

THE DOUBLES IN JULIEN GRACQ'S *AU CHÂTEAU D'ARGOL*

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Julien Gracq is finally being given the acclaim he deserves. Although his first novel *Au Château d'Argol* (1937)¹ had been heralded by André Breton as the first Surrealist novel and although *Le Rivage des Syrtes* was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1951, his works have generally remained *chasse gardée* for a limited number of "Happy Few." Ten years ago the tide began to turn, due in part to the studies of literary critics; there is an ironic twist to this, considering the intense dislike Julien Gracq feels towards critics. As a further sign of consecration, *Le Rivage des Syrtes* has just been included in the *Agrégation* syllabus.

Several elements make the reading of a Gracq novel a difficult venture. The style, rich in unusual sensuous imagery, is highly polished in the best tradition of the Rhétoriciens. The sinuosity of the sentence and the dream-like atmosphere created by a poetic prose purposefully sidetrack the reader and cause him to lose the narrative thread. Thwarted in his efforts for a logical unfolding of the story, the reader is caught up in an atmosphere of expectancy which works obsessively on him. Yet the novels rarely satisfy the hunger they provoke, the quest (Gracq's main theme) remaining for the heroes and the reader an empty, bewildering endeavor.

Literature handbooks customarily link Gracq to Surrealism. His long friendship with André Breton and certain aspects of his works attest to this filiation: specifically the force of desire and chance in man's affairs, the need for free exploration of spiritual matters, the role of the Unconscious and dreams, the refusal of definitive solutions, and the thirst for adventure and the marvellous. However, Gracq stayed clear of the political and social involvement of the

Surrealists and rejected certain of their favorite themes: love as a means to self-knowledge, the glorification of woman, the city as opposed to nature, the psycho-analytical technique of automatic writing and the repudiation of art in the accepted sense.

Au Château d'Argol is fundamentally the story of a quest, a form well suited to dramatizing the uncertainties besetting man about his origin and nature, his relationship to God, his place in society and the cosmos. It describes a moment in the individuation of a man whose search for identity and totality is brought about through a sexual differentiation and the resolution of the Oedipal conflict. A brief summary of the plot might be useful at this point. Albert, a reserved and idealistic young man with a passion for metaphysics, visits for the first time a castle he has just bought sight unseen. A friend, Herminien, who is described by the narrator as Albert's double and his opposite ("son double et son contraire," p. 46), soon joins him there, with a companion. The companion happens to be a woman, Heide, who, by falling in love with Albert, unwittingly breaks the union between the two men, a bond of a shameful or undefinable nature ("inqualifiable," p. 60), intense but deeply hostile. As the story unfolds, it becomes obvious that Albert must come to terms with the opposing unconscious drives in his nature. A shattering experience of unusual violence—a rape—opens the way to reestablishing, at least momentarily, a state of wholeness. In the end, as in most stories involving a double, Albert slays his "realistic" alter ego when he becomes conscious of his irremediable duality.

In *Au Château d'Argol* doubling is not only a fundamental trait on the syntactical and the semantic levels but it is also so compounded that the narrative resembles a kaleidoscopic pattern of multiple reflections. According to the studies of Otto Rank, Ralph Tymms, and Robert Rogers on the subject, several elements are common to the *Doppelgänger* novels.² Among them, a murderous antagonism between the Self and the double gives rise within the Self to an intense desire to penetrate the secret of his protagonist. Secondly, the individual is linked to his double by powerful, often quasi-erotic ties. Finally, the alter ego can be an effective means to a new self-consciousness. The meanings of the word *double* must include the mirror-image which faithfully reproduces, and the negative photographic image which both transforms and holds in latency; in *Au Château d'Argol*, Gracq makes use of both.

Because of the doubling technique, *Au Château d'Argol* lends itself to a polysemic reading. One first reacts to the description of an

incoercible passion, that of Herminien for Heide, and the no less strong attachment of Herminien and Albert for each other, thus noting a double tragic passion. A second level, a “demonic version of *Parsifal*” (in the words of the preface) leads to a refutation of the legend with destructive yet paradoxically constructive consequences.³ Yet a third level focuses on the psychological crisis within the hero—the “final” resolution of doubleness (p. 46). A fourth level provides an answer to the philosophical question: What is man? Another might focus on the moral aspect of the “Event” (p. 133) and the correlative ideas of freedom and responsibility. These separate perspectives, like a Silenus or the *jeu de boîtes*, do not individually reveal the whole or provide definitive solutions to the hero’s plight; indeed as in all of Gracq’s novels, the game’s worth lies more in the expectation of discovery than in the discovery itself, which more often than not leads to disappointment.

In this study, I will concentrate on the quantitative aspect of doubling and trace the more important variants of the technique: the mythological as well as the structural and stylistic doubles. From the preface on, and quite ironically, Gracq guides his reader inward to reflect on certain traditional myths, particularly the Christian dogma of the Fall and Redemption. By placing his novel in relation to these structures, Gracq gives *Argol* a timeless dimension by which it becomes itself an *exemplum*, constituting a new myth, set in a surrealist perspective.⁴ Indeed, like Albert’s rape of Heide, a re/action to and a re/enactment of Herminien’s deed, the novel is a double contestation and reworking. As negative doubles, neither the rapes nor the archetypes and Gracq’s version of them are identical in form and content to the original; they bear the difference which the individual stamps on his creative act. Yet although they are rejected, all the doubles will prove in some measure to be indispensable means to a new creation.

