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Instability of the Regime of Reading, Repetition and Difference: Definitional Elements of a «Mimesis Without Model»

"I do not find *myself*, nor recognize *myself* in the
Other: I feel or experience the otherness and the alteration that 'in
myself' puts my singularity out of myself, and which ends it infinitely. The
community is the particular ontological regime in which the Other and the
Same are fellow creatures: that is to say, the split of the identity."
Jean-Luc Nancy 1990 [1983], 83-84.

It is one word, that of "collapse", which gives rise to a commentary on the singular entanglement of Vitaliano Trevisan's novel *The Bridge*. A collapse with Thomas Bernhard's novel *Extinction*. A collapse. It is thus this question of intertextuality that will be discussed here and, ultimately, analysed from a poetic and anthropological perspective, one which is, in a way, a perspective of "anthropoetics". The intertextuality between these two works is given as unilateral, for Trevisan's narrator feels the need, in the long monologue that structures the entire narrative, to clarify that he discovered the work of the Austrian novelist on "the day I bought *Wittgenstein's Nephew*", February 12, 1989, the day after the death of this same Thomas Bernhard. This coincidence is extensively staged by Trevisan's narrator, because he specifies that his purchase was motivated by the surname of "Wittgenstein" on the cover rather than by the name, unknown to him, of the Austrian novelist (Trevisan 2009, 112-3). One might object here to the confusion between the character-narrator and the "implied author", even with the historical author. However, aside from the fact that the biographical data

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Philippe DAROS

of the two writers confirm this unilateral affiliation, we will subsequently see that the emphasis given to this coincidence can be read as an especially strong "presentation of intent". Since what is essential to consider here is that we are further from a "simple" practice of intertextuality, we will speak about the extremely complex rewriting of the practice of repetition: moreover, the central part of Trevisan's work is entitled "The bridge. A repetition", which should be read in terms of miscegenation, in the sense that this term possesses within the anthropological approach. Here, it is not simply a question of an intertextuality limited to borrowings or to references, but of an intertextuality that transforms the fictional writing of the author of *The Bridge. A collapse* into a set of reversed symmetrical figures, parallel to the themes, to the fictional situations and to the "style", which is based on rehashing and on literal repetition, that defines the fiction of the Austrian author of *Extinction. A collapse*, but which appears as a systematic characterization of his attitude toward writing, which is even more intense in his earlier novels. This use of repetition, of a double process of repetition — a constant dispositif of internal repetitions, and from Bernhard to Trevisan, a dispositif of "external" repetition — will therefore be discussed, starting from Alfred Gell, as well as from Gilles Deleuze's and François Laplantine's anthropological perspective that still defines contemporary poetics.

¹ Perhaps the "names" of Gambetti and Hennenmaier are nothing but variations, shaped as "characters-names", of these androids with whom Maeterlinck dreamed to populate the theatre scene to make physically present this "third person" who "haunts the dialogue", who embodies "the confrontation with the unknown, with the impersonal and senseless powers of life". At least that's what seems to have evoked the remarks of Maurice Maeterlinck made by Jacques Rancière in his *The Aesthetic Unconscious* on the ways of possible materialization of that "silent speech" that the theatre must strive to hear, to see: "It is the soliloquy, that speaks to no one and says nothing, except the impersonal conditions, unconscious of the speech itself" (Rancière 2001, 39-40).

First, however, the discussion will centre on the fiction itself: analysis of the differentiated repetition, in the plot of *Extinction* and in that of *Bridge*, of a particular figure of the repetition, the one that affects the character in terms of duplication. It is the repetition of a schizoid character, repetition of the manner of presentation of that particular narrative "voice", that infinitely rehashes the addressed discourse, in both cases, to an addressee at once omnipresent in the phatic function of its nomination as insertion ("Gambetti" in Bernhard's novel, "Hennenmaier" in Trevisan's novel), and completely silent so as to compel the reader to consider him as a simple receptacle of both transitive and reflexive speech.¹ The addressee in both Bernhard and Trevisan is, ultimately, only the proper name (a pure signifier) on which is infinitely projected the exposition of a conflict (interiorized by the character of the narrator who tells the story, obviously saying "I") — his endless score-settling with his "family novel" as *double bind* in the strictest sense, as defined by Gregory Bateson in his etiological researches on the schizophrenia. Indeed, each of the two narrators places the memorial in relation to his childhood, to his adolescence and even to his life as an adult, under the sign of a set of orders, derived from the paternal authority, marked by a contradictory double bind, opening on a strategy of escape and denial.

