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Playing Leapfrog with Plato:
Mimetic Representation in the Novel as Described in Virginia
Woolf's *The Waves*, Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* and Clarice
Lispector's *Água Viva*

by

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

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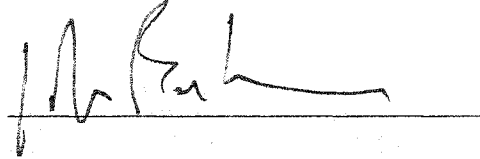
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ABSTRACT

Playing Leapfrog with Plato:
Mimetic Representation in the Novel as Described in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* and Clarice Lispector's *Água Viva*

by

Douglas L. Hurbon

Advisor: John Brenkman

According to the theories of the novel portrayed in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* and Clarice Lispector's *Água Viva*, mimesis is one of the factors that limits the novel's capacity to represent things objectively, that is, from without any given subject position. Mimesis is the mechanism by which artistic media construct fictive objects, like characters, histories or action. In the novel, this mechanism relies exclusively on the way our subjective consciousness constructs objects in time and space out of the linear series of sense impressions which comprises our interaction with the physical world. The linear imperatives of such a mechanism force all mimetic representations in the novel to be both singular and linear.

According to the theory presented in the three novels, any objective representation of the world must be plural, that is, perceived simultaneously from a multiplicity of human perspectives. The novel fails to achieve any form of objective representation because its mimetic mechanism can represent things only as they would appear to a single, subjective perspective. No two perspectives can be represented simultaneously. The inability to represent simultaneous perspectives limits the novel to presenting multiple perspectives as a linear series, one at a time. According to the three novels, any

objective representation of more than one person in a world must present their multiple perspectives simultaneously, all at once.

The experience of being is defined phenomenologically, following Ricoeur's definition in *Time and Narrative*. This definition and its relation to the novel is compared and contrasted to the theories presented in the three novels. Woolf's novel portrays mimesis in scenes currently unfolding for the reader as steadfastly singular and linear. Cortázar's novel portrays the unification of those individual scenes in the novel into a single entity as also ultimately singular and subjective. Lispector's novel attempts to impede mimetic representation as a means of escaping its singular linearity.

Forward

This study began as an attempt to characterize the novel more precisely via the advent of some brand-new and supremely useful theoretical terms or via the further qualification of already-in-use terms like experimental, postmodern, modern, metafiction, self-reflexive, etc. What I admitted to slowly is the fact that all terms fail to some degree or other in their characterizations of the novel because all novels, novels of all eras and subjects, genres and types, share a variety of characteristics, such that any novel might be labeled, to some degree of accuracy, any term we wish to define. In sifting through terms, eras and novelistic genres, it quickly became clear that trying to define exactly what constitutes metafiction or the postmodern novel was an arbitrary exercise in exclusion and inclusion: all novels possess to some degree or other the characteristics I would assign to my new or further qualified terms. In other words, we must agree with Barthes when we attempt to define certain kinds of novels as worthy of being grouped together under any given term, no matter how well-meaning that term might be. All novels are, to some degree, like all other novels, just as for Barthes all novels are to some degree readerly and to some degree writerly—no novel falls completely to one side or the other of any term or distinction with which we'd like to characterize it. As it turns out, the modern novel is not so rigidly modern, nor the Victorian novel so neatly Victorian, nor the postmodern novel so very post as all that, nor metafiction purely meta.

Rather than avoid this continual problem, we can embrace it, for the failure of descriptive terms to characterize certain groups of novels convincingly or neatly gives

way to its inverse: certain qualities, certain characteristics, are germane to all novels. Not to be confused with the universal pursuits of narratology and its grammars of time, narratological levels or mythic structures, I am speaking of much more pedestrian qualities that are particular to the novel and often looked past: the malleability of its prosaic form, its strictly linguistic manner of representation, its devout linearity (it is, after all, a set of words in linear order).

Amongst these simple but universal characteristics is, perhaps surprisingly, the most important and least immediately obvious: mimesis, the construction of fictitious things in fictitious time and space. All novels, even the most experimental, as are the novels in this study, rely upon it almost constantly. There can be no novel without it. *Agua Viva*, *The Waves*, and *Rayuela*, while they struggle with the novel as a literary form, characterize themselves not by how they differ from other novels with respect to mimesis, but by how they fail to differentiate themselves. Primary amongst their characterizations of their failed attempts at differentiating themselves from the shadowy figure of the “common” novel is their inability to escape, do away with or alter what we might call classic mimesis: the representation of things. Like all novels, they rely upon it to become novels and can find no substitute for it nor a means of becoming novels without it.

Given the irreplaceable, inescapable quality these novels assign to the nature of mimesis in the novel, it follows logically that mimesis in part defines the novel: the novel is a work in which operates a particular form of purely linguistic mimesis. Of course this completely erases any conception of characterizing sets of novels as having moved away from or having supplanted mimetic representation. This characterization of mimesis and

the novel raises the need to define what mimesis is, exactly, how it operates in the novel in particular, how it is irremovable from the novel and how the nature of that mimesis shapes and defines the novel itself.

I examine the characterization of the concept of mimesis in *The Waves*, *Rayuela* and *Agua Viva* in excruciating detail and contrast that characterization with an equally detailed examination of its characterization in phenomenological theory, where the philosophical understanding of how we perceive the existence of things is brought to bear on how the novel makes fictional things exist. Ricoeur, of course, has examined this subject in detail in his *Time and Narrative*. In place of the breadth of a survey of the subject, I have chosen to delve deeply into Ricoeur's argument and its underpinnings, to expand, modify and discount various pieces of his argument, and, using the novels as a guide, bring Sartre, Barthes, Plato, Zeno and any number of other theorists to the table such that the nature of mimesis as these novels characterize it can be seen clearly in a theoretical context. The arguments are nuanced and complex, and I hope I have handled them to some degree of clarity and completeness.

The high degree of agreement among theorists and novelists concerning the nature of mimesis lends its own organic vocabulary to this study. It gives us a solid foundation from which to begin to characterize the novel in a more sensitive way. By extracting from the novels their implicit and explicit theories, and by qualifying them by the contexts from within which they are presented, we gain a perspective on just how deep, complex and original are Woolf's, Cortázar's and Lispector's conceptions of the novel, its roots, its immutable characteristics and its possibilities. The position or critical stance from which each of these writers produces their novels is already a rather well-

defined theoretical position on the nature of the novel which comes through in the reading of the novels themselves. These theoretical positions on the nature of the novel are, in the end, what produce the novels. The work of the critic comes in defining to some degree what those positions are. The authors themselves are not necessarily charged with such a task.

By translating, in essence, their theoretical positions from the fiction in which they are presented into a kind of critical prose, Woolf, Cortázar and Lispector become full-fledged contributors to the discussion that Ricoeur, Barthes, Sartre, Heidegger, Husserl, Augustine, Aristotle and Plato have been having across these many centuries. No reason to leave them out based on their chosen writing genre, based on the fact that they express their theoretical views of the novel primarily through the writing of novels. The value of this study comes when we can see the novels themselves as, in the fact of their being written, the taking of certain definitive positions regarding the nature of the novel.

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The Mimetic Limits of the Novel

The Portrait Painted in The Waves, Rayuela and Agua Viva

The novel has often been considered capable of accurately or realistically expressing the human experience of surviving, albeit temporarily, that endlessly vast thing to which the word “reality” refers. Alas, the experience of existence and the expressive capacity of the novel do not necessarily overlap or coincide. The novel is only capable of certain, limited types of representation, ensuring that it will never fully or faithfully capture what it is like to interact with, to be part of, that ultimate referent. This does not negate the novel’s capacity to continue to depict our experience as it has throughout its history, nor does it imply that reality, to allow such a small word to point at such an immense thing, is singular or even comprehensible; what this does imply is that between the novel’s representation of human existence and the actual experience of that existence is a gap that has yet and may never be bridged.

As the most flexible, malleable and encompassing of fictional narrative forms, the novel’s capacity to present in what seems like a complete and comprehensible way human consciousness’s high-wire act through the great three-dimensional circus of the universe makes articulating the limits of that capacity quite difficult. To say that the novel is always a limited and therefore always a false presentation of human experience

due to the constraints of its own, particular form is akin to asking whether human experience itself is expressible and therefore comprehensible. It's as if our inability to accurately portray reality as we know it in the novel means that we are simply incapable of such an achievement. If we can't do it in the novel, we seem to feel, then we just can't do it.

To be sure, the novel's limitations mirror our own. We created it in our own image, after all, and blessed it with all of our own shortcomings. At the same time, the novel provides us with certain expressive abilities we would not otherwise possess. The novel is able to hand over in some comprehensive, comprehensible way what seem like whole and complex representations of human lives in their vast, natural habitat. It allows us to pass these expressions of human experience, which we like to think of as deeply true, even "realistic," from one person, one generation, one era to another. In extending to us this capacity to transmit ourselves, the novel does a remarkably good job, the best we've ever done, says Auerbach,¹ but even as it succeeds, the novel's transformation of our flesh-and-blood selves into paper people is not without its particular costs and necessary falsifications, some of which make our paper selves more appealing than our flesh-and-blood selves. One of the great attractions of life on paper, and indeed life as a statue or a painting, has always been and perhaps continues to be the ability to reach beyond our own mortality. Where Huck Finn will never die, Samuel Clemens had no choice but to surrender to his own inevitable demise. Beyond the static representation of

¹ Auerbach in *Mimesis* portrays Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* as the crowning achievement of the evolution of mimesis as an ongoing enlightenment of our perception of reality. Woolf is the best representative of a modern novel which displays in a more complete and nuanced fashion than ever before "the wealth of reality and depth of life in every moment to which we surrender ourselves without prejudice" (552).

a portrait or a sculpture, the novel, like film or theater or other narrative forms, allows a representation of action, the “unfolding” of events in time, so that that unfolding can be experienced by its readers as if those events were happening in all their nuanced detail in the here and now, as if we the readers were witnesses to the events themselves. Even as the unfolding of a set of events is preserved forever on paper so that Odysseus might eternally return home or Juliet take her own life night after night, actuality, the very real thing the word “reality” points at, is falsely endowed with the prospect of just such an endurance. Actuality, in actuality, never recurs, cannot be re-read. We cannot reconstitute a particular day or a particular moment in time once it has disappeared into the nowhere of the past merely by taking it down from the bookshelf. Narrative, in this sense, extends our access to what we experience while we live in the universe by making it re-playable, re-livable to a certain extent, albeit in a medium with fixed limits. Those fixed limits impose themselves uniformly on everything we preserve in that medium, from creation myths to a recounting of our morning trip to the grocery store. Taking the novel as a narrative par excellence, we can examine closely the falsifications and mutations it imposes on its recreation of events unfolding in time. This allows us to see how those limits shape and determine how we understand what we manage to preserve out of the inevitable vanishing of things. It also forces our fingers down onto the fiery braille of everything that the novel is incapable of capturing, onto everything we lose in the transformation of the fleeting present into something we can hold onto and share with one another. Understanding the gap between the novel’s capacity to express our experience and the experience itself shows us that beyond our novels’ abilities to express the boundless material with which our consciousness is intertwined, in the rest of reality

that we do not yet know or have names for, new forms of comprehension and expression are waiting patiently for us, just as the novel and the moving picture, painting, sculpture, and the written word once gave us new and sometimes frightening looks at ourselves when we invented them. This is not the proclamation of a revolutionary new philosophy or art form, just a consideration of taking the next meager step in the hopelessly idealistic, western, occidental dance of enlightenment.

It is in this spirit that the novels *Rayuela*, *The Waves* and *Agua Viva* analyze themselves. They attempt to push the boundaries of our ability to comprehend and describe the world we live in, even if that world no longer looks anything like a novel, a narrative, or a story. These novels showcase each of their author's perceptions of the limits of their expressive medium. Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* comes as a kind of crescendo to a line of experimentation that flows through *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse* and is one of the iconic examples of the modern novel's struggle with realism and representation. Where Woolf and the moderns develop difficult questions about realism and representation, Cortázar and Lispector encounter those same questions as an already established part of the literary landscape in which they begin their careers, and their responses to those questions inform and shape the entire body of their works. As *The Waves* is published in 1931, *Rayuela* in 1963 and *Agua Viva* in 1973, they offer a small, historical survey of the problem of the limits of representation in the novel as viewed by three deeply influential authors. What joins these particular novels together is that they articulate very detailed theories concerning the narratological underpinnings of the gap between the novel's representational capacity and their own experience of being in the world.

The results of these novels' struggles to comprehend and to some extent bridge the gap between themselves and reality do not result in anything we might call success. These are no fabulous new novels that hurtle forward into the ubiquitous transformation of human consciousness. They are instead analyses of the form of the novel as we know it, novels which analyze themselves, as much theoretical fiction as fictional theory, as much novels about theory as theories about novels. They are self-analyzing fictional experiences aimed at understanding the gap they can't help but create between themselves and *la verdadera realidad* ("true reality"). In their theorizing and analyzing of the forces which separate the novel from the referent of that poor word "reality" like some great ocean, there is one deep and ever-present current which runs throughout all three novels: mimesis, the representation of action, specifically the construction of flowing fictional time in the novel, is limited at any given moment to a single point of view. An endless number of different points of view can be mimetically constructed in linear succession, but the novel is incapable of constructing any two of those points of view simultaneously. In *The Waves* this is exemplified by the singular point of view and linear nature of the final scene of the novel. In *Rayuela*, this is characterized as, among other things, the false cinematic language of the novel, cinematic implying both a singular and linear point of view. In *Agua Viva* this is described as the straight line in space drawn by the novel, the line representing the linear progression of single points of view to which mimesis in the novel is limited. In short, these novels tell us, no matter which way you slice it, what tests you run, which way you look at it or in what theoretical frame you place the novel, the novel inescapably constructs one exclusive, non-plural point of view at a time. Each particular point of view from which we gaze upon a

particular fictional place at a particular fictional time must be discarded in order to construct another. The classic transition in Westerns, "Meanwhile, back at the ranch," precisely encapsulates this problem: although the scene at the ranch is meant to occur simultaneously with the scene just portrayed, the novel cannot present it as such. The novel, to put it in more general terms, can represent no comprehensive simultaneity, and that comprehensive simultaneity is, according to all three novels we will consider, an obvious characteristic of any objective view of the world, fictional or otherwise.

This is, of course, an extension in the form of the novel of our consciousness being singular, to our always being confined to one body, to a continuous, although mobile and mortal, point of view. Woolf, Cortazar and Lispector, however, find this imposition of the physical limitation of human beings onto their grand plans for their novels unacceptable. It is unbearable for them, for example, to know that billions of pairs of eyes are simultaneously perceiving unique aspects of the world while their novels can only depict what one of those pairs of eyes sees at any given time. Why should the immortal novel surrender to this limitation of the flesh when even death holds no sway over it? The limitation of mimetic scenes to a linear succession of singular points of view is, ultimately, a limitation of the form of the novel that uniformly imposes itself on the novel's capacity to represent events unfolding in time. *Agua Viva*, *Rayuela* and *The Waves* portray this limitation as an inherent and unacceptable falsification of both what reality actually is and the human experience of being in that reality. At the same time, they portray this limitation as one they cannot yet overcome.

When we cast the light of our consideration simultaneously onto Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela*, and Clarice Lispector's *Agua Viva*, the novels'

concerns with their own inability to represent our existence to any satisfactory degree of accuracy or objectivity are suddenly highlighted like a luminescent matrix that intertwines them. From *The Waves*:

But it is a mistake, this extreme precision, this orderly and military progress; a convenience, a lie.

[...]

The crystal, the globe of life as one calls it, far from being hard and cold to the touch, has walls of thinnest air. If I press them all will burst. Whatever sentence I extract whole and entire from this cauldron is only a string of six little fish that let themselves be caught while a million others leap and sizzle, making the cauldron bubble like boiling silver, and slip through my fingers. Faces recur, faces and faces—they press their beauty to the walls of my bubble—Neville, Susan, Louis, Jinny, Rhoda and a thousand others. How impossible to order them rightly; to detach one separately, or to give the effect of the whole.... (353)

From *Rayuela*:

...la verdadera realidad que también llamamos Yonder...no es precisamente historia, el Yonder es como las puntas de los dedos que sobresalen del las aguas de la historia, buscando dónde agarrarse.

—Pamemas—dijo Perico.

—Y por isso el escritor tiene que incendiar el lenguaje, acabar con las formas coaguladas e ir todavía más allá, poner en duda la posibilidad de que este lenguaje esté todavía en contacto con lo que pretende mentar. No ya las palabras

en sí, porque eso importa menos, sino la estructura total de una lengua, de un discurso.

—Para todo lo cual se sirve de una lengua sumamente clara—dijo Perico.

—Por supuesto, Morelli no cree en los sistemas onomatopéyicos ni en lo letrismos. No se trata de sustituir la sintaxis por la escritura automática o cualquier otro truco al uso. Lo que él quiere es transgredir el hecho literario total, el libro, si querés. (618)

[“... the true reality that we also call the Yonder... is not precisely history, the Yonder is like fingertips sticking out of the waters of history, looking for something to cling to.”

“Bullshit,” said Perico.

“And that’s why the writer has to set language on fire, put an end to its coagulated forms and even go beyond it, place in doubt the possibility that language is still in touch with what it pretends to name. Not words so much any more, because that’s less important, but rather the total structure of language, of discourse.”

“For all of which he uses an exceedingly clear language,” Perico said.

“Of course, Morelli doesn’t believe in onomatopoetic systems or in lyrics. It’s not a question of substituting automatic writing or any other current fraud for syntax. What he wants to do is transgress the total literary deed, the book, if you will.” (447)]

From *Agua Viva*:

Eu te digo: estou tentando captar a quarta dimensão do instante-já que de tão fugidio não é mais porque agora tornou-se um novo instante-já que também não é mais. Cada coisa tem um instante em que ela é. Quero apossar-me do é da coisa. Esses instantes que decorrem no ar que respiro: em fogos de artifício eles espocam mudos no espaço. Quero possuir os átomos do tempo. E quero capturar o presente que pela sua natureza me é interdito: o presente me foge, a atualidade me escapa, a atualidade sou eu sempre no já. (*Agua Viva*, p. 9)

[I tell you: I am trying to capture the fourth dimension of the moment-now-already that, being so fleeting, is no longer because now it has become a new moment-now-already that also is no longer. Each thing has a moment in which it is. I want to take possession of the *is* of the thing. These moments that pass in the air that I breath: like fireworks they explode silently in space. I want to possess the atoms of time. And I want to capture the present from which by its nature I am interdicted: the present flees me, actuality escapes me, actuality is me always in the now-already.]

These three quotes are emblematic of the three novels' approaches to and concerns with their own inability to express what we might call true being, or true reality, although the words "true being" and "true reality" are by the standards of these novels about as accurate a representation of their would-be referent as a junkyard full of automobiles is proof of the evolution of human consciousness. In these three passages, whatever existence is in its entirety or in its discrete moments is given a name, a label: "the globe of life," "el Yonder," "o instante-já," and yet, even as the name is given these passages

contend that naming it in this way has achieved little if anything: this whatever-it-is escapes our writers, is impossible to achieve, may perhaps be achieved only by the transgression of the total literary deed. These novels are less concerned with what constitutes true being, for each of them seems convinced of a clear, intuitive contact with *la verdadera realidad*, and more with the problem of how to write the experience of that intuitive contact into the form of a novel.

The problem of writing the experience of that intuitive contact into the novel is one that, as we have said, none of the novels manages to overcome, and this seeming contradiction, the professed desire by characters and narrators in the novels to overcome the novel's limitations and finally achieve an objective representation of their existence coupled with the failure of the novel to do so creates a kind of internal combustion that drives these three novels: the desire to write what Lispector will come to call the impersonal *it* (the grand *it* of life, the universe and everything) in a linguistic form which is incapable of doing so. The result of this internal combustion is a great amount of theorizing about what the novel is, what it can do and what it can't do. At the same time, in the midst of all their theorizing, the novels are also trying to varying degrees to accomplish what they are theorizing about: the construction of mimesis without the simultaneous construction of a linear series of singular points of view. This seemingly simple and perhaps obvious characteristic of mimesis in the novel is, according to the theories presented in the novels, ultimately responsible for the upper limit of the novel's objectivity.

How, these novels ask themselves, can we get around this most central of the novel's limitations? The answers come primarily from each novel's designated fictional

theorist, a particular character who acts as spokesperson for the novel's theoretical concerns, presenting and discussing various theories about the novel. These spokespeople inevitably liken themselves to a fictional representation of their authors who seem not so very far removed from the characters through which they speak. In *The Waves*, the spokesperson is Bernard, in *Rayuela* it's Morelli, and in *Agua Viva*, it's the first-person narrator. Each of these fictional theorists comes up with a variety of definitions for and solutions to the problem of creating multiple, simultaneous views in or out of mimetic scenes. Distilling their work down to short and concise statements, we can say the following of the theories they present: In *The Waves*, Bernard posits that the figure drawn by the novel as a whole, the novel taken as one big figure, might somehow make the succession of singular perspectives presented in the novel simultaneous, thereby circumventing the problem of only being able to present one point of view at a time. In *Rayuela*, Morelli dismisses this possibility, deciding that the figure of the novel as a whole is no more a simultaneity of perspectives than any of the single points of view presented in linear succession. His belief is that a plurality of perspectives can be attained only by preventing the coordination of the novel into a unified totality. Morelli is convinced, in other words, that a plurality of perspectives cannot be accomplished in the novel itself, but only externally, in the unwritten experience of the reader. And in *Agua Viva*, Lispector's narrator takes this idea to its ultimate consequence, deciding that since the novel is not capable of depicting human existence objectively to any satisfactory degree, it should be used and understood as a non-representational experience. According to *Agua Viva*, the novel is nothing but a special means of focusing the reader's attention on the reader herself: the reader's experience of being

while she sits and reads the novel is the novel's true subject, the novel becoming nothing but a mirror which frames and reflects that experience back to the reader.

The Confrontation Between Theory and Fiction

In large part, this study is concerned with the relationship between the description of the novel offered by critical analysis and that offered by the three novels I consider. Where analytical theory holds fiction out as a solution to the problem of expressing being in language, the novels, as presented by our fictional theorists, see nothing but insurmountable obstacles between themselves and an acceptable expression of being. Our novels tend to agree to a minute level of detail with our critical theorists concerning the description of mimesis in narrative and the novel, but that description serves our fictional theorists not as a means of understanding the novel's successes, but as a means of understanding its failures. For our critical theorists, the novel always sits as a kind of utopic medium to which they assign various abilities and characteristics, often referring to an idealized novel as capable of a mode or manner of expression that cannot be achieved in their critical essays. The novelists, on the other hand, have no ideal, absent medium to which they can defer their failure. According to both our fictional and non-fictional theorists, if anyone is going to be able to write a complete representation of the experience of existence, it's going to be our novelists, not our critical theorists. When the novelists fail, they are, in a sense, stuck with their own failure. There is no other medium that is supposed to be better than the medium they're working in. As a last resort, they defer their inability to accurately represent what exists to the inexpressible experience of an ideal reader. The perceived expressive capacity of the genre within which the theories

themselves are put forth seems to account for the theories' relative degree of optimism or pessimism concerning the expressive capacity of the novel. Where critical theorists work within the perceived expressive limitations of the critical essay, our fictional theorists work within the perceived unlimited expressive capacity of the novel. Our critical theorists, uncharged with executing the theoretical possibilities they ascribe to the novel, put forth rather optimistic theories concerning the prospects of the novel, while our novelists, in the midst of attempting to fulfill those optimistic prospects, come to espouse rather pessimistic theories concerning the expressive capacity of the novel, as if having to fulfill the promise of the novel inevitably leads to an understanding of its falsehood.

Moreover, the method of treating fictional theorists alongside critical theorists brings the nature of their chosen expressive mediums or genres to bear on the theories themselves. The critics are forced to present and follow a very closed system. Where they start should indeed be where they end up. The thesis should be if not confirmed by the conclusion, then at least returned to, commented upon and revised. The essay, in short, may not contradict itself. The novel, on the other hand, can contradict itself in as many ways as it likes, and it never has to return to where it started if it doesn't feel like it. The novel is allowed to have one character go to his grave believing the novel perfectly represents being, while another perishes with the last words "the novel cannot and never will successfully express being in language." The novel, unlike the essay, has no constraints put on it to present a cogent argument or a cohesive theoretical point of view. This poses a particular problem when pitting a critical book against a fictitious one: one is by design uniform and logical in its opinions, the other is not necessarily related to and does not have to take anything like a definitive position.

Another aspect of the two genres which impacts the theories they present is their underlying purpose. Where one seeks to disclose information, the other seeks to induce a particular mimetic experience. The goal or meaning of the novel is in part the experience of participating in a fictive place and time, whereas the essay does not induce a mimetic experience of observing fictitious events unfold. The experience of reading an essay, in short, should not have a bearing on what the essay says, argues or proves, which should be accomplished instead through a series of declarative statements and logical arguments. To put it another way, in critical work, there is no essayistic time, no alternate universe in which we are to become involved, and no Aristotelian catharsis. This difference in purpose to a certain degree constantly colors the comparison of our real and fictitious theorists.

In order to contend with these differences, the novel's fickle theoretical positions in contrast to the singular stance presented in critical essays and the fact that the novel's construction of fictive space-time has no correlation in the essay, I follow a complex, although not original, method of analyzing the novels. There is, on the one hand, the need to bring the novel's fictional space-time to bear on the theories therein presented, and on the other the need to build the novel's sometimes disparate theoretical positions into a cohesive theory in order to compare it to the theories presented in the critical essays. For *The Waves* and *Rayuela*, what accomplishes both these goals is the analysis of continuous pieces of text from the novels, somewhat like Auerbach's method in *Mimesis*. This allows the fictive space-time of a given passage to come to bear on the ideas therein presented while also forcing us to account for the multitude of differing theoretical points of view offered in the passages. For *Agua Viva*, these goals are

accomplished by reconstituting one line of argumentation from its exploratory prose, as no single piece of text no matter how large seems to encapsulate its theoretical position. This also allows me to approach *Agua Viva*'s overall effect on the reader, which is its most persuasive argument, as the line I follow runs throughout the novel and following it gives a sense of the novel as a whole.

Within this structure, I follow a method of close reading that Barthes, in *S/Z*, called "staring" the text. In the chapters on *The Waves* and *Rayuela*, after the passage to be analyzed is presented as a whole, I consider the text from beginning to end in fragments, usually re-presenting the particular fragment in question. In the *Agua Viva* chapter, I take a long series of fragments from various places in the text that follow the theme of this essay. From each particular fragment, any number of meanings radiate out, and each of those meanings in turn spawns its own multiplicity of meanings and ideas, which in turn spawn other implications. Following these interwoven grids of meanings, ideas and implications allows me to fully unpack the novels' complex theoretical points of view which, unlike the theories presented by our critics, are presented in multiple layers of linguistic and situational contexts. Consider, for example, the following paragraph from *Agua Viva*:

Meu tema é o instante? meu tema de vida. Procuro estar a par dele, divido-me milhares de vezes em tantas vezes quanto os instantes que decorrem, fragmentária que sou e precários os momentos—só me comprometo com vida que nasça com o tempo e com ele cresça: só no tempo há espaço para mim. (10)

[My theme is the instant? my theme of life. I seek to be on par with it, I divide myself thousands of ways as many times as there are instances which pass,

fragmentary as I am and precarious the moments—I only concern myself with life that is born in time and with it grows: only in time is there space for me.]

In *Agua Viva*'s fictional context, the speaker can represent the text, the novel, the narrator and the implied author, so these conceptions of theme, time and being must be considered in all of those contexts: as a comment on the narrator's fictional existence, as a comment on the nature of the text, and as a comment on the novel in general. The conception of time, in turn, is that of an infinitely divisible quantity, a rather complex question which spans all of Western thinking. On top of that, the narrator/text/novel wants to stay even with that fragmented time, to be "in time," a question to which Heidegger devoted a lifetime of study. And finally, the question of the construction of fictive time and space is brought up, for only in the construction of a fictional time is there space for this first-person narrator, and the birth of that time is equated with the birth of a co-extensive fictional space, and that space and time, the substance of fiction itself, is divided a thousand ways in each of its instances. This interwoven complexity, created by a text considering what it is doing in the moment it is doing it, leads quite organically toward an Auerbach-Barthsian approach which is both comprehensive and multifaceted.

We see in the end that the novels do hold on to certain important theoretical positions concerning the capacities and limitations of representing the experience of human existence in the novel, the first and foremost of which is the reliance of mimesis on a linear progression of singular points of view. Where, after all, should we expect a better discussion of the possibilities of the novel to come from if not the novels themselves, a discussion penned, ultimately, by three great twentieth-century novelists.

**One at a Time, Not All at Once:
Bernard and *The Waves***

The Linear Singularity of Mimetic Perspective

Published in 1931 some thirty years before *Rayuela* and forty years before *Agua Viva*, *The Waves* presents the idea that mimesis in the novel is both singular and linear without much of the literary terminology which will become part of the intellectual discourse surrounding and informing the two later works. Specifically, *The Waves* portrays mimesis in the novel as limited to a linear succession of singular points of view onto a linear progression of mimetic scenes. Each of those mimetic scenes is in turn organized around a single controlling or coordinating figure. This prevents any two points of view or any two mimetic scenes from being presented simultaneously even though they are meant to occur simultaneously in the fictive time of the novel. *The Waves'* complex narrative of interwoven narrations is aimed directly at circumventing this limitation. Bernard, the character in *The Waves* who is the chief architect of this theory, presents the linear singularity of mimetic perspective as the primary hurdle standing between the novel and an objective representation of his experience of existence. According to his theory, the inability to present simultaneous, multiple viewpoints imposes an unacceptable limitation onto his ability to represent anything like an objective view of the world in what we typically think of as a story.

Reading *The Waves* through the lens of Bernard's theory, the six different narrators which take turns telling their own version of the story of *The Waves* becomes precisely an attempt to construct a set of simultaneous viewpoints. In the end, the multiple narrations fail to construct anything like a simultaneity of perspective. They fail because they cannot negate or supersede the linear singularity upon which mimesis in the novel depends. While *The Waves* fails to supersede the linear progression of singular perspectives and mimetic scenes to which the novel as a literary form is constrained, it does attempt to recuperate that linear progression into the metaphoric figure which gives the novel its title: the waves. The metaphor of the waves is meant to depict the kind of vast simultaneity of forces, events and points of view which constitutes an objective view of the world. It is precisely this vast simultaneity that cannot be portrayed as a simultaneity in the novel. The image of the waves, in short, represents the ideal form the novel strives to realize but fails to achieve. Bernard's problem, and the problem to which *The Waves* addresses itself, is that this ideal form can only be alluded to metaphorically. Only after the various points of view and mimetic scenes are presented in linear succession can they then be re-constructed as having occurred simultaneously. *The Waves*, like all other novels, must portray its world first from one point of view, then another, and then tell us that those points of view were supposed to have occurred simultaneously even though the novel didn't present them to us that way. Following Bernard's theory, *The Waves* resolves itself to pointing toward its desired simultaneity of perspective as a metaphoric figure presented in its framing narrative and alluded to from within various characters' monologues. While this is traditionally understood as an acceptable if not a

revolutionary plurality achieved via *The Waves*' experimental narrative form², Bernard sees it as a far-reaching but inescapable failure. A plurality of perspectives built *post hoc*

² The perception of *The Waves* as a successful revolution in form is obvious from the very first review of the novel in the *Times Literary Supplement*. The review states in its opening:

For the book is, as it were, a piece of subtle, penetrating magic. The substance of life, as we are accustomed to see it in fiction, is transposed and the form of the novel is transmuted to match it. (263)

And ends with:

Alive as the novel is with the vividness of things, one feels in more than one sense that its spirits roam through empty places. Yet it is simpler, after all, to be grateful for a book that achieves its own aim and that no one else could have written. (265)

The anonymous *Times* reviewer clearly sees the novel as having achieved its literary goal of transmuting the form of the novel. This positive view of the novel's form is echoed in places throughout its critical history, as it is here, for example, in 1990 by McNichol:

What I have tried to indicate above all in my approach to *The Waves* is, in other words, that informing the virtuosity of the linguistic performance with its sustained intensity, with never a moment's rest as the momentum builds up, is the simplicity of one large thought that is charted as it develops in the diary, which is analyzed and assessed in 'A Sketch,' and which is embodied in poetry in the novel that Virginia Woolf referred to as a 'playpoem.' (140)

Here the form of *The Waves* succeeds as a playpoem, achieving its own aim of poetically expressing the vision of the world Woolf desired to express.

Interestingly, even those who do see *The Waves* as a failure posit that, with a little work, Woolf could have made it succeed. They seem to miss the point altogether that the "failure" of *The Waves* is a demarcation of one of the novel's fixed limits. Here Hussey tells us how to fix *The Waves*:

Crucial in the failure of *The Waves* as a work of literature that can be successfully and fruitfully read is Bernard's failure to distinguish between story-telling and life and Woolf's failure to harmonize design and content. (89)

If Bernard could distinguish between story-telling and life and Woolf could harmonize the novel's form, then we'd have a fruitful book. Hussey has taken the long walk to the pier, but missed the boat completely, as these two failures are precisely the subject of the novel. Guiguit, reading her diaries, makes the same error in presupposing that the novel could have been easily remedied, but attributes Woolf's failure not to a lack of ability, but to a lack of mental health. In analyzing a portion of her diaries concerning *The Waves*, Guiguit describes the novel's failure as follows:

The "narrative" or "representational" part of which she speaks, and which she had deliberately accepted, failed to attain the end she had set for them. If they convey the surface, the appearance of the "not I" and "the outer," they miss its solidity, its hardness, its constraint and cohesion. (316)

The failure of Woolf's novel to represent or capture the "outer," objective world is a failure of temperament, not a fixed limitation of the form of the novel:

On the other hand, *The Waves* shows how far her sensibility, allied with patient technical experiment, could take her in the exploration of the strata submerged in the depths of the human

out of a linear progression of singular perspectives and mimetic scenes is, for Bernard, not a plurality at all, but a failed attempt to supersede the limitations of the linearity and singularity of mimesis in the novel.

Bernard's theory agrees to a striking degree with Ricoeur's depiction in *Time and Narrative* of the singular, linear nature of mimesis as it operates in the construction of individual scenes. Ricoeur's use of Husserl's "tempo object" as a model of how synchronic elements are built out of the diachronic running of the text fits Bernard's theory quite well. Husserl's notion of coincidence also fits Bernard's conception of the singularity of any given mimetic scene, as it offers a good description of how the elements of a mimetic scene are organized around a single controlling or coordinating figure. Beyond the individual mimetic scene, Bernard's and Ricoeur's theories of the novel diverge. Bernard rejects Ricoeur's belief that the set of mimetic scenes which comprise the novel must always line themselves up in a comprehensible, singular, linear fashion. For Ricoeur, Husserl's coincidence and Heidegger's repetition serve as descriptions of the manner by which all novels coordinate their mimetic scenes into a totality based on the notions of common, linear time. Bernard, on the other hand, sees the linking together of the set of mimetic scenes which comprise the novel as the only place

consciousness. But although she had come to realize that everything was connected, that the reality she was pursuing embraced all the levels of experience, her nature was both too fragile and too sensitive to succeed in embracing this whole. (317)

An accurate representation of the objective world is only prevented, so Guiguit says, by the fragility and sensitivity of her "nature." Even as these critics see *The Waves* failing, the novel's form makes these critics think that Woolf's project is not only a completable one, but an obviously simple one at that. In failing to understand the scope of the novel's project as a confrontation with the fixed mimetic limits of the novel as a literary form, these critics perceive the revolution in form attempted by *The Waves* as, if not achieved in the novel itself, clearly mapped out by the novel, such that the novel's failed form points toward an obvious and easy method of achieving what it could not.

in the novel where he might be able to construct his Heideggerian vision of the world, his non-singular, non-linear simultaneity. Individual mimetic scenes, in other words, are, according to Bernard, strictly singular and linear, whereas the manner in which they are linked together need not be. The conflict of these ideas concerning the unity of the novel leads Ricoeur to decide that *The Waves* is no longer a novel exactly because it does not unify itself into a single, linear totality. Bernard, in essence, posits the theory that the gap between the Husserlian novel and his Heideggerian vision of the world might be bridged by arranging the novel's Husserlian mimetic scenes in some Heideggerian fashion.

The experimental form of *The Waves* which juxtaposes itself to and fights against the novel's linear progression of singular mimetic perspectives is both simple and complex. It is comprised chiefly of two narratives: a short, framing narrative, narrated in third person, of the sun's journey through the sky from dawn till dusk during a day at the ocean's shore, and a main narrative, narrated completely through the subjective points of view of six characters whose lives are followed in chronological stages from birth to death. The framing narrative progresses in short preludes before each chapter of the main narrative, metaphorically aligning the chronological progression of the day at the beach with the chronological progression of the lives of the characters depicted in the main narrative's monologues. In the main narrative, each chapter represents a chronological stage in the characters' lives, and within each chapter the characters take turns describing emotions, events, feelings, ideas. Each change in narration is marked by a single "said," a single flag, a "said Bernard" or a "said Jinny" as that character launches into his or her "internal" monologue. One of the chief accomplishment of the main narrative's format is to eliminate any single, authoritative, "objective" point of view from the events described—

everything is always seen from a multiple of competing viewpoints, including the detached framing narrative in which the characters never appear. As the main narrative progresses in its chronological chapters, the narrator's monologues grow from the abbreviated sensory perceptions of childhood to paragraph-length adolescent speeches of desire to multi-page orations on adulthood and are mirrored by the advancing stages of the day described in the framing narrative. The internal monologues culminate in the final chapter, which is mirrored by the ending of the day in the framing narrative. The final chapter is composed entirely of Bernard's forty-page uninterrupted and unchallenged (none of the other narrators are present to do so) search for a kind of conclusion to his life, the lives of the other narrators and, ultimately, the novel. Bernard, like Morelli in *Rayuela* and the writer-narrator of *Agua Viva*, is the novel's writer-doppelganger, and his last monologue is the most self-reflexive part of the novel. In it we find a concise theory of the linear singularity of mimetic perspective in the novel. True to form, the final chapter begins with a single "said Bernard" which tags as his the uninterrupted forty pages of monologue which follow, and it begins, tellingly, with a detailed characterization of the impossibility of accurately or objectively depicting the life of an individual in a story. The following passage, which we will analyze throughout this chapter, comprises the first two paragraphs of Bernard's final soliloquy:

"Now to sum up," said Bernard. "Now to explain to you the meaning of my life. Since we do not know each other (though I met you once I think on board a ship going to Africa) we can talk freely. The illusion is upon me that something adheres for a moment, has roundness, weight, depth, is completed. This, for the moment, seems to be my life. If it were possible, I would hand it you entire. I

would break it off as one breaks off a bunch of grapes. I would say, 'Take it. This is my life.'

