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THE TEXTS AND THE READERS OF PHILIPPE SOLLERS' CREATIVE WORKS FROM 1957 to 1973

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By Roland A. Champagne, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1974

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Acknowledgment

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PUBLICATIONS

2. Philippe Sollers bibilog. for 1975 Cabeen ed. of A Critical Bibliography of French Literature (French Institute);
3. Essay "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Failure -- A Study of the Modernity of Italo Svevo's Una Vita" to be pub. in 1976 by Italian Quarterly;
4. Essay "A Displacement of Plato's Pharmakon -- A Study of Italo Svevo's Short Fiction" to be pub. in 1975 by Modern Fiction Studies;
8. Essay "Un Décenlèvement: The Revolutionary Implications of Philippe Sollers' Nombres for a Logocentric Western Culture" pub. by Sub-Stance, Fall 1973;
9. Essay "Le Roman du texte: A Response to Julia Kristeva's reading of de LaSale's Jehan de Saintre" pub. by Sub-Stance, Fall 1972;

FIELDS OF STUDY

Structuralism and other periods of French literature
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Linguistics and literature in the XXth century
Prof. Charles Winthrop

The development of French literary criticism
Prof. Charles G. S. Williams

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Generative Criticism
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Introduction

Ever since the appearance of *Le parc* in 1961, the "texts" of Philippe Sollers have increasingly been subjected to severe criticism for their illegibility. To agree with or to refute such criticism, one must explore the polyvalent components of "text" and "reading." Initially, let us explore the most basic definitions of these terms and their application to Sollers. On the one hand, "text" is a succession of signs united within specified boundaries. In the case of Sollers, there are seven such texts which appeared from 1957 to 1973: *Le défi* (1957), *Une curieuse solitude* (1958), *Le parc* (1961), *Drame* (1965), *Nombres* (1968), *Lois* (1972), and *H* (1973). Each of these seven texts, traditionally understood to be creative fiction or narratives, is a closed entity in itself, differing considerably from its successor(s) and/or predecessor(s). Sollers himself has remarked that "chaque texte a sa propre logique et ces logiques sont différentes." While presenting the logical variations of the Sollers texts, we will also trace the development of a common consciousness which has produced and is producing these seven texts through three main stages: 1) 1957-1959; 2) 1960-1967; 3) 1968-1973. These three stages demonstrate just
what Sollers has identified as the movement of the "Tel Quel Group" through the years: "Toute notre action peut se définir par un changement d'axes de références." These changes of orientation proceed from Sollers within traditional narrative (1957-1959), to Sollers the experi­menter (1960-1967), to Sollers the revolutionary (1968-1973). On the other hand, let us postulate that reading is, in its most primitive sense, a confrontation of a text with an exterior consciousness. Traditionally, in Western civilization, reading has also implied focusing one's attention upon a written word, deriving meaning or meanings from what is inscribed, and appropriating a written message to one's consciousness. However, Joseph Bya, at the Colloque Cluny II in April 1970, has observed a problem in this Western conception of reading: "Nous savons que, s'il n'est pas de lecture totale, il n'est pas non plus de lecture innocente. Entre texte et lecture s'élèvent et se préfèrent toutes sortes de paroles -- des mediations -- qu'il nous est impossible de tout à fait congédier." These mediations are often presented as privileged readings or interpretations of a text for its readers. Philippe Sollers has given many such theories and critiques which provide insights into his creative texts. However, we will concern ourselves herein only with those of his theories that enable us to understand the dialectic of text and
reading in his seven texts produced thus far. These méditations will become increasingly crucial from Le parc (1961) through his subsequent works. Reading the texts of Sollers in their chronological sequence through the three stages previously mentioned is not merely a simple task of consuming a text through reading. The "common consciousness," which will be developed within the seven texts of Sollers, is also a developing ideology about reading and epistemology. This common consciousness of the heterogeneous roles of those seven Sollers texts and their readings may offer us many insights into our own abilities to "read" anything at all in this last quarter of the twentieth century.

In the first stage of the Sollers texts, we find that Le défi (1957) and Une curieuse solitude (1958) exemplify Leon Roudiez's observation that "the novel is indeed a carrier of ideology." And, although they are distinct texts, Le défi and Une curieuse solitude have close ideological ties. Emile Henriot has even remarked that "il n'y avait pas à s'y tromper: Une curieuse solitude confirme, en la tenant, la promesse de la nouvelle qui contenait en germe le roman." Le défi is a short story whose self-conscious narrator is more fully developed in the novel, Une curieuse solitude. Both texts do contain the first-person narrator who presents his personal growth by means of a sexual encounter.
Both texts present a sense of linear time as the narrators reconstruct their liaisons with Claire (Le défi) and Concha (Une curieuse solitude). What is perhaps more interesting, however, is the thematic questionings of the validity of traditional narration in these early texts. These questionings are seeds for the later texts of Sollers contained in these apparently traditional early texts. Let us consider the texts and the readers of this first period of Sollers' creative works to elucidate which narrative traditions were promulgated therein.

On the one hand, text, as a succession of signs united within specified boundaries, is specifically identified with narrative in Le défi (LD) and Une curieuse solitude (S). The former is an adolescent's account of his seduction of Claire, her suicide, and his cold repudiation of her. The latter is the diary of a twenty-year-old man who once had an affair with an older Spanish maid, Concha, and who now spends much time reflecting upon the lost splendor of that first affair. Both texts rely upon words as their succession of signs to convey the message of a story which has a beginning and an end. Le défi is characterized by Sollers in his own post-face as an essay about "l'adolescentile aiguë." Hence, this text has a single subject matter which
centers around an affair between the adolescent self-conscious narrator and his beloved, a 19-year-old woman named Claire. Their adventures constitute a closed narrative insofar as there is no "monde extérieur dans Le défi" (LD, p. 34). And the passage from Breton's Nadja at the heading of the text ("C'est une puissance extrême de défi que certains êtres, très rares, qui peuvent les uns des autres tout attendre et tout craindre, se reconnaîtront toujours") introduces the self-consciousness of the characters as a possible goal within the text.

François Mauriac had praised such traits as character development, articulate language, and incisive style in the early Sollers. In fact, Mauriac even admitted Sollers into his literary establishment by consecrating those narrative qualities: "Pour notre Philippe aussi, le catholicisme c'est sa famille." It was this very orthodoxy in narrative style that occasioned Francis Ponse to present Le défi to the committee which eventually awarded it the Prix Fénon. The orthodox fashion of Le défi offered hope to these critics who sought a rejuvenation of the novel during those days of 1957 which saw the early works of Claude Simon, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, and other adherents of non-traditional "narratives."

The adolescent narrator of Le défi who realized his idealistic shortcomings ("...faute de savoir où la terre
se trouvait," LD, p. 3), lucidly portrayed his situation ("cette sorte d'inaptitude que je jugeais sacrée me fit devenir suspect; on voyait bien que j'étais seul et, par malheur, libre." LD, p. 5), and yet retained the wonder of poetic feeling ("...ainsi, au crépuscule de mon adolescence, j'errais dans mes labyrinthes où je ne croisais que tourbillons qui parlaient de ma mort." LD, p. 4) appealed to those confused by the innovative nouveaux romanciers. Emile Henriot even acclaimed Le défi as "une nouvelle Éducation sentimentale" and "le renouvellement du roman." It is interesting that Sollers would later reject this text as a reflection of his early bourgeois sollicitude: "Le livre que j'avais écrit était victime d'un certain code, d'un certain schéma qui, de toute évidence, m'avait été donné et imposé de l'extérieur, du dehors." Indeed, Sollers perpetuates the dominant ideology of a well-constructed story with Le défi. In effect, the text continues the myth of language as communication.

However, there is a tone of suspicion about the efficacy of such a text. Embarrassed by that work today, Sollers has tried to dismiss it by saying that the text was written by his bourgeois class. I agree with Professor Roudiez who maintains that Philippe Sollers remains as the specific scriptor whose peculiarities are brought forth in his writing. Despite the transitive function of communicating found in Le défi, there
are also some reflections on the creative act of writing which will especially be dramatized in *Drame* (1965).

The adolescent narrator is especially self-conscious of his role as a writer: "Je voulais composer un livre, seul moyen, pensais-je, de parler de soi sans assister à l'ennui des autres" (LD, p. 5). After discovering that not even Claire can help him ground his idealism ("Je la trouvais claire comme le jour...", LD, p. 20), he suggests that communication with others may be just an illusion and that writing might be a haven for practicing his ideals. And even writing is no easily accessible venture for him: "Mais la littérature est un naturel auquel on arrive après de multiples contorsions" (LD, p. 5). Once he has attempted to write, he also realizes that writing itself is deceptive since "ce que nous écrivons n'est pas toujours -- hélas -- ce que nous sommes." (LD, p. 34). The narrator doubts the efficacy of his own role to communicate. Within the orthodox narrative, the seeds of self-destruction are being sown. However, *Une curieuse solitude* does not yet ferment these seeds. Its text is also concerned with perpetuating the ideology of the narrative.

In his second text, Sollers presents his first "novel" — *Une curieuse solitude* (1958). In *Logiques* (1968), Sollers would define the novel as "...le discours incessant, inconscient, mythique des individus." This
discourse, presented by Felipe the narrator, assumes a different identity in Une curieuse solitude. Therein, it is a conscious reflection of a personal encounter of a single individual. Such a narrative is very much opposed to the later theoretical construct of a "novel" as Sollers presented it above. At the time of Une curieuse solitude, Sollers had been writing from within the dominant ideology of the narrative as text. Indeed, Louis Aragon even portrayed the hope for a renaissance of the narrative in this Sollers text because "ce livre est celui de la grâce..."\(^{12}\) And Felipe certainly gives the impression that he is seriously concerned with his writing style: "Je compterais sur le temps, la fatigue et l'habitude pour donner à mes phrases je ne sais quelle soigneuse banalité qui les feraient rentrer dans l'ordre."\(^{13}\)

This serious, sincere discourse will especially be questioned for its viability in Drame (1965) and those creative works by Sollers which succeeded it. However, the influence of Henry James ("...la présence mystérieuse qu'il donne aux êtres...")\(^{14}\) and Marcel Proust ("...les portraits fouillés de ses personnages..."\(^{15}\)) was especially acute upon the narrator Felipe. Jean Tortel observed that Une curieuse solitude might even be "le seul roman de notre temps qui veuille reprendre
l'expérience proustienne et se situer dans la même perspective qu'elle." His own character as well as that of Concha are more extensively drawn and developed than the characters in Le défí. Despite these influences on his narrator, Sollers was insistent that he had not been conditioned by the novel genre: "À mon avis, il n'y a pas de genres. L'expression, c'est tout." In this same interview, Sollers proceeded to characterize Une curieuse solitude as "...une sorte d'essai ou de longue réflexion, bien plutôt qu'un roman." Nevertheless, this text does construct the character of Felipe and Concha in an atmosphere of verisimilitude to which Felipe the narrator himself alludes: "Écrire pour respirer, tâcher de rattraper cet instant si court, si décisif" (S, pp. 167-168). With words, Felipe attempts to recall the moment of his seduction by Concha. Language attempts to reinstate that experience now lost in time by Felipe: "Au vrai (ne riez pas tout de suite), il me semble que le monde a disparu" (S, p. 12). Felipe's discourse tries to re-create that very world which disappeared. Professor Roudiez has presented an important analogy here: "The role her name [Concha] plays in Felipe's possession of her would then be correlative to the role language plays for the narrator in coming to terms with the world." Felipe specifically speaks of this identification of Concha with her name: "La femme qui le
[son nom] portait me semblait coller si parfaitement à lui, que je ne la séparais pas de lui, que je ne la possédais vraiment que par son intermédiaire" (S, p. 70). The narrator has faith in the ability of language to possess, to capture, to grasp "reality." Re-creating the myth of Concha ("Je voulais, oui, que Concha ne se préoccupât que de moi, qu'elle fût tout entière attentive à me séduire, à entretenir cette image déjà mythique que je me faisais d'elle," S, p. 40), words contain Felipe's hope of portraying that Concha who was at once "une communion et un déchirement" (p. 145). Continually reflecting upon the Concha whose Spanish sensuality had once seduced him with her black dress resembling that of a priestess and the Concha who now had an illegitimate baby girl after prostituting herself to others, Felipe duplicates the harsh education of the narrator of Le défi as he finally accepts what has long haunted him: "Comme tout le monde, j'avais remarqué que la profondeur ne naît pas toujours dans l'agitation, mais plus souvent dans le calme, l'harmonie, le silence, le bien-être. Comme tout le monde, j'avais éprouvé que les souvenirs qui me ravissaient le plus n'étaient ni ceux que j'avais crus les plus beaux, ni les plus susceptibles de durée" (S, p. 146). Perhaps language was not capable of expressing those memories which were the most beautiful. Beginning with his first meeting with Concha
when he was sixteen and she was ten years his senior
and ending with their last farewell in Paris, Felipe's
reflections have constructed a text which exemplifies
the inadequacies of language: "On n'a rien à dire
lorsqu'on a trop à dire" (S, p. 126). As in Le défi,
this questioning of language is made within the form
of the traditional narrative as opposed to such later
texts as Nombres, Lois, and H which will question the
efficacy of language by demonstrating its incoherence
and fragmentary nature apart from a theory of communica-
tion.

On the other hand, what type of reading do these two
texts entail? Percy Lubbock seems to have correctly
pointed out for us that "the beginning of criticism is
to read aright, in other words to get into touch with
the book as nearly as may be."¹⁹ Le défi and Une curieuse
solitude do not pose very serious challenges "to read
aright" in Lubbock's sense. However, the implications of
such readings must be understood so that the actual
reader, he who can "get into touch with the books as
nearly as may be," can be realized for the texts in the
second and third stages of Sollers' creative works. We
have previously identified reading, in its most primitive
sense, as the confrontation of a text with an exterior
consciousness. In Le défi, this task becomes one of
following the logical sequence of words and deriving
meaning from the linear flow of language. In effect, the reader of *Le défi* digests the words of the adolescent narrator and converts them into a story of the seduction and suicide of a nineteen-year-old girl. The text and the actual reader are not closely aligned since the text is constructed of a logical flow of words whose essence can be extracted to re-create the narrative or story. The actual reader is merely a consumer of *Le défi* who has no bond to the text. The words of *Le défi* transitively (as opposed to the intransitive *écriture* theoretically developed by Roland Barthes and exemplified in stages two and three of Sollers' texts) communicate the confusion of the adolescent narrator, his hopes upon meeting Claire, and his final disillusionment with her. Fascinated by this adolescent narrator who presents a well-defined discourse, the actual reader can be comfortable with a succession of words that ultimately has a message and that does not strain its reader's credibility. For example, the themes of fluidity and movement which will be dramatized in Lucretian and Heraklitan settings in *Nombres* (1968) are now coherently articulated ("J'ai toujours aimé que quelque chose bougeât," (LD, p. 6), sometimes with overtones of Blanchot: "Les voyages m'enchantent par ce côté d'absence qu'ils me communiquent et où je retrouve mon véritable élément" (LD, p. 6). The actual reader of *Le défi* can trust the narrator to
present some keen statements about maturity. Language perpetually haunted the young narrator: "Silencieux, j'avais l'impression de me trahir; bavard, celle de me répéter" (LD, p. 4). Words had given the narrator the confidence of his reader. Yet the narrator was not comfortable with or without words. For him, "il ne s'agissait que de vivre" (LD, p. 29). Despite the suicide of Claire which he tried to narrate; "après tout, Claire n'en était plus aux clichés du sentiment" (LD, p. 28), language is inadequate to cope with life or death. Yet language had been used to communicate this theme to the reader without affecting the actual reader of the text who, after thinking he possesses the message communicated by the words, no longer has any affinities to that same text. In effect, the words of Le défi constitute a text whose very existence is merely momentary as this text is doomed to be consumed by the actual reader anxious to appropriate its message. François Mauriac alluded to this concern for Le défi: "Non que certains d'entre nous ne fussent déjà fascinés vaguement, comme l'est Philippe, par cette recherche de l'absolu dans le langage..." Mauriac considers Sollers to be a descendant of Rimbaud and Mallarmé due to this concern for the power of language which will especially be dramatized by Lois (1972).

The actual reader of Une curieuse solitude becomes somewhat more uneasy with this text. Although Felipe
the narrator offers a single perspective which encloses a story having a beginning and an end, the actual reader may be shocked by the audacity of the language and/or the stylistic aberrations which occasionally mar Felipe's reflections. Aragon had observed the direct manner of Felipe's erotic language: "Philippe Sollers peut parler de tout, rien ne choque, parce qu'il n'y a rien de choquant en lui."

Yet Felipe does present some keen insights into human behavior of which eroticism plays an important role, especially in his own maturing process. For example, upon being embarrassed by his teenage friends for his affair with the older woman Concha, Felipe remarks that "...les jeunes gens ne sont si grossiers en amour que pour se protéger du sentiment où ils se savent faibles" (S, p. 55). At another moment, Felipe hears an account of Concha's ridiculing a former obese lover and concludes that "il ne faut pas oublier que certaines femmes ne font l'amour que pour humilier leur partenaire..." (S, p. 132). While these maxims may seem to be dogmatic out of context, they in fact are lessons which Felipe learns by re-living his affair with Concha and which he shares with the actual reader. These lessons might even seem to be moral statements rationalizing Felipe's erotic fascinations with Concha's breasts, his fetishes gleaned from obscene magazines, and his re-living the affair with Concha. Nevertheless, as Robert Kemp has remarked, "cette griserie
Once again, language has organized the text to give the actual reader a certain amount of security, despite the shocks that might be experienced. Nombres, Lois, and H will be much more explicit in their erotic references and will not be so well-packaged within a narrative. However, the effect in those later works will entail much different readings.

The stylistic peculiarities of Une curieuse solitude may also warrant some concern by the actual reader. One critic, Charles Camproux, has addressed a whole review to pointing out such stylistic problems as the reliance on the imperfect subjunctive ("Ce goût préconçu pour le subjonctif imparfait va si loin qu'il paraît bien devenir un vice."), the use of improper forms (e.g., émeuvraient for émouvrairaient, or s'aggaver for s'alterer), and a lackluster style. Camproux even accused Sollers of an awkward choice of styles when contrasting Felipe from Bordeaux with the Spanish Concha: "Mais il ne semble pas que nous soyons toujours en présence de certaines maladresses; on a bien souvent l'impression de la fausse élégance." Another critic has dedicated an article to chastising Sollers for misquoting a phrase from Lope de Vega as belonging to Gongora. While slighting Sollers in his Spanish scholarship, this critic (Ricardo Paseyro) also scores the awkward idiom of Concha: "...bien que les
nombreuses fautes d'orthographe et de syntaxe qui les émaillent ne puissent toutes être attribuées aux typographes...”26 However, these harsh criticisms of the "aberrations" of narrative style in Une curieuse solitude do not consider the characters who utter those words. Felipe and Concha are both products of their social milieu -- he a bourgeois poet from Bordeaux, she a lower-class peasant from Seville. Another critic, Gérard d'Houville, has viewed the various styles of Sollers herein as reflecting a classical sense of distinction: "...il est né classique; il est déjà de la ligne bien française des esprits qui savent regarder en eux-mêmes et décrire avec une subtilité, parfois perverse, les détours de leur pensée et les élans de leur instinct.”27 The actual reader must begin to be cautious with Sollers. As the texts from his second and third stages will demonstrate, he dares to be different and challenging to the actual readers of his texts.

The reflections on language and writing should especially intrigue the actual reader since they are coherent statements about the relationship of the reader to this text. While the Spanish language was a refuge in which Concha could hide herself from Felipe, that language had served as the means for their initial meeting. Felipe was her translator in his household. Language was the initial bond between them: "...j'étais
obligé de lui servir d'interprète. Tout de suite, cette complicité de langage me parut en créer une autre, plus profonde" (S, p. 20). Likewise, language serves as the initial bond between actual reader and text. But there is more. For Felipe, he was fascinated by "...le vocabulaire du désir ..." (S, p. 38) which was "...une musique troublée..." (S, p. 25) whereby Concha would express her emotion while making love with such expletives as "échad." Like the actual reader, Felipe, who began as a professional writer at 20, was concerned with reducing his presentation of Concha to some basic message: "Ce serait une relation de bataille que mon livre, de lutte et de travail avec moi-même, pour aboutir enfin à cette qualité qui m'était si refusée: la simplicité" (S, p. 115). The complexity of woman was sometimes portrayed by allusions to paintings, specifically comparing Felipe's childhood friend Beatrice to a Gauguin painting (S, p. 83) and comparing Concha to the angel in El Greco's The Martyrdom of St. Maurice (S, pp. 148-149). This technique of combining painting and writing was especially popular with the Surrealists who influenced Sollers considerably in this first stage of his texts. However, the technique itself will be especially well-developed with the stained-glass window which introduces H (1973) and serves as a model for the text itself. Nevertheless, in Une curieuse solitude, the latter painting by El Greco is especially pertinent
to the actual reader since Felipe is reminded of Concha by the painting of "le petit ange lecteur qui doit tenir le livre du Jugement" (S, pp. 148-149). Concha assumes the identity of an angelic reader of the most dogmatic truth -- the final Judgment. While Felipe has been trying to "read" (cf. Beatrice with "...son visage curieux, passionné et d'autant plus lisible qu'il se croyait seul observateur," S, p. 84) the identities of others, it is Concha who is also "reading" his ultimate fate. Felipe had faith in language. While Concha mysteriously hid herself in the Spanish language away from Felipe's discovering searches, Felipe was intent on expressing his feelings in Paris some four years after his initial affair with Concha: "Je voulais du moins, en pensant à elle retrouver la même intensité qu'autrefois" (S, p. 103). But Felipe finally realizes that only bits and pieces can be recovered by language since "...nous ne sommes que mémoire" (S, p. 140).

The actual reader finds himself in the same position vis-à-vis the text as Felipe was facing others. Having faith in language as a medium for the communication of information may lead the actual reader awry. Language is an ideology in itself in that it carries the cultural and systematic overtones of a particular way of thinking. Felipe failed to resurrect the Concha of his earlier days with words whose...
not convey that "alinguistic" memory. Sollers would later formulate a theory of écriture whose beginnings are found in the first stage of his own texts: "En fait, la théorie de la communication ne forme qu'une partie de la théorie de l'écriture. L'écriture, telle que nous l'entendons, n'est pas directement un processus de communication." The key to this passage is directement. The actual reader of Une curieuse solitude goes away from that text thinking that he has consumed the message and story of that text very directly. However, he would do well to be cautious of Felipe's concern for language. In this first stage of the Sollers texts, language served as the ideology of a certain culture. If culture can be understood in Yuri Lotman's terms as "the collected non-hereditary information accumulated, preserved, and handed on by the various groups of human society," then the language of Le défi and Une curieuse solitude has communicated that information to an actual reader now detached from those texts. However both texts contained warnings for their actual readers who might have too much confidence in the power of language. Joseph Bya has constructed an interesting diagram comparing the capitalist economy with the consuming reader so trustful of language. The texts and the actual readers of the first stage of Sollers' creative works can be found within this system.
Such a system encloses the text and the reader within a certain rigid framework. Sollers will dare, in stages two and three of his creative works, to project the text and the actual reader beyond this closed framework. In Appendices 1 and 2, we have presented and compared selections of *Le défi* and *Une curieuse solitude*. Both selections present texts which are consumable by an actual reader who recovers the sense of the text and then lays that text aside to be forgotten. Let us return to *Une curieuse solitude* and look forward to *Le parc* (1961) as Felipe, like the "narrator" of that later text, has a privileged position in his world: "Tard dans la nuit, je restai sur mon balcon" (S, p. 169). His last words are foreboding from his elevated viewpoint: "En attendant pire" (S, p. 171). The iconoclasm of the texts and readers of this first stage seems inevitable when one remembers those concerned words of Felipe and the narrator of *Le défi* about the viability of language as a tie between the text and its actual reader.
Notes for Introduction


8 Henriot, p. 8.


15 Ibid.
Notes for Introduction

16 Jean Tortel, Rev. of Une curieuse solitude: Cahiers du Sud, 46e année, No. 350 (April 1959), 163.


18 Roudiez, p. 344.


21 Mauriac, p. 36.

22 Aragon, p. 5.


25 Ibid.


30 Bya, p. 113.
Outline

Chapter 1: Sollers the Experimenter with Le parc

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Chapter 1: Sollers the experimenter with Le parc

The year 1960 was a crucial year for Philippe Sollers as he joined with Jean-Edern Hallier, Jean-René Huguenin, and others to found the Tel Quel quarterly review. Initially inspired by Paul Valéry for its title, the review spent the years 1960-1967 in search for its own ideology. It experimented with many different methods, identifying especially with the nouveaux romanciers in issue No. 17. Likewise, Sollers experimented with various narrative techniques during the second stage (1960-1967) of his creative works. This experimentation especially characterizes Le parc (1961) and Drame (1965) which were subtitled as "novels." Although Sollers has insisted that "pour moi, la communication est le sujet même d'un livre," the linear narrative is no longer obviously present. The media of his communication have changed with Le parc and Drame and reflect one of the two primary "changements d'axes" in Sollers' creative works from 1957 to 1973. In fact, the constitution of the texts Le parc and Drame entail changes in the readers of the Sollers texts because the epistemological system of his first stage, whether it be a theory of information or a product of capitalism, will now be questioned, as Sollers asks: "Qu'est-ce que communiquer vraiment?" There appears a
need to re-evaluate the very nature of reading and literary criticism which, in their traditional positions of dealing with rational and logical discourse, cannot effectively confront Le parc and Drame. Robert Kanters' observation of Le parc is equally relevant to Drame: "La critique dans une certaine mesure perd ses moyens devant une oeuvre qui prétend chercher la communication directe entre la sensibilité subjective de l'auteur et celle du lecteur." There is a new shift from the transitive role of the text between author and reader to an intransitive role of the text. Hence, the reader and the text assume a different relationship. And if the critic must first of all be a good reader as Lubbock has told us, literary criticism must also adopt a new posture in relationship to such texts as Le parc and Drame. In these first two chapters, let us examine the nature of these differences in text and reader occasioned by the second stage of Sollers creative works. First of all, let us look at Le parc, that text whereby Henri Peyre remarks that "...he disappointed most critics and alienated the mass of readers in giving a deliberate, cold, obscure 'new novel' with no subject and no characters." In almost the same breath, Peyre, who is not very enthusiastic about the nouveaux romanciers, also acknowledged that "the experimental skill of the book is, however, striking."
I. The text and its self-conscious narrators

Similar to Felipe at the end of Une curieuse solitude, a speaker begins Le parc (P) by viewing his environment from a raised balcony: "De ce balcon, la nuit semble rassurante, théâtre confortable où l'on peut s'attarder." From such a perspective, one would expect a story from a privileged narrator who is physically and symbolically elevated above his circumstances. The speaker himself is conscious of his position on a sixth-floor balcony hiding in the darkness of its shadows while a red lamp beacons forth from his own room: "Oui, rien ne va m'écchapper si je m'assieds dans le petit fauteuil trainé sur le balcon étroit..." (P, p. 12). Although this male speaker thinks himself hidden from the sight of his neighbors who might be fooled by the light in his room, a woman (let us call her S2, for convenience of discussion) begins giving her observations of that first male narrator (S1) from her vantage point, a balcony on the sixth floor of another building facing the balcony of S1. She observes that he is feverishly taking notes in an orange exercise-book whose pages are grilled like graph paper, horizontally and vertically. The physical distance separating her balcony from his seems analogous to the emotional distance of their friendship.
D'ailleurs c'est moi qui ai surtout parlé, il me semble avec aisance, comme toujours avec lui. Il n'a presque rien dit, mais du moins cette phrase que j'entends sans en rien déchiffrer, que je sais seule­ment être indifférente, dédaigneuse. Ces mouvements, ces paroles paraissent alors venir de très loin, comme s'ils devaient traverser des cloisons, des surfaces (P, p. 18).

The text becomes a continuous shift between $S_1$ and $S_2$ as they both try to present a geographical study of the emotional distance between them. Apparently, $S_2$ is now living with another man in her apartment while discreetly trying to show her affection for $S_1$. Meanwhile, $S_1$ observes her from the shadows of his balcony, taking painstaking notes in his orange exercise-book of his role as a voyeur. These notes constitute part of the text as the observations of $S_2$ break up the "continuity" of $S_1$'s notes here and there. The text of Le parc presents the dramatic tension between $S_1$ and $S_2$. Although $S_2$ continuously comments on the activities of $S_1$, $S_1$ believes that he is alone in the portrayal of his lonely existence: "Ramassé sur soi entre deux vides (car veiller, dormir, rêver ne sont rien), réduit à une lisière mentale transmise et protégée, rassurante presque, depuis ce lit et ce corps allongé (où cela se meut, je commence; où cela commence, j'ai lieu);" (P, p. 68). Nevertheless, both speakers constantly comment on one another in a technique described by
Carlos Lynes as "le glissement dans les pronoms personnels," that is, the nuanced chances in narration from first to third person without warning or preparation. Sollers himself, in his usual role as explicator of his creative works, once admitted that "ce champ pronominal ... me paraissait capital pour des raisons de contestations de l'identité..." Contesting the verification of "identity" is, indeed, an effect of the play between the pronouns of $S_1$ and $S_2$. "Narration" becomes a complex drama of pronouns which foreshadows Drame in its denial of objectivity as Alberès has pointed out: "Ici, la vision objective et la description (telles qu'elles pourraient provenir d'un observateur étranger à l'action) se mêlent à la subjectivité du narrateur." "Narration" itself becomes a complex task as the consciousness of self and the consciousness of others are not distinctly organized and developed.

I. A. Loss of linear development

The aspectual shift in verbs and personal pronouns serves the dual function of fragmenting and perpetuating the continuity of the text. The plot does not develop temporally and spatially. Instead, the text moves in leaps from the emotions of $S_1$ to the echoing observations of $S_2$ which either reverberate or modify the pronouncements of the former. But the reverberations of $S_2$ are scattered throughout the text so $S_2$
will not necessarily immediately comment upon an observation of $S_1$. Their mutual responses are often scattered throughout the text. Louis Barjon insists that there is no thread uniting the various episodes of $S_1$ and $S_2$:

"Aucun fil d'Ariane ne marque la route dans ce labyrinthe végétal, ô l'on éprouve, au bout de quelques pages, le sentiment d'être un peu perdu." The developed narrative of the first stage of the Sollers text appears to be lost. Amongst the noise of the traffic below, the flashing colors, the scents from the park, and the shadows of evening, $S_1$ believes his identity to be unknown to $S_2$: "...elle ne sait pas où je suis, elle pense avec soulagement à mon absence..." (P, p. 15). $S_1$ has even lost his own perspective of space: "Je ne sais pas où je suis, en avant, derrière" (P, p. 20). Walking in the park, he feels that he is different from his environment as he creates a subjective impression of distance by the speed of his pace: "Je repars avec précaution d'abord, puis de plus en plus vite à mesure que je me sens moins lié à ce qui m'entoure et me retient" (P, p. 20).

The subjective experiences of $S_1$ are recalled with an objective style, that is, with the third person.
referring to his previous roles as a soldier in war and as a child obsessed with his atlas. Meanwhile, $S_2$, who is often referred to as the woman dressed in red by $S_1$, begins to correspond with $S_1$ in letters whose contents are never directly divulged. But smiles, glances, and exchanges of greetings from one balcony to another convey the general tenor of those letters. All of these experiences are being reconstructed by $S_1$ in his orange exercise-book upon which $S_2$ focuses much attention and wonder. The sporadic style of the text is partly contained within that very orange exercise-book whose contents $S_2$ describes thus: "...page, qui, de loin par-dessus son épaule me sembla pleine de ratures et de phrases surajoutées" (P, p. 38). And such is the montage-effect of the text developing itself through the reflections of $S_1$ and $S_2$.

I. A. a) Cinematic presentation

Similar to the ciné-roman, which Robbe-Grillet would especially perfect at a later date, the text of *Le parc* shifts from $S_1$ to $S_2$ with such vivid plays of imaginary vision that it destroys the unities of time and place, sometimes useful in orienting traditional narratives. In the place of these unities, there is an organic unity in *Le parc* similar to that which $S_1$ discovered in a library book he encountered: "Les épisodes se succèdent
sans faiblir, selon un ordre imprévu qui maintient l'intérêt du lecteur et, semble-t-il, du héros lui-même; héros qui change sans encombre de pays et d'identité, disparaît, reparaît au dernier moment, déguisé, à mille lieux d'où on le croyait prisonnier" (P, p. 139). The technique of employing the *style indirect libre* herein reinforces S₁'s own role as part of an organic unity greater than himself -- that of the text itself. S₁'s role as a speaker, momentarily suspended in this passage, is merely part of the continuous displacements of identity achieved by the text, as Jean Ricardou has well remarked: "Sa continuité [du *Parc*] ...assure le déplacement instantané dans l'espace et le temps dont les catégories sont à la fois reconnues et abolies."¹⁰

Such techniques of the text have brought many assertions about *Le parc* that it certainly was influenced by the so-called *nouveau roman*, especially the works of Robbe-Grillet. Indeed, "superficially it belongs most to the *nouveau roman*,"¹¹ according to the *Times Literary Supplement*. Michel Foucault specifically accused Sollers of imitating Robbe-Grillet's isomorphism with the similar geometric forms of the park and S₁'s balcony grill.¹² Sollers admits such an influence: "Qu'il y ait un rapport entre ce que fait Robbe-Grillet et ce que je veux faire, cela
me semble forcément...

Indeed, the similarities are striking. Perhaps Professor Roudiez has given us a more valuable insight: "Robbe-Grillet, in the final analysis, may well have been more of a challenge than an influence, and Sollers' ties to surrealism remain unbroken at this stage." Sollers combines the techniques of Robbe-Grillet (e.g. isomorphism; imaginary play; games of perspective) with those of Surrealism (e.g. automatic writing; the dreams and imaginary recreations of the speakers; the torment of the conscious and unconscious voices) achieve very different effects in the text of Le parc. As Sollers has characterized the work of Tel Quel during this period so his own creative work exemplifies the same trend: "Nous tendions vers une troisième voie, celle de l'expérience purement littéraire."

