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Review of *Mallarmé and the Sublime* by Louis Wirth Marvick

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essentiel que l'écriture s'approprie. Dans le *Sahara*, l'individu s'évapore derrière les figures qui ne sont qu'apparences, apparences qui, loin de dissimuler, sont ce qui s'impose. Les visions sont le résultat de l'écriture (le trajet du regard, par exemple, est rendu par la syntaxe; les métaphores "rendent" la vision). Donner à voir, c'est, pour Fromentin, donner à rêver, sur des mots, des couleurs...

Mais, pour que l'écriture puisse servir à *conter l'espace*, il faut une *mémoire*. C'est l'imaginaire du souvenir qui garantit la présence du réel. Le *Sahel* substitue au rêve d'espace et de soleil du *Sahara*, une prise de conscience du temps cyclique (voir notre *Dominique, thèmes et structure*, 1977, Nizet, Paris) et de la littérature.

Pour donner une forme romanesque au *Sahel*, Fromentin a fait appel à *Zorr*, manuscrit de du Mesnil, mais transforme l'héroïne en une *image* qui reflète le rêve d'immobilité de l'écrivain rochelais: son écriture substitue à l'espace exotique un désert où se recompose le vide d'une province française, l'Aunis. L'aventure, pour ce "voyageur," a l'attrait d'un *retour* à l'imaginaire et à l'enfance. Le mécanisme foncier de l'écriture fromentinienne, c'est l'analogie formulée, comme l'explique A.-M. Christin, par une inversion des thèmes. En tout lieu, Fromentin, obsédé par la pérennité, est attiré par un certain vide qui ne signifie pas manque mais plénitude—seulement accessible par l'analogie.

Fromentin a été constamment déchiré: devait-il écouter les appels de sa réceptivité ou obéir aux exigences d'une création littéraire régie, au XIX^{ème} siècle, par le modèle narratif?

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MARVICK, LOUIS WIRTH. *Mallarmé and the Sublime*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986. 211 pp.

In this comparative study, it is Louis Marvick's aim to read Mallarmé's prose writings in light of the historical discussion of the sublime as a category of esthetic experience. Understanding of the sublime comes primarily from Longinus and the English tradition (Burke, Dr. Johnson, Hazlitt, Coleridge), filtered through Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime." Except for a few brief references to French writers other than Mallarmé (Boileau, the seventeenth-century critic René Bary, Baudelaire), Professor Marvick eliminates from his study any discussion of the French literary tradition, preferring to focus on a body of essays specifically on the subject of the sublime. He is thus able to write a semantic history of that word "sublime" through 1820 and then to compare the results with Mallarmé's use of it fifty years later. Similarly, the

author gives no sustained consideration to Mallarmé's poetry, where the word sublime is not used. Mallarmé's prose does make use of *sublime* and various derivatives ten times, though nowhere is there an essay devoted to it.

The history of the sublime is treated in three parts and constitutes the first half of Marvick's book. The first of these clarifies Longinus's view of poetry as serving, through rhetoric, a definite social function and as making no ontological distinction between the immanent and the ideal. Marvick would thus correct the usual tendency on the part of literary historians to see in Longinus an ecstatic precursor of the Romantics. The second part develops the categories of enthusiasm and irony to describe the two principal views of the sublime in eighteenth-century England. As seen for instance in Burke, the hyperbolic endowment of Nature with the laws originally held for a transcendent God causes the double-sided delusion of taking the real for the ideal and of equating expression of the ideal with the ideal. On the other hand, the essentially ironic view held by Samuel Johnson recognized the limits of language, which must fall short of an unspeakable ideal, and the necessity for silence. Finally, a chapter on Kantian esthetics describes the three phases of the sublime moment: the failure of the mind to comprehend its object, resultant displeasure, the recognition of a supersensible destiny. The aloofness of Kant's third stage in its ironic detachment from the natural world signals two important changes from the enthusiasm of Burke. The first is in the nature of the sublime object itself which need no longer be grandiose but may be found in familiar settings. The second is that the imagination must forsake the realm of the poem and, as in Johnson's view, move toward silence.

