MODERNISM'S SONIC WAIVER

Literary Writing and the Filmic Difference

***Tongues* can *over-read* as well as *eyes*.**
William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (53)

Unheard determinants quaver everywhere in "modernist" writing, waver there, crowding its textual surfaces, flooding its utterance with excess enunciation, drifting across its signifiers in the unsounded racket of stray signification. And despite its estranging zing, this scud of lettered speech remains the very stuff of the everyday. We all have our Joycean accidents. In saving on computer disk a list of the film clips from *Apocalypse Now* that I planned to screen for a class recently, I resorted to my available eight-letter WordPerfect shorthand with the usual ad hoc decisions and elisions, coming up, I only noticed on later retrieval, with the all but letter-perfect overlapping portmanteau, "APOCLIPS." Abbreviation's lucky break? The fractal symmetry of a self-replicating scale model? In any case, the left hand often knows better than the right brain what the wrong spelling can get right. Literary modernism begins, is always beginning again, with such incursions of linguistic eccentricity into our habituation to lexical and syntactic code. Rather than thinking to listen in on such textual phenomena, as if writing somehow contained its sonic (or even phonetic) matter, one has only to listen up, to alert oneself: not giving voice so much as giving thought to voice. The waiver of orality in any text is what licenses its multiple overhearings.

However the silence of a page is intuitively felt to be sounded in the production of its full literary effect, the theoretical silence on the matter has grown deafening. The present essay would like to assist in breaking this silence by the odd route of including the silent—and mostly invisible—operations of the cinematic medium (before and apart from any dialogue on the soundtrack) as an un-

tend to bring the verbal "material" up so close to the eye, rather than ear, that words break up into sheer letters, surrendering not only their mimetic function within the field of semantics but their phenomenality as read language. Cohen borrows from Poe to call such effects "runic rhyme." As such, they generate an echoism not of chimes but of runes, marked fragments, as for instance in "The Bells," where we are asked to think of "crystalline *de*light" as the "foreclosure of light" (112) or to free associate as follows: "If the letters E-A-R almost reproduce the initials E.A.P., Poe may be said to seek his runic signature in the ear, much as the 'mad ex*pos*tulation' of the third stanza involves an external positing of sense on the acoustic stuff of language in which Poe's own *name* is echoed" (113–14). As outré and indulgent as such claims may seem, Poe, read this way, operates for Cohen within an abiding American tradition: executing a truer pragmatism than neopragmatism imagines, carrying us back to the verbal *pragma*, the thing itself. In a like manner, Conrad's signature effect is supposedly heard to echo through various permutations of the letter *c*. Further, the infamous "The horror! The horror!" from *Heart of Darkness*, in association with Marlow's final lie to Kurtz's Intended, dissolves into various bilingual perversities, "including the double play on or-or, error, or the *hors-hors* that names her as the outside (of an outside)" (201).

When shifting his "too close" readings to film, the spirit of Cohen's approach recedes even farther from the medium-specific phenomenality of textual generation I am trying in this essay, against the more obvious tread of script or images, to hold in mind. The signifying materiality of Hitchcock depends for Cohen on rebuslike effects in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* such as "the question to Mr. Memory about the distance between *M*ontreal and *W*innepeg, in which the inversion of W and M reminds us that they are the same, and also without distance" (245). Thus does the material, prefigural thing, the letter, prompt a reading less "gentrified," in his view, than Slavoj Žižek's Lacanian decoding of Hitchcock, for it respects the necessary precedence of the thing, the *pragma*, even over the psychoanalytic Thing as a scandalous intrusion of the real. Cohen's "anti-mimetic" cryptography of the linguistic signifier on film bears certain affinities with the work of Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier (unmentioned by him but discussed below). In this respect, it must be distinguished from what I might call the *counter*mimetic stress of my own reading, which audits a text sequence not only working against the grain of manifest sense but cutting parallel grooves of sensualized representation in the (contrapuntal) process. By contrast with Cohen's avowedly "havoc-wreaking" (6) dispersions of the letter, the attention of this essay will be trained on the misfires and discharges of

literary language as they get—if I may let pun come to the rescue of mixed metaphor—immediately rehired at overtime wages within an unstable but relentless economy of pertinent textual connotation. At one pole of the generic spectrum, traditional prose fiction as much as modernist verse participates in such an economy, oscillating always between the supply of signification and the demand for sense. A pair of classic nineteenth-century narratives should do the job of demonstrating this.

Lending an Inward Ear

The immediate appeal of my first Victorian example is to common sense, before we turn in any detail to the sensed commonalities of adjacent letters and syllables—either through multiplication or overlap—in an exemplary passage. Do we, could we ever, "overcorrect" the linguistic thickening and heightened phonic echoism of *Jane Eyre* (1847) in order to lend a more convinced ear to the novelistic document as Jane Eyre's transcribed voice? Are we not steadily asked to sense that *Jane Eyre*, read as written, is the model for Jane Eyre herself as text (rather than text maker), the psychological subject under the regime of the sliding signifier? I speak with a theoretical anachronism—or nondiachronism—that seems well enough advised, derived as it is from my commonsensical premise. If aesthetic modernism, on one prevailing account, is understood as a mode of art determined by the concerted revelation of its own medium, abstracted from the dutiful protocols of mimesis, then what literary modernism programmatically discloses about the materiality of language is a fact about such language that it is only reasonable to conceive being glimpsed, if not fully excavated, in the most intensive literary activity of any period. My topic is therefore a modernism less historically cataclysmic than often claimed, more continuous with the discontinuities of literary language itself. Brontë's prose gives teeth to this view.