“But unfortunately, what I see (this globe, full of figures) you do not see. You see me, sitting at a table opposite you, a rather heavy, elderly man, grey at the temples. You see me take my napkin and unfold it. You see me pour myself out a glass of wine. And you see behind me the door opening, and people passing. But in order to make you understand, to give you my life, I must tell you a story—and there are so many, and so many—stories of childhood, stories of school, love, marriage, death, and so on; and none of them are true. Yet like children we tell each other stories, and to decorate them we make up these ridiculous, flamboyant beautiful phrases. How tired I am of stories, how tired I am of phrases that come down beautifully with all their feet on the ground! Also, how I distrust neat designs of life that are drawn upon half sheets of notepaper. I begin to long for some little language such as lovers use, broken words, inarticulate words, like the shuffling of feet on the pavement. I begin to seek some design more in accordance with those moments of humiliation and triumph that come now and then undeniably. Lying in a ditch on a stormy day, when it has been raining, then enormous clouds come marching over the sky, tattered clouds, wisps of cloud. What delights me then is the confusion, the height, the indifference and the fury. Great clouds always changing, and movement; something sulphurous and sinister, bowled up helter-skelter; towering, trailing, broken off, lost and I forgotten, minute, in a ditch. Of story, of design I do not see a trace then. (342)

This passage is a complete portrait of the generalized problem of writing a truly objective vision of an individual life and the world surrounding it into the novel: a fictional author's intuitive understanding of his life and the world solidifies into a complete, objective and accurate vision, he attempts to render that vision in writing (story), finds himself unable to do so, attempts to define the problems encountered in the midst of writing and then, in a great flurry of metaphoric writing or narrative variation or anti-writing, reaches toward some new way to say what he finds himself unable to say.

Bernard's intuitive contact with *it*, Lispector's word for the sought-after impersonal, objective and complete rendition of reality in all its splendor, occurs as the passage begins: "something adheres for a moment, with roundness, weight, depth and completeness." Here is the clear contact with "true reality," a vision, albeit illusory and momentary, of his whole life. This vision is then solidified or figured as what Bernard sees: "this globe, full of figures." The problem is not in the comprehension or grasping of the essence of this vision of *it*, as these kinds of visions occur naturally to him from time to time, rather, the problem lies in his inability to transmit this vision to his reader. What we readers see, Bernard the old man sitting across from us at a table, is not what he sees, a globe full of figures. To further compound his problems, Bernard believes that story, the very medium which prevents the communication of his globe of figures, is the only medium available to him for such transmissions: "in order to make you understand, to give you my life, I must tell you a story." Only there are no true stories according to Bernard: "none of them are true." And it gets worse. Bernard's experience of being in no way reflects or bears any relation to "story" or any kind of organized design: "Of story, of design I do not see a trace then." Later in the monologue he will compare the

biographical style of story to “phrases laid like Roman roads across the tumult of our lives” (356). Story, for Bernard, is an arbitrary construct which bears no resemblance to his life, but it is the only medium capable of giving some sort of understanding about his life to another person, to his reader. On the one hand, story is the only means with which to communicate the meaning of his life, on the other hand, it bears no resemblance to his experience and always transmits a falsification of that experience. Story, as far as Bernard can figure it, is a necessary evil which turns the unfathomable depth, breadth and chaos of his life into false, arbitrary, but communicable packages which substitute themselves for the complete and true but untranslatable vision of his life which settles on him as the scene opens.

As portrayed here, the fundamental problem, the root cause of story’s inability to portray Bernard’s vision of *it* in any objective way, is that at any given point in its linear progression, story requires the reduction of the spatial and temporal breadth of Bernard’s life to the single point in time and space which defines the point of view or subject position (to anachronistically retool Woolf’s terminology) of Bernard’s reader. It is from that one point in time and space that his reader gazes upon the mimetic scene Bernard has just constructed. As he says, there are endless stories, “so many, and so many—stories of childhood, stories of school, love, marriage, death,” but “none of them are true.” In order to understand this pairing of declaratives, we must reflect Bernard’s sentiments against the novel itself: the competing subjective narrations of the main characters spread out over time, both the reader’s time and the chronological time of the characters’ world. Reading *The Waves* we have known Bernard in a great many stories, just as we are now experiencing him in this his last story as an old man in a restaurant sitting across from us

at a table. Which Bernard is the true Bernard? Bernard the child on page 6? Bernard the adolescent on page 20? Bernard the young adult on page 58? Bernard the middle-aged man on page 115? Bernard the old man on page 135? Bernard the dead man, not included in the novel? Bernard seen from the point of view of Jinny? Of Lewis, of Susan, Rhoda, Neville? These are the endless stories, none of which are true. And why are none of them true? None of them are true because none of them matches Bernard's ontological vision of his world.

As a writer, Bernard's ontological vision of his world is based upon the projected point of view of a third-person, omniscient narrator. For Bernard, the true, objective story of his life can be seen only from that ubiquitous point of view, from the point of view which is no point of view at all: the knowing of everything that happens everywhere at all times. If one were to become this omniscient narrator, Bernard's entire world would suddenly become known to you in the blink of your now omniscient eye, as would the entire set of events and perspectives that constitute what we think of as Bernard's life. Bernard is convinced that this sudden, instantaneous comprehension of everything that constitutes and has constituted his world is the truth about his world, and that everything that constitutes and has constituted his life represents the truth about his life. He is convinced, in other words, that he is not just the old man at the table, that he cannot be reduced to any single scene on any single page, that he has been, that he continues to be simultaneously all the stories he or his friends could possibly tell, a composite of everything he has ever been over time seen from all possible perspectives.

This all-encompassing ontological vision of his life and his world cannot be represented in any one story, in any one point of view. In this sense, it isn't that the

stories told in *The Waves* aren't true, it's that no one of them can present the entire truth, no one of them can present his ontological vision. At the same time, the novel allows Bernard to present only one of those stories at a time, effectively destroying any chance he has of presenting his ontological vision to the reader like a bunch of grapes he picks from a vine. As each perspective, as each story, as each mimetic scene is presented to the reader, it's as if all other stories from all other places, times and points of view cease to exist, as if when reading page 69 all other pages cease to exist. He can present no two stories simultaneously, in other words, nevermind the massive simultaneity of perspective implied by his globe of figures, his all-encompassing, ontological vision. He exemplifies this in the story he tells of himself sitting across the table from his reader. That story fixes, selects, limits the reader's point of view to one particular point in time and space to the exclusion of all others:

You see me, sitting at a table opposite you, a rather heavy, elderly man, grey at the temples. You see me take my napkin and unfold it. You see me pour myself out a glass of wine. And you see behind me the door opening, and people passing.

It is the fixing of this point in time and space, the point which we, the readers, occupy at the opposite end of the table from Bernard, that, on the one hand, creates the fundamental, fictional space-time of his story, and on the other hand interdicts Bernard's sought-after objective point of view from that story. It allows Bernard's world to spread out from that one point (our chair) as if complete and real, as if we could travel out the door of the restaurant, down the street, across the river, up through the clouds, past the moon on the left, once around the sun, past the moon again on the right and then plunge

back down to the blue-green planet, Europe, the isle of Great Britain, London, the street, the door, Bernard, and again, our chair. It posits the idea that Bernard's entire world exists, is viewable, visitable, knowable by us, the reader, but that we are simply, for the moment, viewing this particular place at this particular time (we could as easily visit Rhoda's grave, witness Neville's birth, or hear Jinny's innermost thoughts at any given moment on any given day as meet Bernard in this restaurant). But the selection of this moment in time and space via which Bernard's world comes to life is just that, a fixed moment in time and space. Bernard's *it*, his globe of figures, is not a fixed moment in time and space, it is instead the simultaneous presence of all the points of view from all the stories told by all six narrators, the simultaneous co-existence of a nearly unlimited number of points of views in a single mimetic moment. The entire novel would be perceivable in that one instance from one point of view. The reader could then be mimetically transported into that moment and see, as easily as he or she sees Bernard sitting across the table, all perspectives presented in the novel simultaneously, suddenly and for the first time. This for Bernard, is what the world *really* looks like: a massive simultaneity. This is the bunch of grapes he would pick from a vine and hand us. The very mechanism which creates a place for us in Bernard's world, allowing us to "view" that world (this coffee cup here, that table there), also falsifies it (*it*) (this coffee cup is not the world, the world is not this table). In order to function, the novel's mimetic mechanism requires the fixing of a single point of view onto a single moment in time and space, thereby creating a place for the reader to step into and occupy and at the same time excluding, deferring, displacing all other moments and points of view. The scene Bernard narrates is but one instance, one story, pulled from Bernard's globe of figures, and story,

for Bernard, must always be this: the reduction of *it* (countless, simultaneous presents endlessly present to endless points of view) to one story, one voice, one narrator at a time. Story, in other words, is restricted to presenting mimetic scenes and perspectives one at a time instead of all at once. Or, to put it yet another way, story can only present a linear succession of mimetic scenes perceived from a linear succession of points of view. *It*, as defined here (the globe of figures), can never be written into story when story requires the creation of a world via an entry point somewhere, via a specific point of view onto a specific time and place. This is forcefully represented by Bernard's including the reader him/herself in the scene, giving the reader a specific chair to sit in from which to view the currently selected mimetic "present" of his world. Throughout his final soliloquy, Bernard returns to the point of view occupied by his reader as the limiting factor against which his vision of a globe of figures crashes and splinters.

In a very elegant way, Bernard is making a very serious theoretical point: the novel, being a narrative, depends on a mimesis which is inherently limited to a linear succession of single points of view onto a linear succession of mimetic scenes. This translation of Bernard's theory from the discourse of narrative fiction to the discourse of literary theory depends on a few obvious relationships. Bernard's "story" is translated into the term "narrative." The scene of himself and the reader in the restaurant is taken as an example of mimesis in the novel, and his theories, stemming from his contemplation of writing the story of *The Waves* from within the novel *The Waves*, are taken as referring to the writing of novels in general. In his own discourse, Bernard's theory can be summarized as follows: when attempting to write a novel like *The Waves*, you are in fact writing a story, and in writing a story you create scenes like the scene of Bernard and the

reader in a restaurant, and in scenes like the one in the restaurant, you always have to create a chair for your reader, a single perspective from which the reader may view that scene. Translated into theoretical discourse, this statement comes out as: the novel is a narrative, and narrative implies the construction of mimetic scenes, and mimetic scenes in narrative cannot be constructed without constructing one, singular point of view at a time. Shortening this sentence, we arrive at Bernard's succinct theoretical statement: the novel, being a narrative, depends on a mimesis which is inherently limited to a linear succession of singular points of view onto a linear succession of mimetic scenes. Bernard's theoretical statement is echoed in both *Rayuela* and *Agua Viva* and turns out to be the single most limiting factor imposed by the form of the novel onto the worlds those novels attempt to portray.

Bernard's theory can be understood as a consequence of the novel's linear form. The novel's linearity in turn can be seen as a product of our habitual way of understanding our experience of actuality—specifically, our comprehension of the experience of time as a linear progression. The novel is, in essence, an alternate, linear, temporal progression. Over time, we read the fixed, linear order of words on its pages and thereby invent, organize and coordinate a fictional world unfolding in time. The relationship between our comprehension of time as a linear progression and the nature of narrative mimesis is explored at length in Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*, and his study gives us a means of understanding the implications and nuances of the theory Bernard is putting forth. The accomplishment of Ricoeur's three-volume work is to make clear the inseparable link between our understanding of time, which he draws initially from Augustine, and narrative mimesis, which he draws out of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Ricoeur

demonstrates that narrative mimesis operates according to the same principles as Husserl's "coincidence," the patterned coordination of various sensory inputs along a linear timeline. Husserlian coincidence, in turn, leaves no doubt that narrative mimesis must be both linear and organized around patterns whose persistence in the "retention" of any narrative constitutes mimetic time, space and action. Bernard's inability to construct a simultaneity of perspective can be understood, given Ricoeur's definition of narrative mimesis and time, as his inability to construct two simultaneously persisting patterns which organize mimetic time and space. Without the possibility of two organizing patterns persisting simultaneously, no two mimetic perspectives, and consequently no two mimetic scenes, can persist simultaneously in his story.

Ricoeur's conclusions are the result of an extended consideration of the implications of thinking simultaneously Augustine's concept of "distentio animi" and Aristotle's mimesis as the making of plots. As Ricoeur puts it, our experience of time and the linearity of the novel operate according to parallel rules: through a point-like present (the word we are currently reading) the future flows into the past (what is yet to be read becomes what has been read), and this flowing is accumulated in our memory, what Augustine calls the present of the past. Ricoeur draws his description of the present from Augustine, but Augustine himself faces a dilemma when trying to describe in language exactly what the present is. Augustine's dilemma is that the present seems to both have and not have duration. The present is a durationless focal point through which the future becomes the past, and thus it seems to have no extension or duration, and yet all that exists exists only in a present which somehow or other has duration. Or to phrase it contrarily: the past and future exist nowhere at all, and only the present exists, and yet

we seem to have knowledge of something called “the past” and something called “the future.” Augustine is sure, however, that we know and experience time as having duration, that time exists well beyond the immediate moment, that it extends itself along an endless line which we not only measure, but inhabit as a simple fact of our existence. How define something that both has and doesn’t have duration? Augustine responds to this dilemma by deciding that the future and the past exist only in our minds. He uses the terms “the present of the past” to define the image-impressions in our memory of events that have disappeared into the past and “the present of the future” to define our imaginings of what is yet to become present. This leads him to conclude that it is only in the mind that we measure time, for the thing that we measure, the duration of a sound’s resonance or the duration of the recitation of a poem, does not persist for any length of time in the point-like present, it only passes through it: “it is the impression that I measure, since it is present, and not the thing itself, which makes the impression as it passes” (276). The accumulation of these residual impressions of events passing is what gives us a sense of the present having duration when it in fact does not.

Augustine calls this accumulation of sense impressions which gives the present the illusion of duration *praesens intentio*, which means the “stretching” or “straining” of what is present or at hand. This *intentio*, this exertion of our accumulated sense impressions on the durationless present, is Augustine’s attempt to define and name the mechanism by which we construct a present, a reality, which has duration out of a present, a reality, which in fact has none. As events occur and vanish into the oblivion of “the past,” the impressions they make on our memory are accumulated and coordinated in the mind into persisting structures that outlast the ever-fleeting events themselves. The

diachronic, these fleeting events, become synchronic, the mental structures which persist in time. Through these structures we perceive the persistence of bodies in space, distance, movement, all coordinated by and accumulated from a linear progression of events which ceaselessly impact upon our senses. This linear progression of sense experience is the basis for our conception of time. What Augustine wishes to make clear, and what engenders the very notions of phenomenology, is that it is only man's active mind which creates the "presence" of time, and it is this same action of the mind that allows us to conceive of objects moving and ultimately ourselves acting—action in general. To prove that the construction of the present occurs only within the mind, Augustine points out that the more acute the mind's attention to the present, the greater the detail in the memory, the more stretched the present seems to become, the slower time seems to pass. In support of this idea, he points out that one can recite in one's mind a psalm, and experience it as a temporal progression without the presence of the actual written words themselves, without any external stimulus whatsoever. The *intentio*, then, the mental mechanism acting on the present to produce time, Augustine maintains, is not so much a product of the external world as a product of attention, of the engagement of the soul:

“What is true of the whole psalm is also true of all its parts and each syllable. It is true of any longer action in which I may be engaged and of which the recitation of the psalm may only be a small part. It is true of man's whole life, of which all his actions are parts. It is true of the whole history of mankind, of which each man's life is a part.” (278).

Praesens intentio, the mechanism by which our experience of time is produced, from the minutest action taken by a mosquito to the history of mankind, is internal to mankind, to our minds and memories, and not necessarily reflective of or induced by something external to us. Here, for Ricoeur, is the key that links mimesis and phenomenology. This mechanism described by Augustine as the way in which we construct the present is also, Ricoeur posits, the mechanism by which we construct mimetic scenes in narrative fiction. He takes this experiential, that is to say phenomenological, conception of time as the constant relationship between the present, which in itself is nothing unless related to successive impressions on the memory, and its accumulation into the persistent mental structures which give time its extension as synonymous with the diachronic progression of words in fictional narrative and the resulting synchronic elements that are accumulated as the linear narrative, words in order, progresses. Out of the running of the words of a novel, objects appear, move, characters come to life, act, time begins to flow. The reader's experience of participating in this flow of time within the world of the characters who inhabit that fictive space is precisely what constitutes narrative mimesis, the fictional present, the *right now* of the fictional world, any given mimetic scene.

Mimesis, this participation in fictional time, is, according to both Bernard and Ricoeur, requisite for any novel. A novel cannot be a novel without that moment when the reader is transported, when the reader begins to experience time passing (events unfolding) in another world, in a fictional world. This is the essence of Bernard's insistence that story create a chair for the reader. In order for his story to become vital, to function, it must draw the reader into its own time, it must inspire the reader to project *praesens intentio* upon the virtual world of the narrative. This is no more clearly

characterized than by Plato himself, that figure via whom the concept of mimesis makes its taciturn way into our culture:

Socrates: Well then tell me this, Ion, and don't withhold anything I ask. When you are speaking well and making the deepest impression on your hearers, whether you are telling how Odysseus leaped upon the threshold, revealed himself to the suitors, and poured out the arrows at his feet, or how Achilles attacked Hector, or the sorrows of Andromache or of Hecuba, or Priam, are you in your right mind or are you beside yourself, and does not your spirit seem to take part in the events you narrate, whether they are in Ithaca or Troy or any other place you tell of?

Ion: How vividly you present this proof to me, Socrates! I will answer you without reserve. When I speak of anything piteous, my eyes are filled with tears; when I mention anything fearful or terrible, my hair stands on end with fear and my heart throbs.

Socrates: Is that the way of it? Shall we say, then, that a man is in his right mind who, when he is adorned with beautifully colored garments and golden crowns, weeps in the midst of sacrifices and public ceremonies, though he has lost none of his adornments, or who is afraid when he is surrounded by more than twenty thousand friendly persons, though not one of them is disposed to strip him or treat him unjustly?

Ion: You speak the truth, Socrates; he is not in his sober senses.

Socrates: And do you not know that you produce the same effects on many of the spectators?

Ion: I know it right well, for when I look down from the platform I see them weeping and showing signs of terror and astonishment at my words.
(Gilbert, 15)

The insanity of Ion as he recites Homer and the shared communal derangement of the audience, or so it is termed by Plato, lies in each listener casting his or her own *intentio* upon the virtual world created by the recitation. It is the narrative state without which Aristotle's catharsis cannot happen. It is what happens to us every time we sit in a crowded theater and silently weep. We experience in some sort of other time (meaning *intentio* acted upon) an event, an action, some movement of the plot, which seems so "real" (the mystery was solved, the love was lost, everyone in Hamlet dies), that is, to which we have proffered enough energy and attention to experience it in "the present" through fictional narrative's hijacking of our "natural" mechanism for building the synchronic out of the diachronic, that it comes to life, it closes the magical *as if* circuit of fiction, of mimetic narrative, and we reach for our handkerchief—catharsis (bless you, thanks). This central function, furthermore, using Bernard's depiction of the problem as an analysis of *The Waves*, is intrinsic to and inseparable from the novel, or, following Ricoeur, the novel is one of the many forms of fictional narratives, and as such must complete its seminal function, mimesis.

The act of constructing a narrative capable of achieving mimesis thus defined Ricoeur calls "emplotment" after Aristotle's depiction of the poet as a maker of plots. Ricoeur takes the conception of the accumulation of the present into the synchronic

structures of memory as our “natural relationship with time” and demonstrates how narrative emulates or relies upon the writer’s and reader’s mutual understanding of this natural relationship with time in order to construct Aristotelian action. For Aristotle, tragedy is mimetic of action, and Ricoeur extrapolates that in order for action to occur within tragedy, tragedy must first construct the fictive space-time, the stage, if you will, upon which the characters act, action being for Aristotle the actions of men. According to Ricoeur, the stage upon which narrative actions may occur is nothing less than the common perception of the linear space and time in which we live. As Ricoeur states:

To imitate or represent action is first to pre-understand what human action is, in its semantics, its symbolic system, its temporality. Upon this preunderstanding, common to both poets and their readers, emplotment is constructed and, with it, textual and literary mimetics. (v.1, 64)

The link between phenomenology and literary mimesis, between Augustine and Aristotle, lies precisely in the need to “pre-understand” temporality as a structure within which actions, more precisely movement or change over time, occurs. Making plots, the primary task of the maker of tragedies, is for Ricoeur necessarily dependent on the temporal organization of the work, “the linking of episodes in a manner which is probable or inevitable” (v1, 41). The establishing of a temporal organization within the work, understood by the author in order to produce it and by the reader in order to perceive it, which is refigured into an expanse of time by the reader casting *praesens intentio* upon it, is what constitutes literary mimesis: the establishment of a “stage” upon which actions in the novel may take place.

Understanding mimesis as conditioned upon the refiguring of a temporal organization perceived by the reader does not, theoretically at least, imply that said temporal organization be perceived identically by both author and reader or that a similar temporal organization must exist in actuality. Instead, mimesis as Ricoeur is defining it could result from any pattern of temporal organization which the reader can construct into a flow of imaginary time, regardless of the origin of the pattern. As we will see, it is in the disassociation of the temporal organization of the work from “common” structures that *The Waves* places its hope of constructing something like Bernard’s globe of figures. Where Ricoeur maintains that narrative relies upon figures common to both author and reader, Bernard’s theory is strictly concerned with the possibility of constructing a non-common temporal structure, his globe of figures, in his narrative. As such, the mutual comprehension of such a temporal structure between author and reader is not a given, but an elusive goal. What is at issue in *The Waves* is the reader’s capacity to perceive a completely foreign and heretofore unknown temporal organization within the linear flow of the novel’s text and, via that structure, organize some kind of narrative mimesis.³

The temporal organization of a narrative occurs, according to Bernard’s theory, on at least two different levels. One, the one we have been discussing, is the diachronic narrative *right now*, what is happening in the mimetic scene currently unfolding in the reader’s mind. It is this level of time that Bernard characterizes by creating a chair for his reader. The other, which we have yet to discuss, is the absent synchronic of the already read, the accumulation of persisting structures in the reader’s memory. It is this synchronic already read that most closely corresponds to Bernard’s globe of figures, to

³ In this sense we are affirming Auerbach’s conclusion in *Mimesis* that over history, the nature of mimesis has evolved as our perception of reality has evolved.

the figure of his absent, “true” reality which is nothing less than the totality of the world of *The Waves* reorganized into a non-diachronic, non-linear temporal structure.

Ricoeur also identifies two distinct levels of temporal organization. The first, “mortal time,” equates to Bernard’s diachronic, narrative *right now*, to the scene whose time is currently unfolding for the reader. The second is “cosmic time,” and it equates to Bernard’s globe of figures, to the totality of the history of the world of *The Waves*. Mortal time for Ricoeur is the immediate, lived present—what is happening *right now* in either the actual world or a fictional one, precisely what Bernard’s scene of himself in the restaurant represents. Cosmic time is defined by Ricoeur as our sense of the totality of history and our place in it beginning with the birth of the cosmos and ending never. Ricoeur’s version of cosmic time is essentially Augustine’s conception of eternity: “. . . a never-ending present . . . [when] you are at once before all past time and after all future time. . . your years are completely present to you all at once, because they are at a permanent standstill” (263). This an excellent description of what Bernard’s globe of figures represents, the unification and ever presence of the entire history of the world. Bernard and Ricoeur both see identical and definitive splits in narrative mimesis based on levels of temporization: mortal time: the *right now*, and cosmic time: eternity, constitute, they both believe, two distinct temporal zones in which narrative mimesis operates.

As far as the nature and capacity of narrative’s representation of mortal time are concerned, the two agree whole heartedly. Both agree that in any given mimetic scene whose time is currently unfolding for the reader, narrative mimesis is and must be singular and linear, that is, organized according to what Ricoeur has defined as the “common” notions of time and space. Ricoeur sees this as narrative’s successful

refiguration of time. Bernard, on the other hand, sees this as a failure to represent the true nature of being in time. They see the same model, but see that model in two different lights: one negative and one positive.

As far as narrative's representation of cosmic time is concerned, the two disagree about its nature and capacity. Ricoeur sees cosmic time as limited to the same singular linearity as mortal time. Bernard, however, believes that the temporal organization of cosmic time is not limited to being singular and linear. He believes that it is precisely in the novel's cosmic time, in the temporal organization of the totality of the novel, that the possibility of constructing uncommon temporal structures exists.

Ricoeur's theory holds that mimesis functions precisely because both levels of narrative time, mortal and cosmic, are organized around the single figure of linear time: that single figure makes of the entire novel a single, cohesive entity, and guarantees that mimesis operates identically and successfully on both levels. Given such a theory, the novel should as easily portray Bernard's restaurant scene as portray Bernard's globe of figures, and his globe of figures should be immanent in his restaurant scene and the restaurant scene immanent in his globe of figures: it should all be part of one, big temporal figure. Bernard, on the other hand, feels his mortal time mimetics are a failure precisely because his globe of figures is neither present nor immanent in the scene he narrates of himself in the restaurant—it's simply not there: "But unfortunately, what I see (this globe, full of figures) you do not see." In fictive mortal time, Bernard maintains, there can be no globe of figures. Given that his globe of figures represents an objective, honest vision of his world, Bernard sees narrative mimesis at the level Ricoeur calls mortal time as unacceptably limited, and therefore a failure. Fictive cosmic time, on the

other hand, is not portrayed by Bernard as necessarily singular or linear. The experimental project of *The Waves* specifically holds out the hope that Bernard's globe of figures can be constructed in a fictive cosmic time that is non-linear and non-singular. Bernard's theory, presented from within the experimental project of *The Waves*, points toward a split capacity between narrative mimesis at the level of mortal time and narrative mimesis at the level of cosmic time. Where the mortal time is clearly unable to express Bernard's globe of figures because it is exactly as Ricoeur describes it, both singular and linear, cosmic time, not being limited to the same singular linearity in Bernard's opinion, may still render his globe of figures satisfactorily.

This split capacity of mimesis in the novel cannot be accounted for by Ricoeur's theory in *Time and Narrative*. In order to account for Bernard's perceived differentiation between the nature of narrative mimesis in fictive cosmic time and the nature of narrative mimesis in fictive mortal time, we must segment Ricoeur's model of mimesis along the same lines by which phenomenology segments time into hierarchical levels. These hierarchies are, in fact, exactly what Ricoeur sees narrative as integrating, and by segmenting his model of mimesis along those same lines, we precisely negate Ricoeur's notion that narrative is a poetic solution to the difficulties encountered by phenomenology in representing those hierarchies in analytical language. As Ricoeur puts it:

Fiction is not restricted to the successive exploration by means of its imaginative variations, first, of the aspects of discordant concordance connected to the horizontal constitution of the temporal flux, then of the varieties of discordant concordance related to the hierarchization of the levels of temporalization, and,

finally, of the limit-experiences that mark the boundaries of time and eternity.

(v.3, 137)

In this rather confusing sentence is a summary of the aims of phenomenology vis-à-vis its characterization of time: 1) to describe the *right now* of our lived present 2) to describe the relationship between the *right now* that's happening right now and all the *right nows* that have already been relegated to the past and 3) the projection of all the *right nows* that have ever been or will ever be into one unified vision of all history and everything in it, ever. Where philosophy fails to describe these hierarchies, narrative, both historical and fictional, Ricoeur maintains, succeeds by enlisting or re-enacting these hierarchies to construct itself:

. . . temporality cannot be spoken of in the direct discourse of phenomenology, but rather requires the mediation of the indirect discourse of narration. The negative half of this demonstration lies in our assertion that the most exemplary attempts to express the lived experience of time in its immediacy result in the multiplication of aporias, as the instrument of our analysis becomes ever more precise. It is these aporias that the poetics of narrative deals with as so many knots to be untied. (v.2, 241)

Temporality, an expression or realization of the integrated hierarchies of time, can only be accomplished in narrative, says Ricoeur. Narrative, refiguring these hierarchies, does not encounter these hierarchies as a problem to be solved. Instead, narrative's successful integration of these hierarchies poses a problem for any poetics of narrative: "The key to the problem of refiguration lies in the way history and fiction, taken together, offer the reply of a poetics of narrative to the aporias of time brought to light by phenomenology"

(v.3, 99). In other words, the representation and integration of all temporal levels is a problem for a poetics of narrative, not narrative itself. Ricoeur firmly believes that narrative's refiguration of time, which refiguration forms the substructure of narrative mimesis, resolves a dilemma long faced by phenomenology, the description of the hierarchies of time. Narrative, in other words, by its very nature represents time and its various levels as an unproblematic, cohesive integration. It's just what narrative does as far as Ricoeur is concerned.

This is completely antithetical to Bernard's depiction of the novel's inability to make his globe of figures present in the linear succession of singular perspectives to which mortal-time mimetics is restricted. As far as Bernard is concerned, an objective, mimetic mortal time would present its linear succession of perspectives not as a linear succession but as an immediate, massive simultaneity. As such the novel endlessly defers any manifestation or immanence of Bernard's globe of figures in its mortal time. Bernard's globe of figures only has the possibility to establish itself in what Ricoeur describes as cosmic time once the interdicting linear progression of mortal-time mimetic moments has ended and we arrive at something like the ultimate figure which organizes the entirety of the time of *The Waves*. Only after the succession of linear mortal-time moments has ceased does the possibility of making them simultaneous present itself. Thus for Bernard the mimetic capacity of the novel's cosmic time, the novel refigured into a single whole entity, offers quite different possibilities from the mimetic capacity of its mortal time, the linear progression of singular points of view onto a linear progression of mimetic scenes. He is convinced that narrative mortal-time mimesis fails to present an objective view of his world because it is unable to present perspectives and mimetic

scenes simultaneously. The novel *The Waves* still holds out hope, however, that such a view can be constructed in the mimetics of narrative cosmic time because in it, all events might possibly attain equivalent temporal and/or spatial status. According to Bernard's theory, in all but the most sweeping of cosmic-time figures, narrative discourse is as incapable of articulating an expression of the integration of the hierarchies of time as is the analytic discourse of phenomenology.

In order to understand Bernard's belief in the novel's incapacity to express all but the highest orders of cosmic time, we'll need a poetics of narrative capable of explaining in analytic discourse how mimesis in the novel is split along the same line as the temporal hierarchies Ricoeur describes. Articulating such a poetics of narrative, as Ricoeur points out however, means being able to articulate the hierarchies of time in the first place, as it would be difficult to demonstrate how narrative refigures or fails to refigure phenomenology's temporal levels without defining those temporal levels in the first place. Unfortunately, this is precisely what phenomenology has failed to do. This would seem to imply, as Ricoeur does, that in direct, analytic discourse, a poetics of narrative which describes narrative's refiguration of the levels of time is as impossible to articulate as a phenomenology of those same levels, a rather deep swamp from which to extricate ourselves. One way to step from the mud, the method this study clings to, is to look to the indirect discourse of narration itself for the articulation of its own poetics. If philosophical discourse cannot articulate the poetics of narrative, should it not give way to other narrative discourses which might be able to? Bernard's restaurant scene is, after all, a concrete example of what phenomenology cannot describe: a present, a *right now* (which is Ricoeur's point). So, without getting too bogged down at the moment in the

attempt to resolve the problems of defining the hierarchies of time, to supplant philosophy with narrative or any other discourse, or to come up with the ultimate statement on the nature of time either as a poetics of narrative or as a phenomenological description, let us simply utilize the terminology of phenomenology to define, as best it can, how mortal time is constructed and how cosmic time is constructed. With these two definitions in hand, understanding them to be attempts at definitions rather than definitive conclusions, Bernard's theory of narrative's incapacity to objectively refigure his world on all but the most sweeping of cosmic levels will become clear.

Husserl's notion of coincidence offers an excellent description of how mortal time is constructed. Husserl offers us a detailed depiction of how synchronic entities are built out of the linear progression of time, how these synchronic entities persist, and how we can then perceive their subsequent action. For Husserl, the concept of "retention" describes the process by which we construct objects and events that persist as perceptual patterns while they are present to our senses. Our ability to predict future patterns, to extend what is present to our senses into the future, he calls *potention*. This is, in essence, an extrapolation of Augustinian *praesens intentio*, the stretching of the present into the synchronic structures which constitute the bubble of time we think of as *right now*. For example, right now, I am watching the sun rise. My ability to construct the object that is the sun, the distance between us, the cool ocean breeze drifting across the beach, and myself as a physical entity on a round, clay ball I call earth are all products of the retention of persisting patterns immediately present to my senses—the sight of the bright orange ball and the blue expanse in which it persists, the sensation of the coolness

on my skin caused by the breeze, the curvature of the horizon which I barely perceive. This construction of the immediate present Husserl understands as “retention.”

Everything in retention is simultaneously passing on to memory, and from memory I can recall any previous retention. The ability to recall previous retentions and insert them into the current retention Husserl calls “recollection.” After a few minutes of watching the sun, I realize that it is indeed further above the horizon than it was when I began observing it. At this point, my initial vision of the sun is no longer present to my senses, no longer in retention, but a “recollection,” something I retrieve from my memory and overlay or insert into my current retention of the sun at its now further advanced distance above the horizon. I can detect the motion of the sun precisely because I can compare its earlier image, now extant only in my “recollection,” to the image presenting itself *right now* to my senses, in my “retention.” The actual differentiation between retention and recollection is none too clear, but for our purposes, it doesn’t need to be. The construction of a body in space—my body or the sun—which for Husserl exists in retention when it is presented to the senses is already a coordination of previous retentions gathered out of the eternal flux which is the present. If this were the first time I had seen the sun, and I had not been informed by my human culture of what the sun is, that it is round, that it is far away, I would not have much of an “idea” of what that bright light hurting my eyes actually is, or even that it is a thing apart from the sensation of pain in my eyes. Here is the really tricky maneuver. This transition of, movement away from sensory experience to the perception of entities which persist in time is synonymous with, is the same process as, operates on the same natural mechanism by which the diachronic of narrative is accumulated into its synchronic entities. This same dilemma at the level of

linguistics finds an expression in Derrida's resolution of *différance* into the trace, the diachronic movement among signifiers, where the trace, at some point, offers up the signified—an entity which persists in time—however in-transit or in-flux that signified might be. If this is the case, then in attempting to understand the limitations of the *right now* of mimetic narrative, we are thrown back, as was Derrida, upon perhaps the oldest dilemma—how is knowledge which persists *in time* constructed out of experiences which do not? What is the actual relationship between my synchronic mental structures and the diachronic world, the always already-in-motion universe? Let us draw from a very old depiction of the problem:

SOCRATES: Are we to say that the beautiful itself is always such as it is?

CRATYLUS: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: But if it is always passing away, can we correctly say of it first that it is *this*, and then that it is *such and such*? Or at the very instant we are speaking, isn't it inevitably and immediately becoming a different thing and altering and no longer being as it was?

CRATYLUS: It is.

SOCRATES: Then if it never stays the same, how can it *be* something? After all, if it ever stays the same, it clearly isn't changing—at least, not during that time; and if it always stays the same and is always the same thing, so that it never departs from its own form, how can it ever change or move?

CRATYLUS: There's no way.

SOCRATES: Then again it can't even be known by anyone. For at the very instant the knower-to-be approaches, what he is approaching is becoming a different thing, of a different character, so that he can't yet come to know either what sort of thing it is or what it is like—surely, no kind of knowledge is knowledge of what isn't in any way.

CRATYLUS: That's right.

SOCRATES: Indeed, it isn't even reasonable to say that there is such a thing as knowledge, Cratylus, if all things are passing on and none remain. For if that thing itself, knowledge, did not pass on from being knowledge, then knowledge would always remain, and there would *be* such a thing as knowledge. On the other hand, if the very form of knowledge passed on from being knowledge, the instant it passed on into a different form than that of knowledge, there would be no knowledge. And if it were always passing on, there would always be no knowledge. Hence, on this account, no one could know anything and nothing could be known either. But if there is always that which knows and that which is known, if there are such things as beautiful, the good, and each one of the things that are, it doesn't appear to me that these things can be at all like flowings or motions, as we were saying just now they were. So whether I'm right about these things or whether the truth lies with Heraclitus and many others isn't an easy matter to investigate. (155)

At the beginning of western culture and here at the end of it (so far) the same persistent dilemma: how is it that the synchronic, truth, knowledge, the beautiful, the sun as an object in space, Bernard in his restaurant, persists even though all that is present to our senses is diachronic, always in flux, flowing, mutating? It is not an easy matter to investigate, says old Socrates. Cognitive psychology, physics, endless medieval debates on the status and location of the universal, the history of phenomenology and Heidegger's eventual abandonment of the description of this process in *Time and Being* to rethink Heraclitus once again (*Heraclitus Seminar* 8) all attest to the difficulty posed by the problem. It is precisely this dilemma that confronts Bernard in attempting to articulate how the mimetic representation of any given scene interdicts his globe of figures: how is it that synchronic, fictional objects come to persist in time out of the diachronic running of the syllables of the text? At the heart of mimesis is a mechanism which allows fictitious objects to persist in time, and this very mechanism, Bernard feels, is what distorts and falsifies his experience of being in time. In order to better understand that mechanism and yet without pretending to resolve this age-old dilemma, I'm going to extrapolate from Husserl and Heidegger the simple idea of the persistence of perceptual patterns as the fundamental mode in which the diachronic is transformed into the synchronic in any given mimetic scene, thereby establishing the mimetic scene itself. This at least lets understand the mechanism at work in Bernard's mimetic scene which interdicts his globe of figures.

Husserl approaches the idea of the persistence of perceptual patterns in his notion of "coincidence" and Heidegger does so in his notion of "repetition." Husserl's ideas are based on the notion that time is in fact linear, and thus his concept of coincidence offers

an excellent description of how narrative constructs the *right now* of its mimetic scenes. Heidegger's conception of repetition, on the other hand, is as good a description as we find in phenomenology of Bernard's globe of figures, of the kind of time Bernard would like to represent in his novel but cannot. Heidegger's conception of repetition is, in essence, an attempt to rethink Husserl's coincidence in a non-linear fashion and its failure is phenomenology's equivalent of Bernard's inability to express his globe of figures.

For Husserl, the notion of coincidence⁴ encapsulates the coordination of any number of sensory perceptions or retentions around a single focal point, the sun in our example, what he calls a "tempo-object."⁵ Once the light of the sun hits our eyes for the first time, it continually spills into our retention and our recollection. The coincidence of the bright light that is the sun along the string of retentions that comprise the *right now* of my watching the sun rise gives rise to the idea, the "tempo-object" that is my cognition of the sun. The coincidence of these retentions with my recollections of the rising sun in other minutes, hours, days and years extend the persistence of this tempo-object from the *right now* of my retention to the days and years of my recollection, and by extrapolation, eventually to the barely imaginable eternity that is the life of that middle-aged star. If this were the first time I had seen the sun rise, that is, the first time I had seen it move from one point in space to another, I would not necessarily know what the sun would do

⁴ For a specific description of "coincidence," see pages 117-122 in *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, where the notion of the coincidence of retentions and recollections is what ultimately forms our comprehension of "things." This is the closest Husserl comes to my conception of knowledge as the "persistence of perceptual patterns."