Let us examine the nature of this "purely literary experience."

J. A. b) Art for Art's sake

Within that orange exercise-book, S_1 may have created whatever dreams, imaginations, and other forms of wish-fulfillment he desired. He speaks of walking, sleeping, and making love with a woman who might be the inaccessible woman-in-red across the balcony. Or he may have done all these things with that very woman, and he is now re-living those moments by writing them down. These are no longer the reliable narrators of the first
stage of the Sollers texts. The text is composed of narrators who are probing the possibilities of the narrative. In effect, the speakers of Le parc exemplify Camus' l'homme révolté in the domain of the narrative:

"...l'homme refuse le monde tel qu'il est, sans accepter de lui échapper."\(^{16}\) Hence, by drastically re-arranging the "novel" within the realm of writing without reference to an external "reality", Sollers has warranted the criticism from Pierre Bourgeade that he is "le dernier champion de l'Art pour l'Art."\(^{17}\) Such an epithet is one of the first of an avalanche of accusations by literary critics who still resent the hyper-literary quality of his works today. Le parc warrants that accusation insofar as its text questions the very structure of "novel" as a vehicle of social communication. In his later texts, especially Nombres and Lois, the very epistemological foundations of language and Aristotelian logic will be questioned.

One may well ask what this mosaic structure of a text ultimately achieves aside from the destruction of order and harmony. If Sollers does not concern himself with a mimesis of "reality" or with a theory of information, what does Le parc communicate by its fragmentary structure? Since, by admission and consensus of critical opinion, Sollers has concerned himself with a purely
literary problem, it is there that we should look for a possible answer. S1 is especially involved with writing in his orange exercise-book. His production might offer a commentary on the very practice of writing. One reviewer has remarked that *Le parc* especially exemplified that "the imagination of the writer and the reality he creates within the words are just as important as the objects to which he refers." I might even add that in this text, the imagination of the writer supersedes "the objects to which he refers." Let us examine what *Le parc* tells us about that venture which has concerned so many writers, especially in the term *écriture* which seems to have adopted an alluring meaning of its own since Roland Barthes' *Le Degré zéro de l’écriture* (1953).

I. B. Commentary on the Art of Writing

*Écriture*, or the art of writing, assumes a new dynamism for Sollers in the text *Le parc*. One important feature of this dynamism is the author's gradual lack of effective identity due to the existence of the writing. Sollers once remarked about such a writer: "...un auteur n'est pas vraiment la cause de ce qu'il écrit, mais bien plutôt son produit; ...il se rend donc sans cesse virtuel et pluriel par rapport à son écriture." The "author" is written, and hence created, by his own writing. He becomes part of his text. In *Le parc*, S1 especially feels
this gradual ineffectiveness in manipulating the writing in his orange exercise-book: "Si certaines phrases sont barrées, d'autres se développent sans une hésitation, se ponctuant presque d'elles-mêmes, il me semble" (P, p. 98). And the very text Le parc has "produced" $S_1$ inasmuch as part of that text is constituted by the contents of the orange exercise-book. Even at first, $S_1$ remarks that his consciousness does not have a very large role to play in his écriture: "Je ne vois rien alors, je n'entends rien, ou plutôt j'attends une telle confusion de détails que c'est l'inaperçu qui s'exprime en moi par hasard" (P, p. 19). There seems to be an organic unity, which we have previously observed in the flow of the text and which is beyond the conscious control of $S_1$ as a writer. In that orange exercise-book which seemed already determined by its "surface blanche quadrillée" (P, p. 21), $S_1$ inscribed letters whose distinctive identities could no longer be "read" by their writer: "...les lettres se déforment, perdent leur aspect irrégulier, s'égalisent, deviennent bientôt indéchiffrables" (P, p. 21). Thus, $S_1$ is the instrument by which the écriture of the orange exercise-book is produced. He is its writer or scripteur, but not its conscious author. As a result, écriture in this text becomes especially a problem of language which has re-created the identity of its writer.
I. B. a) A linguistic "novel"

As Carlos Lynes has aptly remarked about Le parc, it is primarily "un roman 'linguistique.'" This text is linguistic insofar as it is concerned with the determination that language imposed on its users. In Nombres (1968) and Lois (1972), this discussion will be developed into a questioning of the cultural bases of Western civilization. However, in this text, the problem is that of the roles of the speaker as a consumer or a producer of language. Inasmuch as Le parc is a "novel" about that problem, the argument is one which concerns all users of language, rather than merely its writers as in Drame (1965). With Le parc, the commentary of S₂ on S₁ constitutes a dialogue of the writing and speaking forces of language which underscores a later Sollers observation about the "novel": "Le roman est la manière dont cette société se parle, la manière dont l'individu doit se vivre pour y être accepté." Thus, the "novel" has a social role which, in the case of Le parc, addresses itself to the determination of language for all the members of society. As S₁ and S₂ exchange letters throughout the text, the moods of the two speakers change to such an extent that the force of written language in human affairs is strongly presented by implication. S₁ especially feels himself carried away by the succession of words: "...un mot ne suffit pas à sauver le reste...il
Thus, $S_1$ tries to consciously destroy his written work. At this point, he tears his orange exercise-book apart in an effort to assert his control. However, as Edern Hallier has developed, $S_1$ is still caught up in the theatrical role of language which destroys all perspective of linear time or geographical place to dramatize the circular determination of $S_1$: "La durée, magnétisée, semble s'être abolie, la continuité de la lecture est telle que la douleur (ou la haine) peut aussi bien aller de l'enfant au soldat que du soldat à l'enfant, ou bien encore mettre des années, une vie entière, pour accomplir un trajet circulaire d'un endroit au même endroit, d'un moment au même moment."

Uncanny language re-structures his childhood, his military experience, and his present affair through his writing. $S_1$ attempts to assert his conscious control by destroying his own writing. $S_2$ observes $S_1$ tearing a letter which he has spent much time writing: "Et il préfère la déchirer lui-même, après l'avoir rapidement relue" (P, p. 76). Destruction appears to be his only conscious expression of liberation from a language that dominates his conscious and unconscious activity: "Silence libéré de celui qui a réussi, en se privant d'une fonction ou d'un sens, à s'ouvrir enfin une issue" (P, pp. 73-74). Perhaps it is
the destruction of a verbal sequence or récit in Le parc which is an expression of liberation. The silence between apparently disjunctive sequences in the text itself may be the writer's effort to gain conscious control of language. Such a destruction of the linear sequence of language exemplifies Lorent's commentary that "déjà dans Le parc...Philippe Sollers penchait sur le Comment de ses livres." But Le parc is only a prelude to his texts in stage three of his creative works wherein the problems will be dramatized to a more complex degree. Even in Drame, where the whole text is concerned with the creation of the art of writing, the problems are merely posed rather than resolved. Nevertheless, through the destructive powers of S₁, Le parc demonstrates man's need to control and produce, rather than to simply consume passively, the powers of language.

I. B. b) Transforming the world

As an instrument in the art of writing, S₁ is involved with transforming the "world." This "world" assumes a new identity in his writing. Similar to his atlas, with which he was so obsessed as a young child, his writing will produce a geographical orientation with all its legends and guidelines to assist the inexperienced traveler in life. Sollers himself has portrayed the function of a text as a "nouvelle topologie destinée à dénoncer implacablement l'illusion réaliste bourgeoise."
In addition, a text has the affirmative topological function of creating a new order which replaces the traditional order of the narrative with its linear time, character development, and a reliable narrator. At another moment, Sollers has also appropriately remarked that "le monde n'est pas à décrypter, il est à transformer." Writing is not a matter of accepting or copying the world as it is... Writing is an active effort to transform that "world" as we know it and have come to passively accept it. Hence, S_1's writing is a re-creation of his boyhood when, with the memories of his atlas, he went on imaginary odysseys which created impassioned desires for different experiences:

Ou encore, les matins d'hiver, dans la salle de bains embuée (le miroir, les vitres), l'enfant regardait son corps, le touchait, rêvait des pays coloriés de l'atlas où l'on peut vivre nu tout le jour, plus près des éléments, de la terre, de l'herbe, des feuillages, des femmes; pays rendus plus inaccessibles, semblait-il, par la couleur de la peau invariable du voyageur; et il regrettait, bien sûr, de ne pas être noir, indien, pagayeur ou chasseur; d'être forcé, plutôt, d'enfiler près du radiateur des vêtements ordinaires au lieu des riches étoffes de coton ou de soie qui rendent la chair plus précieuse (P, p. 96).

So, with his writing, S_1 re-created himself and his environment, perhaps with the dreams of his imagination as well as with his own experiences. But is S_2 merely part of his imagination? Has he constructed his violent need for self-expression, or vice versa? How can one
distinguish between his dreams and his experience?
The text poses these problems whose answers cannot be
verified definitively. Nevertheless, the text has
created a topology which the actual reader is tasked with
orienting. Discovering the legends by which to travel
through Le parc is an intriguing problem for the reader
who confronts this text. Let us explore this task.

II. The reader searching for consistent images

"Pourquoi n'ai-je pas pu lire très bien Le
parc...[?]"27 Thus, the critic Georges Perros offers
us an exemplary reaction as a reader of Le parc. This
reaction is "exemplary" insofar as it questions our
ability to read a Sollers text after those works of
his first stage which were so traditionally understandable.
Perhaps in order to preclude the feeling of being lost
in our confrontation with Le parc, we should adjust our
habits of reading to conform to that text. With
Le parc much more than with the Sollers texts of the
first stage, the reader becomes an integral part of
the text itself, since reading this text fulfills and
complements its writing according to Sollers. However,
such a reading must be of a special kind: "...une œuvre
n'existe par elle-même que virtuellement et...son
actualisation (ou sa production) dépend de ses lectures
et des moments où ces lectures s'accomplissent
It is an active reader who is called upon to fulfill *Le parc*. Such a reader must search for consistent images and for recognizable patterns within the text. In effect, the reader produces his own text by re-arranging the words into what is finally the unity of "the park." This active reading requires some amount of perseverance and tenacity from the reader of *Le parc*. However, it is a significantly small amount of patience when compared to *Nombres*, *Lois*, and *H*.

Jean Thibaudeau has told us that the text of "*Le parc est une enquête.*" However, it is also true that reading *Le parc* is also a search, similar to looking for the missing pieces of a puzzle.

II. A. Kaleidoscope of a park

Similar to the young boy with his atlas, the reader searches for indices which will guide him through *Le parc*. The boy had especially been thrilled to find special marks: "mais ce qu'il aimait surtout c'était trouver pour certaines illustrations, des légendes inédites" (P, p. 45). Sometimes, these marks would suggest special orientations to the boy's reading: "...des lieux à peine indiqués par un détail coloré mais reliés par cette couleur même, lieux qu'un fil invisible réunit" (P, p. 134). And to find such a "fil invisible" is the task of the active reader who must relate the apparently disparate plethora of colors, perfumes, and images which both voices of the text are
unleashing. The following passage from La Nouvelle Héloïse, part of which is the preface to Le parc, especially suggests an analogy between the park and the text regarding their heterogeneity and organic unity: "Tel est, par exemple, le parc célèbre de Milord Cobham à Slaw; c'est un composé de lieux très beaux et très pittoresques dont les aspects ont été choisis en différents pays, et dont tout paraît naturel, excepté l'assemblage, comme dans les jardins de la Chine dont je viens de vous parler" [I have underlined the preface].

This park, composed of exotic elements brought from different places to form a singular arrangement, is similar to the text whose components are variously taken from $S_1$ and $S_2$. The reader must then organize such a kaleidoscopic vision into an ensemble by intuitively combining the apparently disjunctive elements ("dont les aspects ont été choisis en différents pays") such as the writer, the child, and the soldier in order to re-instate that organic unity, displaced by the order of the text ("l'assemblage"): "quoiqu'il en soit, une telle coexistence d'éléments disparates -- mais qu'on sent obscurément reliés -- accentue l'aspect ambigü de la scène..." (P, pp. 114-115). Let us explore how one can gather together these elements into the kaleidoscope of a park.
II. A. a) Negative space

The park itself represents an interesting analogy to the organic unity of the text. Each night, a groundskeeper in the park would sound a handbell which signalled the visitors to leave. Suddenly, the park's deserted space was transformed into an idyllic scene worthy of S's observation that it became "le centre du soir" (P, p. 31). But the park only became the center of interest once the noises and colors of the daylight traffic had abated. In the evening, the quiet of the park with its vegetal perfumes dominated the scene. Nevertheless, S would sit in the shadows and peer across the way to observe the lady-in-red and the other dwellers of her apartment house. S's activity seems to be secondary to the existence of the park. Yet practically the whole text is a re-creation of S's visions in the dark evening hours. The park in the background of the text may be the model upon which the reflections of S and S must be patterned. The forms and their shapes must be constructed by the reader as he imitates S's own mixture of invention and reading: "Ainsi la vision précise qu'il avait de certaines pages débordait-elle malgré lui, au point de lui faire inventer dans les livres des passages ou des scènes imaginaires. Parfois, il essayait de les relire, étonné de ne plus les trouver à leur place, grands panneaux de réalité disparus entre deux paragraphes, quand il était sûr de les avoir lus exactement où il les..."
cherchait" (P, p. 106). The words seem to be displaced sometimes for $S_1$ and for his actual reader so that the links among the words must be constructed by he who confronts them.

Similar to the park, the text is structured in the absence of its occupants. Despite what the speakers $S_1$ and $S_2$ say about their situation, the actual reader must suspend his belief in their voices as sincere and trustworthy perspectives. Together the speakers present what Hallier calls "...la structure d'un espace négatif." The actual reader is placed within the dialectic of $S_1$ and $S_2$ wherein he realizes that organic unity similar to that which $S_1$ had experienced within the park: "Une fois à l'intérieur, malgré le bruit constant de la circulation alentour, on abandonne peu à peu toute notion de distance, le regard se perd dans les frondaisons des platanes et des marronniers" (P, p. 145). Once within this dialectic of visions between $S_1$ and $S_2$, the actual reader begins to remark an internal dynamism of the text which is generated around obsessions with color.

II. A. b) A coloring book

Although the speakers continually fade in and out between one another and between night and daylight, this cinematic technique gives the reader certain glimpses of colors which survive all the fadings of time, place, and character. The color red is especially significant
because of its consistent appearance within the observations of the writer ($S_1$). Red will be such an obsession in *Nombres* that some critics will call it "le récit rouge." In *Le parc*, it is the striking color of the woman's dress across the way ($S_2$), of the light in his room, of blood in the violent recollections of his military experiences, of the child's atlas, and of many other striking scenes which capture his attention. This vivid color lends a certain amount of unity to the fragmentary text. But it is also capable of expressing many different moods at once. While the color red attracts attention by its brightness and distinctive color, it may also evoke anger, passion, sensuality, and violence. By its association with fire, it may also connote purgation and destruction. And as the color appears in the sky, either at morning or at evening, it is a foreboding of things to come. The red atlas of the young boy had once impassioned him with a desire for the exotic. Red is also the color of blood as the boy becomes a soldier having to confront violence directly. Then, the red dress of a woman and his own red lamp imply a sensuality of the mature man while the red of fire may be identified with his own desire as a writer to destroy the determination of language. All of these implications of the color red may be contained within each reference to that color. And the actual reader must
certainly acknowledge the polyvalent effects that red must have in his kaleidoscope of the text. S_1's memory and imagination eventually magnify the effect of the red lamp so that, even in the evening when darkness makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish color, red predominates in S_1's visions of his environment. From his balcony, he, like the actual reader, sees through his sheer curtains that: "...le miroir ne reflète plus que les tentures rouges..." (P, n. 149).

The color red flashes so vividly that Le parc, rather than Nombres, should literally be called "le récit rouge."

II. B. Atmosphere rather than plot

Still experiencing a rather strange role between the two speakers who are not speaking to one another but about one another, the actual reader of this text searches for a single thread to guide him the remainder of the way through the labyrinthine text. However, the plural nature of the speakers complicates a recoverable plot. The sequence of words confronting the reader might be similar to the decomposing body which continually haunts S_1 from his military experiences. The reader's notion of a developing plot must decompose in favor of the reader's developing awareness of S_1's plight. Jean-René Huguenin had insisted that "Le parc n'est pas un roman, c'est un chant." Perhaps we can develop this insight and
conjecture that Le parc is comparable to a chorus of two voices whose differences must be blended by the actual reader into a harmonious song. Once again mimicking S_1, the actual reader could consider himself to be an orchestra leader bringing together disparate sounds into a single harmonious entity: "Peu à peu, l'harmonie s'affirme contre le bruit des voitures déjà plus espacées, et emplit la salle où les spectateurs sont attentifs à l'effort du musicien, courbé, jouant avec une énergie, une violence croissantes jusqu'à l'arpège final où il rejette la tête en arrière, achevant ainsi une longue phrase suspendue dans le vide qu'elle avait créé" (P, p. 32).

In effect, the actual reader must allow himself to be enchanted by the two speakers without being mesmerized by them. Once within their dialectic, he begins to organize the park created by the two voices. He experiences a certain atmosphere generated by the two voices. However, he must be careful not to rely too much upon their veracity. The park exists somewhere between their commentaries. If the reader is too inert, he will be written or produced by Le parc. Sollers would later say that "l'écriture n'est pas la domestique du réel ou de l'économique, elle en est la force de transformation symbolique." As a
result, *écriture* might well form the reader into a passive shape, unconcerned by that which is determining him. Such a danger will be much greater in *Lois*. Nevertheless, *Le parc* remains a serious threat to a reader who will not accept the active role he must assume with the Sollers texts of stages two and three. Although he must allow himself to be placed in the atmosphere of *Le parc*, the actual reader must not allow that atmosphere to condition him into a passive receptacle of words.

II. C. The reader as detective

In order to avoid that passivity, the actual reader must realize his role as a detective looking for clues which will aid him in constructing the text. Reading *Le parc* must be a careful observation of the nuances in the speakers. When the narrating voice shifts between various points of view, one must consider all the possibilities and eliminate those which are inapplicable as the dynamism of the text continues. Identifying the speakers is especially important in understanding the perspectives which are being contrasted. The reader is placed right in the midst of these two speakers, who themselves have difficulty identifying a discourse with its speaker: "...autant de phrases qu'elle disait m'écrivait, et c'était toujours un sujet d'étonnement, que cette ressemblance peut-être inventée, exagérément grossie..." (P, p. 54). Indeed, the actual reader is
involved in tracing the life of \( S_1 \) with the writer's subjective reflections and the commentaries of another. \( S_2 \) portrayed his life as "fragment de réalité qui poursuit sans le consulter sa propre histoire" (P, p. 105). \( S_1 \)'s history has not yet been organized according to linear time or successive places and/or events. The actual reader must organize that life for himself. However, \( S_1 \) gives a hint about the structure of the text in his last few reflections. Having locked away the orange exercise-book, he observes that \( S_2 \) provides the secret to its access since "...elle est seule à garder la clé..." (P, p. 155). Similarly, it has been her commentary that provided an access into his writing. The reverberating effects of the two speakers do not constitute mimetics of a privileged reality, but commentaries one upon the other. Sollers has told us that "...le texte est un espace double, intra-réflexif, dont le piège est de se présenter comme miroir ou reflet." However, the actual reader can avoid this deceptive trap of looking for a mimetic in *Le parc*. \( S_1 \) provided a good example for the actual reader. At first, \( S_1 \) had attempted to look into the windows of the apartment facing his own. But the windows were opaque, even mirror-like: "...vitres à travers lesquelles on voit seulement les rideaux; vitres où se reflète un réverbère" (P, p. 29). Likewise, the reader who tries
to read across the text of Le parc to an informative message will discover the text to be opaque or mirroring his own passive role. However, S₁ soon discovers that there is a reciprocal look observing him with which he begins to identify: "Encore une fois l'image me regarde, les yeux de cette image; et encore une fois, l'inconcevable espace se reforme entre nous" (P, p. 147). So it is with the text Le parc and its actual reader. Reading Le parc must be an experience of immersion whereby one can realize from within the text just which roles the reader must play in defining the limits of that text. In Appendices 1 and 2, we have compared some elements of a passage from Le parc with the other texts of Sollers. In that selection from Le parc, S₂ is describing the futile efforts of S₁ in trying to consciously organize his writing. The actual reader is placed between S₁ and S₂ where he attempts to determine how reliable S₂'s commentary is and whether S₁ is "in fact" resigned to his unconscious role in writing. The actual reader is now being involved in the text as the technique of employing two voices draws him into Le parc which, unlike Le défi and Une curieuse solitude, he cannot easily leave aside and be certain he has impartially retrieved its adventures. Let us now examine Drame to discover what this proximity of reader and text can tell us about the very creation of écriture.
Notes for Chapter 1


2Ibid.


7Sollers and Daix, p. 5.


12Michel Foucault, "Distance, aspect, origine," Critique, XIX, 198 (Nov. 1963), 931-932.


Notes for Chapter 1


17 Pierre Bourgeade répond à Sollers, "La Quinzaine littéraire, 1 October 1970, p. 27.


19 For a discussion of some of the developments of écriture in the 1960's which were implicit in Barthes' work, see my article "La Chanson de Roland," Delta Epsilon Sigma Bulletin, XVII, 3 (October 1972), 78-87.


21 Lynes, p. 105.

22 Sollers, "Le Roman...," p. 228.


24 Laure E. Lorent, "Formalisme ou engagement (À propos de quelques livres récents)," La Revue nouvelle, XLIX, 3 (March 1969), 306.


Notes for Chapter 1

31 Hallier, p. 307.

32 The major occurrences of this color red are in the following objects which are followed by the pages in which they occur: lamp in the room of $S_1$, 20; the evening sky, 31; the reception room of $S_2$, 33; the velvet balcony of an imagined orchestral hall, 33; the tiles on the balcony of $S_2$, 34; his red skin, 40; the child's atlas, 45; the carpet in the stairway, 63; the old woman's nightlight, 64; his palm bleeds, 80; a neighbor inoculates himself, 86, 127; an armchair, 86, 121; the eiderdown of his bed, 87, 140; a glass of wine, 112; a body bleeding on the floor, 120; armchairs, 121; a vest, 141; the final evening sky, 152.

33 Jean-René Huguenin, Review of Le parc, La Table Ronde, No. 167 (December 1961), p. 115.


Outline

Chapter 2: Sollers the experimenter with *Drame*

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Chapter 2: Sollers the experimenter with *Drame*

In *Drame* (1965), Sollers continues to experiment with two speakers. However, these speakers are more distinct than those in *Le parc*. Once again the speakers have no formal names. But let us call the third-person commentator, Id, and the first-person confessor, Ego. The psychoanalytic terminology here is deliberate and reflects the concerns of the text which will be developed later. Such a psychoanalytic separation of the two speakers is implied by their utterances. The terms are used here for the convenience of distinguishing the two speakers. The activity between Id and Ego could be a very generic one since they are not limited to specific names. However, *Drame* evokes a very special problem in the art of writing. Sollers has remarked that he understood the word "drame" in the special sense given it by Mallarmé: "Il en est de la mentale situation comme des méandres d'un drame..."¹ He may very well be evoking the intellectual drama of Mallarmé. However, the text makes no obvious allusions to the Mallarmé quote. In the *prière d'insérer*, which Sollers wrote for the jacket of his works to facilitate our understanding of his complex works, the analogy to theater is made quite explicit:
"Exactement comme un drame se joue, on peut imaginer qu'un roman s'écrit sous les yeux du lecteur." If this is an insight into the work, then the text is a dramatic portrayal of the creation of a novel. That sounds very straightforward until the text begins to unfold itself.

The preface to the text bears the enigmatic words: "Le sang qui baigne le coeur est pensé." Perhaps this will be explained as the text continues. However, at first, this sentence literally could be an attempt to unite physical and intellectual activities; or, it could metaphorically refer to the emotional ties of reason. Nevertheless it is puzzling and almost poetic in its ambivalent meanings. It is no wonder that, despite the title referring to the theater and the subtitle calling this a "novel," Roland Barthes has supported the poetic claims of this text: "nous avons donc quelque droit à lire Drame comme un poème." Sollers would certainly give his approval of such a view which supports Tel Quel's ideological thrust at the moment of Drame's inspiration: "Nous trouvons à Tel Quel, un enrichissement à la confusion des genres." But we are still about to witness the event of a novel, even though the method of presentation may be a mixture of poetic, dramatic, and narrative art. The text is concerned with the event of that novel through the dialogue of its two speakers, Id and Ego. The reader will be especially influenced by
the poetic, dramatic, and narrative methods. One would think that the reader would not be very concerned with the portrayal of the writer's plight. However, let us first consider the nature of the text before approaching the plight of the reader of Drame.

The text "begins" with Id's description of an epistemological crisis between a writer ("il") and his thought. Id sets the scene for the whole text: "le jeu consiste en ce que le second personnage (vivant et imaginaire) tourmente le cadavre réel" (D, p. 13). Apparently, this speaker, Id, will narrate for us the tension which produces the subjective, quoted words written by the writer. The whole text will alternate in sixty-four separate instances of this "dialogue" between the commentary of Id and the written words of Ego. This "dialogue" between "je" and "il" appears to be a classic case of the alternation between story (histoire) and discourse (discours). But the structure of Drame is more complicated than that. The commentary of Id does not narrate or develop any story. As in Le parc, there is some sort of organic unity which links Id and Ego in this text because, as Barthes tells us: "Le propre de Drame, c'est qu'elle [la dépersonnalization du sujet] n'y est pas racontée (rapportée) mais constituée (si l'on peut dire) par l'acte même du récit." Hence, "story" is not an
appropriate term for the commentary of Id. Despite a consistent use of the third person, Id’s commentary might also be called a discourse insofar as it gives a specific perspective of Ego’s predicament. The dialogue between these two discourses is a special kind because, once again, linear time and geographical place do not enter into their confrontation. As the moment of literary creativity is suspended by the dialogue of those two speakers, conventional time and space are not only ignored but mocked, as Tzvetan Todorov tells us: "Un livre comme *Drame* de Philippe Sollers met en jeu, dans une interrelation complexe, ces deux ordres [l’espace et le temps], en accentuant le temps de l’écriture et en alternant deux types de discours, menés par un ‘je’ et par un ‘il.’"6

However, distinguishing the discourses within the text is not enough. There is also another discourse that intervenes in the constitution of the text — that of the reader. So let us distinguish between the horizontal discourse and the vertical discourse. The vertical discourse is that of the actual reader who imposes his consciousness upon the text as he attempts to read it. The horizontal discourse, then, is that complex interweaving of the discourses between Id and Ego to constitute the text *Drame*. It is that very horizontal discourse whose constitution must first be studied before considering its influence upon the vertical
discourse of the reader.

I. The text — horizontal discourse

Id is the first speaker who appears. He continually speaks in the third person about a specific writer's dilemma. Id does not bring himself within the drama he is delineating. He seems quite impartial as he portrays the dramatic background:

Problème — pousser la reconnaissance le plus loin possible, supprimer le malaise qui ne cesse de l'envahir. Problème: avoir vu le piège mais perdu ses limites... Il aura bientôt l'impression de s'être égaré par mésarde dans un musée animé où il serait un personnage épisodique ou central de tous les tableaux à la fois: pas un qui ait la même forme ni le même auteur. C'est de là qu'il lui faut partir (D, p. 12).

The problem of the writer versus the determination of language, which had so haunted S1 before his orange exercise-book in Le parc and which had been suspected by the narrators of Le défi and Une Curieuse Solitude, is the "trap" which the writer must acknowledge before beginning to write. Id tells us that the writer will be written by his own writing and transformed into an object in a museum, with no single identity of his self but with those identities which his writing gives him. And the writer cannot ignore the threat of scriture: "Mais il ne peut se résigner à ne pas savoir. Il sent qu'il ne peut qu'échouer; il sent qu'il ne peut qu'essayer" (D, p. 14). Therein lies the impossible
drama of the writer with his words. But the drama of the text is two-dimensional since not only is there a tension between the writer and his writing, but also between the discourses of Id and Ego. Id portrays the difficulty of determining in which dimension Ego must act: "C'est ainsi qu'il est convoqué sans arrêt, sollicité par des pièces sans unité, obligé de répondre aux situations les plus variables sans savoir ce qu'elles attendent de lui, quel texte il faut leur soumettre" (D, p. 15). Ego can only respond with his writing, without addressing any particular audience. Within the same plane of discourse, that of the text of Drame, Ego responds to the commentaries of Id by presenting his struggle with his writing in a series of subjective narrations preceded by Id's comment that "il écrit." There are sixty-four such sequences or exchanges between Id and Ego which the prière d'insérer compares to the sixty-four squares of a chess board or which Stephen Heath, in his study of écriture and Drame, has compared to the sixty-four geometric figures of the Chinese I Ching. Such comparisons are not at all obvious and seem to be superfluous to the text. In fact, the sixty-four "chants," as Sollers likes to refer to them, are not numbered and are not obviously linked in their sequential structure, except in the repetition of "il écrit" which precedes Ego's discourse. These comparisons, however,
do support the theory that the text Drame is constructed on a single, two-dimensional horizontal plane, similar to a theatrical stage. The reader, then, will constitute a third dimension, the vertical depth which lends additional perspective to the drama which is Drame.

I. A. De-constructing the single voice

Neither Id nor Ego constitutes a reliable voice in itself. Lorent has portrayed the tension between the speakers as representing two aspects of the same person: "Ces deux voix représentent les deux aspects de la personnalité de l'Auteur, à la fois le créateur et la critique de sa propre oeuvre." However, the unity of these voices is a difficult position to support. They are distinct and very different in perspective although they are interdependent. The struggle of Ego (the writer) with his writing achieves a greater dimension when understood in light of Id's commentary. Neither speaker can exist by himself. Ego's writings are so subjective and involved in his plight that his portions of the text are enigmatic without the benefit of Id's commentaries. Likewise, Id's commentaries only become fruitful when juxtaposed to the actual torments of Ego's plight. More than in Le parc, these two speakers constitute a dialectic which gives internal dynamism to the text. Despite their distinct identities, they are dependent one upon the other for those identities. This dialectic
between Id and Ego might also reflect upon the struggle of the writer with his work. As Carlos Lynes has said in his study of Le parc, Drame is the "roman où le thème central... est", en fin de compte, le travail textuel lui-même."9

This work of the text is its self-constitution by means of the dialectic. Just as the discourses of Ego and Id constitute Drame, so the opposition of the writer with language (one living-being confronting another) constructs Ego's discourse within Drame.

I. A. a) Binary structures

Such dialectically opposed structures as Ego and Id are united by molecular units of thematic development. Leon Roudiez has observed that Drame seems to sustain its own textual life through clusters of images.10 Such clusters of images operate within the text in a chemical fashion of combining and separating to provide the very lifeblood of the text itself. In light of such themes, we might better understand the preface to Drame: "Le sang qui baigne le coeur est pensée." Id had described the writer's artistic production as a chemical, rather than an intellectual, operation: "Opération chimique plutôt: décoller, isoler..." (D, p. 12). The major image clusters involve the themes of life/death and vigilance/sleep. On the one hand, the writer gives life to his writing which in turn negates the writer's life by replacing it. Likewise, when writing has not yet been given existence,
the writer is in full presence to his own life. On the other hand, the writer's life seems to be tied to the theme of vigilance and wakeful consciousness. But that is not the period of true creativity. The writer has considerable difficulty in controlling his thought ("la pensée" or "elle" in the following passage) as he speaks to his writing: "Et pourtant elle se glisse également dans ces phrases, et si j'écris en t'entendant marcher, en imaginant tes jambes sous ta robe, à côté: ta nudité peut représenter cette terre, l'image où tu étais nue passe dans ces mots comme moi dans ta robe, insaisissable et distraite -- et tu contiens, tu détruis en même temps toutes les fois où cette robe t'aurait cachée" (D, p. 34). Perhaps it is the boundary between consciousness and sleep which is represented by this dress between the writer and his thought. When the writer is dreaming or non-vigilant, his writing seems to flow from his pen and readily constitute Ego's discourse. Such discourse exemplifies Jacques Lacan's theories about writing as a product of the unconscious. This example in Drame is concomitant with the developing importance of Lacanian psychoanalysis along with Jacques Derrida's theories of the art of writing ("écriture") in the Tel Quel ideology. Drame implicitly embodies many of the concerns of Derrida and Lacan.

Ego and Id have been terminologically employed to
refer to the speakers because of their Freudian implications as well as their employment of I (Ego) and he (Id) in their discourses. They do not specifically refer to the same functions as the id and ego of Freud. However, it is significant that, in a Freudian context so familiar to Lacan, the id and ego do constitute a dialogue of the human psyche under the supervision of the superego. In Drame, the writer's discourse, i.e. his writing, appears to be a conscious construction in that it is a subjective voice. However, as a product of the non-vigilant writer, that writing by Ego, is also an unconscious construction. Both discourses of Ego and Id are much too complex to delineate the conscious and unconscious components, or of the Freudian id and ego. The speaker Id points out well that "mais, en fait, n'importe quoi peut devenir limite, point critique..." (D, p. 36). The dynamism achieved by the multiple constructions of dialectics tends to efface their components. Nevertheless, the binary structure initially generates such confrontations to give organic unity to a plural text.

I. A. b) A geometric panorama

The writer seems almost ineffective in organizing his writing. Once he intends to write a certain project, writing then dominates his pre-conceived scaffolding of that project: "Du panorama géométrique à l'aveuglement mobile" (D, p. 26). Id implies that the writer's projects
will never be accomplished: "Au fond, il ne va nulle part, et maintenant il le sait: le projet est sans cesse à recommencer" (D, p. 119). However, writing will provide its own geometric complexity in an internally organic manner, apart from the consciousness of the writer. Such a geometric complexity will be scientifically and methodologically developed with the analogy of the text to the stained-glass window in H. Herein, the writer at times hopes to overcome his imitation of the order with which his ideas are expressed in language: "Mais pour l'instant, il s'agit d'un mot enveloppé, sourd, qui se dit dans l'ombre et que je ne peux dire ici qu'en écho" (D, p. 50).