Mythological Doubles

The narrator’s insistence on the plot’s “inner character” (p. 72) and on the narrative perspective (“from the outside to the inside,” p. 110) alludes to a *dictée intérieure*, an introspection and a liberation. This inside view is more than a quest; it is an in/quest whose aim is exoneration or condemnation of a particular case. As various perspectives help construe a case, so do the mythological doubles.

All are *mises en abyme* of one another, mutually enriching and illuminating. At one point or other of history, these tentative formulations formed authoritative frames of reference. Yet they constitute, and are themselves subject to, diverse interpretations and aesthetic mutations. In this study the terms *mythos* and *mythologies* will be free from any derogatory connotations and will be used in accordance with Joseph Campbell's terminology in his study on creative mythology.⁵

Since philosophical systems aim at alleviating man's uncertainties about his nature and destiny, those mentioned in the novel are central to the quest; the Hegelian dialectics are particularly meaningful in this text.⁶ First, they constitute a mode of exploration and a quest-framework within which oppositions, pitted against one another, lead to a temporary synthesis and implicitly deal with the progressive, cyclical evolution in the human world. Secondly, more than most, they lead to a rather optimistic if untenable conclusion, in view of historical events at the turn of the century. The novel's search for harmony is made tangible in references to different ways of achieving or apprehending knowledge. The shattered mirror scene in the chapter entitled "La Chambre" illustrates the transformation undergone by Albert; it symbolizes the dangerous consequences of knowledge, even if acquired vicariously, while testifying to the force of mimetic desire.

The cathartic quality of philosophical systems is shared by what some might call the "mythology" of psychoanalysis and its therapy. No effort will be made here to choose between one psychoanalytical interpretation and another; rather we shall trace the impact of psychoanalytical theories on Gracq at the time of *Argol* and show how these theories and their link to archetypes enrich Gracq's search for meaning, both as distanciation and integration. The opposition of cognitive faculties versus the subconscious and its contributions as revealed in dreams, fantasies and/or premonitions comes to a climax in the dream sequence of the chapter entitled "L'Allée."⁷ Since Freud and Jung, dreams are known to constitute a different figurative language, double in nature (the manifest and latent contents of the dream). They also mirror, with a difference, a reality lived by the dreamer; through the super-ego's intervention, the dream becomes a negative double—undeveloped or repressed—of that reality. Psychologically, the dream acts as a *mise en abyme* of what is lived by the dreamer. In the novel, the dream sequence uncovers Albert's fascination with the rape and his feeling of *sympathy* toward Herminien (italicization drawing attention to a visual and mental fusion). This

empathy had previously been revealed in the first part of the chapter entitled "L'Allée," while the second part had stressed the brotherly love ("dilection," p. 135) he feels for her. The following quotation describes Albert's obsessive recalling of the "Event."

Then a veil of blood across his eyes, a quivering of the lips would announce the disconcerting approach of the atrocious and uneffable *object*. And lying at full length in the wet grass which he would gnaw in a transport of rage, his face streaming with his own salt tears, he would evoke the white vision of Heide amidst the terrors of that night unparalleled by any other for sheer horror and fascination. (p. 131)

In the dream-sequence, Albert among a group of spectators and judges witnesses the execution of Herminien. Two parallel bars dancing in space come to unite around his neck, crushing him to death. At that sight, Albert wakes up in horror, surprised to see Heide at his side. On waking up, Albert censors the dream content and the emergence of the truth: in spite of the rape of Heide, Albert rejects Herminien's punishment as intolerable, with all the possible meanings entailed by a decapitation and/or strangulation death (castration, aphasia, impotence, overpowering rationality interfering with the physical enjoyment). In addition, according to Freud's phylogenetic theory or Jung's religious symbolism, dreams being testimonies of a certain continuum, not only in the individual's personal life but on an anthropological and archetypal level as well, they help establish a certain sense of meaningfulness in the dreamer. The decoding of the dream can lead to regressive or progressive knowledge, since it provides a new liberating awareness (Freud) or reveals a subsequent, unifying (synthetic) course of action (Jung), and a definite optimism about the dreamer's future life. Both interpretations are germane to the novel, for the two dynamics ("clarification" and "creative transforming completion") reflect the dual nature of the quest.⁸