⁵ For Husserl's complete discussion of the concept of the "tempo-object" see pages 40-60 in *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*. Husserl is concerned with understanding how the perception of an object persists over some duration when the perceptions themselves are constantly "running off." He wonders, as did Plato in the *Cratylus*, if that object is a constant or is constantly changing, and coins a phrase similar to Lispector's *momento-já*: the *now-moment*. The diagram on p. 49 is especially useful. It is the same one Ricoeur reprints in his notes.

next. Would it sink back down, explode, go out, move madly back and forth along the horizon, or continue to move in a single direction as slowly as it had been moving. I would say, if this had indeed been the first time I'd seen the sun: "The sun moved," a statement indicative of no predictive future pattern of movement or non-movement. But since I have seen this pattern before, since this pattern of movement coincides with other patterns in my recollection, and since this pattern is repeated at regular intervals in my retention, I and my ingenious human cousins have recorded this pattern in language (English language anyway) as: "The sun rises." We even go so far as to say "The sun always rises," but we know (more or less) that someday the sun will not rise. Indeed, we know that the sun doesn't really rise, but that's what it looks like to us, and we'd gotten so used to the idea that the sun was moving and not us that by the time we realized the sun was not moving in relationship to the earth, we decided not to substitute "the earth will continue to spin for the time being" for "the sun always rises." Our ability to predict the sun's movement (really the earth's movement), our ability to "know" this most obvious of all facts-truths-knowledge encapsulated in the tiny phrase "the sun always rises," lies in our ability to detect patterns in the imaginary past which we can project into the imaginary future in order to predict the future position of objects in the eventual present. This coordination of retentions and recollections Husserl calls "coincidence." We are very comforted when our predicted patterns unfold in the present as we have foretold. Eight ball, corner pocket. All of science is simply this: the atom bomb, airplanes, genetics. It lies on the basic principle that in order for something to be true, an experiment, a law, a theorem, the pattern it predicts must continue to recur. The experiment must *always* return the same results, the law must *always* function, and the

theorem must always predict the exact outcomes. Even *one* deviation from the predictive pattern throws the law, the experiment, the theorem, into doubt, and the scientific community rushes about trying to repeat the anomalous outcome in order to modify the law so that it will, once again, always predict the proper pattern. If it cannot be modified to do so, it will be abandoned, it will be false. All of our knowledge rests in the predicting of the future based on patterns perceived in the past. This happy coincidence between retentions and recollections over time, Husserl rightly notes, constitutes our ability to perceive our existence. This is an adequate response to the Plato/Heraclitus dilemma: how can we know anything if we never step into the same river twice? It is the persistent pattern of the water's flow, the pattern of its flux, which defines the river, which constitutes the thing that we "know" as the river. The water which flows through this eddy or those tiny rapids indeed is never the same from one moment to the next, and each time we place and remove our wet foot, we encounter a completely different heretofore unknown set of water molecules. But the patterns of flowing water which constitute this eddy, those tiny rapids, persist. As long as the ever-in-flux water continues to fluctuate in the identifiable patterns of this eddy, those tiny rapids, then this eddy, those tiny rapids will continue to exist. A change in the flux pattern of the river could easily make them disappear. Indeed, the word "river" itself is nothing more than a name for a particular persistent patterned movement of water. If the pattern changes too much it might become a stream or a creek, a bog, a swamp, a lake, an ocean, humidity rain fog clouds urine scotch wine milk a human body. As long as the patterned flow of water remains relatively the same over time, as long as it persists, it will remain the "same" river to our intellect. Truth, that is, the synchronic that is built out of the

diachronic, as far as our study is concerned, will be defined as the persistent predictiveness of patterns, the core characteristic of Husserl's "coincidence." It is this persistent predictiveness of patterns that will help us understand the singularity of perspective inherent in the construction of linear mortal time in Bernard's restaurant scene.

Bernard's depiction of the interdiction of cosmic time from the linear progression of predictive patterns which constitutes literary mimetics at the level of mortal time or the *right now* can be understood with the help of Heidegger's conception of "repetition." His "repetition" is an attempt to undo the linearity of Husserl's notion of coincidence. Heidegger is easily Bernard's analytic counterpart, as Heidegger fails to cast into theoretical discourse precisely what Bernard fails to render in the discourse of narrative fiction: the masked, synchronic presence of being, the massive simultaneity of the universe. Heidegger, in *Time and Being*, places Dasein, "being there," at the center of being. In essence, this promotes the ever-present present, our continual thrown-ness in the world, the processes at work in the *right now*, as the fundamental structure upon which time, the future and the past, depend. The past, future and present only mean something as temporal categories, only exist insofar as they have a bearing upon our "being there" in the *right now*. The existence of the present, then, is not simply a given, not a simple movement along the linear line of time, but a relational state with the world that must be realized, the realization of which he calls "within-time-ness." In relation to this, the future becomes "coming towards" and the past becomes "having been," that is, they are redefined in relation to "being there." Things, events, experiences no longer move from future to present to past, instead they are either present or absent, they are

either within the “making present” of my “being there,” or not. This is a rethinking and escape from the linear time of Husserl and Kant in that it allows an object like the sun to have a relationship to the present which is independent of its position on a linear timeline at the same time that it defines its entrance into and departure from my phenomenological consciousness. An object not being made present in the right now can be characterized as an absence, a category which need not make reference to linear time. The coordination of time becomes not a singular voyage along a single timeline, but a question of relative, overlapping “being theres” which, if desired, can be organized by any number of figures. It also privileges the future in that the past, “having been,” is useful only in relation to the future, to the past’s re-emergence from absence into the “coming towards.” As I continue to stare at the sun, within the structure of Heidegger’s “being there,” it is my proffering of care toward the sun that “makes” its presence, and it is the casting of this presence toward the future, that moment of departure, the plunging into the unknown future wherein my death is surely contained, the surfing on the wave of change that is time passing, taking control of the board’s direction to shape, direct or control my future in response to the shape of the wave of the present always hurtling me forward into the unknown future, that I achieve true being, true within-time-ness. It is the awareness that we are the mechanism by which the past is dragged out of the past and inflicted on the future through our own agency that Heidegger sees as an essential element in his conception of “being in time”:

Only an entity which, in its Being, is essentially FUTURAL so that it is free for its death and can let itself be thrown back upon its factual “there” by shattering itself against death—that is to say, only an entity which, as futural, is

equiprimordially in the process of HAVING-BEEN, can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and can be IN THE MOMENT OF VISION for “its time.” (*Time and Being* 437)

For Heidegger in *Time and Being*, it is the individual who carries the past out of the past and inflicts it upon the present in order to shape the future, an idea which has relevance for the reader’s casting *praesens intentio* upon the text in order to create the *right now* of mimetic narrative. The notion of presence and absence eventually becomes problematic for Heidegger, and he will later reformulate it as the “standing forth into the unconcealedness of what is already present” (*Heraclitus Seminar* 8). In the tripartite structure of “coming towards,” “making present” and “having been” that constitutes the “being there” of the individual, repetition encompasses the return to presence of anything that is no longer present, a return enacted by the individual. In this broad definition of repetition, linearity is not a structural imperative. The key to Heidegger’s concept of repetition is precisely the removal of causal links associated with linear time implied by the idea of coincidence. The individual in his/her realization of “being there” is the mechanism by which “repetitions” are linked together in order to then realize their “coincidence” as described by Husserl. The image of the sun repeats in the “making present” of my staring at it, but the realization that those repetitions are linked or coincide due to some organizational matrix, what we might call the rising of the sun, or more broadly the orbital nature of the spheres which constitute our solar system, is supplied by me, the perceiving subject and is not necessarily a consequence of the nature of time or space as the very categories “time” and “space” may simply turn out to be illusions, like the longstanding illusion of the sun rising, which depended solely on the perceiving

subjects being positioned on the earth—step off the planet and the sun ceases to rise at all.⁶

For Heidegger, then, the persistent predictiveness of patterns is not a product of the nature of time, but a product of our own ability to make those patterns present, to construct the mental structures called “patterns,” to impose ourselves on the world; it is we who supply the connections between one *right now* and the next, connections which often take the form of a linearity, as we are bound in the course of a lifetime to always see the world through the same, singular physical body, through one singular point-like consciousness. Time, especially its perception as steadfastly linear, becomes a characterization of ourselves rather than an “objective” characterization of the universe. At best, time conceived of in this manner describes the interplay of the particular consciousness of the species *homo sapiens* with the universe, the mutual imposition of ourselves on the world, and the world on us. The novel’s irrevocably linear form can be seen from Heidegger’s point of view as a re-enactment of the perceived linearity of time which results from our entrapment in a single, physical, mortal body, and not as a re-enactment of time itself, whatever time itself might turn out to be really. The conviction that there are other ways to more accurately characterize time and, consequently, our

⁶ For a close look at Heidegger’s discussion of the topic in *Time and Being*, see pp. 388 and 437. The key here is his insistence that what repeats is not simply an event, but the possibilities of being it instigates: merely waiting for the return is inauthentic, realizing the return of any number of possibilities is authentic. It’s what radiates out from the return of an event that interests him, not the fact of the return itself. In this sense it’s the individual’s imposition of the results of choosing to embrace those possibilities which characterizes the authentic nature of being. In this scheme, there is only linearity if we choose it. He states:

Repetition does not abandon itself to that which is past, nor does it aim at progress. In the moment of vision authentic existence is indifferent to both these alternatives. (438)

Repetition is neither a progression, that is to say linear, nor it is a return to what has been, that is to say circular. It is something else, and that something else is precisely what Heidegger and Bernard strive to formulate.

interaction with the world in which we live, which possibility Heidegger strives to formulate, lies at the heart of Bernard's vision of a globe of figures. His globe of figures is neither singular nor linear; it is the projection of a truly objective point of view from which to perceive time, expressly removed from any single, linear consciousness, which removal is precisely the possibility literature makes available to us, the preservation and accumulation of pieces of time as seen from any number of singular points of view when the points of view themselves have ceased to exist or never existed in the first place.

This globe of figures, however, this objective, non-linear view of time, cannot be written into the form of the novel precisely because the novel imposes the linearity of its own form on the possibilities it engenders. Bernard's paradoxical belief that "story" is both the only medium through which to hand his life to his readers and something which does not resemble his life at all can be seen to lie in the fact that the linearity which produces the Husserlian coincidence upon which rests the novel's ability to mimetically preserve moments of time just happens to exclude all non-linear temporal structures, like those envisioned by Heidegger and characterized by Bernard's globe of figures. The novel's linearity both engenders and limits its possibilities. The novel is resolutely Husserlian in its capabilities and quite Heideggerian in its failings: it can represent singular, uniform, linear mimetic space-times from single perspectives quite well but has little or no capacity to represent them simultaneously, or to represent non-linear, non-singular mimetic space-times or perspectives. Any multiplicity of perspectives or space-times can only be presented in a successive, linear fashion, leaving the simultaneity of Bernard's globe of figures as well as the non-linearity of Heidegger's conception of repetition to be alluded to after the fact of the novel itself.

Returning to Bernard's passage equipped with this Husserlian and Heideggerian vocabulary, we can understand Bernard's mimetic scene, the *right now* of the chair created for the reader, as the Husserlian "coincidence" of a persisting pattern which organizes the synchronic elements built out of the linear, diachronic running of the text. This coincidence succeeds in presenting one version of Bernard's story, but fails to achieve his Heideggerian vision. The coincidence of synchronic elements is organized by the single, controlling figure of linear space and time viewed from one specific point in time and space. The persistence of this pattern creates, orients and organizes the synchronic elements constructed in the scene into the fictive *right now* in which Bernard and the reader face off across a restaurant table. Even in this tiny scene, we can already see the impossibility of representing anything like a simultaneity: Bernard himself can only be made to appear one element at a time, in a strict diachronic linearity, as does each item on the table between the reader and Bernard. Let's enter that fictive *right now* again, paying close attention to the patterns which construct it. Here is the text which initiates the fictive present in which we gaze from a single point of view across a table at Bernard. For the entire final chapter of *The Waves* this singular point of view onto this particular fictive present constitutes that which interdicts Bernard's globe of figures:

You see me, sitting at a table opposite you, a rather heavy, elderly man, grey at the temples. You see me take my napkin and unfold it. You see me pour myself out a glass of wine. And you see behind me the door opening, and people passing.

"You see me," two bodies, one the reader, the other Bernard, some concept of space in which to relate the two, and a kind of subject-object point of view are created. Already

the diachronic is making us wait, forcing Bernard to pass us the simultaneous elements which compose his mimetic scene one at a time. "Sitting at a table," a table is created at which Bernard's body is placed in some sort of sitting position, and we wait for more elements. "Opposite you," and Bernard's body is oriented in the fictive space opposite and across the table from the reader. "A rather heavy," first his stomach grows, "elderly" and then he ages, "man," and we attach, finally, any number of additional, personal details to support our notion of man-ness, old age, heaviness. Bernard himself, the synchronic entity that is his body, that in actuality exists as a massive simultaneity of shape, smell and sound, can only appear in his mimetic scene through the slow sieve of the novel's singular and linear mimetic mechanism. In the novel, Bernard, like any other thing we are to conceive of as persisting in fictive time, can only appear one element at a time, like a puzzle we slowly put together, getting first one piece, then another, and waiting for yet others that never come. It is absolutely clear that in any single mimetic scene, the simultaneity Bernard seeks, even on a very small scale, is interdicted by the very mechanism which constructs it.

The *right now* of mimetic narrative is defined, to return to Aristotle's "action," by the subsequent "movement" of the objects these statements have just constructed via the unalterably singular and linear mechanism of narrative mimesis. These statements are coordinated around the evolving pattern of a linear time and linear space perceived from a single point of view, a bit like point perspective in painting. The specific objects and their subsequent movement, the actions of the scene, must conform to this pattern of linear space and time seen from the established point of view in order for this scene to persist. The persistence of this pattern of linear space and time and the continuous

singular point of view from which events occurring in that space and time are viewed is synonymous with the persistence of this mimetic scene. In order to further develop this scene, the text continues to adhere to and develop the pattern now established: He folds his napkin (which suddenly appears in his hands), pours a glass of wine (the bottle and the glass also appear magically on the table for him to manipulate). Behind him, keeping with the spatial pattern of the single point of view thus far established (the reader looking at Bernard), a door appears, "And you see behind me the door," it opens, "opening," and people begin to pass, "and people passing." Time has begun to flow in the fictional *right now* in which both the reader and the fictive man Bernard are participating. They (the reader and Bernard) exist in a fictional somewhere in which time passes simultaneously for both of them: they are sharing time (or really, the reader is sharing time with him/herself, or, perhaps, Ms. Woolf is sharing time with herself as she writes it). The construction of this space and time in which action has the possibility to occur is what makes story story, is what makes narrative narrative. This particular point of view onto this particular space-time will persist as long as the reader actively casts *intentio* upon it and as long as the patterns which produce it persist, as long as the synchronic elements constructed in rigid linear succession via Husserlian coincidence in the reader's retention of the diachronic running of syllables can be coordinated with or made to coincide with or become the next evolution of the space-time-point-of-view pattern that has thus far been established. As long as the patterns which constitute this point of view onto this space-time persist in the reader's *praesens intentio*, so this space-time seen from this point of view will persist.

At a certain point in our quotation from Bernard, the pattern of the restaurant and the chair we as readers occupy within that restaurant ceases to persist and we abandon it, the mimetic space and time it created and any events which may have occurred within that space and time to absence, recollection, the past. We get a better sense of the unity and singularity of the pattern which constructs the space and time of the restaurant when it becomes clear we have moved into a different space and time. There are any number of other tiny separate space-times in our quotation from Bernard, but the most prominent one is the following:

Lying in a ditch on a stormy day, when it has been raining, then enormous clouds come marching over the sky, tattered clouds, wisps of cloud. What delights me then is the confusion, the height, the indifference and the fury. Great clouds always changing, and movement; something sulphurous and sinister, bowled up helter-skelter; towering, trailing, broken off, lost and I forgotten, minute, in a ditch.

The table and restaurant have been abandoned. The I-you, face-to-face speaker-listener relationship between Bernard and the reader has changed. Our chair seems to have vanished, and with it the single point of view we have been occupying. With the loss of adherence to the pattern of uniform space and time which established the restaurant and the point of view defined by our chair, they cease to be “present,” to be the *right now* of the narrative, to persist as a coordination in our Husserlian retention. They are replaced by another pattern of space and time which is less easily identifiable but irrefutably different in that it is impossible to coordinate it into the pattern which established the restaurant. It seems unlikely that Bernard’s restaurant has a ditch in the middle of it, and

it would be impossible to see the clouds through the ceiling, which one would suppose the restaurant has, as the outside is only described as being visible through the open doorway. In other words it is possible to conflate the two scenes, but given our understanding of the mechanics of the coordinating pattern, linear space and time, it seems improbable. The ditch and the clouds “fit” better as another place and perhaps another time.

This new space-time is marked by a clear confusion in the point of view it constructs. The point of view constructed by the phrases “Lying in a ditch on a stormy day, when it has been raining,” and “and I forgotten, minute, in a ditch” are in competition with the descriptions of the clouds which occupy the rest of the scene, giving the impression that we, the reader, are not looking at Bernard lying in a ditch, as the two phrases above suggest, but are instead looking up at the clouds, in which point of view Bernard does not appear. Perhaps looking up at the clouds is Bernard’s point of view which we momentarily share. However we choose to render it for ourselves, the reader’s point of view fluctuates somewhere between observing Bernard in the ditch and viewing the motion of the clouds from a point of view easily conceived of as Bernard’s own. It is precisely this fluctuation or indefiniteness between perspectives that hints at the possibility of breaking out of the singularity of the point from which this mimetic present is viewed without abandoning the mimetic present itself. Our momentary confusion when “Great clouds always changing, and movement; something sulphurous and sinister, bowled up helter-skelter; towering, trailing” overtakes the tiny phrase “Lying in a ditch” which at first established a perspective of looking down at Bernard (and not up at the clouds) may perhaps be precisely an example of “some little language such as lovers use,

broken words, inarticulate words, like the shuffling of feet on the pavement” whose very inarticulateness creates an ambiguity in which more than one perspective is present, in which we are not looking at a mimetic scene from a particular place, but from places.

Does the ambiguity between the looking-at-the-clouds and the looking-at-Bernard perspective constitute a collapsing of mimetic patterns, an escape from the singularity of the mimetic present? Does it constitute a “simultaneity” of perspective? Is the reader looking in two directions at once? Such an interpretation would certainly account for the unsettling feeling the passage leaves me with—I’m not sure what just happened, or where I am “supposed” to be looking until I get to that last phrase, “and I forgotten, minute, in a ditch,” where I assume I’m looking at Bernard, not up at the clouds—indeed that I must have looked at Bernard, then up at the clouds, then back down at the ditch where he is lying, and thus do I re-establish a single perspective from which to observe this mimetic looking-at-the-clouds space and time. I construct this singular perspective, of course, after the fact of having read the entire scene as the text’s imposition of the perspective of looking up at the clouds is too overpowering to keep the perspective of looking down at Bernard in the *right now* of the scene. The difficulty in keeping the point of view of looking down at Bernard in the *right now* of the scene as the descriptions of clouds overtakes him demonstrates the difficulty in establishing a simultaneity of perspective in this mimetic space-time. Instead of a clear simultaneity of perspectives, the arrival of the clouds forces at best a shift of point of view, and at worst a complete confusion in which no mimetic scene is clearly being made present. Bernard shuffles and drags his words in order to prevent the establishment of a single point of view, but as the patterns which establish a given single point of view begin to recede and blend into another pattern, his

story becomes confused and difficult to comprehend. This occurs because no clear pattern persists around which to build a point of view onto a mimetic space and time. Without a clear point of view from which to view a particular place and time, that place and time cease to persist. As the initial point of view becomes confused with another, the mimetic scene itself becomes less defined, vague, and I do not have a template, a means of conceiving, of “seeing” from two points of view, or several points of view, at the same time. The text itself does not offer me a template, the narrative does not guide me to a place from which I can clearly see the mimetic scene in question from simultaneous perspectives, and I am left, if I am to keep this mimetic scene in the *right now*, to establish one of the perspective patterns or the other or a meta-perspective which encompasses both. Ultimately, no mimetic scene is established which can be viewed from simultaneous perspectives, and at best the entire scene of Bernard and the clouds is glimpsed first from one then another singular point of view. Bernard’s “shuffling feet” language in the end fails to establish a clear, dual, simultaneous perspective. This single mimetic moment can only be maintained when coordinated around one persisting pattern at a time. As soon as the persistence of a singular pattern is threatened, the mimetic scene itself becomes threatened.

The need for this singular pattern to persist lies at the very heart of Bernard’s theory, and establishes what I’m calling the linear singularity of mimetic perspective. Bernard’s theory in its full analytic import, when understood from within the context of its own fictionality, posits that the novel, being a narrative, depends on a mimesis which is inherently limited to a linear succession of persisting coordinating figures or patterns and as such must always be, at least in the scene whose time is currently passing for the

reader, monologic, controlled by only one of those figures. The eclipsing of the chair and the restaurant by the arrival of the storm clouds is demonstrative of the singularity of the patterns which establish the Husserlian coincidence necessary for fictive mimesis to occur, for the reader to experience time passing in a fictional world. In Bernard's text, as soon as the text ceases to revolve around the space-time pattern which establishes the restaurant and begins to revolve around the space-time figure of the storm clouds and Bernard in the ditch, the restaurant disappears. No two coincidence patterns upon which rest a point of view onto a mimetic scene can persist in the time currently passing for the reader without threatening the destruction of the mimetic scene itself. Bernard's flurry of inarticulate, shuffling-feet writing fails to integrate two possible, simultaneous points of view. The construction of these unified, separate, singular mimetic space-times, taking the restaurant and the storm clouds space-times as examples, and the impossibility of conflating two points of view in the latter space-time is antithetical to Bernard's project, the "making present" of his globe of figures, a nearly unlimited set of simultaneously present space-times and points of view.

Bernard's theory describes the limitations of mimesis in the novel as it applies to the fictional time currently passing for the reader, to what Ricoeur has called mortal time. Beyond mortal time, beyond the Husserlian retention of the text, beyond the time currently passing for the reader, however, Bernard's theory does not maintain that fictional mimesis is inherently singular or bound to be coordinated by only one coordinating figure. The spatial and temporal relationship between elements that have already passed through mortal time are not characterized as necessarily singular or linear in Bernard's theory of the novel. It is in the accumulation of the linear progression of

mimetic scenes in the reader's memory, in the volume of text which has already been read, where the novel *The Waves* strives to construct Bernard's globe of figures, a non-linear simultaneity of perspective. Once the mimesis of action and its requisite linear progression of singular coordinating figures pass out of the time currently passing for the reader, they accumulate in the reader's recollection and take up residence in the heteroglossia of the always absent "having been." Any number of heterogeneous *right nows* might exist in some sort of equivalent temporal relationship in the "having been." This leaves open the possibility of representing Bernard's globe of figures via some sort of refiguration of what has already been read into a kind of retroactive or *post hoc* simultaneity, even though the entire set of mimetic moments that make up that *post hoc* simultaneity must be presented initially one at a time. Bernard's globe of figures might, in other words, be able to be built in absentia once the linear progression of singular mimetic moments like his restaurant scene has ended. Once all the moments have been collected in the reader's memory, the reader might be able to reorder, re-build, re-coordinate them into something like his globe of figures.

Ricoeur, however, in direct opposition to Bernard, maintains that the novel's cosmic time, its absent synchronic, should be as monologic and linear as its mortal time. Ricoeur's theory implies quite clearly that Bernard's globe of figures, his simultaneity of perspectives, is as impossible in the absent, synchronic "already read" as it is in the *right now*. As Ricoeur defines it, monologism in recollection, in the absent synchronic of the "already read," entails integrating the already-read episodes, the various *right nows* of the text, into a single entity via some unifying pattern or figure. For Ricoeur, this figure must be the probable, uniform space-time of normal, shared or "calendar" time. This uniform,

linear space time should encompass the entire world of the narrative at the level of cosmic time or “having been.” This is, according to Ricoeur, nothing less than the unity of plot which Aristotle demanded of tragedy. For Ricoeur, mimetic narrative is constructed around the same, singular, uniform figure in cosmic time as it is in mortal time. Of *The Waves* Ricoeur says in passing:

At the limit, a pure novel of multiple voices—Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*—is no longer a novel at all but a sort of oratorio offered for reading. If the polyphonic novel does cross this threshold, it is due to the organizing principle it receives from the long tradition marked out by the carnivalistic genre. In short, the polyphonic novel invites us to dissociate the principle of emplotment from the monologic principle and to extend it to the point where narrative fiction is transformed into a new genre. (v2, 97)

The Waves, says Ricoeur, is not a novel at all precisely because its cosmic time, its absent synchronic is not monologic, is not organized around the single, persisting figure of linear time. The ability to unify the novel, all its various *right nows*, into some kind of cohesive fictive cosmic time is necessary, Ricoeur maintains, if a novel is to be considered mimetic narrative. Ricoeur maintains this because he has defined mimetic narrative on Aristotle’s conception of the unity of plot, and extrapolated that that unity must be focused around one and only one figure: the common notions of linear space and time. Ricoeur feels *The Waves* is no longer a mimetic narrative and no longer a novel in that “the pure multiple voices” exist without a single coordinating figure which integrates them into a single, unified world-time which would constitute the “true” history of the world of the characters. We don’t know where or when Bernard is as he tells us his story.

We don't where or when any of the other narrators are either. With nothing but subjective descriptions by the characters, we have no definitive, objective knowledge of the time, space or history of Bernard's world, the world to which the novel *The Waves* supposedly has unrestricted access. As such, the world of *The Waves* cannot be reconstructed as a common history based on the common notions of time and space, and thus it excludes itself from the realm of mimetic fiction. Ricoeur handles the modern novel's desire in general to dismantle the unity of plot he has defined by considering them as offering creative alternatives to chronology, the common view of historical time. Ricoeur struggles to depict the non-linear, non-singular "unity" represented by Bernard's globe of figures as a "discordant concordance" which can be found in the tension between the mortal time of a novel, any given mimetic *right now*, and its cosmic time, the accumulation of those *right nows* in the absent synchronic. The ultimate expression of this discordant concordance he draws from Heidegger:

Illuminated after the fact by our tales about time [Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, Proust A la recherche and Magic mountain], Heideggerian repetition reveals itself to be the emblematic expression of the most deeply concealed figure of discordant concordance, the one that holds together, in the most improbable manner, mortal time, public time, and world time. This ultimate figure sums up all the modalities of discordant concordance accumulated by the phenomenology of time since Augustine. (141)

Ricoeur's use of the idea of Heideggerian repetition as a coordination of mortal, public and world time is distinctly more abstract and more ambitious than my use of repetition as the persistence of patterns which coordinate mimetic scenes whose time is currently

passing for the reader. Ricoeur finds that modern novels which constitute a “unity” are those which offer a means to coordinate phenomenology’s hierarchies of time, to construct a unity out of not only their mortal and cosmic time, but also out of the conflation of the two, the entire novel, in other words, as one grand, unified, temporal figure. Novels which fail to offer such complete and integral coordination threaten the very nature of our capacity to “narrate,” or, to put it another way, where narration is defined as that which integrates both mortal time and cosmic time into a single figure, a novel which fails to do so can no longer be considered “narration,” has failed to live up to the definition. The problems Ricoeur runs into in attempting to define the function of time and narrative in the modern novel are a direct result of his defining “emplotment” on a single, all-encompassing level; that is, his “concordance” is necessarily a concordance of any and all levels of temporization within the novel.

In contrast, Bernard’s theory of the novel posits the monologism of narrative mimesis as a necessary structure only for the construction of mimetic scenes whose time is currently passing for the reader—at any other level, the uniform singularity of space-time is not depicted as a constraint for fictional narrative, does not enter into his depiction of the problem. Ricoeur does not make this distinction, does not divide “emplotment” into hierarchical levels, and thus his theoretical frame forces him to either manage to “unify” the modern novel in the monologic sense implied by Aristotle’s unity of plot or to consider its capacity to narrate altogether lost, a rather poor set of choices. His attempt to depict this unity of temporal levels in fiction is tied to his desire to see fiction as a kind of reply to the problems of phenomenology, which threatens to overshadow his important realization that fictive time at the level of the *right now* or mortal time is a refiguration of

our experience of time as characterized by Husserl—linear and singular. Ricoeur himself is in some sense aware of this:

“...the major contribution of fiction to philosophy does not lie in the range of solutions it proposes for the discordance between the time of the world [cosmic time] and lived time [mortal time] but in the exploration of the nonlinear features of phenomenological time that historical time conceals due to the very fact that it is set within the great chronology of the universe” (132).

While Ricoeur sees fiction’s philosophical contribution as stemming from its exploration of time’s non-linear features, his theory does not provide a model of fictional mimesis capable of such non-linear exploration. According to his theory, all mimetic, narrative fiction must be coordinated into a single, linear entity at all levels of temporization in order still to be mimetic, narrative fiction. Bernard’s theory, on the other hand, portrays mimetic, narrative fiction as capable of exploring non-linear possibilities precisely because at all temporal levels beyond the time currently passing for the reader in any given mimetic scene, narrative fiction is not bound to organize itself around any preset figures, including those described by phenomenology and history. Ricoeur’s theoretical structure does not allow non-linear features to be the organizing principle around which a mimetic narrative as a whole can be integrated into a unity, i.e., substituted for the concept of “plot” where plot is defined on the inherently linear, chronological Aristotelian beginning, middle and end. He argues, following *A Sense of an Ending*, that the existence of an ending indicated in the text itself would be sufficient to mark the existence of a plot, and given his reading of *The Waves* it is clear that the “end” must be an “objective” fact, a single event described from the one true objective point of view, an

account of what *really* happened. It must not emanate from the subjective voice of any of the characters, nor can it occur in the ambiguously associated framing narrative. This indisputably singular event must mark the end to the continuum of time that constitutes the world-time of the novel. In some way shape or form, the world described in a novel must be coordinated into a singular, continuous and linear entity, as would a history of the actual world written in the habits of historians generally, in order for it to be thought of as narrative. Failure to provide an objective, factual, that is to say, an unquestionably singular and undisputed ending would imply a failure to unify the plot, which would mean a failure to present a unity of time, which, by his definition, is precisely what the act of narration provides.

What Bernard posits, on the other hand, is that the unity of time provided by narration and necessary to the construction of mimetic narrative might only be necessary and unavoidable at the level of the fictive *right now*, to what is currently happening in a mimetic scene whose time is currently passing for the reader. To be sure, Ricoeur sees very clearly that the modern novel offers up a multitude of non-linear models through which to unify a work:

Rejecting chronology is one thing, the refusal of any substitute principle of configuration is another. It is not conceivable that the narrative should have moved beyond all configuration. The time of the novel may break away from real time. In fact, this is the law for the beginning of any fiction. But it cannot help but be configured in terms of new norms of temporal organization that are still perceived as temporal by the reader, by means of new expectations regarding the time of fiction. . . . To believe that we are done with the time of fiction because

we have overturned, disarticulated, reversed, telescoped, or reduplicated the temporal modalities the conventional paradigms of the novel have made familiar to us, is to believe that the only time conceivable is precisely chronological time. It is to doubt that fiction has its own resources for inventing temporal measurements proper to it. It is also to doubt that these resources encounter expectations in the reader concerning time that are infinitely more subtle than rectilinear succession. (V2 25)

Even though Ricoeur is aware that modern novels like *The Waves* seek a unity apart from the uniformity of historical chronology, his theory can't account for a unifying principle that is not tied to "common time":

Nothing, therefore, excludes the possibility that the metamorphosis of the plot will encounter somewhere a boundary beyond which we can no longer recognize the formal principle of temporal configuration that makes a story a whole and complete story. And yet . . . and yet. Perhaps in spite of everything it is necessary to have confidence in the call for concordance that today still structures the expectations of readers and to believe that new narrative forms, which we do not yet know how to name, are already being born, which will bear witness to the fact that the narrative function can still be metamorphosed, but not so as to die. For we have no idea of what a culture would be where no one any longer knew what it meant to narrate things. (V2 p. 28)

A whole and complete story depends upon its singular concordance of all its temporal levels, its ability to be recuperated into a temporal structure which is unified, whole and singular. Failing to establish such a concordance threatens our very capacity to narrate, at

least as Ricoeur has defined it. But, Ricoeur seems to believe, new narrative forms may some day be born which will metamorphose narrative itself such that even without such unification, narrative will not die. The conclusion that narrative as we have known it cannot accommodate the non-unification of the time it refigures is arrived at by Ricoeur because his definition of mimetic narrative as a refiguration of time assumes that that refiguration must occur identically on all temporal levels and that those temporal levels must themselves be united into a single, whole entity. His definition prevents him from seeing the modern novel as the simple continuation and exploration of the genre of mimetic narrative and not as its sudden disruption. Something cataclysmic must happen in order for the figure which organizes narrative cosmic to become anything other than singular and linear.

The Waves is nothing short of a narrative form searching for a non-chronological, non-linear, non-singular unity of its cosmic time. At the same time, Bernard's theory of mimesis implies that *The Waves*, and indeed the novel in general, has not outstripped Ricoeur's characterization of "emplotment" at the level of narrative retention. That is, what persists in narrative in the form of the novel is the necessary singularity of the coordinating figure which establishes the mimetic scene whose time is currently passing for the reader. This characterization adheres to "the formal principle of temporal configuration" as Ricoeur has defined it. This formal principle, however, the unity of the fictive space-time of the *right now*, does not extend to the whole work. As far as Bernard's theory is concerned, it does not move up the hierarchical ladder of fictive temporization, does not apply to the absent synchronic of the already read—it is the gamble of the novel that the already read may be organized by linear or non-linear

organizations, familiar or unfamiliar patterns, the very figure of which organization *takes the place* of what has formerly been known as the “plot,” the temporal organization of the work as a whole, which Ricoeur maintains must be singular and linear if there is to be narration.

Where Ricoeur’s theory cannot accommodate a novel like *The Waves* as anything other than having completely abandoned the genre of narrative fiction, Bernard’s theory offers a definition of narrative fiction which accounts quite readily for the novel’s experimental variations on the habitual figures which organize the temporal unity of a work. In order to understand Bernard’s conception of the problem of narrative unity at the cosmic level, at the level of the unity of plot as Aristotle understood it, we must understand plot not as a single, objective version of a set of linear events which occur in linear space, but as any pattern capable of organizing the temporal relationship between individual *right nows* that have already passed through the resolutely linear mimetic time currently passing for the reader. If we divorce plot from common historical linearity and instead conceive of it as any unifying figure which organizes the absent synchronic of the already read, then Bernard’s characterization of the problem of writing *it* lies precisely in the differentiation between the temporal organization which is possible at the level of the *right now* and that which is possible at the level of the absent synchronic.

If we conceive of “emplotment” as split along the line which separates the *right now* from the already read, along the same hierarchical level that phenomenology splits its description of the hierarchies of time, then the modern novel does not threaten to end mimetic narrative, since the mimetic unity of the *right now* which constitutes it is both necessary and unavoidable. Instead, the temporal variations of the modern novel merely

demonstrate that at the level of fictive cosmic time, at the level of the “unity” of the entire work, narrative fiction in the form of the novel *by its own nature* has never been bound to any single coordinating figure, chronological or otherwise. Aristotle’s description of the unity of plot as inherently chronological becomes a stylistic, historical or habitual choice of one particular figure with which to unify the cosmic time of tragedy, not a proscriptive definition of the immutable nature of narrative in general, as Ricoeur is reading it. Further, splitting emplotment into two levels implies that the mediating function narration provides between mortal and cosmic time is not a product of the nature of narrative itself, but a coordination imposed by authors and expected by readers through the use of figures capable of doing so, most of which by desire or necessity are already known to both, hence the heavy reliance on the figure of chronology and our common notions of history.

The implications of Bernard’s theory are quite profound. It implies that the novel, as a form, has historically attempted to make bridges between the two hierarchical temporal levels by reflecting the patterns which organize one level off of the patterns which organize the other. Its unity of time would, in this scenario, be constructed by the purposeful but not objectively true coordination of the figures which organize mortal and cosmic time by reflecting the patterns which organize mortal time off of those which organize cosmic time, and conversely, by reflecting patterns which organize cosmic time off of those which organize mortal time. In Bernard’s hands, Ricoeur’s “concordance” as the linchpin of narrative’s unification of mortal and cosmic time into a single entity becomes a habitual fabrication which hides the underlying, objectively true, non-singular, non-linear multiplicity of being. Chronology, or “calendar time,” an abstraction from our habitual perception of mortal time as singular and linear, placed upon the undying

universe, has long served and will continue to serve as the most commonly utilized model of such mutual reflection between the massive simultaneity that is reality and our limited, singular, linear perception of it; however, Bernard's description of fictive cosmic time as both synchronic and polyphonic implies that the imposition of those same limits onto the possibilities of fictive cosmic time as well as the nature of reality is a mistake. The singular and linear figure which must control the mimetic representation of fictional time currently unfolding for the reader has little to say, Bernard contends, about cosmic time, about the massive simultaneity of his globe of figures, in fiction or in actuality.

Bernard's portrayal of the split capacity of mimetic representation in mortal and in cosmic time encapsulates the whole of Bernard's theory: mortal time in the novel is resolutely singular and linear, and therefore false, while the novel's cosmic time need not be. Any mimetic scene whose time is currently unfolding for the reader can only unfold in a singular and linear fashion. This is just the nature of narrative mimesis and the novel cannot alter it and Bernard, although unhappily, accepts this. How those scenes are linked together, however, need not be singular or linear as far as Bernard is concerned. Bernard believes that it is possible to arrange mimetic scenes in a non-linear, non-singular fashion. The discovery of this as-yet-undiscovered temporal arrangement is precisely what Bernard strives to imagine in his theoretical analysis of his own story. The resolute linearity and singularity of each and every individual mimetic scene ever presented in any novel forms one of the fundamental limits of mimesis in the novel not only for Bernard, but also for Morelli in *Rayuela* as well as for the narrator of *Agua Viva*. Likewise, it is in the linking together of mimetic scenes, in the novel's cosmic time,

where both Morelli and the narrator of *Agua Viva* seek to construct, just as Bernard hopes, a non-linear, non-singular representation of reality's massive simultaneity.