I will be closing in on a passage as far from hermetic or autotelic modernism as the Victorian novel gets. It involves an overtly propagandistic set piece of ethical peroration that nonetheless erodes the lexical foundation of its own rhetorical platform. In it, aural dilapidation undermines the lapidary periods of a quasi-oratorical intrusion. This is the long paragraph ending with the insistence that it is "thoughtless to condemn [women], or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex" (12:96). By sudden juxtaposition, that thoughtlessness, that very irrationality, seems immediately embodied in the goading mockery of Bertha's laugh, at this point mistaken for a servant's:

"When thus alone I not unfrequently heard Grace Poole's laugh." In the mood Jane describes just before this intrusion, during her spells of elevated solitude at Thornfield, "my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third story . . . and, best of all, to open my *inward ear* to a tale that was never ended—a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously" (12:96; emphasis added). Commanding a perch on one kind of "stor(e)y," the building's third, Jane yields to another—one perhaps known to her in her wish-fulfillment fantasies, as is the novel to us, by a name coincident with her own unfolding sense of self-consciousness. Jane Eyre tries listening as often as she can, in short, to Jane Eyre.

The narrator of one story becomes in this way the narratee of its redemptive counterplot. And when we open our *sense* of hearing to Brontë's novel, when we audit it with our own inward ear, we serve to enact this level of Jane's privately sustaining imagination. (The mind's ear is of course continually on alert in a novel where, in brief, plain Jane, airing her despair at the eyrie-like isolation that has been her life ere now, craves in her psychic errancy that heroism she is heir to.) Fleshing out the nature of the subjective narrative whose audition is in turn audited by the reader, Jane further characterizes her inward tale as "quickened with all of incident, life, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual existence" (12:96). If the typical interplay of assonance and alliteration in Brontë's prose—all too easy to discount as an overwrought lyric drag on narrative momentum—can better be read as part of a "cryptonymy" of repressed desire, then we have all the more reason to trust our subvocalization of the immediate lexical pressure points in this passage.[6] The metonymic skid within the temptingly metaphoric (hence appositional) interchangeability of "life, fire, feeling" disrupts sequence with secret equivalence, so that we come to hear in this passage the veritable insistence and slippage of the letter in the unconscious.

Words end up signifying only the spectral doubles of themselves as signifiers, with self-identity thus surrendered, structurally sundered, from the lexical level up. Bertha's cackling laughter, the eruptive flouting of all discourse, is not therefore the only appearance made by the Voice of the Other at this point in the novel. For within the phonemic buckling of Jane's own self-utterance, there is the chiastic switch at "life, fire" by which a large part of "life" is, as it were, swallowed up by "fire." This happens when an elision releases from within the juxtaposition of "life, fire" an otherwise bracketed and contained lexeme that obtrudes now as a further appositive. Out of the friction of letters, that is, the ignition of a further signifier: out of "life, fire"—either "Eyre" if pronounced as in "eyrie" (with the optional long *i* rather than long *a* sound) or, more to the point here, its homonym

(and vocabular succubus) *ire*. At which point we hear named in advance, if by moments only—and only on the sly, or slide, of the signifying chain itself—the vocalized sarcastic rage of Jane's alter ego in Bertha. That this "ire," not the "fire" from which it has been smelted out in the heat of reading, yields not only a closer alliterative link with "I" but a closer morphemic common denominator with "desire" itself (quoting again: "that *I* des*ire*d and had not") is a coincidence only in the mode of all those other accidents that manifest desire in language.

From Stevenson toward Stevens

This entrenching of identity's echoes along the phonemic groove of the long *i* sound is carried to almost garbled exaggeration in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). Speaking of the double whose depravity is a vicarious extension of his own, Dr. Jekyll writes (of himself in third person) that this "insurgent horror was knit to *him* closer than a wife" (53; emphasis added). Discourse thus opens the cleft of self-surveillance at the very moment of erotic analogy. To this Jekyll adds, just as unexpectedly, and with an assonant echo of the long vowel in "wife," "closer than an eye." By this he would seem to mean, beyond the timeworn homophonic pun on an "I" hereby undergoing drastic redefinition, that Hyde is actually *inside* rather than adjacent to or embraced by him, "knit" up with his life by being "caged in his flesh" (53). Putting the *I* back in "w*i*fe" within the homeostatic eroticism of this vicarious soul-mating is not the only echoic thickening of this sort in which Jekyll is caught up. Twice before he has stumbled over an ejaculation as if it were the redundant designation of his own faltering—stuttering—identity. To Utterson, in explaining why he cannot say more, Jekyll multiplies the monosyllables of selfhood even as he is trying to keep his own multiplicity under wraps: "*I* would trust you before any man alive, *ay*, before myself, if *I* could" (44). Later, when explanation can no longer be postponed, Jekyll's reflexive grammar, turning back on itself, again snaps open more selves than it has intended, for "by the sleeplessness to which I now condemned myself, *ay*, even beyond what *I* thought possible to man, *I* became, in my own person, a creature eaten up" (95). Echoing in both passages across the long vowel of "my" and "myself," the homophonic "ays" have it. So, too, do they have Jekyll himself right where language wants him, with the "ay" stammered out only as the affirmation of negativity and self-division.