INSTABILITY OF THE REGIME OF READING, REPETITION AND DIFFERENCE: DEFINITIONAL ELEMENTS OF A "MIMESIS WITHOUT MODEL"

And if that relationship of double bind, under whose influence the diegesis is developed, is considered here, it is certainly not in order to resume the theses of Jacques Rancière on some aesthetic unconscious, nor to continue the analysis of Gilles Deleuze on the relations between the critic and the clinic, but because the *double bind* is extended to the ideological and structural archaeology of a form, essential among all, in the Western heritage: the one of the tragedy as place of exhibition of a conflict. The situation of the tragic hero for a long time has been characterized, for example, by Jean Bollack as "indecisive conflict" or by Vidal-Naquet as dramatic presentation of an individual "entangled" in a hopeless situation: the hero is faced with an irreconcilable conflict and must choose, even as his choice appears to be disconnected from any "rational" calculation. It is therefore a reflection on the doubly paradoxical existence (generic paradox, epistemological paradox), currently, of a tragic conflict in a fictional expression that underlies the discussion of the schizoid conflict confirmed by the words of Bernhard's and Trevisan's narrators; especially because, regarding the possibility of thinking of the question of the tragic in a secularized world, we find in the German playwright Heiner Müller the idea of "the collapse", a term that, to remind ourselves, appears as repetitive subtitle in the both novels.

This attempt of contemporary redefinition of the tragic will allow us to describe the works of Bernhard and Trevisan as an anamorphosis of this generic form (allowing a reinterpretation of many works of "modernity"), or even as a *mimesis without model*.

The tragic today

Perhaps there were historical moments when a strong narrative model was shaped — the "naturalist moment", for example. At the beginning of this third millennium, it wouldn't be imprudent, but it would be wrong to claim that we are able to identify any model of this art of the novel; this form is renewed by exceeding, by subverting any precise modelling, even if, somehow, a historical model, the Aristotelian model — the *mimesis* as defined in the *Poetics* — is the one against which all attempts elaborated by the art of fiction are defined. We will consider the novels of Bernhard and, after them, the one of Trevisan² as particular reuses, for the use of our time, of this proto-model. Or, the *mimesis* has something to do, archaeologically, with myth, and of course, with tragedy. The question of the effects of the sense of the term "mimesis" will be thus put in relation to the examination of the procedures of resurgence — paradoxical, we should affirm it at the outset — of the myth, of the tragic in the novel, briefly, of the two

² In fact, the entire work of Vitaliano Trevisan until now could be under the influence of this observation. We can convince ourselves with *The fifteen thousand steps* (Les quinze mille pas, Verdier, « terra d'altri », 2006 ; éd. Originale, Quindici mila passi, Einaudi, 2002) or with *Bic and other shorts* (Bic et autres shorts, Verdier, « terra d'altri » 2008, éd. Originale : *Shorts*, Einaudi, 2004)

Philippe DAROS

³And even less the myth or, more accurately, our relationship with mythical thought. This is a more than problematic relationship anyway, which was probably already problematic for the Greeks themselves. We can refer, in this regard, to the salutary focus on the reading of the myth that the Greeks of the classical period could have performed. However, it is important to remember that it is through the Greek theatre that we have knowledge, indirectly since the theatre was already a hermeneutic interpretation of the "mythical material". See Jean Bollack, "Interpretation of the myth" ("L'interprétation du mythe" in *La Grèce de personne*, "L'ordre philosophique", Seuil, 1997).

⁴Refer, for more details, to Michel Meyer, *Questioning and Historicity* (Questionnement et historicité, PUF, 2000), particularly to Chapter 42, "The passage from mythos to logos and the birth of literature" (271 onwards).

⁵The fact that the logos of the tragedy is valued in its political significance in Aristotle, in contrast with Plato, is attested by the comments, which seem highly relevant, of Jacques Taminiaux, when he underlines in *Art and Event*: "Anyway, to say that this logos is political, means to say that it is not a part of the peremptory order of the demonstration but part of the persuasion, which can operate only if the other is both similar and different and if one tries to put himself in the place of the other. To say that we should show if such an event is so or not, does not mean that we should give an explanation for this event, but only question whether it is noble or vile, just or unjust" (Taminiaux 2005, 39).

fundamental elements in the cultural anthropology defining Western thought.

There would be no reason to take into consideration the definition of the tragic genre in ancient Greece³ except to remember that the tragic is, fundamentally, a place of juridical conflict, an "indecisive conflict", between the public sphere and the private sphere. As for the origin of this conflict, it is possible to specify the conditions of emergence; that is what Emmanuelle Danblon does:

The emergence of the tragedy testifies of the awareness of man, of his responsibility to the institutions he founds and uses. To put it simply, man acknowledges the social— and therefore human — character of social reality. The transition from mythical to theoretical thought (Donald 1991) has in the human consciousness played out a revealing role of the irreducibly human character of the political thing.