But the writer (Ego) does not completely see the panoramic view of his struggle with écriture and wonders: "Où sommes-nous en dehors d'où nous sommes?" (D, p. 18). He is engaged in a very intimate relationship with écriture as he attempts to articulate his thought within the maze of language: "Cependant, je dois garder le contact au plus près. Je n'avancerai que par rapport à cette carte, le voyage n'est possible que par elle et sur le terrain obligatoire où je suis placé" (D, p. 20). In order to realize the context of this map which has already plotted his course, the writer must rely on a perspective which can portray his plight. Hence, he admits the necessity of Id's commentary: "...j'accepte
de me contempler du dehors" (D, p. 21). Id observes that the writer and his thoughts cannot even articulate such a confrontation with *écriture* because that confrontation is beyond the power of language: "Les lois habituelles sont renversées, ils n'ont aucun langage préparé pour ce phénomène (*légereté immédiate, source de rapidité*)" (D, p. 25). Hence, the writer's plight must be complemented by an external commentary.

I. B. The cosmology of commentary

The writer produces a discourse about himself and his struggles with writing. He confesses his reflections in an apparent need to know more about his art of writing and himself. Lorent has portrayed this well: "En écrivant, en s'écrivant, il veut découvrir le secret de l'être...comme on tisse un Fil ou une Tapisserie." The analogy to weaving a tapestry is especially productive since the commentary of Id is so necessary to the discourse of Ego. In fact, as we have already seen, the commentary precedes the writer's efforts, thus suggesting the intellectual discussion which the writer often entertains with himself to produce the thoughts that induce writing. However, although the first words of the text indicate a beginning to this "drama": "D'abord (premier état, lignes, gravures -- le jeu commence)..." (D, p. 11), there is still a recognition in this text of
Sollers' insight that "au commencement, il y a ce morcellement, ce fleuve, ce roulement corporel de langue." As a result, Stephen Heath may well observe that "Drame, however, is written precisely as an absence of beginning, as recognition of that absence." Nevertheless, the commentary does precede the writing and is continually interspersed throughout the text to produce a discursive process which may well be inherent to language itself. Such a discursive process in Drame leads to the writer's awareness of his predicament: "Je pense et vois ce que je peux dire. Le problème donc est de trouver des mots" (D, p. 111). However, the complexity of resolving that problem must also be discussed. Alain Bosquet believes that the drama is a simple one: "Le drame est simple: l'écrivain sait qu'il est son mot et la chose désignée par le mot. En retour, le mot est de chair et d'objet, comme l'objet est vivant et -- presque -- écrivant." However, a simple statement of the situation does not resolve the complex involvement, not only of the writer with language, but of the commentator with the writer. Robbe-Grillet, who objected to his influence upon Drame, viewed the text of Sollers as ideally concerned with a reflexive study of creativity: "Je ne suis pas du tout d'accord avec certains romanciers plus jeunes que moi qui prétendent être les descendants du nouveau roman et que je ne nommerai pas, et qui pensent
que l'idéal est qu'il n'y ait rien d'autre dans le livre que le romancier en face de son papier, en train d'écrire un roman qui ne serait que le roman du roman qu'il ne réussit pas à écrire."\(^{15}\) Perhaps the problem of creativity is an ideal concern of the Sollers text. However, it is not the only one. The dialectic of the commentary and the writing establishes what Barthes called "une cosmogonie de la parole,"\(^{16}\) that is, the whole context of expression. It is not merely writing a novel which is being discussed, but the very throes of self-expression.

I. B. a) A skillful game

Bosquet has previously identified the "simple drama" of this text. However, the alternation of Ego and Id constitutes a much more intricate weaving of the text. Eberhard Horst has told us that "what Sollers offers in his drama is a sublime, but coldly abstract, game of skill."\(^{17}\) Such a view of Drame seems to capture the subtle yet effective alternations in the dialectic. At once, Ego can be very abstract in portraying his struggle with words: "Étoffe comme enroulée hors de l'espace, mais dont l'espace est seul à pouvoir parler, suite d'images inutiles effrontées désormais à la possibilité d'un langage muet, immédiat... C'est bien 'le monde entier' qui est palpé dans cette ombre chaude, fragile, dans cette insaisissable demeure d'ombre et de nuit"
Other times, Ego will be very explicit about his situation: "Rien ne ressemble moins à un roman que notre histoire, et pourtant c'est bien le seul roman dont j'aurais envie de te parler (celui que personne ne pourrait écrire, celui qui s'écrit en nous devant nous)" (D, p. 27). However, most often, those former abstract words constitute the discourse of Ego. Once again, the necessity of the commentator can be seen in the dialectical reflection of one upon the other. The writer's confessions are often linked to the commentary of Id who skillfully elucidates the writer's discourse or reminds us of the main problem which has occasioned this text: "(C'est ainsi probablement qu'on écrit un livre. Mais il s'agit bien d'écrire un livre...)

(D, p. 61). The commentaries of Id help to orient the discourses of Ego and to situate the predicaments of the writer in another perspective. For example, the writer visits the library to do research for his writing and becomes mesmerized by all the texts and writers there, so much so that he can no longer distinguish one from the other. Id portrays the experience rather vividly as the writer is presented in his intellectual role: "Il entre (mais non par la porte, à travers le mur, plutôt par l'un des livres de l'étagère la plus haute dont, maintenant qu'il est parvenu au sol, il ne peut déchiffrer ni le titre ni l'auteur)" (D, p. 13). The
juxtaposition of abstract and materialistic discourses, first and third person presentations, commentator and writer may seem to be repetitious at first glance since such oppositions often present the same problems. However, they reinforce the dialectical dynamism of the text and model one of the paradoxes which haunt the writer faced with his task — that of writing and erasing.

I. B. b) Writing and Erasing

Although the writer is obsessed with finding the words for his thoughts, his attention is also fixed on the opposite of language: "Aux pires événements, j'imagine que succède toujours un silence — et c'est lui que je veux écrire" (D, p. 66). And there is a certain effacing action which concerns him: "Tu le sais, je continue, les yeux fixes sur ce point où s'efface le paysage" (D, p. 43). The external world seems to gradually be erased and substituted by the writer's battle with words and silence. The space between writing his thoughts and erasing external "reality" obsesses him as he addresses his own writing: "...intervalles, distances, différences entre lesquelles et malgré lesquelles je continue à t'écrire, avec comme unique sujet la proximité où nous sommes pris, où nous avançons en silence...en portant une nuit commune, chaque geste échouant à l'effacer mais la désignant pour finir en nous..." (D, p. 60). And the commentator reinforces
the value of this passage by previously asserting that
"distance du ciel: voilà ce qu'il doit maintenir et
représenter" (D, p. 44). However, Western civilization
has emphasized so much the need for expressive language
which brings together the unity of the referent,
signifier, and the signified that linguistic distance
among signifier, signified, and referent are foreign to
its culture. The commentator then ponders how one can
even wander away from the Western framework:
"Comment aller lentement vers l'est?" (D, p. 31).
Drame never answers that question. But Nombres (1968)
and Lois (1972) will specifically re-introduce the
ideogram into a text beside words to re-create this
distance and spatial dimension which haunts the writer
so much in Drame. The writer of Drame even suggests to
his writing that he would like to exchange places with
it to perhaps view this spatial dimension from another
perspective: "Ne pourrions-nous échanger nos places une
seconde? J'aimerais bien voir où je suis, me voir
d'après vous" (D, p. 32). Then, one morning, Id reports
that the writer finds himself totally effaced: "Il se
réveille un matin dans ce qu'il a écrit" (D, p. 157).
He failed to maintain that distance.

I. B. c) Failure as an affirmation

Otto Hahn has described the project of Drame thus:
"Le véritable objet, c'est l'acte d'écriture, la naissance
de la parole."18 However, the mobility, fragmentation,
and colorful beauty of the writer's discourse reminded him of a stained-glass window (cf. H): "ce vitrail vivant gaspillé..." (D, p. 75). It is living yet spoiled. It cannot succeed in being a finished product (D, p. 159: "...le livre échoue ici -- (brûle) (s'efface) ...").

Denis Hollier has incisively presented the inherent failure of the novel to be born: "Drame se veut un roman, mais il ne saurait s'agir que d'un roman fictif, celui qui constitue le chemin qui sépare l'écrivain du roman qu'il a en vue."19 The writer himself realizes at one point that his intended novel is not what is being produced by the words themselves: "Rendant les mots capables de raconter eux-mêmes ce qu'ils voient -- les plaçant en regard les uns des autres -- et aussitôt la véritable histoire s'annonce..." (D, p. 127). He does not seem capable to cross that frontier which separates his thoughts from the words before him: "Il me semble que je suis à la frontière des mots, juste avant qu'ils deviennent visibles et audibles, près d'un livre se rêvant lui-même avec une patience infinie" (D, p. 87). It is that very failure which is inherent to the art of writing. As Jean Duvignaud has portrayed it, the text of Drame demonstrates the power of Écriture to exist with its own independent life: "L'art est ici, en fin de compte, une suspension momentanée de l'existence..."20

Let us now explore the role an actual reader plays in
II. The reader -- vertical discourse

Theoretically, a reader who confronts Drame has the whole horizontal drama of the text before his eyes. His consciousness is another plane which intersects with the plane of the text. In practice, however, Peyre has observed that "...the book diabolically attempts to bewilder, astonish, and remain impenetrable to the reader." For the unsuspecting reader, part of Peyre's remark may be true. The actual reader must have the patience to confront the whole text and not to be discouraged by enigmatic parts of a speaker's discourse. Id has provided a comment about the writer which is also true about the actual reader: "...l'élément le plus stable qui se concentre derrière les yeux et le front... mène l'enquête" (D, p. 11). As in Le parc, the reader must be a detective who consciously searches for clues and then begins to piece the text together. Some would think that the creative concern of Sollers for the plight of the writer is mutually exclusive to his readers, as Pierre-Henri Simon remarks: "Mais où tend le solipsisme de M. Philippe Sollers sinon à l'épuisement de soi et à l'abolition des autres?" The answer to this question has already partly been answered when we spoke of the implications of the creative struggle for anyone who engages in self-expression. The writer is
continually threatened in *Drame* by "la ville," which might be an allusion to the overwhelming presence of others who have given us the language with which we express ourselves. We can all recognize ourselves as the commentator portrays the writer's struggle: "S'il pouvait imposer de la sorte un sens principal (positif ou négatif) à l'ensemble..." (D, p. 15). Likewise, the actual reader sees his own plight of trying to give a "meaning" to the text *Drame* while the writer is trying to discover which "meanings" the text contains.

II. A. A "homologic" rapport with the writer

Denis Hollier has told that: "on n'entre pas dans ce livre, disons-nous; c'est qu'il se pourrait que nous y soyons nés." Indeed, that seems to be what the commentator is telling the reader upon introducing the dramatic nature of the writer's struggle:

Alors, le rideau se lève, il retrouve la vue, s'évade, se regarde aux prises avec le spectacle qui n'est ni dedans ni dehors. Alors il entre comme pour la première fois en scène. Théâtre, donc; on recommence. Dérile irrésistible et chaotique, foules, cris, actes, paroles, paysages furtifs, quel silence. Tu as le choix et plus que le choix. La réponse te dira si tu l'as inventée. Plus de retards. À toi. (D, p. 14).

Perhaps the actual reader is being addressed herein. The reader must respond to the text by actively feeling the tension of language, just as the writer feels it
before him. The prière d'insérer describes Drama as
an expérience de la violence vivante qu'il y a à parler,
à être parlé." This violent reaction must be felt by
the reader because there is an anthropological myth
being expressed here, as Barthes has uncovered for us:
"...quelle que soit la nouveauté de Drama, ce n'est pas
son caractère d'avant-garde qui retiendra ici, c'est
plutôt sa référence anthropologique; on essaiera
d'apprécier Drama moins par rapport au dernier roman-de-
choc que par rapport à quelque mythe très primitif,
quelque histoire si ancienne qu'il n'en subsiste plus
que la forme intelligible."²⁴ And that "intelligible
form" is what Barthes calls "un rapport homologique"²⁵
between the reader and the text. As opposed to an analogy
between the writer's plight and the reader's plight, both
are united by a homologic ("the word of man") concern.
The writer identifies his task with the reader's: "(J'écris
cela lisiblement, il me semble?)" (D, p. 89). Note that
the legible writing is a question because the writer is
not sure that he can communicate anything to the reader.
Nevertheless, the commentator realizes that someone
intimate is listening: "C'est à toi que je parle, où que
tu sois" (D, p. 17). The reader cannot help but be
drawn closer to the text when addressed again by Id: "Tu
connais le sens des mots et pourtant tu te doutes de
quelque chose... Ton regard est rarement désorienté,
et le fait d'être ainsi debout ou couché sur une
surface tournante où des océans tiennent en équilibre ne te gêne pas" (D, p. 17). However, the actual reader must be more suspicious than ever since the commentator is aware of his audience. The role of detective now also includes the role of psychologist in trying to decipher some possible irony toward a reader who knows the meaning of words, according to the commentator.

II. A. a) Deciphering as reading and writing

But are producing a text and producing an active reading the same activities? Stephen Heath, in his excellent study of Drame, has given us a bit of insight into this problem, insisting that such a text as Drame transgresses the limits of even an active reading: "To accomplish a practice of writing, achieve a text that demands to be read as activity, production, is to transgress automatically the limits of the readable which are always outside in a discourse (lost as such in a natural) that it repeats or copies to be consumed." However, the reader can also constitute his own discourse (we have called it the "vertical discourse") to deal with such texts as Drame. Such has been the task of what Julia Kristeva has called "sémanalyse": "le problème se pose, dès lors, d'affirmer le droit à l'existence d'un discours qui rendrait compte du fonctionnement textuel, et d'esquisser les premières tentatives de
construction de ce discours."27 This discourse is the right of every reader, especially that of the literary critic. Although Kristeva takes her readings from a linguistic inspiration,28 the actual reader of Drame does not have to be so rigorously methodological in his activity of deciphering the text. Sollers has especially brought the activities of writing and reading together in their discourse of deciphering a text: "La lecture et l'écriture ne sont pas des processus opposés, ils s'inscrivent tous deux dans un acte commun de déchiffrage, et cette aptitude au déchiffrage est aussi nécessaire vis-à-vis du monde ou de la culture que vis-à-vis soi-même."29 The reader may even continue the work of the writer who ideally hopes that, despite a different language or a different syntax, the text will be the common ground for both reader and writer: "...au fond rien ne serait changé inévitablement, ce que j'aurais pu faire deviendrait lisible, traduisible (au moins par moi) c'est-à-dire vide, complet, manqué..." (D, p. 112). Such an ideal has not been realized with Drame. However, Hollier offers an alternative to the active reader: "Parler de ce livre c'est donc encore de lire, c'est continuer la lecture, c'est poursuivre le livre lui-même que sa lecture ne faisait que prolonger."30

II. A. b) The obstacles to the goals

One could passively follow the text without
identifying with its problems. Then one would be
victimized in much the same fashion as the writer, who
cannot directly confront his relationship with écriture,
which functions so as to make us avoid the problem:
"l'organisation générale fonctionne pour nous empêcher de
le [le problème] poser..." (D, p. 53). Barthes' view
that "...seul l'écrivain peut se projeter dans Drame, seul
l'écrivain peut lire Drame" might be substantiated with
such passages. However, the reader as reader could also be
implied by this passage. If he is passive in his role as a
reader, then the text will function despite the reader by
supposing that he is ineffective. In the prière d'insérer,
we are told something about reading Drame: "La lecture se
développe sur deux plans, chacun devenant la cause mais aussi
l'effet et la réflexion de l'autre..." This text does not
have to be an obstacle to reading. There is a reflexive re-
relationship ("sur deux plans") mentionned in the previously
cited passage. Obviously, this refers to the dialectical
structure of the text between the discourses of Id and
Ego. Not so obvious is the reference to reading itself
as a reflexive activity which brings together the actual
reader and the text in a mutually complementary produc-
tion of the horizontal and vertical discourses. The
writer's ideal could also be the reader's: "La formule
complète serait: être un livre illimité c'est-à-dire un
livre qui soit un mot (un point)" (D, p. 130). This is not so unlikely a role as it may seem to be for the reader at first reflection. The reader, after all, is designated by a single word which theoretically implies all of his abilities "to read" at the given moment when he confronts a text. The word "reader" is culturally determined in similar fashion to the language of the text. Hence, the actual reader, who is determined in his role by Western civilization to do and be all those things which Le défi and Une Curieuse Solitude expected of him, now confronts a text which has also been determined by its language to present intelligible, logical discourse. However, after the experience of Le parc, the reader can suspect and challenge these determinations by actively reading. Literature can be an immense challenge rather than a boring task with the new roles of reader and writer implied by Drame and explicitly pointed out by Sollers: "L'écrivain n'est pas plus un producteur que le lecteur n'est un consommateur. Il y a dans leur rapport quelque chose d'irréductible qu'est précisément la littérature."32 This "rapport" of reader and writer is especially fulfilled by the active reader who is not discouraged by apparently non-communicative passages of the text but who continues to search for clues in order to reconstruct the drama for himself. The writer in Drame
speaks of the complementary relationship of "il" and "je" within the text in terms of a bow and arrow: "Une image: par exemple 'il' peut représenter un arc, et 'je' la flèche. Le second doit jaillir du premier comme la flamme du feu, incessante, active, mais pouvant aussi y rentrer sans efforts, s'y résorber, tandis que le feu lui-même est plus ou moins vif et 'je' peut alors devenir ce qui l'alimente, s'y brûle, etc." (D, p. 133). This complementary activity could also refer to the text and its reader. The discourse of the reader, that is, his active reconstruction of the text, fulfills the text and realizes its full disposition. However, the active reader must be steadfast in confronting a text such as Drame which is equally conscious of its own activity.

II. B. A new rhetoric displacing the reader

The text can certainly manipulate its actual reader by slipping from one perspective to another without notice as in Le parc. However, in Drame, the speakers are more distinct since they occur in regularly alternating "chants." Even this regular alternation can manipulate the reader by causing him to expect those speakers to recur. Thus expectation may itself be deceiving as Ego remarks about his own task, similar to that of the reader once again: "Il devrait suffire de tenir le fil. Mais c'est justement là l'opération la plus difficile, la plus trompeuse -- car comment être sûr, comment savoir
si l'on est dans la continuité juste ou seulement dans son envers chaotique et glaçé?" (D, p. 80). Can the reader trust the speakers, especially the commentator who is well aware of the actual reader's presence? This is a question which must be raised now and will certainly play a definitive role in the Sollers texts of the third stage. In Drame, it cannot be verified whether or not the speakers are sincere in their dramatic performances. In Nombres, Lois, and H, it is much more obvious that the reader is ridiculed by the internal voices of the text. But the tone seems to be serious as the prière d'insérer portrays the dynamism of the dialectical text: "De même, les fragments s'enchaînant ici par l'écriture voudraient dévoiler une projection immédiate de la pensée dans le langage qui cependant la comprend." Nevertheless, there is still a possibility that the text is trying to vanquish the reader, especially between the interplay of Drame's internal speakers. Once again Barthes has some incisive comments about rhetoric in Drame which are especially relevant. On the one hand, he points out that all rhetoric is concerned with the problem of sincerity: "toute rhétorique vise à vaincre la difficulté du discours sincère." On the other hand, "...son [celui de Drame] langage s'offre déjà à cette rhétorique d'avenir, qui -- qui sera la rhétorique des signifiés...il s'agit du même espace métonymique (supérieur aujourd'hui,
A "rhetoric of meaning" ("la rhétorique des signifiés")
can especially be developed about the play between the
plights of the writer and the reader in Drame. The
reader must realize that he could be displaced and
manipulated by choosing not to critically confront it.
But there is another choice. He can assure himself a
place by perpetuating that rhetoric in studying the
nature of Drame's "metonymic space."

II. B. a) The flow of language

The "metonymic space" of Drame is the isomorphic
(i.e. words as objects) presence of its language before
the actual reader. The reader might tend to identify
with Ego who feels that he is "roulé dans les mots..."
(D, p. 81) as the flow of words at times inundates
its actual reader by its "dépense indéfinissable"
(D, p. 125). Ego may also be speaking to
the actual reader as he addresses his writing: "(et tu
es parmi eux, transparente, tu marches à travers eux
comme un mot parmi d'autres mots)" (D, p. 81). However,
this is not all negative. The writer in Drame insists
upon the free flow of text, without restrictions:

Il faut dépenser le plus possible,
immédiatement. Arracher la suite.
Oublier cet 'il faut.' Se tenir
simplement dans la vibration
transparente qui permet de voir
et d'entendre à la fois ce qui
vient et précède en violence chaque histoire immobile, sous les yeux, ici (D, p. 147).

However, as in Le parc, the reader cannot totally identify with the text. He is not the text. The book which the writer is trying to produce in Drame could be the text Drame: "Un livre dont chaque élément (mots, phrases, pages) serait animé d'une rotation voilée, de telle façon qu'on croirait assister à la révolution d'une sphère multiple -- mais, contraire à ce qu'est dit, dont la circonférence serait partout et le centre nulle part" (D, p. 148). There doesn't appear to be any "center" to Drame either. There is no point at which the text seems complete and fully developed enough to give a "message." The reader becomes inundated with words as if he were experiencing a nightmare, as Annie Leclerc sees it: "C'est bien un vrai cauchemar; ce n'est pas un vrai drame. Seuls ceux du monde sont de vrais drames. Et ceux-là ont besoin de mots plus que tout autre."35 However, the writer did not want to produce a text with a beginning and an end: "Il pense à un livre qui ne s'arrêterait pas plus que la mer" (D, p. 115). As Pollmann tells us, Drame re-fashions the myth of words imitating "reality" to portray words giving themselves their own reality.36 Faced with such a text, where can the reader position himself in this continuous flow of words?
II. B. b) Non-sense consuming the reader

Uncomfortable with a text in which "le sens des mots se vit, se désigne..." (D, p. 113), the actual reader searches for a secure standpoint. Likewise, Ego (the writer) had felt displaced before his writing: "Lui, le visage levé, se sent de plus en plus remplacé, dilaté, par la nuit, essaye d’en devenir le miroir et la réflexion directe..." (D, p. 120). The writer would be somewhat gratified if he could see a reflection of himself in the writing. The distance between himself and his words was a consolation to him when he thought that the words were acting in a controlled manner, just as the words may seem to be "controlled" by the reader who confronts the text in an agonizing word-by-word deciphering: "Je touche à mon tour le monde dans son sommeil théâtral. Ils sont maintenant quelques-uns à parler devant moi, sans de douter qu’ils sont conduits et joués" (D, p. 110). But the writer is involved in this drama to such an extent that he entertains his own metamorphosis: "En une seconde, je peux être aussi cette image" (D, pp. 124-125). Hence, words, with the symbolic distance of their meanings and the threatening presence of their determination, cause an ambivalent reaction on the part of the writer, equally shared by his actual reader: "Le mot qu’il peut prononcer ici sera aussi la chose la plus lointaine, et la chose la plus proche
sera un mot existant mais absent..." (D, p. 121). The image of the text burning is introduced in Drame (and more fully developed in Nombres) to convey the threat of being consumed — both the text by the reader (and writer) and the reader (and writer) by the text. Heath has observed that this burning image will be an image of the energy of reading and writing which, if both active, need not consume or destroy: "For Sollers it is the text that burns in the reading of its own production, in that écriture-lecture that it operates in its activity held in the plural organization of the text."37 The text could be only one part of that energy, the unconscious activity of man: "Les rêves sont ce qui fait dire; un livre pourrait être ce qui sert à ne pas dormir..." (D, p. 93). And the conscious role of the reader complements the unconscious dynamism of the text. Nevertheless, the reader's activity is an endless task which the text Drame continually challenges. The writer in Drame says it well: "On ne peut cesser de lire, même en retrait, ici, derrière le front et les yeux ('oublier, rappelle!'), on ne peut éviter le jeu" (D, p. 157). Once engaged in the challenge of "reading" such a text, it may indeed become an impassioned activity, yet one which is not nearly as complex as the ones of the third stage of the Sollers texts, those in which he adopts a revolutionary stance regarding the text and its actual reader.
Let us consult Appendices 1 and 2 to see a selection exemplifying the intimate relationship between reader and text in *Drame*. The passage in Appendix 1 specifically recalls Ego's dilemma before his writing. Ego and his work are reciprocally present to each other by means of the verbal sign ("par rapport à ce signe"). He especially notes that their relationship has been previously encountered, perhaps when Ego himself was an actual reader. Likewise, *Drame* and its actual reader are present to each other through the medium of the text's verbal signs, which comment on the nature of the actual reader and the text by its relationship to them. Appendix 2 analyzes these functions in comparison with those of the other Sollers texts. Although *Drame* merely experiments with the techniques of separating the identities of writer and text, the actual reader becomes progressively more involved in the activity of the text as we look forward to the revolutionary postures of stage three.
Notes for Chapter 2


4 Sollers and Gaugeard, p. 4.

5 Barthes, p. 594, note 3.


8 Laure E. Lorent, "Formalisme ou engagements? (À propos de quelques livres récents)," La Revue nouvelle, XLIX, 3 (March 1969), 306.


11 Lorent, p. 306.

12 Denis Roche and Philippe Sollers, "La libération du territoire," La Quinzaine littéraire, 1 July 1972, p. 3.

13 Heath, p. 236.


Notes for Chapter 2


25. Ibid., p. 603.


30. Sollers and Hollier, p. 289.

Notes for Chapter 2

32 Sollers and Daix, p. 5.
33 Barthes, p. 594.
34 Ibid., p. 599.
37 Heath, p. 239.
Outline

Chapter 3: Sollers the Revolutionary with Nombres

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Chapter 3: Sollers the Revolutionary with *Nombres*

It has been remarked that there exists "quite a gap between early and recent so-called novels by Sollers..."\(^1\) However, the texts of the third stage of the Sollers creative works (*Nombres* - 1968; *Lois* - 1972; *H* - 1973) do develop many themes and techniques introduced in the earlier texts. The suspicions of the narrators of *Le défi* and *Une curieuse solitude* regarding the reliability of language to communicate information will be transformed into demonstrations of the fragmentary and intransitive nature of signs themselves. The techniques of plural voices in *Le parc* and *Drame* will be complicated further in *Nombres* and *Lois* so that identifying the voices themselves will be practically impossible. "The kaleidoscopic patterns of memory and experience,"\(^2\) which we discussed about *Le parc*, will be indispensable in speaking about the plural texts of *Nombres* and *Lois*, and especially about the complicated structure of *H* with its total absence of punctuation, paragraph structure, and upper-case letters. Stephen Heath insists upon the close affiliation of the texts *Drame* and *Nombres*, such that he believes *Nombres* is a "resumption," rather than a mere sequel, of the work of *Drame*.\(^3\) However, stage three of the Sollers texts reflects a second major "changement
d'axe" in his creative works. **Nombres** is part of a more ambitious scheme than **Drame**. Perhaps the "chants" of **Drame** resemble the voice partitions of **Nombres**. But one cannot ignore the sophistication of the plural voices in **Nombres** which accomplish a meta-linguistic task by questioning the very possibility of discourse. **Nombres** seems to be addressing itself to a practical application of Jacques Derrida's challenge to logocentrism (cf. *De la gramma
tologie*, 1967). According to Derrida, Western civilization has been deceived by its reliability on the word. Hence, Derrida posits the need for a "grammatology" which is: "...la destruction, non pas la démolition mais la dé-sédimentation, la dé-construction de toutes les significations qui ont leur source dans celle de logos." 4 Consequently, **Nombres** implements a complex network of signs which offers an ideological and epistemological commentary on the arts of reading and writing non-logocentric signs.

The singular complexity of **Nombres** distinguishes it from the previous Sollers texts. Although it appeared one month prior to the much publicized and commented May 1968 student-uprising in Paris, **Nombres** has been hailed as a politically revolutionary work: "Révolutionnaire, **Nombres** l'est au premier chef dans sa texture, révolutionnaire au plan de la politique mais par le plan
This was a fashionable cause among Leftists after May 1968 in France. Sollers himself insisted in Théorie d'Ensemble that "L'écriture est la continuation de la politique par d'autres moyens."

Many others, however, are very skeptical about the efficacy of the super-literary, non-university bred Sollers. Pierre Bourgeade has launched a scathing attack on the leader of the "Tel Quel Group" who espouses a revolutionary cause: "Il n'a pas vu un seul ouvrier avant d'avoir vingt ans." Sollers is also too intellectual for the working class: "...il n'est pas rempli de vie mais de lectures." Such learning has questionable effects in the body politic: "We can supposedly break the mold, however, and subvert not only the literary but social structures by transforming this language. Well, it sounds a lot easier than seizing control of the means of production, but I'm afraid true revolutions aren't made that easily." It is a controversial problem to decide whether language and ideas precede or antedate a political revolution. And Sollers continues to place himself in the middle of such a controversy in a country where Leftists are making steadily increasing political gains.

In 1968, Sollers indicated that revolutionary meant a very special thing for him. In his eyes, the revolution was "...d'élaborer le corollaire indispensable du concept..."
de révolution sociale..." that is, "mettre à jour l'économie du travail signifiant..." He certainly is not addressing the French workers with his texts (a Tel Quel advertisement of 1968 remarks about its readers: "une audience de plus en plus large, notamment dans les universités du monde entier"). However, he may be attempting to present the value of work ("du travail signifiant") to the bourgeoisie, which is generally complacent in its cultural heritage. Systematically challenging the bourgeois reader who needs new vocabulary and habits to confront the Sollers texts of the third stage, these texts can reinstate praxis among the bourgeois. While Nombres demolishes discourse, Lois destroys the laws of coherent thought, and H displaces the sentence as a basic organizer of Western thought, the bourgeois reader begins to realize that résumés of a plot can no longer be applied to these texts. Hence, reading itself must become "work" in that the reader must earn his existence rather than merely consume the text in a self-righteous manner.

Revolutionary activity is also performed by Sollers in other areas with the "Tel Quel Group." Julia Kristeva, to whom Nombres is dedicated, became his wife and published in Tel Quel her work in semiotics, which influences the very structures of Nombres, Lois, and H. In Autumn 1970, Tel Quel began to identify with Mao and to repudiate the "Parti Communiste français." As a result, Oriental thought and ideograms, which
are first introduced in **Nombres**, play instrumental in the revolutionary activity of their texts. In June 1972, Sollers led the "Tel Quel Group" to a shocking avant-garde colloquium on Artaud/Bataille which has increased the popularity and/or infamy of the Group. The importance of Artaud and Bataille in the texts **Lois** and **H** will be developed in the fourth and fifth chapters. Nevertheless, **Nombres** is the beginning of a revolutionary pose adopted by Sollers which will have ramifications in the text, the reader, and their mutual relationship. Sollers has told us against what **Tel Quel** was reacting in its early years (c. 1960): "nous avons voulu rompre avec une certaine littérature désengagée, frivole, parisienne, complice des académismes, dont la position classiciste ou classicisante était réactionnaire formellement, et aussi avec l'instrumentalisme de la littérature, qui prétendait mettre la littérature au service d'autre chose." Some eight years later, Sollers would begin his own artistic revolt against that same academic society. Let us consider the text of **Nombres**, how this "revolution" was implemented, and what are its effects upon the actual reader.

**I. The text and its formal organization**

We have previously defined "text" as a succession of signs within certain defined boundaries. In stages one and two of the Sollers creative works, these signs
are words which constitute a narrative or discourse. In *Nombres*, these signs can be words, blank spaces, ideograms, geometric figures, or various marks of punctuation. The boundaries of these signs are structured according to a decimal system of numbers beginning with 1. and ending with 4.100. Within these boundaries are one-hundred sections organized in alternating sequences of the digits 1-2-3-4 which assume a decimal equivalent of their lineal order. For example, the twenty-fifth sequence is headed by the digit 1.25. A résumé of what occurs in these sequences is practically impossible. We have attempted this in discursive fashion elsewhere.  

In this study, we will be concerned with the formal organization of *Nombres* and what it can tell us about the nature of a text. This "organization" of *Nombres* is a commentary on the primary concern of the text: the conception of literary form.

There are many voices which speak in *Nombres*. They all appear concerned with their own situation as they describe their very existence or striving for existence within the "boundaries" of the text. Claude Mauriac has described *Nombres* as a "livre sur rien écrit par personne."  

The author of *Nombres* is not obviously present in the text. And the voices therein appear to have no single central argument which is coherently
developed. Their subject matter appears to be nothing ("rien") at all. However, all the voices of the one-hundred sections are struggling from the very first words of the text: "...le papier brûlait..." These words are a literal threat that the text will be consumed and the internal voices destroyed. That threat is repeated in the same words (N, 4.12, p. 27; and 1.97, p. 119) to strengthen its menace to the voices. Drame had ended with the image of the text burning. And the color red had been "un fil privilégié" in Le parc. Now Nombres "begins" with a burning text whose violence gives it a claim to the metaphorical title "le récit rouge" (N, 4.40, p. 57), which Sollers subsequently developed into a rhetoric for a politically revolutionary text. At times, this violence becomes the focus of attention: "Au sol, le point d'attention était devenu une entaille rouge sombre..." (N, 2, p. 14). The voices are menaced by the presence of "un couteau rouge" (N, 2.34, p. 50). This bloodied knife might be an analogy to the writer's pen which has fragmented the text so much that a coherent discourse is barely allowed to flow. The "red" pen has fragmented the logical sequence of narrative development by interrupting the text with signs from other disciplines and cultures. Michel Foucault gives us an insight into the discourse of Nombres: "...le discours n'est rien de plus qu'un jeu, d'écriture
These signs are the elements which constitute the "game" of Nombres. And numbers are specific signs which "playfully" indicate some sort of formal presentation. Let us examine the nature of this "playful game" of numbers.