This is perhaps the least obtrusive streak of wordplay in a novel that rides on verbal duplicities of all sorts, dead metaphors sprung to sudden

life, ambivalence thematized as psychotic doubling—everything from the distinguished Dr. Jekyll losing moral "stature" (44) when transformed into his dwarfish twin to the discovery by Dr. Lanyon of the "single word: double" (38) to indicate the dosage of the corrective drug meant to ward off the alter ego. Let me put it succinctly. The strangeness of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, its fable of self-estrangement, consists in its radical transformation of form into content, of literary anomaly into fantastic plot. The "profound duplicity" (42) of Stevenson's story is the story of one made two, a pun made flesh. It is saturated by a perversely pertinent wordplay that splits as many subjects as it can find. Even a negligible idiom of recognition at one early point—the dead metaphor of dissociated personality in Enfield's being "surprised out of myself" (34) by the unfolding story—can return burdened with the weight of the entire tale, as when Jekyll, coming to consciousness, "came to myself once more with the character . . . of Henry Jekyll" (85).

Comparison is invited with *Jane Eyre*. There, the logic of the unconscious as manifested in textual production appears in the homophonic undulation of Jane Eyre's discourse in describing that persistent, if continually interrupted, narrative audited by her inward ear. As banked fires are once again deformed to ire in the shearing off of Jekyll into Hyde, the inward clefts, defiles, and drifts of subjectivity are delivered from latency not merely as the syncopated phasing in and out of desire but as the reified—and so rent—faces of the self's contradictory impulses. Stevenson's mastertrope of ambivalence goes like this: A second or double meaning stands to a first—a read suggestion to a written sign—as Hyde stands to Jekyll. This does not exhaust the macabre physiology of the double, of course, but it goes far toward naturalizing it within the only range of experience that counts for its realization: the experience of the reading rather than the social subject. Where else but in language can the one be made two? In dream or nightmare, or its waking pharmacological equivalent, where the ego shivers into multiplicity like a rogue signifier. But, for most of us, only in literary language: that is, in language *recognized* for its layered and multivalent associations. In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the pun, as a paradoxically duplex singular, generates a kind of metalinguistic matrix (multiple signification) for this narrative of the multiplied self. The derivatives of this matrix are relentless, as we have begun to see, ranging from the homophonic through the syntactical.

Another minor and passing example from *Dr. Jekyll* comes to mind, one beginning to chafe at lexical borders as if in anticipation of the eroded envelope of self-identity. The foul alleyway into which Hyde is first seen to

disappear—the unrecognized backside of Jekyll's house—is rather routinely personified when first described, especially the threshold of his den, with its "blind forehead" and the egregious neglect of "every feature" (30). But there is a further quirk of such metonymic personification in the image of loitering tramps striking matches on the "blistered and distained" panels of the door (30). Especially because that second participle is already archaic by Stevenson's time, the phrase's curious phonemic decontraction (and over-accentuation) of the semantically equivalent "blistered an*d* *s*tained" implies that the locals have in fact "disdained" or despised the portal as if it were the obnoxious Hyde himself.

Metonymically revealed by his environs—but still unglimpsed in his own person by Utterson, the reader's surrogate—Hyde remains naggingly enigmatic in his absence, figured only by the cryptic knots of discourse: "And still the figure had no *face* by which he [Utterson] might know it; even in his dreams, it had no *face*" (8; emphasis added). Three more reiterations of the term "face" are added to this fixated repetition—all in phonemic reply to a curious anticipatory echo. For in the sentence just before this, as if in a homophonic matrix for the fivefold litany of "face" to come, we have a summary of the hyperactive "figure" of Hyde, now running down a girl in the street, now appearing at Jekyll's bedside to will the latter into doing his bidding: "The figure in these two faces haunted the lawyer all night."[7] So Stevenson had originally written, striking out "faces" at the last minute (effacing Hyde yet again) and inserting "phases" above the line: the normative constraint of a linear *distinction* (phases or stages) exerted on the intolerable *composite*.[8] As with the aurally materialized overlap of "disdained" upon the lexical boundary dispute and risked phonemic assimilation of "an*d* *di*stained" earlier, here too homophony speaks in tongues: those overreading Empsonian tongues from my epigraph. At this later crux of narrative sequence (the horizontally arrayed "phases" of degradation) reconfigured as a vertical imposition and pressure point, the internal force of language in subvocal production may once again be said to mime the alternatives it cannot graphically perform.