This transition plays a decisive role in the emergence of a distinction between the individual will and the persistence of a deproblematized conception, because of its inclusion of man in the cosmic continuum (*in illo tempore*): a world order as developed by the inclusive, totalizing logic of mythical speech. The tragedy introduces dissociation between *mythos* and *logos*, between collective and individual speech: it opens to conflicting interpretations, and by doing so, it is defined by an ambiguity — which, in reality, reflects a conflict between two epistemic plates. Such a conflict also seeds the emergence of a new poetics. Or, to put it in terms that are, this time, those of Michel Meyer, the tragedy signs the weakening of the problematic repression, which is the weakening of the being and its entry into History.⁴ All of this is sufficiently known; it is not at all useful to insist on it. Such a reminder is proposed here only in order to measure how much the main character of the plot, both in Trevisan's and Bernhard's novels, takes part at once in a sort of ambiguous memory of the existential path of the tragic character and demonstrates the impossible return of such a conflictual relationship between the individual and the community, the Law. For if the essence of the tragedy is to overexpose the conflict and to open to questioning, it also aims to "fix" the problem and to settle in it, in the framework, ultimately, an ethics, the one of the "Greek being" and of politics⁵: the one of the legitimatization of the Law. The tragedy, beyond the conflict, decides to define an Order that is still the mark of a will: the one of maintaining the ontological distinction between *fusis* and *metafusis*, a distinction that due to its weakening becomes an object of a strategy, a politics of conservation, by and in the modelling function of the work of art in the tragic representation.

In order to account for the reprise of a tragic component, a profoundly ambiguous reprise deeply linked to the impossibility to make

INSTABILITY OF THE REGIME OF READING, REPETITION AND DIFFERENCE: DEFINITIONAL ELEMENTS OF A "MIMESIS WITHOUT MODEL"

this conflicting relation between the world of gods and the world of men return today, I will begin by referencing a conversation between Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Bruno Duarte:

LABYRINTHE - Heiner Müller once spoke of the modern tragic as an experience in which one can live without hope and without despair, which comes to receive the tragic effect — the "catharsis" — as a flow of energy: in order that one regain his strengths, the other must exhaust himself.

PHILIPPE LACQUE-LABARTHE — It is still an Aristotelian conception of the tragic, nonetheless. It works as long as the collapse of the other is represented. Which is obviously the case in Müller.

LABYRINTHE — The image of the break or of the interruption of the speculative dialectic logic, discussed in one of the essays from "The Imitation of the Modern" on Hölderlin, should it be understood as a founding mechanism that affects only the tragedy, or should we rather see a full historic statement in it?

PHILIPPE LACQUE-LABARTHE — *The hiatus discovered by Hölderlin* within the dialectical process could only play on the speculative idealism and ultimately ruin what Heidegger clearly saw. I will answer like Heiner Müller on this: the statement that makes a break can only be a statement coming from the dead. Who are the dead, now? Who do we consider as dead which could articulate something by making a cut? I think that in the most recent European history, the dead in question are the Jews. But insofar as the story fades away, we can no longer know. The one that could carry and deliver this kind of statement would be an artist and nobody else, ultimately a philosopher, but in any case he should be the spokesman of the dead — what Müller has tried to do. I mention the Jews because of the theological-political issue that has arisen in Europe. But we can extend the concept to all victims of the late modern politics. (Duarte 2005)

It is well known, starting with Hölderlin, that the tragic crisis has been brought to a level with no possible solution, with no other resolution than the disagreement. According to Müller, the tragedy today "would represent" the collapse of the Other so that the "one regains its forces", "without hope or despair". This "contrastive" approach of a contemporary "tragic effect" authorises a precise rereading of Bernhard's and Trevisan's novels. In each of these stories, in fact, the narrating instance appears to be in conflict with the others and with himself or, more accurately perhaps, with himself as Other.

Evidently in conflict with others, and these others being systematically — or almost — the parental authority, the form taken by this conflict reveals consistently, indeed, a double bind, internalized anyway as such by or rather in the relation with the narrator. It is under the influence of this *double bind* that the relation of Thomas Bernhard's narrator Murau with his brother was reported: whatever is the origin of the wrongdoing committed, his parents systematically defend the

Philippe DAROS

⁶ Translator's note: The original term is "inter-dit". "Inter-dit" has a double meaning in French: "prohibited" (when it is used without a hyphen) and "said in between words" (when it is used with a hyphen). While "said in between words" is the most appropriate translation here, it should be noted that Daros' term "inter-dit" reinforces the association of guilt and prohibition.