I. A. Facetious architecture

The sequential order of digits in Nombres appears to give us a map through the serpentine succession of signs in the text. The linear flow of the one-hundred numbered passages is sometimes impossible to follow. The numbers are the only consistent signs which obviously give order to the passages. While the text is constituted by a horizontal succession of signs from left to right, occasionally interrupted by a geometric figure or an ideogram, the numbers vertically order the passages from top to bottom in alternating patterns of 1-2-3-4. In effect, we have a mathematical matrix of vertical columns and horizontal lines which composes the text. One of the voices cites an unknown source in defining a matrix:

"'le nombre minimal de rangées -- lignes ou colonnes -- contenant tous les zéros d'une matrice est égal au nombre maximal de zéros situés sur des lignes ou des colonnes distinctes'" (N, 1.45, p. 61). This might give us a clue to the unity of the text to which one of the voices..."
refers: "cependant, il y avait un 'nous" (N, 1, p. 11).

In a matrix, the horizontal and vertical addition of its elements should be equal. A formula -- 1+2+3+4=10 -- cited by one of the voices (N, 4, p. 17) also indicates that by simply adding the contents of the four alternating numerals, one should be able to produce a whole which they are constituting. It seems that a literary text is being scientifically constructed, perhaps to answer the question asked in the première d'insérer to Nombres: "Comment lever la contradiction entre discours et histoire?" By eradicating discourse and presenting a scientific architecture of the "story," one could conceivably hope to eradicate the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity, discourse and story. Two years before the publication of Nombres, Tel Quel had begun to sub-title their review with the words "Littérature/Science." Nombres appears to be an effort to unite those two concerns within the same text.

However, the voices within the text are threatened by the pre-determined form of the matrix. One observes "...cette surface agitée..." (N, 1.5, p. 17) in "...ce que vous croyez être une forme continue et stable..." (N, 1.5, p. 18). The final formula \((1+2+3+4)^2 = 100\) appears to be a statement that the alternating sequences of four voices do constitute a whole. However, that formula was preceded by a statement from one of the
voices: "refusant de se refermer dans son cube et sa profondeur" (N, 4.100, p. 124). Thus, there is a tension between the form of the text and its voices which is being dramatically portrayed. The theatrical struggle of écriture, demonstrated by Drame, is continued in Nombres. Sollers had also pointed out the dramatic involvement of text, life, and écriture, in a separate essay: "Il nous faut donc réaliser la possibilité du texte comme théâtre en même temps que celle du théâtre et de la vie comme texte si nous voulons occuper notre situation dans l'écriture." One of the voices seems to portray itself as a marionette on a stage created by the text: "On ne peut dire s'ils sont déjà fermés, si vraiment tout est déjà joué dans leur chute; on ne peut dire si l'on est parmi eux ou l'un deux, car être revenu dans cette pièce, c'est ne plus compter qu'avec eux" (N, 2, p. 14). Its struggle for identity is tied to the numerical ("l'un deux") form which is attempting to localize the voice to a specific number, rather than to its components. The image of the mirror also becomes complexly interwoven so that the singularity of reflection is precluded, thus denying the verification of identity by any of the voices. Space itself becomes a questionable entity within the text as Jacques Derrida remarks: "Difficile de savoir si un tel miroir est l'espace de scène classique ou l'espace général." These mirrors
certainly do not represent a mimetic of "reality."

Sollers has given a hint regarding the function of the mirrors in Nombres: "...je tends au lecteur un miroir qui ne reflète pas mais le jette hors de soi, hors de la mythologie bourgeoise." The very order which we normally associate with successive numbers is being refracted by the interplay of mirrors. One voice especially feels the formal architecture of those integers: "...il n'y avait plus que cette série de chiffres comptant et enregistrant et annulant le tout du dehors --" (N, 3.7, p. 23). This "architecture" seems to be a special internal kind which resists external classification.

Jacques Derrida's commentary about the digits of Nombres may help us: "mais tout se passe entre les nombres. L'innombrable qui semble faire sauter les cadres ou sauter par-dessus le cadre, vous aurez pu en tenir compte." This insight can be verified by the voices who begin to realize how ineffective the numerical form has been in "organizing" their activities. At one point, one voice observes that the form is important, especially in its iconoclastic function: "cette enveloppe est la platitude et la profondeur mêmes...elle est très exactement, ici ce qui vous fait signe...avec le désir bien net de vous détruire et de vivre au coeur de ce trait" (4.8, p. 23).

The sign of the number does not "mean" what we expect it to signify: "Il y a une loi pour cette méconnaissance,
pour cette fusion qui peut de nouveau tout lire et mourir, et le manque d'exposition, de méthode, indique l'impossibilité de classer, d'affirmer, et les chiffres qui n'en finissent pas de courir sous chaque assemblage, leur souffrance nette et sans voix..." (N, 4.52, p. 68).

The very title Nombres thus assumes an ironic tone as the integers exemplify Sollers' use of "...the term roman with a subversive intent."24 The "story" does not have any linear or cumulative sense to it. One voice cites an unverified reference about the status of numbers, as they seem to be functioning in Nombres:

"au lieu de servir à mesurer, les nombres servent à opposer et à assimiler. Les choses, en effet, ne se mesurent pas. Elles ont leurs propres mesures. Elles sont leurs mesures' (N, 3.99, p. 121).

Let us then examine this inherent measurement which "things," or elements upon which numbers are predicated, provide for themselves.

I. B. Lucretian atomism

Nombres is prefaced by a curious Latin phrase: "Semanaque innumero numero summaque profunda." This phrase comes from Lucretius, whose atomistic determinism may offer a serious commentary on the self-measurement of signs. Let us look at the whole passage in which the quoted phrase occurs in De Natura Rerum.
Granted, then, that empty space extends without limit in every direction and that seeds innumerable in number are rushing on countless courses through an unfathomable universe under the impulse of perpetual motion, it is in the highest degree unlikely that this earth and sky is the only one to have been created and that all those particles of matter outside are accomplishing nothing. [I have underlined the English trans. of the preface to Nombres.]

What do the "seeds innumerable in number through an unfathomable" universe have to say about Nombres? The context of the Lucretius passage indicates that the innumerable seeds materially relate the whole universe. Nombres could be one of these seeds. And the components of its text could also be some of these seeds. This will be developed later in the chapter when we discuss the principle of intertextuality.

However, the quotation from Lucretius given as a preface to Nombres suggests that there may be some elementary particles in Nombres which are part of an infinite series yet which are identifiable in the "unfathomable" text. These elementary particles, for Lucretius, were atoms which determined the constitution and the movement of the universe.

Derrida believes that "on pourrait reconstituer le réseau qui fait passer les Nombres par les références à toutes les théories atomistes qui furent aussi des théories du sperme." He develops the analogy between
atomistic theories and theories of sperm through his principle of dissemination. Similar to the sperm, the atom procreates by infinitely proliferating and dividing itself further, thus disseminating its vital activity to other areas. And as the title of Derrida's study suggests, dissemination is the very practice of the text Nombres as it gives life to the voices. One voice in Nombres compares the text to "...un tourbillon semblable à celui des feuilles roulant dans la pluie" (N, 3.35, p. 52). Another voice also feels caught up in some sort of vortex: "Tout se répète et revient encore, et vous êtes entraînés dans cette chaîne de terre et d'air, de feu, de sang et de pierre, vous êtes pris ou prises dans ces permutations dérégées..." (4.12, p. 27). At another moment, a voice feels detached from its own formal "identity": "...ma propre forme dissimulée..." (N, 1.13, p. 25). Despite the movement, which are the elements of this dissemination? One voice finds it even difficult to select which are the basic elements in spite of the intuition of its own identity: "... j'étais une unité parmi d'autres, mais une unité impossible à chiffrer, perpétuellement excité par sa propre fin..." (N, 2.10, p. 25).

There is also an intuition that the voices originated from a group of elements: "...ils viennent d'une série infinie d'éléments..." (N, 4, p. 17). A series implies
a succession of elements linked together spatially and/or temporally. This dynamic series is disseminated in a text which cannot be called "discourse" or "story" because of its complex makeup. Space is temporarily suspended since the voices are seeking their own identity independent of that given them by a writer: "On n'est pas dans sa tête? Non. Plus loin" (N, 1, p. 13). And time is a special effect attained by the dialectic of the present and imperfect tenses: "L'écoulement et le flux qui maintenant m'entraînaient venaient en effet d'un échange des temps comme superposés..." (N, 1, 5, p. 17). This dialectic of present and imperfect tenses will be developed later. The problem here is that the forms of story and discourse are replaced by a serial dynamism. In light of this, Nombres surpasses neo-realist in its rejection of "...la technique narrative qui consiste à raconter une histoire selon une gradation savante des événements, tantôt ascendante, tantôt descendante, destinée à corser peu à peu l'action, à l'amener par une série de scènes cruciales jusqu'à un dénouement qui satisfasse, autant que possible, à la logique du déroulement de l'intrigue et au développement des caractères." The serial dynamism of Nombres is a positive implementation of an atomistic theory of the text in place of the narrative technique concerned with developing intrigue. One of the voices of Nombres
realized something different about the text to which it belonged: "...je savais qu'un nouveau récit s'était déclenché" (N, 1, p. 12). At times, the juxtaposed elements of this new text seem almost incomprehensible: "...aussi incompréhensibles qu'une série d'empreintes ou de taches regroupées là par hasard" (N, 2.6, p. 20).

Semiotics or semiology, the study of the sign, has been recently developed into a literary tool by Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, and Jurij Lotman among others.28 Perhaps the semioticians might help us to understand the atomistic text of Nombres. Julia Kristeva, to whom this text is dedicated, has underscored the limitations of language as a semiotic model: "And yet semiotics by its attempt to set itself up as a theory of practices using language as its model restricts the value of its discovery to the field of practices which do no more than subserve the principle of the social contract."29 And Nombres is also trying to implement an atomistic theory of the text which will go beyond the limitations of language. Kristeva has introduced her own theory of what semiology should be: "La sémiose dont nous nous réclamons considérant le texte comme une production et comme une transformation, cherchera à formaliser la structuration plutôt que la structure."30 Hence, the dynamism of the text in the act of constituting itself
("la structuration") can be brought forth through a semiological approach to Nombres. At one point, a voice refers to the vowels in its speech as the atoms of its very activity: "L'activité de ces atomes...me permettait ainsi d'intervenir en renversant l'opération dont j'étais l'objet, l'émission, et la projection..."(N, 3 p. 15). His very voice, phonemically arranging the vocal elements, somehow has permitted him to transform the process which has so puzzled the other voices (e.g. "ne sachant plus où aller...," N, 3.27, p. 41). The sounds, re-arranged in much the same manner as such signs as ideograms and geometric figures, are introduced into the text of Nombres. Although the functioning of the serial dynamism is difficult to grasp: "Fonctionnement difficile à saisir dans ses glissements, ses coupures, ses rapprochements, son absence de centre et de but, son tissu ramifié de lois"(N, 4.16, p. 31), the elements of that dynamism come into better focus now. Signs which may have seemed trite and stereotyped in other series are introduced into the series which composes the text Nombres: "...nous venons ainsi d'une série infinie, de séries pourries et accumulées, nettoyées, brûlées, annulées..." (N, 4.100, p. 123). The "atoms" become more distinct as the series is recognized: "Vous voyez tout cela, vous savez distinguer un cas précis de l'espèce..." (N, 4.28, p. 42). There are words, ideograms, empty spaces,
vectors, punctuation marks, and geometric figures which are all introduced from other series into this one: "Ainsi chaque élément garde-t-il son autonomie et c'est vous qui les mélangez..." (N. 4.32, p. 47). In this manner, the atomistic text Nombres implements a semiotic view of the functioning of a text, as Kristeva once explained it: "Au lieu de se constituer sur le signe en renvoyant au référent ou au signifié, le texte joue sur la fonction numérique du signifiant, et ses ensembles différenciés sont de l'ordre du nombre." These signs are differentiated even further by the heterogeneous nature of their presentations. Let us explore the plural voices of Nombres.

I. C. The four voices

There are many speakers constituting the text Nombres. There could be merely two voices — the text and its commentator as in Drame. Or there could be many individual voices occurring with each successive sequence of the numerals one to four. The form of preceding the sequences by those numerals presents a recurring series which gives a pattern to the text. However, it becomes increasingly difficult to discover additional consistencies among the twenty-five sequences of these four voices. The voices portray the tension between the holistic text Nombres trying to give identity to its plural components. The first three voices, preceded by the numerals one to
three, predominantly use the imperfect tense to indicate the past process by which they "were constituting" the text *Nombres*. The fourth voice, preceded by the numeral four, continually addresses an audience outside the text, usually in the present tense to indicate the here-and-now confrontation with the text. Similar to the commentator Id in *Drame*, this fourth voice is also differentiated from the others by parentheses which enclose its discourse. While it does identify with the other voices because of its predicament as part of the text, it also assumes the role of commentator, a qualified identity which is denied to any of the three other voices.

I. C. a) Polyphonic unity

After the complex interweavings of voice in such *nouveaux romans* as Butor's *La Modification* and *Degrés*, the voices of *Nombres* represent *Tel Quel*’s contribution to the art of fiction as Ricardou has presented to us: "L'une [la perspective du nouveau roman] subvertit la catégorie de personnage, et l'autre [la perspective de *Tel Quel*, i.e. de *Nombres*] l'abolit."? The "category of character" is abolished by *Nombres* because it is never attained within the text. None of the voices, either individually or collectively, ever constitutes a whole character. Each of the voices is in search of its own identity within the text. Even the fourth voice merely approximates
a whole identity because it too is merely a part of
the text and can only comment upon some of the activi-
ties of the text. From the subjective narrators of
Le défi and Une curieuse solitude, the Sollers texts
have developed into the form of a writer's voice and an
echo of it in Le parc, to the dual voices of Id and Ego
in Drame, now to a complex form of at least four voices
in Nombres. Similar to Jean-Louis Baudry's text Personnes
(1967), the play of personal pronouns in Nombres pre-
cludes the identification of consistently recurring
characters. Contrary to a Balzac or a Proust, Sollers
has created a text which exemplifies what Philippe Boyer
calls "l'écriture révolutionnaire, tout le contraire
d'une écriture sur la révolution...détruisant le récit
comme structure de l'ordre bourgeois où toute histoire
est bonne à dire tant que le nom, le nom propre y reste
sur repère..."33 In Nombres, the personal pronouns deny
such a "story" and create their own plural discourse.

Although there are some indications of an organic
unity ("cette production organique," N, 1.37, p.54) bringing
the voices within one activity, there is a tension
between the text and its plural components or voices:
"À ce moment, je comprenais la raison qui me liait si
étroitement à elle... Elle était cette régularité
brisée, cette attente, cette avidité et, au-dessus de
cela, un rire reîanché, quelque chose de constamment
ranimé et inapaisé" (1.37, p. 54). Such a fragmentary unity could be seen as paradox and/or dialectic.

Within Nombres, the dialectic operates once again in that plural voices give unity to the text similar to the polyphonic effect of a choir. Jacques Derrida portrays such a dialectical dynamism: "Polyphonique. Les valeurs d'espacement vocal sont alors réglées par l'ordre de cette voix sans tain (sans la voix d'auteur), non par l'autorité du mot ou du signifié conceptuel dont le texte ne manque pas -- au reste d'user aussi à sa guise." The voices seek to escape the identities simply given them by words: "et je me souvenais que nous étions pris les uns et les autres dans l'alphabet désormais pour nous dépassé..." (N, 2.22, p. 35). The figure on p. 38 (N) suggests the plight of the voices which are tracing a circumference without a center:

This diagram demonstrates the absence of identity (no center except an empty space) which is given the "text" by the event of the four voices placed contiguously. The voices feel the disappointment of form in giving them identity: "réordonnant ma forme provisoirement pensée et figée ici comme un barrage cercle et toujours
sur le point de céder pendant que le signal était à chaque instant donné de l'écoulement inverse" (N, 1.45, p. 61). Sometimes, their situation seems inexplicable: "...il n'y avait plus d'explication pour dire ce qui m'arrivait..." (N, 1.41, p. 57). Sometimes, even the personal pronouns were self-deceptive since the voices could not localize their activity: "...moi' cependant de plus en plus égaré dans le texte, posé, arrêté dans un coin du texte et ne faisant plus vraiment que passer, m'esprouvant encore partout et en tout mais jusqu'au point où tout devenait obscur dans le mouvement de sa force..." (N, 3.47, p. 62). The text threatened to thus destroy the voices. Yet, in contrast to this assimilating force of the text, there is also a differentiating movement which the voices are striving to implement: "...et c'était maintenant comme si nous commencions à sortir sur une scène prismatique et mate, et chaque surface renvoyait à une surface parallèle où chaque corps se trouvait exposé ou renversé par rapport aux autres, les autres pouvant vivre et comprendre ce qui en somme échappait à chacun dans son mouvement..." (N, 3.67, p. 84). As we have previously suggested, these voices offer a chorus of reactions to the tension between a text and its components which suggests a theatrical setting. Claude Mauriac has commented that the four voices of Nombres create "un théâtre sans scène, ni salle, où les
mots deviennent les acteurs et les spectateurs d'une nouvelle communauté de jeu." As actors within the dramatic form of the text, the role of the voices seems rather obvious. Let us now examine the role the fourth voice has as a spectator of this "nouvelle communauté de jeu."

I. C. b) Why the fourth voice?

After the commentator Id. of Drame, the fourth voice of Nombres appears to be another "aid" of "helper" to identify the activity of the text. However, the fourth voice is also involved in the same predicament as the other voices. Why does the fourth voice provide this additional commentary? Sollers, once again in his role as explicator of his own texts, has told us that the play between the imperfect and present tenses implements the complementary narrative patterns of "story" and "discourse." He insists that the imperfect tense of the first three voices constitutes "story" while the present tense of the fourth voice is "discourse." He would have us accept the fourth voice and the first three voices as perfect complements of one another. However, the fourth voice presents the problem rather well: "il est difficile d'accepter cet intervalle, ce blanc intact...quand le texte s'interrompt se replie, laisse revenir les voix comme un enregistrement sans fin --" (N, 4, p. 16). The change in tone and concern between the first three voices
and the fourth is troubling because it is not entirely free from the "story." Its role as "discourse" may be questionable since its perspective is one involved in the drama of the text. Ricardou has portrayed the ambivalence of this parenthetical fourth voice:

"Puisque la parenthèse établit une rupture et subit un englobement, le présent de la lecture (par 'vous,' la séquence suppose le lecture) se trouve défini comme entièrement équivoque; il rompt l'imparfait de la narration tout en restant pris dans son circuit."37

And the fourth voice seems to realize this problem as it addresses the reader: "Vous disant, comment joindre la fin au commencement? comment être dans la fin et dans ce qui va venir?" (N, 4.36, p. 53). Julia Kristeva may have provided a tentative answer in her view of Nombres: "C'est là, dans ce miroir indispensable du récit représentant en courbe concave ce qui est en train de se construire, que la théorie s'injecte pour tenter en vain de le liquéfier."38 The fourth voice may also be partly a mirror of the activity of the text, ironically attempting to do what many of us as readers and literary critics attempt to do with a text -- destroy it by reducing the whole text to a certain theoretical message or framework. Indeed, one of the voices senses the threat of the fourth voice's commentary: "faire sortir le rond du carré, c'est-à-dire traiter le rapport 3/4"
The relationship of the first three voices to the fourth voice ("le rapport 3/4") is an impossible one. The fourth voice distorts the other three voices by reducing them to geometric figures or to theoretical principles. The rapport of 3/4 creates the tension which Jean Thibaudeau developed in his essay "Le Roman comme autobiographie": "Le texte doit être reconnu le produit d'un désir individuel (l'écriture étant le désir même)." This desire will be developed later when we speak of the readers of Nombres. However, this desire is embodied in the vacillation between the fourth voices and the other voices, so much so that Roland Barthes portrayed it as "scenography": "Dans Dramé, la vacillation atteint le sujet dit 'de l'énonciation, le décolage sacré de l'action et de la narration.' Dans Nombres, elle subvertit les temps, ouvre l'espace des citations infinies et substitue à la ligne des mots une écriture échelonnée, transformant la 'littérature' en ce qu'il faut appeler, à la lettre, une scénographie." This "scenography" is the theatrical mode we have previously discussed, but it is also "echeloned writing." This type of writing is a curious composition of a text from various unidentified sources, giving the appearance of a graduate-student's term paper without the footnotes. Let us discuss this curious textual
composition in Nombres.

I. D. Inter-textuality

From Le défi, we have noticed a serious distrust in words as a reliable component of the text. In Nombres, the text introduces Chinese ideograms, geometric figures, mathematical formulas, and other signs in an effort to break up ("déclencher"\footnote{41}) the necessary relationship of significé/signifiant in our Western culture. Émile Benveniste has portrayed the consubstantial nature of the sign: "Mais le signe, élément primordial du système linguistique, enforme un signifiant et un significé dont la liaison doit être reconnue comme nécessaire, ces deux composantes étant consubstantielles l'une à l'autre."\footnote{42} In contradistinction, Sollers will try to implement the arbitrary nature of the sign, as Saussure once defined it. In order to do this, the linear succession of words is broken up by introducing signs from other disciplines and cultures. These signs will mutually correspond to one another's atomistic series from which they are taken. In effect, Nombres implements the Tel Quel venture, as Mary Ann Caws has portrayed it: "Tel Quel considers itself a cooperative work...holding firm to a common belief in the response of text to text and their mutual engendering and destruction."\footnote{43} This "response of text to text" has been theoretically developed by Julia Kristeva as the
principle of inter-textuality which is linked to her transformational study of semiology previously introduced: "La méthode transformationnelle nous mène donc à situer la structure littéraire dans l'ensemble social considéré comme un ensemble textuel. Nous appellerons intertextualité cette interaction textuelle qui se produit à l'intérieur d'un seul texte."\(^44\) Hence, text is no longer merely a literary term: "A text is a cultural phenomenon which includes the body politic and which must continually relate to other texts. A text is never alone. It is a serial phenomenon which Roland Barthes has portrayed thus -- "Et c'est bien cela l'inter-texte: l'impossibilité de vivre hors du texte infini."\(^45\) Let us consider the ideograms of \textit{Nombres} as an example of this activity of inter-textuality.

Sollers has remarked that the thirty-six ideograms in \textit{Nombres} were introduced for two reasons: 1) writing is arbitrary although it seems natural to us; 2) our system may be apprehended from another one.\(^46\) But Sollers is not the first to use Chinese ideograms in his text. \textit{Ezra Pound’s Cantos} also contained fascinations with the Chinese scription. However, Sollers has differentiated himself from Pound by stipulating that Pound had borrowed his ideograms from the Chinese Empire with all its grand imperial culture while the ideograms of \textit{Nombres} implement a revolutionary esthetic and ethos.
bent on internally transforming Western civilization: "Nombres est déjà une tentative pour prendre à revers toute une stratification culturelle occidentale inconsciente et de la confronter à cette alterité, qui est le surgissement révolutionnaire chinois, avec tout ce que cela implique sur toute la longueur d'onde de notre culture." It is not at all obvious, however, that the ideograms of Nombres imply the whole Chinese cultural revolution of the 1960's, as Sollers would have them do. In fact, the ideograms often come at the end of a particular sequence and merely translate the last few words (e.g. the ideogram at the end of 1.29, p. 44 signifies "measurement" and the last words of that sequence are "la mesure du temps"). The ideograms of Nombres almost seem to be ornaments in the text since they do not suggest any coherent arguments to induce one to read further a revolutionary Chinese text. The ideograms of Nombres are, however, an introduction of Oriental scription into Western texts merely as a comparison in the structure of signs. For example, the oral basis of Chinese and the absence of left-to-right linear sequence can be contrasted to words in our Western texts. Julia Kristeva may have given us an insight into the "place" of ideograms in Nombres: "Les 'grammes' chinois ne renvoient pas à une obsession (Dieu, chef, sexe) mais à une algèbre universelle du langage comme opération
mathématique sur des différences." Hence, the mathematical and geometric figures, the marks of punctuation, the vectors, as well as the unidentified quotations, all perform the same function within Nombres, but in a different manner. The serial effect of this "mathematical operation of differences" creates an infinite text being constructed before our very eyes.

I. D. a) Chain reactions

The heterogeneous nature of the signs taken from various texts to constitute Nombres is transformed by their new context. One voice observes "...le texte ancien, embrouillé, menteur, le vieux texte qui parle de vérité et d'erreurs de vie et de mort..." (N, 4.24, p. 37). The mosaic produced by Nombres integrates the signs into a new context. Sollers describes the procedure: "On écrit un texte avec des textes, mais par une sorte de courant, de glissement liés à un montage inédit, ces textes commencent à provoquer des réactions en chaîne qui détruisent tout livre achevé et à plus forte raison tout auteur." However, Sollers is a bit too enthusiastic here. The old contexts are never completely destroyed. The new context invigorates the signs in a fresh environment. But the old contexts can also be re-studied to open a text toward new possibilities. Nevertheless, within a given text such as Nombres, these heterogeneous signs do create "chain reactions" in their
new contexts. These "chain reactions" in Nombres especially implement the dialogue of inter-textuality in three specific areas: epistemology, metalanguage, and ideology.

I. D. b) Three functions of dialogue

Epistemologically, this method permits the free exchange of knowledge without erudite "-isms" or name-dropping to identify, and thereby, reduce knowledge to simple formulas. One voice feels this exchange taking place: "...devenant comme vous, ne sachant pas qui je suis. Mais gardant ce qui me permet de dire 'je,' ce sursaut, ce défaut des syllabes au moment où elles sont là tout à coup..." (N, 3.11, p. 25). This voice arbitrarily uses "je" for convenience in discussing itself. The label "je" is a fortuitous joining of two letters which is used by many people to signify themselves. It is part of a cultural inter-textuality which generates a freer exchange of ideas when signs are changed from one context to another. At one point, Drame is quoted in the middle of the text without any identification ("D'abord (premier état, lignes gravure, le jeu commence) c'est peut-être l'élément le plus stable qui se concentre derrière les yeux et le front," (N, 4.32, p. 47) to bring as many texts as possible into this concentration of texts and also to point out that
human thinking and knowing ("l'élément le plus stable") is the starting point for the inter-text.

In a metalinguistic sense, Nombres attempts to free écriture from its logocentric concern and to open it outward in relating all possible signs in a given context. One voice feels it is being determined by its spoken words: "...ma voix que j'entendais moduler une conjuration fluide, pressante, où les voyelles se suivaient, s'échangeaient et paraissaient s'appliquer au texte à travers mon souffle" (N, 3, pp. 14-15). But this succession of phonemes in words is only part of the work of a literary text: "Leur suite agissait directement sur chaque détail, repoussait les éléments hostiles, formait une chaîne rythmée, un spectre qui rassemblait et distribuait les rôles, les faits, et ce jeu m'employait comme une figure parmi les autres..." (N, 3, p. 15). Raymond Jean has told us that the unidentified citations of Nombres are "...des principes vivants destinés à élargir le champ de l'écriture et de son interrogation." But this enlargement is also implemented by the ideograms, the blank spaces, the geometric figures, etc. which continue the work of écriture without a sole reliance on phonemic or verbal structures. The signs used in such fictitious constitutions by écriture are limited merely to the imagination.
Sollers had once rejoiced in being able to write a book which could not be classified according to traditional literary jargon: "Aujourd'hui, je suis presque libre d'écrire un livre, le livre par excellence inclassable, ne correspondant à aucune forme précise, qui soit à la fois un roman, un poème et une critique. À l'intérieur, je peux mettre ces textes différents et le lien ça sera mon imagination." With Nombres, he went beyond this formless text by presenting a text whose very components were not limited to phonemes and words to perform its task.

Thirdly, the inter-text of Nombres performs an ideological function. As we mentioned earlier, the political revolution of May 1968 was affixed to Nombres after its publication. Nevertheless, there are a good number of Marxist citations about praxis, the economic foundations of the body politic, and denouncements of the bourgeois society. This Marxist tone contrasts with the Chinese ideograms to give opposing views for a cultural revolution. Now, as one voice in Nombres explains it: "Cependant il y avait à choisir entre l'est et l'ouest..." (N, 3.23, p. 36). The mobility of the text ("le mouvement incessant" and "une continuité irrépressible" -- N, 1.9, p. 24; "quelque chose s'était mis en marche que je ne pourrais plus arrêter" -- N, 2.10, p. 24) has political overtones for Western culture.
as it falls asunder: "Le texte constitue et inpuisible se ruinant et tombant dans sa propre action..." (N, 4.96, p. 119). As Roland Barthes said about Nombres, "communiquer avec le monde...c'est traverser les écritures dont est fait le monde..."53 And to rewrite these writings which have constructed the world is to reconstruct the world in a new context. Let us now examine how such reconstructions affect the reader of Nombres.

II. The readers within and external to the text

With Nombres, the accusation of illisible is strongly alleged against a Sollers text. Sollers was quick to answer this charge by stipulating that "cela n'est 'illisible' que pour une pensée classique ou encore pour ce qui est complice de cette pensée..." and that "...on peut 'lire' ce qui est écrit exactement sans le lire."54 The "classical" manner of reading and thinking would especially be incapable of deciphering a text which is not "translatable" into a message. With the techniques of a serial dynamism, the various signs of Nombres relate to one another and to signs outside the text rather than to what is signified (the signifié) by signs in classical texts. Attempting to recover a meaning or signifié from the text Nombres could be a very frustrating type of reading, as Claude Mauriac tells us: "Notre lecture, si malaisée, de Nombres, devenait soudain impossible, des caractères chinois achevant
certains paragraphes. Thus, a classical mentality gives up on Nombres and easily relegates the text to the "unreadable," and therefore, the worthless.

However, to the extent that an actual reader surrenders to Nombres, the text is in control and bears witness to the apathy and unconcern of bourgeois culture. Nombres is the first Sollers text which seriously challenges the actual reader to work. Praxis becomes a task for the reader to implement. Within Nombres, this is especially vivid since the text has its own internal reader in the fourth voice. This fourth voice is a consciousness internal to the text which appears to be the desire of the text to complete itself. The actual reader then is an external consciousness which appears not to be needed to fulfill the text. However, the fourth voice is a biased "reader" of the other three voices because it is also an integral component of the text. An actual reader could merely rely upon its commentary as a guide through the text. Then, this fourth voice would manipulate the writer by exemplifying what Lorent has pointed out to us about the "revolutionary" stance of the Sollers texts of stage three: "La Révolution n'est plus que la révolution communiste. La littérature n'est plus, finalement, que de la propagande." The internal reader is probably
disseminating this propaganda by guiding the actual reader into the text, thus programming how he should read and reducing his individuality to a rote pattern of following the fourth voice's commentary.

Let us examine the passage selected for the comparative examples of Appendices 1 and 2. Therein, we find a geometric figure introducing the selection. Unlike the texts of stages one and two, this page introduces a non-verbal sign which may be a commentary on the relationship of the text to its actual reader. The digits themselves can refer to the four voices. Notice that the vectors toward the numerals 1, 2, and 3 originate with (4). This may be an illustration of the fourth voice as a commentary on the three voices. The integer (4) is the only one within the three-sided figure, which is probably an illustration of the text constituting itself from the three voices. However, a fourth vector points outward from (4), which has no linear dimension in the diagram. As we have developed elsewhere, this diagram suggests the three-sided classical stage opening up before an audience. The vector pointing outward in the diagram may be indicating this audience, that is, the actual readers who confront this text with their external consciousness. The commentary of the fourth voice continually addresses itself to the actual reader,
similar to an actor on a stage who suddenly interrupts his dramatic role to speak to the audience, thus indicating his awareness of the performance in front of spectators. Nevertheless, in Appendix 1, it is the fourth voice which gives the commentary explaining this diagram as a construction of contiguous mirrors. As the diagram in Appendix 2 shows, this commentary is one of "biased objectivity" in that it is also functioning within the text ("on l'oublie par conséquent aisément, et là est sans doute l'illusion ou l'erreur"). As the commentary warns us, we must be careful with the analogy to the theater since the fourth voice is not an audience. Similar to a mirror, it may invert and even distort the other voices in order to give them the appearance of being fixed and complementary to one another. However, such a diagram and its commentary oversimplify the whole text. The actual reader must not forget the complex serial dynamism of the text to observe, as Jean Ricardou does, that "en la complexité de son fonctionnement, Nombres annule de mille manières toutes manoeuvres d'appropriation et de conservation." The passage in Appendix 1 consigns the reader to a role as a spectator of the text ("le spectateur possible mais par conséquent toujours repoussé, multiple"). However, this role need not be an impartial one since he can
react and ultimately affect future performances by the kind and degree of his reaction. Let us now return to Nombres and discuss in detail this interplay between the internal and external readers of the text.