What I do not mean to be saying here is either of the things that might seem most obvious about this revision: either that Stevenson did not want the shadow self resulting from the degradation of Jekyll into Hyde to be confusingly two-faced in its own right, or that Stevenson's manuscript alteration has suppressed a virtual dead metaphor ("faces" for something like "aspects") in order to postpone any foreshadowings of the doppelgänger's countenance at this premature point in the arc of building anticipation. I would not put it this way precisely because the erasure is actually retained

in the shadow of a pun. I want therefore to suggest instead that homophobic shock (Utterson's shudder at the thought of Hyde at Jekyll's bedside) is taken up rather than kept down by the shudder of homophonic recoil. In the imposed sequential logic of "phases" (temporal rather than corporeal), we have thus—and by a metamorphosis, or anamorphosis, internal to language—caught the alternative face of a phrasing that, like its referent, refuses self-identity. We have caught it, moreover, caught on to it, as if glimpsing it in superimposition: the prosopopoeia of the pun itself as a material inscription rather than an overtone, a kind of lexical mirage, a specter, a deformed scriptive double. This phantom manifestation operates on the model of a dreamlike parapraxis, as a working (out) of fleeting, amorphous apprehensions in and through language. Quite apart from the manuscript's apparent corroboration of wordplay (however unconscious), the published text as we have it has its divided way with us. Even while in a state of quickened, edgy alertness—a kind of textual paranoia—we may think it is we who are writing over, by reading in, the given by its equivocation, the stable substantive by the pun ("phases" by the "faces" that demarcate them). Instead, we are all the while being written with—conscripted at the level of phonemic demarcation itself.

The described anxieties of the passage rise to the surface as a warping doubleness of language itself. To think that this could operate credibly within the classic discourse of bourgeois realism only with a certain "overcorrection" of these fugitive folds of enunciation (Easthope's position above) would be woefully untrue to the workings (on us) of narrative textuality—even if the passage were not devoted in the first place, as of course it is, to transcribing the febrile half-consciousness of Utterson's fitful waking-dream state. To lean in this way on the constraints of overcorrection is to cut the text off from its affiliations with the modernist verbal instress of a Hopkins, a Conrad, a Woolf, a Joyce, an H. D., or a Stevens, all with their hospitality to the incorrigible in language.

Moreover, just as the stray letter insists (on itself) in Utterson's represented unconscious-structured-like-a-language (to paraphrase Lacan), so too is the general shape of Utterson's obsession a symptom of literature in embryo. Prosopopoeia—the quintessential literary activity of giving face to absence—is just what Utterson craves in his compulsion to look on Hyde's face. But whereas he is finally gratified, we are not, except by the feeble approximation of words—or except when we realize that in realizing Hyde in the space of his absence, we as readers are functioning rather like Jekyll himself. It is, in short, when we start hearing double that we end up seeing Jekyll-eyed.

In this passage from Stevenson, then, prosopopoeia is in the ear of the beholder. So too with a poem by Wallace Stevens about the sun whose face cannot be seen, a kind of cosmological catechresis, the name for whose every effect is always a figurative deflection from the source. In the modernist Stevens as well as in the Victorian Stevenson, the process of literary manifestation from the blank page entails the return of repressed absences within the linguistic economy of redistributed differential signification, whether the differential is between a word and its bordering blank (and [di]stained) or between a letter and its absentation by another (phases/faces). To Wallace Stevens's sequestering of the letter in the very image of imaging's invisible condition, the unsighted sun, we now turn.

"The Red Fern" Reread

Stevens's little-known and unreprinted poem tests the limits—or, to be more precise, the lexical lower limit—of a certain figural reading initiated by Paul de Man and promulgated further by J. Hillis Miller. "The Red Fern" (1947) is in fact a text on which Miller has written at the top of his bent. Stevens's verses develop across four stanzas as an elaborate exfoliation of their title, itself a metaphor for the unfurling light of day in the first stanza. This is the stanza to which we will mostly limit our concern here:

> The large-leaved day grows rapidly
> And opens in this familiar spot
> Its unfamiliar, difficult fern
> Pushing and pushing red after red.

Procreative and phallic at once, day dawns aggressively, its tendrils many and penetrant. This is where Miller too begins, but what we have now to register goes in a direction different from his emphasis on figural contradiction in the text.

In this poem about the very presupposition of the ocular in solar radiation, there is a sense, too, of revealed phonemic presupposition—as if to say that as the sun is to seeing, so are vocables as well as syllables to reading. A mediated internal rhyme from the second stanza, by which the "doubles of this *fern* in clouds" are "Less *firm* than the pat*ern*al flame," may indeed—via a further association of homophonic echoes across divergent orthography—augment one's suspicion that an unsaid half-pun may be operating as one avoided "matrix" of the entire poem: the day's blazing uprush figured as a "red furn/ace." This is, as it were, only half said, half written. I will be concentrating on the yet deeper-going lexical play in the first stanza,

one that is entirely (if almost invisibly) manifested by script (pace Miller). According to his analysis (sounding in his local reading rather like Riffaterre as the global theorist of poetic signification), "the unspoken law of the poem is that though the poem has as its goal to name the sun the word *sun* may not be used" (217). Though this closely resembles that "expanded" and "converted" matrix pursued in Riffaterre's analysis of poetic semiosis, it must be remembered that for Riffaterre the "goal" is not a naming that is banned but precisely the sustained and elaborate deflection and forestalling of that name. Hence troping, "turning"—instanced here in a poem that we may come to think reads like a pervasively evaded autotelic pun: the fern as helio*tropic* image of its very source in the literary circumlocution for sun.