Diverse world-views and solutions have been advanced by religions. To the non-believer, they constitute speculative systems intent on relating man's origins with many psychological, social and eschatological implications. As systems of signs with symbolic structures and languages they constitute a socio-cultural phenomenon which has had a great influence in molding man's view of himself. While differing in their dogmatic content, all share an element of ritual representation, the object of which is a transcendent catharsis (salva-

tion). Except for one allusion to the Buddhist karma in the chapter entitled "Le Bain," most religious references can be linked to the Christian mythos. The ritual character of the first rape and its repetition allude to a communion in the act, reminiscent of the Eucharist, while the black mass quality of Albert's visit to Heide's room in the chapter entitled "La Chambre" is exemplary among many episodes or images. These allusions are central to the novel's theme: a formulation of man's essence, "a materialization of a *finality without the representation of its end*" (italicized in the text, p. 103), which goes against the open end of the Christian world-view. The preface specifically singles out the problem of man's salvation or more "concretely" (p. 8), that of the Savior and the Destroyer as the novel's main objective. The ambivalence of the title's preposition *au* (meaning "in the direction of" and the "place where something takes place") reflects the progress of the quest and the site of the salvation, while hinting at the end of the novel (a personal judgment free from authorities and dogmas, achieved in a mythical place, away from society). The preface had clearly placed the novel in a Surrealist perspective, that movement being known for its sometimes violent aversion toward Christianity, even though it was deeply conditioned by it. Similarly the "Christian and Judaic mythos" linked to previous mythological texts attests to a continuum of thought in spite of an apparent innovation.⁹

Myths have obviously played a prominent role in exploring the enigmas of man's existence. Be they considered as dramatizations of the interior life or as hypotheses and tentative interpretations of these aspects, myths constitute a reflective and cathartic perspective by offering a pattern of action, the transgression of a taboo imposed by an authoritative figure. Gracq's allegorical representation of a quest for knowledge rests upon several traditional myths—Pygmalion, Narcissus, and Oedipus. In the last example, both the episode of the Sphinx and that of the killing of the Father serve to illustrate Albert's crisis of identity. Traditional mythological themes have been and still are the source of much modern art. Art, to quote Joseph Campbell, performs the first function of mythology: "To transport the mind in experience past the guardians—desire and fear—of the paradisaical gate to the tree within the illuminated gate."¹⁰ Not only does the juxtaposition of primitive and more modern artistic expressions in the novel emphasize their common cathartic intention, but, more important, it places *Au Château d'Argol* at the confluence of tradition and the novel's own organization. The innumerable cultural references or

cultural archetypes in Gracq's novel act as *mises en abyme* of one another or of the story; as quotations and resonances, mutually enriching and illuminating, they form a *sous-language*. Among these, the Grail legend plays an important role while *Faust* (p. 42) reflects Albert's thirst for knowledge. Music, as a system of relations conducive to myth-making and as another language, has a definite place in this search for unity; for not only has Wagner's musical interpretation of the legend given rise to controversy, but the musician's use of leitmotifs has also established a pattern of echoes similar to the one created by the doubles in Gracq's text. Herminien's improvisation on the organ which leads to a "virile" solution to the crisis is a non-verbal quest that duplicates the novel's erratic progress and the fluidity of consciousness itself. The reference to the Dürer miniature, on the other hand, stresses the change of focus in the characters' importance, Amfortas replacing Parsifal as the hero of the legend (p. 163), as Herminien does in the novel. The references to alchemy, the tarot (p. 134), and the Bestiary betray an effort to include diverse systems of interpretation and formulation in the search for knowledge.¹¹ This dialogue of texts also points to the several subjective levels of the reading of reality—the characters', the narrator's, the reader's—and the multiple interpretations they gave rise to, and still do, versions of versions of versions so to speak.

This aspect of mirroring is enhanced by the presence of a narrator who, like a medieval *meneur de jeu*, directs the narrative through various signals (innuendoes, double-entendres, premonitory hints, and direct reminders) to the reader, from whom he later dissociates himself. He represents an ironic mode of interpretation, acting as a counterbalance to the obvious subjectivity of the narrative perspective and even, one may venture to say, adding at times a parodic slant to it, as if the narrator himself did not believe in his own tale; the hyperbolic descriptions of the characters (p.19)—*à la Lavater*—are striking examples of such a distance.¹² Moreover, the aloofness of the omniscient narrator hints at the pre/destination of the tale which is not without relevance to the Genesis myth. One can single out two passages early in the novel which show how the author guides the reader towards a precise perspective. The clause, "... in the strictest acceptance, as previously indicated, of the word—recognition" (p. 21), compels the reader to think back on his reading, to recall perhaps the preface and the author's reasons for valuing the conventional decor of the Gothic novel ("a presence conducive to a sense of security" or *présence sécurisante*) because of its familiarity. This

reminder punctuates the interaction between reader and storyteller which the latter thus monitors as a *vérification de contact*.¹³ Another example is to be found in the chapter entitled "Heide": "bonds, be that as it may, quite beyond words (*inqualifiable*) and against which the reader is sufficiently forewarned or prejudiced" (*prévenu*, p. 60). Like the impersonal pronoun in the previous example, the definite article exemplifies the distance and the depersonalization at play throughout the novel, which is intended to provide a clear and objective perspective, yet the adverb suggests a slight condescension toward the manipulated reader and his values. A similar depersonalization is undergone by the characters being known by their first names only, without any familial or social background, and by the use of the third-person narrator, the nonperson of Benveniste.¹⁴ Moreover, since *Au Château d'Argol* is the maiden novel of a fledgling novelist who writes under a pseudonym but is never completely anonymous, it would seem that the ironic slant expresses the author's criticism of his own *affabulation* and his distance from it. Thus *Au Château d'Argol* also reflects the narcissistic quality of art and its cathartic effect on the artist. To be true to himself, the artist must break the silence of routine, sever his ties to mentors and tradition, and detach himself from the events which may have been in some measure at the source of the work. Art constitutes a double, similar but not identical to an individual's experience, and at the same time a self-mutilation, a liberation, a secular salvation.