⁷ Thomas Bernhard, *Extinction*. Un effondrement, folio, n° 3216 (Ausloschung. Ein Zerfall, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1986)

⁸ "As one author wrote that few people know, any man who says yes is a liar, that's the truth." (Bernhard 2007, 46-47.)

brother (or the sisters, anyway), and the narrator "victim" finds himself in a situation absolutely impossible to manage : to exculpate himself, redoubling the accusation of the motif of bad faith as a supplementary fault, or not to say anything, meaning to accept the punishment for an act not committed. This is almost exactly the same in the case of Trevisan's narrator "Thomas". Moreover, the novels clarify the internalization of this insoluble conflict, since, gradually, the idea of guilt is *inter-dit*⁶ between sentences, between words. Everything happens as if the internalization of this *double bind* caused a split in the "self-consciousness". The conflict is indeed presented frequently in the contradictory aspect of the narrator's statements about the world. Each narrator progressively reveals shadow areas, cracks in the coherence of his monologue: with a complexity of interpretation increased elsewhere in Trevisan because, if in Bernhard's novel this monologue conserves a vague chronological coherence, it is not the same in Trevisan's. Bernhard makes his narrator say, concerning his judgments about his parents: "I despise them, I hate them, and at the same time, I realize my terrible injustice toward them" (Bernhard 2007, 186).⁷ And if he repeats, shortly after this verbal act of self-criticism, that he has "often accused my father in the most abject way, in circumstances where there was no reason to accuse him, I've lied to my mother ..." (288), the continuation of the novel covers the main leaders of denigration of his family, his country, without retaining any trace of the memorial moments of self-disqualification of his continual accusation. There are so many contradictions that make his entire discourse falter that he is conferred with an artificial as much as indecisive theatricality that voids its reliability.

As for the remarks given, rather shouted, by the narrator of *The Bridge*, their purpose gradually darkens: between vituperation and denial, between denunciation and confession, between innocence and culpability. Absolute indecisiveness, here again. We find a significant mark in relation to the commissioner investigating the death of Filippo, the son of his friend "Pinocchio". Gradually, in Trevisan's novel, and on this point the story is more complex indeed than Bernhard's, the "story" narrated in first person appears as an explicit dispositif of denial. The entire diegesis takes part of a strategy of secrecy, confessed and denied: the one of the murder of a child, of Filippo, the son of the Thomas's friend, and the strength of the story resides in the indecisiveness of the intent that presides over this dispositif of the narrator's denial⁸. Explicitly raised and rejected, the shadow of the mental pathology, the pedophilia and the infanticide flat on the text of the novel ... here again, it is a communication of his own ignorance about any introduction of a "self-consciousness" that is the mark of the monologue.

INSTABILITY OF THE REGIME OF READING, REPETITION AND DIFFERENCE: DEFINITIONAL ELEMENTS OF A "MIMESIS WITHOUT MODEL"

We can see how such a tragic effect is revealed from a misreading of the "tragic" as an anthropological expression of the conflict between the maintenance requirements of the community, of the Law that establishes and organizes the "being-together" and the emergence of an individual singularity, of its "fate" (in Greek thought). Here, the conflict has been internalized, moved out of the opposition between the public and the private sphere. This is the subject itself that is the theatre of this conflict, of this caesura. That observation implies an essential displacement of the Aristotelian dispositif of the *mimesis*. While in the *Poetics* this *mimesis* modelled an "objective" conflict, it has become a deformed *mimesis*, involving an essential structural alteration in the antagonistic terms of conflict. We can no doubt talk about a "mimesis without model", since mimesis models only the dispute, the untreatable, the des-unification of the self: indeed, this caesura, this schism, appears as necessarily correlated with a loss of the control of the subject faced with himself, with that other self with whom he dialogues without a possible dialogue, apparently without communication other than the phantasmal, enigmatic, blinded. In addition, we must resume literally the statements of Lacoue-Labarthe: it comes, however, in *The Bridge. A collapse*, to "make the dead speak" because the character who tells his story in the first person seems to vanish at the "end of the game". "There is nothing to do, I thought, the writing always has a score to settle with death" (Trevisan 2009, 16).

"Who do we consider as dead which could articulate something by making a cut? I think that in the most recent European history, the dead in question are the Jews." This question and the hypothetical response formulated by Lacoue-Labarthe seem to correspond to the entire work of Bernhard, and more particularly, to *Extinction*. The story is meant to be ashes, proposed as dispositif of erasing, of voluntary destruction of a past where the family history and the collective history are closely intertwined; without hope or despair, but again not without suggesting a form of final opening that can be read as a way of "self-catharsis" or more simply, as final constitution of an implied "self-conscience".

The story of Trevisan confirms the links between the process of denial and the willingness to dispense oneself from origins by building a fantasy origin, paradoxically in a certain measure, which has something to do with the death but also with the final acquisition of an assumed identity, recognized as his own by the character – narrator. The multiplication of the references made by this narrator to an "oedipal" problematic, his refusal, reiterated to "become his father",⁹ his fantasy of killing his mother,¹⁰ suggest the coherence of the conclusions of the story on "the Open", on the dark trust that implies the dispositif of denial: reinvent another origin (for oneself): narrate, for reflexive purposes, the in-origin of the origin.¹¹

⁹ "Concretely I thought, I refused to become my father, purpose for which my mother brought me up..." (Trevisan 2009, 91).

¹⁰ This fantasy is repeatedly evoked in the rehashing of the monologue.

