once the day is done, they burn out together, neither one surviving the other; and one of subdued flirtation with her as temptress, exercising her seductive charms over her partner and yet coyly resisting his overtures.

The speaking voice admits her to be his nourishment and his sustaining force. With each word that he speaks, to his own detriment,-- she thrives, grows stronger, and becomes more persuasive. And yet despite their special relationship, "he" does not selflessly seek her good, for we read of his desire to tire her with such perseverance that he soon detects her imminent breakdown, her sun eclipsed, her only infidelity. Without a doubt these two unnamed figures designate the poet and poetry. Shedding further light on the emerging connection between the two, this piece reinforces the previously introduced notion of the poet as poetry's malevolent partner--the one who, paradoxically, despite his desire to

achieve poetry also desires failure. In addition, we perceive an almost cyclical plan to the poetic process: the poet, eager for accomplishment, openly courts poetry; but when he succeeds in losing himself in her, he turns on her and wishes her destruction as well as his own. And yet, once again at point zero, the nagging need to reach out for poetry recommences, and the poet begins again his doomed flirtation with poetry.

"Il m'est interdit de m'arrêter pour voir. Comme si j'étais condamné à voir en marchant." (E 69) The use of the first person personal pronoun in these lines and in the remainder of the poem forms a bridge with the preceding poem, thus enabling the reader to consider the speaking voice to be that of the poet. Whereas the preceding poem reveals some of the poet's attitudes about poetic reality, this poem discloses the poet's observations about his efforts to attain that reality.

The poem begins with an interdiction, and this interdiction against the poet echoes the lines of a previous poem in the series indicating the poet's subjugation by an outside force ["nous restons prisonniers de l'odeur des mousses dans les fissures de son règne"(E 61)]. Forbidden to stop, condemned to continue-- clearly the poet lacks the freedom to determine his own actions. Indeed, the dominating

force is so insidious that the poet is condemned to see that about which he speaks and to speak because he does not see. Blindness, the speaking voice asserts, signifies the obligation to invert the terms and to place the step, the word, before the look-- much the same way, we may assume, that the modern dancer, according to Dupin, must confront reality anew at each step, or as Bachelard's dreaming traveler must experience the maze only by living it. Likewise the poem, emanating from the poet's blindness, is written as the labyrinthine effort of the poet to "see" by walking, an effort undertaken in the thick of night so that the rays of dawn will indicate the fruits of success (E 69).

With a shift in focus from first to second person, the next piece asserts its control over the reader's attention. Soon following the declaration of the poet's lack of freedom in exercising his will comes the injunction, "Tu ne m'échapperas pas, dit le livre. Tu m'ouvres et me refermes, et tu te crois dehors, mais tu es incapable de sortir car il n'y a pas de dedans."(E 70)

If the first person personal pronoun designates the poet, as the context of previous poems in the sequence seems to indicate, then the second person personal pronoun must refer to someone else, a someone who opens and closes books-- that is, a

reader. Now, just as the poet finds his mind under the control of an external power, so the reader finds his attention directed at will by the book. Bold and assertive, the book assumes mastery over the reader, dictating his actions and pronouncing judgment on him and condemning him "à errer entre les lignes, à ne respirer que [sa] propre odeur labyrinthique."(E 7Ø) At this point we still know nothing about the means by which the reader enters the maze of the text; all we know is that once absorbed by his reading, the reader is doomed to continue his reading in much the same way that the ancient Athenians, emprisoned in the labyrinth, were condemned to wander endlessly until falling prey to the Minotaur. Here, once it captivates the reader, the text never abandons him but becomes, rather, his punishment.

Labyrinthine. Without any designated substantive to qualify, the adjective "labyrinthique" dangles in its position at the end of the sentence, its awkwardness there drawing our attention to it. The rarity of the occurrence of this lexical entry merits a re-reading of the context while considering the nature of the classical labyrinth. Behind its predominant characteristic of an intricate structure of connecting passageways lies an exit-- that overlooked, inconspicuous feature which provides the raison d'être of the labyrinth experience. That is

to say that following the maze is the means to discovering the way out. So it is with poetry. The serpentine quest is but the means to an ultimate goal, yet undefined. This poem opens with the figure of an authoritarian book asserting its sovereignty over the reader and declaring him incapable of going out because there is no inside ("tu es incapable de sortir car il n'y a pas de dedans"). The reader roams through a closed system, one which, having neither inside nor outside, condemns him to endless wanderings. With no way out, the reader is doomed to making the following of the maze an end in itself.

In this poem and the last, a sense of domination rules-- domination, first of all, of the poet by an external power which forces him to exercise his craft blindly, being neither capable of foreseeing the outcome nor even able to plan a strategy of operation; and secondly, domination of the reader by the book which condemns him to read endlessly. Thus sharing a common sentence, poet and reader find themselves shackled together to the text, forced to persevere and unable to quit.

The speaking voice's inalterable obligation to pursue his task unremittingly in no way exempts him from innumerable foes, for in the next poem comes the disclosure, "J'observe jusque dans mon corps les attaques et les accalmies d'un mal innommable, et les

mouvements de ce qui, en moi, le refuse, le repousse, pactise, s'insurge à nouveau"(E 71). What follows is an attempt to identify this debilitating evil, and the poet begins by reviewing the symptoms: individual, persistent assaults like seeds of a devastating catastrophe; and continues by classifying struggles. There are those, he writes, which strengthen, and those which imply an exchange of blows and yet retain an element of hope in an eleventh-hour deliverance. But he is drawn, to the evidence of an insidious evil, one powerful enough to crush and make void, one which abolishes the whole of space and all seeds of space.(E 71)

Throughout Dupin's poetry we are constantly aware of the poet's search for space, that undefined level of attainment epitomizing the ultimate poetic achievement. Here we learn of an evil not only threatening the very existence of that literary Nirvana but also menacing all viable efforts to reach it. That is to say that in this segment of Moraines the poet becomes conscious of an ongoing effort to undermine his creative ability and his inspiration and consequently feels himself falling victim to a stiffening paralysis. And so, to the image of the poet condemned to pursue his course doggedly is added, in this poem, the sense of his increasing powerlessness to create.

With the next few pieces the focus shifts from an emphasis on the poet-- his desires, his readiness to create, his attitudes towards poetry, and his mounting frustrations-- to a consideration of the plane of writing. Looking in retrospect at the individual poems read to this point, we perceive, rather than view in its entirety, an emerging labyrinth. The succession of individual poems with their accumulated insights clearly evidences an advancement in the struggle for poetic fullness, and we begin to understand more fully Bachelard's assertion that the labyrinth is neither seen nor foreseen but must be lived in order to be perceived.

A reader-response approach to any literary work must resist the tendency to prefer summarily drawn conclusions to the process of deriving those conclusions. In unraveling emerging truths (or reading experiences), our emphasis must be on the emergence of the truths (or on the actual living through the reading experiences) rather than on a condensed resume of the end result. The preceding commentary on Moraines reflects such an approach.

Before beginning to read through the sequence of poems, we selected several elements to trace in the course of our reading. The first was the quest itself. Although identifiable as the ongoing search for a poetic space, the quest nonetheless remains

undefinable since the goal of the quest is forever out of reach. Because we are unable to attain the goal, mastery over it eludes us and we are, consequently, incapable of adequately defining the quest.

In addressing the problem of attempting to situate the reader in following the maze, it is not sufficient to reiterate Bachelard's conception of the dream traveler blindly advancing along a course, unable to anticipate his next step nor to forget the anguish of past encounters. Although the actual reader does share the perspective of the dream traveler, the actual reader's perception of the reader posited by the text develops and constantly undergoes modification from the first piece of the sequence.

Initially the identity of the speaking voice, the "nous", remains uncertain. Does this pronoun refer to the persona of the poet? If it does, why is it plural? May it also refer to the actual reader? No answer to these questions is readily available and although we assume the pronoun to refer both to the reader and the poet, we must read on in hopes of discerning some clarifications. In not all of the poems that follow do we read the presence of the "nous" nor simply of the poet for that matter; indeed, some of the subsequent poems are marked by

the conspicuous absence of both self-conscious writer and destined reader. After several poems devoid of any direct reference to poet or reader, the presence of the poet surfaces in relation to poetry, and in the establishing of the poet's domination by an outside force and compulsion to write is the reader's domination by the book anticipated. The process of identifying and defining the reader in the text hinges on the information about the poet, information discernable only in relation to poetry.

All of which underscores the relational nature of the implied reader: our attempts to situate the reader implicit in the text must not start with the figure of the reader but with that of the poet, and even with the self-conscious presence of poetry itself.

The question of the limits of the labyrinth produces the most far-reaching implications. As we have seen in the foregoing description of Moraines , the quest for poetic plenitude is constantly elusive: in struggling to attain the unknown fullness, each section fails and by that failure generates another section of poetry which, in turn, fails as well. Moraines , with its twists and turns, its gaping hiatuses and its apparently impassible blockages, constitutes a succession of failed attempts.

The persistence of failure leads us to read

Dupin in the light of Derrida's notion of *différance*,

> that systematic play of differences by which elements related to each other --that endless displacement of meaning designated by a "passive" difference already in place and by the ongoing act of differing which produces endless differences. In the labyrinthine quest for poetry *Moraines* anticipates a new poetic space forever out of reach, or constantly deferred. In describing the sequence we note the nuances of difference between successive segments and may view the entire piece as a chain of fixed moments of difference, but at the same time we must never overlook the fact that with each of those instants of difference poetic space lies just beyond.

This economy of difference gives us a structure which Derrida identifies in several of Rousseau's texts (namely, in *Emile* and *Les Confessions*) and which he designates by a term borrowed from Rousseau-- the logic of the supplement. According to Derrida, supplementarity implies the ongoing lack of a presence compensated for by an economy of *différance* . As an added-on extra, the supplement seeks solely to replace or to account for an original lack of presence. Thus, writing for Rousseau serves only as a supplement to speech: recognizing that the speech act consumes itself from the moment of its articulation, Rousseau chooses to valorize himself by

means of a substitution for speech-- writing. In other words, the "I am" of "I am present" lost irretrievably by speech is recast in writing by "what I am"./7/

In illustrating the economy of différance as elucidated by Derrida, Dupin's quest for poetic fullness results in a structure of supplementarity. The elusiveness of the desired poetic space sets into motion an effort to fill the void, an effort identifiable as the resulting poem, Moraines . Just as for Rousseau writing (not just the individually inscribed word but also the entire assemblage of words) replaces speech, so for Dupin does the poem in its entirety take the place of the sought after poetic plenitude. Viewed according to this logic of the supplement, the sequence Moraines is but a substitute for an absent presence, a substitute which by its very existence signals the permanence of the absent presence. Not only is poetic plenitude out of reach but the physical "presence" of Moraines implies that it is forever so.

Germane to the logic of the supplement is the notion of a flawed, or even dangerous, substitution. For example, as a substitute for speech, writing is an inadequate supplement, dangerous by its claim to be the very presence it seeks to replace./8/ In supplementing the original presence, the

representation does violence to that presence by attemptiong to make it present when it is not. Derrida views writing as a dangerous supplement to speech, for in its attempt to imitate speech, writing actually sells short the presence of language. Likewise, Moraines , in its effort to recapture the space of poetry does injustice to that envisioned space and by simply filling in the void, demonstrates the danger it poses to that space.

Whereas Moraines as a unified chain of poems reflects the structure of supplementarity, so do the individual pieces in their relation to each other evidence this logic as well. In the definition of supplementarity formulated by Derrida, one phrase in particular, "the ongoing lack of a presence", implies linear progression. The succession of individual poems in Moraines , with each piece as an added-on "extra" to the previous failed attempt to reach poetic fullness, attests to the continuing economy of compensation. And the reader, in following the convoluted course charted by the poems, participates in this linear process to attain the absent presence by constantly monitoring the difference between the reality of each successive supplement and the forever-elusive goal.