The multiplying effect of the *mise en présence* of ancient and not so ancient myths (Surrealism, for instance, inasmuch as it presented itself as a social, political, esthetic and moral revolution with a systematic program, manifestos and exhibitions, and an international following) is comparable to the facets of a prism and its refractions or to a Surrealist collage. At work in these texts are elements of dynamism and continuum or identity, as well as elements of discontinuity due to each individual adaptation. More specifically, these texts, supplementary and complementary to one another, are pre/texts to Gracq's own text, which posits itself as contestatory. In this intertextual dialogue, texts are on the one hand absorbed by Gracq's narrative while on the other their survival is ensured thanks to the reader's decoding. In retrospect, André Breton's estimation of *Argol* still appears valid: "In *Au Château d'Argol*, surrealism, for the first time, turns back freely upon itself in order to confront the great concrete (*sensible*) experiences of the past and to evaluate the extent

of its conquest both in the perspective of emotion and in that of lucidity.”¹⁵ Here the past can be regarded as the cultural legacy experienced “concretely” (cf. the reference to Hegel’s philosophy, p. 18) in a body and a soul, to use Rimbaud’s expression. The common denominator of all mythological doubles is their faith in the cathartic power of knowledge: “Ainsi la connaissance seule délivrait l’essentielle, la vivante connaissance!” exclaims Albert joyfully (p. 41).

Structural Doubles

Doubling is so pervasive in *Au Château d'Argol* that textual examples are too numerous to mention. The traditional binary discrimination between the categories dark/light, closed/open, horizontal/vertical, etc. is found in the spatio-temporal imagery; the black/white dichotomy and the progression in the characters from white clothing to black are stylistic signals of a negative change or of a gradual development as in photography. The castle, a composite of many architectural styles, complete with a terrace and an underground passage—all communicating with one another—constitutes a metaphor for the story itself. In effect the reader must disassemble this multi-layered construct in order to comprehend its complexity. For instance, the reception room linking all levels is described as a three-storied well (*un puits de trois étages*, p. 27). The castle is *mis en abyme* in the chapel, which in turn is miniaturized in Heide’s room; the association with the *Interior Castle* of Theresa of Avila, or that of the three levels of the psyche, points to an endless generating game.

One form of imagery is frequently used as a front for another. For instance, under the guise of the Gothic novel and its paraphernalia, for which the author admits a definite predilection, conventions of the nineteenth-century German *Doppelgänger* novels are at play in *Argol*. Such characteristics as shadow, secret, mirror-image, inversion, subversion, metamorphosis—physical as well as moral—and destruction are apparent to the reader. Like myths or dogmas, both genres are meant to act as security devices for the reader because of their predictability.

As structural doubles, the two rapes seem to be mirror-images of each other; however, Albert’s deed is only a re/action of (as an instance of mimetic desire) and a re/action against the crime of

Herminien (to destroy the newly formed couple Herminien-Heide).¹⁶ Nature acts as a constant symbol of man's "animality" and unpredictability; the forest in particular is a metaphor for man's unconscious or evil impulses (e.g., the storm episode over Storravan, p. 33). The light metaphor and the various degrees by which light is absorbed or *interprétée* (i.e., reflected, refracted and transmitted, according to the laws of optics, p. 29) leads to an endless association of meanings, one of which being the *translatio*, both a passage beyond and a transformation of a specific content, a photosynthesis, a psychosynthesis, an aesthetic or dialectical synthesis, all occurring through the mind's illumination. The temporal structure includes an undetermined dimension (a legendary, mythical Brittany) and a modern one (references to an automobile and bathroom, p. 32), thus achieving another a-temporal dimension. The function thus of myths, religions, art, psychoanalysis in the novel was to provide many lights to be interpreted by the mind, and to be transmitted back out in a personal fashion.

The disposition of the blank pages between the ten chapters and the focalization of the chapters' titles, unique in Gracq's novels, delineate clearly the structure of the story. Within the chapters, often doublets of one another,¹⁷ the repetition of scenes, images, and words acting as quotations of one another, from page to page or even within a single page and paragraph or sentence, creates an echo which works obsessively on the reader's mind. In the following example the color red and its connotations contrasts with the general black/white setting, and announces the violence of the exchange between the protagonists:

The long, low dining room was lined with sheets of red copper with quadrilateral crystal mirrors set in them: one massive piece of solid copper formed the table; huge bunches of dark red flowers burst from its smooth surface. The burning beams of the setting sun now shone on this blood-red metallic surface and called forth rich and potent harmonies; the dull red of the floral groupings appeared almost as blocks of darkness But cruel flashes glided over these walls as the clouds passed by, pools of unctuous light, suspicious-looking and viscous, fell on the table, on the delicate bezels of the mirrors and the brilliance of the hard metal of these hostile walls forced the soul to take refuge in its own center and seemed to concentrate all thought in a point of flame, sharp and penetrating like a steel blade. (p. 27)¹⁸