It is in the light of the above that the author gives the second half of his study of Mallarmé's use of the word sublime. For Marvick, Mallarmé's recurrent use of *praeteritio* and hyperbole when speaking of the sublime ironizes the text and infuses it with enthusiastic potential. Often taking an ordinary object for his point of departure, Mallarmé, like Kant, evokes the object the moment after it has vanished. However, unlike Kant, Mallarmé does not compel us to withdraw from the text. To the contrary, he inserts into the syntagma a symbol of the subject, which forestalls the aloofness mentioned by Kant and thus postpones an encounter with absolute meaning. This metaphoric inclusion ultimately permits the subject and object to merge, though not in the present, but in some ideal past, referring the reader to an absolute which is absent as well as to a proof of that absolute which is present. The poems which Marvick suggests might complement this discussion are those where, as in "Hérodiade," one finds a doubling of the self into both subject and object.

Mallarmé and the Sublime provides an interesting point of departure for further study in two areas, both suggested by Professor Marvick. The first would be an analysis of the parallels that exist between the English Romantics and Mallarmé, taking into account the French tradition of preciosity and the evolution of esthetics of *le beau*, particularly as they came to Mallarmé through Baudelaire. The second area (and I believe this is original with Marvick) would see an expansion and a deepening of the Kant-Mallarmé comparison throughout the poems outlined at the conclusion of this study. Such a

project might involve a critical dialogue with others who have written on ontological questions in Mallarmé, Blanchot being the indispensable starting point, with critics like Bersani providing some of the more interesting developments since 1980. It could also perhaps complement the work done on Mallarmé and German idealism, particularly with respect to Hegel (Houston's being the best of the recent contributions).

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THALER, DANIELLE. *La Clinique de l'amour selon les frères Goncourt: Peuple, Femme, Hystérie*. Sherbrooke: Editions Naaman, 1986. 260 pp.

In recent years there has been significant scholarly work done on the novels of the Goncourt brothers, with the result that their role in the world of letters of nineteenth-century France is being re-evaluated. Among those who have contributed to the growing body of criticism relating to the oft-maligned, always controversial novelists is Professor Danielle Thaler. She brings to the present task not only a profound knowledge of the writing of the brothers and their contemporaries, but an interest in feminist issues as well.

In their introduction to *Germinie Lacerteux*, as in the *Journal, mémoires de la vie littéraire*, the Goncourts make explicit their intention to depart from the conventional formula of the novel as practiced by Balzac, Eugène Sue, and Victor Hugo. They propose to grant to the lower classes their rightful place in the novel. Almost immediately this extravagant assertion initiated considerable debate in literary circles regarding the degree and the extent to which they actually achieve their goal. The debate continues. Professor Thaler has chosen to explore the claim by examining the brothers' treatment of three heroines: Philomène (*Sœur Philomène*), Germinie (*Germinie Lacerteux*), and Elisa (*La Fille Elisa*). If these heroines are truly prototypical of their class the critic can assess to what extent the brothers do explore the social milieux they have chosen to portray. Thus the question Professor Thaler addresses is whether the Goncourts did give in fact *le peuple* entry to the novel, or whether they limited such access to a few exceptional individuals, thus demonstrating their near-morbid, certainly clinical obsession with *la marginalité*, in other words with the non-representative members of the very class they claim to treat.

Professor Thaler defines the novels under consideration as a trilogy; not a trilogy in the conventional sense of one novel being the sequel to another, but rather as distinct novels, yet variations of the same novel. Her book is divided into two parts. The first, "Structure: Salut, Dépense et Gaspillage," analyzes the childhood of the heroines, Germinie's quest for *la salut*, and the interrelationships between secondary characters and the protagonist of each novel. She defines *salut* as the goal the heroine wishes to attain, *dépense* the means by