The labyrinth image, metaphor of the poetic endeavor in Moraines , reflects the logic of the

supplement, since the entire sequence is built of accumulated segments, each differing from the previous piece and each deferring arrival at the goal to some unknown future time. Caught in the maze of différance , the reader is condemned at each successive instant to bear the burden of assimilating past remembrances and present realities to future expectations.

III. Conclusion

Although nowhere else in his poetry does the image of the labyrinth play as clear a role in Dupin's poetics as it does in Moraines , certain features of the labyrinthine quest in that series of poems may be seen elsewhere. The frustrated movement of an imprisoned body towards some external freedom (as evidenced by the reader in Moraines) can also be seen in Une Apparence de soupirail , with its dominant image of a figure breathing through an air-hole.

The poems of this collection find their unity in the ongoing movement towards space. We have already commented on the image of the gap as the place where poetry opens and have noted the multiple instances of slippage, each of which testifies to a new attempt to

escape the tyranny of some restricted inside. Here, just as in Moraines , the repeated efforts to reach the unknown illustrate an economy of différance at work. In illustrating the displacement of writing, the following poem points to the ongoing act of difference:

> Dans le contre-jour. Dans le jour. Une écriture érémitique et nomade à la fois. Qui déplace incessament sa fixité, sa supplication tabulaire. Aveugle chaque nuit, naissante toujours. . ./9/
>
> [In the half-light. In the daylight. An eremitical and nomadic writing at the same time. Which displaces incessantly its fixity, its tabular supplication. Blind each night, always being born. . .]

Similar but yet different, the first two phrases, "Dans le contre-jour" and "Dans le jour" obscure the framework of the poem. The first identifies a point of reference (the half-light) and the second, read after the first, alters that identification and although replacing it with another (the daylight), effectively nullifies both. Juxtaposed, each phrase loses its identity as the reader, in moving from one to the other, synthesizes the two.

The following phrase, "Une écriture érémitique et nomade, à la fois", presents two extremes of writing-- one of stasis ("érémitique") and the other

of movement ("nomade")-- another set of differences which, in following the variation between half-light and light, intensifies the system of divergence at work. By this point the reader anticipates further differing and is not disappointed upon reading the next phrase, "Qui déplace incessamment sa fixité, sa supplication tabulaire." The relative pronoun "Qui", the reader assumes, takes as its antecedent the phrase "une écriture érémitique et nomade." Writing, qualified as eremitical and nomadic, is that source of constant divurgence, that force which, in constantly seeking its own space by ever producing differences, finds itself always ever being born.

Another feature of the labyrinthine model which this collection shares with Moraines is that of supplementarity. The figure breathing through an air-hole never succeeds in throwing off the shackles of its inner imprisonment and in enjoying the freedom it so strives after. Despite the progressive series of differences set into motion by writing, the desired space remains an unrealized goal. Each poem stands as a reminder of the absent presence.

The supplementarity inherent in the labyrinthine enterprise to create a new poetic space is a fundamental characteristic of Dupin's poetry. Not only in the poems of Une Apparence de soupirail , but also in "Le Chemin frugal", "Le Soleil substitué",

"Histoire de la lumière", and "Ballast",-- to name a few-- do we, in reading them, find ourselves engaged in a never ending Orphic quest.

Notes

/1/ Jacques Dupin, L'Eboulement (Paris: Galilée, 1977) 14. Subsequent references to this play will be indicated by the abbreviation EB .

/2/ Gaston Bachelard, La Terre et les rêveries du repos (Paris: Jose Corti, 1948) 215.

/3/ Jaques Dupin, "Conjonction," Festival de musique et d'art contemporain, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, 31 July-7 August 1966, rpt. in L'Espace autrement dit (Paris: Galilée, 1982) 97.

/4/ Dupin 97.

/5/ Bachelard 216.

/6/ Dupin, L'Embrasure (Paris: Gallimard, 1969) 61. Subsequent references to this collection will be indicated by the abbreviation E .

/7/ Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology , trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977) 142.

/8/ Derrida 144.

/9/ Dupin, Une Apparence de soupirail (Paris: Gallimard, 1982) 81.

Chapter 6

Poetry under Cover of Night

> . . .Chaque pas naît de la nuit, chaque geste sort du chaos, instaurant l'ordre fragile de la danse. . . . ("Conjonction", 98)

I. Introduction

As a means of apprehending a new reality rather than an end in itself, the poetry of Jacques Dupin resembles that of Reverdy, Char, and du Bouchet, all of whom exercise an art of search, approach, and expectation. Their poetry is neither one of fulfullment nor one of despair, but rather begins with that which lies just ahead of the poem. Just as the arduous labyrinthine endeavors of Dupin's poems only point to the advent of poetry, so do the fragmentary visions of Reverdy only shed a fleeting ray of light upon the well kept secret while never adequately embracing it.

In the following Reverdy poem, "Cadran", the aspiring towards the essence of poetry gains momentum and then falters, irreversibly:

Sur la lune
s'inscrit
Un mot
La lettre la plus grande en haut
Elle est humide comme un oeil
La moitié se ferme
Et le ciel
Se couvre
au lourd rideau qu'on ouvre

Sans bruit
une lumière luit
Rapide
C'est une autre lueur à présent
qui me guide /1/

[On the moon
is inscribed
A word
The biggest letter above
It is watery like an eye
Half of it shut
And the sky
Is covered
a heavy curtain which is opened
Noiselessly
A light shines
Rapid
It is another light at present
which guides me]

Breaking through the covered sky of nascent poetry--the arena of inscribed words--a light shines forth, the mention of which suggests hope for achieving the quintessence of poetry. And yet the last two lines of the poem, "C'est une autre lueur à présent / qui me guide", undercut this hope by deferring the means of its fulfillment to another light.

The poetry of Reverdy, where time and time again reality touches the threshold of the transcendent, looks to light for guidance, to light for the culmination of desire. In Reverdy's poetics (just as in Valéry's "Le Cimetière marin") light signals the imminence of pure poetry.

Participating in the tradition of the poem as the advent of poetry, Dupin also uses the image of

light. But the use of that image in his poetry differs from Reverdy's association of light with poetic fullness. For Dupin, not light but rather its opposite-- night-- provides the space for poetry, much as the theme of night affords inspiration to Musset, Lamartine, Gautier, and others. Dupin's observations that in modern dance, "chaque pas naît de la nuit, chaque geste sort du chaos, instaurant l'ordre fragile de la danse. . ." apply equally well to his poetry. For Dupin, out of night proceed the strivings which give shape to his poetry.

In this respect Dupin's poetry allies itself with that of René Char. Despite the fact that the image of dawn in Char's poetry has been given much attention as that moment in which the poetic world comes into being, dawn often marks the culmination of an endeavor begun long before. Nick Caistor effectively argues that in Char's poetry, the night image initially refers to an observable phenomenon in the natural world but later becomes the "beneficient provider of the opportunity for speech./2/ For Char, Caistor asserts, the idea of night becomes a force which acts upon the observer at a level deeper that that of perception./3/ Night stands as a metaphor of the unfathomable workings of poetry to create meaning from an initial nothingness.

But whereas for Char, the poet employs the night

image to integrate man into the harmony of the world around him, Dupin's use of night focuses on the emergence of poetic space. In Dupin's poetry, the night image and all other dominant images serve as tools of the poet as he labors, not on behalf of the world as does the poet in Char's view/4/, but rather on behalf of poetry itself.

Dupin's work repudiates traditional symbolism of light and darkness. In his poetry sunset is not death, neither is sunrise rebirth. The play L'Eboulement , for example, reflects a complete reversal of the sunrise-sunset paradigmatic opposition. And yet, in that work night imagery resists oversimplification. By studying its multifarious associations we can arrive at some conclusions about the importance of night in L'Eboulement , and then by comparing those conclusions with the uses of night imagery in Dupin's other works, we can better understand Dupin's use of the image of night in opening up the space of poetry.

II. Night in L'Eboulement

An initial reading of the play uncovers multiple associations of night, associations which by their sheer number and diversity argue against venturing a restrictive interpretation of the darkness. First of

all, darkness seems to furnish the space within which things happen, for in the opening scene Ottilia exclaims, "Ce qui est arrivé hors de raison une nuit / doit revenir pareillement cette nuit / pour être élucidé, mis à nu / confronté à sa propre lumière. . . /5/. [What happened beyond understanding one night / must return in like manner this night / in order to be cleared up, laid bare / compared with its own light.] From the beginning mystery shrouds the characters, their relationship to each other, and their actions. What is clear from Ottilia's speech, however, is that night forms the backdrop for certain important events and is expected to provide the setting for the replaying and the explanation of these events.

Night in L'Eboulement can be fully appreciated only in relationship to light, and Ottilia's assertion that what happened can be understood only in terms of light provides darkness with its natural counterpart. We might well ask whether or not the implied relationship of light to truth is sustained throughout the play and if light here accords more readily with the standard universal interpretation than does night.

The first indication that light belongs to the domain of moral truth comes as Ottilia speaks about the Irishman: ". . .et la superstition de ses

ancêtres / vient tordre sa parole / et la rendre obscure / maléfique . . ./ Il ne connaît pas le soleil. . ."/6/. [. . . and the superstition of his ancestors / comes to distort his word / and to render it maleficient. / He does not know the sun.] Here it seems that ignorance of the sun is associated with evil and we are left to assume the knowing the sun would maintain clarity and purity of speech.

From the Irishman's perspective, light brings truth: "Ouvre les yeux!" he says, "la lumière des couteaux aiguise ma parole / et l'aggrave / et rend irréversible son éclat. . .// La mort est sur toi / sur moi / sur tous. . ./7/ [Open your eyes!/ the light of the knives sharpens my word / and worsens it / and renders its burst irreversible // Death is upon you / upon me / upon all. . .] In contrast to darkness incurred by blindness, the opening of one's eyes brings the light of truth. Truth is light, even though the content of that truth may happen to signal the imminence of death.

The imminence of death in L'Eboulement is akin to the idea of death expressed by Novalis who, like most of the German Romantics, seeks in death a return to wholeness, a transcendence which reaches even beyond death in the space of night which is more than night: night which is the harmonious union of light and darkness./8/ Likewise the whole of L'Eboulement

moves towards a transfigured wholeness, one sought in impending death amid the juxtaposition of darkness and light.

Throughout the remainder of the play,, the image of light is associated with the truth of reality and actuality. The Irishman sees light as a menace and attributes to it the sudden toppling of the status quo: "Le monde a basculé // à cause d'un mince faiseau de lumière qu'il n'attendait plus"./9/ [The world has toppled // because of a slender beam of light for which it was no longer waiting"]. Light, a respecter of no one and of nothing, lays bare all that lies in its path. As such, the image of light in this play concurs with the whole of literary tradition, for which light is a prime vehicle for the revelation of truth.

In another sense, however, Ottilia's assertion that what took place one night must be understood only in its own light points not only to physical electromagnetic radiation-- the phenomenon characterizing the period between sunset and sunrise-- but rather to the more figurative sense of the word, denoting illumination, or source of awareness. Thus the term "light" in this case refers back to the image of night and is, consequently, dependent upon the scope of the night image. Paraphrased, the statement would read: "What

happened beyond understanding one night must return in like manner tonight in order to be cleared up, laid bare, compared with its own illumination." The image of night provides the time framework within which the incomprehensible act will be elucidated. Therefore night, although the opposite of light, does not signify the contrary of light; that is, concealment, but paradoxically joins with light in making known the unknown. In other words, although light is the primary vehicle in revealing truth, night also participates in that process of revelation be creating circumstances propitious for illumination. Ottilia's statement effectively argues against dichotomizing light and darkness.