II. A. The internal reader

The fourth voice presents a peculiar obstacle to the actual reader's confrontation with Nombres. In its role as a commentator of the three voices and the text, it proposes the finished form complete in itself. The reader, the writer, and the text appear to be all contained within the same apparatus with no need for external interference. Percy Lubbock has told us that "the most finished form that fiction can take...[is] the story that will tell itself in perfect rightness unaided to the eye of the reader." This appears to be the situation with Nombres. The fourth voice presents an authoritative "reading" of what is happening between the voices and the text so there appears to be no need for the actual reader to complete the text with his own consciousness. This internal reader of Nombres is even audacious in its power as it addresses the actual reader: "...vous n'êtes jamais qu'un des éléments de ce plan..." (N, 4.80, p. 101). The external reader is also being programmed to fit into the text without causing any disruption in the fourth voice's presentation.
II. A. a) The intransitive verb écrire

We have previously introduced Barthes' portrayal of the intransitive power of writing. Sollers had also been influenced by this theory as he once described the new challenges of literature: "...de donner au verbe écrire, selon une formule de Roland Barthes, sa fonction intransitive, de communicer à la lecture un sens absolument littéral; de définir en somme, par une série de gestes pratiques et théoriques, un mythe cohérent qui répond de l'ensemble de notre réalité." And Nombres creates such a "coherent myth" by implementing an intransitive text which does not communicate directly to the reader. There is no message which belongs to anyone. Even the internal reader begins to lose its credibility as it observes: "...mais rien ne vient expliquer cette phrase, c'est elle qui vous regarde..." (N, 4, p. 16). The fourth voice is part of the text and thus participates in the activity of that text which is aware that there is something and/or someone else outside of its boundaries. Let us remember some of the first words of the text: "...une phrase parlait: 'voici la face exteriere'" (N, 1, p. 11). Hence, as the passage in Appendix 1 also demonstrates, the text is performing before an audience. It expects spectators to be watching this illusion of totality.
II. A. b) Identity found and destroyed

The internal reader appears to decipher the identities of the voices and portray them in geometric figures or as integral components of the text. The third voice especially expressed a need to be deciphered in its role: "et j'étais ainsi une marque parmi d'autres marques..." (N, 3.7, p. 21). It could not differentiate itself from the other products of writing: "...nous restions suspendus, ouverts, sans savoir si nous étions deux..." (N, 3.7, p. 21). And passive reading of meanings to the components of writing was not enough since it could also do that: "naturellement, je pouvais lire la signification des mots, leur enchaînement, leur intention déclarée et sourde" (N, 3.7, p. 20). The fourth voice suggests an identity with writing which unites all the voices and readers in a geometric flow of identities: "cependant vous gardez avec le récit un contact aigu, géométrique, lisse...cette fonction a lieu malgré vous..." (N, 4.56, p. 73). This sharing of the "bio-graphy" (i.e. the living écriture) of the text is effected without the conscious intervention of any presupposed identity. Jean-Louis Ferrier expressed this phenomenon well with the formula: "je parle et tu m'entends, donc nous sommes." One identity is exchanged for the one given by the text so that the
internal voice can tell the actual reader: "tout est perdu et rien n'est perdu, vous vous retrouvez sans rien mais plus fort, emporté, nettoyé, irrigué, changé, et plus mort..." (N, 4.92, pp. 114-115). More than ever, there is a need for the actual reader to confront this challenge of the text. If he is a spectator to the drama of Nombres, he must not be dazzled into a euphoria by the internal reader. Professor Roudiez has well portrayed the confrontation of the text Nombres with its actual reader: "The reader, perhaps a bit awed by the essays, may well approach this book with fear and trembling, wondering what he is supposed to do...at the end, the reader will emerge a changed person." Let us now explore how this reader has changed.

II. B. The external lecteur

After the experience of Nombres, the actual reader is transformed into another person. He does not have to be the professional reader that the French word liseur indicates. However, as the reviewer of Nombres in TLS has told us: "...the necessity for a new reader is an organic part of new writing." Such a "new reader," which we shall call lecteur to differentiate him from his pre-Nombres role, finds it practically impossible to choose whether or not he will be involved in the text. Discovering that the traditional critical
idiom of character, plot, story, discourse, etc. is ineffective in helping him to confront Nombres, he must immerse himself in the text where his identity has already been given to him. Of course, he can always choose not to confront the text. But there again, the text remains in control since it has already written him into its script and given him a role to play whether he accepts it or not. Agosti has given us an insight into the reversible activities of the writer and reader of such a text: "The pair form/content is radically dismissed, substituting for it that which is exquisitely dialectical and belonging to the reversible process of production and consumption, of scripteur/lecteur, whereby the "writer" understands himself to be an active 'reader' of himself." Similarly, the lecteur must not allow the internal reader to impose the value-system of the text upon him. He must implement his own praxis by actively producing his own reading. The fourth voice reminds the lecteur that: "'le travail est la mesure inhérente des valeurs, mais il n'a lui-même aucune valeur'" (N, 4.76, p. 96). This Marxist quote reminds the lecteur that he must work to obtain his own value-system beyond that of the signs, as the internal reader interprets them. And a new method of reading is necessary to find "...une façon de se frayer un chemin à travers les noms connus et appris..." (N, 4.56, p. 73).
II. B. a) A critical producer

Producing one's own critical reading is a very individual task. The lecteur must put aside not only his own personal culture which may interfere with his reading but also that which the text attempts to give him. The ideograms present a special obstacle in that they introduce arrangements of space outside the lexical and epistemological systems of most Western readers. And not everyone has the determination to study Oriental ideograms just to read *Nombres*! However, the lecteur should not be bothered by such obstacles. Instead, he should attempt to relate signs one to another rather than search for the "meaning" of a single ideogram or geometric figure. James Legge, the translator of the *I Ching* into English, offers a pertinent commentary here: "In the study of a Chinese classical book there is not so much an interpretation of the characters employed by the writer as a participation of his thoughts; — there is a seeing of mind to mind." And the lecteur of *Nombres* must do the same and not rely solely on the fourth voice to produce "an interpretation of the characters." One voice gives an apparently lucid view of the text for the lecteur: "...ce qui peut se lire de bas en haut comme le rien se transformant en rien..." (N, 2.74, p. 94). Nothing has "happened." Hence, the lecteur's mind must meet with the text's consciousness
to retrieve something from hindsight: "en retrait, on aurait pu croire que tout s'écoutait, se touchait..." (N, 3, p. 15). And the lecteur alone can produce the text again by participating in the functioning of Nombres. That is why the fourth voice can say: "—mais enfin nous sommes ensemble, aucune raison d'attendre ou de s'arrêter --" (N, 4, p. 16). Neither the text nor the lecteur can put aside the activity of production once it is begun.

II. B. b) The bourgeois as worker

The revolution is thus being brought to the bourgeois reader by Nombres. The actual reader must work at reading because texts such as Nombres threaten his very identity. A résumé of a story or discourse is no longer sufficient for an act of reading because, as the internal reader tells us, "ce qui vient vers vous à travers le déferlement des visages, des langues, ne peut être réduit ou traduit..." (N, 4,72, p. 90). If the bourgeois readers are passive to the activity of Nombres, they can only accept the complacency attributed to them by the internal reader: "vous ne reconnaissiez plus le monde de votre langue, vous marchez désormais au-delà de ses signes lents et discrets, vous êtes situés au croisement des forces lâches, obligés de les voir couler dans leurs multitudes groupées et différenciées" (N, 4,76, p. 95). The challenge to the actual reader is to transform himself into a lecteur
capable of "...franchissant l'histoire de ce qui désormais nous porte en nous consumant" (N, 4.99, p. 122). Such a lecteur has seen the deceptive formal order of Nombres ("les nombres sont la seule relation entre la science théorique et le monde objectif" N, 4.72, p. 91) question the epistemological, metalinguistic, and ideological rapports of man with his culture. Meanwhile, Sollers has replied to some of his foes regarding his so-called unreadable texts that "...le reproche d'illisibilité s'adresse non seulement aux transformations (d'ailleurs nécessaires) de l'aspect verbal (signifiant) mais encore, et peut-être surtout, aux écritures opérant sur le signifié (le concept) pris comme signifiant." Lois will especially address this problem of writing as a basis for representing concepts in that it will "de-construct" the very laws which we assume to be working in our idea of culture. Let us now examine this text and its lecteur to learn how the confrontation with Nombres may help us to read in different ways.
Notes for Chapter 3

1 Leon S. Roudiez, "In Dubious Battle: Literature vs. Ideology," Semiotext(e), 1, 1 (Feb. 1974), 94.
2 S. Lynn Fell, Rev. of The Park trans. by Sheridan-Smith, Library Journal, XCV, 13 (July 1970), 2521.
8 Ibid., p. 27.
9 Vivian Mercier, "Write or be Written," The Nation, CCXV, 18 (4 Dec. 1972), 564.
11 Philippe Sollers, "Tel Quel," Le Monde (des livres), 21 Feb. 1968, p. V.
12 For a discussion of the interplay of themes and structures in Nombres along with references to similar works of those concerned with Écriture, see my Master's thesis, The Ohio State University, 1972: "The Implications for Écriture in Philippe Sollers' Text Nombres (1968)."
Notes for Chapter 3


18 See chapter 1 of my Master's thesis for a detailed study of the themes and structures involved in the theatrical allusions and illusions of _Nombres_.


20 See chapter 1 of my Master's thesis for a discussion of the mirror-image and its relationship to the theater motifs of _Nombres_.


22 Philippe Sollers and François Bott, "Mandarin ou révolutionnaire?" _Le Monde (des livres), 13 July 1968_, p. II.


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28 For a discussion of semiology as a substitute to the structuralist mode of thought, see the introduction to my *Beyond the Structuralist Myth of Écriture* (The Hague: Mouton, to appear).


33 Philippe Boyer, Rev. of *Nombres* in *Esprit*, XXXVI, 375 (Nov. 1968), 602.


35 Mauriac, p. 334.


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41 This verb and its noun form ("déclenchement") was defined by Jacques Derrida ("La dissémination, I," p. 99) and developed in my essay "Un Déclenchement: The Revolutionary Implications of Philippe Sollers' Nombres for a Logocentric Western Culture," Sub-Stance, No. 7 (Fall 1973), pp. 101-111.


48 See chapter 3 of my Master's thesis, The Ohio State University, 1972, where I have introduced some of Pound's ideograms as well as the structure of Japanese ideograms to demonstrate the opening up of Oriental culture into Western texts without specific references to Chinese revolutionary philosophers.

49 Julia Kristeva, "Pour une sémiologie des paragrammes," Tel Quel, No. 29 (Spring 1967), p. 69.

50 Sollers and Gaugeard, p. 3.


Notes for Chapter 3


54 Sollers and Gaugier, p. 4.

55 Mauriac, p. 338.

56 Laure B. Lorent, "Formalisme ou engagements (À propos de quelques livres récents)," La Revue nouvelle XLIX, 3 (March 1969), 310.

57 See chapter 1 of my Master's thesis; also my article "Un Déclicnement," pp. 103-106.

58 Ricardou, Pour une théorie, p. 249.


60 Philippe Sollers, "Littérature et totalité," Tel Quel, No. 26 (Summer 1966), p. 82.


64 My translation of Stefano Aposti, Rev. of Loriques, Strumenti Critici, III, 8 (Feb. 1969), 72: "La coppia forma/contenuto è radicalmente rimossa, subentrando- vi quella, esquisitamente dialettica e attinente al processo reversibile della produzione e del consumo, di scriputore/lettor, ove lo 'scrittore' si intende come il 'lettore' attivo di sé."


Outline

Chapter 4: Solers the revolutionary with Lois

I. The text of laws
   A. The myth of changes
      a) A negative impetus
      b) The mastery of jargon
   B. Poetic subversion
      a) The "machines désirantes"
      b) De-constructing the Word
   C. A lexical text
      a) A materialistic affirmation
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II. The reader -- a lecteur as function of the text
   A. Functioning as true acticity
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   C. Recreating with the text
      a) Reading as dialectical materialism
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Chapter 4: Sollers the revolutionary with Lois

Lois (1972) has been negatively criticized by many of its readers thus far. Its mocking tone, verbal incoherence, and non-deleted sexual expletives have not only intimidated but also infuriated many respectable literary critics. The lexical display of Lois in at least eight different languages resembles Finnegans Wake too much to be merely a coincidence. But if Joyce’s work has now become recognized in many academic circles for its avant-garde genius, why should Lois be considered as part of a revolutionary esthetic? For one reason, Joyce’s epic has not yet been widely disseminated among the French. Sollers and Stephen Heath have collaborated in translating a few excerpts for Tel Quel. But the work of Finnegans Wake has still defied translation into a non-English basis of reference. Another reason for ascribing Lois to a revolutionary Sollers may be explained by the negative response of its critics. Unable to cope with its incoherence and creativity, they easily anathematize the text as “unreadable.” The audacity with which Lois “de-constructs,” (i.e. destroys and then constructs in another fashion) the French language and its cultural identity in Western civilization is a threatening omen to those who have invested their
lives trying to identify their cultural heritage and pass it on to others. *Lois* demonstrates how culture is predicated upon language by re-organizing the structure of French sentences and words, combining them with other languages, and arriving at an awareness of the materialistic bases of culture. On the one hand, we will examine how the text plays with the laws of culture. By manipulating stereotyped expressions, it creates a game that appears to be solely negative in its initial thrust. However, the neologisms and incoherent structures which are produced imply an awareness for the unconscious construction of language. In effect, *Lois* is a text composed of words whose material reality reflects the political conditions of "Western civilization" as an arbitrary identity which has distracted man from the material reality of his condition. On the other hand, the reader who confronts the material reality of *Lois* does not know how to confront its inconoclastic text. Since many of the cultural assumptions being "de-constructed" are part of the reader, the reader must feel that he too is being de-constructed. If the reader has learned to associate signifiers after confronting *Nombres*, the task of confronting *Lois* will be considerably easier since the myth of reading as looking for meaning is also part of the cultural questioning in the later text. After the experience of *Lois*, the *lecteur* learns
to enjoy the work of the text. As Lois re-creates a cultural revolution with words, the lecteur can re-create while learning the arbitrary "values" that language has given to culture and culture to language. Let us now consider the interplay of text and reader in Lois.

I. The text of laws

Which laws are being addressed by Lois? The formal structure of the text may give us some indication. Although Lois is not organized by any successive numerals as was Nombres, the prière d'insérer informs us that there are six chapters in the text. Each chapter is introduced by words in upper-case letters so that we have a sequence of the history of civilization before us, divided thus: pre-history (chapter 1), Greece and Christianity (chapter 2), and the modern capitalistic state (chapters 3 to 6). The larger part of the text is concerned with the modern era. The words which introduce each of these chapters may also suggest something: NÉ, FACE, À FACE, NIANT, MEMBRANE, L'ENTRÉE. The text begins with birth (NÉ), continues through identity (FACE), confrontation (À FACE) and denial (NIANT), to an affirmation of material reality (MEMBRANE -- physiological fact; L'ENTRÉE -- sexual obsession). The text traces the path of life from birth to maturity while at the same time theoretically creating a history
of civilization. Perhaps civilization is being patterned on life. And the laws which will be examined are the natural laws of life itself. Certainly the problems of origin, both biological and religious, are discussed in many various contexts throughout Lois. But they are not coherently presented. Instead, the laws of biological and religious origin, specifically dealing with the role of parents and the credo ("In the Beginning was the Word"), are continuously transformed into various realizations. For example, sexual incest is vividly presented in all its possibilities: "...j'ose assurer que l'inceste devrait être la loi de tout gouvernement dont la fraternité est la base." The natural law against incest is being replaced by a law which ignores the respect for one's biological origins. And the religious credo undergoes several metamorphoses: "Au commencement était la gerbe" (L, p. 87); "Au commencement est la verve" (L, p. 131). Earlier in the text, this religious tenet had also been mixed with material expressions thus: "Le verbe est à frire au commencement, mais encore faut-il qu'il y ait un verbe, car les queues voulant le perpétuant des sous-queues gonflant sous le verbe-écran, l'insondé repart en escargot-bride, en couloir flottant de mêlo-mêlant. Mieux vaut s'y risquer par piqués directs par la crabe-creuse? Oui" (L, p. 17). Faith in the power of the Word (and the word) is being questioned by natural laws which now
appear to be the laws of transformation. Consciously, man has constructed laws recovering his origins and has set these laws up as venerated activities not to be assailed. These laws were then passively received through successive generations to constitute human heritage. This historical tradition gives man a sense of identity, of belonging to an origin: "on obtient alors ce qui s'organise et se reproduit de l'autre côté, ce qu'ils n'ont cessé d'excrêter et de renfermer, étant entendu que le commencement vient toujours après" (L, pp. 6-7). In order to hide the artificial nature of these origins as man has constructed them, taboos were placed on questioning the sources of man's cultural heritage.

Georges Bataille, whose work is implied throughout Lois, has explored transgression and taboo and insisted that the research of Claude Lévi-Strauss revealed some pertinent facts about the taboos placed by the laws of origin: "Le grand mérite de Lévi-Strauss est d'avoir retrouvé dans les méandres infinis de structures familiales archaïques l'origine de particularités qui ne peuvent deriver uniquement de ce vague interdit fondamental qui porta généralement les hommes à l'observation des lois opposées à la liberté animale." These laws which are "contradictory to animal freedom" religiously and socially prohibit incest, that act which
denies human identity with its origins. In Lois, language distorts these laws by creating neologisms (e.g. "mamânes," p. 7) and disjunctive series of such neologisms, thus demonstrating the need to transgress unconscious cultural laws. One instinctively rejects as nonsense such disjunctive series of neologisms as this one which traces the history of civilization:

Homo trois cent mille ans apparaît poisson assêché amphibo singé terre à terre. Étonnante huma. Nuit tendu fragile dans son mage d’or animant non plante fruits cueillant sur tout animal fondé ou virant de bord en couillu ferré ou encore chute en caca pêché histoire à dormir debout civilisé (L, p. 37).

However, the transformations performed on the sentence structure and the words do give the passage a sense of its own, beyond our immediate apprehension. For example, "mage d’or" is a combination of "image" and "age d’or" to portray the illusion of grandeur in man’s pristine state. Within this passage, there are also juxtapositions of man’s sexual freedom, his fall into original sin, his dominance over and equality with other living things, and his creation from the earth ("huma" being a play on 'humain' and the Latin for earth). By deconstructing the etymons and radicals of the words, the text becomes a product of conscious language formation. This conscious working of the text demonstrates the laws
of transformation which operate within a culture. Rather than the external activity of Nombres which tries to relate the word to other signs outside a logocentric culture, Lois attempts to manifest the transformations that can operate within the word to retain life and creativity internal to Western civilization.

It is an interesting historical detail that Sollers and Tel Quel began to identify with Maoist Communism during June of 1971. Rejecting the French Communist party, the "Tel Quel Group" received the resignations of Jean Ricardou and Jean Thibaudeau as well as the fury of the French press due to this Maoist stand. However, despite Sollers' insistence that the ideograms of Lois imply more of a political identification with the Chinese revolution than those of Nombres, the few ideograms in Lois do not impose themselves so greatly upon the text. However, the Chinese cultural revolution of the 1960's, which attempted to overthrow the Confucian ethic of respect for family and tradition in favor of Maoist Communism, has strong similarities to the major themes of Lois which also deny traditional laws of origin in favor of a dialectical materialism. Traditional religious and literary culture is certainly mocked by such passages as: "À nous culture saucière cathocolique frehnétique en bière, les grands eschrivains bien
châtres grimés, le mimi racine à cinquante francs et la mère corneille dans chaque inconscient" (L, p. 55). But the transformations in Lois go further by developing what Pingaud noted in 1968 as "...la véritable 'idéologie' de Tel Quel qui est celle du refus du signifié." Similar to Nombres which had precluded a "meaning" from its signs, Lois repudiates the search for a single meaning: "Pas besoin de chasser le snark pour aller au pot" (L, p. 125). The "snark" was that impossible animal that Alice sought in Wonderland. In a sense, the "snark" is that univocal meaning which man continually seeks for his world but will never find. The ladder of Jacob from this world to a land of universals has traditionally been used as a symbol of epistemological certainty, of the ties between material reality and absolute knowledge. Lois changes that symbol by juxtaposing it with material terms, especially sexual ones ("zob" is argot for the penis): "Échelle jacob mais sans zob. S'adorant par défaut, phallus en moellos avec paille, lotus pour sucer logos. Biblos! Biblos! Biblos!" (L, p. 29). The respect for the word as a medium for epistemological certainty is de-constructed here as the passage ends with a frenzied ("lotus pour sucer logos") reference to the Book ("Biblos"). The Bible may be referred to here. However, all books which have been given a sacred position by man are questioned by the transformations.
of this text. The novel is especially important since that is the subtitle of Lois. Sollers told us in 1968 that "notre société a besoin du mythe du 'roman.'"? Apparently, Sollers still believes in the need for the "myth of the novel" since he has re-created it again with Lois. This myth, however, is concerned more with changes than with constructing a harmonious narrative for its society. But what is this "myth of changes" and what does it tell us about society?

I. A. The myth of changes

Many of the components of Lois seem to be adaptations of stereotyped expressions. These expressions are convenient formulas or lois by which people live. In place of these myths, the text revives the Surrealist myth of changes by substituting words, letters, and other languages or re-structuring the formulas so that something new is produced. It may not always be intelligible. But it gives society a means of looking at its own constructs, indeed its own structure, from the outside. We have already seen an example of the questioning of origin by transforming simple formulas. Man in his modern state, that of capitalism according to Sollers, can well be portrayed by the change applied to Julius Caesar's "veni, vidi, vici" into "veni, vidi, volui" (L, p. 88). Such a simple substitution of one word portrays man in his economic condition, not satisfied
by his conquests or purchases ("vici"), but unsatiated by his desire to accumulate or purchase more ("volui"). One critic has remarked that since Sollers does not belong to such established social groups as the French Communist Party or the universities, he is able to portray their situations better: "c'est parce qu'il est dehors que Sollers, lui, produit du nouveau..." And by linking series of changes in various stereotyped expressions Lois also enables those various communities to share the Sollers views from the outside. The limitations of stereotyped phrases are circumscribed by getting outside their parameters and giving them new vitality — "Ici le retour, ici le surdité, dépend de la place infini-fini, car si c'est fini qui précède ici, il passe infini et s'y évanouit, et si au contraire fini cède et suit, fini se combine avec infini, nouvelle puissance modifiant l'écrit" (L, pp. 18-19). Change can thus modify the limitations imposed on words by the trite contexts given them in our culture.

Transforming accepted formulas also involves directing irony against the culture from which they emanated. The burning image, so vivid in Drame and Nombres, now returns to describe the common plight of this text and its society: "brûlons maintenant papyrus vieux névrose traçant choc de la pulsion-clé" (L, p. 7).
The text ("papyrus") and its society ("vieux névrosé") will be tracing the destruction of their own structures ("la pulsion-clé"). Lois is constructed by destroying the bases for the society which is the subject of its text. In apparent response to Riffaterre's criticism of the subjective approach of the "Tel Quel Group": "Dans leur recherche même des idéologies encodées dans un texte, de la pluralité de ses significations et de ses structures, ils accordent trop peu d'attention à ce qui dans le texte assure un décodage correct, en un mot, à son style," Lois appears to say that there is no consistent style posited by Western culture which allows vitality and creativity on the part of its practitioners. Instead, changes are attested which manifest the needs of man to answer the challenge of this text: "dégourdissez-vous!" (L, p. 59). This challenge follows closely upon the example of Lois which opens language to plural possibilities: "pas plus enveloppé dans un œuf que rien de ce qui est fait, pas plus unifié ou formé que rien où l'on puisse entrer..." (L, p. 5). Sollers himself wrote once that "on écrit à l'intérieur de toute littérature à la fois, chaque œuvre rentre dans un rapport de contestation avec toutes les autres..." The text portrays the ambivalence of such a confrontation in a more striking manner: "Se magnant la bite pour gagner l'orbite"
While "magnant la bite" refers to the masterbatory pleasure of self-sufficient writing, the orbit or the external references to any other writings is also a goal sought by the text. Unlike Nombres with its quotation marks to denote its constitution of various other texts, Lois relies upon the cultured reader to identify the phrases and texts which it is contesting. However, there is still the undeniable presence within and outside the text of the "inconscient vicieux et ronflant-râpeux" (L, p. 17). It interferes with whatever conscious creativity the text can implement. But its role can be minimized by maximum concentration and activity, such as that contained in the ultimate form of volition — refusal.

I. A. a) A negative impetus

The importance of negation as an expression of human volition and conscious activity is brought forth through the allusions to the history of mankind. Sollers has pointed out literature's role to make Western man more aware of his historicity: "Le sujet occidental, il ne connaît rien de l'histoire, de sa classe sociale, il se vit comme tombé du ciel, apporté par une cigogne, né dans un chou. Réveiller tout ça, parler à découvert, en forçant l'enfance. By awakening man to the childhood of his culture, one can bring the self-perpetuating
components of this culture into the active realm of man. For example, the role of the monarch is untouchable in a political arena wherein he has been given the power of a father figure: "ceux qu'on a nommés rois ont été destinés à boire sans arrêt cette queue paternelle jusqu'à ce qu'on ait compris la plaisanterie..." (L, p. 8). This notion of the endless reign of a monarch is comparable to the other unquestioned components of culture which continue until the "joke" of the doxa of culture is discovered. By doxa here, we are speaking of the dominant ideology which is accepted and passed without any reflection or questioning of its effectiveness. The challenge to question this is contained by the very language which perpetuates our culture: "c'est alors qu'il faut se spectrer tout le vocabulle" (L, p. 18). The neologism "se spectrer" refers to making the doxa disappear yet ever mindful that, like a ghost, it may always remain to haunt us. The "vocabulle" combines the words for vocabulary ("vocabulaire") with those for papal-bull and bubble ("bulle"). Like a papal-bull, our language is thought to be in a privileged "ex cathedra" state since lexicographers have told us which are the "acceptable" usages. The play on the word "bulle" also implies that this view is illusory. Vocabulary is arbitrarily, not necessarily, designated within our culture.
Once realizing this myth of language, the initial negative impetus of Lois may be better understood. Birth itself is understood in light of the power of negation: "nié face à face, niant la membrane, l'entrée: ce qui s'y trouve n'y est pas n'est nulle part: NÉ --" (L, p. 5).

The text itself is born out of these words and then "elaborates" this initial denial by de-constructing the culture which tries to determine its existence. This dialectic between negation and affirmation in the first lines of the text provides a dynamism for all of Lois. That negative assertion is necessary so that the text can establish its difference from its readers at the very beginning. An echo of Georges Bataille's words can almost be heard: "Nous essayons de communiquer, mais nulle communication entre nous ne pourra supprimer une différence première." The defiance of the word "no" sets up a barrier between Materialists on the one hand and Idealists on the other: "posons le premier son qu'inscrit la matière, non, en retrait de son col coupé" (L, p. 7). In support of this refusal of matter to be downtrodden by Idealists, a man reacts: "Il se lève, dit non. Et non. Et nonnon. Scandale!" (L, p. 32). The scandal is brought forth by society's reaction to one man's renunciation. Lois then reinforces this negation by bringing all of culture into question. The effect is
what a TLS review has called "...an overpowering consciousness of the teeming mass of the universe."\textsuperscript{13} This "teeming mass of the universe" virtually creates an epic unlike any other we have yet seen. As the text tells us, "l'histoire s'y remonte dans son effacement" (L, p. 14). By negating the history of mankind as it has been handed down to us, the text re-creates its own epic vision of man's culture. \textit{Lois} indicates that "...l'espace qui sépare le ciel et la terre peut être prolongé indéfiniment..." (L, p. 8). Let us explore the affirmations of such an opening implemented by the initial negations of the text.

I. A. b) The Mastery of jargon

Sollers has explained the voice in \textit{Lois} as that which is "entre chanteur, le chimiste et le géologue..."\textsuperscript{14} Somehow, the skills of all three are united in this text. Similar to a singer, \textit{Lois} transcends its lyrics, sometimes with poetic skills, sometimes with bizarre obscurity. The text tells us that "la musique est ici plus près de moi que vous ne le serez peut-être jamais" (L, p. 119). At one point (L, p. 33), a musical piece becomes part of the text, with no apparent links to the words of the text. But there is a more organic role of music in the play on words and their structures. For example, the following passage seems to mesmerize one's
attention by its repetitive power: "Tradēridēra,
traliralira, liralirapas dēlirascrir" (L, p. 20).
The nursery-rhyme pattern of tra-la-la introduces the
series, followed by a play on Jacques Derrida's name,
the verb to read ("lire"), and finally a combination of
the verbs "to read" and "to write" with the noun
"delirium." The question is related to the delirium
caused in reading and writing as a result of Derrida's
philosophy, more than likely a reference to his work
De la grammatologie. Of course, the question is not
"understandable" or "explicable" in coherent language.
Like music, the text is trying to attest to an a linguistic
experience with words. Perhaps Pierre Boulez has given
us an insight into Lois with his description of contra­
puntal rhythm: "Le contrepoint est un phénomène
occidental, nous voulons dire par là que l'évolution
de la musique dans une direction polyphonique est un
phénomène culturel qui appartient en propre à la
civilisation européenne occidentale."¹⁵ He has also
described a contrapuntal movement thus: "Une ligne
contrapunctique prend donc toute son importance dans
le sens horizontal, quoique contrôlée verticalement."¹⁶
The first passage points out the Occidental tradition
of the evolution of music in a polyphonic direction.
Nombres had employed many voices as components of its
Lois now implements the polyvalent manifestations of words within Western culture. The second passage by Boulez indicates that counterpoint is achieved in its horizontal sense (the variations of melody) despite being controlled vertically by harmony. Similarly, Lois employs a contrapuntal rhythm in its variations of cultural themes. This rhythm is "horizontal" insofar as it changes the structural components of the language which portrays these things. It is also controlled vertically, as Boulez has described counterpoint, by its harmonious effort at de-constructing Western culture from the inside.

Lois is also a chemical production insofar as it is the crucible wherein the basic elements of Western culture, its signifiers, are combined and changed to produce different compounds. Demonstrating what Sollers has called "...le pouvoir producteur du langage, la capacité transformatrice de l'Écrire sur le signifiant," Lois employs expressions from Greek, Chinese, Vietnamese, German, Latin, Italian, and Spanish to transform the French language. More often, however, neologisms within the French language are created to produce new concepts. The text berates the Greeks for their heritage of classical ideas which has limited productive thought: "nous aimons compter toute compression, mettre des compresses à vos convulsions, vous consasser l'os dans
la congestion, nous sommes confuses, nous le confessions, mais vos durs concepts, vos congrégations deviennent combine où nous convergeons" (L, p. 50). The contrast of the intellectual heritage of the Greeks with the textual play on the word "con" reveals a mocking tone in its presentation of classical Greek philosophy. The signifier (signifiant) here is more important than the signified (signifié) in that the materialistic dimension of the sexual overtones undercuts the concern for Greek intellectual heritage, which the passage might have "communicated." Continually combining various signifiers in such a manner, the text creates a chemical language of change: "Chœgraphins diabolès ça revient couplé, ça insiste sec pour se faire nommer..." (L, p. 17). Despite the inherent claim that language must nominate something, the combining powers of Lois create a different compound than what is expected. The reliance upon language to nominate throughout history is portrayed by this creative passage in the text: "Languille barrière où chromos s'excisent migration mamâles enfieffescendants. Famille quadrillant classes conflits sans arrêt vivable, acteur pensâ fou parmi eux cadavre s'il les barre à fond en tournant leurs noms" (L, p. 26). Language, whose elusive nature is articulated by its combination with the word "eel" ("anguille"), is also a barrier of generations
("chromos" for chromosomes) wherein males and females ("mamâles" as a combination of "mama" and "mâle"), sons and daughters ("enfieffescendants" as a combination of "envie," "fils," "filles," "fait," and "descendant") are trying to cut themselves away from one another ("s'ex-cisent" as a neologism from "ex" and "ciseaux"). But language unites these together into a class system without any exit. And he who dares to renounce this barrier of language by changing the words ("en tournant leurs noms") is thought to be a madman by the other players. Meanwhile, the whole text of Lois combines words together to demonstrate the threat that systematic language poses by suggesting the analogy to a nuclear explosion which begins with simple atoms and ends in the destruction of daybreak: "Pulsion frappe incidence atomes image faisceau rasant d'obscur électrons contre-jour levant" (L, pp. 13-14).

The work of Lois is also comparable to that of a geologist who must examine the components of matter. Mocking the archeologist who seeks the origins of human culture, the text dynamically demonstrates the madness of trying to recover origins for their own sake: "Débuts rageurs cavernés caveurs. Chimie-tic! Anthropo! Dinobronches! Iguanonde! Ptérodoctes! Azor! Popo! Pipi! Tec! Tec! Paleo! Neo! Et au lit! Tic-Toc!"
Transforming archeologic terminology into a frenzy of word association, the passage ends with a reminder that, meanwhile, present time is disappearing into past time ("Tic-toc"). *Lois* also explores human origins, but it does so in order to question the effectiveness of present-day heritage. As the text presents classical works in new settings, one critic wonders whether Sollers could enjoy re-reading his own early texts: "Il est certain que du haut de sa citadelle de *Tel Quel*, il doit relire, sans plaisir, son premier texte, parfaitement compréhensible et bourgeoisément passionné." Such a re-reading is the very work of *Lois*, although this text is returning to earlier works in our Western culture. It must change older texts in order to make them pertain to the plight of contemporary man. Perhaps Maurice Cagnon is right in observing that this text is "...guaranteeing by topicality a soon-to-be outdated work." But that topicality may also make it a landmark of our time as it calls us to be geologists and contribute to its efforts: "déposons les œufs de mon oubli" (*L*, p. 18). Instead of following or looking for the star that guided the Magi to Bethlehem, we should begin to realize what that star has done to us and to our civilization: "Étoile vagabonde bleue consument ses couches" (*L*, p. 25).
The text is trying to tell us that our faith in various forms of Idealism has distracted us from our material state.

I. B. Poetic subversion

In order to re-focus man's attention on his material state, Lois presents a text which subverts man's Idealism. This activity is performed by juxtaposing cultural visions and material images to contrast one with the other. For example, the text provides the example of a professor of design who destroys a product of one of his students because a swan was depicted, not in the aquatic habitat where the professor expected it, but on land with its legs awkwardly showing (L, p. 122). The harmonious order of the professor conflicted with the student's vision of a swan. The result was destruction. As a representative of human culture, the professor demonstrates the exclusive attitude which is promulgated by harmonious systems. Lois seems to have a similar task before it that Sollers tried to implement in the Tel Quel colloquium in 1972: "Il s'agissait évidemment pour lui d'intensifier la rupture avec la culture et l'idrudition traditionnelles, de signifier à la fois que celles-ci sont indissolublement liées à une idéologie précise -- celle de la bourgeoisie capitaliste -- et d'en opérer la subversion." The method of accomplishing this is to parade the myths of
civilization within the text and internally change them.

Philippe Nemo has depicted the work of Lois thus: "Il s'agit donc de passer consciencieusement en revue tous les mythes-chair de la civilisation occidentale et de les ronger, à force d'ironie, jusqu'à ce qu'il ne reste plus que limites extrêmes de notre pensée." One of the characteristic forms of demolition performed by Lois is that delivered against the fashionable "structuralists": "Ç'tructure, ç'tructure que de trucs qui durent en ton nom!" (L, p. 113). Such phrases inspired one critic to write that "...Lois va devenir une mine de citations pour les romanciers en quête d'exergues originaux." And if that does happen, then Lois will perpetuate the subversion it is seeking.