These reiterated elements express the emotional impact of the crisis on its participants:

... he then threw out his words like the meshes of a net in which he would have wanted, in a desperate embrace, to wrap the woman who seemed henceforth separated from him because of a cruel malediction. In order to hold her, to keep her, to charm her, he would have wanted to fill the drawing room and the entire manor of his dangerous (verbal) arabesques, of his disturbing incantations, (and) with a marvellously active vigilance to mark out in advance with his thoughts all the avenues which could open themselves to Heide's soul—stretching out his mind to the extreme limits of the world like a living and magic carpet, with large flowers, beyond which her feet could not possibly find a way to stray. (p. 82)¹⁹

In "L'Allée," for instance, empathy for the rapist is counterbalanced by the *amour de dilection* toward Heide. The vicarious satisfaction of the flesh opposed to a spiritual communion has previously been lived through when Albert sucked the droplets of blood on Heide's hand after her rape (p. 132), these talismans constituting a simile for Tristan's love philter, which united him indissolubly to Iseult. The *plénitude à trois* (p. 77) of the evening confrontations in the dining room is echoed in the dangerously exhilarating swimming episode (p. 92). As an example of the recurrence of identical elements one can single out the number of cutting instruments (more than fifty), the wounds they inflict, and the degrees of pain they cause. Besides a sexual suggestiveness, they create a menacing atmosphere, not easily shaken off. More important, they are linked symbolically to the penetration of intellect and of death, and their blinding, destructive effects. Heide's sexual fantasy (*le poignard fixé entre ses deux épaules*, p. 74) is similar to Herminien's death (*l'éclair glacé d'un couteau couler entre ses épaules . . .*, p. 182). The transfer of Heide's wound, like a stigma, onto Herminien's side not only illustrates metaphorically Freud's theory of transference but concretizes the *instantané unique* (p. 133) which Herminien and Heide shared and which had indelibly marked them. However, since the awareness of the contradictory or similar feelings and/or actions comes retrospectively to the hero as well as to the reader, the story-line constantly seems broken up and obscured.

Stylistic Doubles

The linearity of the narrative, painstakingly slow, yet inexorably oriented toward an ending alluded to since the beginning, is disrupted by devices that destroy certainty and postpone comprehension. The sinuosity of Gracq's sentences reflects the quest theme and its open end: colons, unusual capitalizations, hyphens, italics, authorial insertions, and long diversions retard the reader's comprehension. These devices actualize the progress of a groping search and attest to a need for precision in expression and perspective. Gracq's use of the conjunctions at the beginning of the sentence is often annulled by the adjunction of a modifier (*cependant, pourtant, etc.*) which undermines the previous statement. The following example is typical of this type of play. The scene is simple: Albert and Herminien meet face to face, the old chemistry works again; Heide witnesses it and attributes the transformation of Herminien to the charisma of his young friend, with whom she immediately falls in love. The scene described below is a reminiscence by Albert of the few days after the arrival of his friend and his personal, mixed emotions:

And in his mind he also saw Heide, just as she would appear at the table later *that evening*, dramatic and unreal like a princess in a play—protected by her motionless beauty—he could hear again the subtle words he had exchanged with Herminien when, because of his stimulating presence, *he was permitted to see her* for the first time—and the idea that she had thought of, or could have given herself to him seemed to him a particularly vulgar and reprehensible artifice, although its exact nature escaped him. (p. 77)²⁰

The dynamism of the narrative is further destroyed by the stasis of the explanatory passages and the numerous descriptions which by their sheer beauty tend to distract and sidetrack the reader. As *tableaux*, they give an idea of an enlargement of time even though they are examples of immobilized time in a novel which encompasses many historical periods and their respective quests. Gracq's syntactical games often force the reader to go back on his reading, as in this passage: “des flaques d'une lumière grasse, louches et gluantes, se posaient sur la table” (p. 11), the last two adjectives modifying *flaques*. The qualifiers' *mise en relief* interrupts the flow of the

sentence and focuses the attention on the regressive, reflective movement of the sentence.

The repeated use of intransitive verbs like "seem," "appear," or "ought to," generally in the negative form, implies a necessity, an intention, a probability, and a supposition, as well as creates a pervasive feeling of powerlessness and vagueness. Similarly the recurrence of the adjective "fatal" and equally suggestive adjectives—irremediable, inexorable, indelible, secret, taboo, fanatic, "ténébreux"—alludes to overpowering malevolent bonds. This is further enhanced and dramatized by the recurrence of the verbs "see," "know," and "dare," the latter mostly in the negative form, which bespeaks a need of transgression. Typical of Gracq's style, the use of the pluperfect subjunctive (*il eût voulu, il eût dû, il eût fallu*, etc.) instead of the past conditional, underlines a subjectivity, potentiality, and irreality which echo the hypothetical nature of the other doubles, while it also concretizes the impossibility of achieving one's intent.²¹

These stylistic devices imitate the uncertain and dangerous progress of the quest (progression, regression, or a movement in a *staccato form*), reflecting Albert's individuation, sexual or other, and represented in the dream's image by the dance of the parallel bars. As a rhetorical device, anaphora performs several functions. It undermines the cause and effect relation, for in nature no phenomena being exactly alike can have identical consequences. It also points to a didactic narrative direction by helping to control and orient the reading. Finally, it creates an obsession and urgency within the reader.