The night image in L'Eboulement operates on two distinct levels, and we may evaluate the potential symbolism of night on each of those two levels. First of all, night forms the structural framework within which the play is created. It provides the interior space requisite to the play's development. We might go so far as to say that the play feeds on darkness. The image of night does not signify space available for expansion but only witnesses on occasion the presence of such space.

Secondly the night image contributes to the tone of the play. Because of the foreboding evil which darkness in L'Eboulement anticipates, the night

image conforms to the traditional moral association of night with evil. Were this association with evil the only one of the night image's associations, we might consider the image as symbolic; however, the multiple associations which the image enjoys exclude all possibilities of symbolism.

Finally the night image operates on a more subtle level, one proposed by Maurice Blanchot who writes: "Oeuvre attire celui qui s'y consacre vers le point où elle est à l'épreuve de l'impossibilité. Expérience qui est proprement nocturne, qui est celle même de la nuit."/10/ The entirety of L'Eboulement , situated in the space of one night, alludes to what Blanchot refers to as the "other" night ("l'autre" nuit). It is not to be confused with the "first" night--that in which everything has disappeared, that welcoming night, that night in which the sleeper sleeps without knowing he sleeps, in which he who dies reaches nothingness./11/ This "other" night is what is sensed "when dreams replace sleep, when the dead pass into the deep of the night, when night's deep appears in those who have disappeared."/12/ It is the appearance of "everything has disappeared", the presence of some absence.

The experience of L'Eboulement is this purely nocturnal "other" night. In it Gabrielle and Ottilia perceive night as that time when wakefulness and

sleep merge imperceptibly, casting doubts as to the reality of all statements and actions. In it, what was no longer is, for the Old Woman says "Je ne t'entends plus. . ./Je suis trop loin. . .// Il y avait un espace autour de nous / un espace de feuilles, de ciel, d'oiseaux / et de cris// [. . .] Cela n'est plus. . ."/13/. Indeed, the entire movement of the play is one towards immobility, signaled by the gradual, irreversible shrinking of physical and temporal space and the ever present portents of immininent death. Ever on the point of dying, the Old Woman loses all ability to see anything but the blackness of death: "Au-delà, il y a la nuit / la nuit /l'enclave commune / l'immense volière sans oiseaux. . ."/14/. Truly this is the "other" night: a night in which night appears, not stealthily and covertly, but openly and in its own constant disclosure.

Paradoxically, according to Blanchot, to be situated in such a night is to be still outside. "En elle," he writes, "on est toujours dehors. Elle ne se ferme pas non plus, elle n'est pas le grand Château, proche, mais inapprochable, ou l'on ne peut pénétrer parce que l'issue en serait gardée. La nuit est inaccessible, parce qu'avoir accès à elle, c'est accéder au dehors, c'est rester hors d'elle et c'est perdre à jamais la possibilité de sortir d'elle."/15/

Likewise the reader experiencing in L'Eboulement this "other" night, finds himself always outside night. In this "other" night, the reader does not know the rest, sleep, and dying of the "first" night. From this "first" night the reader is excluded; and should access to it be granted, the reader would find all possibility of return from it to be cut off.

In conclusion, the impossibility of L'Eboulement ; that is, its constant deferral of the darkness of death, its ambiguous juxtaposition of wakefulness and sleep, its protracted shrinking of space, its refusal to permit itself to be controlled, mastered, explained; constitute this "other" night about which Blanchot writes.

III. Night in "Suite forestière"

Another poem which by the prevalence of its night imagery deserves attention is "Suite forestière." Prose poem written to accompany lithographs of Jean-Paul Riopelle, "Suite forestière", in depicting the damp, dark undergrowth of a neglected forest, quickly snares the unsuspecting reader in a dense thicket of tangled words-- a labyrinthine poetic terrain from which no exit seems possible.

The opening sentence, containing one hundred

forty-six words, constitutes the entire first paragraph. Despite the sentence's length, entry into the poem's interior landscape is relatively easy: the initial clause, "la nuit danse sur la forêt"/16/, with its normal subject-predicate word order, poses no problem for the reader. However, those initial six words form the only independent clause in the paragraph. Everthing that follows that opening clause only contributes to an increasingly jumbled bog of thickly textured language:

> La nuit danse sur la forêt, la nuit, une lente déflagration mouillée de sêves dont l'or gris et le camphre suffocant prolongent et signalent l'entrecroisement des mythes et la touffeur des légendes et les giclées de sperme du grand original que personne, jamais, n'a débusqué au fond du labyrinthe végétal d'ou réjaillissent les éclats de sa pestilence comme une éclaircie sauvage déchiquetée parmi la masse innombrable des troncs érigés vers le gouffre du ciel gorgé d'encre et d'imprécations, une escarmouche dans la guerre des linéaments et du vide, mais d'un vide surpeuplé qui verse une clarté noire et transpire une froide sueur mercurielle qui rend mortellement glissante la piste du retour et de la pensée. . ./17/
>
> [Night dances on the forest, night, a slow deflagration damp with sap whose gray gold and suffocating camphor prolong and signal the interlacing of myths and the suffocating heat of legends and the sperm spurts of the great original which no one, ever, has dislodged from the bottom of the vegetal labyrinth from which burst of its pestilence gush forth as a wild glade jagged by the innumerable mass of trunks set up toward the gulf of the sky glutted with ink and void, a battle in the war of lines and void, but an overpopulated void which

pours out a black clearness and sweats a cold
mercurial sweat which makes mortally
slippery the trail of return and of thoughts.]

Stylistically this paragraph is a mixture of subordinate constructions and loosely connected word clusters. Subordination implies a hierarchy of relationships all stemming from a main clause. But in this case no clauses are embedded into the opening sentence. Neither the adjective subordinates ("labyrinthe végétal", "éclaircie sauvage", "vide surpeuplé", and "clarté noire") nor the relative subordinates ("dont l'or gris. . .", "que personne, jamais, n'a débusqué. . .", and "qui verse une clarté noire. . .") stem grammatically from the kernel clause. Everything which follows the opening statement-- words, phrases, and clauses-- is juxtaposed disjunctively and defies the very logical progression which subordination sets out to achieve. With all attempts at discerning a thread of meaning destroyed, the reader is left to experience the discontinuity of the successive clauses and word clusters. This morass of language, with its twists and turns, is a picture of the forest upon which night dances.

Interestingly enough, it is the first clause-- the simple succession of words which leads the reader into the forest of poetry-- which provides the first

clue to understanding the role of the night image. Despite its ordinary grammatical sequence of words, the sentence escapes mundane prosaicness by the unusual semantic alliance between subject and verb. "Night dances on the forest." Night, the atmospheric condition characterized by a period of darkness, cannot dance upon a forest. It can descend upon a place, settle in somewhere, or overtake someone; but not dance. To use this verb with the image of night is to transfer to the latter, by means of personnification, an aspect of human activity.

The picture of night engaged in dancing recalls Dupin's own assessment of modern dance-- an art form which, freed from any prescribed succession of steps, constitutes the search for a pure language of artistic expression. In his essay "Conjonction", Dupin underscores the uncertainty with which each step is taken and the great risk which faces the dancer constantly. For him the dancer is at every moment isolated in his ongoing attempt to break through to the essence of art.

By its position as grammatical subject of the verb "danse", night is the dancer, the one who, in Dupin's words, "se livre totalement et affronte la plénitude de l'instant unique"/18/, the one who "à chaque pas s'expose à l'inconnu de l'espace, et court sa plus grande chance en même temps que son plus

grand risque."/19/

Thus with Dupin's modern dancer in mind, we may read the image of the night in the sentence "La nuit danse sur la forêt" as Bachelard's dream traveler or as the poet, or the reader of poetry-- all of whom must experience the maze by living it. That is to say that just as the poem sequence "Moraines" was ostensibly written as the labyrinthine effort of the poet to "see" by walking/20/, so is this poem, "Suite forestière", generated by the figure of night. The cumulative clauses and word clusters which follow this initial independent clause bear out this observation: far from simply creating the setting of a damp, dark overgrowth of neglected forest, the night image shows itself to be the cutting edge of poetic creation-- the ever present catalyst for engendering poetry.

The first two paragraphs demonstrate the work of darkness in taking over the forest of poetry. The figure of night invades the heretofore unexplored forestal territory, dominating trunks, branches, and twigs, and overtaking every living tendril and creeping vine-- following them to their furthest extremities. One image of a twining plant leads to another which, in turn, leads to another until the knotted jumble of warring lines and spaces "rend mortellement glissante la piste du retour et de la

pensée"./21/ By the second paragraph the night's control of the forest is irreversible, with the reader's attention so fixed to the inner prison of the forest so as to preclude any thought of returning. The poem unravels under the cloak of darkness, for only in the context of night is the denseness of the forest revealed.

In L'Eboulement we observed that night provides the interior space requisite to the play's development and that night is associated with growth and expansion. The same seems to be the case in "Suite forestière": only through the gloom of darkness can the emerging forest be perceived.

Similarities between the two works do not stop there: in both play and poem night is more readily perceivable in its spatial dimension-- consisting in L'Eboulement of the confines of the stage and in "Suite forestière" of the terrain covered by forest. But once the spatial bounds of darkness have been determined, its temporal limits are suggested as well. Just as in L'Eboulement the period of night provides the time framework for the play, so does darkness contribute to the temporal structure of "Suite forestière".

Throughout the poem we find four references to time which situate the work in the space of a single night. The first reference comes in the third

paragraph, after the night's control of the forest has been well established and after all possibility of remembering the way out of the labyrinthine wood has been effectively abolished. The image of a foot stepping into the confusing mass of overgrown vegetation is timed to correspond to early nightfall: "Et le pied sans mémoire s'accroche à la ganse de la première heure de la nuit."/22/ [And the foot without memory clings to the edging of the first hour of the night]. What was at the beginning simply a disorderly jumble of plant life now takes on a sinister tone by implicating imprisoned human experience. To the image of brambles, trees, roots, and runners are added the suggestions of cries, traps, shackles, and wounds. The figure of a footstep venturing uncertainly into the unknown implies synecdochically the one who is in imminent danger.

The human activity at risk is poetry, and at each step the creator of the word affronts threatening obstacles inherent in the very nature of the overgrown forest. The second reference to time which helps to delineate the temporal space of the poem appears in a subsequent paragraph:

> Un alcool d'herbes se répand et brûle
> lentement entre ses chevilles alourdies
> d'extraire du sol spongieux le sang d'où

jaillit dans l'obscurité l'immense bois d'un
supplice dont le point de l'aube décidera
s'il doit être détruit ou se survivre
au-delà de la discorde entre sa densité
ligneuse et la folie de ses feuilles, /23/

[An herb alcohol spreads out and burns slowly
between his ankles weighted down by
extracting from the spongy soil the blood
from which springs forth in obscurity the
immense wood of a torture of which the
verge of dawn will decide if it must be
destroyed or survive beyond the discord
between its ligneous density and the madness
of its leaves.]

The crucial point comes just before dawn. That late stage of waning night signals the moment of decision between imminent destruction and salvation. The fact that this hour of night is significant calls to mind L'Eboulement , where the anticipation of dawn provokes not only agitation but also announces death, for the Old Woman claims, "Cette nuit pour la première fois / just avant le lever du soleil / j'ai vu se creuser le ciel derrière la montagne / derrière les nuages / se creuser, me tirer hors de moi."/24/

The third reference to darkness which helps fix the time frame as one of a single night appears three paragraphs before the end. By this stage of the poem the poet has experienced the forest to the extent that he begins to envision leaving it behind. In the discourse of familiar address he begins: "Et de cette nuit tu sors, des fûts de la forêt excessive, tu vas sortir, pour apposer tes marques à ce

territoire étranger. . ."/25/ [And from this night you are going out, from the trunks of the excessive forest, you are going to go out, in order to post your marks on the strange territory]. These lines, read with the reference to dawn in mind, reinforce the imminence of leaving behind the night-- not simply night as a condition, but night as the period of time between dusk and sunrise.

