

Border Crossings in Marie Redonnet's *Splendid [Seaside] Hôtel*

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Marie Redonnet published her first work, a collection of poetry entitled *Le Mort & Cie*, in 1985.¹ She has since written a number of short stories, novels, and plays. While her works have been published by three separate editors (P.O.L., Gallimard, Minuit), she is considered to be among the new generation of Minuit Novelists. As Yvan Leclerc suggests, Redonnet and her contemporaries—François Bon, Jean Echenoz, and Jean-Philippe Toussaint—cannot be viewed as a school or literary group with a particular agenda. Any attempt to unify or to categorize their works, affirms Leclerc, would simply mask their differences. It is thus preferable to recognize the fact that as descendants of the New Novelists these authors are taking the novel in new directions. While the novel continues to thrive in France, reaction and commentary pertaining to recent works is quite limited. In spite of the numerous articles that address the so-called “postmodern” trends in literature, the arts, and popular culture, Ginette Michaud’s “Récits postmodernes?” ‘Postmodern Tales?’ is one of the few articles pertaining to the novel of the 1980s. By taking examples from two of Poulin’s works—*Les Grandes Marées* ‘Spring Tides’ and *Volkswagen Blues*—Michaud illustrates some of the novel’s recent currents. She maintains that the aleatory structure of these works is linked to an element of nostalgia or longing:

It is not unusual to sense, somewhere beneath the seemingly “new” values conveyed in postmodern fictions—drifting, a penchant for aleatory structures, celebration of movement, of the ephemeral, of fragmentation etc.—a nostalgia, an actual desire for a presence that is at once eternal, immaculate and stable.
(83-84)

The type of nostalgia to which Michaud refers differs from that of previous literary movements since it is tied to such notions as "the end of history" and "the loss of reference." This desire to recall the past is likewise linked to current perceptions of "identity." Marc Augé addresses the many ways in which perceptions of space and time work together to efface the individual. Augé maintains that both "lieux de mémoire" and "non-lieux" confirm the loss of individuality.² He characterizes this societal homogeneity as a manifestation of "surmodernity."³ In this light Marie Redonnet's *Splendid Hôtel* and *Seaside* depict a "supermodern" world. The characters in her novel and play long for an unrecoverable past. At the same time, they blend together—each becoming an amalgam of their shared surroundings. In *Splendid Hôtel*, the narrator's world is shrinking. In a sense, the rapid degradation and diminution of the narrator's environment illustrate Augé's reflections on "surmodernity." Similarly, the rate at which the characters age in *Splendid Hôtel* and *Seaside* suggests a seemingly accelerated passage of time.

By revisiting certain motifs, characters, and situations in *Splendid Hôtel* and *Seaside*, Marie Redonnet writes "across boundaries." In addition to crossing the border between the novel and theater, she echoes the works of other authors—specifically Arthur Rimbaud and Marguerite Duras.⁴ Moreover, within a particular text Redonnet erases subject boundaries. That is to say, her characters are not individuals; their uniqueness is washed away by a continual ebb and flow of common characteristics and traits. As she weaves her "literary" text and intertext she also incorporates elements from popular culture. Indeed, her references to the movies as well as to the family photograph obscure conventional divisions between high and mass culture. In sum, Redonnet's blurred boundaries create a sense of longing for the past, or more precisely for past representations. This element of nostalgia sends the characters and, at times, the reader/spectator into the familiar. Once there, things seem stable, even safe, as compared to the tenuous "present." Thus, traces of past representations emerge in Redonnet's writing as in a palimpsest.

Splendid Hôtel, Redonnet's first novel, is the first segment of her trilogy which includes *Forever Valley* and *Rose Mélie Rose*. In her article "Redonne après Maldonne," she speaks of the particular "fluidity" in her novels.