Veiling like cloud-cover the always invisible, because otherwise blinding, origin of all sight, a figure like the "fern" becomes (in the other sense) figure to the always unrepresentable ground of perception. "Day is a name for everything under the sun but the sun" (220), quips Miller. Within this understanding, though, one of the things that is for Miller "anomalous" in the poem, a figurative detail deliberately staged so that it "does not make sense," is the tropological conversion by which the first quatrain moves from the metaphoric equation between day and "large-leaved plant" to "the day as the locus, milieu, or 'spot' within which the invisible and unnamable sun grows as a red fern" (220). Yet looking at the lines more closely, in their lineation as well as figuration, we may find that they resolve their own apparent contradiction.

"The large-leaved day grows rapidly / And opens in this familiar spot." So far one potential grammar is complete. As specified by the title, the red fern has by line 2 opened (itself). The unexpected transition—which for Miller fails to "make sense"—comes when "opens" slips from intransitive to transitive verb form around the turn of the enjambment, releasing "Its unfamiliar, difficult fern." What Miller seems to rule out here is a genitive sense of "its" other than the expected possessive, a sense that would prevent the fern from seeming like some illogical component of the larger plant—even though everything so far would have led us to assume that the whole dawning day and "its" spreading fern were represented as equivalents. Another rhetorical option presents itself, however. Is this not in fact a case of the "genitive metaphor" so closely related to catachresis (as in, so it happens, such a prototypical example "eye of the sun," where the sun *is* rather than *has* an eye)?[9] On this understanding, then, the sun opening its eye would be like the day opening its fern, in other words unfolding itself to view. If this metaphoric subcategory—marshaling what Jakobson might characterize as "the poetry of grammar, and its literary product, the

grammar of poetry" (Jakobson 319)—were brought to bear in helping solve Miller's problem at this turn, it would only support his sense that all of this figuration is floated on the structuring absence of the seen sun: the fern made available by metonymy for a daylight that, in illuminating the proximate causes (atmospheric conditions) of the fern's figurative effects, always remains hidden behind it.

But what about the fact, emphasized by the heavy beat of lexical invariance within antithesis, that in a "familiar" spot the fern is, and presumably always, "unfamiliar"? This may be just—and must be at least—a perfectly apt description of a day's always unique dawning in the inevitable East. Yet what else, if I may put it this way, does difference within familiarity here permit? Miller insists on "the impossibility or at least the impropriety of naming the sun in so many words, looking it in the eye, so to speak" (317). We never do quite look its inscription in the eye, but this does not mean—especially in a poem titled to permit its own aural transliteration to "The Read Fern"—that we are not in a position to *read* "sun." My claim is that we cannot help but do so, and yet never more than under erasure, at precisely that enjambment from second to third line. Across the at least momentarily ambiguous "its" (genitive versus equative), the text yields (by liaison rather than elision this time) the sibilant whisper—the aural penumbra—necessary to say the unseeable "sun" on the underside of "it*s* *un*familiar, difficult fern." It would seem that the "noble riders" of inked inscription are here blurred by their phonemic materialization as the "sound of words." If so, then the repressed matrix has been instantiated after all, if only on the slope between the falling off of one word and the uptake of the next. With "The Red Fern" read this way, its never more than covert assertion of the backing "sun" replays any text's resistance to complete and literalizing *dis*figuration. The effects of such resistance are indeed "difficult"—defacilitating, that is, defamiliarizing—if only in order to be registered in the first place, registered as the figures that wrest themselves from blank literality.

In this sense I would carry Miller's de Manian argument about the priority of figure to ground one step farther—farther back—to the material basis of language itself within (if not before) the mark, language as a structure of double articulation (phonemes/morphemes). The annihilating brightness of unfigured light is the always present but masked cause of its epiphenomena, then, just as the blank obliterating space glimpsed between lexically bunched letters is the very ground of enunciation repressed in process. The cross-lexical effects I am examining enjoy, it should be clear, a privileged if not strictly legible relation to this textual ground. They institute in fact the morphophonemic (the scriptive, subvocal) rather than picto-

expected parallel to the reeling-by of words held in syntactic focus. Across the stationary beam of the film projector, the frame-advance mechanism drops one photogram (the single celluloid image) after another, each reframed by the aperture on its way—along another axis—toward the masked rectangle of the screen. The equivalent for writing in its production as text is the lateral racing of the eye from word to word as they are perceptually assimilated along an axis that is angled (again) at roughly ninety degrees to the flat page. The main point is this: just as the photograms that we register as continuous film images are in fact incremental textual imprints s/tripping over themselves from projected frame to frame, so too is the apparent ribbon of syntax a continual overlap of lexigrams and functional blanks spliced by conventions that exert no absolute control over the disruptive overrun of one word upon the next in the inevitable slippage of subvocal response. An obvious point follows: these latter verbal effects are in every sense marginal, rimming words, edging forward alternative junctures, hedging syntax, but mostly (if not always) ousted by sense.