At the beginning of "Suite forestière" we saw night as the generating force of poetry. Now, the indication that one leaves night implies the abandonment of poetry as well, for the phrase "des fûts de la forêt excessive" serves as an appositive to the parallel phrase "de cette nuit", thereby associating the action of quitting the forest with that of leaving the night behind. No longer is it possible to consider the propelling presence of night to be distinct from the actualizing of poetry: evidently the forest of poetry will last only as long as does night.

Although the preceding three references to night situate the temporal framework of the poem in the space of one night, a fourth mention, located in the penultimate paragraph suggests the final limits of night: "Couleurs de la nuit cinglant la forêt, tapissant de poivre la paupière, l'humidité de la langue, et la feuille raturée, noircie, dont je suis

la plume oscillante, comme une femme désemparée sur la dernière marche de la nuit. . ." [Night colors swishing through the forest, covering with pepper the eyelid, the tongue's dampness, and the scratched out, blackened leaf, of which I am the oscillating pen, like a crippled woman on night's last step]. The phrase "la dernière marche de la nuit" announces imminent daybreak. The mention of the last step, that one after all others in chronology, stands as the counterpart to the first of the four allusions to night, to the one in which the image of a foot is said to cling to the edging of the first hour of night. Between the references to night's first hour and its last step, the reader experiences the completed nocturnal cycle. With the arrival of morning, the night of poetry has been achieved; and the poem, deprived of its nocturnal nourishment, dies.

Almost as an addendum to the poem, the final section resumes succinctly the preceding twelve paragraphs:

> Leurre et figure résorbent les séquences écrites ou dessinées ou rêvées dan le noeud du bois volatil où se rencontrent les races et les errants qui ne pactisent jamais et se reconnaissent trop tard, quand les signes substituables de la nuit percutent et font voler en éclats l'énigme et la couleur du jour. . ./27/

[Decoy and figure absorb the sequences

> written or sketched or dreamed in the knot
> of the volatil wood where races and wanderers
> meet which never come to an agreement and
> which are recognized too late, when the
> substitutable signs of night strike and send
> bursting into pieces the enigma and the
> color of the day].

Comprised of forestal images and representations of figures which serve to mislead and to entice into danger, "Suite forestière" (as reviewed in this final segment of poetry) is a place of conflicting poetic forces and of creative energies never resolved. Here, just as in L'Eboulement -- although to a far lesser extent than in that work-- the image of daylight affords the concluding perspective on night. As the cutting edge of poetry, night wields violent and enduring mastery over daylight, not simply in subduing it but in shattering its very component elements-- its enigma and its color.

Interestingly enough, the opening image of the poem-- night-- is countered at the conclusion by its opposite-- day. But the image of daylight with which the poem ends is a fractured image, an image signaling once and for all the success of night in its attempt to gain the upper hand. This entire final section, therefore, reinforces the primacy of night: although the poem concludes, having run its course; the force which energizes the creative act continues.

Night in "Suite forestière" functions on three levels: first, its prominence in the setting is requisite to the threatening, foreboding atmosphere. Second, the night image is crucial to the spatial structure of the poem. As is the case in L'Eboulement , night here fuels the creative process. In other words, each word, each phrase, each line owes its existence to the image of night which carves out a terrain for the poem. Third, the image of night provides a unity of time for the existence of the poem, a time frame within which the poem is conceived, flourishes, and fades.

IV. Night and Its Celestial Bodies

The first chapter focused on the nature images in Gravir and in Une Apparence de soupirail and showed that nocturnal celestial bodies such as the moon and stars indicate the spatial perimeters of poetry. At great distances from the mountain terrain of the poet, these heavenly spheres stand as representatives of an other-worldliness-- of a realm towards which the quest for new poetic space is directed. As the furthest points imaginable, moons and stars mark out the arena for poetry.

From the perceived agelessness of those constellations and moons, the reader infers a sense

of permanence and eternality in the face of constantly changing days and seasons. Despite the artist's unrest in his ongoing poetic endeavors, the figures of heavenly bodies evoke stability.

But are we to consider these nocturnal images to be synonymous with night? Can all that is said of them be said of night as well? Or is there a distinction to be maintained between night as the cloak of darkness and the spheres inhabiting that darkness?

In only a few of the poems of Gravir in which find references to celestial bodies do we find the image of night as well. "Grand Vent" is one of those few. As the opening poem in the "Suite Basaltique", "Grand Vent" presents the image of a mountain ascent. The poem's first four lines situate the speaking figure on the rocky trail and projects the goal of its endeavor:

> Nous n'appartenons qu'au sentier de montagne
> Qui serpente au soleil entre la sauge et le lichen
> Et s'élance à la nuit, chemin de crête,
> A la rencontre des constellations. /28/
>
> [We belong only to the mountain path
> Winding in sunlight between sage and lichen
> And hastening to darkness, mountain-top road,
> To meet the constellations] /29/

All attention focuses on the trail which, in carrying

its travelers along the mountain crest, thrusts them into the night so that they will reach the distant constellations-- the outer limits of the sphere of poetry. Here we perceive a virtual synonymy between the constellations and the night as goal. Both represent the same unachievable end, the furthest reaches of the poetic imagination. Among the poems in Gravir , only in this one do we detect a close likeness between the image of a constellation and that of night.

Elsewhere in Gravir nocturnal celestial images are not accompanied by direct references to night. Consequently those references to night which do appear throughout the collection elucidate other aspects of poetic creation. In the sequence "Lichens", night is perceived first as the key to explaining the mysterious and then, in a later poem, as that which satisfies, as that upon which our fulfillment depends: La nuit qui nous attend et qui nous comble, il faut encore décevoir son attente pour qu'elle soit la nuit."/30/ As the end towards which we aspire, night stands as the goal, in much the same way as the constellations of the night sky mark out for the poet his sphere of operation.

The poet uses the image of night in yet a different sense in a later segment of "lichens" in which the speaking voice says, "Si par mégarde cette

nuit je heurte contre votre porte, n'ouvrez pas. N'ouvrez pas encore."/31/ Night in this case implies the time for preparation, the period in which the crafting of the poem is to be achieved.

Clearly these examples demonstrate the diversity of referents of the night image in Gravir . Whether the poet associates night with the poetic goal to be achieved, or with spatial and temporal expansion, one thing is certain: night in Gravir , regardless of the variety of its functions, always fosters the creative act.

Dupin's other collection of poems in which stars and moons play a conspicuous role in supporting the dominant figure's urge to break through to an outer space is Une Apparence de soupirail . Evoking great distances, the images of the stars and the moon hint at a threshold of poetry-- at the space beyond all accessible artistry which promises poetic freedom.

Just as in Gravir , the night image and the figures of nocturnal celestial bodies are mutually exclusive: where one is present the other is not. But although the images do not appear side by side, do the occurrences of the night image nonetheless signify (as do images of stars and moons) the boundaries of poetry?

The first poem in the collection introduces the goal of breaking through to wide-open space: "D'un

fil à l'espace, interminablement."/32/ If this first sentence identifies the destination of the poems to follow, then the second suggests the manner by which one will proceed to arrive at that destination: "Sans désagreger le tissu de la nuit ouverte". Whatever this reference to night means, we know at the very least that the fiber of night must be left intact during the effort to break through to another space.

But why "la nuit ouverte"? What is an open night? How does the quality of being open relate to night? Is a night said to be open if it is all-encompassing and exclusive? No answers to these question are readily available and we may look for other examples of qualified night.

Two such examples appear juxtaposed in the middle of another piece. Oscillating night. Summer night./33/ The first is of special interest because of its adjective "oscillante", for we recall that oscillatory movement in this collection is crucial to the poetry's dominant urge to transcend to another reality. In reading the representation of such polar, combative extremes, we perceive the emergence of a new poetic space. In our previous study of this collection we saw that images of the heavens contrast with images of the earth in oscillatory juxtapositions. Now we read of a night which, in its

oscillation, shares a common feature of the stars. Thus, by its association with the stars and the moon, the night image may be said to suggest the threshold of the bounds of poetry.

In this collection and in Gravir , therefore, we may understand something of the spatial perimeters of poetry from selected occurrences of the night figure. Although perception of the limits of that arena is more readily available through the imagery of stars and moons, we cannot discount the occasional relevance of the night image itself to the spatial dimensions of poetry.

But as is the case in Gravir , more often than not the figure of night elucidates other facets of the creative process, especially the temporal aspect. The following lines clearly link night to time: "Toutes choses obscuries. Le souffle suspendu. Une nuit. Un instant, Durant lequel je suis le maître de l'obscurité des choses. . ."/34/ However long or short night may be, its significance lies in its temporal nature. Night is a period of time here, not a spatial entity. For the speaking voice night is the moment to dominate the unknown. Thus we may conclude that not only does night function on the temporal plane, but its importance on the temporal plane can be determined only in terms of one who sees himself in relation to that plane. In other words,

time has value not in itself but to those who operate within its sphere. In this poem night's value rests with the speaking voice which perceives night as the temporal space it needs.

In summary, the relationship between the image of night and the figures of nocturnal bodies is unpredictable. Whereas the celestial imagery regularly suggests either physical or temporal space for poetic expansion, the figure of night resists specific categorization. The most we dare conclude with certainty about night is that it consistently facilitates the creative process. On some occasions its role cannot be specified beyond a general appreciation of its propitious function in the poems.

V. Night in Dupin's Later Poetry

Although it occurs infrequently in De Singes et de mouches , the night image serves to offer hope to the poet of a yet untouched poetic territory. In this collection the poet employs the figures of monkeys and flies engaged in an ongoing struggle in an attempt to chisel out for himself a fresh terrain of poetry. The frenzied dance of aggression in which the figures particapate is but the attempt of the poet to conquer silence.

Three references to night permit us to identify

it as that poetic space still to be apprehended. In the midst of a succession of images signaling chilling cruelty and uncontrolled energy, the first denotes quiet isolation: "mais au milieu de la nuit / l'étincelle / le silence"./35/ Amid the jockeying for dominance and the reciprocated violent blows, we detect a quiet-- a silence associated with night. At this point we know nothing more about night than that it is distinct from the boundless energy expended around it.

Several pages later, another reference to night sheds more light on its identity:

N'est qu'on plectre un ongle
de singe arraché

forant seul la pierre
lacérant
la seule nuit
. . . . . .

un plectre moucheté de venin
touchant le vide /36/

[Is only a plectrum a monkey's
claw torn out

alone boring the stone
lacerating
the one night
. . . . . .

a plectrum speckled with venom
touching the void]

The juxtaposed images in this section can be

classified into groups according to their relationship to the other images. Due to the contiguity of the signifiers denoting a plectrum and a claw, we may read the word for claw as the appositive of the plectrum image. Belonging to that same group of substantives is the image of the plectrum speckled with venom. These referents form the first group.

A second category of words is comprised of the present participles "forant", "lacérant", and "touchant". These all convey physical activity of varying levels of aggression directed toward some object. Following each participle is a substantive which, receiving the action borne by the verbal, functions as its syntactical object. Thus "la pierre" is the object of "forant", "la seule nuit" the object of "lacérant", and "le vide" the object of "touchant". All of which means that the constituent members of each group-- the subject class, the verb class, and the object class-- enter into a semantic association with the other members of its class. As a result the reference to night is associated with stone and void. All three act as conditions subject to intended acts of subjugation. While not yet under the control of their respective subjects, these three objects represent coveted space. By its contextual associations, therefore, the night image finds its

identity shaped in this passage to convey the promise of anticipated space.