¹¹ This process has already been mentioned in our presentation of the book by Catherine Malabou, *Ontology of the accident, Essay on the destructive plasticity* (Ontologie de l'accident, Essai sur la plasticité destructrice, Variations X, Editions Leo Scheer, 2008). See the end of the chapter: "It remains to do the negative" (« Il reste à faire le négatif »).

Philippe DAROS

And in each case, that verbal itinerary, that logorrhoea, attests of "more than one" as identity characterization: an "I" runs out in order to allow another "I" to "recuperate his strengths" but especially affirms a manner of self-catharsis. It seems indeed easy to admit that the explication of *Extinction* can still be read as evidence of a kind of redemption, or at least a salvation, of Murau. He, who throughout the novel, is "abhorring" the Nazism of his parents, the historical collaboration of his country after the Anschluss, decides, becoming the heir of the vast family estate of Wolfsegg after the accidental death of his parents and his brother, to bequeath this heritage to the Jewish community in Vienna. And in *Extinction* also, the project to "make the dead speak", in this case the victims of Nazi violence, is explained¹².

It is in a manner infinitely more ambiguous, but still susceptible to a questioning conceptualized as openness, that the narrator of *The Bridge* disappears at the end of his story. The form of presentation of this ending transforms it in an *indecisive*, while simultaneously bringing evidence of a mechanism of duplication of the "self" of the narrating instance and, *in fine*, of a new perception of his identity as unity. This one finds himself grabbed under a bridge, trying to cross it, walking on a tube: a perilous enterprise attempted, unsuccessfully, many years ago with his friend and "blood brother", Pinocchio:

I looked down, towards the river. Enough, I told myself, it all starts to become pathetic. You must continue, there's nobody left who could do it for you. It was my voice now, I finally recognized it. The words are too heavy for me, it was saying, they crash me against the ground, a place that is not mine. There, I am a slouch, I told myself, arguing again, awkward and ridiculous. I haven't been made for surfaces, that's all. For such a being no contact is easy, and my eyes no longer support this perspective. Now the words. I drop them all together, without worrying about the order, and yet the penultimate, it cannot be a coincidence, it's the "end". And the last "I". (Trevisan 2009, 185)

There is certainly a Beckettian tonality in this explicit but also an obvious presence of an allusion, not really Beckettian meanwhile, of reconciliation with oneself! Paradoxical anamorphosis of the tragic, of a tragic without tragedy, of course: the conflict has turned into an identity split, into *agon* from which the concept of returning to some order appears to be strictly private! Such an *explicit* should not be interpreted quite simply in terms of closure, but they seem to renounce this "wandering under the indecisive" of which Hölderlin spoke on the benefit of an initiation of a synthetic reconciliation of the subject with himself, an other of himself painfully wrought by the oracular rehashing of a speech "at any depth", but after which a paradoxical form of deliverance is manifested.

¹² A long rehashing takes as its theme the evocation of the fate of a servant from the field of Wolfsegg, named Schermaier, sent to concentration camp, "denounced during the war because he listened to the Swiss radio" (Bernhard 1987, 417-8, emphasis added). Murau comments on this memory: "I will write simply about Schermaier, whom the National Socialist society was able to destroy, if not annihilate him for life, quite with impunity. [...] I made the promise that in *Extinction*, I would bring to him, if not the justice that the society denied him, at least an attention, in my own way". (Bernard 1984, 428)

An anthropoetics of "miscegenation"

These are now the complex dispositifs of "rewriting" of Bernhard's work by Trevisan are now those which will challenge a conclusive commentary opening on a poetics of miscegenation, thereby opening the interpretation according to an anthropological perspective. The following reflections will attempt to argue the use of this miscegenation as substitution of the "tragic" for the benefit of a communitarian writing, of what Nancy calls a politics of the writing as *idleness*. This substitution is initially the fact of the game of repetition. And probably the most insistent mark, symptomatic for this "idleness", of internalization / liberation of the tragic is to look into the stylistic mechanism of repetition, under the original forms that should be explicated. On two levels. First, the principle of repetition, which in Trevisan's novel is obviously a duplication of that same characteristic of the writing as we found in Bernhard's novel. This distinctive feature of Bernhard's writing has been widely commented on. A continuous repetition of insertions, of redénomination, repetition, thematic rehashing, and so on, each dispositif is found, absolutely identical, in the writing of Trevisan. Then by the intertextual game of "repetition" of one's work by the other. Because this game is unique in the rules that apply. We are infinitely far from the intertextuality as borrowing, as quotation or as (impossible) recovery (Borges). It is a question here of an extremely original and emblematic rewriting of the will for a significant questioning of the figure of the author as singularity, as singular "subject", in favour of what might be qualified, to paraphrase the title of the book of Jean-Luc Nancy, a "singular plural" author.

The use of repetition appears to be a characteristic of the literary among many authors, major actors in the evolution of the writing practices of the XX century, first and foremost Samuel Beckett or Thomas Bernhard, but also many others.