An element of surprise which interrupts the narrative's linearity is introduced in minute *décalages sémantiques*, such as "la forêt n'avait pas dit son *premier mot*" (p. 31), which transforms the implied threat of the idiomatic expression (*dernier*) into an allusion to a birth: like a new-born, Allan (or the forest with the symbolic connotation of the Unconscious) has not come to life, that is to say, spoken its cry. The adjective is italicized and therein lies an additional element of distraction, since italicization suggests the existence of another semantic level. By its overall effect, italicization is metonymic.²² It visually stresses the spatiality of the word, usually lost in the narrative flow as well as its autonomy—the word as object—and its mobility. Intellectually it invites the reader to move from the accepted meaning of the word and to proceed from the analysis of it to a reading encompassing

the totality of its meanings. As a graphic accentuation, it separates the word from its context, thereby illustrating the organic quality of language, in some measure self-generating. Thus it reflects the novel itself—an echo of many echoes. Yet, more often than not, italicization leads nowhere. It acts as a false *poteau indicateur* (p. 9), adding nothing to the meaning of the sentence. By pointing out the dynamics of the word-sign it also mistakenly allows the reader to feel he has become a creator of sorts of the novel. Since the italicized word needs to be decoded, as do the literary allusions which more or less overtly appear in the narrative, the reading becomes an active re-animation of the text. Thus a connection between italicization and irony, based upon a basic questioning and distancing, brings us back full circle to an enriching doubling.²³

The same play of oppositions and contradictions drawing to a visual or mental concordia, real or imaginary, occurs also in the sentence structure, as in *l'instantané longuement retenu* (p. 143), resulting in an apparent annulment of the meaning. In this context of the ambivalence of language and of destructive double-talk and silence (the absence of dialogues or monologues), one can fathom the dramatic importance of the *jamais plus*, uttered at the height of Albert's despair and frenzy. It is tantamount to a rape of silence.

The event of the tale is transformed into an Event by the use of the definite past, which stresses the formal and historical quality of the narrative and echoes the collective significance of mythologies. Yet there are examples where the present tense insinuates itself into the sentence (e.g., p. 34), thereby focusing on the present perspective and sharpening the eye on the here and now. Rather than being a *présent historique*, this juxtaposition of tenses actualizes the event and asserts its everlasting relevance, reminding the reader that the event has already taken place. This individual *conscience actuelle* is analogous to the mythological doubles in the larger meaning of the word, spatially *mis en abyme* in Herminien's library. All are intensifiers of one another.

Argol's Perspective

In this dramatization of man's destiny all doubles combine to illustrate a spanning of time and a fusion of elements, forming a historical backdrop to Albert's search. Their combined effect constitutes a deferment or a questioning of meaning and certitude

central to the Surrealist movement. The reader, swept along by a highly poetic prose and confronted at other times by scenes of poignant pain, comes to resemble the hero (p. 121). He is led to wonder whether a resolution of the doubles is possible or whether the precarious coexistence prevalent in the novel will be perpetuated. While the novel mediates the tensions and provides the locus for the harmonization of the other doubles, a union of the psychological/spiritual doubles would seem to be found in a double death. But, as in the novel where the perspectives opened by philosophy, psychoanalysis, religion, archetypes and art are initially rejected in the formulation of a new reflection and yet remain inseparable from it, similarly the hero both accepts and rejects his double and grows in awareness of self, even though death cancels out any gains in consciousness.

Thus doubling is essential to the novel as a whole—an adaptation and dramatization of archetypal quests. Using Kant's formula the narrator describes Herminien as a "*materialization of a finality without a foreseeable end*" (italics in the original, p. 103). He represents Man and the power of negativity which dispels self-delusion and indoctrination. He constitutes the informing spirit, very precisely "a lute being both its string and its voice" (p. 104), i.e., the means and the result of the creative act. The two episodes of the chapter entitled "Chapel of the Abysses" are therefore central to Albert's metamorphosis: the Narcissus episode materializes the sexual nature of his inner conflict (the ring and the dagger) and his fascination for his inverted image, i.e., his realist self represented by Herminien; the musical improvisation on the organ (a double of Echo's seductive voice) is viewed later as a warning and a call for help (p. 119) and hints at a liberating solution through Heide. As a miniature castle the chapel thus actualizes the conclusion of all quests (the death—real or symbolic—of the knight). The ritualistic double death has several meanings: in step with the traditional duplication novel, as a form of defense against narcissism, it reflects the danger of the quest, its self-destructiveness and the guilt associated with the consciousness of self. It illustrates the vicious circle of the quest ("*qui semble à jamais clore—et ne clore à jamais sur rien d'autre que lui-même le cycle du Graal 'Rédemption au Rédempteur,'*" p. 16). The murder/suicide represents a conscious expiation of Heide's death. The novel constitutes a ritual representation of man's dual nature and the locus where Gracq fashions his personal myth of man.