The third reference to night which permits us to perceive it as that space still to be created appears several pages later. Three short lines identify night as a state whose potential remains unrealized: "Cette nuit ne finit pas d'être creusée, ou comblée, mise à nu"./37/ Whatever the exact nature of the image may be, its essence remains hidden, its potential beyond reach.

In De Singes et de mouches , therefore, the night image plays a passive role. Here night provides neither the skeletal framework for the poems nor the cutting force which brings them into being. All allusions to night in this collection suggest it to be the anticipated poetic breakthrough-- the object of poetic desire.

In De Nul lieu et du Japon the night image resembles that in De Singes et de mouches by obliquely signaling deferred poetic fullness. In both collections the role of night is implicit rather than explicit. Snatches of phrases and a kaleidoscope of images in De Nul lieu et du Japon evoke ethereal impressions of the Far East. And yet those impressions of an exotic society give way to recurring themes of emptiness, death, and night. On only a few occasions do we encounter the word

"night". By looking at its semantic associations, however, it is possible to derive the importance of the image.

The most accessible reference to night appears in a temporal context: juxtaposed with the image of dawn, night contributes to a framework within which a potter (one who creates) operates. In this poem, however, the identity of night depends on more than its opposition to dawn. In the following lines we sense an accelerated expectancy of the future:

> Les mains lisses de terre humide
> un potier tourne de l'aube
> à la nuit l'instant différé de sa mort
>
> nous gouterons dans ce bol
> la mer intérieure le riz blanc /38/

> [Hands smooth with wet earth
> a potter turns from dawn
> to night the delayed instant of his death
>
> we shall taste in this bowl
> the inner sea the white rice]

Our attention, focused on the figure of a potter turning a pot on his wheel, shifts to the object being formed and anticipates its future serviceability. The work schedule of the potter interests us because immediately following the indication of its furthermost limit ("la nuit") comes the phrase denoting the potter's imminent demise, a phrase which, due to its juxtaposition to the

reference of night, may be read as parenthetical to the night image. Night, thus, is perceived as the constantly postponed deadline for achieving the work of art. It is that always delayed moment at which the artist ceases his work. In short, night serves not only as an objective, fixed time limit within which work must be done, but also as that ever anticipated point beyond which no more work is possible.

Elsewhere in De Nul lieu et du Japon , a network of associations permits us to read the night image as the promise of poetic fulfillment. Dispersed throughout the poetry, each of the signifiers "night", "garden", and "void" appears with the others in various combinations with the effect of reinforcing our understanding of night. Although the word "night" occurs in only the first of the following three excerpts: "Dans le jardin de pierres la nuit"/39/, "dans les jardins du Prince / jardins du Vide"/40/, and "le vide est plénitude" /41/, we may nonetheless infer something about the nature of night from the other two.

Linked by contiguity to the phrase "jardin de pierres", the word "nuit" finds itself linked in turn by association to the other references to gardens-- "les jardins du Prince" and "les jardins du Vide". Nowhere do we find a clue for explaining the "jardins

du Prince", but the allusion to void (as in "jardins du Vide") takes as its precedent the assertion "le vide est plenitude". Through a chain reaction of word associations, we may link night to emptiness, and-- since the emptiness is fullness-- night to fullness. Thus, in both De Singes et de mouches and De Nul lieu et du Japon , references to night announce the advent of pure poetry.

VI. Conclusion

Night imagery for Dupin provides the substance of poetry. Intrinsic to the creative process, the night image nonetheless resists pertaining exclusively to any particular aspect of that creative process. As we have seen, night participates in a broad and varied spectrum of signification, conveying spatial limitations in works such as L'Eboulement and "Suite forestière"; temporal boundaries in L'Eboulement , "Suite forestière" and Gravir ; providing the catalyst of the creative act in "Suite forestière"; and suggesting the promise of poetic fulfillment in De Singes et de mouches and De Nul lieu et du Japon . Referents to night extend beyond these works and can be found in poems from L'Embrasure (especially in "La Nuit Grandissante", "Vendémiatrix", and "Rubrique") and from Dehors ("Le

Soleil substitué", and "Le Lacet"). The general nature of the image, perceivable in part by any one of these poems, frustrates our search for a specific significance of night.

The relevance of night to several facets of the poetic act suggests that the night image might represent metaphorically Dupin's artistry. At the beginning of the chapter we affirmed that Dupin's poetry, like that of Reverdy, Char, and du Bouchet, is an art of search, approach, and expectation. By its reference to the spatial perimeters of the quest undertaken, the night image reflects the poet's search for poetry; by its use as a temporal framework, night reflects the artist's approach of poetry; and in its role as the promise of poetic fulfillment, the night image reflects the expectative aspect of the poet's art. One art, three phases, one image. Night, that one image with multiple referents, stands as one metaphor for the whole of Dupin's creative process.

What accounts for the poet's willingness to employ the same image over and over again, constantly modufying its sphere of application? For an insight into a poet's fascination and experimentation with one image, we turn to René Char who writes, "Le poète ne retient pas ce qu'il découvre; l'ayant transcrit, le perd bientôt. En cela réside sa nouveauté, son

infini et son péril."/42/ So it is with Dupin and the image of night which, ever exploited and discarded, is always ever retrieved in order to renew and reinvigorate the quest for a new space of poetry.

Notes

/1/ Pierre Reverdy, Plupart du temps , 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1945) 2:24.

/2/ Nick Caistor, "The Image of Night in Rene Char's Poetry," Sensibility and Creation: Studies in Twentieth-Century French Poetry , ed. Roger Cardinal (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1977) 169.

/3/ Caistor 181.

/4/ Caistor 169.

/5/ Jacques Dupin, L'Eboulement (Paris: Galilée, 1978) 18.

/6/ Dupin 38.

/7/ Dupin 46.

/8/ Maurice Blanchot, L'Espace littéraire (Paris: Gallimard, 1955) 138.

/9/ Dupin 97.

/10/ Blanchot 215.

/11/ Blanchot 216.

/12/ Blanchot, The Space of Literature , trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, NE: UP of Nebraska, 1982) 163.

/13/ Dupin 61.

/14/ Dupin 61.

/15/ Blanchot, L'Espace 216.

/16/ Dupin, Suite forestière (Paris: Maeght, 1979) n.pag, rpt. in L'Espace autrement dit (Paris: Galilée, 1982) 243.

/17/ Dupin, Suite 243.

/18/ Dupin, "Conjonction", Festival de musique et d'art contemporain, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, 31 July-7 August 1966, rpt. in L'Espace autrement dit (Paris: Galilée, 1982) 97.

/19/ Dupin, "Conjonction" 97.

/20/ Dupin, L'Embrasure (Paris: Gallimard, 1969) 69.

/21/ Dupin, "Suite" 243.

/22/ Dupin, "Suite" 244.

/23/ Dupin, "Suite" 245-6.

/24/ Dupin, L'Eboulement 117.

/25/ Dupin, "Suite" 247.

/26/ Dupin, "Suite" 248.

/27/ Dupin, "Suite" 248.

/28/ Dupin, Gravir (Paris: Gallimard, 1963) 23.

/29/ Dupin, "High Wind", Anthology of Contemporary French Poetry , ed. and trans. Graham Dunstan Martin (Austin: UP of Texas, 1971) 117.

/30/ Dupin, Gravir 68.

/31/ Dupin, Gravir 69.

/32/ Dupin, Une Apparence de soupirail (Paris: Gallimard, 1982) 9.

/33/ Dupin, Une Apparence 68.

/34/ Dupin, Une Apparence 98.

/35/ Dupin, De Singes et de mouches (Montpellier,Fr.: Fata Morgana, 1983) 24.

/36/ Dupin, De Singes 28-29.

/37/ Dupin, De Singes 34.

/38/ Dupin, De Nul lieu et du Japon (Montpellier, Fr.,: Fata Morgana, 1981) 9.

/39/ Dupin, De Nul lieu 27.

/40/ Dupin, De Nul lieu 23.

/41/ Dupin, De Nul lieu 2.

/42/ René Char, La Parole en archipel (Paris: Gallimard, 1962) 42.

Chapter 7

Desire and the Problem of Framing

"Le poème est l'amour réalisé
du désir demeuré désir"
--René Char /1/

I. Introduction

In illustrating the never ending obsession with occupying a new space, Dupin's poems permit the reader to inquire about their limits, and specifically, to attempt to identify the bounds separating the reality of the written poetry from the irreality of its goals; or expressed otherwise, the work of art from the non-work.

The problematic of the frame can be traced back to the question of aesthetic judgment, a question raised by Kant in his Critique of Judgment . In his efforts to establish a criterion for evaluating a work of art, Kant addresses a more fundamental issue: the recognition of the distinction between the work to be evaluated and the background upon which it is placed. In the course of his discussion (on which Derrida elaborates and to which we shall return), Kant proposes the concept of the parergon : that which is against, next to, and beyond the accomplished work, all the while touching the work and participating in it as its accessory./2/ After

reviewing the case for studying the problem of framing in Dupin's poetry and after suggesting and illustrating a frame by close readings of selected passages, we shall return to the concept of the parergon and show how it enriches and broadens our understanding of Dupin's poetic quest.

Framing implies boundaries, and the chapter on nature images identifies certain images in Dupin's poetry as serving to announce the perimeters of the poetic terrain. The problem of framing persists, however, despite the category of images which suggests limits. The movement in Une Apparence de soupirail of a figure trying to break out into a freeing outside space, the speaking voice in "Moraines" declaring "Tu ne m'échapperas pas, dit le livre. Tu m'ouvres et me refermes, et tu te crois dehors, mais tu es incapable de sortir car il n'y a pas de dehors",/3/ and the poetic voice in "Un Récit" announcing his work on a body ". . .dans le mien que je sens tressaillir, se ramasser, s'apprêter à bondir-- se jeter DEHORS"/4/: all draw attention to the question of liminality by supposing a distinction between the internal, the text, and the external, the "hors-texte". I propose to show that apart from any body of imagery, desire itself constitutes a frame for the poetry.

Identifying desire as important to Dupin's

poetry is not new. According to Dominique Viart who, in L'Ecriture seconde: la pratique poétique de Jacques Dupin studies writing as the meeting place for his criticism and his poetry, desire can be identified as the source of the writing experiment. Referring to two passages from Une Apparence de soupirail and "Un Récit", Viart isolates two manifestations of desire-- the desire for life (inherent in breathing) and the desire for death (inherent in suffocation)-- as the two poles of the same act which engenders writing./5/ For him, therefore, desire prefigures the realization of the writing experience; desire constitutes the seed from which "le battement dans le sous-sol"/6/ germinates and develops into the full-blown poem. But although he acknowledges desire to provide a frame for poetry, Viart does not demonstrate the ways in which desire forms the frame.

In the preface to the collected critical essays of Dupin, L'Espace autrement dit , Jean-Michel Reynard isolates desires as that rupturing which breaks through into the opaque space of painting (for the painter) or poetry (for the poet). Desire, he writes, constitutes the sum of movements-- turbulence, fever, distress, and lack-- which proceed from the inside of artistic space to that outer space yet to be conquered. Through the exercise of desire,

therefore, that space is little by little won over to the painter, or to the sculptor, or to the poet./7/

Reynard's perception of desire, however, reaches beyond the fissuring action itself to include the opacity of the space to be occupied as well as the violence which emanates from within the work./8/ In other Dupin poems Reynard interprets the figure of light as the representation of desire: he sees light as the call to overcome the silence of forbidden space./9/

For Reynard, then, desire has broad reference, in its seeming to form the conduit force linking the inside to the outside as well as representing the opacity of that outer space, and also in its signifying the violence with which the poem is written. Although his assessment of desire includes its use as a framework for the "dedans" of poetry, Reynard's view of desire in Dupin encompasses much more. In "Gisement" Reynard announces the importance of desire in Dupin's work but leaves an analysis of its role as frame to others.