In *Splendid Hôtel*, my ageless female narrator is eternally menopausal. In *Forever Valley*, she is sixteen, is not developed and never will be. And *Rose Mélie Rose*, which concludes the cycle of these three novels, begins on her twelfth birthday, the day of her first menstrual period. (163)

In *Splendid Hôtel*, Redonnet's nameless narrator speaks of her unending efforts to maintain the Splendid Hôtel that she inherited from her grandmother. The hotel borders a virulent swamp that continually threatens to inundate the hotel and garden. The swamp is not the only reason for concern, however, for the hotel suffers from faulty plumbing, a severe termite problem, and a careless clientele. The narrator cares also for her sisters, Ada and Adel, who require almost as much attention as the hotel itself. In *Seaside*, on the other hand, the Seaside Hotel no longer exists.⁵ As one of the characters explains, "Il n'y a plus de Seaside Hôtel . . . Il ne reste plus que la façade" 'The Seaside Hôtel no longer exists . . . only the façade remains' (65). Nevertheless, during the closing scene one discovers that the play's setting—a bungalow bordered by a lagoon and drifting sands—is also the Seaside.⁶ Its proprietor is in essence Lolie, a young girl of thirteen, who inherited the "hotel" from her grandmother.

In *Splendid Hôtel* the characters' bodies, particularly that of Ada, "la malade," are decomposing like the hotel itself. In fact, the "boundaries" that separate Ada from the hotel are so fluid that her anatomy blends together with the hotel's edifice. For instance, neither makeup nor paint can cover up the painfully evident signs of "illness."⁷ Much like Ada, the hotel suffers from poor plumbing. In the narrator's words, "Il faut sans arrêt déboucher les sanitaires" 'The toilets continually need to be plunged' (9). Elsewhere she states, "Il y a des bruits dans la tuyauterie. Je ne sais pas ce qui se passe" 'The plumbing is making noises. I don't know what's happening' (43). As for Ada, "Elle a des bleus sur tout le corps à cause de la mauvaise circulation de son sang" 'She has bruises all over her body due to her poor circulation' (10). The swamp that borders and eventually surrounds the hotel exacerbates Ada's woes. After taking a walk in the swamp, "Elle [Ada] dit que ses membres sont *comme du bois*" 'She [Ada] says that her appendages are *like wood*' (24, my emphasis). It is apparent that the swamp is responsible for some of the hotel's problems as well: "Les tuyaux sont devenus poreux. Il suffit de passer un doigt dessus pour le constater, le doigt est tout

mouillé” ‘The pipes have become porous. One just has to put a finger on them to notice it, the finger will be damp (63).⁸ Hence, there is an osmosis between Ada’s body and the Splendid Hôtel. Her wood-like appendages meld with the hotel’s porous “skin” and “internal organs.” In a humorous way, Redonnet illustrates that Ada is not simply a product of her environment; in fact, it is impossible to know where “Ada” ends and her “environment” begins. On a larger scale, the seepage that occurs between character and setting in *Splendid Hôtel* suggests that one’s surroundings are at once constructed and constructive.

Initially one can identify the narrator’s sisters as Ada, “la malade” ‘the sickly one,’ and Adel, “la comédienne ratée” ‘the unknown actress.’ Nevertheless, in Redonnet’s world of bodies without borders, the features that separate Ada and Adel begin to fade. Since their names are so similar, references to the sisters tend to be confusing.⁹ Statements such as “Ada dit qu’Adel n’est plus Adel” ‘Ada says that Adel is no longer Adel’ (45) and “Ada fait toujours le même rêve. Elle rêve qu’elle n’est pas Ada, mais Adel” ‘Ada always has the same dream. She dreams that she is not Ada, but Adel’ (23) entangle the sisters in such a way that it is no longer possible to know who is who. At times the narrator refers to her sisters as if they were one:

Quand j’entre dans la chambre, je vois que je les dérange. Elles me regardent avec méfiance. Elles accusent grand-mère de les avoir chassées avec mère. Elles accusent mère de s’être laissée chasser. Elles me jugent responsable de leurs malheurs. Elles essaient de nouvelles potions. Leur ventre est dur et gonflé.

When I go into the room, I know that I am disturbing them. They look at me with apprehension. They accuse grandmother of having sent them away with mother. They accuse mother of letting herself be chased away. They hold me responsible for their unhappiness. They try new antibiotics. Their stomach is hard and swollen. (102-03)

In some ways, relationships in *Splendid Hôtel* are much like those of the animals and insects that seasonally infest the hotel and plague the sisters and their clients.¹⁰ In relation to the narrator, Ada and Adel are parasites. It is as if they depend on her in order to survive. At the same time, they deplete her energy and resources.¹¹ Ada and

Adel, on the other hand, maintain a symbiotic relationship. While they seem to be incompatible, they remain in close association. The narrator is excused from this peculiar bond. She observes their behavior as if she were an outsider:

Ada doesn't understand Adel. She is unremitting. Adel suffers from Ada's behavior. Ada does everything to crush Adel while maintaining her innocence. Adel cringes in front of Ada. Ada triumphs. I am right to say that I don't know my sisters. (54)

While it appears as if Ada has the upper hand in their relationship, this is not always the case. Elsewhere the reader learns that "Adel prend plaisir à effrayer Ada" 'Adel enjoys terrifying Ada' (56). Thus, positions of power in this family are just as unstable as the characters' "identities." Once Ada moves into another room to care for an "infected" client, Adel has difficulty coping with her absence.¹² Adel tries to imagine that her sister is near by putting on Ada's perfume. This behavior seems particularly troublesome since the previous scene reveals that the scent of Ada's perfume is quite unpleasant. In the narrator's opinion, it is less agreeable than the odors that emanate from the swamp. The sisters' separation does not last long, however. Shortly after Ada becomes infected with the client's virus, she passes it on to Adel. Then they die from the same illness. Once the narrator wraps their bodies in sheets, she realizes that she can no longer tell them apart. In her words, "On ne peut pas deviner qui est Ada et qui est Adel maintenant qu'elles sont enveloppées dans leur drap. A quoi bon le savoir, puisqu'il y a le nom du Splendid Hôtel brodé sur chacun des draps, et brodé par grand-mère" 'One cannot even guess which one is Ada and which one is Adel now that they are draped in their sheets. What does it matter since the name of the Splendid Hôtel is embroidered on each sheet, and embroidered by grandmother' (108). Thus, the reader begins to see the extent to which matrilineage and inheritance efface subject boundaries in *Splendid Hôtel*.

If the narrator appears to be unique, this is simply because she is telling the story. As she utters, "Il n'y a que moi qui n'ai jamais quitté le Splendid Hôtel" 'I am the only one who has never left the Splendid Hôtel' (10) and "Il n'y a que moi qui vais et viens" 'I am the only one who comes and goes' (22), the narrator intimates that she is an autonomous character. Nonetheless, this is not always the case. Elsewhere, the narrator's body is linked to those of Ada and

the hotel. The unusual fusion between body and architecture reappears as she states, "Je ne suis pas résistante au gel, et le Splendid non plus n'est pas résistant . . ." 'I cannot withstand the frost, and the Splendid can not withstand it either' (39). Similarly, the narrator's references to her "health" render her indistinguishable from Ada: "Il n'y a pas qu'Ada qui a des problèmes de santé . . ." 'Ada is not the only one who has health problems' (39); "En marchant dans le couloir, je me cogne partout, et j'ai des bleus comme Ada" 'While walking in the hallway, I bump into everything, and I have bruises like Ada' (12). Moreover, the fact that she inherited the hotel from her grandmother underscores her place in Redonnet's web of interchangeable women. For the narrator, the Splendid Hôtel is more than an inheritance. It is all that she has ever known. She continually describes the hotel as it appeared during her grandmother's time even though these memories are not her own. She explains that the hotel was once highly rated and that it was surrounded by a lovely garden. In light of such images, she is particularly troubled by the hotel's present condition. It is as if the stories of her grandmother's "success" confirm her "failure." After all, "L'hôtel n'a plus du tout le confort" 'The hotel no longer has any comforts' (123) and "Le jardin est un vrai marécage" 'The garden is a veritable swamp' (47). Now the hotel is not even a "lieu de mémoire"; it is merely a vestige.

With the help of family photographs, however, the narrator is able to recall an earlier, more prosperous time. According to Susan Sontag, "photographs are not so much an instrument of memory as an invention of it or a replacement" (165). Hence "la photo de grand-mère prise le jour de l'ouverture" 'the photo of grandmother taken on the day of the hotel's opening' (9) and "[celle] d'Ada et d'Adel quand elles étaient petites" 'the one of Ada and Adel when they were young' (115) enable the narrator to remember that which she did not experience. By placing the photographs of her grandmother and sisters in the hallway she tries to tell her story. Even though her narrative, like all photography, is one of loss, it has the power to distort perceptions of time and "reality."¹³ As Susan Sontag explains, "Photographs are a way of imprisoning reality, understood as recalcitrant, inaccessible; of making it stand still. Or they enlarge a reality that is felt to be shrunk, hollowed out, perishable, remote" (163). Perhaps by displaying pictures from another time, the narrator hopes to create the illusion that the Splendid Hôtel has not changed.