To read a fiction such as *Extinction* or as *The Bridge* implies a strange experience: one of a shift in the relationship between fiction and representation in favour of a research of rhythmic effects, those inducing constant processes of repetition, of rehashing. Such processes, with systematic use, cause remarkable instability in the system of inferences. At first glance, the field of inferences is constituted "normally", contributing just as "normally" to the instauration of a fictional world for the reader, provided as historical elsewhere, in both cases: Austria and more precisely the house situated at Wolfsegg (for Bernhard's narrator; the city of Vicenza for Trevisan's narrator) and the family environment. But soon, the reading is somehow modulated, displaced in its expectation, by the effects of repetition¹³. Modulated, because, by their omnipresence, these rhythmical effects discredit the words to the benefit of

¹³Only by eliminating, for the benefit of a "fictionalizing" reading of the novel, this unstable interlacing of games of echoes, of repetitions, of repetitive contradictions, is it possible to account for the diegesis of this novel shaped as (relative) unit. This is, for example, what Martine Laval does in the delivery of "Télérama" dated February 28, 2009 (n° 3085), in a perspective in accordance with the approach of the reasons for being of the fiction defined by Jean-Marie Schaeffer. The journalist "smoothes" the fiction, draws it to a narrative normative, "novelistic" in a way, restores a coherence that a careful reading prohibits, or at least moves to other perspectives, in some aspects even more radical than those from the novels of Thomas Bernhard. Those are, in fact, infinitely fleeting perspectives: the story becomes a labyrinth with so much complex topology that the reading is transformed into a series of questions, which are also very difficult to formulate. Here, everything is, in fact, a question: to begin with, the structure of the narrative: three chapters, the first and the last extremely short, so the second is central, which corresponds to almost all the pagination (about 160 of 170 printed pages). Or this second chapter is titled "The Bridge. A repetition" and, indeed, the text will be developed in an extremely complex game of repetitions, infinitely more complex than the one structuring (or rather de-structuring) Thomas Bernhard's prose. It is impossible to account for it: critical reading demands stopping on practically every page of the story and connecting the countless systems of repetitions: literal

Philippe DAROS

repetitions of statements, duplications of fictional situations, shifted duplications of evocations of memory, problematic duplications of the identity of the narrating instances. When the journalist's comment of "Télérama" notes: "Thus speaks Thomas, the narrator of this novel..."; the approximation is large, because the text of the narrative prohibits such a claim. A reference is made to the system of echo, of repetition between the incipit of the novel (*The Bridge*, op. cit.) and the problematic disjunction of the identities of the narrating instance: "And so Pinocchio is dead. I never thought it possible" (11) and the opening words of the next chapter: "And so Pinocchio is dead, writes Thomas. I never thought it possible". (17)

¹⁴ Effects of "refrain" ("ritournelle"), Gilles Deleuze would say. A reference can be made, for an interesting commentary on this term, to the article of Aliocha Wald Lasowski "Manifesto for a Tempo-World: the rhythms of the outside" (2009. *Manifeste pour un Tempo-Monde: les rythmes de l'en-dehors. L'en-dehors: éloge et variations, Consistance de la littérature, des arts, de la philosophie*. ed. by C. Arcuri and Giorgio Passerone, Editions Kimé: 227-239). Here is an excerpt: "The refrain is the motif, the model and the figure to suggest the rhythm as distance and spacing from the outside, as mark of a crack, sign of a pivoting of the melody, of the writing or of the thought with themselves. This non-pulsed time presents us a multiplicity of heterogeneous durations, non-coincident and multiple." (235)

an interest, an expectation, one of a hunting speech: the strange hunting music of a speech as incessant return of the discourse back to itself, of a monologue that runs to "refrain" ("ritournelle"), in the sense that Deleuze gave to this musical term. It is useless to exemplify, since it is enough to open these books, on any page, to be convinced; secondly, because it is in the becoming of the cursory reading that these effects of rehashing gain all their importance, inducing their power of destabilisation, their power of "estrangement" of the text. Emmanuelle Prak-Derrington offers a systematic reflection on the concept of repetition, particularly of Thomas Bernhard's work. She describes a double movement induced by the reading of such a processes as follows:

So a double movement occurs by way of the senses. On the one hand, the obsessive repetition is interposed as barrier, making the signs lose their transparency. It suspends the evidence of designation, burdens the signs with materiality that therefore cannot refer to objects of the world to which they referred in all simplicity. On the other hand, unlike this process of opacification, the not repeated elements gain particular importance and prominence. In this context of archi-redundancy, they take the foreground and impose a rhyme that asserts, in contrast with the evidence of what is beyond doubt and cannot be questioned. All the characters of Bernhard are rehashing (rehashing can be read properly as well as vice versa – the palindrome explains the circular and infinite movement of the repetition). (Prak-Derrington 2005, 11)