One of the most obvious contrasts between film and writing in this regard is the very point of their intersection—as well as their immediate divergence. The filmstrip in hand, like the text on the page, manifests those seams between signifying units (edges in one case, blanks in the other) that the apparatus of cinematic projection deliberately masks and that, by contrast, the apparatus of reading insists on yet cannot help but let slide. The oddness of this comparison between the technical bases of these two differentially geared but otherwise strikingly different media is, therefore, meant to get at the fundamental oddness of the two processes separately, as well as at their joint inherence at times in a modernist program of disclosed textual materiality.

To be sure, when thinking of the raw material of the modernist text, sound is scarcely what comes to mind, let alone to ear. When not actually intoned by reading aloud; when not miked, broadcast on radio waves, tracked by analog recording, laid next to an image strip on celluloid, or digitalized either for video beam or laser imprint; and when not mystified as some aura of origin in such an otherwise dead metaphor as the "ironic voice" of poem or narrative, sound would seem to have as little to do with literary modernism as with the "protomodernist" telos (or mere leaning) in earlier eras of literary production. Even within variations on the dramatic monologue, doing the police in different voices (T. S. Eliot's ultimately suppressed homage to Dickens in his planned subtitle to *The Waste Land*) is never more than a manner of speaking about a manner of writing.

It is voice itself that has come increasingly to be policed. This essay has

rial version of those gestalt drawings in which the figure/ground relationship oscillates beyond easy containment: the duck looking one way that almost simultaneously becomes a rabbit looking the other, or the vase that flip-flops to two faces staring at each other in profile. That last fabled example carries with it a happy lexical coincidence in English that allows one to produce a veritable gestalt phrasing dependent on a slip of the ear rather than the eye: "How does shifting perception sometimes receive *faces*?" The answers lies immanent along the very phonemes that phrase the question. It is what I have taken to calling the duck/grab-it-while-you-can syndrome.

This is the same effect, not in Stevens but in Stevenson, that we saw in that phasing-out of "faces" by the "phases" that alone gave form to the perversity at play in the protagonist as living pun. It is also the effect that I would like now to imagine in its relation to film, as a way of imagining film's relation not just to the international modernism it accompanied and informed, but to a history of the modernist moment in the literature of earlier periods. If the sun's invisibility in relation to the traces of the day it generates is like the page's functional disappearance beneath the marks that manifest a given text as signification, then the cinematic equivalent of this might seem, pretty much as with a slide projector, to be the bright and effectively invisible light behind the image as projected. But in the kinetic medium of film, as analogously in the workings of textuality, there is another level of the material base, requiring not just projection but also the serializing of difference. This is the spatiotemporal materiality that develops a closer parallel, after all, between the filmstrip passing in front of the projector lamp and the eye's assimilation of a scriptive text than between movies and sun-drenched mornings. As we will see, this (so far hypothetical) parallel may be linked ultimately to an unexpected teleology of text-based representation on the way toward silent film's automatism of difference in the first decades of this century. Indeed, on the issue of modernism's general turn toward the minimal increment of textual generation across various aesthetic forms, there is a suggestive remark from the linguistic vantage of Roman Jakobson: "The autonomization of minimal formal units, a characteristic procedure of the arts and sciences around World War I, was saliently manifested in the growing inquiry into the sound shapes of language" (Jakobson and Waugh 181).

Phonemic Montage: The Word D/Riven by Syntax

In entertaining the cinematic process itself as something like a photomechanical equivalent for the interlinked phonological and graphic basis of

textual generation, I will be offering finally an epitomizing—if by no means typical—moment of sheer homophonic wordplay. This is an imbricated phrasal pun that may be found to rehearse the most eccentric visual operations of the film that passes under its name(s). I take it that this is no harder to do because the wordplay I have in mind appears only in the film's title and is nowhere mobilized within the functional syntax of the voice-over narrative. The avant-garde text in question is the late-modernist photographic montage ("photoroman" or "ciné-roman") by Chris Marker, *La Jetée* (1962), whose most famous (or only?) "scene" (the narrative is comprised otherwise of still photographs in overlapping succession) is a few seconds of teased-out moving-image footage. What this experimental narrative serves to distill of the medium's own standard operations is, we will find, a composite textuality that the impacted title has already acted out in advance.