If it is in the novel's cosmic time that Bernard believes a non-linear, non-singular unity of time can be built, it is logical to ask if the novel *The Waves* achieves such a unity. Does the figure which organizes the fictional eternity of the world of *The Waves* represent Bernard's globe of figures, a single perspective onto a massive simultaneity? For Ricoeur, no such figure is drawn in *The Waves*. Woolf has offered up no metamorphic substitute for the missing plot, for the missing unification of the novel as a whole into one cohesive entity. It is "no longer a novel at all but a sort of oratorio offered for reading," because its refigurations of time have not been unified by some figure capable of doing so. The possibility of such a figure in the absent, synchronic cosmic time of the novel resides in *The Waves* in the framing narrative where at some unknown beach at some unknown time the sun rises, passes through the sky, and sets. This is clearly a figure by which the novel's cosmic time might be ordered, but the relationship of this figure to the internal monologues is completely undescribed, completely implicit. It is the lack of specificity of this cosmic-time figure, the space-time settings of the internal monologues of the characters, and the relationship, if any, between the two that for Ricoeur makes *The Waves* no longer a novel. Without the integration of all of these elements into a single coordinating figure, Ricoeur feels that the very substance of narration no longer persists. His point is well taken; there are no "objective" facts about the world of *The Waves*, only subjective points of view. At the same time, I do not see how Bernard's restaurant scene can be considered anything other than mimetic narrative, as it is the construction of a space and time in which actions occur—people pass by the

door behind Bernard. Time, in other words, does flow in *The Waves* even if those segments of flowing time are not recovered into a linear unity capable of organizing them into a single whole entity organized around a single, unifying figure. At the same time, the implicit chronology of the character's internal monologues coupled with the imagery of the framing narrative seem to point toward a traditional, chronological unity. That chronological unity, of course, is precisely what the structure of *The Waves* is designed to prevent, and in this sense Ricoeur is granting the novel its due.

At the same time, Bernard and *The Waves* clearly do seek a unity for the novel, a single vision of all the lives of the characters from all moments in time, only they seek a more objective and more honest unity than Ricoeur's singular plot can attain. Bernard's theory portrays the novel's singular, linear cosmic time as a stylistic habit, pointing toward the possibility of re-ordering or re-arranging it by supplanting a new figure for that of the traditional plot. This new cosmic-time figure, represented by the metaphor of waves in the ocean, is what gives the novel its title. The unifying figure of *The Waves* does not make itself present in any other way than as a metaphoric suggestion as to how one might conceive of organizing in a non-linear, non-chronological way the mimetic moments presented in the subjective narrations that, given the linear form of the novel and the singular linearity of the mimetics of time currently passing for the reader, have been presented singularly and linearly. There are two ways to read the metaphor of the waves: as single waves which swell, break and dissipate, or as the endless, innumerable waves whose interweaving constitute the vast surface of the ocean. The integration of these two possibilities, indeed the fact that these two possibilities juxtapose or necessitate one another is precisely what makes it apt for the novel. All waves are singular and lead

a linear life, rising, breaking and dissipating, just as do the lives of the characters in *The Waves*, as the order of the monologues is presented in more or less chronological order. At the same time (and it is this *at the same time* that the novel as a narrative form cannot actualize), the metaphor suggests we try to imagine these monologues as occurring simultaneously, all at once, as integrated into and irremovable from an interlocking complex pattern as simultaneous, vast and inconceivable as a sudden snapshot of the infinite interlocking waves which form the undulating surface of the entire ocean. It is certain that the novel cannot present anything but the former, which is not to negate its validity, but to point out its inability to present the vast simultaneity of the latter. Waves do rise fall and break upon the beach like the rise and fall of a human life, but those individual waves are created by, cannot exist without and are inseparable from the simultaneous existence of the rest of the waves in the ocean, from their vast, simultaneous interplay which, at each and every moment, creates and defines any individual wave crashing upon the shore. It is this vast simultaneity, every bit as real as the linear progression of any individual wave, to which Bernard, the mouthpiece of the theory behind *The Waves*, is devoted. The linear, singular nature of narrative mimetics described by Ricoeur is precisely what *The Waves* seeks to subvert in an attempt to make Bernard's simultaneity, his globe of figures, present. *The Waves* demonstrates and Bernard theorizes that in narrative mortal time, there is no possibility of escaping the linear singularity of the novel's mimesis. In its cosmic time, the mimetic representation of an objective point of view onto the vast simultaneity of the interwoven sea of humanity is approached at best as the *post hoc* reconfiguration of its singular, linear mortal time into a figure like that suggested by the metaphor of its title. For Bernard, the

inability to hand such a figure to the reader as one would hand over a bunch of grapes constitutes a failure, and since *The Waves* cannot hand his globe of figures to the reader in the visceral, deranged (as Socrates would have it) state of a mortal time, mimetic moment, where the reader gains the multiperspective, mimetic point of view from which to gaze upon that globe of figures as clearly as the reader gazes upon Bernard sitting across the table at the restaurant, the novel must be seen as a failure in its attempt to construct simultaneous, multiple perspectives.

This is not to say that *The Waves* is no longer a novel or no longer mimetic narrative. It is, in fact, both. Bernard's theory, where narrative refigures time differently on mortal and cosmic levels, the former being rigidly monologic and linear, and the latter being completely untied from the common notions of time and space, hits precisely on the mark in terms of the limits and capacities of the novel. It successfully explains the novel's continued adherence to the simple representation of mimetic scenes, even in a novel composed of internal monologues as is *The Waves*, amidst the most wild of experimentation with how those mimetic scenes might be put together into a whole novel, that is, unified into unique and new configurations which lead us toward new visions of what an objective look at what the vast simultaneity of the universe looks like. It allows that experimentation, in everything from Woolf to Joyce to Robbe-Grillet to Garcia-Marquez to Faulkner to be seen as a simple extension and exercising of the novel's possibilities and not as some metamorphic new genre. Bernard's theory offers us a way to conceive of alternate organizing principles on which to base a plot without those organizing principles threatening the constitution of the novel itself.

Bernard's theory points out that it is possible to play with the cosmic time of a novel in a way that you cannot play with its mortal time. You can rearrange how mimetic scenes are linked together into what Ricoeur calls the plot, but you cannot disturb the monologic, singular, linearity of mimetic scenes themselves. There has never been a novel whose mortal time mimetic scenes do not conform to Ricoeur's definition of the monologic imperative of narrative mimetics, and there never will be. The nature of narrative mimetics at the level of mortal time precludes deviation from the linear singularity by which it is constructed. This is the most important contribution to the theory of the novel that we can take from our consideration of the theories of Ricoeur and Bernard as they apply to *The Waves*.

In stitching these monologic mimetic scenes together into the whole fabric that becomes the higher orders of temporal refiguration and ultimately the cosmic time of any novel, the novelists of the 20th century have been playing, experimenting, exploring. *The Waves* is just such an experimentation, as is Cortázar's *Rayuela*. *Rayuela*, in fact, spends a great deal of its energy exploring the possibility of constructing what Bernard describes as a globe of figures in its cosmic time. The capacity of the novel to do so, to coordinate a cosmic time which is at once singular and unified, as is Ricoeur's plot, and a non-linear, vast simultaneity of perspectives, as is Bernard's globe of figures, is what we explore in the next chapter in our examination of *Rayuela*.

Morelli, *Rayuela*, and the Singular Totality of the Novel

The Novel as a Unified Entity

In *The Waves*, Bernard puts forth the theory that, as far as scenes whose time is currently passing for the reader are concerned, mimesis in the novel is both singular and linear. Here, singular implies that no two points of view and no two mimetic scenes can be presented simultaneously, and linear indicates that points of view and mimetic scenes must thereby be presented as a linear succession. The novel, in other words, cannot depict two points of view or two mimetic scenes at the same time. This prevents Bernard from depicting an objective view of his world in the novel. For Bernard, the world is a massive simultaneity of people, points of view, and points in space. He is unhappy with his novel because his novel cannot represent this massive simultaneity as a simultaneity, so he must choose from this massive simultaneity an arbitrary linear succession which inevitably turns what started out as a simultaneity into a non-simultaneous, linear progression. Bernard's conception of the world as a massive simultaneity stems from the concept of the omniscient narrator, a narrator who not only sees everything and knows everything, but who also has simultaneous access to all points in time. In Bernard's view, if one is to take seriously the point of view of the omniscient narrator, time must be conceived of as a massive simultaneity, not a linear succession. The novel's inability to

mimetically represent this massive simultaneity means that the subject position of an omniscient narrator is untenable. Since neither his ideal, objective world view nor his ideal narratological point of view can be represented in the novel, *The Waves* takes the next logical step and attempts to construct this ultimate, objective point of view by linking together a multitude of mimetic scenes in a manner which will impel the reader to re-imagine their linear presentation as a simultaneity. It does so through its unique narrative structure and by offering in its framing narrative a metaphoric representation of what such a vast simultaneity might look like. *The Waves* suggests that the massive simultaneity of the world, when looked at objectively, that is, from outside any one point of view, might look something like the incomprehensively huge interconnected network of individual waves and ripples which, at any given moment, form the surface of the great oceans of the world. *The Waves*, however, does not consider whether or not this metaphoric suggestion succeeds in constructing a mimetic representation of the kind of simultaneity that Bernard desires. *The Waves* leaves open the following question: can a non-linear, non-singular mimetic representation of Bernard's globe of figures be built *post hoc* out of the linear succession of mimetic scenes which constitute the text of *The Waves*?

Where *The Waves* leaves the question unanswered, *Rayuela*, through the theorizing of Morelli, attacks it head on. For Morelli, and ultimately for *Rayuela* itself, if the mimetic scenes and points of view which comprise a novel are to be linked together into a totality, they must be linked by a single, unifying figure, what Ricoeur has called the plot. If this single figure is ultimately perceived by the reader as having been provided by the author, then, Morelli feels, the novel is what Barthes calls a classic text,

monologic in its totality. For Morelli, as for Barthes and Bernard, any valid representation of the world is a pluralistic one. For a representation to be truly objective, it must be a pure plurality; it must not reduce the massive simultaneity of the world by any degree whatsoever, lest it become increasingly subjective to that degree. Any figure presented by the author by which the novel's mimetic scenes can be linked together into a totality reduces to some degree the plurality of possibilities which not presenting such a figure leaves open. Like Bernard discovered in linearly arranging mimetic scenes, Morelli discovers that choosing any figure by which to link together the mimetic scenes of his novel reduces the plurality of their possible interrelationships to the single figure by which he has chosen to unite them.

Morelli, however, cannot forgo his desire to link together the individual mimetic scenes of his novel in such a way that they form "a crystallization in which nothing will be subsumed." He, like Bernard, does not wish to abandon the goal of actually representing the world in an objective way, but he finds that any overt linking together of mimetic scenes constitutes the very subsumption he seeks to avoid. Once a single figure arises out of the novel which can link together its mimetic scenes, that figure has subsumed those scenes within its own immanence and subordinated all the other interrelationships and means by which they might be linked together. The only possibility left Morelli is one he does not desire: to altogether resist the construction of unifying figures in his novel. If his readers can perceive in the novel no figure by which its mimetic scenes might be linked together, they will have to invent one for themselves, and this, hopes Morelli, will preserve the kind of pure plurality his conception of an objective view of the world requires.

Not presenting any unifying figure at all in a novel, however, turns out to be not so easy to do. The playful alternate readings suggested in *Rayuela*'s "Table of Instructions" are a testament to how difficult it is not to present a unifying figure for the novel. It is especially hard, for instance, to avoid the most common figure of all, that of linear, chronological time and the common perceptions of historical cause and effect. Even more difficult for Morelli are his own predilections for unification. While he believes that not presenting unifying figures can make his novel into the kind of plurality he desires, he cannot escape the fact that he still desires one. For all his protestations, Morelli cannot imagine a novel whose mimetic scenes do not revolve around a central figure. So, Morelli leaves himself with only one possibility: to imagine a single figure by which his novel can be both unified and purely plural. Such a figure, once conceived, would not reduce the plurality of his novel's totality to any degree whatsoever. Not surprisingly, Morelli fails to come up with such a figure. As we will see in our discussion of the *Tablero de Dirección*, the figure suggested by the novel's title, the game of *Rayuela* or hopscotch, is more of a theoretical refusal to fix or declare a fixed structure for the novel than it is a figure capable of unifying a kind of purely plural plurality: it is, in essence, a declaration of the novel's inability to provide such a figure. In the end, Morelli cannot conceive of a novel without a central unifying figure nor can he conceive a purely plural central figure. Thus for Morelli, as for Bernard, any truly objective representation of a fictional world in the novel remains an unachieved, idealistic goal.

El tablero de dirección

In contrast to *The Waves*, *Rayuela* spends little time contemplating the “optics” of its own mimesis, tacitly accepting the impossibility of altering the linear singularity of individual mimetic scenes. Instead, *Rayuela* focuses its attention on the possibilities of constructing a truly objective view of the world in the novel’s unified totality, in what Ricoeur has usefully termed fictive cosmic time. This is nowhere more clearly indicated than in the “Tablero de dirección.” The often discussed, whimsical “Table of Instructions” is in essence a theoretical statement of the novel’s inability to profess, to solidify into, a single, unitary figure of its own cosmic time:

A su manera este libro es muchos libros, pero sobre todo es dos libros. El lector queda invitado a *elegir* una de las dos posibilidades siguientes:

El primer libro se deja leer en la forma corriente, y termina en el capítulo 56, al pie del cual hay tres vistosas estrellitas que equivalen a la palabra *Fin*. Por consiguiente, el lector prescindirá sin remordimientos de lo que sigue.

El segundo libro se deja leer empesando por el capítulo 73 y siguiendo luego en el orden que se indica al pie de cada capítulo.

[In its own way, this book consists of many books, but two books above all.

The first can be read in a normal fashion and it ends with Chapter 56, at the close of which there are three garish little stars which stand for *The End*. Consequently, the reader may ignore what follows with a clean conscience.

The second should be read by beginning with Chapter 73 and then following the sequence indicated at the end of each chapter.]

What is at play here, if we take seriously the idea of *Rayuela* being composed chiefly of two novels, is the unity of cosmic time in the world of *Rayuela*. The unanswered question raised by the table of instructions is simply this: how should one order its 155 chapters? Implicit in these instructions is the idea that the novel itself cannot or will not provide a response. The instructions suggest two possible ways of organizing the chapters into a unity, but also note that many other books, many other versions of a unified cosmic time might be constructed out of its chapters. This places the focus of exploration or experiment clearly at the level of cosmic time, at the coordination of all the book's episodes into a single, unified order which will constitute the true history of the world of the characters which circle around Horacio. These instructions do not question the monologic linearity of the chapters themselves, in other words, what Ricoeur has called the novel's mortal time is not at play, is not open to reader or author manipulation and refiguration, nor is the mutability of its cosmic time an extension of the characteristics of its mortal time. The instructions imply that each chapter unto itself is immutable, a fixed piece of mimetic time, but the coordination of the 56 or 155 chapters which is to constitute the unity that will become the totality of the novel *Rayuela* is bound to no single coordinating figure, is in no sense monologic. The dividing line between mortal and cosmic time is thus clearly drawn in the instructions: the contents of the chapters constitute the novel's mortal time, how the chapters are linked together constitutes its cosmic time. This prior-to-reading commentary on the novel's possibilities models the theoretical problem described by Bernard in *The Waves*: it isn't the monologism of its fictive mortal time that the novel as a form is at liberty to restructure *à vontade*; rather, it is the novel as a single, unified entity, its cosmic time, the way in

which its mimetic scenes are linked together, that lends itself to reconfiguration in attempting to make present an objective representation of the world.

This is not to read too much into the table of instructions and the reading variations they indicate, as the experiment-in-form they represent has in many ways been beaten to death, either negatively, as ultimately an insignificant gesture which does little to make *Rayuela* as a novel wholly different from any other novel, or positively, as an unquestioned victory over the false order of its own form. Ermarth makes much of the instructions, Heisse very little. Rabassa maintains that Cortázar added them as a joke, an afterthought, whose import has been rather blown out of proportion. The value or status of the multiple readings, that is, whether re-ordering/re-reading the chapters offers the kind of evolution in form sought after by either the novel itself or critical studies and their various projects is not what makes them interesting. What makes them interesting is that they draw an accurate figure of the novel *Rayuela*: a bunch of relatively normal, mimetic chapters theorizing about how to make something not normal out of themselves. To put it another way, the instructions accurately portray the span of the novel's project in that the novel is composed of chapters which rely on the singular, linear mimesis described by Bernard and Ricoeur. The singular linearity of mimesis is as germane to *Rayuela* as it is to any other novel, be it *Don Quixote*, *Clara* or *Grande Sertão*. At the same time, these "low mimetic" chapters theorize the possibilities of, and here is the key, not *escaping* the limitations of their own mimesis by altering or denying the mechanism by which mimesis in those scenes is constructed, but by making something *out of* the linking-together of those mimetic scenes which might approach a more accurate representation of the world's objective plurality.

The debate over the import of the table of instructions is often seen as inextricable from the debate over whether *Rayuela* as a novel succeeds in “unwriting” itself or accomplishing its professed desire to say *it*. The novel is seen to succeed or fail based upon the validity of the effects induced by the instructions’ suggestion of alternate readings. Either the re-ordering creates a new kind of novel and the novel succeeds in its goals, or the re-ordering has no effect and the novel fails. This leads some to conclude that the novel is or has become rather altogether irrelevant: “Hopscotch would have to have been, effectively, the last book in order to be read as seriously as it plainly desires us, in all its emphatic self-projection as ‘écriture,’ to read it” (Alonso, 58). Larsen believes, in what he self-projects as a kind of ‘60s hallucination, that the novel professes to have escaped its own limitations, to have taken some evolutionary step backwards or forwards into some revolutionary new linguistic form. This is to read these instructions seriously and to see the effects of their suggested reordering of chapters as the novel’s only “important” move or experiment, and Larsen says as much. Larsen seems to have read the opening line of the novel, “Encontraría a la Maga,” as “Econtrè a la Maga,” missing the open-ended inconclusiveness and comic self-awareness which makes the novel inviting as an exploration of its own troubled self-identity. Larsen decides that “it is the gimmick of the hopscotch—of the novel which is really two, or an infinite number, of novels—that seems the most unmistakable signature of its *aesthetic* obsolescence” [his italics] (60), and that “the hopscotch turns out to be really just a conventionally linear experience of reading, broken up by a miscellany of clips and ‘morelliana’ of widely varying interest but never formally anything more than *interruptions*.”

This, meant to be a condemnation of *Rayuela* by Larsen, hits precisely on the point, the real point, contained in the instructions: the novel is ultimately unable to escape linearity, the monologic, the low mimetic—indeed, *Rayuela* makes the case that the novel as a form cannot do so. At the same time, *Rayuela* is not satisfied with what it sees as this form's obviously false linearity, its inherent limitations. This internal tension between the limitations of its own self-proscribed form and its desire to supplant this form with a better one all under the overarching admission in the table of instructions of the impossibility of doing so makes *Rayuela* seem not only more self-aware than many of its modern predecessors, Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* included, but especially contemporary, at least to the idiosyncratic, personal point of view of this reader, who first encountered the novel not in the '60s, as did Larsen, or even the '70s, but in 1987. Larsen seems to be pointing out a rather common truism of the "new novels," of experimental art in general in the 20th century: it seems not to have engendered the kind of revolution it was meant to. Oddly, whereas Larsen realizes only now that it was perhaps his sheer will to have an experience of a non-linear narrative that seemed to prevent him from realizing *Rayuela*'s failure when he first read the novel back in the '60s, it is the realizing of *Rayuela*'s struggle even in the face of recognizing its own failure, admitted in the table of instructions, which so energized my reading. The great 20th-century experiments of social justice and revolution whose historical portraits fade more and more as each successive generation learns to walk, talk and write were already seen cynically as pre-failures by Cortázar's Horacio. This is not a novel that naively proclaims the success of any revolution, but a novel about a man incapable of doing anything precisely because to him the revolution brewing in the late '50s and early '60s

seems doomed to fail before it even gets started. In *Rayuela*, the revolution seems trapped within the as-yet-inescapable but still confining structures of the past and unable to articulate or arrive at new structures that do not simply repeat, albeit in a new guise, the very failures they are meant to overcome. The form of the novel in *Rayuela* is, like Stephen's description of history in *Ulysses*, a nightmare from which Morelli has yet to awake. This is precisely the attitude the novel takes towards its own "revolution" in form: it foresees, lives in, is an example of, its own failure.

And yet, and yet the novel still strives at least in sheer will to imagine another way. In the wake of the modern novel, it has become quite common to see the novel as an inherently limited perspective on what we fondly call reality and all the experimenting in the world seems to have done nothing to expand those limits, and we are, in the end, left with a seemingly immutable narrative linearity which even the New Novel could not succeed in supplanting. It is *Rayuela's* confronting of that inability which makes the novel invigorating, a kind of tireless will, a supreme stupidity in attempting *not* to fall into what we can't help but fall into, high comedy to be sure. This is precisely the internal tension which energizes all three of our novels: how escape the linearity of words which both produces the novel, brings it into being, and simultaneously produces the novel's false order, the monologic linearity which interdicts the *it*, the world's objective plurality?

The table of instructions lays out clearly *Rayuela's* response to this question: you cannot escape the linearity of the novel. To truly have a plot, to be a narrative as Ricoeur has defined it, the entirety of the world of the novel, its cosmic time, must be coordinated by the monologic uniformity of linear space-time, the same figure which organizes and

coordinates mortal time. To extend the problem brought up by the table of instructions, once we choose in which order to read the chapters of *Rayuela*, or which chapters to read and which to exclude, all we have done is to recreate an alternate linearity, in other words, any order of chapters, once concretized, once decided, once read, becomes linear. Logically then, only what is not written can truly remain outside of the novel's linearity. *Rayuela* theorizes that it is in the gaps between the chapters, in the unwritten experience of the reader, where mimetic monologism might be escaped. *Rayuela* does not present a figure of its own cosmic time that does not ring false, that does not in the end surrender to its own fixed and linear limitations.

Larsen's assumption of the novel's self-proclaimed success mirrors precisely, albeit in the negative, what many others have assumed in a more positive light—that the novel has succeeded in writing *it*, in drawing a more accurate figure of the objective plurality of the world than has any other novel. On this point the instructions cannot be more clear in that the onus of drawing what might possibly be a true figure of the world's objective plurality is placed squarely upon the reader: the novel will not or cannot provide a fixed cosmic figure of the world it describes and chooses instead to draw attention to the reader's complicity in completing such a gesture and to underscore the impossibility of achieving its own aesthetic/philosophic goals. While we wend our way, more or less however we feel like, through its more or less conventional chapters we know ahead of time that the novel cannot offer up a satisfactory final solution, an acceptable ultimate statement, the end-all be-all figure of either itself or the actual world. This admission of failure, this warning marked out by the table of instructions is the subtle, little turn which, reiterated in the opening line of the novel, makes the novel a

playful, open-ended offering as opposed to a fixed and rigid conclusion. The question of literary innovation opened by *Rayuela* is much more delicate, nuanced and studied than the effect of merely re-ordering its chapters, which re-ordering highlights and is but one instance of the multitude of theoretical veins the novel contemplates.

On the one hand, *Rayuela* is a theoretical study in the guise of a novel. On the other hand, *Rayuela* is a novel whose characters are greatly concerned with theoretical issues. It is tempting to think that the novel attempts to enact the theories it discusses, but the novel makes only passing gestures toward radically altering its own form. Chapter 68, written in the invented language of *gliglico*, and chapter 34, where the text of a novel by Galdós is interspersed with that of Horacio's monologue, are the most developed attempts at radically changing the singular, linear nature of an individual mimetic scene. The novel *Rayuela* serves less as a canvas for testing its theories than as an evolving example of the phenomena under study, namely, the novel. The experience of wrangling with its own form, of trying to make what would be considered a novel out of the material in chapters 1 through 56 is the experience out of which and within which grow the novel's theories about its own identity. *Rayuela*, quite unlike the New Novel and even quite unlike *64 Modelo para armar*, does not test a preconceived theory or adhere to a radical new blueprint for the form of a novel. Instead it examines itself closely to find out what it is and what it is not. It puts itself under its own microscope as one specimen of that elusive species "the novel." One can easily say that *64 Modelo para armar* is the application of one of the theories developed in *Rayuela*, which inversely highlights the fact that the theory, although developed in *Rayuela*, is not applied to the form of *Rayuela* itself. By presenting its theories from within the very literary form whose limits they

speak to and fail to escape, *Rayuela* frames them, gives a constant backlight to the theories themselves, a kind of consistent irony between the far-reaching theories and the limits of the novel in which they appear.

The table of instructions, then, far from being the beginning and end of the novel's contribution to metaphysics and literature, simply highlights one of the subjects the novel contemplates at length. Whether the novel succeeds in becoming something other than a novel as we have come to know it through the gimmick of the hopscotch or any other means is precisely not the point. The point is that, amongst other things, the novel *Rayuela* is a prolonged consideration of itself and comes upon a number of theoretical strains which resonate with *The Waves*, *Agua Viva* and contemporary theories of narrative and the novel. This self-consideration arrives at the overarching theory that somewhere between the singular linearity of individual mimetic scenes and the linking together of those mimetic scenes into the totality of the novel, the reader confronts and/or creates the illusion of a single figure which organizes and unifies *Rayuela*'s cosmic time. This confrontation between reader and novel-as-singular-entity occurs outside of the novel proper, but it is the only place where Morelli believes a version of *it* can appear that escapes the monologic linearity of any given mimetic scene or the singular nature of what is traditionally known as the plot, that figure which organizes the totality of the novel's mimetic scenes into one entity. The real subject of the novel, perhaps of any novel, *Rayuela* tells us, is the reader's act of completing the figure by which its cosmic time is ordered.

Another, more detailed rendition of this idea is presented in one of the novel's many extraneous chapters as the narrator's description of some of Morelli's theories on

fiction. It describes sharply Morelli's yearning to imagine a unifying cosmic figure created solely by his readers. Each reader would, theoretically, create his or her own unifying cosmic figure based on his or her unique, disparate reading experience. Such a figure would, supposedly, be capable of escaping the limits of both fictive mortal time and fictive cosmic time. Like the image of the novel presented in the table of instructions, the theoretical novel under consideration in this passage is composed of a set of classic, ordinary mimetic scenes whose ultimate truth is found in their coordination by the reader into some kind of unity. I quote the chapter in its entirety in order to grasp completely the ideas presented and to demonstrate the self-contained unity and monologic linearity of the chapters:

109

En alguna parte Morelli procuraba justificar sus incoherencias narrativas, sosteniendo que la vida de los otros, tal como nos llega en la llamada realidad, no es cine sino fotografía, es decir que no podemos aprehender la acción sino tan sólo sus fragmentos eleáticamente recortados. No hay más que los momentos en que estamos con ese otro cuya vida creemos entender, o cuando nos hablan de él, o cuando él nos cuenta lo que le ha pasado o proyectado ante nosotros lo que tiene intención de hacer. Al final queda un álbum de fotos, de instantes fijos; jamás el devenir realizándose ante nosotros, el paso del ayer al hoy, la primera aguja del olvido en el recuerdo. Por eso no tenía nada de extraño que él hablara de sus personajes en la forma más espasmódica imaginable; dar coherencia a la serie de fotos para que pasaran a ser cine (como le hubiera gustado tan enormemente al lector que él llamaba el lector-hembra) significaba rellenar con literatura,

presunciones, hipótesis e invenciones los hiatos entre una y otra foto. A veces las fotos mostraban una espalda, una mano apoyada en una puerta, el final de un paseo por el campo, la boca que se abre para gritar, unos zapatos en el ropero, personas andando por le Champ de Mars, una estampilla usada, el olor de *Ma Griffe*, cosas así. Morelli pensaba que la vivencia de esas fotos, que procuraba presentar con toda la acuidad posible, debía poner al lector en condiciones de aventurarse, de participar casi en el destino de sus personajes. Lo que él iba sabiendo de ellos por vía imaginativa, se concretaba inmediatamente en acción, sin ningún artificio destinado a integrarlo en lo ya escrito o por escribir. Los puentes entre una y otra instancia de esas vidas tan vagas y poco caracterizadas, debería presumirlos o inventarlos el lector, desde la manera de peinarse, si Morelli no la mencionaba, hasta las razones de una conducta o una inconducta, si parecía insólita o excéntrica. El libro debía ser como esos dibujos que proponen los psicólogos de la Gestalt, y así ciertas líneas inducirían al observador a trazar imaginativamente las que cerraban la figura. Pero a veces las líneas ausentes eran las más importantes, las únicas que realmente contaban. La coquetería y la petulancia de Morelli en este terreno no tenían límite.

Leyendo el libro, se tenía por momentos la impresión de que Morelli había esperado que la acumulación de fragmentos cristalizara bruscamente en una realidad total. Sin tener que inventar los puentes, o coser los diferentes pedazos del tapiz, que de golpe hubiera ciudad, hubiera tapiz, hubiera hombres y mujeres

en la perspectiva absoluta de su devenir, y que Morelli, el autor, fuese el primer espectador maravillado de ese mundo que ingresaba en la coherencia.

Pero no habia que fiarse, porque coherencia queria decir en el fondo asimilación al espacio y al tiempo, ordenación a gusto del lector-hembra. Morelli no hubiera consentido en eso, más bien parecía buscar una cristalización que, sin alterar el desorden en que circulaban los cuerpos de su pequeño sistema planetario, permitiera la comprensión ubicua y total de su razones de ser, fueran éstas el desorden mismo, la inanidad o la gratuidad. Una cristalización en la que nada quedara subsumido, pero donde un ojo lúcido pudiese asomarse al calidoscopio y entender la gran rosa policroma, entenderla como una figura, *imago mundi* que por fuera del coladoscopio se resolvía en living room de estilo provenzal, o concierto de tías tomando té con galletitas Bagley. (646)

[In some place Morelli tried to justify his narrative incoherencies, maintaining that the life of others, such as it comes to us in so-called reality, is not a movie but still photography, that is to say, that we cannot grasp the action, only a few of its eleatically cut-out fragments. There are only the moments in which we are present with this other one whose life we think we understand, either when they talk about him, or when he tells us what has happened to him or projects in front of us what he intends to do. In the end there is an album of photographs, of fixed instances; never the future coming about before us, the step from yesterday to today, the first prick of forgetfulness in the memory. For that reason there was nothing strange about his speaking of his characters in the most spasmodic way

imaginable; giving coherence to the series of pictures so they could become a movie (which would have been so very pleasing to the reader he called the female-reader) meant filling in with literature, presumptions, hypotheses, and inventions the gaps between one and another photograph. Sometimes the photos showed a back, a hand resting on a door, the end of a stroll through the countryside, a mouth opening to shout, some shoes in the closet, people walking along the Champs de Mars, a canceled stamp, the smell of Ma Griffé, things like that. Morelli thought that the existence of those pictures, which he tried to present with the most acuity possible, should have placed the reader in conditions to venture forth, to participate almost in the destiny of his characters. What he would learn from them through his imagination would immediately concretize itself into action, with no artifice destined to integrate them into the already written or the yet to be written. The bridges between one and another instant of those lives which were so vague and so little characterized would have to be presumed or invented by the reader, all the way from the manner in which they combed their hair, if Morelli did not mention it, to the reasons behind a behavior or a nonbehavior, of it seemed unusual and eccentric. The book would have to be something like those sketches proposed by Gestalt psychologists, and therefore certain lines would induce the observer to trace imaginatively the ones that would complete the figure. But sometimes the missing lines were the most important ones, the only ones that really counted. Morelli's coquetry and petulance in this field had no limits.

Reading the book, one had the impression for a while that Morelli had hoped that the accumulation of fragments would suddenly crystallize into a total reality. Without having to invent bridges, or sew up different pieces of the tapestry, suddenly there would be a city, there would be a tapestry, there would be men and women in the absolute perspective of their becoming, and Morelli, the author, would be the first spectator to marvel at that world that was taking on coherence.

But there was no cause for confidence, because coherence meant to say basically assimilation in space and time, an ordering to the taste of the female-reader. Morelli would not have agreed to that; rather, it seems, he would have sought a crystallization which, without altering the disorder in which the bodies of his little planetary system circulated, would permit a ubiquitous and total comprehension of all of its reasons for being, whether they were disorder itself, inanity, or gratuity. A crystallization in which nothing would remain subsumed, but where a lucid eye might peep into the kaleidoscope and understand the great polychromatic rose, understand it as a figure, an *imago mundi* that outside the kaleidoscope would be dissolved into a provincial living room, or a concert of aunts having tea and Bagley biscuits. (468)]

Taken as a whole, this passage repeats or mirrors the figure of the novel presented in the table of instructions. Where the table of instructions poses the question of how to organize a set of chapters into a single, unified entity, this passage poses the problem of organizing a set of photographs into a single, unified entity. The individual photographs represent discrete mimetic moments or scenes, like the chapters of which *Rayuela* is composed, and the goal Morelli describes in this passage is the same as that depicted in

the table of instructions, to imagine a means of linking together classic mimetic instances, whether photographs or chapters, into a unified whole without their being assimilated into the common notions of space and time. How, asks chapter 109, can one link together individual mimetic moments, that is, construct narrative cosmic time, more accurately and honestly than the habitual notions of linear space and time?

The constitution of individual mimetic scenes as both linear and singular is splendidly represented by the metaphor of the illusion of action in cinema. The fixed, single point of view represented by the camera lens clearly portrays narrative mimesis, the novel's representation of action, as unalterably singular in perspective, and the linear progression of individual frames upon which the illusion of action in film depends depicts narrative mimesis as uncompromisingly linear. The very medium of movie film, millions of tiny photographs lined up in cellophane strips thousands of feet long, visually portrays the question Morelli struggles to answer: how is the illusion of action, and ultimately, a unity of time, built out of a set of discrete mimetic moments, the individual frames of the film, which themselves contain no representation of action. Where film relies on passing these individual photographs quickly before the bright light of a projector in order to trick the eye into perceiving the illusion of action, the novel's construction of the illusion of action, its mimesis, must be, Morelli metaphorically implies, of a similar nature. The novel somehow takes our photograph-like knowledge of our lives and, like cinema, creates an illusion of action which is both singular and linear. This conception of mimesis in the novel as both singular and linear is what establishes the both famous and infamous *lector-hembra*, the theoretical category of readers who expect the novel to be, as it normally is, cinematic in its representation of action. Very

quickly, the metaphor of cinema as the common method of representing action in the novel establishes Morelli's belief in Bernard's depiction of the linear singularity of mimetic perspective in mortal time as inherently false.

For Morelli, as for Bernard, this linear singularity, this cinematic representation of action, is a falsification inherent in the mimesis of the novel that must be overcome, circumvented. Morelli at first decides that simply preventing his novel from constructing the illusion of action, the flow of time, will be enough, so he decides to compose his novel only of narrative photographs, of nothing but frozen moments of time. Thus there will be no cinematic action, and therefore no falsification. Chapter 109, however, abandons the notion of the narrative photograph as soon as it becomes apparent that all mimetic scenes, even those of such short duration as Morelli's narrative photograph, require the flow of fictive time. Morelli's attempt to conceive of a narrative photograph only serves to prove the validity of what we discovered in the previous chapter, that narrative mimesis itself is constituted by a flow of fictive time, and that that fictive time is necessarily linear and singular, that is, narrative mimesis is immutably cinematic for any scene whose time is currently passing for the reader.

Once the passage abandons the possibility of constructing narrative photographs, it turns its attention to considering how the novel might unify its various mimetic scenes, actionless or not, into a unity, a totality. Here, Morelli approaches precisely the question of whether it is possible to build what Bernard calls his globe full of figures in the cosmic time of a novel. In Morelli's hands, the globe of figures becomes a polychromatic rose, the *imago mundi*, a crystallization in which nothing is subsumed. Morelli's *imago mundi* is, like Bernard's figure for an objective representation of the world, a kind of pure

plurality, a massive simultaneity that is available to one point of view, to one eye looking into one kaleidoscope, and from that one point of view, everything would be visible all at once, including any provincial-style living room, or a concert of aunts drinking tea. The sudden mimetic moment at the end of chapter 109 serves to reinforce the idea that the *imago mundi* which Morelli seeks should not eclipse, supplant or subsume any one mimetic scene, that the mimetic scene of the aunts taking tea should persist, should be simultaneously present along with the figure of the world, or any other mimetic scene, any other photograph. Any cosmic-time figure the novel presents, however, whether that figure be historical causality, linear space and time, chronology, psychology, physics, religious iconography, ultimately subsumes the novel's individual perspectives and scenes in an overarching figure which, as it coordinates and explains the linkages between those perspectives and scenes, gives them a single, unified trajectory. The mimetic moments become, in essence, that which produces the coordinating figure, and the coordinating figure reduces the vast number of possible but unspecified relationships between individual mimetic moments to one possible arrangement, one possible set of interrelationships. The figure of cosmic time the novel presents, Morelli's *imago mundi*, in short, should *not* displace the aunts with itself. This, Morelli decides, is the problem with constructing a single unifying figure of the novel: it has to put the novel's mimetic scenes in some fixed spatial, temporal, cosmic order and as soon as it does, the aunts stop being present and we are confronted with the polychromatic rose itself, which is not quite what Morelli is after.

What Morelli discovers is ultimately what Barthes describes in *S/Z*, that no novel can be a pure plurality, that all novels are limited pluralities, that to write is to reduce the

unlimited possibilities of the blank page to the thing that is eventually written. Morelli places his hope in the reader's creativity, what Sartre describes as directed creation, the freedom of the act of reading. The possibility of the directed creation of reading is limited only by Morelli's desire to actually produce a single, unifying figure for his novel, to create what Ricoeur has called the plot, a means by which the reader may organize the novel's various mimetic scenes into a single, cohesive entity. Morelli finds that by supplying to the reader any figure with which his novel can be unified into a whole, he has reduced his novel's plurality to an unacceptable degree. Morelli considers not offering any figure at all, but he realizes that, whether by habit or desire, he wants, needs or cannot help but produce such a figure. He is left, in the end, still searching for an illusive, perhaps mystic figure that will both coordinate the cosmic time of his novel and preserve his ideal, pure plurality so that his novel will not become yet another cinematic illusion.

Morelli's view of the novel is ultimately pessimistic, in that the novel does not seem capable of constructing his idealized *imago mundi*, but he does not give up all hope. Morelli resists the reduction implicit in any cosmic-time coordinating figure, and, unable to conceive of a figure which does not reduce his plurality, he turns to his reader. Given the implication of the table of instructions, where the novel *Rayuela* is portrayed as being unable to provide an acceptable figure of its own cosmic time, the best the novel can hope for in Morelli's view of things is to make the reader aware that the figure by which the novel is unified is only one arbitrary figure chosen from among many possible figures, and that the novel's consistent reduction of those possibilities to the one possibility that becomes the unification of the novel itself is a kind of illusion, a sleight of

hand. Morelli's hope, ultimately, passes from the possibilities offered by the form of the novel to the possibility he projects onto his readers. He hopes that readers who are aware of and resist the illusionary coordination of cosmic time might remain free enough from that illusion to conceive of new, although perhaps inexpressible, figures through which to comprehend the higher orders of time in his novel. For Morelli, Bernard's globe of figures is as difficult to construct in fictive cosmic time as it is in fictive mortal time. As we saw in *The Waves*, any accurate *imago mundi* can only be approached as an appeal to the reader to imagine the endless variations the novel cannot include due to its particular methods of representation. *It*, Lispector's impersonal, objective perception of the world, what Bernard and Ricoeur portray as a massive, simultaneous plurality, remains at best an artifact of human perception, and is as yet, as far as Morelli is concerned, inexpressible in the novel proper in either its fictive or its mortal time.