We recognize in that description the implementation of this unstable inferential dispositif: the reading becomes a complex regime, where the words cease to describe referees, gain autonomy, turning the monologue into a strange oscillation between strong autobiographical content of the narrator (his childhood, his relationship with his parents, the historicity of the Second World War, the cultural anchor in Upper Austria in the mid-twentieth century...) and "musical" derealization of the referential system by a game of repetition that abolishes any narrative perspective and assimilates the said into a gushing of a "Thought of the Outside". This effect of constant fracture, unstable, changeable in these places of manifestation, is particularly sensitive, as noted by Prak-Derrington, in the systematic use of the redenomination when the continuity of the "dialogue" appeals to the pronominalization:

While the pronoun has a cohesive virtue, the redenomination is seen as a rabble of disjunction, of fracturing of the referential cohesion. The referent is systematically presented as continuously exempt from seizure (that is what the pronoun should do, which would store the information in its little suitcase). The repetition is transgressive because it is forced to start from zero, to bring a new light on the same object.

The paradox managed by that writing resides in the opposition between a voice speaking in the context of infinite narrated monologue

INSTABILITY OF THE REGIME OF READING, REPETITION AND DIFFERENCE: DEFINITIONAL ELEMENTS OF A "MIMESIS WITHOUT MODEL"

with strong denotative "existential" value, and its effects of repetition¹⁴ that disrupt the *mimesis*. The reading then becomes a continual, unstable experience of "before/within" the fiction, and once again, it appears vain to speak in terms of immersion or emersion.

A few times in the preceding lines, the term of "miscegenation" was mentioned. This term will be used according to its anthropological signification, as proposed by François Laplantine in his essay "Sound, images and language. Aesthetic anthropology and subversion". He defines the "paradigm of miscegenation" in ontological terms, to which he opposes the empire of identity, of "sameness": he stresses that "miscegenation is a thought and, in the first place, an experience of dispossession, of the absence of what was left and of the uncertainty of what will spring from meeting" (Laplantine 2009, 80).

Perhaps it is convenient to read the novel of Vitaliano Trevisan as an experience of miscegenation with Thomas Bernhard's novel. It is not important to know if this experience is, or is not, "voluntary", chosen or suffered. But it is the power of "idleness" that appears as the most interesting mark of such "miscegenation". The multiplicity, the intensity of the "reprises" of the work of the Austrian novelist by Trevisan betrays in him an "intention", probably an intention of dispossession of the gesture of writing, turning this gesture into a way of sharing, partition, understood in the musical sense of the term. These reprises are both extremely diverse and very specific to the writing of Bernhard. In *Extinction. A collapse*, the "theme" of mimesis is an announcement of the death, by car accident, of the narrator's parents and brother; in *The Bridge. A collapse*, it is a death of identical cause, the one of the narrator's friend that will be the reason of being of the *mimesis*; in both cases, a "journey" will correspond to that announcement, a "return" to the city of origin (Wolffsegg) to attend the funeral (Bernhard) or to visit the city of his dead friend (Vicenza). In each novel, the narrator shares a situation of voluntary exile linked to his family environment. In each novel, the narrator addresses himself continuously, in the indistinct theatre of shadows of his monologue without sharing, to a "student", Italian in Bernhard ("Gambetti"), German in Trevisan ("Hennetmair"), according to a strict parallelism, and exploits this situation in order to denigrate, with violence and constancy, his maternal language and his country of origin. In both cases, the rehashing of the monologue indicates, according to an explicit of such intensity that it becomes ambiguous, ironic, a will of extinction of the affiliation, a will of symbolic destruction of the parental couple...

In short, pursuing this tedious parallel is unnecessary, particularly since it should still account for a stylistic differential "mimesis" (relative

Philippe DAROS

¹⁵ This notion of "original" is presented by Jacques Rancière in his essay "Deleuze, Bartleby and the literary formula" (1998, Deleuze, Bartleby et la formule littéraire. La chair des mots. Politiques de l'écriture. Galilée.). This notion, says Rancière, is borrowed by Deleuze from Melville's Confidence man. "...like the character/point of view that projects onto the story a specific light. He also borrows the idea that a novel cannot have more than one original. But the conceptual treatment that he operates on, this figure of the original, substantially exceeds the purpose and the intent of Melville. The original becomes in his work a figure of a new genre. It looks like the pictorial figure by its loneliness that bars the narrative logic and by its ability to emblemize the very movement of the work, the one of schizophrenia restraint on the composition of the work. But even more than the pictorial figure, it receives the power to condense, as in a shield, all the properties of the work. It launches "flamboyant traits of expression" that mark, says Deleuze, "the stubbornness of a thought without image, of an unanswered question, of a logic without rationality" (191). [The included quotations of Deleuze refer to Critique et clinique, Paris, Minuit, 1993, 106.] It is clear that such a definition of "the original" frames are exemplified by a descriptive approach of the two "originals" present in Extinction and in The Bridge.

to the repetition, extremely complex, as it has already been suggested by Trevisan), of a course of narration (obsessive repetition of "inscriptions" and so on): it is a poetic interpretation, but also an ultimately anthropological one which must be attempted.