The clients in *Splendid Hôtel* do not seem to be affected by the photographs, however. In fact, it is not clear whether they consider them at all. In the clients' eyes, the *Splendid Hôtel* is a "non-lieu" 'non-place.' They are "voyageurs de passage" who live in an eternal present. Therefore, they can only "see" what is directly in front of them. The narrator who spends her time plunging the toilets and catering to the ungrateful clients laments their behavior. The men who stay at the *Splendid* remain anonymous throughout the novel. None of them have names; if the narrator identifies them, it is only by their profession.¹⁴ While neither the clients nor the women who live in the hotel are represented as individuals, the way these characters blend together hinges upon their relationship with their surroundings. As Marc Augé affirms, "L'espace du non-lieu ne crée ni identité singulière, ni relation, mais solitude et similitude" 'The space of a non-place creates neither individuality nor community, but solitude and similarity' (130). The solitary but similar clients generally arrive at the hotel at night. It is as if they are seduced by the sign in bright neon lights that reads "*Splendid Hôtel*." Perhaps it is simply the word "hôtel" that leads them into the swamp. Alternatively, they may be enticed by the adjective "*Splendid*"—written in the universal language of advertising. Even if the clients are dissatisfied with their accommodations, they remain at the *Splendid*—essentially because there is nowhere else for them to go.

While the narrator seems to perceive the hotel's name and the neon signs as marketing assets, this is not the only reason why she retains the name "*Splendid*." Although it may be deceptive, "*Splendid*" is the name that her grandmother gave to the hotel. It is a sign of the past—the only one that endures. Even at the end of the novel, the name "*Splendid*" remains in lights:

Les enseignes éclairent de nouveau, mais seulement à moitié. Je ne les allume que le soir. Quand la nuit tombe et que j'allume, un seul mot est éclairé, le premier, *Splendid*. Ce mot se détache sur le ciel. Les voyageurs ne peuvent pas ne pas le voir. Mais comme le mot Hôtel n'est pas éclairé, les voyageurs ne peuvent pas savoir que le *Splendid* est un hôtel.

The signs light up again, but only partially. I only turn the lights on at night. When night falls and I put the lights on, one word lights up, the first one, "*Splendid*." This word stands out against the sky. The travelers can not overlook it. But since the word

“Hôtel” is not illuminated, the travelers don’t know that the Splendid is a hotel. (125)

The absence of the word “Hôtel” in *Seaside* likewise reveals that the hotel is no longer a hotel; it is just a facade. Onie holds the keys to the Seaside Hotel, yet as she acknowledges, “C’est comme si s’était de fausses clés . . .” ‘It is as if they were false keys’ (66). At the beginning of the play, one learns that Onie, who is in search of the Seaside, has lost her way. She thus accepts Lolie’s invitation to rent a room in the bungalow. It is there that she learns from “un voyageur de passage” that “Il n’y a plus de Seaside” ‘Seaside no longer exists’ (65). The young man, who has just come from the Seaside himself, describes it as a “non-lieu.” He tells her that the interior of the hotel has collapsed and that only the surface remains. The young man also speaks of Seaside’s past. As he indicates, “Seaside a été très fréquenté autrefois à cause de son hôtel. Les plus beaux films du cinéma muet ont été tournés dans les décors du Seaside Hôtel” ‘Seaside was once very popular because of the hotel. The most beautiful silent films were filmed in the setting of the Seaside Hôtel’ (64). In this scene Redonnet captures the nostalgia of silent movies as she illustrates that Seaside Hôtel is part of the past. It is ironic that the Seaside no longer attracts film directors; for it has *become* a filmic decor. In its present state the hotel is essentially a movie set, a two-dimensional backdrop. Consequently, the cinematographer could transform the “fake” hotel into one that seems “real.” He/she could project “depth” instead of “surface.” In this scene, Redonnet also sends the reader/spectator back to *Splendid Hôtel*. After all, the grandmother named the Splendid after her favorite film.¹⁵