Chapter 109 is a secondhand account of Morelli's ideas interjected with some of the narrator's own ideas about what Morelli's theory of the novel actually is. The narrator recounts, paraphrases what he has ostensibly read from Morelli's own writing. This secondhand construct implies that Morelli's own writing on the subject is both more extensive and more specific. What we are asked to do is to project from the narrator's metaphors and suppositions a virtual novel written by a virtual author according to a certain theory of the novel. This gives the narrator a great deal of flexibility to toss about whole sets of narratological theories in unexplained, metaphoric images. The passage leaves it up to the reader to project the specifics of the theory alluded to by the narrator's images, and this is what the rest of this chapter will be devoted to, constructing the specifics of Morelli's theory as it is presented in Chapter 109. While the shorthand

presentation of the theory of the novel presented in Chapter 109 is quick-witted and often whimsical, it does project a rather specific set of ideas concerning the nature of narrative and the novel. By considering the chapter piece by piece, in order and in its entirety, I'll delineate the specifics of the theory of the novel I have outlined above with the ultimate goal of answering the larger question raised by Chapter 109: can Bernard's globe of figures, Morelli's *imago mundi*, be constructed in the cosmic time of the novel? And if so, how? And if not, why not?

Morelli's Theory: Chapter 109 Piece by Piece

In Chapter 109, Morelli's bases his theory of narrative mimesis on his understanding of our perception of reality, the same point of departure which led Ricoeur to his theory of fictive time:

En alguna parte Morelli procuraba justificar sus incoherencias narrativas, sosteniendo que la vida de los otros, tal como nos llega en la llamada realidad, no es cine sino fotografía, es decir que no podemos aprehender la acción sino tan sólo sus fragmentos eleáticamente recortados.

[In some place Morelli tried to justify his narrative incoherencies, maintaining that the life of others, such as it comes to us in so-called reality, is not a movie but still photography, that is to say, that we cannot grasp the action, only a few of its eleatically cut-out fragments.]

In the first sentence of the chapter, Morelli justifies the incoherencies of his narrative by deferring to our perception of reality. Action is not represented in Morelli's novel because in the real world action itself is not perceivable. His would-be novel is

incoherent, fragmented, precisely because at best our perception of reality is incoherent, fragmented. In defending his novel's incoherencies, Morelli is making the same move Ricoeur makes when he considers simultaneously Augustine and Aristotle; he equates the novel's mimetic construction of a fictional world with our perception of the actual one. Like Ricoeur, Morelli's theory of narrative mimesis is inseparable from his understanding of the perception of reality.

Morelli's depiction of *cine* and *fotografia* as two means of constituting biographic stories re-enacts the problem phenomenology encounters in attempting to define the present. Phenomenology has a great deal of trouble defining how the leap is made from a photographic present, from a conception of time that has no duration, to a cinematic present, to a conception of time that has duration. Morelli feels that we do not perceive the lives of others as having duration, but as eleatically cut-out fragments, mentally recorded static moments, something like photographs. These mental photographs in and of themselves do not transmit or allow the perception of action or movement in time. Somehow, though, mimesis in the novel manages to transform these static fragments into a flowing, cinematic time, into a depiction of time that has duration. The leap from the real-world present to its representation in the novel is thus equated with the phenomenological leap from a durationless present (in reality) to one that has duration (in our subjective perception). Morelli begins the defense of his narrative by setting up the same problematic as that conceived of by Augustine and later taken up by Husserl, Heidegger, Ricoeur: how does a present which is photographic, that has no duration in time, turn into a present which is cinematic, that has duration in time?

Morelli's metaphoric leap from reality's photographs to the novel's *cine* calls Augustine's description of how that leap is made into question. Augustine's concept of *praesens intentio* describes how our perception of the present as having duration is based upon our memory: as events occur without duration in the durationless present, they are recorded in our memory. This continuous and uninterrupted recording is what gives us the sense that the present has duration. Where Augustine maintains that it is this continuous flowing of events into our memory which gives us our sense of being in time, Morelli seems to feel that we don't really perceive a flowing at all, but only static, photograph-like instances. By claiming the true nature of our perception of reality to be photographic in nature, that is, non-flowing, non-cinematic, Morelli casts the novel's representation of the present as a flow of time as an outright fraud. This in turn calls into question Ricoeur's entire definition of the mechanism of narrative mimesis and its special status as the "truest" expression of our experience of being "in time." If our perception of reality is photographic in nature, then Ricoeur's definition of narrative mimesis as a fictive reconstruction of Augustine's *praesens intentio* is also flawed: instead of accurately re-figuring our experience of time, Ricoeur's mimesis falsifies it, portrays time as flowing and having duration when, in reality, it consists of nothing but eleatically cut-out, static fragments.

In one sense, Morelli is siding with Bernard. He rejects the linear and singular nature of Ricoeur's cinematic mimesis as an unacceptable falsification. In every other sense, however, Morelli's depiction of the cinematic novel as a fraud refutes Bernard's notion that narrative mimesis depends upon the persistence of perceptual patterns in order to establish itself. By strongly declaring our perception of the real world to be

photographic in nature, Morelli even rejects what seems to be narrative's greatest value, the capacity to preserve the experience of a set of events unfolding in time. In the opening sentence of chapter 109, Morelli is denying both a central value of the novel, its ability to preserve an unfolding of events in time, and a central assertion of phenomenology, that we perceive the present as somehow or other having duration.

Morelli's description of our perception of reality as photographic pits him against a very old paradox, and the narrator of chapter 109 seems to be aware of it. The use of the word *eleaticamente* in describing Morelli's conception of our photographic perception of reality calls up the entire pre-Socratic, eleatic school of thought. The Eleatics were concerned with the one-ness of the universe in its ultimate, insurmountable and indivisible unification.⁷ The fragmenting and cutting-out (as in *recortados*) or cropping of each moment of time from all others as a description of the phenomenological present is precisely what Zeno, that Eleatic disciple, set his proofs against. Among those proofs is the paradox of defining motion as an object traversing a series of connected points in space. According to this definition, to be in motion is to occupy first one, then another consecutive point in space. The problem, of course, is that in order to occupy any point in space, you must occupy that point for at least *some* amount of time. As you reduce the size of your point and the amount of time during which you occupy that point, you quickly discover that time and space are infinitely divisible. It becomes impossible, in other words, to define the size of your point or the length of time you occupy it as any positive value; both are simply infinitely small. According to such a definition, if the size of the point or the amount of time you occupy

⁷ For a rather interesting history of Zeno, the Eleatics and their conception of the one-ness or lack thereof of things, see Cherubin.

that point are defined as any positive value, then you aren't really in motion at all, but stationary for however long you occupy each point. After you occupy one point for a certain amount of time, when your "motion" continues, you'd instantaneously disappear from the point you are currently occupying and re-appear just as instantly in the next point along the line. In this sense, Zeno wishes to point out, this definition fails to define the fluid and continuous nature of motion.

It is the very notion of thinking of time and space as divisible into discrete units, of thinking of time as "freezable" or space as divisible that Zeno wishes to discredit as not only impossible but of little use in defining the nature of motion. Morelli's rejection of *cine* as a falsification of a photograph-like present pits him against Zeno: where Zeno adheres to the idea that the fluidity of time and space cannot be intervaled, Morelli feels that only by preserving the intervaled nature of our perception of actuality can we thwart the false fluidity imposed upon the present by the cinematic nature of narrative mimesis. Zeno's paradox of motion can be solved by the concept that an infinite quantity can in fact add up to a finite number⁸, but that does not negate the impossibility of defining the smallest indivisible quantity of space or the smallest indivisible unit of time.

This impossibility is precisely what underlies the phenomenological problem of defining the present. Augustine's problem with the present is the same problem exposed by Zeno's paradox, namely, that the present has no real, positive extension or duration in time, or, in Zeno's words, the duration of the present cannot be defined as any positive value. Like Zeno's depiction of motion, the present, as far as Augustine can tell, does not leap from one static *right now* to the next, there are no "intervals," the present does not

⁸ See Adamson for an excellent history of responses to Zeno's paradox of motion.

persist for any definable length of time just as objects in motion do not occupy any point along their line of travel for any length of time. This lack of duration coupled with Augustine's firm belief that he experiences time as having duration despite his "knowing" that it does not is precisely the paradox that his *preasens intentio* is meant to resolve. In his notion of *preasens intentio*, Augustine maintains that time has no duration *other than* as impressions made upon memory, which means that the perception of time as having duration is a human construct built out of a present which in actuality has no duration. Augustine's solution to the paradoxical nature of our experience of "the present" is a sound one, as it allows for a durationless present while at the same time explaining our experience of it as having duration.

As we have seen, it is upon Augustine's solution to this paradox that Bernard's and Ricoeur's entire notion of narrative mimesis is based. As you will recall from chapter one, Augustine's solution is adopted and modified until it eventually gives rise to what Husserl will call the "tempo-object." It is Husserl's tempo-object which gives us our best definition of how narrative mimesis operates: the linear accumulation of linguistic input over a given period is organized around one single figure, like that of linear space and time viewed from one point of view. That figure is what then coordinates any number of persistent tempo-objects, say a table and a door, into a given mimetic scene. It is essentially the same process described by Augustine: the diachronic, that which has no duration in time, is, by its accumulation in our memory, turned into the synchronic, that which has duration in time. This same process happens along the linear flow of text that constitutes the novel, and is accumulated around figures which organize mimetic spaces and times. This is what constitutes Bernard's assertion that narrative

mimesis is both linear (Husserl's linear time) and singular (focused around a single coordinating figure). It is also what for Ricoeur affords narrative a special capacity to represent time. Since narrative replays our experience of time, since it is itself a linear temporal experience with a certain duration, Ricoeur feels it avoids the problems analytic language has encountered in defining the leap from a present which has no duration to a present which has duration. Narrative thereby achieves a special status: it and only it can represent our experience of being "in time." This means that for Ricoeur's and Bernard's theories of narrative mimesis to be correct, Augustine's description of our perception of the present must be accurate.

Morelli, however, declaring the nature of the present to be photographic, that is, without duration, refutes Augustine's *preasens intentio*, and he has at least one point. As successful as is Augustine's conception of the present as having duration, it relies on a complete divorce between our subjective perception of time and the way time actually operates. According to Augustine, where "in reality" time has no duration, it does have duration in the way we subjectively perceive it. We subjectively introduce duration, in other words, to a present which has none. This, Morelli seems to feel, must be a falsification: we must be falsifying the "real" present by adding our subjective perception of duration to it. This stance of Morelli's, to hold fast in his novel to the pre-perception or non-subjective durationlessness of the present, draws attention to the fact that Augustine's definition makes no attempt to define how time operates outside of the way we subjectively perceive it. In this way, Augustine avoids Zeno's paradox but doesn't resolve it. Morelli, in denying his novel a cinematic mimesis, is essentially denying Augustine's solution, or avoidance, of Zeno's paradox and thereby puts himself in the

position of having to come up with an alternate definition of the present: he has to, in other words, solve Zeno's paradox and come up with an objective definition of time that accounts for both its seeming duration and durationlessness without relying, as Augustine does, on the concept of a divorce between subjective and objective time. It also puts him in the position of coming up with an alternate definition of narrative mimesis. Denying Augustine's depiction of the extension of the present invalidates Ricoeur's description of the process by which narrative mimesis operates and in turn opens up the question of what a non-cinematic novel would look like. How would mimesis in such a novel operate? If Ricoeur is wrong, then perhaps the notion of the novel as being limited to a linear and singular narrative mimesis is also wrong. If Morelli can construct an actionless novel, he may well accomplish what Bernard could not: a narrative mimesis that is neither linear nor singular. It is clear from the outset that Morelli's novel is a rethinking of both the phenomenological description of the nature of the present and the novel's mimetic representation of that present.

In the next two sentences of Chapter 109, the narrator gives us some examples of what Morelli's photographic, durationless reality looks like:

No hay más que los momentos en que estamos con ese otro cuya vida creemos entender, o cuando nos hablan de él, o cuando él nos cuenta lo que le ha pasado o proyectado ante nosotros lo que tiene intención de hacer. Al final queda un álbum de fotos, de instantes fijos; jamás el devenir realizándose ante nosotros, el paso del ayer al hoy, la primera aguja del olvido en el recuerdo.

[There are only the moments in which we are present with this other one whose life we think we understand, either when they talk about him, or when he tells us

what has happened to him or projects in front of us what he intends to do. In the end there is an album of photographs, of fixed instances; never the future coming about before us, the step from yesterday to today, the first prick of forgetfulness in the memory.]

The photographic nature of reality is exemplified by the times we spend with another person, the stories others tell of his or her life, or that other person's own stories of his or her life. In the end these all amount to an album of photos, a set of disconnected fixed instances, the unsequenced frames from a film. The key is that these frames expressly lack the becoming, *el devenir*, the future realizing itself before our eyes. It seems a little odd, however, that the experiences of spending time with someone, hearing her tell stories and hearing others tell stories about her, are metaphorically recast as photographs. In what way is someone telling us what has happened to him or what she intends to do devoid of the passage of time, temporally frozen as a photograph or movie frame would suggest?

This telling of stories or spending time with another person is precisely the situation Bernard explores in *The Waves*: he literally analyzes the scene of himself telling the reader a story, and he concludes that the fictional creation of such "moments" is always bound up with and is inseparable from the creation of fictive mortal time, which in turn depends, as Husserl defines it, upon the linear flow of time in which patterns can be perceived as persisting. How, then, can someone telling us a story about what has happened to her or a friend of hers stand as an example of a photograph, a temporally intransient fragment of the real-world present?

The only likely possibility seems to come in the phrase, “*Al final, queda un album de fotos.*” In the end all of these examples end up as photos in an album. It may very well be that it is the translation from their initial experience within time’s flow to that of a recollection, their moving into what Augustine calls the present of the past, that reduces them to photographs. Their becoming ceases to realize itself before our eyes like the first needle of forgetfulness and they are only remembered as a set of static images, frozen in time, removed from the ongoing mutation that the present flow of time inflicts on all things. If this is what Morelli has in mind when he speaks of making a novel out of photographs, then what does it do to Morelli’s belief that the present itself is a photograph, is without duration? If we are to take Morelli’s examples as the distillation into a durationless memory of what has already occurred in a present that has duration, then Morelli’s claim that the present is photograph-like and devoid of action is completely unfounded.

So, either these examples are photographic distillations of what has already occurred in a present that has duration, in which case Morelli’s claim of a durationless present is unfounded, or these are examples of some of the subjects of the narrative photographs, the actionless scenes, in Morelli’s novel, in which case Morelli will have to rebut Bernard’s theory that constructing these scenes mimetically without the flow of fictional time is impossible. The next sentence of this chapter leans toward the latter:

Por eso no tenía nada de extraño que él hablara de sus personajes en la forma más espasmódica imaginable; dar coherencia a la serie de fotos para que pasaran a ser cine (como le hubiera gustado tan enormemente al lector que él llamaba el lector-

hembra) significaba rellenar con literatura, presunciones, hipótesis e invenciones los hiatos entre una y otra foto.

[For that reason there was nothing strange about his speaking of his characters in the most spasmodic way imaginable; giving coherence to the series of pictures so they could become a movie (which would have been so very pleasing to the reader he called the female-reader) meant filling in with literature, presumptions, hypotheses, and inventions the gaps between one and another photograph.]

In this sentence, the narrator seems to be asserting that Morelli has already constructed a novel composed only of photographs, of mimetic scenes that are somehow durationless, making it seem that the examples we have been given depict the subject of Morelli's narrative photographs, his durationless, actionless mimetic scenes. Having assumed that Morelli is capable of constructing narrative photographs, the narrator goes on to describe Morelli's larger goal, to prevent those photographs from being linked up and thereby turned back into cinema. Creating cinema out of a novel of photographs would mean getting rid of the gaps between those individual photographs, just as cinema depends upon the speed of the projector and the slowness of our eyes to prevent our perception of the gaps between its static frames. So, the narrator maintains, not only is Morelli capable of constructing narrative photographs, he is going to prevent his novel from linking those narrative photographs together in any overt way.

But what exactly are these narrative photographs, and how can Morelli construct them in his novel? In defining both the nature of the phenomenological present and his ideal conception of narrative mimesis, Chapter 109 relies exclusively on the metaphor of the photograph. It would seem that for Morelli, a photograph, the impression made by

light during $1/25^{\text{th}}$ of a second upon photosensitive film, is a satisfactorily small temporal interval by which to define the present. More importantly, the impressions made by the light upon the film become fixed, immobile, intransient, ostensibly resisting the construction of temporal flow altogether, as the objects in time and space they represent cannot move at all. In photographs, Morelli believes, there can be no action, and thus is a photograph more honest than cinema. In his devotion to the “trueness” of the photograph, in the fact that he sees the photograph as a representation of his “true” reality, Morelli, in essence, outlines Barthes’ notion that the photograph, being a message *without* a code, is a more pure, less falsified analogon:

What is the content of a photographic message? What does the photograph transmit? By definition, the scene itself, the literal reality. From the object to its image there is of course a reduction—in proportion, perspective, colour—but at no time is this reduction a *transformation* (in the mathematical sense of the term). In order to move from the reality to its photograph it is in no way necessary to divide up this reality into units and to constitute these units as signs, substantially different from the object they communicate; there is no necessity to set up a relay, that is to say a code, between the object and its image. Certainly the image is not the reality but at least it is its perfect *analogon* and it is exactly this analogical perfection which, to common sense, defines the photograph. Thus can be seen the special status of the photographic image: *it is a message without a code*; from which proposition an important corollary must immediately be drawn: the photographic message is a continuous message. (17, image music text)

Barthes, like Morelli, portrays the photograph as an uncompromised representation of reality. Even its translation, its stretching into cinema compromises its pure, denotative status (17). It is to this pure denotation, this pure analogon that Morelli is devoted: the perfect analogon of reality. Morelli conceives of reality as photographic, in a sense, because photographs cannot lie, or lie the least, anyway. Morelli will compose his novel only of photographs, of these perfect analogons of reality, and this will guarantee that Morelli's novel does not lie any more than absolutely necessary, that it does not turn the honesty of the photograph into the lie that is *cine*.

The only problem, of course, is that Morelli is not a photographer. He is a novelist, and he does not have a camera, but words, that is to say, a code. If the photograph is, as Barthes maintains, a message without a code, how will Morelli construct anything like a "photograph" in his novel, an object constructed *entirely* of code? Barthes decides it's not possible:

In front of a photograph, the feeling of "denotation," or if one prefers, of analogical plenitude, is so great that the description of a photograph is literally impossible; *to describe* consists precisely in joining to the denoted message a relay or second-order message derived from a code which is that of language and constituting in relation to the photographic analogue, however much care one takes to be exact, a connotation: to describe is thus not simply to be imprecise or incomplete, it is to change structures, to signify something different from what is shown. (18)

To describe a photograph, to put the pure denotation of a photograph into words, Barthes believes, cannot help but alter what is in the photograph—in creeps connotation, in

creeps things that are not of the photograph itself, so much so that what language ends up signifying is something different than what is in the photograph. Put a photograph into words, and you are no longer signifying the photograph. If Morelli believes in the photograph in the same way Barthes does, and he seems to, then he must also see the problem of creating photographic scenes in the mimesis of the novel which is wholly dependent on language, that is to say, on a code.

Morelli's desire to construct narrative photographs is perhaps less literal and intended more to frame his understanding of the limits of the novel. Morelli's concept of the photograph as the definition of the true nature of the real-world present and as the foil against which he defines the falsification of the cinematic nature of mimesis in the novel holds the novel to the same "truth standard" as Barthes' photograph. By holding the photograph out as a depiction of the durationless nature of the real-world present, Morelli shows the novel to be inept at representing, at denoting, what his reality actually is. If a novel is pure code, and if the only pure denotation possible is via a medium like the photograph which has no code, then the novel has little hope of portraying anything like an accurate or honest vision of the world. The metaphor of the photograph does define the novel's limits in a quite exacting manner. The cinematic novel is simply *not* capable of being as "honest" as a photograph, and the metaphor works well. The novel will always impose the connotations of its own code onto what reality really is and onto whatever that code manages to construct.

According to Morelli, part of the falsification (the connotation Barthes would say) the novel's code forces onto the present is the imposition of duration onto a real-world present which has none. Morelli wishes his novel to circumvent even this most basic

precept of phenomenological thinking. Morelli's project, taken literally, hinges on his ability to do what Barthes says is quite impossible: construct narrative photographs, to create durationless mimetic scenes, with the only medium available to him—words. Morelli's next series of examples gives us a better idea of what his narrative photographs might look like:

A veces las fotos mostraban una espalda, una mano apoyada en una puerta, el final de un paseo por el campo, la boca que se abre para gritar, unos zapatos en el ropero, personas andando por le Champ de Mars, una estampilla usada, el olor de *Ma Griffe*, cosas asi.

[Sometimes the photos showed a back, a hand resting on a door, the end of a stroll through the countryside, a mouth opening to shout, some shoes in the closet, people walking along the Champs de Mars, a canceled stamp, the smell of Ma Griffe, things like that.]

These are better examples of what a narrative photograph might look. One is a snapshot of a back. Another is an 8 x 10 glossy of a hand resting against a door. Yet another a wallet-size print of a pair of shoes in a closet. Here we get a better sense of what Morelli is after. The question is, in the photo of the hand, is the hand moving ever so slightly as you read it, or is the moment truly frozen in time? In the shot of the *personas* walking down the Champ de Mars, were their legs moving? Did their heads turn to look at one another, a doorway, a lamp post? (*Babas del diablo* seems, suddenly, to be precisely about the issue of the impossibility of constraining narrative to temporal intransience.) What about the end of the stroll through the countryside? How does one take a narrative photograph of that? Isn't the "abre" of "la boca que se abre para gritar" inciting the

mouth to move, to open, to cause temporal flow in the fictional present if even for a very small interval? And what about the length of time it takes to read through even the most terse of examples: *una espalda*? How can we mimetically confront someone's back without imagining that back persisting for some amount of time in a fictional present that has at least some duration, even it is just for 1/25th of a second? How can anything exist in a fictional time and space without the reader casting *praesens intentio* onto the text so that time begins to flow in the fictional world?

These examples, offered as a demonstration of what Morelli means by a "narrative photograph," are themselves straining to keep time from flowing. Morelli is attempting to construct in code what Barthes believes cannot be constructed—the pure denotation of a photograph. The code Morelli is using, moreover, that of narrative mimesis, depends, as we have so far defined it, on the construction of a fictive time which endures however briefly. Without establishing fictive time, without fictive time beginning to pass for the reader, there can be no mimesis, no backs, no hands no people walking. Morelli is not only trying to construct a photograph in code, the code he is using specifically requires duration in order to function. So even if he does manage to encode pure denotation, that denotation will, by the consequence of being constructed in the code of mimetic narrative, have a specific duration; it will be, in short, cinematic by default.

Morelli's examples certainly make one think about what a novel composed of such terse phrases as "*una espalda*" would look like, and there is perhaps no better example than the first section of the *The Waves*:

“I see a ring,” said Bernard, “hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light.”

“I see a slab of pale yellow,” said Susan, “spreading away until it meets a purple stripe.”

“I hear a sound,” said Rhoda, “cheep, chirp, cheep, chirp, going up and down.”

“I see a globe,” said Neville, “hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some hill.”

“I see a crimson tassel,” said Jinny, “twisted with gold threads.”

“I hear something stamping,” said Louis. “A great beast’s foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps.”

“Look at the spider’s web on the corner of the balcony,” said Bernard. “It has beads of water on it, drops of white light.”

“The leaves are gathered round the window like pointed ears,” said Susan.

“A shadow falls on the path,” said Louis, “like an elbow bent.” (180)

Here *The Waves* offers up examples equivalent to Morelli’s examples of narrative photographs: a shadow on a path, a crimson tassel, a ring, and like Morelli’s examples, these very short scenes immediately bleed outside the edges of their very small frames: there are sounds, there are quiverings, something stamps, there is movement. Time in these examples flows just as unimpededly as they do in Morelli’s examples. The impossibility of preventing the flow of time is underscored in Woolf’s novel by Bernard’s conclusion that it is impossible to prevent time from flowing in his narrative of himself in the restaurant. *The Waves*’ use of scenes like those described by Morelli as

narrative photographs as well as Bernard's theoretical consideration of the possibility of narrative photographs both end in the conclusion that narrative photographs are impossible to create, that narrative mimesis endures for however short a time, but it does endure, it does have unavoidable duration. Action, in essence, is inseparable from narrative's establishing of mimesis as far as Bernard and *The Waves* are concerned.

One of Morelli's problems in conceiving of his novel as a book of photographs is that in order to create his narrative photographs, he must enlist mimesis, he must, just like Bernard, create the fictive space and time in which to place his stamp, his mouth opening to scream, his people walking down the street, and as soon as he has, as soon as he says "a back," or "people walking down the Champ de Mars," or "You see before you an old, gray man," he has already completed the act of creating cinema at the most basic of levels, at the level of what Ricoeur calls mortal time, in the *right now* of his narrative. Even if Morelli could construct a photograph out of code, he would still have to extend the shutter speed of his narrative camera beyond zero. Morelli wants to bring into his fictional narrative the existence of another time and another place that exists for no amount of time whatsoever, but that other space and time must exist at least long enough for him to place the objects of his would-be photograph *en scène*.

Morelli's desire to create a novel composed only of narrative photographs replays Zeno's paradox against the definition of literary mimesis as the persistence of predictable patterns we drew from Husserl. Husserl's tempo-object relies upon retention, the accumulation of perceptions along a timeline in order for our cognition of bodies and spaces to occur. By arresting this movement along a timeline, Morelli's narrative photographs effectively theorize cutting time up into discrete, finite, defined intervals.

Within these intervals, time would not flow. If such a narrative construction were possible, Morelli's narrative would resemble Zeno's depiction of the paradox of motion: there would be no motion in Morelli's narrative—his narrative time would leap instantaneously from one static interval of time to the next. As Zeno points out, time thus conceived is not at all flowing or moving; you cannot divide motion into discrete intervals without negating motion itself. Either movement is continuous and unintervalled, or it is intervalled and static, and therefore motionless. Morelli's problem is the same. By conceiving of narrative time as intervalled and static, he would negate his narrative's movement along a timeline. This in turn would prevent his narrative from establishing mimesis, the construction of objects in time and space, which in turn would prevent his creation of narrative photographs, the perception of objects in that space and time. Morelli does not, moreover, have the luxury of making his intervals infinitely small. His photographs must exist for *some* amount of time if we are to be able to see them in a narrative, and so he cannot solve his dilemma the same way Zeno's paradox is solved, by reducing the duration of his mimetic scenes to "infinitely small." Either linear time progresses in his narrative photographs for some positive interval and we identify predictable patterns over that interval, or there is no narrative temporal progression, and therefore no retention, and therefore no persisting mimetic patterns, and therefore no mimesis. The amount of time Morelli's narrative photographs persist, the duration of his durationless scenes, must be defined, in other words, as a positive value. This is precisely what Zeno's paradox points out is impossible to do given the nature of time, as within any defined temporal interval, time continues to flow and objects continue to move, and thus the defined temporal interval is arbitrary and nonexistent. The same is

true for Morelli's photographs. In his actionless mimetic scenes, once they are established, time will already be flowing and he will have no power to freeze it or stop it.

The novel's code, according to Bernard's and Ricoeur's definition and supported by Augustine and Husserl and anecdotally supported by Barthes, requires a positive quantity of time in order to establish itself, in order to construct the space and time in which things persist for at least some given interval of time from some specific point of view. Zeno was attempting to prove precisely that the conception of motion as discrete and definable space-time intervals, precisely what a photograph represents, was untenable logically, and Morelli appears confounded by his own attempt to theorize a novel composed purely of those photographs, for no mimetic narrative instance can exist without duration, where duration means the persistence of the predictable patterns which produce it. In order to construct his narrative photographs, Morelli needs the very cinematic linkages of moments, the repetition of predictable patterns over time, that he wants to avoid. Zeno's paradox holds for the novel as well as it does for reality, as you cannot segment the flow of fictive time into discrete, finite intervals—either fictive time flows and things persist for however small an interval in that time or there is no novelistic moment, no narrative photograph.

Morelli's desire to create narrative photographs at the level of mortal time, to create temporally intransient fictive presents is heading down a dead-end street. Ricoeur's idea that narrative mimesis, at least in the construction of mimetic scenes whose time is currently passing for the reader, relies upon a singular, linear flow of time is borne out by the ideas presented so far in chapter 109. Morelli's projection of actionless fiction cannot stand up to Augustine's conception of the actual present,

Ricoeur's definition of the mimetic construction of the fictive present, Bernard's affirmation of the inescapable cinematic nature of the fictive present, or Barthe's contention that pure, photographic denotation is impossible to construct in any code. The narrator's description of what such a photograph would look like, his examples and our definition of the elements necessary for constructing the fictive present make the very idea of a temporally intransient narrative fragment, Morelli's would-be narrative photographs, seem quite beyond the capacity of narrative fiction.

Chapter 109 offers no resolution or completion of Morelli's conceptions of narrative photographs. Instead, Morelli's capacity to construct narrative photographs is assumed by the narrator, and he never returns to consider examples or to wrestle with the glaring difficulties the concept raises. The next sentence of the chapter marks the chapter's shift away from focusing on what a narrative photograph is to focusing on how narrative photographs, once constructed, would impact Morelli's novel:

Morelli pensaba que la vivencia de esas fotos, que procuraba presentar con toda la acuidad posible, debia poner al lector en condiciones de aventurarse, de participar casi en el destino de sus personajes.

[Morelli thought that the existence of those pictures, which he tried to present with the most acuity possible, should have placed the reader in conditions to venture forth, to participate almost in the destiny of his characters.]

The focus here, and for the remainder of Chapter 109, is on how the reader responds to what the novel presents. According to the narrator, Morelli's narrative photographs, assuming Morelli could actually construct them, are intended to establish the point of departure from which the reader can venture forth into the novel's fictional world, put

herself at risk in the unfolding of the characters' destinies. This putting oneself at risk is decidedly reminiscent of Socrates' example in *The Ion* of a man who is brought to tears at a festival as he listens to the recitation of a poem. As you will recall, the man in Socrates' example believes that he is somehow participating in or witnessing the unfolding of the characters' destinies, so much so that the events currently unfolding in the poem induce in him a deranged mental state, and even though he is not being stripped of his rank and worldly goods, he cries as if he is. Morelli's photographs will have the same impact on his readers: what befalls his characters, the unfolding of their destinies, will also befall his readers. Morelli's photographs, in other words, do exactly what the poem in Socrates' example does, accomplish Aristotle's classical catharsis. Just like any time you've ever cried at a movie or wept at the close of a great book, Morelli's photographs will induce you to participate in the unfolding of events in the world of Morelli's novel. This is what Morelli is describing with his *aventurarse*. His photographs will have the exact same impact, will accomplish the same kind of mimesis, as that described by all of our other theorists.

While Morelli's goal in creating narrative photographs is to induce in his readers the same experience provided by classic mimesis, the means by which he proposes to achieve that goal are slightly different. Morelli's alternative method for achieving the effect of classical mimesis is to force his reader to imagine the action his photos would supposedly lack. If the reader constructs cinematic action, Morelli believes, the effect of classical mimesis can be achieved without artifice:

Lo que él iba sabiendo de ellos por vía imaginativa, se concretaba inmediatamente en acción, sin ningún artificio destinado a integrarlo en lo ya escrito o por escribir.

[What he would learn from them through his imagination would immediately concretize itself into action, with no artifice destined to integrate them into the already written or the yet to be written.]

Somehow or other, the reader's imagination at work on Morelli's narrative photographs would construct the perception of action, the very same thing produced by classical mimesis, but without its inherent artifice. The only real difference between Morelli's photographs and classic mimesis now seems to lie not in whether or not they are temporally intransient, but in who constructs the effect of the perception of action: the reader or the author. It is Morelli's hope that he can force his reader to construct the perception of action and that that construction would not fall prey to the same artifice inherent in the novel's classic, cinematic mimesis. This imposition of the reader's imagination onto temporally intransient narrative moments is, once again, decidedly reminiscent of *Las babas del diablo*: while the reader stares at a photograph, it begins to move all on its own with no author in sight.

The reader's imagination will not only construct action, it will also integrate each photo into all other photographs. Once action is imaginatively constructed by the reader, the reader's imagination will extend the linear expanse of that action until that action can somehow become integrated into everything that has or will be written. According to Morelli's theory, his novel will only contain photographs, so everything that has or will be written is just another way of saying the rest of the action imaginatively constructed

by the reader. Thus it is the reader's job not only to imagine the action of any given photo, it is also the reader's job to integrate that photo-inspired action into all the other action inspired by all the other photos presented in Morelli's novel. The reader, in other words, is charged not only with constructing action, but with integrating all the action inspired by Morelli's photographic novel into a unified whole.

In setting these tasks for his reader, we see the emergence of Morelli's true hope: that his reader can construct what his novel cannot. The metaphor of the narrative photograph ceases to be used literally (which is a good move by the narrator since we have seen that literal narrative photographs are a theoretical impossibility), and it becomes instead a metaphor of the demarcation between what is written down in the novel and what the reader invents. What is written down in the novel are individual mimetic scenes, what surrounds those mimetic scenes and how they are linked together is what it is the reader's task to invent. As such, the photograph no longer strictly represents the idea of a static or actionless mimetic scene and begins to represent anything and everything the novel presents to the reader and upon which the reader bases her imaginative inventions. The photograph, in other words, comes to represent the mimetic scene in general, whether or not it is temporally intransient and whether or not it is constructed with artifice. Just as in the Instructions to the Reader, it's what's between or around the chapters that really counts. This change in the use of the metaphor of the photograph coincides with the shift in Morelli's theoretical focus from the capacity of the novel to the capacity of the reader. It is now the reader's experience that Morelli looks to exclusively as the locus for generating his *imago mundi*. Whether or not Morelli can construct an honest vision of his world no longer depends on the nature of his mimetic

scenes; it depends instead on what the reader constructs in response to those scenes. With the hope of representing his *verdadera realidad* now squarely on the shoulders of his readers, Morelli's theory hinges on the nature and quality of what the reader invents in response to the mimetic scenes his novel presents.

In foisting the task of constructing his *imago mundi* onto his reader, Morelli is also moving the locus of the novel's possibilities for constructing his true image of the world from Ricoeur's mortal time to Ricoeur's cosmic time. For Ricoeur, mortal time is the immediate present, in other words, what is represented in one of Morelli's photographs. Cosmic time, on the other hand, is meant to indicate the manner in which multiple presents, multiple photographs, are linked together so that we gain a conception of what a day, a year, a lifetime are. Morelli's distinction between individual narrative photographs and the integration of those photographs into the already read and the yet to be read is a dead ringer for Ricoeur's conception of how we integrate the present into the future and the past. What this means is that Morelli's hope that the unwritten experience of the reader can produce what his novel cannot lies not in the reader's imaginative response to any given mimetic scene, but in how the reader chooses to link together the entire set of mimetic scenes, of photographs, which comprise his novel. The next sentence of Chapter 109 makes this clear:

Los puentes entre una y otra instancia de esas vidas tan vagas y poco caracterizadas, debería presumirlos o inventarlos el lector, desde la manera de peinarse, si Morelli no la mencionaba, hasta las razones de una conducta o una inconducta, si parecía insólita o excéntrica.

[The bridges between one and another instant of those lives which were so vague and so little characterized would have to be presumed or invented by the reader, all the way from the manner in which they combed their hair, if Morelli did not mention it, to the reasons behind a behavior or a nonbehavior, if it seemed unusual and eccentric.]

What the reader invents are the linkages between one moment of a character's life and another. The reader, in other words, invents everything that links up the photographs, the mimetic scenes presented by the novel, into a unified conception of any given character's entire life. The unification of all the photographs of all the lives presented in Morelli's novel into a single, integrated entity, what we'd call the whole world of Morelli's novel, is precisely what Ricoeur is after with his conception of narrative cosmic time. What the reader *does* with Morelli's mimetic scenes, in other words, is construct narrative cosmic time. Morelli's photograph serves not only as a demarcation between what is written and what the reader invents, it also serves as a distinction between mortal and cosmic time: mortal time is everything in the photograph—all that is written—and cosmic time is everything that is not in the photograph—everything the reader invents.

Morelli's desire to place the onus of constructing his *imago mundi* entirely in the hands of his reader is essentially the same as Sartre's conception of reading as directed creation, but with one major twist: where Morelli believes his reader's invention will make out of his novel something unique and new, Sartre believes that directed creation is the mechanism behind the mimesis of all novels. To put the disagreement between Sartre and Morelli contrarily, if the reader's imagination creates unproblematic, that is to say, non-monologic, non-linear action when asked to fill in the space-time surrounding the

finite mimetic moments in Morelli's novel, wouldn't any gap in any narrative be filled in the same manner? In other words, why isn't everything that's ever been left out of any novel been filled in by the reader with the same unproblematic fictive action that Morelli seems to feel his readers will use to fill in the empty space in his novel?

Sartre's conception of reading as "directed creation" speaks directly to the idea of a reader filling in the empty spaces in a novel. For Sartre, the true objects of the novel are inexpressible and are invented by the reader:

To say that they [the objects of the novel] are unexpressed is hardly the word; for they are precisely the inexpressible. And that is why one does not come upon them at any definite moment in the reading; they are everywhere and nowhere. . . . The reader must invent them all in a continual exceeding of the written thing. To be sure, the author guides him, but all he does is guide him. The landmarks he sets up are separated by the void. The reader must unite them; he must go beyond them. In short, reading is directed creation. (489)

Sartre's conception of reading as directed creation is quite well-aligned with Morelli's conception of letting his reader fill in the gaps between his would-be narrative photographs. The novel as Sartre sees it is a set of landmarks set up by the author, and those landmarks are separated by the void, empty space, spaceless-timeless nothing. Filling in this void is precisely the job of the reader. The very act of "directed creation" is an act of uniting these landmarks, filling in the void between them with imagined terrain so as to make out of them one continuous totality. The true object of the novel, for Sartre, lies in the reader's creation of this absent terrain which, in the end, makes the novel's fictional planet whole. This terra-forming also mirrors Ricoeur's cosmic time, as

it exists at no single *right now* in the text of the novel, in no individual photograph, but as a figure drawn by the reader in the act of connecting those photographs. The only difference between Sartre's theory and Morelli's lies in the fact that Morelli believes he is describing a unique and wholly new vision of the novel where Sartre is describing the basic operation of *all* novels, the very antithesis of something new. How then, can Morelli's conception of allowing the reader to unite the landmarks he sets up, his narrative photographs, get beyond the artifice of classical mimesis? In short, why is Morelli's conception of his novel anything new at all?