I. B. a) The "machines désirantes"

It is quite a coincidence that Lois appeared at just about the same time as the popular Deleuze-Guattari theory of L'anti-oedipe. According to them, the schizophrenic mentality which reveals the unconscious power of desire is an example of our present condition as "machines désirantes." Movement or flux especially characterizes the "machine désirante": "Le code délirant, ou désirant, présente une extraordinaire fluidité. On dirait que le schizophrène passe d'un code à l'autre, qu'il brouille tous les codes, dans un
Lois exemplifies this activity of the "machines désirantes." The text presents man's break with Idealistic systems, similar to a schizophrenic who cannot relate matter to his mind: "Il était scindé, il s'en va néant" (L, p. 11). Felipe had once been fascinated by the expression of desire in Une curieuse solitude: "Or, le désir, c'est surtout le vocabulaire du désir, et n'importe qui remplirait des pages de ces expressions savoureuses, proprement intraduisibles, et qui ont ce pouvoir de nous faire imaginer l'amour" (S, p. 38). The suggestive powers of desire are coherently presented therein. However, Lois presents those expressions of desire as manifestations of a poetic incantation. Barthes has developed the changes wrought by Lois on the constitution of the text: "...les édifices idéologiques, les solidarités intellectuelles, la séparation des idiommes et même l'armature sacrée de la syntaxe (sujet/prédicat); le texte n'a plus la phrase pour modèle; c'est souvent un jet puissant de mots un ruban d'infralangue." Indeed, there seems to be a powerful jet of "infra-language" which portrays desire in Lois. More than in Nombres, the spoken language is depicted to bring forth the vitality of desire. Écriture phonetically reproduces such contemporary spoken phenomena as the absence of the "ne" when using French negation or the liaison
between alternating vowels and consonants of the same breath group (e.g. "Cétalor!" L, p. 18). The text tells us that "l'acteur parle ici pour mieux s'étouffer" (L, p. 15). In other words, the spoken language can demonstrate the phonetic changes wrought from day to day within language as a result of our expressions of desire. For example, the text provides the example of young girls crying to their mothers about their pudding while their dolls are sitting next to them: "Miamama, miamama, crient-elles en réhumectant leur culotte à fond, leur poupée crêtée de mimi didon, miamama, miam miam, hou l'boudin d'pama cétipatrebon?" (L, p. 38). That last neologism is a good example of the phonetic realizations reproduced by Lois. "Cétipatrebon" is a spoken form of the expression "ceci n'est-il pas très bon?". Such phonetic script recalls Raymond Queneau's Zazie dans le métro whereby Léon commented that "tenant d'une réforme orthographique, Queneau n'a rien réformé." And Lois is even more ambitious as the contrapuntal rhythm of its phones seeks to overwhelm the literary language of Western culture: "Musique musique o passe musique sur leur vieux délire merda o musique en bruit et peinture à cris mélodie pré-père et prépère-même, enfuis-toi musique en toujours verdie, branche-toi,
déborde, allège tes plis—" (L, p. 34). This music is anterior to humanity ("pré-père" and "pré-père-mère") yet survives with it as an exponent of human desire. And desire seems to be a human fascination, especially for women who seek its satisfaction beyond sexual gratification: "En réalité, elles vont chercher plus loin leurs effets, elles n'oublient jamais l'antique règle..." (L, p. 12). Yet male and female, man's mechanical desires have a corrosive effect on his language because he naturally desires to go beyond the boundaries of language as our culture has given it to us. Georges Batailles has portrayed this phenomenon well in his study of transgression: "L'interdit ne change pas la violence de l'activité sexuelle, mais ouvre à l'homme discipliné une porte à laquelle l'animalité ne saurait accéder celle de la transgression de la règle."  

Such a transgression of law leads us to a questioning of the efficacy of the Word in *Lois*.

I. B. b) De-constructing the Word

The text depicts man as having been partly produced by his language. The organization of the Word in Western culture as necessarily nominating what a thing is or predicating its quality involves man's own family-names and sur-names. As a result, individual man is fixed to a certain identity by his name, traditionally
distinguished by capital letters and affixed to a family
tree. However, the text realizes the illusion this has
created for Western man: "pour celui qui naît ponctué
storié et va travailler ses reflets brisés, il faut
l'accumule des hasards croisés..." (L, p. 23). And
Lois demonstrates this "accumulation" as it re-writes
human history in a specific way. This new form of human
history has an internal question, which Sollers proposes:
"Il y a simplement une ligne de contestation à
l'intérieur de la bourgeoisie."27 This opposition
begins by a questioning of the validity of linear
history. Similar to Brice Parain's De fil en aiguille,
which is cited several times, the text poses the
challenge of history to Western man: "Il fallait que
j'arrive à savoir si j'avais un passé ou non."28 Then,
Lois re-examines history, often describing man in a
succession of material images such as in this reconstruc-
tion of an anthropological dig: "Voilà tous précrânes
enfités-perchés et les gros nounours tout griffus-rongés,
o leurs sièclattentes en dépit déchets... Revoilà les
dents, les cornes foyers et calotte acide près des
bâtonnets, les coquillorants, les cheveux-sagaies
souffle avide engorgengouffrè poumonnant la roche
imbibant sa croche en pur sang murè..." (L, p. 14).
Creating new words and juxtaposing material images
one with another preclude one from extracting a meaning from history. The words with which we review that history are herein so transformed that the signifiers and the signified are not operating reciprocally. Even names which are historically distinguished such as Corneille, Racine, Freud, Voltaire, and Mme de Sévigné are reduced to small-case letters in order to efface their signification and incorporate these words within the succession of other words. H (1973) perfects this technique by appropriately eliminating all capital letters from its text. Lois tells us that its revolutionary practice causes increased differentiation in fragmented realms: "la révolution est tout à fait autre chose touchant canaux morcelés où chacun s'ébranle différence en strates" (L, p. 31). The effect of such practice on language is to demonstrate what Yuri Lotman says so succinctly: "The word is an instrument of falsehood." But we must insist that Lois is "deconstructing" the privileged position of the Word in Western culture. By "de-constructing," we mean that the Word's direct communication of meaning is mocked while its material reality as a sign is affirmed. The literal presence of the letters on the page is depicted by the text as it traces the very construction of the alphabet: "A FACE de face et b à l'envers et c en surface pour
couper l’endroit, ça fonce à la fête en griffant tout droit" (L, p. 41). Similar to the text Lois, these letters are dynamically asserting their presence by changing their positions and celebrating their existence. The text has also changed the words of language to make the impact of its presence. Felipe had once articulated a similar feeling occasioned by a meeting with Concha in *Une curieuse solitude*: "On n’a rien à dire lorsqu’on a trop à dire. Nous restions là à balbutier, elle avec un sourire un peu douloreaux et son geste ancien de passer sa main sur son visage, soigneusement, comme pour en chasser quelque mauvais esprit" (S, p. 126). The embarrassment of not being in control of language is presented by the gestures and facial expressions of Concha herein. However, in Lois, it is the very refusal of words to say anything normally understood by us to be coherent that is being portrayed. The words themselves cause us to feel embarrassment at being dumbfound before a text which has so much to say that it "says" hardly anything in a traditional manner.

I. C. A lexical text

While the Word is being de-constructed by Lois, individual words are actively creating their own text through self-metamorphoses. These entities should properly be called "cacophonèmes portant leur crâdo..."
(L, p. 42) rather than 'words' because they are various combinations of phonemes whose internal cacophony of sound and sense produces individual units of a lexical dialectic. Of course, some critics refute the work of such lexemes as part of "...cette pédante mentalisation de chaos et de mécanique." But the text insists upon the importance of these neologisms: "Roue libre et queue chassant danse claire sous dictée d'images flux vertèbres cuisses talons et volant mes cendres, je maintiens ce lexique, point-clic parmi eux noteur du conflit" (L, pp. 29-30). The lexical items are the means by which the text can engage in its contest with Western culture. They also constitute the "point-clic" because, as Sollers has once stated, "le livre est ce qui met le monde en forme de comme." In effect, the transformations applied to words are changes which are implemented in the world since words assume the activity of the world. The text exists as if it were the world. Therefore, the materialism and the politics introduced into this text through its lexemes perform as if there were ties between its revolutionary activity and social practice. The presumption of "as if" obliterates the separation between word (signifiant) and thing (référent) so that the individual word becomes a thing in itself exemplifying praxis for Western man.
I. C. a) A materialistic affirmation

Bernard Pingaud has noted that, for the "Tel Quel Group," the opposition between words and things has been displaced. He portrays their concern thus: "La vraie coupure ne passe donc pas entre les mots et les choses; elle sépare un texte muet, inconscient, et l'écriture que le révèle en le redoublant." Ecriture and the text constitute a new axis of concern. In Lois, the written elements offer a commentary on the materialistic necessity of the text's constitution. The text subverts many myths of Western civilization by means of material elements which contest the validity of Idealistic myths: "La lutte pour un contenu révolutionnaire s'est révélée être en même temps une lutte pour la forme" (L, p. 60). The "form" of the text, in effect, becomes a material demonstration of the need for a new cultural orientation rather than an intellectual argument for that revolution.

Antonin Artaud and Georges Bataille, the subjects of the Cerisy colloquium by the "Tel Quel Group," are especially important as precursors of the materialistic activity of Lois. On the one hand, Artaud's position on the physical reality of words is crucial to the Sollers text:

Mais il faut aller à pas lents sur la route des pierres mortes, surtout pour qui a perdu la connaissance des mots. C'est une science
The spiritual essence of language is thus contained in the material reality of words. Lois is especially concerned with the "contents" of matter: "La matière respire son anti-matière qui elle-même implique son anté-matière dans la pro-matière de sa substantia" (L, p. 78). The obsession with the word "matière" is provocative and almost delirious. Pierre Boulez's lesson from Artaud on the relationship of music and words is especially pertinent: "l'avoir entendu lire ses propres textes, les accompagnant de cris, de bruits, de rythmes, nous a indiqué comment opérer une fusion du son et du mot, comment faire gicler le phonème, lorsque le mot n'en peut plus, en bref, comment organiser le délire." This vocal effect is especially felt in Lois when a Rabelaisian list of bourgeois ("le bourjus") failings is produced in an effort to "classer les cracs" (L, pp. 55-57).

On the other hand, Georges Bataille, to whom we have already referred, has provided some crucial theories regarding the linking of sexual and literary activities.
Lois certainly engages itself in such combinations. For example, the importance of language and sex as material realities is underscored by such a passage as "le toutou-langage surcoupe le sexe en détournatout et relai-multant" (L, p. 17). The combinatory power of this sentence is so complex that all we learn is the fragmentation of language which models itself on eroticism. Perhaps Bataille can give us some insights into the how and the why of such a relationship. Eroticism, which intrigued Bataille because of its nature as transgression of certain sexual codes of behavior, may be tied to the language of Lois in its playfulness. Bataille has pointed out that any act of transgression is opposed to a philosophical system: "La transgression par rapport au travail est un jeu. La philosophie, dans le monde du jeu, se dissout." Hence, erotic activity has a similar role to the lexemes of Lois: to engage in playful activity which disallows the philosophies of culture. The words of Lois employ erotic activity as analogies of their own work: "le mâle en effet hait cet engendrement, il commence à comprendre le prix de son foutre-oubli et ce que ça coûte d'œjaculer dans ce qui a joui --" (L, p. 9). Indeed, the de-constructive activity of Lois is boldly compared to the "...éducation de la verge élevaginée
permettant d'afﬁrmer la communauté" (L, p. 6). This use of various sexual activities as an analogy to the text itself reinforces the materialism of its components: "La matière se répète en sexes. Les sexes ce que la matière ne dit pas" (L, p. 93). The reproductive principle of sexual activity especially underscores the organic dynamism of the text. Bataille once told us that "la reproduction met en jeu des êtres discontinus." The words of Lois especially demonstrate this principle by the neologisms which do not flow into a logical sequence. However, there is a dynamism which is operating, albeit covertly, among the lexemes of the text, refusing any references to an outside "reality."

Graham Martin has pointed out that, despite the illusion that "Tel Quel appears to assert the validity of multiple and complex meanings," the Group arbitrarily denies another meaning by refusing reality. In spite of the materialism of Lois which seems to afﬁrm the text as the focus for all reality, there are deﬁnite references to the political milieu which does bring the text into its historical moment. As ironic as it may seem, "à la vérité, Philippe Sollers ne choisit pas: dans ce nouveau livre [Lois], il est tout ensemble un partisan et un créateur ébloui, un victime de ses idées et un assez extraordinaire manieure de mots." Sollers is
indeed a victim of his own ideas in that he cannot
totally refute his culture with the neologisms of Lois.
Lois is unavoidably a product of its historical moment.

I. C. b) Political overtones

In an effort to propagate a Maoist form of Marxism,
Lois gets involved in the political plight of France in
1972. Citing the discrimination problem of France, the
text plays on the names of the country's political heroes:
"...général des gaules dégueulez-moi ca, les cocos-
parias" (L, p. 54). The "cocos-parias" are the French
Communists ("les cocos") suffering from political discrimi-
nation. On the one hand, unity can be attained by defending
the homeland from foreign intervention: "Bloquez l'invasion
du martel en tête! Bloquez l'étranger, résistez bretons,
vercingetorix et druides sacras, c'est pas nous qu'on
pète! C'est pas nos papas" (L, p. 54). Notice that
history now becomes functional as a model for rebellion
in modern man. On the other hand, as all good Marxists
know, the internal solution is an economic one: "La
propriété privée mène au profit, son absence à la
dépense. Dis, pensez..." (L, p. 84). Indeed the modern
political problem is more than a crisis of nationalism:
"Crise à banque par tous les couleurs! Paysans qui
percent!" (L, p. 32). Sollers remarked elsewhere:
"Quelle rouille sur cette guillotine transformée en
couteau à pâtisserie:” But the text substitutes ideology for that cake: "Donnez-leur du marx, du lénine en rond, abstrayez-moi, ça, capital-patron" (L, p. 55). The socialist heroes of yesteryear begin to parade through the text: "En somme trous d'air dans raté bobo, Vicobruno hegelo et ça coupe net en carlo marxo et surlenino, pas moyen d'y voir sans penser mao" (L, p. 25).

Of course, the Maoist stand of Tel Quel had to be introduced. Subtly, the text unites French commercial products — "Omo" the detergent and "La Vache-qui-rit" cheese — to mock Sino-French contrasts: "Jusqu'ici vachomo blanchit riait tout jauni dans sa crémerie, et bien c'est fini les chinoiseries, c'est le jaune en riz qui vous dégrossit" (L, p. 50). The Chinese do not present merely personal examples for those of us conditioned by Western culture, but also political examples for different ideological views. Of course, personal identity is the beginning of the process of change: "Je suis dit-il celui qui suis tout en essuyant dit-il la suie du je suis" (L, p. 49). This "soot" ("suie") probably pertains to our whole cultural heritage in the West which has been affixed to man from generation to generation. The authors and systems of thought which we have accumulated by tradition through the ages are not to be challenged since they have survived the passage
of time. Yet this taboo can itself lead to an affirmation of man's uniqueness if he responds to it with an active mind. Lois especially mocks the French nation to generate such a response: "c'est le franc et de francité, c'est le franchitecte de l'enfrancir, regard franc devant et trois fois derrière, mets ton fil à plomb dans ta cartouchière, ton compas dans l'œil et ton œil dans l'œn du conçu papa sous la curetière..." (L, pp. 54-55).

Bataille has told us that "l'interdit...ouvre à l'homme discipliné une porte à laquelle l'animalité ne saurait accéder, celle de la transgression de la règle." And the text of Lois provides that challenge to Western man: "Défreudez-moi ça en frime miroir, ouvrez-leur l'accès à nos soublimoirs" (L, p. 55). As we have previously discussed, it is important that Lois uses the terms (those of Freud and psychoanalysis in the last example) of Western culture to question the efficacy of that culture internally. This is an example of the Maoist theory of dialectical materialism in which the principle of contradiction must operate within a given system, rather than as a revolutionary counter-culture. The effectiveness of the creative power of lexemes in Lois might be well portrayed in light of Mao's theory of contradiction, presented by Sollers thus: "Ainsi, la dialectique matérieliste suit-elle le cycle suivant:
universalité de la contradiction, contradiction spécifique -- identité des contraires avec contradiction principale et contradiction secondaire et aspect principal de la contradiction -- luttes des contraires -- de nouveau universalité de la contradiction; procès passant à un autre procès avec transformation et permutations des termes, la lutte étant bien l'instance 'absolue' du procès. "41 The contrary nature of the terms juxtaposed by Lois exemplifies such a process of contradiction and demonstrates to us the internal dialectic of our Western system of thought and political action. However, the link from the words of Lois, to productive thought, and finally to political change might be difficult to accept, especially due to its small audience. Elizabeth Brandt, like many anthropologists, has cautiously stated the argument for the impact of language on cultural change: "Language is a system just as is kinship, economics, or religion. We have evidence that changes in other systems affect language. We should not really assume that language does not initiate cultural change."42 Only through its "readers," can Lois ever expect to reinforce that argument for language as a transformer of culture. Let us now explore how this text affects its reader, the medium of its dissemination on the body politic.
II. The reader -- a lecteur as a function of the text

Reading Lois with conventional expectations for meaning can be a very discouraging activity. However, Claude Bonnefoy thinks that this text, of all the Sollers writings except Le défi, is "le plus immédiatement lisible." Perhaps "lisible" means something akin to "reconnaissable" for Bonnefoy. Many lexemes in Lois can be recognized or at least guessed by well-educated readers. However, the problem of confronting Lois is more complex than the mere recognition of lexemes. Even that task can sometimes be frustrating. The text points out one problem with its neologisms and incoherent juxtapositions of lexemes: "Ce que vous lisez ne ressemble à rien" (L, p. 110). After the lessons of Nombres, the reader seeks to be a lecteur who can react and engage in the deliberations of the text. But this text is much different in its constitution. Let us look at the passage offered in the comparative selections of Appendices 1 and 2 to point out some of the intricate involvements of text and reader in Lois.

Notice in Appendix 2 that the reader of Nombres is portrayed as a "spectator" who can involve himself in the presentation if he wishes. In Lois, however, the reader is categorized as a "dupe," that is, as a function of the text which does not have a choice as to its
involvement with that text. The selection from Lois in Appendix 1 exemplifies this observation. As the text is de-constructing the concept of "history" in that passage, it is the reader's own understanding of words and their logical coherence in discussion that is likewise being de-constructed. The neologism "sauftō" combines the words "sauter," ("to jump" as well as "to fry in butter"), "sauf" (the reader will witness a series of verbal "exceptions") and "auf" (a polyvalent German adverb meaning "up," "toward," "at," or "in") to gain the reader's attention by its individuality in position and construction. The passage then changes pace by introducing "l'histoire," a term any reader is convinced he "understands." But it could refer to history or to a narrative. Perhaps it is this narrative which is de-constructing "history" for the reader. The statement that follows insists on the reproductive powers of "l'histoire," which can exist when there are no people left to reproduce themselves. The text is already beginning to repudiate its dependence on the reader who was so sure of himself when he recognized the word "l'histoire." The passage then goes on to apparently speak of the work of geologists, anthropologists, and historians who probe matter to try and recover history. Yet this could also be a reference to the
lecteur who is poking here and there in the text trying to recover a "narrative." Whether they be historians or lecteurs, all are part of a "propulsé pulsif" whose dynamism has existed since "mimines." This last word plays upon those who think they can recover depth ("mines" as "excavations" and "appearances") from matter while only mimicking ("mimes") one another like apes. They look deeply for strata of precious metals (i.e., "significant" matter) and hope for a reply to their efforts ("échomance" as the mania for feedback in research). Beneath the piles of leaves ("feuillage") on the ground or in a text, both hope to find the "bébête fonçant." "Bébête" is the adjective for "foolish" and also babytalk for a strange animal (which might be discovered by either the historian or the reader). The search causes its subjects to salivate as they are energetically using all their resources ("brûlant tous les feux"). But the task is a futile one as they realize that their point of entry is blocked ("le bouchon s'impose") as the guardians of past heritage ("mordu père" and "sur-numéro") have locked the secrets of history (or the "story") so that they may not be recovered. The voice of this selection, as Appendix 2 indicates, must be "on" in that it is speaking of our own condition as readers of the text, without addressing or assuming any
specific role. If the reader is part of the de-constructing activity of this "on," how does he distinguish himself from the text? To answer this question, let us return to the reader and discuss his role as a function of Lois.

II. A. Functioning as true activity

Within the text, the reader observes two extremes of cultural activity: "D'un côté, la loi, de l'autre exploit" (L, p. 13). Written into the unverbalized laws of Western culture, the reader had been part of an unconscious process of formation. Now, in Lois, that reader is also exploited and manipulated by the re-formulation of that culture. The infamous habit of Sollers to provide prières d'insérer as guides for the reader on the covers of his texts has angered some of his readers, such as Alain Bosquet: "Je n'aime pas qu'au dos d'un livre, un auteur me dise ce qu'il y a à l'intérieur." But those guidelines can be helpful for the reader's initial confrontation with the text. Once the reader realizes how "ça pense en cadence réglée d'Esprouvette..." (L, p. 19), then he can answer the challenges of Lois: "Impossible à vivre dans le croulement abrégé retrait te cassant les dents. Ou alors vas-y, déconne et marmonne, crève-toi les yeux, lève-toi en eux, dresse-toi en mieux sur leur nom
Functioning as a distinguished reader or *lecteur* now must involve the activity of going beyond ("métapassant") the de-construction of the text. This involves a purgation of the roles of reader as a consumer or as a geologist of meaning: "lacte-toi le coeur si tu veux passer" (L, p. 15). Such a purgation is achieved through the recognition and subsequent refusal of the text's guidance of the reader through this odyssey: "Allons allons qu'au vent des sanglots vos bras battent toujours autour de vos fronts la cadence de nage qui de tout temps a su faire passer le lourd bateau aux voiles sombres avec ses clients jusqu'au rivage ignoré sans soleil hospitalier noir avant d'avaler sa lumière" (L, p. 14). The text gives the reader "swimming lessons" through its ocean of words so that he may attain an enlightened land unburdened by the "dark sun" of Western culture. However, there are alternatives to drowning necessitated by a literal following of the text. If the reader and text become part of the same activity, then Lois may rightfully assert: "D'ailleurs je n'y connais rien. Mais vous non plus" (L, p. 99). Recognizing the text's work as a de-construction of Western culture, a *lecteur* must carefully observe its intimate reflections: "Tu comprends pourquoi, dans le
con des lois, ça préfère qu'ça baise à tirelarigot
pour entretenir l'illusion princeps et le double cycle
à double pédale, reproduire homo ne va pas sans faux.
Achtung! Einbeziehung! Aussotossung! Fort? Da. Wort?
Pa" (L, p. 58). The reader could be mesmerized by such
a succession of words. The illusion of dialogue between
the text and reader must be realized. The text could
control the reader's response by providing the appearances
of intimacy. However, a lecteur is more careful and
implements the activity of the text in his own reading;
"Tendu précis sans laisser tragédie se refaire lyrique
shlick logique nouvelle raison du moment. Away! Away!
À bas leurs clichés" (L, p. 82). To repudiate the
clichés of the text regarding its reader is a worthwhile
task for the lecteur. However, it involves constant
vigilance not to be written away by the text.

II. B. De-constructing the myth of reading

There are some basic presumptions which the text
Lois makes of its readers. It assumes that the actual
readers will not be able to put aside their traditional
methods of learning in order to confront the radical
form before them. This text intimidates its readers by
re-arranging lexemes in order to force changes in
Western man's logical-thinking habits and even in his
epistemological system. Lois dares man to change:
"Avouez qu'au fond vous ne lisez pas ce qui vous arrange"
The text is manipulating its reader by disordering traditional words and syntax and re-organizing them in its own fashion. One critic mocks Lois by remarking that he did use his traditional reading-habits to consume the text: "...je l'ai donc assimilé -- pas de lourdeurs de digestion, merci -- en allant de la page 5, à la 6, puis à la 7, puis à la 8, ce qui doit lui paraître le comble de la sottise." However, most of us could not confront Lois with our traditional reading habits of searching for meaning or for a plot, of looking for logical coherence, or of relating a narrative to our own experiences. Unlike Le défi, there is no chronology in Lois with a beginning and an end to a "story." As Bosquet implies above, the sequence of page-numbers leads the readers of Lois to believe that there is a succession of words being developed therein. However, such a succession of words cannot be appropriated by our normal reading habits. We must either call Lois "unreadable" according to our traditional reading-habits or change the conditioning which Western culture has given to those habits. Thus, we, as actual readers of Lois, are either arranged by the text into a passive role which it has assigned to us; or we attempt to become involved lecteurs who are concerned with the activity of the text.
The changes which a **lecteur** must implement in his habits of reading must begin with an understanding of the text which concomitantly affects his own epistemological methods. The **lecteur** cannot assume that the written words of the text will offer him direct communication. Those first words of the text ("ni ô face à face," L, p. 5) suggest that the reader should take an oblique position when confronting the text. Indirectly, the text may communicate its cultural questioning. This indirect activity concerns the very nature of those written words: "Contre l'écrit non parlô. Contre le parlô non écrit. Pour le geste avis" (L, p. 109). The "gestures" of the words are their roles as signifiers, relating to one another horizontally in the contrapuntal rhythm which Boulez has already pointed out to us (cf. Part IB of chapter 4). These horizontal gestures do communicate opinions to the **lecteur** about Western culture. These opinions mock logocentrism and the need for the one-to-one vertical relationship of **signifiant/signifié** in a given word. Hence, the actual reader must put aside his search for psychological depth in the neologisms of **Loïs**: "pour sortir d’ici pas de psychologie" (L, p. 37). Instead, he should begin to realize how much his own unconscious reading habits have conditioned him: "Inconscient, inconscient, quand tu nous tiens" (L, p. 139). He is to divorce himself from those habits to
which he has become wedded: "Vous lisez mieux un peu veufs. Votre truc est plus enfabule que vous n'auriez tendance à ronrunner" (L, p. 26). Indeed, we have not suspected that reading could be a myth ("enfabule") which would lead to whole constructs of thinking and learning habits. Now, Lois attempts to break this epistemological series emanating from the myth of reading: "D'abord pour expérience ici relatée perte connaissance en fondu-chainé. Puis découpe à nu par soufflé-tracé. L'acteur se réveille, ne se rendort pas -- bois" (L, p. 24). It is we, the actual readers of Lois, who assume the identity of this actor who can no longer play the passive role of a sleeper once we have been awakened to its mesmerizing effect on our epistemological functioning. We are told to drink, that is, to drink the text, taste it, and let it internally revitalize our static habits of reading. The lexemes of Lois are fragmented into words, groups, and paragraph structures by various forms of punctuation and spacing, thus facilitating the work of the lecteur. By relating these fragments, a reader can prepare himself to confront the whole text: "La préparation subjective est nécessaire. Ce qui ne veut pas dire subjectivisme, sectarisme. Lesquels viennent trop souvent de votre style stéréotypé" (L, p. 105). Such a preparation
enables the *lecteur* to obliquely observe the de-constructing activity of the text regarding the univocal value of a word as a composite of *signifié/signifiant*. The text tells its reader that he is bound up in that dualism which has conditioned his reading performance: "J'aime pas tes pratiques, sacré bande à rien. Tes pratiques tics dans ta cynifiente! Les voilà chassés de mon beau jardin" (L, p. 67). The *lecteur*, who has de-constructed his "cynifiente" (a combination of "cynisme," "fiente," "signifiant"), is the only one who can share the joys of the text's lexical garden. Within this garden, the actual reader cannot localize the text to any specific arrangement of time or place: "Le fait que j'occupe un point précis de l'histoire ne signifie pas que je prétends remplir un trou de l'espace et encore moins me limiter ponctuellement à ce que vous appelez votre temps" (L, p. 137). Rather than limiting the text to specific *signifiés*, the *lecteur* is challenged with opening the text by discovering its polyvalence. Similar to the plural constituents of *Nombres*, the lexemes of *Lois* offer multiple possibilities in their creativity and syntax: "Supposez que ma puissance, mot douteux, soit une pluralité d'unités dont chacune soit cette pluralité même!" (L, pp. 118-119). And the *lecteur* creatively functions by developing the plural possibilities of such a text.
II. C. Recreating with the text

Not everyone can meet the challenge to be a lecteur of *Lois*. Some will suppose that it is not worth the effort. However, the alternative is to be reduced to a cultural non-entity mocked by *Lois*. If one does not meet the challenge of the text, one has given up the chance to express one's individuality from the masses of the culturally stilted. And *Lois* advises its readers not to react: "Ne vous forcez pas à parler, à écrire, si vous n'avez rien à dire. Sans quoi, vous ne pourrez plus critiquer celui qui a quelque chose à dire à côté" (*L*, p. 106). This advice is ironic since the text wants to re-arrange the reader according to its own plan for an anti-cultural questioning. At times, sequences of nonsense syllables (e.g. *L*, p. 107) may entrance the actual reader, thus subverting his critical faculties and subjugating his person to the lexemes of the text. Indeed, this is the very intention of *Lois*: "C'est ainsi qu'au début le saoulblimateur apparaît au coeur même de leurs mimythes" (*L*, p. 107). The text is reproducing the activity of Western culture in arbitrarily juxtaposing various elements to constitute another myth -- in this case, the arbitrary myth of the text. The reader's rejection of such a text is expected: "Tout ceci assez obscur, c'est vrai,
illisible, dites-vous, incompréhensible, d'abord c'est vous qui le dites, ensuite rien n'empêche le réel d'être plus compliqué que votre utilitaire pensée du jour dépensé" (L, p. 107). "Unreadable" or "incompréhensible" is a subjective judgment of the individual who refuses the challenge of the text. This apathy seems to be expected of most of the readers of Lois. However, those old laws of reading may be substituted by new ones such as this one: "L'abcès ne se laisse pas vider sans dégâts. C'est la loi" (L, p. 140). That is why the text is so surprised to observe that a lecteur has begun to retaliate: "Tu parles!" (L, p. 124).

II. C. a) Reading as dialectical materialism

Alain Bosquet has remarked that the ideas of Lois are lost somewhere among its words. Nevertheless, he ironically quips: "Que ses idées s'y noient, tant mieux: les idées n'ont jamais fait la littérature." There may be considerable insight into Lois implied thereby. Rather than ideas, words are the non-reflective material with which the lecteur must work. The text tells its readers that "...la meilleure façon de me lire est d'accompagner la lecture de certains mouvements corporels appropriés" (L, pp. 108-109). The meeting of matter and matter can continue the flow of the text. The reaction of the lecteur to the material creativity in
Lois must be a physical, rather than an intellectual, performance which rebuts, qualifies, or engages in the work before him. The effect is similar to that of a bundle of sticks which together acquire more force than in their individual state: "Le noeud d'application se remonte en branches. Et de là aux masses yeux ouverts dans mouvement dialectique poussé par l'ensemble unité multiple et lucide en cause, je vous ramène la gerbe de votre infantile mais grandiose navigue obstinée purée" (L, p. 26). The lecteur and text can merge to perpetuate this cultural questioning. Together, they might create a new cultural bond. However, the danger of division is awesome. The reader may not obliquely see what the material text is doing and may choose to engage himself in another dialectic: "Crois ce que tu vois. Si tu t'dialectises, on sera en crise" (L, p. 62). But the text urges the reader to become intimately involved in its activity, despite the feeling of emptiness initially experienced by the "loss" of tradition: "Salut, camarade connaissant ma perte, salut disparu dans d'autres pourquoi, fais-le noir pour moi dans ta mémoire nette, futur à gommer, infini croisé..." (L, p. 24). The bond of reader and text has never been more necessary for a Sollers text. The text and the lecteur need one another to escape the static categories of reading and writing and to implement a dynamic sense
of these activities working together. Lois tells us: "Le point de vue de classe doit être visible. D'ailleurs, il ne peut pas ne pas l'être" (L, p. 108). Class here is not only the social category of the reader which limits the breadth and depth of his reading-vision but also the classification of the text into easily said-and-forgotten qualities such as "readable" and unreadable.

II. B. b) Closing the text

This text cannot readily be put aside with the assurance that one has appropriated its full importance. Lois provokes a reader to re-examine history, especially as the text has de-constructed it: "Prends-la, ton histoire, ne leur laisse pas!" (L, p. 63). The "stories" of Lois and of Western history have been displaced, in a fashion similar to the functioning of parents as biological absentee-landlords: "Les parents biologiques ne sont que des locataires. Ils agissent sur ordre de propriétaires absents détournant le script de la vie récrite" (L, p. 122). This "script of life re-written" could be a reference to Lois itself whose very form of verbal creativity was coherently tied to its purpose: "Ce qui vous apparaît comme l'activité de ma forme est aussi le mouvement propre de ma matière" (L, p. 116). But at what point does the lecteur engage and disengage himself from that coherent vital-activity? Professor
Roudiez may have given an insight into this problem when he commented upon the texts produced by contemporary scriiture: "C'est au lecteur que revient la possibilité de clore le texte, et chacun serait théoriquement libre de donner à sa clôture un sens différent." Lois necessitates, from its first engagement of a reader, transformations to man's very epistemological processes: "L'ENTRÉE nous apprend d'abord que ce n'est pas la nature en soi mais les transformations réalisées par l'homme qui sont les fondements essentiels de la pensée" (L, p. 116). And each reader of Lois will be affected in varying degrees, depending upon the application of each one's confrontation with the text. Let us now approach H to discover what the dynamism of such changes, when applied to the very structure of the sentence, can tell us about the text and its readers.
Notes for Chapter 4

1 A very interesting example is the letter by Dominique de Roux, the former editor of L'Herne, who was seriously angered by the publicity that Magazine littéraire gave Sollers after the publication of Lois. The letter condemns Sollers with some of his own expletives and involves de Roux in a debate with Denis Roche that ended by de Roux's withdrawal from the Parisian literary milieu to set up the review Exil in Geneva. See his "Philippe Sollers et Tel Quel," Magazine littéraire, No. 67-68 (Sept. 1972), p. 4 and Roche's reply, "Du bonheur d'être boeuf," Magazine littéraire, No. 69 (Oct. 1972), p. 4.


