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Mauriac: The Ambivalent Author of Absence

James H. Reid 167

Abstract. This essay explores the significance of first- and third-person narrative voices. Although, as Gérard Genette points out, the choice of either voice is not in itself significant, transitions between the two voices are. Such transitions serve to disclose the absence of an author's point of view. They are a privileged means of revealing that no narrative voice can be entirely truthful or persuasive. In two Mauriac novels, *Thérèse Desqueyroux* and *Le Noeud de vipères*, transitions between first- and third-person voices are produced by linguistic differences between the "I" and the "he." These differences create a rhetoric of voice: the "he" hides and figures an implicit "I," while the "I" hides and figures an implicit "he." This rhetoric generates opposing plots recounting both the author's and the reader's search for a hidden, truthful voice: for an implied writer or reader. One plot traces an effort to disclose, within an inauthentic "he," a hidden, authentic "I." It culminates only in a recognition of the formal nature of all stories and all voices that tell them. The other plot recounts the discovery that the "I" hides a "he." It reveals a very different truth: that the "I" is alienated from its formal role and from the formal nature of the narratives it recounts. Both of these plots are linear accounts of how the narrative was composed and how it should be interpreted. Both create seemingly truthful voices—implied writers or readers—who tell them. But because these plots represent the same narrative in contradictory terms, they ultimately demonstrate the impossibility of saying what the narrative is doing or who, if anyone, is doing the narrating. Indeed, Mauriac's characters ask whether the writing and reading of narrative do anything at all. Not only do they disclose the absence of an implied writer or reader; they call into question the very notion that the text represents or constitutes actions or events: its narrativity. (JHR)

Nabokov's Amphiphorical Gestures

S. E. Sweeney 189

Abstract. In addition to using two primary kinds of metaphors (those that clarify descriptions, and those that develop into leitmotifs), Nabokov's fiction

demonstrates a third kind that is characterized by extended analogies, baroque, seemingly uncontrolled imagery and rhetoric, and, most importantly, fundamental ambiguity. Although this inherent ambiguity is developed throughout the comparison, it is never resolved. Because of this distinguishing characteristic, I have named such metaphors "amphiphors," after one of Nabokov's own neologisms. Nabokov's comments in *Nikolai Gogol* and *Lectures on Russian Literature*, as well as direct allusions to Gogol embedded in a few amphiphors, suggest that this device evolved directly from Gogol's absurd, overgrown images and Protean minor characterizations. Yet, whereas Gogol's "spontaneous generation" is careless, uncontrolled, and comical, Nabokov uses his amphiphors deliberately for ironic effect. More precisely, he exploits the gap between the initial and final points of the comparison to create a sustained and irreconcilable ambiguity—what William Empson called the seventh type, "at once an indecision and a structure." Moreover, close textual analysis of the mechanics of several amphiphors, from *Speak, Memory* and *Bend Sinister*, shows marked similarities in content and authorial intention. In each instance, Nabokov uses the amphiphor's inherent stylistic ambiguity to delineate a similar phenomenological one: his own ambivalence towards death (whether his own, his father's, or his hero's) and the insolubility of its "monstrous riddle." (SES)

The Way Through the Human-Shaped Snow

Saul Myers 213

Abstract. This essay interprets Paul Celan's "Weggebeizt" as a concentrated recasting of major themes in the *Book of Job*. It attempts to show how the poet may have constructed the poem out of a close interrogation of passages in *Job*, including glosses and cryptic translations of the idiosyncratic Hebrew text. Talk of biblical "echoes" or "influences" is eschewed in favor of a method of parallel reading by which Celan's new-forged words are referred back to key words and phrases in the argument between Job and God. The main points of contact between *Job* and "Weggebeizt" are: 1) conflation of multiple and opposing senses of a single wind figure; 2) the recurring theme of trial and the ambivalent treatment of "true" and "false" witness as well as oaths of purity and true speech; other points of contact are: 3) ice and snow figures, 4) references to Sheol and heaven (which Celan combines into a single place). Some familiarity with the *Book of Job* is assumed, but key Hebrew words are cited with their alternate translations, especially when it appears that the poem is playing off multiple senses of the original. The paper is written in a commentary style, with line by line explorations of meaning. (SM)