II. Desire as Frame

The first step in identifying desire as frame for the work is to address the question of voice. Desire, as the human quality denoting a longing, or a

reaching out towards something absent, may function as the object of an expressed speaking voice (an "I desire" or "he desires") or it may appear conceptually without being tied to a specified voice, as in "Le Désoeuvrement" where we read ". . .le cri / parmi l'herbe: mot / de la fin, désir"./10/ It may also be implicit in a context in which the speaking voice is not identified, as in the first line of "La Double jarre": "Que l'intensité se fractionne"./11/ In other words the action of desiring may be the object of a speaking voice (expressed or unexpressed) or the concept of desire may be implicit in the subject of the poem. Our task is to distinguish between its two uses and in those instances in which desire finds its origin in a speaking voice, to attempt to separate the subject of the poem from the voice which speaks with some measure of desire about the subject.

Roland Barthes addresses the question of voice in his comments on a sentence from Balzac's Sarrazine in which the identity of the narrator cannot be determined. In the absence of a clearly identifiable voice to which one can attribute writing, Barthes posits writing as "that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing."/12/ Furthermore he

adds that as soon as a fact is narrated apart from any function other than the practice of its own symbol, "voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins."/13/ Saussure and the structuralists assume that language speaks, not the author. If we accept this view of literary theory, then in those cases in Dupin's poetry in which the speaking voice is not identified, we know it to be the voice of language itself.

This prominence of writing as speaking voice gives us a situation in which poetic essence and the medium of poetic engendering fuse almost indistinguishably. The modern poem, which for Wallace Stevens is "the cry of its occasion, / Part of the res itself and not about it",/14/ becomes autogenous, with the poetic voice (writing) virtually writing its own essence, which is poetic writing itself. This self-engendering nature of poetry is nowhere more evident in Dupin's poetry than in the first line from "Moraines": "Ecrire, est-ce un sommeil plus mobile et qui s'entoure de comparses."/15/ In addressing the nature of its own essence and in performing its own being, poetic writing is both constative and performative at the same time.

Poetic writing constitutes in itself a hierarchy in which the dominant position is occupied by writing

in its subjective, "speaking" role; that is, writing as the goal of another force. Or, to express the subordinate position differently, the poem as product is writing exercised. The element distinguishing writing as subjective from writing as objective is desire-- subjective desire for an objective result. Subjective desire for poetic space is expressed both explicitly and implicitly: explicitly in the very subject matter of poetry and implicitly in the manner in which the work is conceived.

On a few occasions in Dupin's poetry, desire is specifically named, and in such instances in which it appears, it functions as that refueling force which, in reinvesting itself in the furthering of poetic writing, actually frames the poetic space to come. Dupin's latest collection of poems to be published, Contumace , contains several references to desire. In "Ballast" we detect a speaking voice in a position similar to that in other poems, especially in Une Apparence de soupirail . From the poem's opening lines, the speaking voice identifies itself as existing "outside" an unnamed but evidently desired inside space. The entire poem forms a labyrinthine styled quest in which the speaking voice is both chased by and flees from a flood of impressions and images in an attempt to reach an elusive horizon.

In the midst of this flight, we find two

references to desire. In the first, "et le même mot brille, et nous / chasse, et rallie la semence, l'excès de forces, le désir. . . ,"/16/ desire finds renewal in the word. Just as the word reinvigorates the speaking voice in its flight for space, so does writing revive the desire to persevere in the ongoing quest. In the second reference, ". . .un corps a peine écrit / dissipé, un visage arpenté sans fin / trop de fois désiré et nomme, pour retenir / un nom, ni le sien, ni ma voix,"/17/ an excess of desire prevents the object from being named. Desire, as an unlimited force, fosters the continuance of poetic writing.

The expression of desire may focus not solely on "another" space, but may demonstrate a longing for its own space as well. The poem "Le Désoeuvrement" begins with the word "ubiquité", and it is this notion of existing everywhere at the same time which serves as the goal of poetic writing. Ubiquity, we read, is the word necessary for the creation of the poem: all poetic energy is spent in its pursuit. In the following lines poetic writing associates desire with ubiquity:

> Le cri de la touffe
> à la surface
> de deux poèmes sous-vécus soudés
> sous la doublure
> de l'inceste, le cri

parmi l'herbe: mot
de la fin, désir

sauvage d'ubiquité /18/

[The cry of the cluster
at the surface
of the two less-than-authentic
poems welded
under the lining
of incest, the cry

among the grass: closing
word, primitive
longing for ubiquity]

The primitive longing for ubiquity extends beyond the movement from one space to another to include the doubling back onto its own space. That this desire for ubiquity comprehends reflexive action in addition to the search for the "other" can be seen in the image of the two poems welded together under the lining of incest. The phrase "la doublure de l'inceste", with its ideas of duplication, contribute to the space desire seeks to occupy. After all, the lining ("la doublure" is the place of doubling-- the meeting space for two parts, and incest suggests a desire turned inward, acting upon itself or upon that which ordinarily would not be the object of desire.

Subsequent references in"Le Désoeuvrement" confirm our suspicion that the poem is being engendered by desire's ubiquitous push for space. The lines "L'ellipse du corps dans le corps du poème"/19/ stand as proof that poetic writing,

motivated by desire, may turn in on itself in an attempt to enlarge its terrain.

Subjective desire for artistic space may be implicit; that is, implied or understood although not expressed directly. Dupin's perception of pieces by the Spanish sculptor Chillida illustrates such desire. In a catalogue accompanying an exhibition of the artist's works, Dupin writes about Chillida's approach that "il découle d'une force appliquée avec intransigeance et une âpre certitude, il procède de la volonté irrépressible de découvrir ce que le vide recèle et dissimule."/21/ Arising from desire, the sculptor's creative powers are maintained by means of desire, so that he may carry out his task.

Likewise we may perceive poetic writing, in taking the place of the sculptor, as that intransigent force behind the working out of poetic energy-- as the irrepressible will to discover that which emptiness hides. Perhaps the clearest way in which poetic writing evidences desire is through the use of verbal moods.

In expressing the attitude taken by the subject with regard to an utterance, a verbal mood represents one of a variety of means by which a discourse is framed. To illustrate the role which linguistic moods play in conveying desire, let us look at the following passages from two poems:

"Trait pour trait"

écrire, ne pas écrire

alternative inconséquente --le poison

ne transporte

que des débardeurs étanches

coeur littoral

boue solaire

de l'écriture du corps

entaillé, fuse

le dehors

l'énergie dispersante du dehors

à la trace volatile

le réel étant le désir, même/22/

[writing, not writing

thoughtless alternative poison

thrills

only some impervious stevedores

literal heart

solar mud

from the writing of the hacked

body, fuses

the outside

scattering energy from the outside

to the volatile trace

the real being desire, even]

"Bleu et sans nom"

Que les mots fassent souche dans l'air,
à la surface et dans la profondeur de l'air,
qu'ils s'écrivent
qu'ils relancent, qu'il réactivent,
une énergie disloquante
et, contre la blancheur qui les récuse,
les aiguise,
contre la douleur dont ils se gorgent,
qu'ils s'écrivent, la encore, obstinément,
sans ébarber le fer, le fil, l'assiduité
de la lumière /23/

[Let the words found a family in the air,
at the surface and in the depths of the
air,
let them be written
let them start again, let them
reactivated
a dislocating energy
and, against the whiteness which challenges
them, sharpens them,
against the pain with which they stuff
themselves
let them be written, yet there, obstinately
without trimming the iron, the thread, the
light's assiduousness]

The subject of both passages is writing; writing as accomplishment; writing as the product of some energy and as a movement from emptiness to fulfillment. In both passages writing is associated with desire; but although desire is named only in the first, its presence in the second is no less definite. In fact, despite desire's being named in the first, it is even stronger in the second, and that strength is located in the attitude of the speaking voice towards writing.

By its use of the subjunctive mood, the speaking voice (writing itself) powerfully conveys desire. In presenting the subject of the utterance-- not in its reality nor as an eventuality-- but rather simply as a preferred possibility, the subjunctive mood sets the entire passage apart as a yet unrealized goal. Mood of wish and decree and exhortation rather than that of the actual or of the concrete, the subjunctive anticipates a state not yet achieved. It effectively labels the subject at hand as belonging to the realm of thought rather than to the plane of existence. In fostering a vision of poetic creation, the subjunctive mood allies with the whole of Dupin's poetry in that it constitutes a movement towards fullness.

Besides its primary function in pointing to an anticipated future state of affairs, the subjunctive

mood in "Bleu et sans nom" reveals another aspect of desire-- the lack from which desire arises. The presence of an absence triggers the desire to satisfy that need, to fill that absence; and consequently, the desire to rectify that lack finds its voice in the subjunctive mood. In light of both the assumed lack and the anticipated fullness, the subjunctive stands as a bridge, a border, to the poetic endeavor.

We can more fully appreciate the framing concept of the subjunctive by examining a specific reference. The words "Que les mots fassent souche dans l'air" form the opening line of the poem. The meaning of this sentence lies in a time yet unrealized, in a time at which words will converge in an artistic arrangement. That is to say that the words which contribute to the poem are but signifiers announcing a signified which exists only in an imagined space. Had the line read "Les mots font souche dans l'air", then signifier and signified would be joined on the same plane. It is the use of the subjunctive mood, however, which defers meaning to a future time. The line contributes to the poem on the page but the poetic space sought after exists only as a thought. The subjunctive mood creates the space around that still incomplete work, that ever unrealized poetic space. While not specifically naming desire, the subjunctive mood actually performs the desire it

strives to convey.

That the perspective of the writing subject in the subjunctive mood originates outside the text and is focused onto the text can be understood more clearly in the light of the passage cited from "Trait pour trait" where two excerpts illustrate two more means by which a discourse is framed. The indicative mood, illustrated by "--le poison / ne transporte / que des débardeurs étanches," presents the action in its reality; that is, as a simple fact uttered by the speaking voice. The indicative moood, contrary to the subjunctive, is not the mood of will or desire but rather the mood of acknowledgment. Between subject (speaking voice) and object (utterance) the relationship is one of equality; the subject claims no superiority and wields no power over the object.

If the indicative mood, by its simple declarative relationship between speaking subject and object, represents an absence of desire, then the infinitive, illustrated by the first line, "écrire, ne pas écrire," represents an absence of any attitude whatsoever taken by the subject with regard to the utterance. In expressing the meaning of a verb without distinction of person, number, or tense; an infinitive is static, devoid of any capacity to convey attitude. A verb in its purest form, the infinitive assumes no speaking voice. Thus, the

discourse exists in isolation, vulnerable to interpretation only by reason of its context.

Clearly then, only the subjunctive conveys desire. The indicative mood posits a co-partnership between subject and object while the infinitive excludes all consideration of a speaking voice altogether. Of the three uses of the verb, only the subjunctive mood manifests the space of desire.

The frequency of occurrence of the subjunctive mood is not tied proportionately to any degree of desire. Permeating the excerpt cited from "Bleu et sans nom", the subjunctive touches an entire listing of verbal actions: founding, writing, starting over, and reactivating. In other poems where the subjunctive mood is present, it exists more in isolation, interspersed with other verb forms yet not relinquishing its power to convey desire. Only in the opening line of the poem "La Double jarre"--"Que l'intensité se fractionne"--do we find a subjunctive, but the desire implicit in that opening line (aided by the colon which draws attention to all that follows) sets the tone for all of the successive verbs, whether they be infinitives, gerunds, participles, or finite verbs.