6 Bernard Pingaud, "Où va 'Tel Quel'?" La Quinzaine littéraire, 1 Jan. 1968, p. 9.


Notes for Chapter 4

12 Bataille, p. 17.


14 Philippe Sollers and Denis Roche, "La libération du territoire," La Quinzaine littéraire, 1 July 1972, p. 4.


16 Ibid., p. 287.


26 Bataille, p. 241. 27 Sollers and Brochier, p. 17.

Notes for Chapter 4


30 de Roux, p. 4.


32 Pingaud, p. 8


34 Boulez, p. 62.

35 Bataille, p. 303.

36 Ibid., p. 17.


40 Bataille, p. 241.


Notes for Chapter 4


45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., p. 19.

Outline

Chapter 5: Sollers the revolutionary with H

I. The text -- producing a stained glass window
   A. A serial association of voices
   B. Narrative as a single phrase
      a) The sentence on trial
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       b) Flexible imagination
Chapter 5: Sollers the revolutionary with H

H is a continuation of the work of Lois. Lois demonstrated, by its de-construction of culture, the linguistic elements which constitute a narrative. Jean Pierre Faye has pointed out the necessity for such a text: "Et voici ce qui importe: le récit qui se rend compte de la façon dont s'est faite acceptable l'oppression, commence la libération." The "liberation" begun by Lois is freedom from the form of narrative to be able to construct a "modern" text of man at the intersection of mass media. Such a "modern" text is H wherein all vestiges of punctuation, capitalization, and paragraph-structure are left behind to constitute a text whose components portray the drama of man being attacked by a cinematic flow of verbal messages from all areas of his environment. The form of H seems overpowering at first glance even though its techniques have been previously employed. Guillaume Apollinaire and Tristan Tzara experimented with the absence of punctuation. In recent years, Beckett, Simon, Butor, and other practitioners of the nouveau roman have perfected that technique. E. E. Cummings especially distinguished his poetry with the lack of upper-case letters. And word-games were especially prevalent in Lois as they have
been with writers throughout centuries. However, the uniqueness of H is that it combines all of these techniques to portray the assault of modern man's intelligence by messages. Quoting from a scotch-whiskey label, Dominique de Roux's criticism of Lois, or such literary greats as Baudelaire and Hölderlin, H brings together such diversified cultural phenomena as the rock-opera Jesus Christ Superstar, a commercial for the Ajax white tornado, and May '68 adventures in Paris into a testimony of the heterogeneity of mass media. The structure of H centers around an internal voice which is being assaulted by a variety of messages and which maintains a dialogue by responding to them and to the reader who is also experiencing this verbal assault. The effect is that of a community of voices interlocked in a theatrical display of man's modern environment. However, the form of H is so unique that one may wonder why it is subtitled a novel. The text may give us a hint about this: "on ne sait jamais donc le roman est un miroir promené le long des routes simplement le nouveau modèle est monté". The novel is still important as a vehicle exemplifying a historical period ("un miroir promené le long des routes"). However, H reflects "le nouveau modèle" for man. Hence, the form and content of the novel must be changed to achieve such an effect.
Professor Roudiez argues well for the subversive purpose of "roman" as a sub-title for the creative texts of Sollers: "Precisely because his fiction no longer resembles the traditional novel, Sollers maintains the word roman on the cover of his books, thereby attempting to dismantle the literary concept of genre, again from the inside." But that subversion goes beyond genre to the reader himself. Anna Otten understands H to be another example of Sollers' advice to his reader to be more flexible: "Sollers urges the reader to free himself to new ideas, and, as Benveniste has put it 'handle the signs of language.'" The very title of this text provides a good example of the polyvalent signs of language in man's modern state. Such signs demand the use of man's critical functions to confront the task of language as Benveniste has portrayed it.

The title H seems so simple in contrast with the complex organization of the text. But, like Barthes' S/Z, this title is significant on phonetic, morphological, and semantic bases. Since the spoken language has become increasingly more integrated into the Sollers texts since Une curieuse solitude, the phonetic role of the letter "h" cannot be overlooked. Having no sound value in itself for French, that letter may at times indicate etymological origins (e.g. homme > HOMO) or
borrowing from other languages (e.g. the feature of aspiration). It is interesting that, by itself, the letter has no phonemic or phonetic value. As exemplified above, "h" is used to indicate something other than its present state, such as its historical origin or source. Likewise, the later Sollers texts Nombres, Lois, and H become significant only when considered in their relationships to other texts (e.g. the intertext role of Nombres; the Western civilization assumed by Lois; the modern verbal assault on man exemplified by H). Alone, these texts have no voice. Similar to the historical implications of the letter "h," the historical predicaments of these texts reveal their full significance. Another pertinent fact about "h" is that, in French, it assumes phonetic and phonemic values only when combined with other letters (e.g. chat; philosophe; Milhaud) or with other phonemes (e.g. it prevents liaison and produces hiatus with certain modifiers, as in the case of "les héro"s"; /lɛʁo/ or "ma haine"; /maɛːn/). Such a role of assuming phonetic value only when combined with other letters is also similar to those three texts of stage three which must be combined with other works so that their individual functions can be implemented.

Morphologically, the letter "h" does not appear to have any value. However, let us stretch the sense of
"morpheme" in its traditional linguistic sense of a basic particle of meaning in a word to a semiological sense of an elementary meaning conveyed by a sign. Returning to the upper-case letter "H," as the title presents it to us, we might look more closely at the construction of that letter as a literal sign. Two parallel lines are joined together by a single horizontal bar. That bar is the only common bond those parallel lines have. Note that the figure is not closed upon itself. It is open vertically in both directions. This figure could be a sign of the text's own activity in that the text H, like the horizontal bar of "H," momentarily unites messages which are disparately found in various sections of contemporary society. Like the parallel lines of "H," those messages continue in their infinite construction, independent of one another, except for their intersection in this text, and by extension, with man himself. Thus, similar to the ideograms of Nombres and Lois, the letter "H" offers a graphic picture of the work of words in the text H.

Semantically, the letter "h" can refer to many things, perhaps all of them implied by H. The texts Nombres and Lois offer some insights into these semantic overtones when the word "hache" is used in those texts. Although "ache" (a letter of the alphabet) and "hache"
(a hatchet) are written differently, they are pronounced similarly. Such a plan on "hatchet" is not very far afield when one considers the spoken basis for the *écriture* of the Sollers texts, especially those of stage three. On the one hand, the violence implied by a hatchet is recalled by *Nombres* as one of its voices described an engraving of the execution of the French king, a century prior to the death of Louis XVI:

"Pareil, maintenant, à ce graveur qui, cent ans à l'avance, a représenté l'exécution à la hache du roi alors que le mécanisme n'était pas produit..." (N, 2.14, pp. 28-29). The similarity referred to is an analogy to the activity of the text. There is no need for such complicated machinery as the guillotine to accomplish simple acts of violence that can be done with a mere hatchet ("hache"). Similarly, the text H performs a simple act of violence by "chopping away" punctuation, upper-case letters, and paragraph organization. In addition, "h" can be a reference to military jargon wherein "h-hour" is the time of departure for an offensive. The text H might be a precisely timed attack against the form of the narrative, appearing not long after *Lois* had de-constructed the content of the narrative. On the other hand, *Lois* uses the word "hache" to describe a certain type of "style" reflected in its own text:

"Son discours haché nervuré tamis éveille en chacun
sa branlette à pâte, son bouton bouffi devenu honteux..." (L, p. 26). Such a staccato "style" could be a commentary on H whose text is composed of messages taken from various environments and juxtaposed to create an often incongruous unity. "H" is also the symbol for the hydrogen atom and for a basic unit of self-inductive electrical current (the henry), both of which may be analogies for the elements of the text H, which are united to compose more complex compounds (such as the hydrogen atom, found in earth, air, fire, and water) and which dynamically form a series of phrases which is the text (such as the henry does in providing the power of electrical current). All of these possible meanings for "H" may be implied here. However, there are also several other possibilities which may prove to be more pertinent to the work of the text itself. A reviewer of H has suggested that the text reminds one of "...le monologue d'un personnage délirant sous l'empire d'une drogue.""5 "H" is a popular term for heroine. And the text H certainly could be the diary of a delirious addict accounting for the dialogue of verbal messages assaulting his super-sensitive, drugged imagination. This situation would probably appeal to the university student who has adopted Sollers as a Leftist hero for a university revolution. Although the
subject of such a presentation is similar to such popular works as William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*. H differs from these other portrayals of the drug counter-culture in its technique of placing its reader in the midst of the hallucinations instead of presenting or narrating the adventures of a drug-addict. "H" may also have many other meanings, depending upon the historical moment and the language. An example of one of its more esoteric senses is given by Larousse: "Argot typogr. (abrév., par antiphrase, de HASARD). Exclamation ironique.// C'est comme par H, cela ne pouvait manquer d'arriver." Such a meaning may seem irrelevant. Yet Sollers has not specified the sense of his title. He mocks the efforts of this very study to recover "the" polyvalent meanings of the title H since "H" could be merely a letter selected at random as a title for the commercial market. Nevertheless, the text and the readers of H confront one another with this initial letter, the beginning of a strange series of adventures.

I. The text — producing a stained-glass window

There is a curious figure which precedes the text H. The back cover identifies the complex diagram as the "Figura Intellectus de Giordano Bruno" which was first conceived in 1588 and is reproduced thus:
In that same year, Bruno wrote a treatise which surmised a metaphysical infinity based on a geometric model. He had insisted that infinity cannot be physically perceived, but it must be conjectured because of mathematical evidence supporting its existence. Especially pertinent to the figure preceding H is this commentary by Bruno: "The greatest of the infinites is the spherical infinity, since the infinite itself is a perfect sphere. The infinite surface is the most perfect circle, and the infinite body, which (as we believe) exists, or is supposed to, is necessarily a sphere and receives the very definition of the sphere." 

This most perfect surface, the circle, is found at the center of the diagram in H and is reproduced six other times around that central figure. Bruno, who was a follower of Lucretius, stipulated that any form of growth is a radiation from that minimum form of perfection,
the single circle, to a series of seven circles expanding outward. This diagram of the growth toward infinity is analogous to the activity of H. Although H resembles Lois in its "surface structure" which integrates many languages foreign to French, as well as erotic expressions, into its presentation, there are some important differences in the "deep structure" of both texts. The most significant difference is the emphasis in Lois on heterogeneity through its de-constructive commentary on culture while the salient feature of H is the unity which it achieves by combining so many apparently different elements from man's contemporary environment. As a crucible wherein is demonstrated "le globe...celui tout compte fait de la transmutation des valeurs" (H, p. 57), H performs in similar fashion to Bruno's doctrine of the minimum whereby infinity is generated from a basic form of perfection. The prière d'insérer to H tells us: "Restez sur le sens, c'est simple." The irony of trying to maintain the meaning to H becomes more and more evident as the polyvalence of the various passages super-imposed one on another expands toward an infinity of passages constituting man's continually changing environment. Similar to a classical text which now must be open to all possible meanings ("l'iliade est un champ ouvert en tous sens " H, p. 11), this text radiates outward from a single meaning: "il faut seulement poser le
problème en dehors de certains tics envahissants" (H, p. 14). The text will try to get outside of any determining agent which tries to limit its performance to a restricted problem-area of meaning. All of literature comes under review as the text seeks new directions for its expansion: "sous prétexte que ça s'dit maintenant chez l'nouveau docteur leur littérature devient emmerdante c'est l'psychanalyste qu'a tout l'frémissement..." (H, p. 40). The concerns of the psychoanalyst attract the text to invert the previous barriers between what is interior and exterior to the performance of literature: "il faut mettre à l'intérieur ce qui est dehors" (H, p. 12). Similar to the basic diagram of the seven circles of Bruno, the text must go beyond itself in order to radiate outward toward an infinity of elements.

However, that diagram from Bruno is also latticed by lines to produce a spider-web figure similar to a stained-glass window. It curiously resembles and functions like the rose-window that introduced light above the entrance of a French Gothic church. The spider-web had been an obsessive image in Nombres in order to present the complexities of an inter-text. In H, however, this spider-web becomes more intricate with the image of the rose window. The stained-glass window, as a whole constructed from minute fragments of various colors and shapes as well as an entity which
can only be properly seen from inside a church, presents an interesting analogy to the text. Similarly, the text *H* is composed of heterogeneous elements which do not seem to be congruous. However, once the reader is inside the text, he is able to see the harmony produced by these phrases curiously different from what he is normally accustomed to reading. The kaleidoscopic unity of *Le paré* and *Nombres* has already been developed. Similar to a kaleidoscope, the stained-glass window unites different shapes and colors together to produce a dynamic harmony which *Drame* had portrayed thus: "...la vision des vitraux où joue et s'efface une lumière prêvue comme leur envers mobile..." (D, p. 75). However, the stained-glass window is also an image for the static categories of structuralist criticism, especially as represented by the studies *Essais Critiques* (1964) and *S/Z* (1970) of Roland Barthes. Jean Pierre Faye has pointed out the necessity for re-examining such an analogy: "L'idéologie française du structuralisme s'est achevée par la description d'un vitrail (Barthes), celui de la mode. Mais ce n'est pas la structure du vitrail qui importe, c'est le procès sous-jacent (Chomsky) qui la porte et la transforme et en vient, à travers les transformations, à cette 'structure de surface' qu'est le texte." 9 Ironically, Faye's ideological adversary
since 1968, Philippe Sollers, would provide an example of this process of "deep structure" in H. The complex relationship of parts to a whole, which is demonstrated by that Sollers text, had also been theoretically developed by Bruno's doctrines three centuries earlier:

...the division of matter, however large it may be, must stop at the indivisible atom. Matter and number are finite downward and infinite upward; number can be added to number, infinitely many times; likewise, the addition of parts of matter can be pushed to infinity; in other words, when parts are being added to matter, itself composed of atoms, and to number, composed of units, one can go on to infinity, but when matter and number are being divided, one necessarily arrives at the indivisible part.10

Let us now review how H explores the relationship of an infinite variety of messages ("si le huit revient sans fin", H, p. 9) to finite concerns ("où va le monde depuis 1960" H, p. 146).

I. A. A serial association of voices

From its first words, H recognizes the mechanical model of life, perhaps mathematically as Bruno diagrammed it in 1588 or maybe psychoanalytically as Deleuze-Guattari popularly presented it in 1972 (L'anti-oedipe): "salut la machine" (H, p. 9). Thus begins the series of imbedded phrases, with occasional interruptions by a speaker, that constitute the text H. These phrases are
serial insofar as that internal speaker confronts them in one fashion or another. He is the common property or "objet = x," as Gilles Deleuze has called that quality which is found in all the elements of a serial narrative and which provides a means of coordinating disjunctive particles juxtaposed to one another. The "objet = x" of H, that is its internal speaker, is not always obviously present. But he is engaging in a dialogue with these phrases gleaned from many different sources. Sometimes they present themselves as he sees them or hears them. Sometimes they speak to one another. But that internal voice is always there, even if in the background, so that he might add a comment or reaction to the dialogue now and then. He considers this text a unique adventure: "je mène une expérience nouvelle pour l'humanité jamais personne n'est passé par cet endroit" (H, p. 42). What is being unveiled is similar to the sudden exposure of tape recordings which have stored the many experiences of modern man in his daily habitat: "voilà si je parle je ne parle pas ce n'est pas écrire que tracer en moi ce qui trace mais admettons que la bande se déroule ici devant toi ou plutôt fasse rotation tambour en croisant sous toi" (H, p. 154). The unreeling of this tape approximates the epistemological process in reverse to display that "on a tout le temps la vérité
ne triomphe jamais" (H, p. 41). "Knowledge," in its parcelled forms as man appropriates it, is parading before us. In effect, the text exemplifies in very vivid fashion Greimas' theory of the fragmentary effect of any narrative: "La narrativité considérée comme l'irruption du discontinu dans la permanence discursive d'une vie, d'une histoire, d'un individu, d'une culture, la désarticule en états discrets entre lesquels elle situe des transformations." The text unites the "états discrets" of contemporary man into a unique harmony of its own. In other words, the text transforms those "états discrets" by taking them out of their former contexts and into a new setting.

The internal speaker points out that this new setting is not merely a static entity such as the structuralist stained-glass window. He notes that "je ne suis pas né pour être tranquille" (H, p. 9) and that "la voie vraiment voie est autre qu'une voie constante" (H, p. 55). This text is a serial process which precludes continuity and localization in a narrative. The images of violence, vengeance, furies, and bombs in the first twenty pages of the text imply a plurality of form which transcends the static structuralist image of the stained-glass window and is reminiscent of the "Change Collectif"'s manifesto: "...à l'inverse de ce pseudo-formalisme, ce qui importe n'est donc pas le vitrail de
la 'forme' mais l'éclat qui la brise et la disperse: ce sont les règles et les dérèglements du changement de formes. The serial association of H demonstrates such principles of the displacement of form to provide a commentary on modern man. A married woman provides a pertinent description of him when she portrays her husband thus: "il est devenu incapable de fixer une pensée de l'éclairer de la poursuivre de la relier à une autre du même ordre ou de former au moyen de chaînons intermédiaires une suite ordonnée qu'il ne parvient pas à combler la distance qui sépare les idées" (H, p. 17). These are the symptoms of modern man being assaulted by a plethora of messages. In order to cope with such an environment, we need to become more flexible, as the internal speaker of H tells us: "nous avons besoin du romantisme révolutionnaire d'un certain sérieux nouveau style brillant" (H, p. 56). And H provides one possibility for "un certain sérieux nouveau style brillant."

I. B. Narrative as a single phrase

Roland Barthes has organized the critical attacks against H into several general categories. One of these is the view that H pretends to be something "new." Yet its techniques have been used by others. Another typical response to that text is that it is merely a product of fashion ("la Mode") and it will
therefore not endure very long. A third reaction to H is that it is the product of the esoteric explorations of the "Tel Quel Group" which are closed to any external audience. All three of these arguments have the common goal of saying that H is not worthy of a reader's tenacious application. The text is either too frivolous or too complex to warrant the attention of any serious readers of French literature. But why would French critics campaign so vehemently against H?

H appears to have fulfilled one of Barthes' own arguments for an emotionally inspiring text. He has cited Sollers as one of those who could give us an example of "...le texte [qui] peut, s'il en a envie, s'attaquer aux structures canoniques de la langue elle-même..." 15 Indeed, the sentences and paragraphs which organize language into groups have become the "canonical structures of language" for most of us. Without these convenient aids, we feel less secure with words as vehicles of communication and knowledge. And the text H projects us very quickly into that realm of insecurity. Perhaps French literary critics, many of whom feel responsible as the guardians of that literary canon, feel threatened by the brash, self-styled H. Some of them could be characterized thus by Claude Bonnefoy: "Les critiques sont arrachés à leur paresse, qui ne peuvent appliquer au nouveau livre les grilles qui
Their first reaction then is a counter-accusation that H is just not worth the effort of abandoning their secure faith in the structure of language. However, the games that this Sollers text plays with proper names by integrating them into the flow of all other words in lower-case letters have provoked Barthes into surmising about the mass effect of popularizing such explorations: "Si chacun de nous explorait ainsi son nom, nous quitterions notre infatuation, et tout irait peut-être mieux, dans la fameuse 'communication.'" 

Nevertheless, H even mocks the Sollers critics by including their comments in its dynamism. Along with references to Lois (H, p. 152), to Lettres persanes (H, p. 140), and to K2R cleaning-fluid commercials, the text integrates excerpts from the bitter de Roux letter against Lois (H, p. 151) and from other inappreciative readers of Sollers (H, p. 135). The tone is often ironically concealed within the text. Indeed, "les pommes sont cachées sous les mots les mots sous les pommes" (H, p. 89). One may suspect that Sollers is having a great deal of fun as some of his opponents become insulted at having their lucid criticism juxtaposed with such commercial items as K2R, Ajax, or even passages from the "incomprehensible" Lois. In its mocking
travesty of those guardians of modernity who insist that we have everything in contemporary civilization, the text recalls the deaths of the students in the May '68 French revolt and in the Kent State student riots in America: "rien ne manquait même pas les exécutions d'étudiants je veux dire communistes bien sûr" (H, p. 171).

The prière d'insérer to H remarks to us that its apparently fluid structure is more calculated than it seems to be: "Au delà de l'automatisme un calcul joue veille, critique, partant à la fois de tous les points de l'histoire." Historical dates of day, month, and year situate some of the elements constituting the text. These localizations in time give some passages a temporal fixation from which modern man can gauge his own finite state. The dates range throughout history to provide the text with vivid examples of the reconstruction of modernity through haphazard selections of data from specific moments without predicking a linear succession of events. This "history" focuses upon the differences of these dates rather than upon their relationship one to another. Such a calculated reformation of history involves the very structure of H in that there is a discourse of many messages which forms the history or story of this text. In effect, story and discourse virtually become united in H. It is impossible to separate one from the other. Let us examine what is
accomplished by this unity of story and discourse.

I. B. a) The sentence on trial

Greimas has told us that the story of a narrative is intimately related to its discourse. "Pour mieux situer les problèmes relatifs au niveau sémantique du contenu, il nous faut revenir à la manifestation de la signification et y rechercher les conditions structurelles du fonctionnement du discours." In H, this "functioning of discourse" is intimately related to the absence of formal sentence-structure. At one point, the text remarks that women's liberation has introduced society with the problem of "comment libérer la femme de la femme là est la question" (H, p. 37). We might change that statement somewhat to reflect the text's own structure: how to liberate the sentence from the sentence. In other words, does the absence of form in the sentence necessarily mean that the sentence cannot exist semantically?

Barthes has remarked that "H constitue donc un certain procès de la Phrase." At first, this trial seems to be a devastating case for the prosecution. The cumulative effect of these successive phrases appears to overwhelm the reader and preclude epistemological security: "plus le flux sera plus fort plus ton rôle intérieur et extérieur sera faible" (H, p. 164). However, one should recall Claude Bremond's insight into the role of the narrative: "Le rôle ne peut pas plus se passer du rôle
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que le rôle du récit: le récit est la forme du rôle, le rôle la matière du récit. He is reminding us not to forget that the narrative can also assume a role of its own. In the case of H, a narrative role against the formal order of the sentence is assumed. Similar to a woman who speaks of her uncertain feelings toward her male companion, the text must perform in its role before any commentary can be made of this role: "j'aurais des entretiens avec lui qui me feraient voir ce que mon âme désire" (H, p. 17). Likewise, we can observe the language of the text as if we were in front of an aquarium: "langue c'est la mer sans vague où le poisson mobile sent le sifflement des tritons l'âcho en croissance dans les tendres plantes de l'eau viens visitons un peu l'aquarium" (H, p. 164). Like the calm sea, the language of the text also has a certain rhythm which helps us to follow the semantic thread of its discourse. The challenge is to accept the invitation to become part of that rhythm and to breathe with the text, thus experiencing the vitality of its words.

I. B. b) Organic rhythm

While many of us continually wait for the last word of H so we may situate its components, there is a certain internal rhythm which sustains the text. However, this rhythm is not a regularly recurring poetic meter which consistently unifies each line. Each line successively
inundates us with words as if we were witnessing what 21 Jack Kolbert calls "cette marée verbale" of \( H \). This tidal succession of words poses "une question de réglage" (\( H, p. 17 \)). What sort of rhythm is perpetuating the flow of the text? We are told that there might be a musical model for \( H \): "tout le monde a compris qu'il s'agissait d'un rythme paisible ouvert bienveillant vrai sens du spasme à torrent ici je mime le minimum de musique" (\( H, p. 6^4 \)). Music has played increasingly important roles in patterning the structures of the Sollers text. In \( Lois \), verbal counterpoint was implemented to deconstruct culture. In \( H \), there is a sense of the musical harmony which transcends the heterogeneity of its elements. One of the internal voices of \( H \), a married woman, speaks of her husband's respect for music:

\[
\text{il dit que les lois de l'esprit sont métriques il dit que tant que la parole ne suffira pas à elle seule pour engendrer la pensée l'esprit dans l'homme n'aura pas encore atteint sa perfection que c'est seulement quand la pensée se voit dans l'impossibilité de l'exprimer autrement que par le rythme il y a poésie force (\( H, p. 17 \)).}
\]

This commentary could be a reliable description of the organic rhythm of all language, especially as portrayed by \( H \) without the conventional punctuation and capitalization which place constraints on such a rhythm. That woman's husband, who provided the insight given
above, would sing while he played the piano.

Although his wife did not understand his singing, she did feel a mutual emotion: "il se met à chanter impossible de savoir dans quelle langue mais avec un pathos déchirant" (H, p. 19). We too, as actual readers of H, seek the "pathos déchirant" which will enable us to break away from our obsession with the heterogeneity of this text. In order to terminate H and give it a wholeness which continually seems to escape us, even after the last words of the text, one has to become part of the choir produced by the unity of those words. Julia Kristeva portrays this need well: "...il faut saisir le rythme de l'ensemble, donc la poly-logique du sujet parlant, pour détacher, à rebours, le sens des unités inférieures (phrastiques ou lexicales)."22 Such a wholeness is not easily attainable because, as Sollers has told us elsewhere, "le texte n'est pas simplement l'idéologie: il est son intégration qui, pourtant, le fonde."23 There are whole systematic views of life which are being destroyed and constructed by the organic rhythm of H. Let us explore these implied systems and try to arrive at a holistic view of that text.

I. C. Imbedded ideologies

The absence or presence of punctuation, capitalization, and paragraph-organization is a phenomenon of
surface structure which leads to far more-complex properties of social deep structure. Indeed, as we have already discussed, the sub-title "roman" is especially crucial for H. Sollers has told us that "le roman est le point d'impact le plus fort de la narration sociale, des rapports du sujet à la pratique sociale." And the very form of H is, in a sense, a commentary on the status of society. This text is a dual commentary in that not only does it chide the dominant ideology as a suffocating doxa but it also provides an alternate ideology which allows for the creative participation of its adherents. The form of H perpetuates the revolutionary fervor of Nombres as the "récit rouge" by obliterating the obstacles to the free association of its plural voices: "les bombardements continuent sur les digues du fleuve rouge ce qui me permet de dire occident que tu mérites cette inondation ce débordement sons-mots-sons-non-mots-sons-ni-mots-sons" (H, p. 155). The text develops the Lucretian atomism of Nombres into a Chomskian formula for dialectical materialism operating between the opposition of the finite and the infinite possibilities of language: "un langage est-il fini ou infini des phrases elles-mêmes séquences d'atomes discrets nesting ou self-imbedding" (H, p. 77). Its own form of combining nesting and
The self-embedding phrases take the text into an examination of "le fardeau culture" (H, p. 86) which has perpetuated the myths of punctuation, capitalization and paragraph organization.

I. C. a) Form as doxa

In a later creative text called "Paradis," Sollers provides a pertinent commentary on the "deep structure" of punctuation. Therein, he suggests that punctuation interferes with the natural processes of language in a manner similar to planned reproduction: "j'avais immédiatement deviné qu'il y avait une liaison entre ponctuation et procréation d'où leurs résistances clichés ponctuant misère leurs journées à savoir qu'ils n'enregistrent que les points de rencontre avec leur image virgule tiret point virgule conclusion." By means of punctuation, man thinks he can control language and make it in the image of his thoughts. However, H points out that the reliance on such forms of linguistic limitation have merely created illusions about life itself: "comme si la pulsion était pas constante comme si y'avait l'temps de mettre virgule point-virgule" (H, p. 178). The effects of such constraints have been demonstrated, not only among the non-intellectual masses, but also and especially among the well-educated: "c'est vrai de la bibliothèque comme de l'usine t'as partout les traces de la solide immense main d'empoignade qui
barre l'humanité sur terre sur mer dans les airs" (H, p. 23). Man has imprisoned himself by forms so that his reasoning processes are limited to such linguistic barriers of punctuation, capitalization, and paragraph-organization. The result is that we have unknowingly continued these constraints so that now "nous sommes dans les canaux inconnus de la philosophie" (H, p. 45). The text demonstrates what going beyond these forms can achieve and questions our complacency over the years: "qu'est-ce que ça veut dire de ne pas y penser" (H, p. 31). Indeed, we have seen de-construction operating before in Lois. Once again in H, we learn that "...a lot may be discovered about the structure of our assumptions by Philippe Sollers' systematic attempts to disappoint them."26 However, disappointment is only the first lesson of H. There is also an affirmation of a positive ideology contained in a text whose "deep structure" reflects the fluidity of form in its "surface structure."

I. C. b) A self-sufficient ideology

The absence of formal constraint on the language of H exemplifies an ideological commitment to dialectical materialism. Using the organic rhythm of language, the words of the text flow together in a dialectical harmony which mutely answer a central question in H: "la question reste posée comment dire ça dans quel rythme comment transformer la langue écrite et parlée dans le sens d'une
respiration démontage de l'idéologie tartre verbal
devenu muet orbital" (H, p. 83). Mocking the Idealists who believe that words can communicate a transcendant ideology, the text ironically cites an adventure from the life of Kant: "kant tombait sans cesse pendant qu'il lisait la tête dans les chandelles" (H, p. 53). Like Kant, we will necessarily be faced with materialism. The words of H perform the same task for us as the ground did for Kant: "donc il faut nager dans la matière et la langue de la matière et la transformation de la langue en matière et de la matière en langue" (H, p. 100). Sollers once remarked appropriately: "Toute idéologie produit et se développe dans un langage. Tout savoir s'organise à partir d'un découpage linguistique donné."27 H demonstrates these principles which lend a sense of internal irony to its text. Although the text insists upon an organic rhythm ("l'ordre est mouvement se dégageant du repos", H, p. 49) which supports an ideology of mechanical flux such as Deleuze and Guattari have formulated: "...nous cherchons seulement comment quelque chose fonctionne dans le réel,"28 the mass of words which constitutes H provides its own static definition by exemplifying the principle of dialectical materialism. In effect, the organic rhythm which it seems to demonstrate is internally limited by its portrayal of dialectical materialism. The ideology of H, which is
independent of the formal restrictions of Western sentence-structure, limits its formal realization to exemplify the system of dialectical materialism. Such an ideology impedes the fluidity of its form and produces constraints in reverse of those imposed by either punctuation, capitalization, or paragraph-organization. Let us now examine the reader's role as he confronts the closed ideology of H.

II. The reader -- refusal as the supreme act

Confronting H can be a decisive experience for a reader. Of course, one can simply relinquish one's dignity as a lecteur and call the text "unreadable," as many of its critics have done. However, Roland Barthes presents the challenge of H to its actual reader: "Comment lire ce qui est attesté ici et là comme illisible?" Let us consult Appendices 1 and 2 to explore a specific example of this Sollers text. The passage from H presents a dialogue involving a hypothetical reader and the internal voice of that text. Notice that the voices continually change form so that the pronouns vary depending on the point of view (cf. Appendix-2 analysis of the passage). The fluidity of form is continued by such a fluctuation in point of view. At first, it is the hypothetical reader who objects ("mais") to the absence of sentence-structure. The analogy to the ocean tide is also introduced
"personne ne pourra naviguer là-dedans") to portray the overwhelming effect of the fluidity of words. This reader insists that punctuation is necessary for him to be able "to read." However, his internal audience picks up the words "punctuation" and "personne" to address this hypothetical reader ("vieux") and to reverse his argument by telling him that the form of sentence-structure is a whole metaphysical system. Notice that the dialectic is used here to link the arguments of the two speakers by juxtaposing apparently similar words which convey wholly different arguments. The internal audience then insists ("tant pis") that this metaphysical system be rejected as he alludes to the actual readers as actors, i.e. participants (cf. the analysis of the actual reader of H in Appendix 2), who must be flexible ("un peu de gymnastique") in approaching this text. Otherwise, he and other Western readers will always be imprisoned by the metaphysics of sentence-structure ("on n'en sortira jamais"). This metaphysics is then implied by the analogy to the train and the locomotive. To remain within the system of sentence-organization is to be like a locomotive which must pull the train of history. "Madame idéologie" is the dominant ideology of Western civilization which has given us this concept of "history" as a linear succession of great works, similar in structure to a
train of freight cars. And sentence-organization fragments and parcels ideas into convenient groups.

In effect, such a dominant ideology has produced a mass of followers ("la grande armée"). But this text is different ("et moi je vais te dire") in that it will present a rebellious ("de tels hommes debout") form which transcends the form of sentence-organization ("en une cohérence plus violente"). The sickness and its remedy are well-defined ("le diagnostic est exact").

In order to survive as a lecteur of H, the actual reader must refuse to "se mesurer trop étroitement aux exigences du temps et du bout du nez." The invitation of the text is extended: "il nous faut d’abord sans attention du débordement". The reader is subtly included in the "nous" which will substitute the constraints of dialectical materialism for the exigencies of sentence-form. Hence, the actual reader is called upon to refuse the qualification of H as "unreadable."

The passage from H in Appendix 1 exemplifies by its pronominal fluidity what Jean Pierre Faye has identified as the pulse of narrativity: "Car le battement pronominal et verbal, ainsi mis à nu, c’est la pulsation de la fonction narrative dans le langage au travers de tour un réseau de circulation, par les écluses du récit." And the lecteur is the one who can open the "canal locks"
of H by participating in the network of its pulsating activity.