The answer ultimately revolves around the perceived intentionality of the figures which organize the narrative cosmic time of Morelli's novel. Morelli's novel will be something new in that the reader will not perceive that the author has provided a figure or a set of figures by which to organize his novel's cosmic time. In Sartre's conception of directed creation, there are landmarks at all levels of narrative time, mortal, cosmic and otherwise. Morelli would remove the landmarks in his novel's cosmic time, he would divest himself of providing *any* map of the territory between his photographs. In essence, in linking his photographs together, Morelli wants to invert the relationship between himself and his reader, to put his reader in the position Sartre ascribes to the author:

The future [for the author] is then a blank page, whereas the future of the reader is two hundred pages filled with words which separate him from the end. Thus the writer meets everywhere only *his* knowledge, *his* will, *his* plans, in short, himself.
(485)

Morelli, the author, wants not himself but his reader to confront the blank page between his photographs. He wants to divest himself of the responsibility of making linkages

between them. In this sense (and very much echoing yet again *Las babas del diablo*) the author should become a kind of camera lens, a conduit of raw images, a supplier of terse, although cinematic, mimetic scenes whose interrelationship it is the reader's job to invent. As such, the lives of Morelli's characters will be "*tan vagas y poco caracterizadas*" that the reader will have to invent them for themselves. Morelli's theoretical novel is *so* vague, there are *so* many holes in it, the void is *so* big, in other words, that readers will end up confronting not what Morelli has laid out before them, but only themselves. When trying to link his photographs together, his readers will feel, in short, lost, without a guide. Directed creation at the level of cosmic time in Morelli's theoretical novel should somehow become *so* undirected that the novel begins to differentiate itself from the novel in general as Sartre is describing it.

Following Morelli's theory, it is only possible to remove Sartre's landmarks at the level of cosmic time, as mortal time does not offer the reader enough freedom—it is dominated by the author. The way a character combs her hair (*la manera de peinarse*), for example, can clearly be thought of as a mortal-time, mimetic moment; it could clearly be contained in a single space-time instant. Morelli, in other words, could easily take a photograph of that. What's in this photograph the reader does not invent. The reader can supply the character's "manera de peinarse" but only "si Morelli no la mencionaba." If he does mention it, then it is taken away from the reader, controlled by the author, installed in a mimetic moment, immutable to a certain degree if perhaps infinitely varied amongst the unique readings given it by unique readers. The reasons for a character's conduct or non-conduct, why she killed her mother or why she never left her house, however, are not as easily documented by the camera lens, could easily require the

prolonged study by the reader of the psychological development of the character as expressed throughout the entire novel, and would thus exist only in the non-presence of cosmic time. These un-represented linkages the reader must invent. “Las puentes entre una y otra instancia,” in other words, are what the reader supplies, while the “instancias” themselves must come from the author, must be placed there ahead of time. The photographic instances are *not*, in Morelli’s conception, capable of being constructed without Sartre’s landmarks; their production is wholly guided by the author (this is his work). Cosmic time, on the other hand, need not contain any landmarks at all; it isn’t even written down. Morelli’s theory portrays a clear distinction in the possibility of mortal and cosmic time: where mortal time must be a set of landmarks laid out before the reader, cosmic time, unwritten and undocumented, need contain no landmarks whatsoever.

Sartre for his part does not distinguish clearly between mortal and cosmic time.

For Sartre, the same freedom exists in mortal and cosmic time:

The reader, on the contrary, progresses in security. However far he may go, the author has gone farther. Whatever connections he may establish among the different parts of the book—among the chapters or the words—he has a guarantee, namely, that they have been expressly willed. As Descartes says, he can even pretend that there is a secret order among parts which seem to have no connection. (492)

It seems that the connections between words themselves, what we would describe as the retention of the novel, its mortal time, as well as the connections between its chapters, what we would describe as its cosmic time, for Sartre, are both laid out before the reader.

Sartre seems to recognize that directed creation occurs on multiple levels, but feels that, for the most part, the reader does the same work on both parts, whether it be to connect the words themselves into the mimetic scene that constitutes one of Morelli's photographs or to integrate chapters into even larger figures, like that of the novel's cosmic time.

This work, of course, is directed creation, the reader engaging the novel as a response to the imperative that is the novel. This is, in essence, another version of *praesens intentio*, the work done upon the text to bring it into a state of being, a state of being in which the reader is the means by which the literary object is manifest just as in actuality "man is the means by which things are manifest" (483). His characterization of what is accomplished via this work is very much aligned with Plato: "That is why we see people who are known for their toughness shed tears at the recital of imaginary misfortunes" (491). Crying at the movies, like crying at an ancient Greek festival, like crying before the recital of some imaginary misfortunes are all characterizations of the same fictive transportation, whether we become Bernard, or Raskilnikov, Odysseus or Oliveira.

While Sartre is attempting to characterize the same fictive state as Morelli, Bernard, Ricoeur and Plato with his conception of reading as directed creation, he does not, as do Bernard, Morelli and Ricoeur, seem to discuss the nature of fictive mortal time or fictive cosmic time, even though he seems to be aware of the distinction. (Plato also does not.) Looking at his examples with Morelli's definition of the split between the two temporal levels in mind, we can see concrete examples of the two levels of fictive time that mirror those offered by Morelli:

On the one hand, the literary object has no other substance than the reader's subjectivity; Raskolnikov's waiting is *my* waiting which I lend him. Without this impatience of the reader he would remain only a collection of signs. His hatred of the police magistrate who questions him is my hatred which has been solicited and wheedled out of me by signs, and the police magistrate himself would not exist without the hatred I have for him via Raskilnikov. That is what animates him, it is his very flesh. (487)

The abstract thing that is hatred which is transferred from the reader to Raskilnikov can only be constructed over time; it needs time to be developed, to gestate, and as such becomes part of the constellations of Dostoevsky's fictive cosmic time. On the other hand, the police magistrate himself, like Bernard sitting across the table from us, could easily be photographed in the mortal time of the novel as he leans against a wall outside his office. Such a mimetic moment could easily be drawn in the *right now* of the reader's experience of Dostoevsky's world. In the examples above, if we look at it though the lens of Morelli's conception of mortal and cosmic time, we can see Sartre is clearly thinking about his directed creation on at least those two levels.

For all the freedom Sartre grants his reader, there is still a regulating function imposed upon the reader, a limitation, and without clearly delineating two or more distinct levels, Sartre's theory applies that limiting, regulatory function to all levels of the novel: "The author's whole art is bent on obliging me to *create* what he *discloses*, therefore to compromise myself" (his italics, 497). We find, here, in the words "what he *discloses*" the differentiation between Morelli's "new" kind of novel and Sartre's "all novels in general," and at the same time a need in Sartre's ideas for a differentiation

between what the author discloses, between what is written, and what the reader creates on his own, what is not written. For Morelli, what the author discloses would be limited to the novel's mortal time, to what is actually in his photographs. Beyond those photographs, the author would disclose nothing at all. For Morelli to conceive of a novel that both discloses and does not disclose, his theory needs to see the novel as split into mortal and cosmic time if only to then declare that on one level, the reader is compromised, and on the other, he is not.

This distinction between what is disclosed by the author and what the reader imaginatively invents is missing from Sartre's theory. For Sartre to say, on the one hand, that there is nothing other than what the reader creates and on the other hand, that the reader is obliged to create what the author discloses without defining the distinction between those two functions seems contradictory. What is regulated freedom? In other words, Sartre's *What Is Literature* seems to leave the question of where the author's disclosure stops and the reader's invention begins quite unapproached in the narratological sense. His response to this question is a moral and categorical one: literature appeals to the purest of human freedoms. On a narratological level, however, his essay makes no clear response. Sartre relies on the conception of the reader/writer dialectic as a means of explaining this seeming contradiction. The reader/writer dialectic both produces and limits the reader's freedom:

Thus, the author writes in order to address himself to the freedom of readers, and he requires it in order to make his work exist. But he does not stop there; he also requires that they return this confidence which he has given them, that they

recognize his creative freedom, and they in turn solicit it by a symmetrical and inverse appeal. (491)

It is a symmetrical and inverse appeal, the reader and author each asking the other to both exercise their freedom and to yield it. The result of this dialectic is the novel itself, its product. But the apparent symmetry of the dialectic is not borne out by the relationship between author and reader even in Sartre's essay. For Sartre, the reader's subjectivity is guided toward the creation of "impermeable objectivities" (488) which are the result of the reader's creative act in response to the "imperative" (489) that is the work of art. The novel's imperative is for the reader to follow the signposts laid out by the author. The act of following those signposts and linking them together results in the reader's creation of a wholly new swath of terrain, a unique planet. Sartre goes to great lengths to make it clear that there is no transference of ideas or conveyance of a specific message between author and reader, but at the same time there is no escaping the limitations the signposts place on the direction the reader's freedom wishes to take. There must always be pre-patterned connections amongst the words and chapters of the book, according to Sartre, so as to lead the reader toward some kind of transcendent revelation even if the author does not know exactly what that transcendent revelation looks like in each reader's case. Sartre's reader, in short, expects some sort of map, or, at least to be able to map out connections on all levels of his fictional journey. And that map had better lead somewhere worthwhile, had better lead to that transcendent revelation. In short, the novel, as does art in general in Sartre's view, presents itself as a "task to be discharged" (489) and distinguishes itself from our engagement with actuality precisely because "It [the world as represented in art] has become intentional" (492). This intentionality, unlike the

unfathomable intentionality or lack thereof of actuality, is understandable, perceivable, accessible to the reader. We cannot know the mind of what Christians conceive of as God, if there is such a thing, but we can understand the mind of the author who has laid out the signposts we are following, and those signposts are supposed to make themselves into a figure we can, with a little imagination, complete with our own pencils. The world represented in art is thus humanized, reinforced as available to the exercising of human freedom, by both author and reader.

Sartre's dialectic does not manage to escape the concept of intentionality by which art and the novel complete their function. There must be perceivable intentionality at all levels of narrative if narrative time is not to be conceived of as split between at least mortal and cosmic time, which means that at Morelli's level of cosmic time, there must be landmarks laid out for the reader to follow; if not, then Sartre's novel ceases to transmit its intentionality. The difference between Sartre and Morelli comes down right upon the line of this perceived intentionality in narrative cosmic time. Morelli does want to provide landmarks in his novel's cosmic time, and he believes he does not have to. He does not want the figures by which the reader can link together his narrative photographs to be perceived of as intentional *at all*. Here Sartre sides with Ricoeur against Morelli in that, for Sartre as for Ricoeur, narrative must ultimately draw a comprehensible set of coordinations in its cosmic time in order to complete its artistic function. These coordinations, available to the reader, constitute narrative's intentionality, to borrow Sartre's word. Without it, Sartre's humanizing function ceases to operate through the medium of the novel. Morelli sets himself squarely against this kind of perceptible coordination. The reader should feel as though he invents the bridges between one

signpost and another without recourse to a coordination already conceived of by the author, as if those signposts were connected by no uniform landmass, as if they were set irreparably adrift in space and time. According to Sartre's definition, Morelli wants a novel that is dehumanized at the level of its cosmic time, a novel whose photographs are linked together by no comprehensible intentionality *other than* those the reader invents herself.

The question of how Morelli's novel is anything new at all given Sartre's description of reading as directed creation comes down to a question of the degree of freedom a novel grants a reader in its cosmic time, to the line beyond which the reader can no longer cull from the novel a set of coordinating figures which can be ascribed to the intentionality of the author. This pure invention by the reader, the novel's laying the groundwork for such an invention, should still allow the reader to infer comprehensibility, their own human agency, onto the nature of the fictional world, but the reader should not ascribe or perceive that comprehensibility as having been placed there ahead of time by the author. Where in Sartre's description of the novel, the reader feels that "However far he may go, the author has gone farther," Morelli's novel would differentiate itself precisely by making the reader feel, at least when it comes to linking his photographs together, as if she were being pushed constantly ahead of the author into some dark and unknown territory. The reader should feel that the author has *refused* to go any farther than absolutely necessary (i.e., constructing narrative photographs) to put the reader in the situation of having to walk into an as-yet-undiscovered country and the reader should fully believe that Morelli has never seen or thought about that country before. The reader should be left confronting a *lack* of authorial coordinating figures by

which to organize his photographs, a blank page as it were, between the figures which construct one mortal-time mimetic moment and another. Instead of confronting figures laid out by the author in some comprehensible cosmic time, the reader should meet “everywhere only *his* knowledge, *his* will, *his* plans, in short, himself.”

The narrator uses an interesting example of the kind of closure Morelli is thinking of, and as elsewhere in the chapter, his example brings problems for Morelli’s theory:

El libro debía ser como esos dibujos que proponen los psicólogos de la Gestalt, y así ciertas líneas inducirían al observador a trazar imaginativamente las que cerraban la figura.

[The book would have to be something like those sketches proposed by Gestalt psychologists, and therefore certain lines would induce the observer to trace imaginatively the ones that would complete the figure.]

Like the Gestalt principle of closure, Morelli’s novel would present itself like the sketch of a figure to be closed. The Gestalt principal of closure described here, put forth by Wertheimer, one of the early proponents of Gestalt, states that human perception is such that subjects perceive closed or complete figures when only partially complete figures are presented to them (Wertheimer, 1935). The classic example is that of a circle composed of segments of lines. Subjects shown such a figure as a rule saw a circle, not a collection of short lines, when in fact no complete circle was drawn. The subject, in other words, composed the complete circle out of the partially drawn circle in the drawing. Even more interesting for Morelli’s theory is Wertheimer’s first famous study, *Experimental Studies on the Seeing of Motion*. Using a projector to project two images on a wall before his subjects, Wertheimer displayed two figures of a line, one slightly offset from the other, at

varying intervals. Given the proper interval between the display of the two figures, his subjects did not see two distinct lines, but one line in motion. Wertheimer's theories evolved from his original experimentation with a stroboscope, one of those old-time, pre-motion picture devices for rapidly displaying a set of sequential pictures in order to induce the perception that the objects in the series of pictures were actually in motion. He was, in essence, describing the underlying principle behind the cinematic illusion of action, movement in time. This construction of perceived motion out of discrete, static images Wertheimer calls the *phi phenomenon*. In his experiments he found that subjects perceived two distinct lines as long as the interval between the display of the images was sufficiently brief without being too brief. While the interval remained within this range, the subject observing the two images consistently perceived not two images, but one image in motion.⁹

Wertheimer wished to demonstrate that it is the propensity of human perception to perceive abstract entities which are never fully present to our senses *prior* to perceiving the discrete entities out of which the mind constructs those abstract entities, such as the sun as a round ball in space (really just a bright light), space itself (really just differentiation between the perspective of my left and right eye), objects (I can never see all sides of my coffee cup at once), motion (his cinematic experiment). He was demonstrating that the perception of the whole, the sun, the circle, motion, which is made up of individual parts, various sensory inputs, two immobile figures, is always greater than the parts which comprise it and that the abstract whole is *more primary* to human perception than the parts, a kind of empirical platonic idealism, one might say. We have,

⁹ For an interesting and contemporary clarification of these levels, see Steinman et al.

in other words, a natural propensity to construct abstract wholes out of partial or segmented sensory perception. This is yet another version of the phenomenological description of mortal-time mimesis as the persistence of perceptual patterns we drew from Husserl/Heidegger/Ricoeur. The casting of *praesens intentio* upon the text could also be understood from Wertheimer's point of view as a completion of the partial pattern of common, linear space and time presented in the text of the novel. Given a chair and a door, the reader, as Wertheimer would describe it, consistently completes the figure of a room *before* or instead of leaving the figure as it actually is: a chair and a door hanging in some undescribed space and time. We can take this as yet another description of one of the underlying factors functioning in mortal-time mimetics.

The line that separates Sartre and Morelli is the same line which separates the perception of two distinct images from one image in motion or the perception of a circle made up of a bunch of dots from just a bunch of dots. In other words, the line between Sartre's humanized novel and Morelli's dehumanized novel is drawn between those novels which provide completable figures to their readers and those that do not. If Morelli wishes *not* to allow his readers to complete coordinating figures which are partially drawn in his novel, he cannot cross the threshold Wertheimer is describing. In Wertheimer's work, there is always a threshold, a quantum leap which separates the subject's perception of, on the one hand, the bunch of dots, and on the other hand, the circle made up out of those dots. The same perceptual threshold is passed when the temporal interval separating the display of the two slightly offset lines is progressively decreased. Until that threshold is reached, the subject only perceives two distinct lines. After crossing that threshold, the subject perceives a single line in motion. Decrease it

even further and another threshold is crossed and the subject sees the two images as one persistent figure: parallel lines. These transformations of perception are not gradual. The perception is always on one side or the other of any given threshold. There is always a threshold, a coordination limit, be it spatial or temporal, that separates a circle from a bunch of dots, a line in motion from two separate lines, a few inconsequential details about a character from an organizing figure which draws together seemingly disparate scenes from a novel.

The line which marks this coordination limit is the line Morelli wishes to cross with his word *tan*. His novel would be *tan vagas, tan poco caracterizadas*, that the reader could not complete any figures in the cosmic time of his novel and attribute them to any kind of authorial intention. They could not, in other words, be perceived by the reader as having come from the novel itself. The figures would have to be seen by the reader as having been self-invented, self-created, not lying in wait as if the author had gone this way already, but brought by the reader from well beyond the realm of authorial control. This would undo precisely Sartre's humanizing of actuality by the novel, its opening up the world to our freedom through the shared realization of our capacity to organize it. Morelli's anti-humanistic novel would refuse to "share" cosmic-time figures with the reader, forcing the reader to go it alone when confronting the figures of its cosmic time. The hope, Morelli seems to think, is that the reader would both create and complete a figure where not even the hint of one is present in the novel itself, a push for a maximum freedom, turning the reader out of the cozy home of well-coordinated novels.

Wertheimer's *phi phenomenon* makes it clear that this kind of pattern refusal can only possibly be accomplished in the cosmic time of the novel. There can be no narrative

photographs, no actual mimesis without the reader's perception of complete figures out of the partial figures which represent any mortal-time moment. The persistence of perceptual patterns which constitutes literary mimesis is precisely the reader's perceiving as a complete, whole entity the partial figure by which any given mimetic scene is organized. Just as Husserl's retention demonstrated how we construct our cognition of the sun out of fragmented sensory perceptions present to our senses over time, so we build fictional objects out of linguistic input presented to us over time. If the novel's mimesis is to function, if the reader is to perceive the subjects of a novel's narrative photograph as existing whole and complete in some alternate time and space, then, just as Wertheimer's *phi phenomenon* describes, the readers must first perceive the complete object that is someone's back, or a hand against a door. Without this *a priori* completion of partially presented figures, mortal-time mimesis cannot operate. The partial patterns which organize any given mortal-time scene, in other words, must be completed by the reader before mimesis begins to operate, therefore, there can be no mimetic scenes without patterns that appear first and foremost as already completed figures to the reader. This leaves only the novel's cosmic time, the linking of those mimetic scenes, open to the refusal of such patterns. If Morelli is going to dehumanize his novel, he needs to purge his cosmic time of any pattern which crosses Wertheimer's threshold.

Morelli's hopes of constructing a dehumanized novel fall on the singular possibility of preventing the reader from perceiving any kind of figure which might link together his mortal-time moments, his narrative photographs. The theoretical projection of the possibility of preventing the perception of such a figure leaves Morelli in the midst of yet another contradiction. Take another look at Morelli's simile:

El libro debía ser como esos dibujos que proponen los psicólogos de la Gestalt, y así ciertas líneas inducirían al observador a trazar imaginativamente las que cerraban la figure.

[The book would have to be something like those sketches proposed by Gestalt psychologists, and therefore certain lines would induce the observer to trace imaginatively the ones that would complete the figure.]

Morelli's book should be like Wertheimer's figures, an incomplete figure which, when presented to the reader, the reader completes. Adhering closely to Wertheimer's conception of closure, if the reader is to complete the figure presented by Morelli's book, the figure must have already crossed the perceptual limit beyond which it will no longer be perceived as incomplete. Once Morelli's figure becomes completable, as this sentence suggests, it will be perceived by the reader first and foremost as a complete figure, it will be perceived as a circle before it is ever conceived as a bunch of dots. At the same time, Morelli does not want to present any figure to the reader by which the reader can link together the photographs of his novel. If the reader does in fact complete the partial figure that is Morelli's collection of narrative photographs, then that partial figure, that pattern, must have already crossed Wertheimer's threshold, which means that the reader will perceive the abstract entity suggested by the incomplete pattern before perceiving the partial figure itself. If the reader perceives the complete abstract entity that is the complete figure of Morelli's novel right off the bat, how will the reader feel that this complete figure has not been provided by the author? If the partial patterns are not to be perceived as having been placed there by someone other than the reader, they cannot cross Wertheimer's perceptual threshold.

Without crossing Wertheimer's threshold, however, patterns which link together Morelli's novel would never be perceived by the reader. The reader would never see them as figures at all. The bunch of dots from Wertheimer's experiments would remain a bunch of dots, never to be perceived as a circle. The only problem is that Morelli *wants* his readers to complete the figure that is his novel. He wants the reader to link together his photographs into a complete image, into a single, unified cosmic time. He just doesn't want them to think that he, the author, has provided this complete image, the pattern of this unified cosmic time. How can a partial pattern which unifies Morelli's cosmic time simultaneously be completed by the reader and not be seen as being there to complete? How can the pattern which links together Morelli's photographs be on both sides of Wertheimer's threshold at the same time, suggest an abstract entity without suggesting it, be in the book without being in the book? The contradiction suggested by the Gestalt theory of closure is that either the bunch of dots looks like a circle, or it does not. If it crosses the line, the circle will seem to have been drawn by the author, if it does not cross the line, the reader will never think that this bunch of dots could, should, or might be a circle.

Here, in the cosmic time of his theoretical novel, is Morelli's dilemma: How induce the reader to complete a figure which is never presented to the reader in any perceivable form? In the very next line of Chapter 109, the narrator concedes that it's not possible:

Pero a veces las líneas ausentes eran las más importantes, las únicas que realmente contaban.

[But sometimes the missing lines were the most important ones, the only ones that really counted.]

A figure that is closable by a reader, once presented for closure, can only be seen by that reader as originating from the author or the purposeful design of the novel, regardless of whether the author consciously constructed that figure or not. If Morelli wants his novel to be unified in its cosmic time, then Morelli's innovation in the form of the novel is reduced in this one sentence to nothing but a shift of focus away from the pieces of the figure provided by the novel toward the pieces provided by the reader. The pieces that really count in Morelli's conception of the novel, so the narrator tells us, are the pieces of the figure provided by the reader regardless of how much of the rest of the figure is or is not provided by the author/the novel. This would once again leave Morelli's readerly participation indistinguishable from that described by Sartre, implying that in the coordination of its cosmic time, if there are to be figures which organize it into a unity, Morelli's theoretical novel is not capable of achieving the kind of dehumanization he desires. In this sense, Morelli's *dibujos* are nothing other than the "directed" part of the directed creation by which Sartre characterizes all reading.

In the next and final line of the first part of chapter 109, the narrator comments on Morelli's insistence on the possibility of a dehumanized novel which still manages to be humanized by the reader even in the face of his theoretical failure:

La coqueteria y la petulancia de Morelli en este terreno no tenían límite.

[Morelli's coquetry and petulance in this field had no limits.]

This pretence, this dangling before us of the possibility of a radical, new, dehumanized novel that is still humanized is a coquettish, petulant tease. Morelli holds out the

possibility of creating organizing figures in his novel's cosmic that will not be perceived as having been placed there by the author without being able, even theoretically, to follow through on it. Here is a great example of the internal combustion which drives this novel, the will to supercede the form of the novel in the name of a more honest portrayal of our perception of the world without the ability to do so. The desire for new forms is irrepressible, but achieving those new forms is neither easy nor, perhaps, possible.

So, the innovation in the novel, if there is to be one following Morelli's theory as presented in this chapter, lies in the reader's perception of the origins of the figures which organize the novel's cosmic time. In other words, Morelli's hope of a novel capable of approaching what he perceives as *la verdadera realidad* depends solely upon where the reader perceives the cosmic-time figures of his novel as coming from, from the reader herself or from the writer. If the reader were to feel that she had invented the ultimate figure of the novel, then Morelli would feel as though he were one step closing to writing it, *la verdadera realidad*, into the form of the novel. As we have just seen, any organizing figure present in the novel will be perceived by the reader as having been placed there ahead of time, that is, not by the reader herself. So, Morelli's only option is to find a way to wall off his own authorial coordination of the cosmic time of his novel. Morelli's job as innovative author, to put it another way, falls to ensuring the complete dearth of cosmic-time figures. If Morelli were to accomplish this, he would have to forgo his desire for his novel to be unified in its cosmic time, but he would thereby succeed in dehumanizing his novel in Sartre's terms. But what does a non-coordinated, non-unified cosmic time look like?

The very idea of authorial closure, or the lack thereof, of the ultimate coordinating figures of narrative fiction finds a compelling definition in Barthes' famous categorization of two types of texts based on the closability of their cosmic-time coordinating figures. Those two categories are the readerly, texts which offer closable figures to their readers, and the writerly, texts which do not:

Why is the writerly our value? Because the goal of the literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text. Our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its consumer, between its author and reader. This reader is thereby plunged into a kind of idleness—he is intransitive; he is, in short, *serious*: instead of function himself, instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, he is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text: reading is nothing more than a referendum. Opposite the writerly text, then, is its countervalue, its negative, reactive value: what can be read, but not written: the readerly. We call any readerly text a classic text. (S/Z, 4)

Barthes' value has the same quality as that of the theoretical novel sought by Morelli's theorizing, namely, to make the reader a producer of the text, to have the reader confront the blank page, to feel as if the author had not already gone further into every part of the text, to have the reader provide their own ultimate figure for coordinating the text. Although Barthes' and Morelli's concepts of the ideal text are essentially the same, they arrive at that concept through quite different theoretical means.

Barthes' idea of the closed classic text and the open non-classic text, of the readerly and the writerly, parallels Bakhtin's notions of the historical opening up of epic monologism (38). Classic texts are monologic, offering a single perspective in the cosmic time of their narrative. "And it was thus" says the classic text. The contemporary novel instead says "It is thus," closing the epic distance between the reader and the world described by the narrative. As the reader's perceived closeness to the world of the narrative grows, the reader assumes more and more of an authoritative stance alongside the author where her own ideas about what that world is like can rival or even contradict those of the author. Such is the dialogic nature of Bakhtin's novels. The reader can talk back, argue with, disagree with the author. I, who live in the New York of 2004, will have something to contribute to a book about the New York of the 1960s that I would not have to contribute to a reading of *The Aeneid*. *The Aeneid* is history, as far as it is concerned, not one version of a world among many to be considered. This, Bakhtin's point, is also Barthes' point: the dialogic is writerly, and epic monologism is readerly.

Barthes, however, wishes to make of this distinction a more general category, one that is not necessarily related to historical or periodic characterizations of literature. Barthes wishes to define the quality of Bakhtin's dialogic works, to articulate the essence of being non-monologic regardless of historical circumstance. This non-monologic quality, what Barthes' terms the writerly, is also the same quality which makes a work an exigence, as Sartre would put it. The writerly, the dialogic, directed creation are all descriptions of how novels induce their readers to become in part the writers of their own readings. Some works, Barthes says, induce such a readerly writing, while others do not. Sartre's text-as-exigence, on the other hand, does not indicate a category of novels, and is

instead an undeniable universal quality which spans all novels. Bakhtin's dialogic, to apply the idea yet differently yet again, indicates a historical difference, an evolution in narrative. The difference Barthes wishes to mark between the readerly and the writerly lies not in the existence of such a universal imperative nor in the historical demarcation of a genre shift, but as a qualitative difference in the universal imperative of narrative that spans its entire history: either the novel induces the reader to construct figures proscribed by the novel, in which case the novel is considered "readerly" and the reader is put in the position of either accepting or rejecting those figures, or the novel does not induce the reader to construct proscribed figures, in which case the novel is considered "writerly" and the reader never finds herself in the situation of having either to accept or reject those figures. The writerly is precisely the quality Morelli seeks to preserve in his construction of the cosmic time of his theoretical novel, a novel which would not proscribe any particular figure by which to organize its cosmic time.

Part of the trouble in dealing with Barthes' definition of the writerly text lies in the fact that it is only defined as the negative of the readerly. A writerly text should never put the reader in the position of having to either accept or reject what a novel proscribes as the ultimate figure of itself—there should never be a monologic cosmic-time figure akin to those Bakhtin describes as fundamental to the epic in his theories of the dialogic. Where Bakhtin describes the nature of non-monologic novels as dialogic or multivocal, Barthes' description of non-monologic cosmic-time texts rests on the distinction between denotation and connotation—between what is written and proscribed and what that writing is constantly spilling over into, the pure connotation that is the unproscribed figure of the purely writerly novel. The writerly is defined, in short, as texts

which preserve the connotations of their cosmic time as unequivocally undetermined. Barthes' writerly is an attempt to define, or at least name, this indeterminateness at the level of connotation.

To be fair, Sartre, on whose ideas Barthes is clearly building, makes the same distinction between proscriptive and non-proscriptive novels, only in an aesthetic and morally less timid fashion. Sartre puts it like this: "Thus there are only good and bad novels. The bad novel aims to please by flattering, whereas the good one is an exigence and an act of faith" (498). Sartre's description of good and bad novels is analogous to Barthes' writerly and readerly texts: good novels are those which are an imperative to the reader, while bad novels are those which, by preventing the reader's freedom, are not. The good novel for Sartre, like for Barthes, is a blank page for the reader to write on, an appeal to her freedom, and the bad novel, again like Barthes, is nothing but a mirror, a reflection of the expected, of what the reader wants to see, which allows or induces no creative freedom for the reader to alter, invent, change what the mirror reflects. Sartre characterizes novels which restrict or inhibit the creative freedom of the reader to write their own reading, what Barthes would call "readerly" texts, but casts these novels directly out of what would be considered literature—they are bad books, undeserving of a literary category. To apply Barthes' ideas to Sartre and extend Sartre's definition of good and bad novels to narratives in general, Sartre would seem to be casting out of the literary canon all classic texts, all of which are defined by Barthes as readerly and by Bakhtin as monologic, which is either a bold and daring vindication by Sartre of the supremacy of the modern novel, or an overapplication of his ideas of good and bad novels. Let us stick with the latter, and conclude that Sartre would not discount *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*,

The Aeneid or *Os Lusíadas* as bad texts if he were to extend his idea of good and bad novels to something like good and bad narratives. Taken as such, the imperative that is, say, *The Bible* to imagine the features of the face of Abraham or the size and shape of the burning bush, or *The Odyssey*'s imperative to create the precise color of Odysseus's scar, is the same as the imperative of Dostoevsky's novel to imagine the features of the police lieutenant's face or to provide our own hatred of him for use by the character observing him. If this is true, then the distinction made by Sartre between good and bad novels is not the same distinction made by Barthes' readerly and writerly texts, and the difference falls once again along the split between mortal and cosmic time.

Barthes' denotation and connotation equate roughly to Ricoeur's mortal and cosmic time. For Barthes, there is always a denotative function to texts, their most simple meaning: "You see before you an old grey man." And this denotation is always spilling over into connotation. Bernard, the old grey man, may represent the theoretical author, writing, time, the "other" or a whole host of things that intersect and radiate out from the man seated across the table from us in the fictional space-time of *The Waves*. This construction of the straightforward here and now of the fictional present, portrayed phenomenologically by Ricoeur as Husserl's retention, is nothing more than an encompassing portrayal of the process of the denotation of language. According to Sartre's directed creation, what the language denotes, is constructed by the creative freedom of the reader thereby constituting what Ricoeur calls narrative mortal time: a man, a table, a restaurant, a space-time, a *right now*. The split between connotation and denotation, between what the novel proscribes and what it leaves to the reader to write, between what the reader finds herself in the position of only either accepting or rejecting

and what she can summon out of the abyss willy nilly is precisely the split between mortal and cosmic. What is present, what is presented, what is given the reader by the author is one thing, call it denotation or mortal time or the directed part of directed creation, and what is absent, what is left out, the rest of the universe that the novel pretends to have access to but has for whatever reason left unwritten is another. This is precisely the differentiation that is represented by Morelli's narrative photographs: what's in the photographs is mortal time, the readerly, authorial direction, what's in the gaps between those photographs is cosmic time, the writerly, the reader's undirected creation.

In order to understand the difference between Barthes' readerly and writerly texts and Sartre's good and bad novels, we have to understand that their ideal quality, the writerly or the freedom of the reader, comes only from the novel's cosmic time. Barthes does not deny or reject the notion that denotation, the pure readerly, happens in all fictional narratives all the time. In his words, denotation is inseparable from language. The distinction between readerly and writerly narratives is made specifically above that level, in the text's connotation, its cosmic time. Writerly narratives, in other words, are still readerly at the level of mortal time, in what they denote. Readerly narratives, in other words, denote cosmic-time figures where writerly narratives do not.

Where Barthes is clear about this mortal/cosmic time split, Sartre is rather vague and it leaves his notion of good and bad novels and his notion of reading as directed creation in seeming contradiction exactly because, as we have said, both qualities seem to apply to both narrative levels. If the very act of reading a book, of passing your eyes along the phrase "a hand pressed up against a door" is directed creation, and directed creation involves the freedom of the reader, how can there ever be a novel which does not

involve this, and thus how can there ever be bad books? Sartre seems deliberately vague about where the “directed” part of reading as directed creation ends and where the “creation” part on the part of the reader begins. As we saw before, these two notions fall into place if we impose a mortal/cosmic-time split onto Sartre’s theory, where the “directed” part of directed creation encompasses mortal time and the reader’s freedom to create constitutes cosmic time. This allows Sartre’s notion of directed creation in the novel to be applied universally to the mortal time of all novels, and at the same time allows for the distinction to be made in the cosmic time of those same novels between those which ultimately merely reflect the expected through that directed creation and those which incite in a more complete way the freedom of the reader to create something wholly new. If we impose the same denotation/connotation or mortal-time/cosmic-time split on Sartre as we find in Barthes, Ricoeur and Morelli, then Sartre’s idea of good and bad books is simply an early and undeveloped version of Barthes’ readerly and writerly texts. Conversely, Barthes’ readerly and writerly texts is an expansion of Sartre’s good and bad books clarified by the notion of connotation and denotation, by the split between fictional mortal and cosmic time. The two ideas hinge on whether or not cosmic-time figures are imposed by the author/novel/text onto the reader’s reading. If they are, then the reader is put in the position of simply accepting or rejecting them, and they are merely the reflection of what is expected and not an exigence to create something new. If they are not, if cosmic-time figures are not imposed on the reader, then the reader gains access to the magic of the signifier, which appeals to his absolute freedom and he finds himself in the position of creating something wholly new.

In the end, the question comes down to what (if anything) the book “hands the reader like a bunch of grapes” in its cosmic time. Is it a figure perceived *a priori* as closed, offered the reader merely for acceptance or rejection, or is it an exigence to the reader’s creative freedom? On which side of Wertheimer’s theory of the closure of figures do Barthes and Sartre fall? Part of Barthes’ response is that the object that is created by the reader doing the work in response to the imperative of a good or writerly novel is in fact not an object at all, but a particular kind of engagement in a particular kind of activity, namely, the work of reading, which neither begins nor ends with the beginning and ending of the reading of any given book or novel, but an ongoing process that passes through this novel or that chapter and emerges from it continuing to denote and connote:

It is a form of work (which is why it would be better to speak of a lexeological act—even a lexeo-graphical act, since I write my reading), and the method of this work is topological: I am not hidden within the text, I am simply irrecoverable from it: my task is to move, to shift systems whose perspective ends neither at the text nor at the “I”: in operational terms, the meanings I find are established not by “me” or by others, but by their *systemic* mark: there is no other *proof* of a reading than the quality and endurance of its systemics; in other words: than its functioning. (10)

Meaning, the “product” of reading, is precisely not a closure, not a product at all. Instead, connotation, by releasing a plethora of meanings beyond denotation, points toward a certain range of figures through which the reader moves. It is this movement,

this act, which Barthes ascribes as the ultimate point of writing. Sartre agrees, to a certain extent:

And if I am told that it would be more fitting to call this operation a re-invention or a discovery, I shall answer that, first, such a re-invention would be as new and as original an act as the first invention. And, especially, when an object has never existed before, there can be no question of re-inventing it or discovering it. For if the silence about which I am speaking is really the goal at which the author is aiming, he has, at least, never been familiar with it; his silence is subjective and anterior to language. It is the absence of words, the undifferentiated and lived silence of inspiration, which the word will then particularize, whereas the silence produced by the reader is an object. (487)

The “object” of the book is to produce the pre-linguistic state of silence out of which the reader produces her own, unique reading, to provide access, as Barthes would have it, to the magic of the signifier. But there is a bit of struggle for Sartre trying to pin down the difference between what is handed to the reader by the book and what the reader produces. Only a page or two later, Sartre uses Kant’s “finality without end” as a means of imagining figures in the novel which are both there and not there, present without being presented:

In fact, it implies that the aesthetic object presents only the appearance of a finality and is limited to soliciting the free and ordered play of the imagination. It forgets that the imagination of the spectator has not only a regulating function, but a constitutive one. It does not play; it is called upon to recompose the beautiful object beyond the traces left by the artist. The imagination can not revel in itself

any more than can the other functions of the mind; it is always on the outside, always engaged in an enterprise. There would be finality without end if some object offered such a set ordering that it would lead us to suppose that it has one even though we can not ascribe one to it. (489)

Here Sartre is keen to point out that the imagination is focused on the external act of recomposing the object left by the artist out of the traces left behind in his work of art, or, in our case, in the words the author has written. This is the “directed” part of directed creation, a set of signposts leading somewhere in particular. Here it seems as if the object of the book is not merely to create the pre-linguistic silence out of which the reader composes her writing, but also to guide that composition toward some beautiful object, namely, the perception of relationships in actuality that, by being transposed to the canvas or in writing, become shared, the “humanizing” act of the novel. This seeming dichotomy is, as we have said, for Sartre answered by the concept of the dialectic, where the writer’s creative freedom in expressing the perception of those relationships joins with the reader’s creative freedom in (re)creating them from the systemics of the painting or the novel. It is precisely the parentheses around the “re” that Sartre sees as provided unproblematically by the dialectic. Sartre’s dialectic straddles the ground between the idea of reading as an act of creating something completely new and the idea of reading as the reconstruction of an object already extant in the novel, for if reading is an act undirected toward some specific discovery or experience, if the novel does not hand the reader some object that the reader recognizes as coming from the novel/author, then the humanizing sharing Sartre greatly values does not take place.

Barthes, once again, seems to be refining Sartre's idea, for Barthes has eliminated half of the dialectic, removing any object toward which reading as an act trends. The act of reading trends, according to Barthes as we saw above, only toward its own continuation. Even Barthes, though, struggles with the parentheses in reading as "(re)creation," for what, exactly, is a "systemic mark," or the quality or endurance of a novel's systemics? The act of reading, once it is over, once it has stopped, leaves us with *something*, only where Sartre is willing to say that that something was at least the shared perceptions of the organizability of actuality, Barthes is only willing to say that the act of constructing through reading what might be a final object which constitutes the novel we have just finished reading is really nothing more than a continuation of the linear Husserlian retentions and recollections, coordinations and Heideggerian coincidences that comprise both the mortal and cosmic time of any given moment in either actuality or narrative fiction. Retention, recollection, coincidence and coordination do not stop merely because we have stopped reading, Barthes maintains, they immediately bleed over into the next moment, the connotations echoing now among the retentions and recollections of actuality, a discussion, a newspaper, a subway ad. The systemics of the mimetic narrative process which, as we have seen, are built upon the same mechanisms by which we comprehend actuality, continue to continue in actuality once we have read the last page of our novel, and any single object we create at the moment we close the book automatically spills over into its own connotations which continue, iteratively, to constitute what we think of as our use of language, both in the construction of fictional universes and the comprehension of our actual one. If Barthes has his way, a book is just

one more ripple in the ocean of our fluid perception of *it*, of *la verdadera realidad*, and not some fixed object like an old boot or an oil tanker or a shark.