In other words the subjunctive need not be used exclusively in a poetic segment in order to express desire. Its presence among other verb forms does not

diminish its own capacity to suggest desire. Even when juxtaposed with the most inexpressive of all verb forms--the infinitive--the strength of the subjunctive in conveying an attitude of subjectivity loses none of its power. In fact, when an infinitive, which is neutral, finds itself in close association with a subjunctive, it takes on some of the same attitude emitted by the subjunctive. Thus the lines "écrire ici soulever / un corps nuageux / de soeur"/24/-- lines which, out of context, reflect no attitude on the part of the speaking voice-- suddenly assume, by reason of the reader's progress through the poem, the same expression of desire present in the immediately preceding line, "Que l'intensité se fractionne :". Therefore, verbs which in their own right do not convey desire, may do so when associated contiguously with verbs in the subjunctive mood.

On occasion poetic writing evidences desire in more than one way. Such is the case with "Malévitch", the poem on which writing inscribes the constellations of soaring rectangles of the Russian painter Kasimir Malévitch. The poem ranks with "Bleu et sans nom" for its sheer number of subjunctive verbal constructions, as illustrated by the following lines:

que le rouge et le blanc
s'affrontent / et s'annulent
que le noir coupe le blanc / et
que le blanc revienne du bord / ou de
l'absence de limites
compact signifiant
que les couleurs écrasées
s'éteignent se retirent /25/

Despite the physical presence of the poem on the page, the envisioned space of poetry-- the place where colors overlap, intersect, and collide-- is set apart by the subjunctive mood whose role in expressing desire for the absent poetic space is of primary importance.

Yet another element present in this segment implies desire, and in order to make the proper connection we must look at an excerpt from another poem; this one from a series of poems published on the occasion of drawings and paintings by Miró. The title of the series of poems, "Couleurs à l'improviste", aptly fits the poems, each of which is built around a different color: black, white, red, green, and blue. The poem entitled "Rouge" begins thus:

Ni tout à fait le sang ni tout à fait la
muleta
mais la couleur de l'impatience
du désir, de la provocation des signes/26/

[Neither completely blood not completely
muleta
but the color of impatience
of desire, and of the provocation of signs]

If red is the color of desire, then we may read the red rectangles in the poem "Malévitch" as joining forces with the subjunctive discourse in suggesting poetic writing's desire for a new space. Just as the rectangles in the artist's paintings vie with each other for supremacy in the race to create a space for visual art, so are the rectangles inscribed on the page desirous of competing with each other to attain poetic fullness.

Not only do the red rectangles signify desire, but that desire actually helps to frame the space of poetry. Once again, the Malévitch paintings on which the poetry opens, serve to elucidate the framing: the contiguous colored rectangles in the paintings suggest, by their constantly changing arrangement, a lack of resolution; that is to say that by their unsettledness, the configurations point to the yet unachieved space of fulfillment. In their ceaseless jockeying for position, the red rectangles participate in conveying instability; but by virtue of the color red's association with desire, the

rectangles actually serve to frame the unrealized space of art from the obvious manifestations of uncertainty and quest.

Likewise, the figures of red rectangles in the poem create a border of desire for poetic space. The poem's concluding lines announce the ongoing wait for space:

> / hors du rouge surgi refoulé
> du rouge poussé au blanc cristal abstraction
> carré
> du sang arraché à sa douleur
>
> l'attente / l'attentat de l'impossible
> espace /27/
>
> [/ beyond the red risen up driving back
> of red thrust on white square crystal
> abstractions
> of blood wrested from its pain
>
> the wait / the crime of impossible space]

All of the poetic energy unleashed in the poem strives for the unattainable, and that space beyond reach--the impossible space--is framed by the red of desire.

Elsewhere in Dupin's poetry, a poetry generally devoid of color, images drawing on the color red hint of desire. One poem in particular, the opening piece in De Nul lieu et du Japon , merits attention by its resemblance to the clashing rectangles of "Malévitch":

Plonger
entre ses genoux ouverts
reconquérir sur le blanc
le sang heurté de sa naissance
à parfaire
dans le geste d'encre

l'instabilité de l'éclair
indéfiniment maîtrisé /28/

[Plunging
between its open knees
winning back from the white
the harsh blood of its birth

to perfect
in the act of ink

the instability of the flash
indefinitely mastered]

In both passages figures of white and red collide violently in an attempt to arrive at a desired state: in "Malévitch" the rectangles clash in an effort to reach the "impossible" space of poetry; in De Nul lieu et du Japon the spilling of blood on a white backdrop signals the desire for perfectability. Just

as the interaction among geometric form in "Malévitch" presuppose a missing space to be the object of desire, so in De Nul lieu et du Japon does the conflict between white and blood prefigure the future attainment of the instability of the flash. In both cases the color red or one of its variants -- blood-- attends the struggles for an unknown. In light of the poem "Rouge", we may read both figures as signifying desire for an absent, awaited presence which, conversely, takes as its frame, a figure of red.

In much of Dupin's poetry, the image of blood is linked to the carving out of a poetic terrain. Blood, associated with personal aggression, metaphorically signifies the cruelty of writing. With all of its imagery of torture, fear, and pain, the collection De Singes et de mouches juxtaposes blood with writing, since the latter cannot be undertaken without pain. The discussion of violence and more precisely, personal aggression, belongs to another chapter; and yet the association of the color red (and those substances characterized by that color) with desire serves to expand the reader's understanding of the relationship between cruelty and writing. As is evident from "L'Onglée", "Sang", and De Singes et de mouches , writing arises from, and is fueled by, violence which chooses as its most

personalized manifestation, bloodletting. Once we read the elements of desire into the image of blood, we understand that the search for poetic space includes not only disruptive action and intense, physical suffering but also a longing for completion, a wish for fulfillment.

It is this anticipatory nature of the blood image which permits us to place the violent engendering of poetry in its proper context: rather than indicating simply a present condition of suffering, the violence of bloodletting looks forward to the moment when the space of poetry will have been won over. Thus the blood, all the while engaging in the struggle for fullness, also frames that desired space.

III. Desire as Parergon

Until now our discussion of desire as frame has focused first of all on the manifestations of desire, and secondly, on the relationship of desire to the poems. As we have seen, that relationship is primarily one-directional: a desire for, a desire towards a specific goal, which is the space of poetry. However, a frame in the Kantian sense of parergon has wider significance, and Derrida's elaboration of the nature of the parergon enriches

our understanding of frames.

Kant speaks of the parergon as an ornement, i.e. as that which is not intrinsic to the representation of the object but which exists externally as a complement to the object,/29/ and he gives as examples picture frames, or draperies of statues. Derrida, in turn, expands this delineation of a parergon to include that which "vient contre, à côté et en plus de l'ergon , du travail fait, du fait, de l'oeuvre mais [qui] ne tombe pas à côté, [mais qui] touche et coopère, depuis un certain dehors, au dedans de l'opération."/30/ He views the parergon as that which lies neither totally outside the work nor totally inside the work, but which is a mixture of both, a thickness which forms simultaneously a part of both inside and out./31/

Two features of the parergon have important implications for Dupin's poetry: first, the notion that the parergon owes its existence to a lack on the part of the ergon ; and second, that the margin (or the frame) is perceivable not only in relation to the work but also (and in equal proportion) to the non-work, or that which lies outside the work. Derrida shows that the characteristic of a frame which determines it to be a parergon is not simply its externality to the work but its internal structure which binds it to a lack in the work.

Without this lack, he claims, " l'ergon n'aurait pas besoin de parergon . Le manque de l'ergon est le manque de parergon ."/32/

Under these terms, desire clearly forms the parergon of Dupin's poetry, since the desire for a new poetic reality springs from an inherent lack of fulfillment in the poems. Elsewhere we have referred to this lack in the poetry as an absence of poetic completion. This absence, or lack within the ergon constantly fuels desire which, although neither part of the envisioned poetic space nor of the work itself, nonetheless serves as an accessory to that work, in much the same way that Kant's example of draping which covers a statue stands as an accessory to that statue.

The second feature of the parergon which elucidates desire as frame of Dupin's poetry is the relationship of the parergon both to the inside of the work and to the outside. In explaining the frame in the Kantian sense of the word, Derrida writes, "Le parergon se détache à la fois de l'ergon (de l'oeuvre) et du milieu, il se détache d'abord comme une figure sur un fond. Mais il ne s'en détache pas comme l'oeuvre. Elle se détache aussi sur un fond. Le cadre parergonal se détache, lui, sur deux fonds, mais par rapport à l'oeuvre, qui peut lui servir de fond, il se fond dans le mur, puis, de proche en

proche, dans le texte général."/33/ Written in reference to a painting on a wall, these lines could just as easily refer to a Dupin poem which, inscribed against a background of emptiness, is completely detached from that background. Desire, that edging around the poem, stands out against the same background of emptiness against which the poem stands out; but in addition, the frame also stands out from the work itself. While the reader of art examines the frame at each juncture (in its relationship to the emptiness outside the poem as background, or in relationship to the work itself as background, the frame (desire) blends in with the contiguous field not under scrutiny.

This contribution to our understanding of framing clarifies the dedans / dehors juxtaposition in Dupin's poetry, for that opposition forms the implicit space for desire. It is clear that desire forms the frame separating an inner space of restriction from an outer space of freedom. What has not been clear until now, however, is that desire as parergon belongs to both the inside and outside space of the work, and that this desire is present even without direct reference to movement from one space to another. For example, in the following lines from De Singes et de mouches ,

tant que le sang
écrit versé
dehors

continue
de couler dedans,/34/

desire is not explicitly present; yet in referring neither wholly to the work nor wholly to that which lies outside the poem, this internal / external opposition creates a thickness of desire around the work.

IV. Conclusion

Apart from detecting and analyzing desire in isolated passages and poems, we may consider the applicability of desire as frame to Dupin's poetry as a whole. A broader consideration of desire as parergon leads to an appreciation of desire on three levels: first, internally, or that within lengthy poems; second, in those poems which take as their referents visual works of art; and third, on the most general level-- that of Dupin's poetry as an entire entity.

First, desire forms the parergon of individual poems. Each poem conducts its own pursuit of a new

poetic reality, a pursuit which arises from a particular lack at a specific time. The foregoing analyses of selected passages indentified certain manifestations of desire, but we must recognize that desire operates linearly throughout the entire poem. Quite frequently, as is the case with "Bleu et sans nom", "Malévitch", and most of Dupin's poems subsequent to the publication of Gravir , each poem is multi-segmented; and although our identification of desire has been limited to a few lines here and there, desire nonetheless forms the covering-- the parergon -- which links every segment of a poem to its preceding and subsequent segments.

In addition, desire forms the frame for that genre of Dupin's poems which represent visual works of art. In that group we find such pieces as "Malévitch", "Suite forestière", "Couleurs à l'improviste", "La Rivière souterraine", and "Arctique". Each poem, drawing its inspiration from a painting, both comments upon the painting as well as recasts it in language. That is to say that each poem not only represents an outside work but also presents that work as new and different.

Viewed from the perspective of the referent works, the poems act as accessories to the paintings. Kant's example of drapings covering a statue serves a a model for the relationship of the poems to the

paintings. Implicit in these relationships is the desire for the poems to reflect and yet expand the visual pieces of art.

Finally, desire serves as frame to the whole of Dupin's poetic endeavor. The ongoing absence of poetic fulfillment elicits repeated attempts to pursue the elusive goal, and each poem represents a separate effort on the part of poetic writing to attain that which remains ever beyond reach. Just as desire for completion links each line and each segment of the poem to the next; so it links each poem to the others. On all levels, then, desire constitutes the frame-- the parergon -- around, next to, and beyond the poetry of Dupin.

Notes

/1/ René Char, Poèmes et prose choisis (Paris: Gallimard, 1957) 223.

/2/ Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1952) 68.

/3/ Jacques Dupin, L'Embrasure (Paris: Gallimard, 1969) 70.

/4/ Dupin, Dehors (Paris: Gallimard, 1975) 108.