II. A. The nature of this confrontation

Returning to the whole text, the actual reader discovers that the natural rhythm of language prevents the text from being as overwhelming as it seems to be at first glance. The "pulse" of narrative, referred to by Faye, helps the reader of H to discover that "ce n'est pas si difficile, une fois lancé" into the actual confrontation with its series of phrases. Reading this text is similar to swimming in an ocean of words, imitating the work of dolphins: "les dauphins suivent dans la mer leurs canaux d'information c'est leur tradition orale imagine un peu qu'ils lisent comme ça en nageant" (H, p. 63). Oral tradition becomes an indispensable aid to the actual reader who must accustom himself to the metronomic pace of language. The internal voice reminds us that this rhythm is in front of us, waiting for us to take command of it: "j'ai pas inventé l'horloge du langage la question est de savoir qui est le maître" (H, p. 64). Of course, some readers need help from others: "le type à côté de moi sait pas lire son texte il faut lui souffler les accents lui séparer les syllabes aujourd'hui" (H, p. 50). However, reliance upon others to perform the act of reading can be dangerous. If one does not succeed in reading, one
might be displaced by a more competent *lecteur* as a
French Resistance song, "Le Chant des Partisans," is
cited to militate the encounter of reading: "ami si tu
tombes un ami sort de l'ombre à ta place" (H, p. 13).
Ultimately, reading H is a personal activity involving
decisiveness and insight because the text is often
disguised by references to other texts: "qui sait lire
doit voir le sens caché exprès pour lui reconnaitre le
flux éternal invisible" (H, p. 28). Let us examine the
deceptions implemented by the disguises of "le sens caché."

II. B. The by-products of rhythmic structure

The text often engages its internal voice in a
dialogue with a hypothetical reader. It sometimes
appears to be a very casual encounter: "on a par
conséquent le temps de causer ensemble" (H, p. 28).
Bonnefoy tells us that this is a dramatic effect:
"Sollers, sur cette scène délirante de l'écriture, met
en scène son lecteur et lui-même." The actual reader
must be careful not to identify too closely with that
hypothetical reader. Like an actor, the *lecteur* of H
assumes the role of the hypothetical reader while
retaining his critical perspective of the dramatic
setting. Perhaps one might enjoy the distance provided
in such accusations by the text: "que tu es obscur
énigmatique y en a marre de tes envolées mystiques"
(H, p. 50). The internal speaker may be deliberately
provoking his actual reader with such attacks on Idealism in order to take such an audience off its guard. If the actual reader is not careful, the quick succession of various phrases may mesmerize him into a passive receptacle: "t'as sommeil tu veux te coucher non bon sortons c'est trop enfumé cette région" (H, p. 52). On the other hand, one can try too hard to discover the self-sufficient ideology of H: "allez donc chercher la dialectique à c'te profondeur bonne chance" (H, p. 168). Both extremes are traps set by the text. In both cases, a reader does not realize the effect of words in this text: "l'homme a tendance à s'ensevelir sous les mots parce qu'il ne sait pas encore laisser les mots enterrer les mots" (H, p. 117). The rhythm of H is dialectical in the temporal realm created by its elements: "nous sommes ici dans un temps à la fois linéaire cyclique infini fini avec transfini donc limité dans l'illimité" (H, p. 172). The actual reader must adjust the tempo of his "reading" to that dialectic which must be experienced rather than defined.

II. C. The lecteur of H

The experience of "reading" H can only be assumed by one who decides to be a lecteur. This lecteur must realize the inefficacy of the transitive function of a message transmitted from a sender to a receiver.
Such a form of communication is linked to Western Idealism: "l'occident a toujours postulé que l'être existait que le savoir était possible et qu'on pouvait le transmettre" (H, p. 110). The text H precludes the existence of Idealistic messages. Hence, its actual reader should notice that "la stérile question destinateur ou destinataire fait place avec son message et son code au tourbillonnant matin du destin" (H, p. 113). This "whirlwind" effort of the text to create its own destiny could easily sweep up its unsuspecting audience into the self-sufficient dialectical materialism of words. H is thus implementing in literary performance the proven importance of a political superstructure for the "Tel Quel Group": "in its insistence on 'politics to the command post,' the Cultural Revolution served as an affirmation of Tel Quel's own belief that superstructure (including art and ideology) could be the determining force in the direction of the economic infrastructure or, more specifically, in the direction of an individual person." Hence, the ideological thrust of H could sway its individual readers as well as whole audiences if they are not cautious. And the text dares its readers not to be mesmerized: "lurons réveillez-vous coeurs endormis" (H, p. 145). It is not enough to merely agree with the earlier dictum of the reader as a creative writer ("tu veux l'écrire le faire et l'écrire reprendre
le volume," (H, p. 13). The lecteur must also perform in tune with the text and aware of its impetus. Similar to someone who can observe the earth from the star Sirius, he has to realize the revolutionary ensemble of which H is only a part. The internal voice tells the lecteur: "la position révolutionnaire te donne le large et mouvement et cadence" (H, p. 13). And the lecteur must then continue the tempo of H by teaching others the dangers dogmatism: "ça dépend évidemment de ton point de vue" (H, p. 31). The lecteurs of Nombres and Lois have not learned the self-imprisonment of dogmatism, perhaps because those texts were themselves still contained within the formal restrictions of the Western sentence. Early in the text, the actual reader is berated for his closed sensibility: "qu'est-ce que tu as compris poursuivi tout est mystérieux comme avant tu n'as rien gagné sur ta pente" (H, p. 12). One critic has counter-accused H of being "un véritable encéphalogramme" in its apparent unconcern for the dominant ideology of form. However, such a rebuttal appears to be somewhat oversimplified in its refusal to acknowledge the dialectical materialism of the words in the text despite the headstrong purpose with which that dialectic is implemented in H. Nevertheless, a lecteur of H adjusts himself to the rhythm of that text which eventually becomes apparent. The
internal voice of H points out quite early in the text that a lecteur can calmly appreciate the activity of the text after an initial acclimatization: "tu ne peux pas oublier que si tu regardes ça calmement depuis l'après-gel tassé ça paraît lumineux évident sans obstacles" (H, p. 14). Nevertheless, a lecteur cannot hope to appropriate all the possible meanings of H. He must be content with exploring his own way and realizing that it is only one of many possible routes.

II. C. a) Modernity and differentiation

We have previously introduced H as a "modern" text. But how does a "modern" text affect and receive a "modern" reading? Roland Barthes has appropriately given us an insight into such a confrontation of modern text with its modern readers: "plus le livre est 'modern,' plus il requiert une différenciation aigüe de ses lecteurs -- de ses jouisseurs." Since all readers of any text will have different specialties of interest and competence, their degree of expectation as well as their semantic interpretations will vary appreciably. Regarding H, Barthes has delineated three broad ranges of lecteurs: the individually, the sociologically, and the historically oriented. The individually oriented choose different styles to approach a text. We can isolate five of these styles: 1) those who choose
random selections to read; 2) those who confront whole pages at a time; 3) those who are obsessed with consuming the whole text at one sitting as if it were a popular novel; 4) those who must research each word to uncover its plurivalence; 5) those who establish a pre-text or preconceived idea and then verify it in the text. In all of these styles, there are strengths and weaknesses which are magnified in a confrontation with H. Almost like a clouded mirror, the complex serial fashion of H will reveal the styles that its lecteurs have chosen: "vous reconnaissiez difficilement vos torts familles vous y trouverez un appui" (H, p. 142).

Then, there are the sociologically oriented lecteurs who are largely represented by the professional critics. Although H deals at length with such social problems as prostitution, over-population, famine, and even the public voice of literary critics, the text is more concerned with the linguistic formulation of such problems: "À quel point tout ça est lié au langage" (H, p. 110). The sociological effects of language are quite complex. This text can only explore some of the possibilities since it must deal with words themselves. However, the lecteur of H who is sociologically directed should understand Marshal McLuhan's theory that "...all technologies are extensions of our physical and nervous systems to increase power and speed." Such a theory
is implied when the text urges the re-envigoration of the analogy of genre to biological species: "il faut dépoussiérer la leçon d'anatomie refaire ça explicite gai genre" (H, p. 92). The text is making a plea to open up the forms of genre so that full discussions of sociological problems can be entertained therein without the artificial constraints of convention.

And some lecteurs insist upon a presentation of history. H warns such a lecteur, however, that "history" can cause many misconceptions: "bref y a deux façons d'être aveugle l'une à l'avenir l'autre au passé" (H, p. 158). One must be flexible to the present historical moment as it shapes itself through continuous metamorphoses. Once again, Idealists must be careful in approaching this text. Various historical moments are cited from the past, present, and future to compose a mosaic of "history" which is always incomplete: "il faut garder le survol en réalité nous sommes à une époque où les différentes plaques de la croûte terrestre peuvent basculer d'un côté ou de l'autre" (H, p. 132). This may be frustrating for the historical critic who seeks a definitive insight into the nature of history. However, H may be trying to point out to all three of these general categories of readers that reading is intrinsically an imperfect skill, as Bertrand Poirot-Delpech has observed: "la lecture est peut-être une
pratique désespérée; nous vivons comme si l'un de nous, un jour, devait tout comprendre..."38 As lecteurs, we ambitiously hope to retrieve the whole sense of a text like H. But we are reprimanded for such pre-ordained designs for the text: "l'utopie est une parabole fatiguée laissez le sujet faire son expérience ne lui cachez pas l'interdit" (H, p. 74). Despite our differences of interest and competence, we can all learn to suspend, at least temporarily, our individual, sociological, and historical preferences while the text presents itself.

I. C. b) Flexible imagination

The lecteur does not stand idly by while the text presents itself, however. As H dramatizes its fluidity, one must not allow one's imagination to be inundated by the successive waves of phrases. Roland Barthes provides some advice: "si au contraire l'imagination du lecteur est liquide, tout change."39 And the text tells us: "c'est à vous de vous transformer chacun son fossé" (H, p. 178). Thus, the lecteur is able to participate in the fluidity of H. No matter which interest area one may have, it is possible to explore that area in H if one is willing to transform one's concepts to adjust to the nature of H. Especially interesting is the developing science of semiotics which could aid all lecteurs as it seeks to define signifying
practices. Julia Kristeva has told us that
"semiotics can lead to a historical typology of signifying
practices by the mere fact of recognizing the specific
status within them of the speaking subject." In this
text, "the speaking subject" is a plural series of
voices which can be explored to reveal much to the
individually, sociologically, or historically oriented
lecteur. The challenge is to choose one's interests
and methods, then, to read. The text opens itself up to
its actual readers: "c'est la chance rien à voir avec
l'illusion c'est le tourbillon pas besoin d'insister
pour faire croire à une pensée en deça nerveux non pensé
lisez-moi lentement s'agit pas d'une crise on est dans
le miel en réalité" (H, p. 127). In a later, similarly
styled, creative work called "Paradis," Sollers has given
us a hint about how to "read" such a text as H: "il faut
prendre les phrases en ensembles scenarii couplets
abrégeés comme des microfilms bourrés de documents de
formules imagine un peu le calcul facile à transporter
à cacher l'histoire dans une boîte d'allumettes dans
les défauts du papier voilà tu développes agrandis
ouvres et c'est tout le réel qui t'saute à la gueule." The text before its actual reader is similar to a
microfilm speeding by on a microfiche-machine while its
operator is dizzied by the blur of print. In a time when
the ciné-roman is becoming increasingly popular, H presents a text which does all the dramatizing in a mute sequence of printed phrases. Without the production of sound or the visual brilliance of color-scenes, this text may appear to be at a disadvantage in comparison with a ciné-roman on film. However, H is a demonstration of the vivid power of words in a written text and a testimony to its need for survival despite claims to the contrary by such media specialists as Marshall McLuhan. H supports the argument of Jean-Louis Curtis who insisted in 1973 that "nous sommes nourris par les livres et ce sont eux qui nous habitent le plus long-temps." And it is the lecteur who will ensure the survival of the written text by engaging himself in such questions as the pertinence of H: "dans cette mer d'encre la plupart des rêves vont plus vite que l'analyse et le sens maintenant est tellement enraciné dans la terre qu'il faut une violence égale pour le soulever" (H, p. 172). The response of a lecteur is necessary for the survival of the written text. Only some will consider the challenge to be a worthy one. However, their efforts will be manifestation that man can perform intellectually to transform his own culture rather than to be formed by a culture of which he is not a part.
Notes for Chapter 5


2 Philippe Sollers, *H -- Roman* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), p. 95. Because of the absence of normal sentence structure in *H*, I must break up the flow of the text by selecting passages here and there for my study. For the sake of convenience, I will use the sign for ellipsis (...) only when the passage selected obviously disrupts the rhythm of its context.


4 Anna Otten, Rev. of *H*, *Books Abroad*, XLVIII, 2 (Spring 1972), 327.


8 See chapter 1 of my Master's thesis, "The Implications for Écriture in Philippe Sollers' Nombres" (The Ohio State University, 1972) for a discussion of the analogies between the inter-text and the image of the spider web.

9 Jean Pierre Faye and Jean Gaugeard "'Change' au-delà du 'structuralisme,'

10 Tomashevich, pp. 96-97.

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28 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Deleuze et Guattari s'expliquent...," La Quinzaine littéraire, 16 June 1972, p. 17.


32 Bonnefoy, p. 7.


36 Ibid., pp. 973-975.


38 Poirot-Delpech, p. 13.

39 Barthes, "Par dessus," p. 969.

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⁴²McLuhan, op. cit., p. 85: "Because of its action in extending our central nervous system, electric technology seems to favor the inclusive and participational spoken word over the specialist written word."

Conclusion

We have explored the confrontations of text and actual reader through three stages of Philippe Sollers' creativity. These three stages can only be a beginning in his exploration of textual possibilities and the protean responses which they may generate. Already in the *Tel Quel* issues of Spring and Summer 1974, Sollers has produced yet another work which refuses any manner of punctuation, capitalization, or paragraph structure. With the title "Paradis," these fragments of a possible eighth Sollers text recall the obsessions of Baudelaire and Coleridge with drug-induced visions of Paradise. However, before examining where the Sollers texts and readers might be going in the future, let us briefly review where we have been. Like the Roman god of beginnings, Janus, we too might be able to link together hindsight and foresight into a holistic vision of the texts and readers of Sollers.

Appendix 2 can especially help us to obtain an overview of those first three stages of Sollers' creative works. The specific encounter of the text and its actual reader is the salient feature of those stages. We initially defined text as a succession of signs within certain given boundaries and the actual reader as
a consciousness which confronts a literary con-
sciousness external to itself. These basic definitions were
be expanded or refined in discussion. The first stage,
Sollers within the doxa of traditional narrative,
includes Le défi and Une curieuse solitude which portray
the text as a narrative with story and discourse while
generating a reader who is an impartial observer.
Appendices 1 and 2 contain selections from those texts
which exemplify the early interest of the Sollers texts
with communication through language, especially the role
of the written word to convey anything at all. As
Appendix 2 analyzes, the written text is elusive in
that it escapes the control of the writer. On the one
hand, the literary testimony of the young man in Le défi
provides an associative, self-controlled pattern of
"unconscious activity" (cf. Appendices 1 and 2). On the
other hand, Une curieuse solitude is a medium for
Felipe's uncontrollable fascinations with Concha, whose
incoherent language of love contrasts severely with
Felipe's lucid reconstruction of their affair. Neverthe-
less, both texts have distinctive narrative threads
which can easily be followed by their readers. In this
first stage, the reader's bond to the Sollers text is
minimal. As Appendix 2 shows us, the reader is merely
an "impartial observer" who reads and then lays aside a
narrative which he has satisfactorily understood.

However, as we have seen, the explorations of Sollers within the texts of stage two necessitate more of a commitment from their readers. In *Le parc* and *Drame*, two voices are used to add complexity to the narrative as constituted by story and discourse. The commentaries of S2 in *Le parc* and the observer in *Drame* develop the importance of speaking performance within the literary text. Although dialogue had been used in *Le défi* and in *Une curieuse solitude*, it becomes increasingly important as it evolves into the very form of the texts *Le parc* and *Drame*. The effect of this is that the text becomes an exploration of form in stage two rather than a vehicle for a story as in stage one. As a result, the reader must also become protean as he is a detective in trying to produce the kaleidoscopic visions of S1 and S2 in *Le parc* and he identifies with the writer's plight to constitute a text in *Drame* (cf. Appendix 2). This involvement of the reader becomes much more intimate in stage three, however, as the text adopts a revolutionary function.

The consciousness of words as revolutionary power has brought the charge of "unreadable" against the texts of stage three. It has been alleged that *Nombres*, *Lois*, and *H* are texts "d'où les réflexes d'autosatisfaction et d'individualisme bourgeois sont moins extirpés qu'il n'y
semble et auxquels les masses ne trouveront ni accès ni profit dans un avenir prévisible. ¹ The fixation of these texts with the spoken language is a rapprochement of literary text with the masses who are not basing their language on a learned, written word. The spoken idiom of stage three is not a question of origins. Its employment is an effort to be true and authentic rather than a literature whose written word is artificially displaced by the spoken word. Although the masses are not attracted to Sollers literature because of its overall complexity, the texts of stage three achieve a more permanent bond with their readers than any of the prior Sollers texts. They are revolutionary insofar as they have drastically changed the form of "narrative" and thereby the act of reading. Admittedly, Sollers asserts: "On n'y écrit pas pour être lisible, mais pour y dire quelque chose. Mal lu, peu lu, l'important est d'être lu, bien, par un petit nombre." ² We have called this superior reader, a lecteur, in order to differentiate him from those who do not accept the challenges posed by the revolutionary texts of Sollers. This lecteur is the new reader who refuses to have his consciousness subjugated to complacency by texts conscious of their own vital power. From the kaleidoscope of Le parc, the text has developed into the numerical matrix of voices in Nombres, the counterpuntal tempo of lexemes in Lois, and the organic tidal rhythm of
language in \( H \). The complexity of internal voices in \textit{Nombres} enjoins ideograms and various other figures to dramatize an inter-text which gives the illusion of self-fulfillment. The \textit{lecteur} is a spectator, but not merely an impartial observer as in stage one. In \textit{Nombres}, he is part of a dramatic audience which can react and discover the facetious numerical-ordering of the text (cf. Appendix 2). The plural voices of \textit{Nombres} are accentuated in \textit{Lois} as their spoken language is portrayed through phonetic script which is only part of the complex cultural de-construction of that later text. Once again, the \textit{lecteur} is piqued into responding. \textit{Lois} continuously threatens to mock its reader. After recognizing the activity of \textit{Lois}, the \textit{lecteur} must then refuse the role of a dupe and continue the work of that text by de-constructing his own power to read. However, despite the lexemes of \textit{Lois} or the ideograms and figures introduced by \textit{Nombres}, there is an affirmation of language which remains. The drugged frenzy of the text \( H \) especially underscores such an affirmation of language. Barthes has told us that these texts exemplify a certain truism about language: "Il faut bien voir qu'avec le langage rien de neuf n'est jamais possible:... en conséquence, le \textit{nouveau radical} (la langue nouvelle) ne peut être que de l'\textit{ancien pluralisé}: aucune force n'est supérieure au \textit{pluriel}." The discursive power of
words is unfolding before us in those texts. With H, we observe the text as an ideological entity, independent of external form, which elicits the participation of the lecteur in its creative combinations (cf. Appendices 1 and 2). That same text, by its work within the context of discursive language, demonstrates the necessity for a lecteur in a view of the human situation described by Jameson thus: "So it is that our possession by language, which 'writes' us even as we imagine ourselves to be writing it, is not so much some ultimate release from bourgeois subjectivism but rather a limiting situation against which we must struggle every instant."\(^4\)

Now where will these explorations with text and reading take us? We are being dared to participate in the avant-garde activities of Sollers. Yet the avant-garde is a very insecure and dangerous arena in that it is subject to the whims of social castigation and iconoclastic individualism. However, John Weightman provides us with an interesting insight into the avant-garde: "Therefore, if my suggestion is correct, the term avant-garde is not simply a military metaphor, used first in politics and then transferred to literature and art; it is basically connected with science, and with what is sometimes called the scientific revolution, the replacement of the medieval belief in a finished universe by the modern scientific view of a universe
Indeed, the evolving text and lecteur in Sollers' creative works reflect this implicit association of the avant-garde with the scientific revolution. The development of the closer bond between text and reader from Le défi to H has especially close ties to the science of semiotics and the technology of film-making.

On the one hand, semiotics or the science of signifying-practices began to play an important role in Nombres. Therein, the text is a succession of many different types of signs. Non-verbal signs such as ideograms, geometric figures, empty spaces, and various marks of punctuation are introduced into the narrative of that Sollers text. Nombres, thus, exemplifies what Julia Kristeva would later assert theoretically: "Semiotics must not be allowed to be a mere application to signifying practices of the linguistic model -- or any other model for that matter." By using various types of signs, Nombres explores a whole gamut of epistemological and signifying methods without being restricted to the verbal restraints of linguistics. Le parc and Drame had implemented such linguistic features as tone, aspect, and voice to present their kaleidoscopic games of perspective. Prior to that, Le défi and Une curieuse solitude merely reproduced the
linguistic model of coherent temporal sequence in order to present vivid flashbacks of historical moments. Returning to stage three, however, the signifying practices of Lois and H become more alinguistic than Nombres as they perpetuate, respectively, the contrapuntal effect of lexemes and the organic rhythm of language without external form. Nevertheless, the increasing importance of musical properties in the Sollers texts attests to a shift in accentuation regarding the values of certain signifying practices in the narrative. The integrated function of external form in the texts of stage one, story and discourse as internal properties of Le parc and Drame, and the decreasing role of external form in the texts of stage three represent the various patterns of this shift while organic rhythm plays a preponderant role in the structure of the Sollers "narrative." The necessity of a value-system in a semiotic approach to the narrative is ascertained by Greimas: "L'organisation narrative des valeurs n'en constitue pas moins le fondement de la narrativité, car son 'effacement' n'est pas moins significatif que sa présence." The presence and absence of narrative values must be considered similarly to Jakobson's analysis of the distinctive features of language based on the +/- system. For example, the absence of external form in H must be complemented with
the presence of the organic rhythm of its language to account for the signifying properties of the narrative. However, semiotics is still a new science. The texts of Sollers are suggesting only some of its implications for us.

On the other hand, the technology of film-making is employed by some of the Sollers texts to involve the reader in their respective activities. *Le parc* and *H* are the two prime examples of the use of cinematic techniques. The role of the film has been crucial in developing the involvement of an audience in instantaneous communication, especially as McLuhan portrays it: "The movie, by sheer speeding up the mechanical, carried us from the world of sequence and connections into the world of creative configuration and structure." And the techniques of the movie bring this same transition into the texts of Sollers. *Le parc* was his first text in which the traditional narrative -- with its character development, temporal sequence, and components of story and discourse -- was questioned in favor of the imaginary play of perspectives between $S_1$ and $S_2$, which we called a kaleidoscopic vision. Likewise, the reader began to play an active part in reconstructing this vision. The instantaneous communication of the film, with its quick succession of visual images, seems to be a model for the shifting points of view in *Le parc*. Such a technique
involves the reader in a serial adventure of events, in which his own imagination becomes part of the dramatic interplay of voices. Although *Drame* and *Nombres* are more complex in their employment of plural voices, *Le parc* is more subtle by avoiding any formal distinctions in its voices, thus making the reader more dependent upon the cinematic flow of the text since he has no formal transitions to guide him. However, it is *H* which, as we have discussed, employs filming techniques in their most complex role of all the Sollers texts. The shifting in points of view involves the reader in an illusion of a news interview with many different personalities on the corner of a Paris street. At one moment, a woman speaks of her musically skilled husband. Suddenly, without transition, we are listening to a TV commercial or witnessing a discussion of the problems of overpopulation or prostitution. The slippery movements of *H* from one perspective to another is similar to the work of a movie camera which changes its focus from one frame to another. Of course, the fluid form of *H* is perfectly congruent with the speeding pace of its alternating points of view in order to create the aura of an engaging film for the reader. Nevertheless, Jean-Louis Curtis reminds us that "le langage des mots et celui des images demeurent distincts et ne peuvent
The film and the text remain distinct. However, the rapprochement achieved by the Sollers texts is an affirmation of the survival of reading by making that activity an involving bond between text and reader. The dialogue of "Paradis" with its actual reader is concerned with such a survival of the literary text: "je suis venu ici pour chanter te voir chanter avec moi pourquoi ta poésie ne parle-t-elle pas du rêve des feuilles des mythes venez-voir le sang dans les rues". This exchange is concerned with the subject-matter of a literary text. By scientifically experimenting with semiotics and film technology, the Sollers texts present a case for the pertinence of reading, that act by which man can see the material reality of his own condition ("voir le sang dans les rues"). Jacques Derrida had given us a view of the necessary complexity of the text and its reader in his own essay "La Pharmacie de Platon": "Un texte n'est un texte que s'il cache au premier regard, au premier venu, la loi de sa composition et la règle de son jeu." And Sollers implements such a text which causes its reader to join in the scientific research for readings which will provoke man into thinking and acting to change his own condition.

Such a probing into reading as an integral function of human life is designed to have man take another look
at his past and his future. Weightman has made us question "avant-garde" as a term applying merely to concerns of the future: "In so far as they are non-progressive, the metaphorical expression, avant-garde, is a misnomer, because the movement is not forward, but to the side, or even backwards in time to pre-Enlightenment attitudes." This appears to be an appropriate commentary of the Sollers texts also. For example, the theories of Lucretius and Bruno were demonstrated by the textual activity of Nombres and H. And, in his own theoretical collection—Sur le matérialisme, Sollers has revitalized his faith in Lucretius as a forerunner of the dialectical materialism of a text: "C'est en tout cas ce que Lucrèce (ce 'chien,' donc, d'après Calvin) nous donne à penser dans le mouvement et le flux des atomes qui soutiennent les lettres, dans la combinaison et le déplacement des lettres volantes fondées sur les 'corps génétiques de la matière.'" Roland Barthes has told us that he reads H as "un désir de Renaissance." Therefore, we must return to reconstruct our allegiance to the classics and establish their pertinence to our present condition. The allusion to pre-Enlightenment figures by Weightman is especially interesting in view of the revolutionary posture assumed by the Sollers texts and their readers, especially in the third stage. One reviewer of Lois compares its work with that of the XVIIIth century,
"a period in which an enthusiasm for theory, born of an acute historical awareness, can overflow into verbal exuberance, and in so doing participate in the ideological and political quickening which prompted it." One may be amazed at the congruent theories and practices of Sollers. However, despite his affinity to such historical predecessors as Democritus, Lucretius, Bruno, and Saint-Just, there are some unique features of the Sollers texts and their lecteurs which are also projections into the future.

Tracing the development of the Sollers texts and the responses which they elicit, one remarks the obsession with the text as a means of inducing change. An audacity to challenge stereotyped concepts becomes increasingly vivid while the text becomes the medium for asserting the heterogeneity and fluidity of matter. Apparently searching for a positive ideology of cultural change, the text begins to develop an implied philosophy, expressed by Sylvère Lotringer thus: "Portée dans le mouvement même de la matière, son développement inégal, sa pluralisation, son hétérogénéisation constituent au-delà de toute illusion 'unitaire' le point-clé de cette nouvelle philosophie qui est le matérialisme dialectique." Although Ž realizes a dialectical materialism involving the text and its lecteur, the value of such a system as a flexible ideology to deal with
all manners of cultural change remains to be explored. It must also be demonstrated that dialectical materialism, applied to the narrative, can consistently produce worthwhile confrontations between a text and reader which do not degenerate into apathetic responses of expectation one toward the other. This approach is not merely a Marxist or Maoist refinement of the materialism of Democritus, the atomism of Lucretius, or the infinities of Bruno. The methods of all these thinkers, among others, are being combined to produce a new effect which Bernard Sichère describes thus: "Car le matérialisme n'est pas une nouvelle pensée ou une nouvelle 'philosophie' mais un nouveau rapport de l'homme à sa réalité matérielle et aux pratiques sociales dans lesquelles sa pensée (consciente) se constitue inconsciemment."17 Within this "new relationship," there is certainly room for exploration in determining what the ramifications are for the text and its reader. In "Paradis," there are hints that the whole cult of Christ as the Savior of mankind must be re-examined in light of a more comprehensive view of man's ultimate Ideal, Paradise. Perhaps Alvin Toffler offers some additional insights into the problem areas to be probed in arriving at an ideology for an Age of Transience:

It is, however, not only our relationships with people that seem
increasingly fragile or impermanent. If we divide up man's experience of the world outside himself, we can identify certain classes of relationships. Thus, in addition to his links with other people, we may speak of the individual's relationship with things. We can single out for examination his relationship with places. We can analyze his tries to the institutional or organizational environment around him. We can even study his relationship to certain ideas or to the information flow in society. The emphasis on "relationship" is equally important to Sollers. The bond between his texts and their readers has already told us much about man and his environment. Reading the Sollers text of the future will likewise provide another test of the relationship of man to that which is Other. Modern technology is especially endangering the distinctions of man and Others: "panic about automation as a threat of uniformity on a world scale is the projection into the future of mechanical standardization and specialism, which are now past." But Sollers has told us that "contester c'est le moment révolutionnaire." There are many possibilities for such contests of the Sollers text and its lecteurs. We can only be certain that, if there will be additional Sollers texts, they too will provoke us to respond from one of our secure positions.
Notes for Conclusion


7 A. J. Greimas, "Un problème de sémiotique narrative: les objets de valeur," Langages, 8e année, No. 31 (Sept. 1973), 35.


Notes for Conclusion


19 McLuhan, p. 311.

Appendix 1
The text before the reader in the creative works of Ph. Sollers, 1957-1973

Post-face to LD, p. 34
"Ce que nous écrivons n'est pas toujours -- hélas -- ce que nous sommes. Ou plutôt -- dans un sens plus subtil -- c'est ce que nous sommes malgré nous."

S, p. 140
"Patiemment, je construirais le souvenir que je garderais d'elle, gouvernant ma mémoire, cet effort dût-il me coûter mon amour, et, peut-être, à force d'attention, sortirais-je vainqueur de ce duel avec le temps."

P, p. 76
"Toutes les pages sont blanches. Il est là, penché, écrivant presque sans relâche, voulant terminer cette lettre avant d'aller dormir, écrivant parfois sans ponctuer de son écriture fine, serrée; s'arrêtant, jetant son style contre la page qu'il tance ainsi de quelques éclaboussures noires..."

D, p. 18
"Ton visage, maintenant me parvient sur fond noir, tu es en retrait par rapport à ce signe comme je le suis par rapport à toi. Où sommes-nous en dehors d'où nous sommes? Je pense malgré tout que nous avons connu la rencontre avant que j'essaie d'inventer."

N, p. 22, 4.8

"Cette quatrième surface est en quelque sorte pratiquée dans l'air, elle permet aux paroles de se faire entendre, aux corps de se laisser regarder, on l'oublie par conséquent aisément, et là est sans doute l'illusion ou l'erreur. En effet, ce qu'on prend ainsi trop facilement pour l'ouverture d'une scène m'en est pas moins un panneau déformant, un invisible et impalpable voile opaque qui joue vers les trois autres côtés la fonction d'un miroir ou d'un réflecteur et vers l'extérieur (c'est-à-dire vers le spectateur possible mais par conséquent toujours repoussé, multiple) le rôle d'un révélateur négatif où les inscriptions produites simultanément sur les autres plans apparaissent là inversées, redressées, fixes."
"Saufte! l'histoire s'y remonte dans son effacé: ça revient-tourbille à la nappe enflée quand y avait personne pour se répeter... Le fouillé trifouillé en milliards d'années pour donner accès aux couches serrées... Plongé à fond dedans sous l'écho des graines, gratte à fond d'envers couvrant les valées sortis des cheveux, des feuilles pressées... Propulsé pulsif depuis les mimines! Dévié des accouches emmélimétaux! Echomance! Bébête fonçant sous feuillage! Humouisieux baveux brûlant tous les feux! Le bouchon s'impose, emplit la cuvette, c'est mordu pépère contrôlant bidet, reposant morpions sur le sol brumé et surnuméraire écrasant ses lèvres sur la pisse en boue qui les a soudés..."

"mais est-ce qu'on peut mettre le tout en vrac en jet continu personne ne pourra naviguer là-dedans c'est sûr la ponctuation est nécessaire la ponctuation vieux c'est la métaphysique elle-même en personne y compris les blancs les scansionss tant pis il faut que les acteurs fassent désormais un peu de gymnastique sans quoi on n'en sortira jamais ce sera toujours l'excuse de la locomotive des wagons qui suivent l'histoire de madame idéologie cantinière de la grande armée et moi je vais te dire de tels hommes debout dans une situation violente leur parole aussi presque à la manière des furies parle en une cohérence plus violente il nous faut d'abord sans attention du débordement le diagnostic est exact il serait en revanche absolument faux de se mesurer trop étroitement aux exigences du temps et du bout du nez"
Appendix 2
Comparisons of the selections in Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative work</th>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Text as...</th>
<th>Actual reader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stage 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Within the Doxa)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD</td>
<td>nous</td>
<td>reliable commentary</td>
<td>unconscious activity</td>
<td>impartial observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>je</td>
<td>personal encounter</td>
<td>instrument of writer</td>
<td>impartial observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stage 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Experimenting)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>il</td>
<td>observation</td>
<td>not produced by the writer</td>
<td>detective between two subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>tu</td>
<td>intimate conversation</td>
<td>identity with the writer</td>
<td>a role similar to the writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stage 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Revolving)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>ils</td>
<td>biased objectivity</td>
<td>illusion of completeness</td>
<td>spectator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>ironic manipulation</td>
<td>cultural &quot;de-constructing&quot;</td>
<td>dupe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>je;ils;tu;</td>
<td>dialogue</td>
<td>ideological entity</td>
<td>participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The writer as a spokesman for all writers speaks about the plight of writing.
2. Felipe thinks that writing will enable him to overcome time.
3. S₂ sees S₁ writing a letter and provides this description.
4. S₁ finally throws his pen down in despair, unable to consciously write anything.
5. The actual reader is caught between the narrative voice of S₂ and the activity of S₁ in this passage.
6. The writer (Id) is addressing his writing in an attempt to separate himself from it.
7. This passage is biased insofar as the fourth voice is also part of the text it is describing.
8. "De-constructing" is destroying and re-constructing culture by transforming words and their contexts.
9. Without punctuation, this passage provides an internal dynamism organizing its own ideology of dialectical materialism.
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