If reading is truly characterized as an endless act which ultimately offers up no object, then Morelli should have no dilemma at all; he should not have to struggle to create a novel which is not readerly. In fact, there should be no such thing as readerly texts. But he does have quite a dilemma, for what both Barthes and Sartre are struggling with are not actual novels, but a theoretical description of their ideal novel, and Barthes says as much:

In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend *as far as the eye can reach*, they are interminable (meaning is never subject to a principle of determination, unless by throwing dice); the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language. The interpretation demanded by a specific text, in its plurality, is in no way liberal: it is not a question of conceding some meanings, of magnanimously acknowledging that each one has its share of truth; it is a question, against all in-difference, of asserting the very existence of plurality, which is not that of the true, the probable, or even the possible. This necessary assertion is difficult, however, for as nothing exists outside the text, there is never a *whole* of the text (which would by reversion form an internal order, a reconciliation of complementary parts, under

the paternal eye of the representative Model): the text must simultaneously be distinguished from its exterior and from its totality. All of which comes down to saying that for the plural text, there cannot be a narrative structure, a grammar, or a logic; thus, if one or another of these are sometimes permitted to come forward, it is *in proportion* (giving this expression its full quantitative value) as we are dealing with incompletely plural texts, texts whose plural is more or less parsimonious. (S/Z, 5)

The ideal text is the pure writerly, a completely plural text whose meanings are endless and unfixable—it is pure exigence, an imperative which leads to all objects without trending to any single one. This ideal text, according to Barthes, can have no structure, no grammar and no logic. It cannot, in short, be written. It certainly cannot be a novel, and so, the ideal text, the absolute writerly, the closable figure that never crosses Wertheimer's perceptual threshold, the perfect bunch of grapes, is just that: ideal. Real books, real novels real narratives for Barthes are always somewhere on a continuum between pure readerly and pure writerly, no text capable of obtaining either extreme.

The writerly, it turns out, is more a quality a text might possess than an absolute category; we cannot go about labeling this text writerly, that text readerly. It is instead a category at one end of a limitless scale, which manifests itself in a narrative's cosmic-time connotations, whereas narrative denotation or mortal time, as we have seen, is, by its very nature unalterably readerly. The quality that is the writerly is found to varying degrees at various levels above that of fictive mortal time in the connotations which resist being coordinated through figures which seem to have their origin in the text itself, leaving the reader and the critic to perceive those figures as being generated, inscribed,

written by the reader or the critic herself, that is, in Barthes' terminology, constitutive of a plurality. The varying degrees of the writerly must somehow escape the text's grammar, narrative structure and logic, all of which serve increasingly to limit the plurality of connotations produced by the text. The landmarks of any narrative landscape, the logic and structure which guide the reader, always lead in some way shape or form in some specified direction, thus limiting with each successive landmark the scope of the narrative's plurality. Without this progressive limitation, there can be no narrative. A narrative landmark cannot be everywhere or it would no longer be a landmark. Thus does Morelli's dilemma, through a different set of critical terms, come down to the same enigmatic yearning as we find in Barthes, a yearning for an ideal and unachievable, perfectly plural text. Morelli's dilemma can be restated in Barthes' terms as follows: how write a writerly novel when the very grammar, logic and structure which creates that novel serves only to limit that plural?

Giving up on the immutable readerly nature of his novel's mortal time, Morelli strives to imagine a way to inhibit as much as possible the creation of cosmic-time coordinating figures that reach out from the novel and rein in the creative freedom of the reader. Morelli's entire and perhaps impossible project comes down to his being able to present to the reader a set of mortal-time mimetic moments, photographs (that we know are really cinematic sequences) that he concedes must be essentially readerly, without also presenting in those photographs even a partial figure by which the reader can link them together into a cohesive cosmic time. Make no mistake about it, Morelli still wants the reader to unify his novel into a single, cohesive entity, but he wants the figure which organizes that unification to be perceived by his readers as being their own invention:

Leyendo el libro, se tenía por momentos la impresión de que Morelli había esperado que la acumulación de fragmentos cristalizara bruscamente en una realidad total.

[Reading the book, one had the impression for a while that Morelli had hoped that the accumulation of fragments would suddenly crystallize into a total reality.]

As the narrator reads Morelli's novel, he cannot help but notice that in the end of it all, for all of Morelli's resistance to the idea that his novel should extend anything like an organizing figure of itself to his reader, he still wants the novel to somehow close itself, to turn itself into a totalized reality. Morelli's strategy seems to be one of denying his own desire or habit to construct the figures by which such a totality is constructed. If Morelli doesn't create them, they won't be in the novel, and the reader will have to invent them on her own. Without even a few penciled marks to suggest a figure, with nothing but a blank page in front of the reader, the organizing figures of his novel's cosmic time should magically appear. The reader should coordinate the mimetic fragments presented by Morelli's novel into a total reality—complete, whole and singular—without having received any part of that coordination from Morelli's text. Morelli will guarantee this by purposefully not inventing cosmic-time coordinating figures as he writes. There won't be any cosmic-time organizing figures because he won't invent them, but he hopes, almost mystically, that they will appear all on their own:

Sin tener que inventar los puentes, o coser los diferentes pedazos del tapiz, que de golpe hubiera ciudad, hubiera tapiz, hubiera hombres y mujeres en la perspectiva absoluta de su devenir, y que Morelli, el autor, fuese el primer espectador maravillado de ese mundo que ingresaba en la coherencia.

[Without having to invent bridges, or sew up different pieces of the tapestry, suddenly there would be a city, there would be a tapestry, there would be men and women in the absolute perspective of their becoming, and Morelli, the author, would be the first spectator to marvel at that world that was taking on coherence.]

Morelli won't have to invent the coordinating figures, won't have to bind together one cinematic sequence to another. It will happen all by itself, that is, the construction of a fictional cosmic space time for his novel, the "absolute perspective" of the becoming of the men and women in his fictional world, would cohere, come together, coordinate itself without him. The sudden and spontaneous generation of these coordinating figures would surprise Morelli as much as anyone. When the thunderclap finally struck and the unified fictional cosmic time of Morelli's novel finally erupts, Morelli, just like his readers, will have no idea where it came from. Morelli hopes, in other words, that by not intentionally creating organizing figures for his cosmic time, that he will stumble across organizing figures that are also perceived as non-intentional by his readers.

This idea of there being cosmic-time coordinating figures that do not seem to have been created by anyone is echoed in Sartre's critique of Kant's finality without end:

There would be finality without end if some object offered such a set ordering that it would lead us to suppose that it has one even though we can not ascribe one to it. (489)

This having a finality without being able to ascribe one to it is a very nearly perfect description of Morelli's desire for his novel to have an ultimate cosmic-time figure without the reader being able to ascribe its origins to the author or even the novel itself. We would suppose the novel had a coordinating figure based on the way in which it was

ordered, even though we could not ascribe to it any particular figure. The impossibility of achieving this everything-from-nothing ideal can be seen as a particular application of the absurd: the novel's grammar, logic and structure continually limits its own endless possibilities, and becoming a novel means choosing a finite set of those possibilities from among those endless choices. The unlimited plurality of the novel's ideal self can only last until the first word is written down. Once that word hits the page, the scope of its plurality has already been greatly reduced; the first choice has been made. The continual limitation of the novel, the intentionality of its words, their coordination into recognizable figures like a hand against a door, Raskilnikov, or Horacio, continually fights against the idea these coordinations are unintentional, that behind them an author like Morelli is not hiding. If there is a yellow brick road to follow, then behind some curtain must be the Wizard of Oz, pulling this string, turning that phrase, making it all up so we can follow.

This is finally realized in the next line of Chapter 109. Morelli decides that even if he managed to create a cosmic time for his novel that could not be ascribed to him or the text itself, even if the ultimate figures of his novel seemed to have emerged from the great void or the reader's own creative freedom, it would still fail to be anything other than ordinary cosmic fictive time, the same space-time figure as presented in all other novels. Any coordination, no matter its origin, would only reinstall the novel into the monologic, common space-time from which Morelli originally sought to escape:

Pero no habia que fiarse, porque coherencia queria decir en el fondo asimilación al espacio y al tiempo, ordenación a gusto del lector-hembra.

[But there was no cause for confidence, because coherence meant to say basically assimilation in space and time, an ordering to the taste of the female-reader.]

Coherence, the ordering of his novel, any ordering of his novel would, in the end, revert to common notions of space and time, to our habitual notions of how space and time are ordered. Here, Ricoeur's conception of fiction's replaying of our experience of the common notions of space and time are born out by Morelli himself.

Finally, there seems to be no remedy for what ails Morelli. Stubbornly, however, he refuses to give up. He refuses to accept the fact that he cannot write a novel that more closely adheres to his intuitive perception of his *imago mundi*:

Morelli no hubiera consentido en eso, más bien parecía buscar una cristalización que, sin alterar el desorden en que circulaban los cuerpos de su pequeño sistema planetario, permitiera la comprensión ubicua y total de su razones de ser, fueran éstas el desorden mismo, la inanidad o la gratuidad.

[Morelli would not have agreed to that; rather, it seems, he would have sought a crystallization which, without altering the disorder in which the bodies of his little planetary system circulated, would permit a ubiquitous and total comprehension of all of its reasons for being, whether they were disorder itself, inanity, or gratuity.]

Morelli will not consent to his novel's cosmic time being ordered by common notions of space-time, even though even his complete abstinence from providing any such figure still would not prevent his novel falling back into the habitual order of things. Instead of relinquishing his desire to fundamentally alter the novel as he knows it, he continues to search for a crystallization that will permit the ubiquitous comprehension of the world in its pure, unrestricted plurality. He continues, in other words, to try to find a way to write

it, Bernard's globe of figures, a crystallization of the ubiquitous comprehension of his entire world in one miraculous, multifaceted gemstone.

The final sentence of Chapter 109 is an elegant figure of this thwarted but irrepressible desire. It describes quite well the internal combustion which drives Cortazar's, Woolf's and Lispector's novel. It points as much toward the medieval problematic of the status of the universal as it does toward the unification of a work of fiction as it does toward the comprehension of our actuality:

Una cristalización en la que nada quedara subsumido, pero donde un ojo lúcido pudiese asomarse al calidoscopio y entender la gran rosa policroma, entenderla como una figura, *imago mundi* que por fuera del coladoscopio se resolvía en living room de estilo provenzal, o concierto de tías tomando té con galletitas Bagley.

[A crystallization in which nothing would remain subsumed, but where a lucid eye might peep into the kaleidoscope and understand the great polychromatic rose, understand it as a figure, an *imago mundi* that outside the kaleidoscope would be dissolved into a provincial living room, or a concert of aunts having tea and Bagley biscuits.]

A great polychromatic rose, a globe of figures, the image of the world, a figure which subsumes nothing but includes everything available to one perspective, to one lucid eye. This is the very essence of what our novelists are after: a single perspective, one mimetic scene, the artistic construction of one point of view from which to see the infinite plurality, the breadth of the universe. From that mimetic perspective, the reader could see, clear as a bell and all at once, the great polychromatic rose, as much the figure of the

totality of the novel as of the totality of actuality. The rose, like the medieval universal, would simultaneously be each individual aunt in each individual living room as well as the unification into a single entity of all aunts in all living rooms—the universal and the individual aunt simultaneously. Morelli's polychromatic rose is, like Bernard's globe of figures, one figure in which everything is represented—eternity, in short. This is what Morelli would like to write in one 500-page novel, but can't.

In responding to Bernard's hope that in the cosmic time of the novel it may be possible to construct a figure which is capable of becoming his globe of figures, the polychromatic rose, Morelli in *Rayuela* concludes that it is not possible. All novels must be limited plurals, somewhat writerly and somewhat readerly even in their cosmic time. The very capacity to unify a novel means that the figures upon which that unification are based will seem to have come from somewhere outside the reader. This perception of the intentionality of these figures ultimately humanizes the novel's cosmic time. What Morelli does show us is that the novel itself cannot express any such figure without that figure becoming part of the intentionality of the author, without the reader having to yield some of their freedom to what the author intends, to what the text denotes. What this means is that Bernard's massive simultaneity, Morelli's unlimited plural, Sartre's absolute freedom, Barthes' pure writerly, only has the possibility to occur as the unwritten, and therefore theoretically unlimited experience of the reader. The novel itself cannot express an unlimited plurality, but it might be instigated in the experience the reader has when confronting its text. The capacity of the novel to instigate such an experience is precisely what we will explore in our next chapter when we consider Lispector's *Agua Viva*.

Agua Viva and the Framing of Being

This is the only chapter whose title does not have a fictional persona attached to it: the speaking persona of Clarise Lispector's *Agua Viva* is just too deviously slippery to pin down. She refers to herself in the first person, as "I", assuming, that is, as I do, that she is female. At first this seems very simple, yet another first-person narrative, but in Lispector's text, the "I" refers to any number of personas at any give time, the most important of which are the author (fictional or otherwise), the narrator, the text of the novel itself, and the reader, who comes to identify herself at times with the "I" of the text. The speaking voice of *Agua Viva*, in other words, has a fluid identity that shifts between author, narrator, text and reader and can take on several or all of them simultaneously. It is therefore difficult to say who, exactly, is the speaking persona of *Agua Viva*, and so I simply do not identify one.

The addressee of this speaking voice, the "you" to which the "I" continually speaks, is equally fluid. "You" in Lispector's text can refer to the text itself, the reader, or even the author or narrator. The fluid identities of both the "I" who speaks and the "you" who is addressed creates a rather complex grid of possibilities:

I	you
Author	Reader
Narrator	Text
Text	Narrator
Reader	Author

At any given moment, one or all of the personas in the “I” column can be addressing one or all of the personas in the “you” column. And this only makes sense: the author, when she writes, is writing simultaneously to herself and to her reader, and yet is very much only speaking to, battling with, the text she is writing. At the same time, the reader is always “listening” to the author, but also to a fictional narrator, and is only ever reading a text, and is, sitting in a room by herself, only really talking to herself, inventing the story for herself by herself. It’s more confusing to describe than it is to read, which is what makes *Agua Viva* such a splendid study of the phenomenological nature of the experience of writing and reading that takes place through and in response to the text of the novel.

As a study of the novel, *Agua Viva* comes to the following conclusion: the novel, incapable of representing our experience of being, incapable of denoting in a mimetic scene an objective representation of the world, cannot be *about* anything but the reader’s reading experience. The reader’s comprehension of that experience as a distinct and well-defined entity is the novel’s product. The novel’s job is not to denote or describe the experience of being, but to frame and reflect the reader’s experience of being that occurs in response to and while she reads the text.

In *The Waves*, Bernard comes to the conclusion that it is not possible to construct an objective vision of the world, fictional or otherwise, in the novel’s mortal time, in any given mimetic scene. He holds out the possibility that such a representation might be possible only in the novel’s cosmic time, in its unification into a single, whole entity. Morelli, in *Rayuela*, although unwillingly, confirms Bernard’s belief in the impossibility of constructing an accurate representation of reality in the mortal time of the novel, and

then goes on to posit that such a representation is also impossible in the novel's cosmic time. For Morelli, the novel is simply not capable of such a representation, and so he puts his hope in the reader's experience of reading: if his text cannot represent reality authentically, then perhaps his reader might construct an authentic representation of *la verdadera realidad* on his or her own. *Agua Viva* confirms Morelli's conclusion that the novel cannot represent reality honestly on any of its levels, and takes the extra step of portraying any representation in the novel as a total failure. *Agua Viva*, in fact, takes this failure as its point of departure and turns its attention to the very font of Morelli's hope: the reader's reading experience. Is a true representation of *it*, an objective view of the world, possible to construct in the reader's reading experience? Yes and no, says *Agua Viva*. While the novel cannot represent *it*, providing readers only the impulse to improvise and pay attention to their own experience of being while they read, that experience is not separate from their actual experience of being. In other words, the reader, while she reads, is alive, exists in time, is, in fact, sitting in the very middle of *it*, true-reality-whatever-that-is. The novel, unable to represent this experience, merely frames a chunk of the reader's actual experience. The novel is capable of turning the reader's attention toward and framing that experience, and in framing that experience, it asks the reader to come to some understanding of what that experience was. In so doing does the novel produce its product.

In approaching *Agua Viva* it became apparent that analyzing any single block of text, as I've done with Cortázar and Woolf, would not be possible—the text is just too much of its own kind of enigmatic mass to be consolidated into one or two quotations, no matter how lengthy. This says something about the text itself, something like:

Sei que depois de me leres é difícil reproduzir de ouvido a minha música, não é possível contá-lo sem tê-la decorado. E como decorar uma coisa que não tem historia?

Mas te lebrarás de alguma coisa que também esta aconteceu na sombra. Terás compartilhado dessa primeira existência muda, terás como em tranqüilo sonho de noite tranqüila, escorrido com a resina pelo tronco de árvore. Depois dirás: nada sonhei. (74)

[I know that after you read me it's difficult to reproduce by ear my music, it's not possible to sing it without memorizing it. And how memorize something that has no history?

But you will remember something, that also this happened in the shadow. You will have been part of this first silent existence, you will have, like a tranquil dream on a tranquil night, drained the sap from the trunk of the tree. Afterwards you will say: I dreamed nothing.^{10]}

Reading this text, says the narrator, is a bit like dreaming, but not remembering the dream. It's very hard to say, exactly, what the text has just said, without returning to reciting the text itself. This is, for me, very true of the text. And it's as true of the pieces one might cut out of the text to analyze, for as soon as you separate out any meaningful quotation, as soon as you take it out of the huge contextual web that is the text of *Água Viva*, it seems to lose its meaning, to turn into something else, to turn into a dream you can't quite remember. The text, as she says, must be seen in its entirety. Its secret lies not in any individual sentence, paragraph or page, but in a single, nearly invisible thread

¹⁰ All translations of Lispector are mine.

that cannot be seen from up close. This thread runs through the text from end to end and like an island that we walk upon, it can only be seen in its entirety from some great distance, like looking down at that island from a plane in high-altitude flight:

Este texto que te dou não é para ser visto de perto: ganha sua secreta redondez antes invisível quando é visto de um avião en alto vôo. Então adivinhasse o jogo das ilhas e vêem-se canais e mares. (25)

[This text that I give you is not to be seen from up close: it gains its round secret before invisible when it is seen from a plane in high-altitude flight. So imagine for yourself the play of islands and see for yourself the canals and the oceans.]

The impossibility of seeing what *Água Viva* is about from up close is confirmed by each attempt one makes to pick out a single quote and find in it somehow that secret roundness that one has in reading dreamed but cannot remember. It's as if the quotes' meanings just drain away as soon as its attachment to the text preceding and following it are cut away. So, in attempting to construct a glimpse of the text as if from some great distance, I have tried to draw a single thread, one electrical wire, through Lispector's text. That thread is the following: since the novel cannot denote, since it cannot represent, it can at best instigate a particular kind of self-reflexive experience. I have gathered quotes of various lengths from any point and all points of the text which respond to the question of representing *it* in the novel, and I have lined them up, literally, so that they make a kind of cogent argument. I think it makes this one particular aspect of the text clear without reducing too much the text's broad and enigmatic expanse.

The Failure of Representation

Mortal Time

Like both Bernard and Morelli, *Agua Viva* abandons representation in what Ricoeur calls narrative mortal time:

Eu te digo: estou tentando captar a quarta dimensão do instante-já que de tão fugidio não é mais porque agora tornou-se um novo instante-já que também não é mais. Cada coisa tem um instante em que ela é. Quero apossar-me do é da coisa. Esses instantes que decorrem no ar que respiro: em fogos de artifício eles espocam mudos no espaço. Quero possuir os átomos do tempo. E quero capturar o presente que pela sua natureza me é interdito: o presente me foge, a atualidade me escapa, a atualidade sou eu sempre no já. (*Agua Viva*, p. 9)

[I tell you: I am trying to capture the fourth dimension of the moment-now-already that, being so fleeting, is no longer because now it has become a new moment-now-already that also is no longer. Each thing has a moment in which it is. I want to take possession of the *is* of the thing. These moments that pass in the air that I breath: like fireworks they explode silently in space. I want to possess the atoms of time. And I want to capture the present from which by its nature I am interdicted: the present flees me, actuality escapes me, actuality is me always in the now-already.]

“I,” says the speaking voice of *Agua Viva*, am interdicted from the present. Here on the very first page of the novel is the declaration of the failure of the novel’s capacity to represent the present, to represent Ricoeur’s mortal time. We see almost immediately the conflation of the persona to whom the “I” refers. The “I” is referring to at least both the

text and the narrator, if not also to the reader. Presumably, this is “I” the (implied) author telling “you” the reader what the goal of this novel is, but it is also “I” the narrator telling us that she herself, in her fictional world, has the same unachievable goal as the text she writes: to capture the present.

Via this simple conflation of the “I” as narrator and the “I” as text, the nature of reality in actuality, how we construct and perceive it, is equated with the manner in which that same reality is constructed and represented in the novel; how we perceive or fail to perceive it in one is also how we perceive or fail to perceive it in the other. This equating of our perception of reality with narrative mimesis is the same move made by Ricoeur in his considering Augustine and Aristotle simultaneously, the same move made also by Bernard and Morelli.

The description of the present as *o instante já* is an excellent depiction of Augustine’s description of the ever-fleeting and without duration present. Here the word *já* in Portuguese has the fortunate dual meaning of “now” and “already,” depending on its context. So, translating literally, we’d have to invent a bit to come up with something like “the moment-now-already” in order to capture its significance. The *instante já* is, in other words, the present that, as soon as it becomes present is also the past. This is precisely the dilemma faced by Augustine, Zeno, and Morelli in their attempts to define the nature of the present: it has no duration.

At the same time, for each thing that is, it is that thing, is such-and-such, Socrates would say, only for that one and durationless instant. What is in that one instant will never come to be again: *cada coisa tem um instante em que ela é*. This is the dilemma faced by Heraclitus: how can one step into the same river twice? How can one capture

the true essence of anything when a) that essence never repeats itself from moment to moment, and b) each moment is so without duration that as soon as it exists it has also vanished?

Here is where the idea of the fourth dimension comes as a solution. “I” as author, narrator, text and possibly reader, is after the *is, o é da coisa*, the fourth dimension, that which is of the fleeting present but somehow outlasts it—a push for sure toward Augustine’s *praesens intentio*, a means of making the synchronic out of the diachronic. If you recall, Augustine’s *praesens intentio* is a description of how the durationless present is perceived as having duration by its accumulation in our memory. Like Morelli, *Agua Viva* portrays the construction of duration out of a durationless present as a process which spans the gap between reality and text, that is, the text constructs synchronic elements out of a diachronic reality. At the same time, the “I” as narrator also has trouble making the synchronic out of the diachronic in her fictional world: the fleeting present is interdicted from not only the text, but also the fictional narrator in her natural state of being. And yet, “actuality,” says the “I,” is the state of always being in the present. The present constantly is, and yet is constantly already past. Out of this dilemma rises a duration, a semi-mystical, invisible fourth dimension, an *é* which lasts even while nothing lasts.

This fourth dimension, this duration that seems to be there but is not, that outlasts the ever-fleeting present but is nowhere to be found, is nothing short of time: “I want to possess the atoms of time” says “I.” Specifically, this is Ricoeur’s mortal time, or Husserl’s retention or Augustine’s *praesens intentio*: the establishing of duration in the

immediately lived present out of something which has none: the paradoxical state of being to which we give the name “time.”

For *Água Viva*, it is not possible to represent in the novel this state of being in the present, what Heidegger calls being in time. It is interdicted from the I-text, it flees the I-text, it escapes the I-text. At the same time, this state of being also escapes the I-author, which opens up in a much broader context Heidegger’s problem of being in time: it is a state in which we persist but fail to grab hold of not only in the novel, but in our own existence. This also equates the “I” with Morelli and Bernard in that while the “I” has a vision of the state of being in time in the present, she finds it quite difficult to articulate it, even to herself:

Mas escrever para mim é frustrador: ao escrever lido com o impossível. Com o enigma da natureza. E do Deus. Quem não sabe o que é Deus, nunca poderá saber. Do Deus é no passado que se o soube. É algo que já se sabe. (66)

[But writing for me is frustrating: in writing I deal with the impossible. With the enigma of nature. And of God. Whoever does not know what God is, never will know. God is something that one knew in the past. It is something that one already knows.]

The enigma of nature and God, the enigma of being and being in time, is something that “I” knows, but cannot transfer or articulate or even grab hold of. It is a state of knowing that merely is or is not. The “I” of *Água Viva*, like Morelli’s perception of the polychromatic rose and Bernard’s vision of his globe of figures, has a kind of contact with the enigma of nature and God, being in time, the paradoxical present, but cannot articulate it, capture it or put into the text of her novel.

The reason the I-text of *Água Viva* is incapable of expressing the enigmatic present is because narrative time is out of sync with actual time. To construct a single moment in narrative requires much longer than a moment. In order to represent that one moment, narrative must stretch it, elongate it. This is the same problem we saw with Morelli's narrative photographs: it is not possible to construct durationless mimetic scenes because narrative mimesis requires duration in order to establish itself:

Mas o instante-já é um pirilampo que acende e apaga, acende e apaga. O presente é o instante em que a roda do automóvel em alta velocidade toca minimamente no chão. E a parte da roda que ainda não tocou, tocará num imediato que absorve o instante presente e torna-o passado. Eu, viva e tremeluzente como os instantes, acendo-me e me apago, acendo e apago, acendo e apago. Só que aquilo que capto em mim tem, quando está sendo agora transposto em escrita, o desespero das palavras ocuparem mais instantes que um relance de olhar. Mais que um instante, quero o seu fluxo. (15)

[But the instant-now-already is a firefly that lights up and goes out, lights and goes out. The present is the instant in which an automobile tire at high velocity minimally touches the ground. And the part of the tire that still has not touched, will touch in an immediacy that absorbs the present instant and makes it past. I, alive and shimmering with instances, light myself and put myself out, light and go out, light and go out. It's just that that which I capture in me has, when it is being now transposed into writing, the unhappy effect of words occupying more instances than a glance.]

Here, the tire is yet another metaphor for the durationless present, as is the blinking on and off of the firefly. The present is like a firefly, each instant-now-already blinks into existence and then blinks out of existence in a linear progression. The text, like the actual present, follows a parallel linear progression of instances blinking into and out of existence. The I-text, however, in constructing one of those instances, occupies more time than the instant itself. It takes several instances in the text to construct the one instance of a glance. The mimetic representation of an instant, in other words, always takes longer than the instant itself. This elongation of the actual present makes the text's capacity to represent the present forfeit, it is the source of the text's *desespero*, the loss of hope or giving up, in attempting to accurately portray reality. The I-text's inability to construct the present leads it to abandon the construction of the present in the novel altogether. At the end of the paragraph I have just quoted, the "I" looks away from constructing "moments" to constructing the present's flux.

The idea of what the text is trying to capture in the present is further clarified as the novel goes on. By halfway through *Água Viva*, the goal of the I-text has been honed down to capturing a state of being, and this state of being is a complex simultaneity, and it is unrepresentable in words for the very same reason that the present is unrepresentable, the text elongates the moment in which the vision of that state of being persists:

Houve o que se chama de comunhão perfeita. Eu chamo isto de estado agudo de felicidade. Estou terrivelmente lúcida e parece que alcanço um plano mais alto de humanidade. Ou da desumanidade – o it.

O que faço por involuntário instinto não pode ser descrito.

Que estou fazendo ao te escrever? Estou tentando fotografar o perfume.

Escrevo-te sentada junto de uma janela aberta no alto de meu atelier.

Escrevo-te esta fac-símile de livro, o livro de quem não sabe escrever; mas é que no domínio mais leve da fala quase não sei falar. Sobretudo falar-te por escrito, eu que me habituei a que fosses a audiência, embora distraída, de minha voz. Quando pinto respeito o material que uso, respeito-lhe o primordial destino. Então quando te escrevo respeito as sílabas.

Novo instante em que vejo o que vai se seguir. Embora para falar do instante de visão eu tenha que ser mais discursiva que o instante: muitos instantes se passarão antes que eu desdobre e esgote a complexidade una e rápida de um relance. (50)

[There was what you would call a perfect communion. I call this an acute state of happiness. I am terribly lucid and it seems like I have reached the highest plane of humanity. Or of inhumanity—the *it*.

What I do by involuntary instinct cannot be described.

What am I doing by writing you? I am trying to photograph perfume.

I write you seated by an open window at the top of my atelier.

I write you this facsimile of a book, the book of someone who does not know how to write; but it's that in the lightest domain of speech I almost don't know how to talk. Above all else I speak to you through writing, I that am habituated to you being the audience, even distracted, of my voice. When I paint I respect the material that I use, I respect its primordial destiny. So when I write you I write respecting the syllables.

New instant in which I see what will follow. Even though in order to speak of the instant of vision I have to be more discursive than the instant: many instances will themselves pass before I can unfold and empty the complexity of a rapid glance.]

The concept of what she's after is here more focused: the present, what she's trying to represent, has been refined into an instinctual state of being, not necessarily knowing or perceiving, but being. This state of being is a kind of sharp, acute happiness. This is the highest plane of humanity, or complete dis-humanity, and it has no name so she calls it *it*. [I italicize the word "it" in my translation to simulate the estrangedness that "it" has in Portuguese, as it's not a Portuguese word, but an English one, and it's also a neuter—neither feminine nor masculine—which does not exist in Portuguese.] This form of being is instinctual, once again reinforcing the idea that the "I" of *Água Viva*, like Bernard and Morelli, encounters what needs to be written into the novel on a regular basis, has a kind of pre-linguistic understanding of *it* which is not translatable into words. Trying to write *it*, "I" tells us, is like trying to photograph perfume. Earlier "I" perfumed herself all over as a prelude to writing. And why can't this state of happiness be photographed by her text? Again, as we saw before, the words cannot capture her *it* because writing is more discursive than an instant, because many instances would pass before the united and rapid complexity of a single glance could be explained. In order to unfold and empty the complex, simultaneous set of things that is contained in one instance, it would take the text a long time. What "I" wants in her text, in other words, is the united complexity of a glance to be presented in her novel in one instant. This refined version of what "I" wants to write in her novel is not just a moment in time, but everything that is that moment in its

total and instantaneous complexity. That instantaneous complexity, the state of being that is *it*, the text cannot photograph. Instead of a glance, the text shows us a photograph of perfume, missing *it* completely.

We can now see that *Agua Viva* agrees with our other two fictional theorists. Like Morelli put forth in *Rayuela*, there can be no such thing as a narrative photograph, no narrative instances, no representation of single moments. The narrative, the novel, can only give us cinema, an elongation of the present, which falsifies *it*. And like Bernard put forth in *The Waves*, that cinematic elongation allows for no simultaneity—the complexities of any instance cannot be captured in the text as a simultaneity. The text instead unfolds and empties the complexity of any given instant over an artificially elongated length of time. According to Lispector, not even one of Bernard's multiple points of views, not even one glance, can be accurately constructed. As far as *Agua Viva* is concerned, the present, Ricoeur's mortal time, *it*, cannot be represented mimetically in the novel.

Cosmic Time

According to *Agua Viva*, the novel has no capacity whatsoever to generate what Ricoeur has called cosmic time, or the accumulation of the narrative present into things like a fictional day or week or year:

E eis que percebo que quero para mim o substrato vibrante da palavra repetida em canto gregoriano. Estou consciente de que tudo o que sei não posso dizer, só sei pintando ou pronunciando sílabas cegas de sentido. E se tenho aqui que usar-te palavras, elas têm que fazer um sentido quase que só corpóreo, estou em luta com a vibração última. Para te dizer o meu substrato faço uma frase de

palavras feitas apenas dos instantes-já. Lê então o meu invento de pura vibração sem significado senão o de cada esfuziante sílaba, lê o que agora se segue: “com o correr dos séculos perdi o segredo do Egito, quando eu me movia em longitude, latitude e altitude com ação energética dos elétrons, prótons, nêutrons, no fascínio que é a palavra e sua sombra”. Isso que te escrevi é um desenho eletrônico e não tem passado ou futuro: é simplesmente já. (11)

[And it's there that I perceive that I want for myself the vibrating substratum of the word repeated in a Gregorian chant. I am conscious of the fact that everything I know I cannot say, I only know painting or pronouncing syllables blind to meaning. And if I have here to use-you words, they have to make a sense that is almost only corporeal, I am in a fight with the ultimate vibration. In order to tell you my substratum I make a phrase of words made only of moments-now-already. Read then my invention of pure vibration without meaning if not that of each effusive syllable, read what now follows: “with the passing of the centuries I lost the secret of Egypt, when I moved myself in longitude, latitude and altitude with the energetic action of electrons, protons and neutrons, in the fascination that is the word and its shadow.” This that I write you is an electronic design and it has no past or future: it is simply right now.]

Words, the text, is just a vibration, blind to any meaning. It doesn't really tell us anything. All fiction, all novels all stories are just a *right now*, an electronic design without future or past. Her example story is, interestingly enough, a story of history since Egypt—the story of all humanity, the story of cosmic time itself, its secret lost as she moved through the three dimensions of space according to the laws of microphysics in

the fascination that is “the word and its shadow.” This is a story of all space and time since Egypt, and yet no matter what the text pretends to tell about, no matter what expanse of space or time the story describes or denotes, it is just an electronic design that creates a *right now*, a moment-now-already, a fictional present (not forgetting that this fictional present itself is a failed attempt to represent the actual present—and here is the problem of extracting quotations from *Agua Viva*’s intricately woven textual web).

This creation in narrative of a history according to the common notions of historical time and causality, precisely what *Agua Viva*’s story of time since Egypt represents, is what for Ricoeur constitutes cosmic time. Each *instante* of narrative mortal time, each *right now*, should be coordinated into such a story such that each *right now* could be placed on the space and time map of the novel’s fictional history of mankind since Egypt. This coordination of *right nows* according to *Agua Viva* is not possible because the story of Egypt creates nothing but another fictional present. The novel, even though it cannot represent them accurately, cannot construct anything other than a *já*, a right now, a fictional present. The text, in other words, has no real historical depth, nor can it construct one. No matter what higher order of time the text attempts to create by describing or denoting it, the only real product is the construction of yet another narrative present, even though that present is a perpetual falsification of the “I’s” experience of that same present, even though the present the text constructs is just a photograph of perfume.

*The Flux as a Form of Being: An Improvised,
Non-Representational Experience of Time Passing*

The failure of representation in the novel due to its lack of any sort of cosmic time joined with the novel’s inability to represent the present to any degree of accuracy due to

its unavoidable “stretching” of the durationless present leads *Água Viva* to focus on constructing an experience of flux like the one experienced in the actual present. As “I” says in a phrase quoted above: “Mais que um instante, quero o seu fluxo.” [More than an instant, I want its flux.] One part of the present, one of its aspects, is that it contains within it a kind of flux, and this flux seems to find a parallel in the novel. The novel’s always *right now*, elongated, false representation of the present is, if not useful as a representation, perhaps useful as an experience of time passing, and this construction of an experience of time passing is, as far as *Água Viva* is concerned, the novel’s only valuable, expressive medium:

Escrevo-te como exercicio de esboços antes de pintar. Vejo palavras. O que falo é puro presente e este livro é uma linha reta no espaço. É sempre atual, e o fotômetro de uma máquina fotográfica se abre e imediatamente fecha, mas guardando em si o flash. Mesmo que eu diga “vivi” or “viverei” é presente porque eu os digo já. (17)

[I write you as a sketching exercise before painting. I see words. That which I say is pure present and this book is a straight line in space. It is always actual, and the photometer of a camera opens and immediately closes, but it holds within itself the flash. Even if I were to say “I lived” or “I will live,” it is the present because I say them now.]

The linear text of the novel is something like a constantly open shutter with a flash that’s permanently on. There is never an ending or finishing of the flash. The photometer or light meter, unlike the text, captures the flash and holds it inside of itself. The text does not; it just keeps going, is always in the state of flashing, of capturing, but it never arrives

at the state of having captured anything. This is what “I” means when she says the text is always *right now*. This passing of things before the open shutter of the camera is what constitutes the I-text’s flux, and it is all that the I-author has to work with in attempting to communicate something honest through her novel.

The continuous flux of the narrative’s constantly open camera shutter is never segmented into any single photo, very much like Zeno’s unsegmentable line of motion. In this flux, no individual moment of the present can be constructed in its unified and immediate complexity. “I” makes use of the metaphor of the photograph just as Morelli does in describing the present in its ideal, durationless state, only here the photo is like her image of the text as a firefly: it is something that eludes us, something we cannot have either in actuality or in a text. This flux of things passing before the open lens of a camera, which is the medium, the material the novel offers the I-author in attempting to photograph or paint the perfume that is her state of being, is nothing short of a fictional experience of time passing:

Neste instante-já estou envolvida por um vagueante desejo difuso de maravilhamento e milhares de reflexos do sol na água que corre de bica no relva de um jardim todo maduro de perfumes, jardim e sombras que invento já e agora e que são o meio concreto de falar neste meu instante de vida. Meu estado é o de jardim com água correndo. Descrevendo-o tento misturar palavras para que o tempo se faça. O que te digo deve ser lido rapidamente como quando se olha.

(16)

[In this instant-now-already I am engulfed by a wandering, diffuse desire for marvelousness and thousands of reflections of the sun in the water which flows

from the spout in the grass of a garden all ripe with perfumes, garden and shadow that I invent now [já] and now [agora] and that are my concrete means of speaking in this my instant of life. My state is that of the garden with the water flowing. Describing it I try to mix words so that time makes itself. What I tell you should be read rapidly like when one looks.]

The state of the novel, the continually open camera lens, is that of time passing. The I-text makes time pass for the reader, and this is the flux that the novel is capable of producing. This flux doesn't represent reality in any direct or accurate way, but it does offer a kind of experience that is similar to being in reality: one experiences time passing, the water flows out of the spout in her suddenly constructed mimetic scene, even though the thousands of diffuse reflections that shine out from that flowing water are not captured by the text, their complexity lost even as the text encourages time to make itself. The construction of this experience, the text's ability to encourage time to make itself, is where the "I" of *Água Viva* hopes she can build something like a photograph of the perfume that is her acute state of happiness, her unsayable vision of reality.

The I-text's construction of the experience of the fictive flow of time is a particular kind of experience that the reader has with herself as she reads and the writer has with herself as she writes:

Também tenho que te escrever porque tua seara é a das palavras discursivas e não o direto de minha pintura. (11)

[I also have to write you because your harvest is that of discursive words and not the directness of my painting.]