In the preface the reader had been advised not to take the novel at

face value. The mythological doubles viewed as structures meant to alleviate human existential uncertainties play a definite part in enabling man to survive in spite of their relative value. Like them, *Au Château d'Argol* offers its own viewpoint and its own catharsis; yet admittedly it constitutes nothing more than another version. In *Au Château d'Argol*, man's dualism is viewed as a fact, like the warp and woof of a fabric, the flaw resting in the Creator's handiwork and not in the creature. Adam's curse stops with him. As a demonic version of Wagner's *Parsifal* or as a *Graal noir*, the novel rejects any idea of redemption as nothing but a temporary reprieve until the Apocalypse.²⁴

However, the story of the fall of Albert gives form to a differentiation between actual sin and original sin. Man, being born dual, does not bear responsibility for his flaw, *un vice de forme* (in the text, *malchance*, p. 180). However, he is responsible for any act he wills and thus becomes his own "damnator/destroyer" (pp. 8, 187) or savior. In assuming his dual nature and working within its limits, Albert/Herminien, like Sisyphus, attains a heroic status (*fabuleuse royauté*, p. 194). Being his own creator, accountable to himself alone or to other humans rather than to any gods, he is his own savior. There will be no vicarious death through a scapegoat, divine or not. As in St. Augustine's words, "*spirituel jusque dans la chair et charnel jusque dans l'esprit*," Albert assumes his dual nature. With a clam resolve he puts an end to himself, having found out "concretely" (p. 18) that some acts are irremediable, some tendencies inescapable, and life without one's double, psychologically destructive. Death alone can unify man's opposite tendencies because it nullifies them. This stroke is similar to that of the pen which created a *fondue* of all the opposite elements in the language and in thoughts. Yet all the intimations of harmony are temporary or illusory; there is no final revelation of life's meaning or man's nature. Like Archimedes' mirrors (p. 19) which saved the day for Syracuse in 210 A.D. but did not win the war for the city, the doubles do not shed saving light on human uncertainties. As illustrations of the power of comparison and of negativity in the creative process, they only allow a certain respite from binding world views. Duplication in botany or biology is known to lead to a new life, similar but with characteristics of its own; similarly the doubles also produced a new being: the novel, the focal point of all their crossed fires.

The chapter entitled "La Chapelle des Abimes" had pointed out the solution. Inside the chapel lie the means to the quest and the

answer to it—the weapons, the wound, and the fate; outside lie the Abysses, emptiness and nothingness. Man must shape his life, find justification for his own existence within himself, by positing himself against accepted values, even though his conclusions may often appear inconclusive, temporary or ultimately meaningless. In this context, where language shows itself to be the reconciler of all antitheses, doubling serves as the device toward a new awareness and a new creation, the novel's, to be sure, but also that of Julien Gracq as a double of Louis Poirier, history professor, into a *Narcissus romancier*.

NOTES

1. Julien Gracq, *Au Château d'Argol* (1938; rpt. Paris: José Corti, 1975).
2. Among studies on doubling see Otto Rank, *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*, trans. Harry Tucker (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1971); Ralph Tymms, *Doubles in Literary Psychology* (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1949); Edgar Morin, *L'Homme et la Mort*, Coll. Points (Paris: Seuil, 1970), pp. 149-72, 188-91; Michel Guiomar, *Principes d'une esthétique de la mort* (Paris: José Corti, 1967), pp. 285-322, 375-425; Robert Rogers, *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1970).
3. Cf. Rollo May, "Psychotherapy and the Daemons," in *Myths, Dreams, and Religion*, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: Dutton, 1970), p. 196.
4. *Exemplum* is used in the sense of popular stories and everyday lessons illustrating the Scriptures as a basis for folk wisdom.
5. Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Creative Psychology* (London: Penguin, 1968).
6. Kant, Leibnitz, Plato, Descartes, Aristotle, Plotinus, Spinoza, Hegel, the Alexandrine philosophers, Schelling and Fichte form the philosophical background of the novel.
7. The miniaturization of the dream's spatial imagery announces the penetration of Heide's room—the corridor/the underground passage, the voices impelling them inside/Hermien's urgings; but it also recalls the chapel's imagery, the river or the initiating house in the primitive rites, which all lead to Heide as a focal point.
8. David L. Miller, "Orestes: Myth and Dream as Catharsis," in *Myths*, p. 33.
9. Amos N. Wilder, "Myth and Dream in Christian Scripture," in *Myths*, p. 70.