A particular poetics of otherness

We could see in the character of Murau (this is the name of the narrator in Bernhard's novel), and in the contradictory, in truth unstable, character Thomas (could he be named otherwise?) in Trevisan, two figures of these "Originals"¹⁵ that celebrated Gilles Deleuze speaking of Bartleby or Achab. The figures of that "anti-representation" of which, apparently according to Jacques Rancière this same Deleuze dreamed, could also be seen. The highly particular rehashing of these "voices" is, indeed, a continuous fabrication, and the story manifests this "flagrant crime of producing a legend". This character fabricator "is, definitely, the *telos* of the anti-representation" says Rancière: "the fabrication is the true opposite of the fiction. It is the identity of the 'form' and of the 'content', of the inventions of art and of the powers of life" (Rancière 1998, 195).

Each one of these narrators confesses, without admitting it, to manage a discursive flow without origin; or rather each one of them rehashes the origin only in order to set down his original value; each narrator, in fact, communicates the ignorance of the status of his speech, of the reasons of his enunciation, making it a trace of alteration to his identity, of his identity as elusive multiplicity. But it is an extremely opposite dispositif that establishes the intertextual "affiliation", manifested by the novel of Trevisan towards the novel of Thomas Bernhard! In the case of this dispositif, in fact, "the origin" of the Trevisan's story is rooted in a highly explicit way in the "model" of the Austrian author. The origin of the written work, or at least the strategy of writing of the work, is therefore another written work. This is commonplace, but the very mode of the presence of that explicit intertextuality isn't common: it puts the status of the "author", more precisely his figure, into question, because the voluntary assumed risk of such a miscegenation appears to be a recognition of the dis-appropriation of the form, a *refusal of paternity* or, more precisely, a diffraction, a duplication of it. What it is not, we must emphasize, is a negation of the form. The written work becomes a production without a single topic; the work thus opens to an otherness, which is then the mark of an implementation of the act of writing in the community. The exact opposite of what Gell defines as anthropological function founder of art: *taking power over ... on the benefit, in some way, of a abandonment of power with ...* Perhaps

INSTABILITY OF THE REGIME OF READING, REPETITION AND DIFFERENCE: DEFINITIONAL ELEMENTS OF A "MIMESIS WITHOUT MODEL"

Vitaliano Trevisan realizes, thereby, a significant step forward in the conception of the work of art, by making in some way a practice of incompleteness, of disjunction between the product, the literature and the emergence of a sovereign authorial figure, although in its dislocation. Here, the extinction is said in the plurality of the voices, the collapse is not assumed by the romantic singularity of the author as seer, as a messianic figure, even of an apocalyptic messianism. Here the work opens, ultimately, on a sort of "inoperative community", the term meaning simply and modestly a community of writing not giving rise to any figure of authority known under the generic term of the figure of the author. Without doubt, this means to appeal, by assigning them a precise content, the statements of Jean-Luc Nancy on "the communist experience of the work, of the writing, of the voice, of the given word, played, sworn, offered, shared, abandoned. The word is communal in the measure of its singularity, and singular in the measure of its truth of community" (Nancy 1990, 173).

It seems possible to think that the novel of Trevisan prefigures that "being-in-common" noted by Jean-Luc Nancy:

This is not a creature of literature: it is not a fiction, neither narrative nor theory. It means instead that the literature, at least from the moment when we understand by this term the interruption of the myth, has as being (as essence, if we like, or as transcendent constitution) the common exhibition of particular beings, their appearance. The most solitary writer writes only for the other. (The one who writes for himself, or for the anonymous of the indistinct crowd, is not a writer. (Nancy 1990, 173)

I like to think that this solitary writer that probably is Trevisan has widely written for that other, equally lonely, whose name is Thomas Bernhard.

Translated from French by Eva Velinova

Philippe DAROS

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INSTABILITY OF THE REGIME OF READING, REPETITION AND DIFFERENCE: DEFINITIONAL ELEMENTS OF A "MIMESIS WITHOUT MODEL"

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**INSTABILITY OF THE REGIME OF READING, REPETITION AND
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*This study is written as an intertextual interpretation of the fictions of two authors, Vitaliano Trevisan and Thomas Bernhard, connecting them by the notion of "collapse" that is contained in the title of both works: *The Bridge. A collapse and Extinction. A collapse*. The inquiry of their intertextuality will not consist of a simple retaking of the references, but in the creation of a specific poetics as a feature of the modernistic writing that is opposed to the traditional, objectivistic process of mimesis. This interpretative essay opens up the Aristotelian question of the "tragic" as a central motif in both works, evident in the problematization of the relation between individual free will and collective determinism. Formed in the hesitation between these two categories is the modern conception of the narrator who interiorizes the conflict and acquires a "split" identity, reflected in the plurality of the literary writing.*