“You” here is most predominantly the text: your harvest, meaning the text’s, is not direct like it is in painting, but discursive. Who reaps this harvest is the reader, and so the harvest of the text also belongs to the reader: what the reader takes from this textual field of grain is not direct, but something indirect. In other words:

“O que te falo nunca é o que eu te falo e sim outra coisa.” (15)

[What I tell you never is what I tell you and is instead something else.]

What the I-text tells us, what we reap from it, is never what it tells us, it’s always something else. The same is true for the I-author. Always what the I-author tells us through the intermediary of the I-text is never what the author tells us, but something else entirely.

This something else is a form of being instigated by the text:

A garantia única é que eu nasci. Tu és uma forma de ser eu, e eu uma forma de te ser: eis os limites de minha possibilidade. (61)

[The only guarantee is that I was born. You are a form of being me, and I a form of being you: such are the limits of my possibility.]

Taking the I as the I-text, the only guarantee the text has is that it has been born, that it has come into existence, that the fictive flow of time has begun. This is equally true for the I-narrator in her own fictional universe and for us in our real universe as well: being born is our only guarantee. This being born is a form of being, of coming into being; it is what marks the beginning of being. This form of being is established through and by the I-text for the I-narrator on one side and for the you-reader on the other: I (the text) is a form of being you (the reader), and also you (the text) is a form of being me (the narrator). The pronouns can be shuffled if you like, to the same effect. (Such is the

efficacy of Lispector's use of the fluid "I" and "you.") All of this to say, quite succinctly, that the (real) author instigates a form of being by writing, and the (real) reader instigates another form of being by reading. The text instigates in the writer and the reader distinct forms of being, and these forms of being, their establishment, forms the limits of the text's possibilities, of what the novel can possibly do.

The "I" equates this form of being very much with a birth, and through the imagery of the birth makes it clear that what the reader gives birth to and what the writer gives birth to is an experience of a certain state of being in which time is passing and that no one state of being has anything whatsoever to do any another state of being. Each state of being birthed at each moment upon each reading is its own distinct fact:

Tenho uma coisa importante para te dizer. É que não estou brincando: *it* é elemento puro. É material do instante do tempo. Não estou coisa-ficando nada: estou tendo a verdadeiro parto do *it*. Sinto-me tonta como quem vai nascer.

[I have something important to tell you. It's that I'm not kidding: *it* is pure element. *It* is the material of the instant of time. I am not thingifying anything: I am having the true birth of *it*. I feel stunned like someone who is about to be born.]

What is being given birth to is the material of the instant of time, the true essence of being in the present, not an image or representation of it, not a *thing* made out of the experience of being in time, but the state of being in time itself, *it* itself. She continues with the metaphor:

Nascer: já assisti gato parindo. Sai o gato envolto num saco de água e todo encolhido dentro. A mãe lambe tanta vezes o saco de água que este enfim se

rompe e eis um gato quase livre, preso apenas pelo cordão umbilical. Então a gata-mãe-creadora rompe com os dentes esse cordão e aparece mais um fato no mundo. Este processo é *it*. Não estou brincando. Estou grave. Porque estou livre. Sou tão simples.

Estou dando a você a liberdade. Antes rompo o saco de água. Depois corto o cordão umbilical. E você está vivo por conta própria. (32)

[To be born: I have already seen a cat giving birth. The cat comes out encased in a sack of water all bunched up inside. The mother licks the water sack so many times that finally it breaks and there is a cat almost alive, held only by the umbilical cord. So the cat-mother-creator breaks with her teeth this cord and there appears one more fact in the world. This process is *it*. I am not kidding. I am serious. Because I am free. I am very simple.

I am giving you liberty. Before I broke the water sack. After I cut the umbilical cord. And you are alive of your own accord.]

The I-text gives birth to *it*, the material of the instant of time, which, like the cat, it sets free as one more fact in the world. Here the “you” in the final line is both the you-reader, which is suddenly set free, cast into a state of existence by the I-text, and the you-text, which the I-author has just given birth to. The “you” here is also the *it* itself: the state of being in which time is passing, the embodiment of time passing itself. What the novel produces, its “facts,” then, are these consolidated states of being which the reader, text and author, each create and set free. Each of these states of being, moreover, are, once set free, given their own distinct life: they don’t depend on or refer to each other, they don’t point to anything but themselves.

The text, then, is nothing but the constant, unceasing birthing of the fact of the material of time, a kind of continual eruption of the experience of *it*, of the individual and distinct facts that are themselves the material of time:

Nasci.

Pausa.

Maravilhoso escândalo: nasço.

[...]

“Eu sou” é o mundo. Mundo sem tempo. A minha consciência agora é leve e é ar. O ar não tem lugar nem época. O ar é o não lugar onde tudo vai existir. O que estou escrevendo é musica do ar. A formação do mundo.

[...]

Eu sou puro *it* que pulsava ritmadamente. Mas sinto que em breve estarei pronta para falar em ele ou ela. História não te prometo aqui. Mas tem *it*. Quem suporta? *It* é mole e é ostra e é placenta. Não estou brincando pois não sou um sinônimo—sou o próprio nome. Há uma linha de aço atravessando isto tudo que te escrevo. Há o futuro. Que é hoje mesmo. (34)

[I was born.

Pause.

Marvelous scandal: I am born.

...

“I am” is the world. The world without time. My consciousness now is light and is air. The air has neither place or epoch. The air is the non-place where

everything comes to exist. That which I am writing is music of the air. The formation of the world.

...

I am pure *it* pulsing rhythmically. But I feel that soon I will be ready to speak of he or she. History I do not promise you. But it has *it*. Who can stand this? It is malleable and is oyster and is placenta. There is a line of steel which traverses all of this that I write you. It has future. Which is itself today.]

Here “I” is more than anything the I-text: I am the world, says the text. I am born, I create the world in a non-place, out of air. I am it pulsing rhythmically—I am, in other words, the construction of an experience of being in time, not history, not a story, but a rhythmic pulsing though which the reader and the writing have an experience of being, and that experience of being is the “fact” that the writing produces. These “facts,” this material of being is independent of what has produced it, the cord has been cut, but it, like the child of the mother, is of what has produced it without being a representation or denotation of what has produced it.

Thus does the text, constructing only a *now*, set loose its fictional world as the instigation of a certain distinct and autonomous experience of being in time. There is no denotation or representation in the birthing of these facts, there is only the fact of their being birthed—this experience just *is*. This state of being is nothing short of a description of the construction of fictional time as Ricoeur has defined it only devoid of any denotation or representation. For the “I” of *Agua Viva*, the novel does create an experience of fictive time, but without that experience referring to or pointing at anything like a fictive world. *Agua Viva* removes denotation from Ricoeur’s definition of fictive

time, removes the idea that the temporal experience fiction constructs is *about* anything other than itself.

The Text as Frame and Mirror

If birth represents the origin of the state of existence that is a non-denotative experience of the passing of fictive time, then death becomes that which represents the end of that state of existence, the end of reading for the I-reader and the end of writing for I-author. The state of being, in turn, becomes that which lies between its own birth and its own death, and the text becomes that which determines the beginning and the end of that life; the text becomes that which frames and encases that special state of being that is *it*. While reading persists, while the text lasts, *it* is constantly being born and is therefore alive, and yet it is only alive because the text frames it, only because the text constantly threatens to terminate, to kill *it*, that *it* in fact seems alive, that we “live” it (*it*):

Nós—diante do escândalo da morte.

[. . .]

Minha liberdade pequena e enquadrada me une à liberdade do mundo—mas o que é uma janela senão o ar emoldurado por esquadrias? Estou asperamente viva. Vou embora—diz a morte sem acrescentar que me leva consigo. E estremeço em respiração arfante por ter que acompanhá-la. Eu sou a morte. É neste meu ser mesmo que se dá a morte—como te explicar? (24)

[Us—before the scandal of death.

...

My liberty, small and framed, unites me with the liberty of the world—but what is a window if not air shaped by frames? I am incongruously alive. I am leaving—said death without bringing up that it takes me with it. And I convulse in rapid breaths for having to accompany it. I am death. It is in this my being itself that gives itself to death—how do I explain it to you?]

The constant birth that is the text carries always with it death—to be alive is to be always before the scandal of death, and this is what makes the text a kind of framed experience of being. This experience of being, of the fictional passage of time, is framed by its own birth and death like a window frames the air. Inside that frame is the tenuous experience of being which at any given moment could vanish. The novel's purpose, what the text actually does according to *Agua Viva*, is to frame that experience.

The idea of the text as constant birth confronting constant death is further refined into the idea of an improvisation: the reader and writer's giving birth to the experience of being produced in response to the text is a form of improvisation, a self-originated, unique performance:

“Sei o que estou fazendo aqui: estou improvisando. Mas que mal tem isto? Improviso como no jazz improvisam música, jazz em fúria, improviso diante da platéia. (21)

[I know what I am doing here: I am improvising. But what's bad about that? I improvise like in jazz they improvise music, jazz in fury, I improvise in front of the audience.]

The I-author in writing improvises before her audience, and the I-reader does so before the text, she improvises, that is, she gives birth to *it* as she reads, creating and setting *it*

free. Only while this improvisation lasts does the thing that is the novel, this experience of being, last:

“E enquanto dura a improvisação eu nasço.” (87)

[While this improvisation lasts I am born.]

“I” here is *it*, the experience of the fictive state of being. As long as the improvisation lasts, *it* lasts, is constantly birthed. As long as the reader’s improvisation continues *it* continues to be born. As long as the author’s improvisation continues, *it* continues to be born.

To be very clear, the *it* framed by the text and given birth by the author has nothing to do with the *it* that is framed by the text and given birth by the reader. The reader’s and author’s birthing of this experience is ultimately solitary and separate from one another, re-affirming once again that the text is not a representation, a denotation, or a method of transfer:

E eis que sinto que em breve nos separaremos. Minha verdade espantada é que eu sempre estive só de ti e não sabia. Agora sei: sou só. (65)

And it’s that I feel that soon we will separate. My frightened truth is that I always was separate from you and I didn’t know it. Now I know: I am alone.

The I-author makes it clear, she has always been alone. So too the I-text and the I-reader. Each one’s improvisation has nothing whatsoever to do with one another. The reader and the author each improvise *it* in their own separate realms. Nothing, in other words, is shared, passed or communicated between reader and author, or between the text and the reader or between the text and the author.

The idea that the reader is improvising, that is, creating in response to an imperative that is the text, is very much like Sartre's conception of reading as directed creation that we saw in our study of Morelli in *Rayuela*. *Agua Viva* portrays the text as being exactly what Morelli desired for his theoretical text, namely an equal and identical imperative to both the reader and the writer: both, according to *Agua Viva*, confront the same empty page when performing their improvisations. For Sartre, the text of the novel is an imperative to the reader to follow the signposts the author has laid out:

To say that they [the objects of the novel] are unexpressed is hardly the word; for they are precisely the inexpressible. And that is why one does not come upon them at any definite moment in the reading; they are everywhere and nowhere. . . . The reader must invent them all in a continual exceeding of the written thing. To be sure, the author guides him, but all he does is guide him. The landmarks he sets up are separated by the void. The reader must unite them; he must go beyond them. In short, reading is directed creation. (489)

The I of *Agua Viva* makes it quite clear that *Agua Viva* is, just as Sartre is describing, an imperative to the reader:

Porque sou uma pergunta. (36)

[Because I am a question.]

In *Agua Viva*, the text itself is a question just as Sartre described it, but it's a question posed to both the reader and the writer, an imperative to both of them to come up with an answer. The question is answered, according to *Agua Viva*, by the improvisation performed by the reader, on one side, and the writer, on the other. Such is *Agua Viva's* conception of "directed creation." *Agua Viva's* conception of the imperative of the novel

as not just an imperative to the reader, however, is a departure from Sartre. For Sartre, while the writer confronts a blank page, meeting “everywhere only *his* knowledge, *his* will, *his* plans, in short, himself” (485),

“the reader, on the contrary, progresses in relative security. However far he may go, the author has gone farther. Whatever connections he may establish among the different parts of the book—among the chapters or the words—he has a guarantee, namely, that they have been expressly willed” (492).

This distinction in imperatives and tasks does not exist in *Água Viva*'s conception of the novel. No landmarks are passed to the reader from the author, and no cues or clues as to how to perform the improvisation that is the response to that imperative. Just as in Morelli's ideal novel, *Água Viva* portrays the text of the novel as forcing both the author and the reader to confront a blank page. Without denotation, the text is an imperative which leads the reader nowhere but back to herself:

Olha para mim e me ama. Não: tu olhas para ti e te amas. É o que está certo. (87)

[Look at me and love me. No: you look at yourself and love yourself. It is what is right.]

In the penultimate paragraph of the novel, the “I” reiterates the separateness of the improvisations performed by the author, the text and the reader. The real subject of the novel for the reader has been not the I-author or the I-text, its landmarks or story, but the reader herself, looking at herself, that is what is correct. This also holds for the author: the author, confronting the imperative that is the novel, improvises an experience of being which is ultimately a self-reflexive exercise, which transmits nothing. *Água Viva* sees the text as an imperative as does Sartre, but that imperative is a completely self-

reflexive one, leveled identically and equally at both reader and writer: both confront an empty expanse of time, encased by the text, in which to perform their individual improvisations.

Without denoting anything, with no transfer between author and reader, without representation, the text becomes a pure imperative, that which instigates the improvisation of the reader and the writer, and nothing else:

Uma chusma dissonante de insetos me rodeia, luz de lamparina acesa que sou.
Exorbito-me então para ser. Sou em transe. Penetro no ar circundante. Que febre: não consigo parar de viver. Nesta densa selva de palavras que envolvem espessamente o que sinto e penso e vivo e transforma tudo o que sou em alguma coisa minha que no entanto fica inteiramente fora de mim. (61)

A dissonant mass of insects circles around me, light of a light lamp that I am. I exceed myself in order to be. I am in trance. I penetrate the surrounding air. What fever: I cannot stop living. In this dense forest of words that encase expressly that which I think and live and transforms everything that I am into something that is mine that even so rests entirely outside of me.

The I-text here is like a light around which hover readers and the author. The text contains nothing, gives nothing, but it is that which draws the readers and author, like insects to a light, to perform their own improvisations. The text is in this sense nothing but pure instigating impulse. Out of that text, out of that dense forest of words that is the light of the text, what is lived and thought by the I-author or I-reader as they buzz about the I-text-lamp is transformed into something that is at once theirs and yet outside of them at the same time. This thing that is outside of them, of course, is the form of being

that is *it*: an improvisation that is the continual birthing of *it*. This birthing takes place outside of the I-text itself, is not within it; the text is merely that which instigates it.

In another metaphor of the text as purely a means of instigating the improvisation of *it*, the text is portrayed as a kind of bait:

Então escrever é o modo de quem tem a palavra como isca: a palavra pescando o que não é palavra. Quando essa não-palavra – a entrelinha – morde a isca, alguma coisa se escreveu. Uma vez que se pescou a entrelinha, poder-se-ia com alívio jogar a palavra fora. Mas aí cessa a analogia: a não-palavra, ao morder a isca, incorporou-a. O que salva então é escrever distraidamente.

Não quero ter a terrível limitação de quem vive apenas do que é passível de fazer sentido. Eu não: quero é uma verdade inventada. (20)

[So writing is the mode of someone who has the word like bait: the word fishing for what is not-word. When this not-word—the betweenlines—bites the bait, something has written itself. Once you've caught the betweenlines, you can with relief throw the word out. But there the analogy ends: the not-word, upon biting the bait, incorporates it. What saves then is to write distractedly.

I don't want the terrible limitation of someone who lives only by that which is passable to make sense of. Not me: what I want is an invented truth.]

The words of the text are like bait, drawing to themselves that which is not-word, namely, the improvisation of *it*, and when the not-word bites the bait, then a truth has been invented: *it*, the material of time, a fact, has been invented, birthed. As soon as it is birthed, however, the analogy ends, and the text no longer functions as bait. The not-word, being turned into or fused to the word, is impoverished, is no longer the experience

itself, no longer a form of being but a dead thing on a hook. The I-author/I-text does not want what can be made sense of in words, does not want dead fish, in a sense. She does not want to limit herself to what it is possible to say. The only option is to not dwell on what has already become word, but to look toward the invented truth of the not-word, that is to say, toward the improvisation of *it*. The text in itself is nothing but the bait which draws the reader and author to perform their individual, distinct and disconnected improvisations. What is written has already become what “I” no longer wants.

So, what is the text then if it’s just dead fish? To put it simply, the text is a mirror, itself devoid of anything, a kind of pure emptiness waiting. As the text instigates an improvisation on the part of the reader, and as nothing is transferred between author and reader, as both are ultimately alone and enveloped in their own improvisation of *it*, the text is merely a point of reflection, a mirror showing us what we improvise before it, the author seeing herself and the readers themselves:

O que é um espelho? É o único material inventado que é natural. Quem olha um espelho, quem consegue vê-lo vem se ver, quem entende que a sua profundidade consiste em ele ser vazio, quem caminha para dentro de seu espaço transparente sem deixar nele o vestígio da própria imagem—esse alguém percebeu o seu mistério de coisa. Para isso há de se surpreendê-lo quando está sozinho, quando pendurado num quarto vazio, sem esquecer que a mais tênue agulha diante dele poderia transformá-lo em simples imagem de uma agulha, tão sensível é o espelho na sua qualidade de reflexão levíssima, só imagem e não o corpo. Corpo de coisa. (71)

[What is a mirror? It is the only invented material that is natural. Whoever looks in a mirror, whoever manages to see one comes to see himself, whoever understands that its profundity consists in its being empty, whoever walks into its transparent space without leaving within it the vestige of his own image—this person will have perceived the mystery of the thing. For this one has to surprise it when it's alone, when it's hanging in an empty room, without forgetting that the most tenuous needle in front of it could transform it into the simple image of a needle, so sensitive is the mirror in its quality of the lightest reflection, just the image and not the body. The body of the thing.]

And to be clear, the text itself is this mirror:

Não, eu não descrevi o espelho—eu fui ele. E as palavras são elas mesmas, sem tom de discurso. (72)

[No, I didn't describe the mirror—I was the mirror. And the words are themselves, without a discursive tone.]

The novel on its own with no one peering into it, with no one reading or writing it, when the book is closed and on the shelf, is a mirror in which nothing is reflected: it contains nothing in itself. It is impossible to perceive the text, to read or write, to peer into the open book without at the same time seeing yourself, your own reflection where a moment before there was nothing, without putting into the emptiness that is the text what one brings with oneself. The text, like the mirror, has the possibility to reflect everything and anything. It is pure possibility until someone looks into it, and then it becomes that one thing, that one face, that one needle, fixed and finite.

The text itself, its own substance, however, is never fixed and finite—it is the open camera lens waiting to imprint, the mirror that can make of anything a bodiless image, but it can only do so when someone looks into it, and when they do, the text ceases to appear empty, that is, ceases to appear as itself and instead seems to have always been that which is peering into it: the face of the reader.

The novel itself, devoid of our own improvised response to it, is nearly impossible to perceive, but this is precisely what the novel is according to *Água Viva*: a mirror reflecting nothing but our own faces. And around this mirror is a frame, the frame of the text. The novel, says *Água Viva*, is a framed mirror in which we watch ourselves improvise an experience of *it*.

While the novel's framing and reflecting of our improvisation of being is temporary, our act of improvisation in reality, in our real flesh-and-blood lives, continues both before and after the birth and death of the text, both inside and outside the mirrored frame that is the novel:

Ah este flash de instantes nunca termina. Meu canto do it nunca termina? Vou acabá-lo deliberadamente por um ato voluntário. Mas ele continua em improviso constante, criando sempre e sempre o presente que é o futuro.

Este improviso é. (86)

[Ah this flash of instances never ends. My song of it will never end? I will end it deliberately by a voluntary act. But it will continue in constant improvisation, creating always and always the present that is the future.

This improvisation is.]

The text is a kind of temporary frame and mirror for the reader, it frames the reader's experience while she reads, while she improvises *it* before the reflective surface of the text. But that experience of being, the I-author's improvisation in creating the text is carried on by the reader once she leaves the text's frame behind: she continues to improvise *it*, to experience the material of time, just as does the author when she has finished improvising her writing. The improvisation of *it* when reading, in other words, is the same improvisation performed when living; the text just frames and reflects it.

Lispector's "I," like Barthes' *S/Z*, sees the object of Sartre's directed creation as not an object at all, but as part of a continuum of the exercising of making meaning. Quoting once again Barthes' ideas on the subject of reading as a continuing form of creation, we can contrast Barthes' use of the pronoun "I" with *Agua Viva*'s of the same pronoun:

It is a form of work (which is why it would be better to speak of a lexeological act—even a lexeo-graphical act, since I write my reading), and the method of this work is topological: I am not hidden within the text, I am simply irrecoverable from it: my task is to move, to shift systems whose perspective ends neither at the text nor at the "I": in operational terms, the meanings I find are established not by "me" or by others, but by their *systemic* mark: there is no other *proof* of a reading than the quality and endurance of its systemics; in other words: than its functioning. (10)

Barthes' "I," like the "I" of *Agua Viva*, is engaged in a form of work, what *Agua Viva* calls improvisation, and what Barthes called the writing of his own reading. For both Barthes' and *Agua Viva*'s "I's," the form of work performed in reading, and in *Agua*

Viva's case also in writing, does not cease or begin with the text itself: it is something that "I" moves through as part of the ongoing becoming of their own being, of *it*. The novel, in other words, for Barthes as for *Agua Viva*, is a frame through which the reader walks, through which a process is engaged that focuses attention in a particular way on the making of meaning, on the improvising and writing of our own being.

Interestingly though, where for Barthes the "I" is irrecoverable from the text, the "I" of *Agua Viva* feels that it is the text that is irrecoverable from the "I": the text is nothing but a means of focusing attention on the "I." In this sense, the "I" of *Agua Viva* promotes the "I" above the text, it is the "I" that is served by the text, where for Barthes the text itself is that which is served, that which is constituted by the "I."

For both *Agua Viva* and Barthes, the actual termination of seeking new meanings, that is, the establishment of set meanings, is the death of reading:

To read is to find meanings, and to find meanings is to name them; but these named meanings are swept toward other names; names call to each other, reassemble, and their grouping calls for further naming: I name, I unname, I rename: so the text passes: it is a nomination in the course of becoming, a tireless approximation, a metonymic labor. (11)

This is a virtual restatement of the metaphor of writing as fishing: as soon as the not-word has bitten the bait, as soon as it has become word, then its value is over. The value of reading, for Barthes and for *Agua Viva*, lies not in its set meanings, but in the search that it inspires, in the point of departure, the casting once again the line of the text into the dark ocean of the not-word.

For the “I” of *Agua Viva*, the novel frames and reflects what Barthes describes as a form of work: the reader’s improvisation of *it*. The novel is, to borrow Lispector’s metaphor of fishing, a self-invented film of and about “I” while “I” fishes all alone on some rocky coast for what is not-word. The “I” of course is both the reader and the writer. The improvisation, the act of fishing, is not separate and distinct from the act of fishing in reality, from really fishing: the text merely temporarily frames and reflects that act in a bodiless phantasm, in something as light and airy as a film projected onto a wall, as an image in a mirror.

The Object of the Novel: A Framed and Reflected Improvisation

On page 80 the “I” of *Agua Viva* says she wanted to write down what she was experiencing, to capture her state of being in words:

Essa felicidade eu quis tornar eterna por intermédio da objetivação da palavra.(80)
 [This happiness I wanted to make eternal through the intermediary of the objectification of the word.]

But this, it turns out, is not possible. “I’s” experience of happiness is lost when turned into words, as words in the novel do not denote and cannot construct the present, never mind photograph the perfume that is her state of happiness. Instead of transmitting her own experience of happiness, “I” settles for what the novel can do: induce the reader to improvise her own experience before the framing, reflective surface of the text. The reader, pausing for a moment before this mirror, improvises her own experience of *it*, performs the work that is reading, fishes for the non-word. The reader has a certain experience, separate and distinct from the author’s and from other readers, distinct even

from her other readings of the same text, as each improvised *it* is the birth of its own free fact. If there is an object of the novel, if the novel produces a specific thing that is the same in each and every improvisation, if it can be said to “say” anything, then that thing can only be found in the reader’s comprehension of her own experience. We can see this in the swift summary of the novel’s theories in its final lines:

Aquilo que ainda vai ser depois—é agora. Agora é o domínio de agora. E enquanto dura a improvisação eu nasço.

E eis que depois de uma tarde de “quem sou eu” e de acordar à uma hora da madrugada ainda em desespero—eis que às três horas de madrugada acordei e me encontrei. Fui ao encontro de mim. Calma, alegre, plenitude sem fulminação. Simplesment eu sou eu. E você é você. É vasto, vai durar.

O que te escrevo é um “isto”. Não vai parar: continua.

Olha para mim e me ama. Não: tu olhas para ti e te amas. É o que está certo.

O que te escrevo continua e estou enfeitiçada. (87)

[That which is still to come afterwards—is now. Now is the dominion of now. And while this improvisation lasts I am born.

And there is after an afternoon of “who am I” and of waking up at one o’clock in the morning still without hope—there is that at three o’clock in the morning I woke up and I found myself. I went to the encounter of myself. Calm, happy. Plenitude without explosion. Simply I am I. And you are you. It’s vast, it will endure.

What I write you is a “this.” It will not stop, it continues.

Look at me and love me. No, look at yourself and love yourself. It's what is right.

What I write you continues and I am bewitched.]

What is created by the text is a "this," a "something," The reader's filling in the nature of that "something" is the reader looking at herself, looking at herself looking at herself in the mirror that is the text and coming to terms with what that "this" is. "This" is just a name for what was improvised by the reader: *it*, an improvisation, "X", whatever you want to call it. The reader's comprehension of it, or *it*, it's unification into a single "this," is the ultimate object of the novel, its constant and uniform product.

Defining One's Own Experience

Agua Viva portrays the object of the novel as that which is produced when the reader comes to terms with the form of being she improvises before the reflective surface of the novel. The very phrase "come to terms" simply begs the question the novel struggles with: how put that experience in words, that is, how find the proper terms to express such a thing. Even so, the determination of what that form of being is, the means of wrestling with it, is the product of the novel, it is the uniform, single thing that is produced in each and every reading of the novel *Agua Viva*. It is the only thing guaranteed to be there.

On top of that, *Agua Viva*, in its definition of the novel, simply erases the lines which separate the experience of being while reading from the experience of being while not reading: being is being, whether you are reading, fishing or looking out the window. The novel is thereby relieved of the burden of constructing *it*, as the reader has already

brought the true *it* with her. The mere fact of her presence before the text is undeniable proof of this fact. The novel's only job, then, is to frame a segment of the reader's ongoing experience and draw her attention to it, give the reader a means of seeing it. *Agua Viva* undeniably does this. In this sense *Agua Viva* certainly succeeds: almost everywhere is the text of *Agua Viva* forcing its readers to confront the text itself, to bump our nose against the glass of its reflective surface and destroy the illusion that we are in contact with anything but ourselves sitting in our chairs in our rooms all by ourselves. *Agua Viva* is at times difficult to read exactly because Lispector has to such an extent denied the representational aspects of her text, and it often seems that one is staring at a text that says almost nothing, at an opaque, non-reflective surface. How else could she draw our attention to the mirror itself and not what it reflects? Both in execution and in theoretical propositions, *Agua Viva* has succeeded in shifting the focus of the novel from denotation, from representing the world, to the reader's individual and ongoing sense of being in the world.

The consequences of this success are twofold: the novel is impoverished given the definition of its function by our other theorists, and the reader's responsibility for self-definition in both the fictional realm of being and the actual one are augmented almost vertiginously. Neither Bernard nor Morelli could or would divest themselves of the responsibility of coming up with an ultimate figure of their objective view of the world; they could not give up the desire or the hope of constructing such a figure in the novel. For both of them a successful novel would be capable of representing the globe of figures, the polychromatic rose. The same is true for Sartre and Ricoeur; the construction of such a figure, illusory or not, is the main purpose of the novel: to lead the reader to

some shared understanding with the author, to build a single, unified plot that organizes the entirety of the world of the novel into a single, cohesive and comprehensible entity. As Ricoeur puts it: “we have no idea of what a culture would be where no one any longer knew what it meant to narrate things” (v2 p. 28). It’s precisely the “narration of things” that *Agua Viva* removes from its conception of the novel: the novel does not narrate things, it only gives us the opportunity to observe and define our own experience. *Agua Viva*, in this sense, denies the novel its most potent capacity: to portray the unfolding of events from other places, perspectives and times. Without denotation, the novel can represent nothing. This lack of narration raises the ultimate question for *Agua Viva*’s conception of the novel: is giving up the illusion of being able to define collectively our world worth losing the novel’s greatest capacity: to give us a glimpse, however falsified, of the unfolding of events in time from other places, points of view and eras?

This question’s answer is inextricably bound up with the second consequence of *Agua Viva*’s success, that of the vertiginously augmented responsibility of the reader to define her own experience, both fictional and otherwise. As denotation is surrendered by the novel and as the barriers between actual being and fictional being are broken down, the responsibility to define one’s own experience of being grows into an almost overwhelming imperative: the novel is asking us to come to terms with our existence without words, without representation or denotation. How is this possible? When the reader looks out from the edge of the novel, when she peers beyond the frame of the mirror that is the text of the novel, the imperative to comprehend *it* is as strong as the fear of knowing she cannot. In something like Kant’s sublime raised to the n^{th} degree, the novel points to the world it cannot represent while simultaneously declaring that such a

representation is not only impossible, but irrelevant. Being composes no figure but itself, and that's a difficult assertion to deal with. This is dehumanizing in Sartre's sense of the word not only for the novel, but also for our existence. In looking into the mirror that is *Agua Viva*, we must confront Ricoeur's lack of narration not only in the novel, but in our existence. What is being without a story that makes it make sense? What is a novel without a story that makes it make sense?

Agua Viva leaves the reader with the following questions: "What is this being that I see reflected in the mirror?" And the answer is inevitably the beginning of a story: "I was born on . . . ," and that story, says *Agua Viva*, is always the beginning of an illusion. Is it better to be comforted by the illusionary story or to suffer the indignity of a dehumanized existence? This seems to be the raw, conflicted choice that *Agua Viva* leaves us with. Story, however, still and may forever have a hold of the human imagination: we like it, for whatever reason, and we resist being reminded that it is, in fact, a bodiless trick of light, a ghostly reflection in the surface of the novel. Like the sirens in the Aegean sea, our novels trap us not with iron shackles, but with beautiful songs.

Agua Viva, in this sense, is the wax for our ears, and when we awake we confront ourselves lost at sea in the sudden silence. *Agua Viva*, of course, means "jellyfish" in Portuguese, and the title is ever so appropriate for the novel: this is no phantasm to lure us away from our own existence, this an unsavory creature, inhuman, hard to see, and when we do run into her, she's full of sting and venom.

Conclusion: What is *it*?

What is it we find ourselves temporarily in the midst of? Any complete answer to the question, any all-encompassing depiction of it is, at the moment, quite beyond the capacity of the novel. While we exist, we perceive persisting patterns, what we call truths or facts, and can predict to varying degrees of accuracy how those patterns will extend themselves into a not-yet-extant future. This ability constitutes our understanding of the universe, that single word that stands in for the unrepresentable thing that is the composite totality of what is. This ability in turn gives birth to mimesis in the novel: by replaying the persistent predictiveness of patterns by which we comprehend the actual universe, the novel constructs fictional universes. Our novelists, probing the limits of the novel's capacity to mimetically represent the/a universe in a complete, objective or accurate way, have shown us that those limits lie precisely along the line which separates what we consider "objectivity" and what we consider "subjectivity." Where the novel aspires to a kind of pure objectivity, it cannot escape the singular subjectivity which both gives birth to the novel's mimesis and impedes its aspirations of objectivity. Objectivity in the novel comes in the form of the omniscient narrator: seeing everything from all points of view. Nothing, seemingly, could be simpler. Subjectivity, on the other hand, takes the form of the singular subjective nature of the reader's consciousness which forms the substructure upon which mimesis operates: we can only encounter any given

moment in any given fictional world from within the single, limited point of view constructed and required by novelistic mimesis just as actuality can only be experienced from the singular subjective point of view of the patterned flow of water that, for a short time, is each one of us.

The complete confluence of objectivity and subjectivity which is the novel's great promise is only partially achieved. While the novel *pretends* that through the replaying of linear, singular subjectivity it attains a kind of objectivity, our fictional theorists point out that this pretence to objectivity is no objectivity at all. While the very concept of objectivity in the novel *depends* upon the precept of a narrator (a narrative speaking voice) who has access to, can tell us the story of, 1, 10, 500 years of events seen from 1, 10, 500 points of view, that precept can never be actualized: the reader of a novel can never actually *be* in more than one subject position at a time, can never be in two places at once or in two points in time at the same time. It's not possible in actuality, and it's not possible in the novel—it is merely something we allude to as the absent, authoritative, that is to say, objective and true, point of view: the only place from which the true reality, *la verdadera realidad*, can be glimpsed, a place from which we are still interdicted. This is the heaven from which both subjectivity and the mimesis it spawns in the novel are, and perhaps forever will be, poor, fallen angels.

That heaven, that masterful subject position, is simply not there. There isn't one. These novelists, sitting down to imagine the world as seen from that all-encompassing point of view realize that that point of view is untenable. Or better yet, it was never there to begin with and we imagined it, and invented the novel as a kind of token of it and for a while believed in it and now, turning the corner of the 21st century, we are beginning to

understand what the modern novel was really all about: how the novel as a form essentially replays our projection of an objective narrating point of view against the subjective point of view to which the novel is limited in its representational, that is to say mimetic, capacity.

To confirm that we are still and perhaps irrevocably trapped within a single, linear, subjective point of view is, on the one hand, simplistic and banal, and on the other hand, cogent and dangerous. It is simplistic and banal in the sense that we are, obviously, each of us a single physical body, and that we cannot alter. The novel, however, language, and other art forms and means of preserving communication have offered us the ability to escape that entrapment. We can talk, we can write, we can make movies. Standing in a library one has the sense of an impending and overwhelming cacophony of voices whispering simultaneously in the silence of all those dusty bindings. Therein lies the lure of objectivity: the world seen from every point of view at the same time: the simultaneous existence, presence, conflation, unification, totality of every point of view expressed in every book at the same time. This is the library.

This momentary rapture inevitably falls against death and shatters. I will never read all of these books. I can't even remember all of the books I have already read. The momentary illusion of being able to occupy that objective point of view vanishes, and I take the books currently under my arm and proceed to the circulation desk. Today, these three books and no others. Today this subjective point of view and no others.

What our novelists wish to point out is that writing a novel takes one through a similar experience: the projected illusion of objectivity engendered by the taking on of the writing of a novel, the desire to express the simultaneous comprehension of a

multitude of viewpoints, inevitably gives way to the only thing the novel can create: a single, linear, subjective point of view that looks out onto the sea of existence, one more string of six little fish while a million others leap and sizzle. Any novel, like any singular consciousness, is a Roman road built through the tumult of the universe. No two ways about it.

And what does this mean? Why is it at all important to say this? Because every claim to truth, every authoritarian stance is made upon the concept of objectivity, of understanding what is *outside* of us in some complete and comprehensible fashion, everything from economics to aesthetics. If one is to take seriously the simple, obvious fact of our immutable subjectivity, how can we speak of objectivity without endless qualification, without an immense, immense, immense amount of irony, without constantly winking at each other? What is the scientific method if not a permanent, fixed irony?

We are six billion and counting. We are six billion tapping our toes, a rhythmless cacophony of simultaneous action whose massive interplay at any given moment constitutes human existence on this planet. The novel can only pretend to gain such a vantage point, to see us simultaneously, and it does so by showing us action as it is perceived first from one, then another subjective point of view, building, in the end, just one more Roman road through the tumult of humanity, one more road destined to collapse under the weight of all those feet.

The interplay of subjectivity and the projection of objectivity in the novel is nothing if not the perfect laboratory for the study of the limits of our enlightenment dream of surmounting our own subjectivity. Bernard showed us that "objectivity" or the

escape from linear singularity was not possible in the novel's representation of action in mimetic scenes whose time is currently passing for the reader. His hope of an objective representation of the world, whatever that might look like (I don't believe anyone has ever seen such a thing, or they would have told the rest of us, and we would have believed them), was put to rest by Morelli, who conceded that even the totality of the novel was a singular and subjective trope if the world the novel describes was to coalesce into a unified entity. Best, Morelli decides, to leave the novel's representation of the world as fragmented as possible, and hopefully thereby prevent its unification, thereby preventing any single figure from emerging and unifying the novel under its authoritative wing and blasting yet another Roman road through the chaos of reality. And finally the narrator of *Agua Viva*, as if having read the previous two works, attempts a kind of inversion of mimesis: by resisting as much as she can the construction of the mimetic representation of the world and at the same time impelling the reader to invent and project her own single, unified, complete image of the world, to imagine for herself what the writer desires to write but does not actually write, she turns her novel into what she describes as a kind of mirror: she asks the reader to project her own subjective consciousness out onto an unhumanized world without pretending to resolve any of the problems or difficulties that that projection engenders.

It is perhaps Lispector's image of the novel as lamp around which buzz insect-readers that best describes the novel: an illusory intermingling of consciousnesses in and around the lamp that is the novel. The lamp, the novel, written by one person at one time and read by many others at many other places and times, transgresses both time and space. In this transgression of time and space, the novel's insect-readers can be seen to

be hovering *simultaneously* around it like a swarm of mosquitoes around a single light source, as if those insects were, when basking in the novel's warm glow, somehow all together in one fictive time or one fictive place. That imagined, projected intermingling, however, is precisely what Lispector's novel-as-mirror is meant to portray as illusory: there really is no transgressing time and space via the novel just as there is no stepping into the space projected by a mirror: we are each alone when confronting the novel, we encounter no one but ourselves, we never step out of our single, subjective point of view, we can never step through the mirror's glass surface. The light that draws us to the novel as lamp, however, is precisely the incomprehensible pull of the projection of intermingledness, the lure of escaping through the novel's warm glow our singular subjective consciousness. Like the insects, we never attain what it is we seek from the lamp, as the lamp turns out to be a technical illusion, but that does not stop us from coming.

The novel, in short, encapsulates both our desire for and projection of a pure objective comprehension of our world and our continued inability to achieve it, to escape just once, just for a minute, our own subjectivity. Any objectively accurate view of what we find ourselves for the time being conscious within will have to come, say our three novels, either through some new evolution of subjectivity or via some new formulation of what constitutes objectivity, which amounts to the same thing: how on earth are we supposed to see the world *simultaneously* from a multitude of perspectives, that is, how are we to understand the *simultaneous* interaction, summation and unification of six billion points of view if we can never escape our own, if we cannot even once see the world from more than *one* of those points of view at a time?

Without pretending to solve the dilemma, our novels point out that this dilemma is in fact still a dilemma.

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