10. Joseph Campbell, "Mythological Themes in Creative Literature and Art," in *Myths*, p. 164.
11. The castle is *mis en abyme* in Claude Gelée's paintings (p. 24), and the story in Dürer's miniature (p. 163).
12. Cf. Northrop Frye on irony as a parody of romance, "the nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfillment dream," in *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), p. 186. Moreover, as is pointed out by Philippe Hamon in another context: "Through them [the mnemotechnical signs] the work quotes itself and constructs itself as tautological" ("par eux, l'oeuvre se cite elle-même et se construit comme tautologique, comme autant de syllepses") (in *Poétique du récit*, ed. R. Barthes, W. Kayser, W. C. Booth, and P. Hamon, Coll. Points [Paris: Seuil, 1977], p. 123).
13. Julien Gracq, "Ricochets de Conversation," in *Préférences* (Paris: José Corti, 1961), p. 224.
14. The references to animality and the metaphoric meaning of animals concretize the dehumanization and allegorical stylization of the characters, never individualized enough to be any more than examples.
15. André Breton, *Situation du surréalisme entre les deux guerres* (Paris: Fountaine, 1958), p. 7.
16. Albert had vicariously relived the rape (p. 132), his dream of Herminien's decapitation-castration reflecting his ambivalence toward it. Rape, a typical allegorical trait illustrating the clash between the world of mind and the world of matter, is relived according to Freud as a castration, whereas for Jung it is an exorcism of the destructive libido through the reclaiming of the symbols of virility.
17. Cf. Leo Pollmann's diagram of the novel's structure in "Le Mythe de Soi dans *Au Château d'Argol*," in *L'Herne* (Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 1978), p. 70:

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|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 5. Le Bain | 6. La Chapelle des Abîmes |
| 4. Herminien | 7. La Forêt |
| 3. Heide | 8. L'Allée |
| 2. Le Cimetière | 9. La Chambre |
| 1. Argol | 10. La Mort |

18. "La salle à manger, longue et basse, était revêtue de dalles de cuivre rouge, où se voyaient sertis des miroirs de cristal quadrangulaires: une dalle de cuivre massif constituait la table, de grosses touffes de fleurs d'un rouge terne éclataient sur ces parois lisses. Les rayons du soleil couchant touchaient alors cette cuirasse de métal sanglant et en tiraient de puissantes harmonies; les masses florales d'un rouge mat y paraissaient presque des blocs de ténèbres . . . Cependant de cruels éclairs glissaient sur ces murs avec la passée des nuages, des flaques d'une lumière grasse, louches et gluantes, se posaient sur la table, sur le sertissement délicat des glaces et l'éclat de ce métal dur, de ces parois hostiles forçait l'âme à se réfugier au centre d'elle-même et semblait

concentrer la pensée en une pointe de flamme aigüe et pénétrante comme une lame d'acier" (p. 27).

19. The translator cannot adequately render the special quality of this passage. Moreover, the English syntax tends to destroy the halting, feverish tempo of the sentence; similarly the addition of conjunctions for clarity's sake interrupts the powerful, uncontrollable flow of desire, which is concretized by the ample movement of the multi-syllabic words, the place of the modifying adverb and of the hyphen, which graphically expresses an extension. Even the comparison of the brightly-colored magic-like carpet adds a note of exoticism to the *style noble* of this erotically charged vision. "... il projetait alors ses paroles comme les mailles d'un filet dont il eut voulu, d'une étreinte désespérée, envelopper, celle qui lui semblait désormais séparée de lui par l'effet d'une malédiction atroce. Il eut voulu, pour la retenir, pour la garder, pour la charmer, peupler le salon et le manoir entier de ses arabesques dangereuses, de ses bouleversantes incantations, avec une prévoyance merveilleusement active jalonner d'avance de ses pensées toutes les avenues qui pouvaient s'ouvrir à l'âme de Heide—distendre son esprit jusqu'aux limites extrêmes du monde comme un tapis magique et vivant, aux fleurs géantes, hors duquel jamais son pied ne pût trouver la chance de s'égarer" (p. 82).

20. "Et il revoyait Heide aussi, telle qu'elle devait apparaître à la table du soir, dramatique et irréelle comme une princesse de théâtre—et barricadée de sa beauté immobile—il entendait les paroles subtiles qu'il échangeait avec Herminien quand la présence exaltante de celui-ci lui permit de la voir pour la première fois—et l'idée qu'elle crût, ou pût, lui faire le don d'elle-même lui semblait alors un subterfuge particulièrement grossier et condamnable, quoique la nature ne lui en fût pas exactement connue" (p. 77).

21. Maurice Grevisse, *Le Bon Usage* (Gembloux, Belgium: Editions J. Duculot, 1975), pp. 1037-40.

22. In *André Breton*, a critical study by Julien Gracq (Paris: Corti, 1948), can be found several pages on the significance of italicization. Gracq writes: "Inversion fondamentale" of the word, the process "incorpore désormais étroitement à la phrase qu'il irradie souvent d'un bout à l'autre, lui confère seul son sens supérieur et son achèvement... porte tous les caractères d'une *sublimation*... point focal... mot de passe... flèche indicatrice" (pp. 183-85).

23. See Henry H. Weinbert, "The Function of Italics in *Madame Bovary*," *Nineteenth Century French Studies*, 3, Nos. 1 and 2 (Fall-Winter, 1974-1975), 97-111.

24. Cf. A. Breton, cited by Michel Carrouges, in *André Breton et les données fondamentales du surréalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), p. 43.