Indeed, the ebb and flow of references, characters, and situations between *Splendid Hôtel* and *Seaside* seems unending. For in the film *Splendid Hôtel*, the hotel is in an oasis; as a result of the constant winds, the sand engulfs the hotel.¹⁶ In *Seaside*, Lolie’s bungalow, which is really the only “hotel” in the play, is likewise menaced by drifting sands. As Onie indicates, “Chaque matin, elle [Lolie] doit enlever le sable de la nuit qui recouvre les bordures de terre de l’enclos. On ne voit plus les limites de l’enclos, il se confond avec le sable” ‘Each morning, she [Lolie] must remove the sand that covers up the edges of the enclosure during the night. One can no longer see the boundaries of the enclosure, it is indistinguishable from the sand’ (73). Moreover, the persistent mole who pre-

is reminiscent of the numerous pests that overrun the *Splendid Hôtel*. Lastly, it is possible to perceive Lolie's daily chores as similar to those of *Splendid Hôtel*'s narrator. One can almost say that the narrator resurfaces in *Seaside* as both an adolescent *and* as a retired dancer. First of all, the characters Lolie and Onie are doubles that seem to be separated only in time. The following scene relates their initial encounter:

ONIE.—Comment est-ce que tu t'appelles?

LOLIE.—Je m'appelle Lolie, et vous?

ONIE.—Onie.

LOLIE.—On a presque le même nom. Mais on n'a pas le même âge . . .

ONIE.—What is your name?

LOLIE.—My name is Lolie, and yours?

ONIE.—Onie.

LOLIE.—We have almost the same name. But we are not the same age . . . (33)

Additionally, Lolie intends to do the same things that Onie did or intends to do. Onie is a retired dancer who comes to the region in order to reopen the *Seaside Hôtel*. Lolie "becomes" Onie when she claims, "Quand je saurai bien danser et que je serai majeure, j'ouvrirai le *Seaside Hôtel*" 'When I know how to dance well and I am old enough, I will open the *Seaside Hôtel*' (85). The characters Onie and Lolie blend together in *Seaside*, and at the same time, they call to mind the narrator in *Splendid Hôtel*. Like the narrator, Lolie has never left the bungalow.¹⁷ Both of these characters know their mothers through photographs, and both of them have been raised by their grandmothers.¹⁸ Their attempts to preserve their homes from the destructive forces that surround them have caused both of them to age at an accelerated rate. At the same time Onie and the narrator must come to terms with the fact that the hotels that they have inherited are not windows on the past, but merely traces. It is not until the fifth scene of Redonnet's play that Onie comes to this realization: "Endel m'a donné des clés qui n'ouvrent sur rien. Il croyait me donner un héritage. Quel drôle d'héritage" 'Endel gave me keys that do not open anything. He thought that he was giving me an inheritance. What an odd inheritance' (81). Onie and *Splendid Hotel*'s narrator thus attempt to preserve or recall the past in other ways. The narrator lights up the signs of the hotel at all costs,

In so many ways, *Splendid Hôtel* and *Seaside* illustrate the type of nostalgia for an unrecoverable past that is particular to writing of the eighties and early nineties. As described above, characters within Redonnet's novel and play become indistinct. They appear to be homogenous, and thus a reflection of "surmodernity" as defined by Marc Augé. Redonnet also emphasizes the fluidity of her characters by rewriting their "stories" in other works, in other "genres." Moreover, portions of France's literary past resurface in her work. *Splendid Hôtel*'s epigraph—"Les caravanes partirent. Et le Splendide Hôtel fut bâti dans le chaos de glaces et de nuit du pôle" 'The caravans left. And the Splendide Hôtel was constructed in the chaos of the ice and darkness of the north pole'—suggests that the novel's title stems from Rimbaud's "Après le déluge." The various images of fluidity and instability that characterize "Après le déluge" compare to Redonnet's overflowing toilets and surging swamp.¹⁹ Furthermore, in the end of her novel, Redonnet's hotel is just a light shining in the night. Like the flickering images in Rimbaud's poetic fragment, it is an "Illumination." In *Seaside*, Redonnet traverses the writings of Marguerite Duras. The bungalow, the sweeping sands that threaten the "enclos," and, of course, the double meaning of the verb "to dance," send the reader/spectator back to "Indochine," if only for a moment.²⁰ However, unlike Duras' work, desire does not have a place in Redonnet's novel and play. As the narrator of *Splendid Hôtel* proclaims, "Je n'ai pas le temps de penser à me donner un genre" 'I don't have time to think about giving myself a gender/style/genre' (85). To be sure, the narrator is too busy plunging the toilets to think about intimacy. Even when the other women in *Splendid Hôtel* and *Seaside* have sexual encounters, they are devoid of all emotion and feeling. Moreover, whereas Duras is concerned with cinematic writing, Redonnet incorporates film in her writing. Her numerous references to the cinema and the family photograph reveal that her characters are image consumers. Even their memories are based on images and representations. In conclusion, like the narrator in *Splendid Hôtel*, Marie Redonnet does not have time to think about "genre." She crosses previously established borders, and as a result, she paints permeable boundaries among individuals, text/intertext, and photography/film/literature. Most importantly, however, she does so by creating