/5/ Dominique Viart, L'Ecriture seconde: la pratique poétique de Jacques Dupin (Paris: Galilee, 1982) 21.

/6/ Dupin, "Le Soleil substitué," Dehors 26.

/7/ Jean-Michel Reynard, préface, L'Espace autrement dit , by Jacques Dupin (Paris: Galilée, 1982) 13.

/8/ Reynard 13.

/9/ Reynard 14.

/10/ Dupin, Contumace (Paris: P.O.L., 1986) 47.

/11/ Dupin, Contumace 77.

/12/ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," Image, Music, Text , trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977) 142.

/13/ Barthes 142.

/14/ Wallace Stevens, The Collected Poems (New York: Vintage Books, 1982) 473.

/15/ Dupin, L'Embrasure 60.

/16/ Dupin, Contumace 36.

/17/ Dupin, Contumace 39.

/18/ Dupin, Contumace 47.

/19/ Dupin, Contumace 50.

/20/ Dupin, Contumace 56.

/21/ Dupin, "Répétitions autour du vide," L'Espace autrement dit 266.

/22/ Dupin, Dehors 86-87.

/23/ Dupin, Contumace 103.

/24/ Dupin, Contumace 77.

/25/ Dupin, Dehors 149.

/26/ Dupin, L'Espace autrement dit 160.

/27/ Dupin, Dehors 149.

/28/ Dupin, De Nul lieu et du Japon (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1981) 1.

/29/ Kant 68.

/30/ Jacques Derrida La Vérité en peinture (Paris: Flammarion, 1978) 63.

/31/ Derrida 65.

/32/ Derrida 69.

/33/ Derrida 71.

/34/ Dupin, De Singes et de mouches (Montpellier:Fata Morgana, 1983) 35.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

To approach the essence of poetry is to participate in its own displacement. This sentence, which introduces this study, may be seen as summarizing its composition. Four words in the sentence stand out as indicating the foundation of this study of Dupin's poetry: "essence", "approach", "participate", and "displacement".

First, the word "essence" suggests literature's space, that central point of the work which Blanchot identifies as its origin, that nowhere which, by its eternal presence, constitutes the only point worth reading./1/ This space is that undefinable, inexhaustible domain whose existence Dupin acknowledges when he writes, "la poésie ne comble pas mais au contraire approfondit toujours davantage le manque et le tourment qui la suscitent."/2/

In the chapter entitled "Cataclysm and Cruelty: Texts of Violence", I identify multiple manifestations of violence in Dupin's poems which testify to poetry's essence by illustrating the means by which that essence, to paraphrase Dupin, "always deepens further its own lack and torment." The notion of violence as the modus operandi of the poet's creativity can be traced to Dupin's perception

of violence as the force engendering the works of Miró and Giacometti. This is to say that Dupin's own attempts for poetic transcendence reflect the nature of the creative act in the visual arts and, consequently, serve to situate Dupin's poetry in a context wider than that of poetry alone. In other words, by its reliance on violence as a means of reaching a new reality, the poetry of Dupin not only finds a place among fellow poets but also, on a broader scale, serves as a paradigm of the whole of contemporary art.

The violence intrinsic to the opening of poetic space is often perceivable in Dupin's poems by images of gaps or fissures. In the chapter,"Gaps, Fissures, and the Promise of Space Beyond", I study Dupin's use of the gap in testifying to the means of transcendence (violence) as well as in maintaining open the poetic vision for attaining the center of poetry. In addition to considerations of thematic and textual gaps in Dupin's poetry, I address the notion of the gap inherent in the reading experience. Blanchot speaks of the essence of the work as that which constantly withdraws the poet from what he does and from what he can do/3/, and I show that the gap implied in this constant withdrawal from the work reflects the gap experienced by the reader in the process of reading.

In much the same way that the space of poetry is beyond grasp, the image of night in Dupin's poems resists categorization. In "Poetry under Cover of Night", I explore the multiple appearances of this dominant figure in an attempt to induce its symbolism. That attempt to establish the symbolism of the night image ends in failure since night is impervious to categorization. And yet, by its ambiguous nature the night figure can be read as a metaphor for the entire poetic quest for space.

In the context of approaching the essence of poetry, the word "approach" denotes the act of drawing near, the process by which one gains access to a desired state. Certain features of Dupin's poetry illustrate the action of the reader in approaching a space which remains beyond apprehension. Nature images-- suns, stars, rocks, and moons-- provide the focus in Chapter Two of our consideration of the spatial limits of Dupin's poetry. These images, appearing primarily in Dupin's earlier poems-- those in which the poet uses language to express, or represent, the world around him-- connote the imminence of poetry's essence: in suggesting physical boundaries of the space already under the poet's control, the appearance of these images point to that which lies beyond. The changing configurations of nature images signal movements of

approach-- containment, liminality, expansion, emptiness, and undulation-- which all work to penetrate poetry's true space.

The action of approaching the desired space is most graphically illustrated by the image of the labyrinth. In Chapter Five, I study the labyrinth as a model of the venture towards poetry's essence. It is this labyrinthine model of the quest, as it is read in Moraines , which informs the space of poetry perhaps more cogently than does any other single image, theme, or model in Dupin's poetry. From this model we gain insight into the nature of the quest undertaken, the limits of the labyrinthine endeavor, and the changing perceptions of the reader in following the text, for the labyrinthine model provides the place where reader joins the poet in the search for transcendence.

Read in the light of Gaston Bachelard's observations that the labyrinth must be lived in order to be perceived/4/, the series Moraines illustrates the necessity of the reader's active participation in the process of literary communication. In the equation set up at the beginning of the thesis ("To approach the essence of poetry is to participate in its own displacement"), the verb "participate" correlates to the idea of approaching some desired end. Whereas the act of

drawing near poetry's essence may originate as the poet's venture, participation implicates the reader in that undertaking.

Indeed, the emphasis in this study is on the process of unraveling emerging characteristics of poetry; a process which demands of the reader a conscious assimilation of memories and changing perceptions of the present with constantly modified expectations for the future. The participatory role of the reader in the literary experience is summarized by Stanley Fish when he asserts that the method of reader-response criticism involves "an analysis of the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed one another in time."/5/ The labyrinthine model of the poetic quest successfully accommodates the participation of the reader in the process of literary communication.

By its very nature as the embodiment of a quest, Dupin's poetry centers on its own begetting; and this ontological self-reference ultimately seeks mediation through language. Unlike the Surrealists, for whom poetry is a means to rediscover one's authentic self through automatic writing, Dupin's poetry is a poetry of self-effacement. Its presence begins and ends, not in the poet's search for self, but in the space of poetic being./6/ As a language oriented poetry, Dupin's poetry invites the reader's participation in

uncovering the subtleties of the poet's language. Fish says of the reader-response method of communication that it is essentially "a language-sensitizing device and as the 'ing' in sensitizing implies, its operation is long term and never ending (never coming to the point)."/7/

The protractive nature of the reader-response method coincides with the elusive essence of poetry: the communication of poetry's continual displacement demands of the reader long term, never-ending participation. As the chapter on the labyrinthine quest in Moraines illustrates, the reader's response to the constantly deferred space of poetry is itself ongoing-- incapable of terminating. Just as Dupin's poetry's "never [comes] to the point" (in Fish's words), neither can the reader's account of the poetic effort ever conclude.

In moving toward its essence, the poetry of Jacques Dupin constitutes its own substitution. Each word, each poem, and each collection of poems illustrates Derrida's notion of the logic of the supplément , according to which we may read the whole of Dupin's poetry as a replacement (and an inadequate one at that) for that which is hidden, that which is forever displaced.

The final chapter in the body of this thesis discusses desire as a frame for Dupin's poetry.

After ascertaining desire to illustrate Kant's idea of parergon , we show that desire acts on three levels in Dupin's poetry: first, as a framing device within lengthy poems; second, in those pieces which take visual art works as their referents; and third, as a frame for Dupin's entire poetic endeavor. It is on this last level that desire is the most significant. If we are to read the whole of Dupin's poetry as a substitution for an absent presence, then desire serves as the constant motivator of poetic writing to reach the essence of poetry.

That essence remains impenetrable, but the foregoing pages illustrate that by means of the reader's active participation in the poetic act, we may approach that elusive space of poetry.

Dupin's quest for transcendence situates him as a poet in the Orphic tradition. His poetry, rooted in language and born through language nevertheless aspires to something beyond language. His search for the poetic absolute ranks him among those poets-- Bonnefoy, du Bouchet, Reverdy, and Char-- who conceive of poetry as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. This esthetic, in which the poet is the unveiler of the unknown, finds its opposition in the poetry of those who believe that writing, or

l'écriture , is all there is. This latter position, represented in contemporary French poetry by Denis Roche, Marcelin Pleynet, and, to some extent, Francis Ponge, embodies the hermetic view in which poetry is a closed system, intelligible only in terms of itself./8/

These two main currents find their early expression in the literary magazines Tel Quel (reflecting the hermetic stance) and l'Ephémère , which during its five-year publication life (1967-72) contered the poetry of Tel Quel . Dupin, along with du Bouchet, were the founding editors of, and contributors to, L'Ephémère and consequently, express not only in poetry but also in essays those facets of poetic composition which interest them. The art of Alberto Giacometti interests both Dupin and du Bouchet, and in their reflections on his creativity, we perceive their own conceptions of poetic composition.

Despite Dupin's Orphic preoccupations with poetry, his work nonetheless reflects a conflict between the poet as seer and the poet as self-absorbed artist. His work, especially that of Gravir , L'Eboulement , and Une Apparence de soupirail , reflects the conception of poetry that attributes to the poem the power to take us beyond the ordinary, that visionary position reminiscent of

Baudelaire and Rimbaud; and yet we also detect facets of his work whose Mallarmean self-detachment and metapoetical nature suggest the hermetic, ends-oriented conception of poetry. In not merely taking poetry as subject but in centering on it as the reason for being, Moraines , perhaps more than any other sequence in his poetry, embodies the hermetic strain in Dupin.

In embracing aspects of both the means-oriented and the ends-oriented currents of poetry, Dupin's work evidences the ambiguity which characterizes the modern poetic endeavor and points to the uncertainty with which the poet undertakes the creative enterprize. And yet the poet's persistence in setting to his task, unsure of how to proceed and unaware of where it will lead him, witnesses nevertheless to the space of poetry which, as that point which cannot be reached but which constitutes the only one worth reading, perpetuates the expression of the work.

It is that expression, arising from the poet's persistent efforts, which keeps open poetry's space, for Dupin, in a tribute to Pierre Reverdy, writes: "Le poète, c'est à dire personne, devant le mur qui nous arrête, et qu'il traverse, continue d'écrire sur le sable et la poussière. . . Moins il a à donner, plus il donne. Il maintient l'espace ouvert."/9/

Notes

/1/ Maurice Blanchot, L'Espace litteraire (Paris: Gallimard, 1955) 54.

/2/ Jacques Dupin, L'Embrasure (Paris: Gallimard, 1969) 65.

/3/ Blanchot, The Space of Literature , trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, NE: UP of Nebraska, 1982) 88.

/4/ Gaston Bachelard, La Terre et les rêveries du repos (Paris: Jose Corti: 1948) 215.

/5/ Stanley Fish, Is There a Text in This Class? (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1980) 27.

/6/ For a study of the poet's shifting conception of self, see Maryann De Julio's dissertation, "Expressivity and Indication in Michaux Reverdy and Dupin," U of Iowa, 1979.

/7/ Fish 66.

/8/ For an indepth consideration of the two major conceptions of poetry, see the introduction to Robert W. Greene's book Six French Poets of Our Time (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979) 4-21.

/9/ Jacques Dupin, "La Difficulté du soleil: A Propos de Pierre Reverdy," A la rencontre de Pierre Reverdy (Saint-Paul: Fondation Maeght, 1970).

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