Then, too, for the lexical splaying of Marker's title there may indeed be a notable high modernist prototype in cinema's own avant-garde canon. In his silent, anagrammatically titled *Anemic cinema* (1927), Marcel Duchamp inscribes a series of homophonic puns—"esquimaux au mots esquise" and the like—on a set of spiraling disks. Simulating the spooling of the cinematic reel in its own silent visual slippage from one celluloid frame to another, frames that blur like Duchamp's high-speed wordplay into various signifying permutations, these spirals bespeak a moment of alliance between the linguistics of literature and the mechanics of a recently arrived and rival medium. From here to the punning title of another nondialogue film half a century later, *La Jetée*, is a shorter step than it may seem in the history of modernist experiment in verbal and visual succession.

Moreover, this step is effectively halved by a direct link recently demonstrated between another of Duchamp's kinetic investigations, this time on canvas (*Nude Descending a Staircase* [1912]), and the late nineteenth-century protocinematic studies of the biomotor "trace" conducted via the chronophotography of Etienne-Jules Marey (Dagognet 140–51). These last are experiments that went so far in the direction of my present thesis (if I may put it this way) as to include—but always without full success in the cinemalike resynthesizing of its analytic breakdowns—a "phonoscope" designed to reinscribe the precise facial and lip movements necessary for the execution of speech patterns (Dagognet 160–62). At the center of its narrative almost a full century later, *La Jetée* embeds an exercise in such analysis-cum-synthesis that may be found to replay the technological origins of both pictorial and literary modernism, each in their own way cubist and polysemous, diffracted and multivalent.

Photogrammatology

Given the psychoanalytic topic (and subject) of Marker's film—a self vanished into his own artificially induced and self-displacing memory traces as visual fixations—the thematizing of the medium as the carrier of consciousness seems inevitable. For Lacan, the *aphanisis* of self-consciousness, its phased fading in and out, constitutes the subject only as "flickering in eclipses" within the metonymic slide of its own enunciation (Jacques-Alain Miller 34). Comparably, in Marker's "photoroman"—composed all but exclusively of still photographs edited together—we are made uniquely aware of kinetic representation in cinema as the flickering-in-eclipses of the single photogram on the image track. This fact is brought out most forcefully by that cinematically "realized" moment when the flow of discrete images of the hero's dream woman asleep is sped up to the point where it begins to resemble, and then actually becomes, a moving-image shot of her waking face in close-up. Just before the photographic encroaches in this way on the cinematic, the separate images have grown so nearly coincident with each other that they narrow to that differential spread necessary to the process of animation. Even before the filmic achieves itself momentarily in a brief stretch of "moving pictures," then, its mechanisms have been rehearsed and asserted in what we might call a *pressure toward* cinema.

Brought forward here is the so-called phi effect at the basis of filmic projection, dependent on that "persistence of vision" that bridges the dis/juncture between separate photograms in order to produce the illusion of continuous motion across the succession of single frames.[10] In the sequence where an all but animated montage of hairbreadth deflections builds toward a fugitive engagement with the full cinematic process, Marker's ontological point is perhaps best captured by precisely the impossibility of capturing this moment through illustrative frame enlargements in an essay like this. Once they were blocked out in sequence, one could not "read" the difference between those stills that, on one hand, remain within the thematic logic of perpetually fading fixations and those that, on the other hand, accelerate toward the enhanced cognitive (and emotional) dimension of the moving image. My own point is that the mechanical rudiments of the apparatus may well evoke at such a moment, as if standing in for all filmic projection, that flickering signification that film shares, while literalizing, with the file of the signifier in writing. Within the filmic flow, that is, the automatized serial displacement of images offers the new medium's loose but illuminating equivalent to the continuously decentered activation of script in subvocal text production, with its recurrent jostling of lexi-

graphic material by phonemic encroachments. This connection is all the more tempting in the case of Marker's film because, again, it is a connection staged—if only in lexical pantomime—by the ambiguities of its very name. To these I will return after bringing out some further points about the mechanics of cinema that should help to gloss such wavering valences even in their related linguistic register.

Let me first advert to a cinematic happenstance as a way of coming round—via the relation of the phases/faces (rather than faces/vase) syndrome of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*—to the flickering-in-eclipses of the cinematic chain. I refer to the manner of producing the transformations of Jekyll into Hyde in the 1941 film version with Spencer Tracy (as well as in previous cinematic adaptations going back to 1912).[11] By the device of superimposition, one avatar of self fades away as the other materializes behind or upon it, the successor self getting stabilized only at the completion of the overlapping dissolve. Any number of other scenic evocations or editing tricks *might* have been used. So that at the level of directorial decision, this device is only a probability, not a structural inevitability. Yet at the level of film history, and the very evolution of its syntax, such a laboratory effect encapsulates a longer view of such technical devices.

This is the view, outlined and exemplified by Christian Metz, whereby the history of editing codes in the cinema is in part the record of the gradual naturalizing of special or trick effects (*trucage*). Superimposition (to choose one of Metz's examples, 666) was once perceived as all magic, all trick—and inevitably foregrounded as such, part of the available spectacle of early cinema. This remained the case until, over time, the device became normalized (in Metz's terms, de-diegeticized)—transferred from message to code—as the operable grammar of temporal and spatial transition in film narrative. To borrow from Stevenson, it was as if the lap dissolve comes eventually to be read not to mark a fantastic simultaneity of "faces" but to generate the "phases" of a narrative as dovetailed episodes. In order for the werewolf-style special effect of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to operate again as the monstrous, as the preternatural rather than the merely grammatical, it must negotiate in this way a certain return of the media-historical repressed: a reactivation of the unnerving artifice of imposed overlaps. In so doing, it becomes the exception that proves the rule of this general outmoding of original narrative topos by sheer editing technique. The resurgence of such a device as figure rather than grammar, in short, manifests a return of form as content.