something new. Her seemingly emotionless characters live in a world that is her own. As their card dealer, Redonnet distributes some particularly bad hands; nevertheless, her characters never fold.

Notes

1. *Le Mort & Cie*, poésie. Paris: P.O.L., 1985.

2. According to Marc Augé, "No one expresses this view better than Pierre Nora in his preface to the first volume of *Lieux de mémoire*: what we are looking for in the religious accumulation of testimonies, documents, images, and all the 'visible signs of the past,' he says, is essentially our difference, and in the performance of this difference is the sudden awareness of a lost identity. No longer a genesis, but an unraveling of what we are in light of what we are no longer" (37).

On the jacket of *Non-Lieux*, "non-places" are defined as "ces espaces d'anonymat qui accueillent chaque jour des individus plus nombreux. Les *non-lieux*, ce sont aussi bien les installations nécessaires à la circulation accélérée des personnes et des biens (voies rapides, échangeurs, gares, aéroports) que les moyens de transport eux-mêmes (voitures, trains ou avions). Mais également les grandes chaînes hôtelières aux chambres interchangeables" 'those anonymous spaces frequented by countless individuals each day. "Non-places" are installations necessary for the accelerated circulation of people and material goods (highspeed rails, automatic tellers, stations, airports) as the modes of transportation themselves (cars, trains, or planes). Large hotel chains with interchangeable rooms are also "non-places."

3. According to Augé, "the acceleration and overabundance of events and space and the individualization of references [are] the three elements of excess with which we have tried to characterize the supermodern condition" (55).

4. The title of Rimbaud's collection of poetry, *Illuminations*, and his poem "After the Flood" figure into Redonnet's *Splendid Hôtel*. Intertextual references to Duras' writings are probably more evident in *Seaside* than in *Splendid Hôtel*. While I will illustrate this assertion shortly, it is interesting to consider the fact that Duras herself writes "across boundaries." According to Janice Berkowitz Gross in "Women Writing Across Purposes: The Theater of Marguerite Duras and Nathalie Sarraute," "The designation for *India Song* as 'texte-théâtre-film' by Duras is further proof of the undifferentiation among genres that has progressively marked the Durasian corpus" (42).

5. In the final scene of *Seaside*, Lolie abandons the bungalow. A sign on the blue door of the bungalow reads "SEASIDE HÔTEL CLOSED."