Voices of Authority and Linguistic Autonomy in <i>Niebla</i> Mary Lee Bretz	229
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Abstract. Miguel de Unamuno's works have often been studied as expressions of his philosophy or life experience. More recent literary theory has eschewed approaches that foreground the author, preferring to focus primarily on the text or the reader. Utilizing Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the novel, this paper analyzes *Niebla*, one of Unamuno's most frequently studied works, to illustrate that new literary theories can enrich our reading of the text. Bakhtin argues that the novel is characterized by many voices or styles which the novelist welcomes and exploits. The novel should not be viewed as having a single style but as a dynamic interaction between a variety of incorporated languages. The authorial voice is only one among many and it is constantly challenged, muted, and reshaped as it enters into contact with other voices that are present in the text. "Authoritative discourse" is only one type of discourse that can be incorporated into the novel, especially a *Bildungsroman*. In the process of maturation, the character passes through a series of ideological phases, each of which is characterized by the interaction of the character's language and the language of a given authority. Unamuno's *Niebla* is essentially a *Bildungsroman*, in which Augusto Pérez progresses through a series of stages in an existentialist quest for self. These stages are accompanied by linguistic changes, as Augusto gradually sheds the voices of authority and acquires his own autonomous voice. The culmination of this process occurs in the famous scene where Augusto confronts Unamuno. The meeting of author and character is more than an expression of Unamuno's thirst for eternal life through literature; it is a dramatization of the nature of heteroglossia and a confirmation of the linguistic autonomy of the fictional character. (MLB)

Nathalie Sarraute's <i>Between Life and Death</i> : Androgyny and the Creative Process Bettina L. Knapp	239
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Abstract. Nathalie Sarraute's *Between Life and Death* deals with the creative process, from the uncreated work of art embedded in the *prima materia* to its completion in the book. The Writer, the focus of Sarraute's attention, takes the reader through the multiple stages of his literary trajectory: the struggle involved in the transmutation of the amorphous word into the concrete glyph on the blank sheet of paper; the pain and anguish accompanying the birth of the created work, alluded to as the "thing" or the "object"; the attitude of the successful Writer,

who postures and panders to his public, and the rebirth of the creative *élan* following an inner vision. How does the Writer, like the ancient *vates* inject "life" into what has previously been "dead," or uncreated: the written word? How does the course of the word from the uncreated to concretion in the empirical world affect both the Writer—as androgyne—and the reader during the happenings in *Between Life and Death*? (BLK)

Practicing Nostalgia: Time and Memory in Nabokov's Early Russian Fiction

Philip Sicker 253

Abstract. Nabokov's earliest Russian fiction reveals his lifelong preoccupation with time and his complex strategies for preserving heightened moments of experience. Dissatisfied with the brevity of involuntary (Proustian) recall, his *émigré* protagonists strive to inhabit their Russian past more fully through a painstaking process of aesthetic re-creation. Beginning with a handful of vivid recollections, the hero of *Mary* gradually fabricates a past that is more intensely real than the original. Nabokov's most mature characters, however, recognize the solipsistic danger and futility of living in a vanished mental paradise. Turning to the present, they find unexpected beauty in the arrangement of ordinary objects in Berlin. In order both to intensify these perceptions and to memorialize them, the heroes of "Torpid Smoke" and "A Guide to Berlin" adopt a remarkable strategy: projecting themselves into an imagined future, they view the scene before them as if it were already a memory. This ocular adjustment endows the perceived objects with a radiance, fixity, and "relief" that they would acquire (and lose) only in a moment of extraordinary recall; but this act simultaneously preserves the impression indelibly when it becomes part of the actual past. In short, by anticipating and accelerating time's destructive movement, by "practicing nostalgia" for the past while it is yet present, these individuals arrest the process of forgetting. (PS)