6. *Seaside*, published in 1992 (Minuit), is Marie Redonnet's third play.
7. As the narrator explains: "Ada spends hours putting on her makeup. It improves her appearance. One can hardly notice that she is so sick" (9-10). Before long, however, "[Ada] no longer has the strength to put on makeup. She has aged all of a sudden, she seems older than she is" (30). In a similar manner one learns that "The new paint does not cover the rotten wood, it actually brings out the general rundown condition of the hotel" (25).
8. Water saturates Ada's body as well. As the narrator explains, "She has water in her lungs" (68).
9. The names of Marie Redonnet's characters often echo one another. The twelve characters in *Doublures* (Paris: P.O.L., 1985)—Lia, Lii, Gal, Gil, Gem, Gim, Sil, Sim, Lam, Lim, Nel, Nil—clearly illustrate this device.
10. Flies, mosquitoes, spiders, termites, cockroaches, rats, and bedbugs are among the creatures that seasonally infest the Splendid and the swamp.
11. In reference to her sisters, the narrator declares, "Mais, maintenant qu'elles sont installées, elles ne sont pas décidées à partir. Elles font comme si elles étaient chez elles. Elles occupent les deux plus belles chambres, ça ne les empêche pas de se plaindre de l'inconfort et de l'insalubrité du Splendid Hôtel. Je ne devrais pas m'en laisser imposer par elles. C'est moi qui les fais vivre grâce à mon travail et à l'hôtel" 'But, now that they are settled, they have no plans to leave. They make themselves right at home. They occupy the two most beautiful rooms, yet that doesn't stop them from complaining about the Splendid Hôtel's discomfort and insalubrity. I shouldn't let them impose themselves on me. I'm the one who supports them, thanks to my work and the hotel' (10).
12. The construction crew that has come to the area to construct a dike is considerably behind schedule. The venomous rats that have emerged from the swamp are not helping matters: "Le chef du chantier a été mordu par un rat en plein son mollet. Depuis, il a la fièvre. C'est Ada qui soigne sa morsure. Elle trouve que c'est très infecté" 'The head of the construction workers was bitten in the calf by a rat. Since then, he has a fever. It is Ada who is tending to his bite. She finds that it is extremely infected' (93-94).
13. See Roland Barthes' *La Chambre Claire* (Paris): Seuil, 1980.
14. Splendid Hôtel's clients include prospectors, geologists, construction workers, and a team of engineers.
15. According to the narrator, "Grand-mère n'aimait pas le théâtre, mais le cinéma l'attirait. Elle avait des abonnements à tous les magazines du cinéma. Son film préféré, qu'elle avait été voir plusieurs fois quand elle était jeune, c'était Splendid Hôtel. C'est ce film qui lui avait donné l'idée d'appeler

son hôtel *Splendid Hôtel*” ‘Grandmother didn’t like the theater, but the cinema appealed to her. She subscribed to all the film magazines. Her favorite film, which she saw several times when she was young, was *Splendid Hôtel*. It was this movie that gave her the idea to name her hotel *Splendid Hôtel*’ (85-86).

16. In the narrator’s words, “Dans le film, l’hôtel n’était pas au bord d’un marais, il était dans une oasis au milieu des sables. Le vent n’arrêtait pas de souffler, l’oasis s’ensablait peu à peu, et l’hôtel aussi” ‘In the film, the hotel did not border a swamp, it was in an oasis surrounded by sand. The wind blew continuously, slowly covering the oasis and the hotel with sand’ (86).

17. For example, Lolie tells Onie, “J’ai toujours habité le bungalow avec Lend et grand-mère” ‘I have always lived in the bungalow with Lend and grandmother’ (30).

18. As the narrator of *Splendid Hôtel* describes the photograph of Ada and Adel, she notes, “En arrière plan, on peut apercevoir mère, floue comme d’habitude” ‘In the background, one can make out mother, blurred as always’ (115). Similarly Lolie tells Onie: “Grand-mère dit que mère ne voit personne. Mais je vois mère chaque soir sur les photos de grand-mère. . . . Je regarde les photos avec grand-mère chaque soir avant de m’endormir. Mère ne me ressemble pas du tout sur les photos” ‘Grandmother says that mother never sees anyone. But I see mother every evening in grandmother’s photos . . . I look at the photos each night with grandmother before going to sleep. Mother doesn’t look anything like me in the photos’ (30).

19. The title of Rimbaud’s poem is indeed deceiving. Not only do the floods come again—“Eaux et tristesses, montez et relevez les Déluges” ‘Water and sadness, rise and bring back the Floods’—but water and liquids continue to flow “après l’idée du Déluge se fut rassise” ‘after the idea of the Flood had waned.’

20. I am referring specifically to the scene in which the young man dances with/rapes Lolie. “Il ne m’a même pas dit son nom, ni souhaité bon Noël. Il m’a renversée par terre, il m’a prise par terre dans ma robe de Noël. . . . Il a dit que c’est moi qui l’avais invité à danser” ‘He didn’t even tell me his name, nor did he wish me a Merry Christmas. He threw me to the ground, he took me there on the ground in my Christmas dress . . . He said that it was I who had asked him to dance,’ (75). During a conversation I had with Marie Redonnet in August of 1993, she intimated that Margarite Duras is “present” in *Seaside*. Admittedly, the grandmother who “ne se sépare jamais de son album de photos” ‘never puts down her photo album . . .’ (30), and who “a l’air très vieille . . . en un an c’est incroyable comme elle est devenue très vieille” ‘seems very old . . . it’s incredible how old she has become in one year’ (35), calls to mind the author/narrator of *L’Amant*.

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