Linguistic evolution may occasionally operate in much the same way, with a tension between syntax and lexicon that, over etymological time,

turns a too easily mispronounced phrase such as "a napple" into "an apple" (Jesperson 133). If "at ease" had once been "a tease," then a moment such as that mentioned above in Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" would be the reanimation of a linguistic fossil. One does not need a specific etymological contingency of this sort, however, to apprehend a general tendency. It is a tendency never far from impinging on—even while readily overridden by—the local histrionics (rather than history) of language at play and at risk in a given literary text. The tendency is that of lexical border crisis under shifting syntactic duress. The point I now wish to clarify is the way in which this crisis finds an unexpected parallel in the constitutive suppression of differential advance in the photogrammar of the filmstrip: a temporal specificity apart from all special effects.

Cinégation as *Écriture*

In "The Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," Jean-Louis Baudry speaks of the cinematic phenomenon in explicitly psychoanalytic terms. Cinematic images seize attention by means of denial, repression, and negation. In regard to the minimal differentia of images on film, Baudry seeks to demonstrate that cinema as process operates by "the denial of difference: difference is necessary for [cinema] to live, but it lives on its negation" (Baudry 290). This process depends on an enforced cognitive succession—rather than disjunctive series—of photograms clamping down on the unconscious "as it is found in dreams, slips of the tongue, or hysterical symptoms." In this way does the unconscious, if released, find manifestation "as continuity destroyed, broken, and as the unexpected surging forth of a marked difference" (290).

With film and consciousness both understood as networks of containment, of suppressed disruption, the unspoken third term for Baudry is writing. But it is not unspoken for long: "Couldn't we thus say that cinema reconstructs and forms the mechanical model (with the simplifications that this can entail) of a system of writing [*écriture*] constituted by a material base and a countersystem (ideology, idealism) which uses the system while also concealing it?" (291). We can. But only, once more, with the provisos that (1) in certain discursive situations the concealment incident to such writing is not so extreme as the discourse analysis of an Antony Easthope would suppose, and that (2) in those same situations—call them literary moments as such—the unruly deviations of marked *différance* do not get conceptually degraded to inscribed marks per se. Film is, in short, so perfect an illustration of Derrida's "trace" that it reminds us of the term's inevitably

metaphoric status in the not purely visual (graphological) medium of literature, with its system of double articulation rather than (as in cinema) a mechanized indexical relation to an action once before the camera.

Baudry's own claims are indirectly renewed (without explicit comparison) by the work of Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier. In an "antidisciplinary" survey not unrelated to the cross-disciplinary links attempted by this essay, John Mowitt's *Text* gives considerable space to Ropars's work. For Mowitt, its interest rests with the way Ropars theorizes the film image "by first showing how its effacement of the spacing (the enunciative ordering) that conditions the image (as a recognizable visual phenomenon) makes film complicit with phonecentrism [phonocentrism], that is, the ideological system that, among other things, reduces writing to a seamless representation of speech" (Mowitt 170). Instead, Ropars unravels the seams. She sets out (and we turn here to her own translated essays) to deconstruct speech precisely as it founders on "the space of intervals" ("Film Reader" 26). She is concerned, therefore, with its "overlapping of multiple circuits, both heterogeneous and simultaneous" (26). In a parallel reading of a novel by Maurice Blanchot and a film by Alain Resnais, Ropars claims to have "pushed the deconstruction of the sign by the overlapping of letters to its most vertiginous point" (26). She does so, for instance, through the byplay latent in Blanchot's *L'Arrêt du mort* on the proper noun "Louise" (with its hidden "oui") and the pronoun smuggled into the enunciation "ote elle" (26). When Ropars takes up a similar impaction of syllabic matter in "Nevers," a town in the remembered past of the heroine in *Hiroshima mon amour*, the place-name is found overlain in context with, among other monosyllabic infratexts, *verre* (glass), *vers* (toward), and *vert* (green).

This "process of unbinding" directed on "the intertangling and reciprocal disintegration of the elements where meaning is undone" (30) is extended in another of her essays (as it will soon be in my own) to the homophonically loaded title of a single film, in her case Godard's *Breathless*. On Ropars's hearing, the "cinéscripture" ("The Graphic" 147, 158) of the film's French title, *À bout de souffle*, reveals how a "single graphic tracing ('*souffle*') . . . generates elements ('sous') which are figurable or phonetically combinable into 'souvenirs brises' (broken memories)" (151). As in the case of Cohen's "anti-mimetic" disturbances earlier, there often appears something forced rather than found in her examples, anything but immanent, yet the general claim may hold. The analytic rather than just synthetic power of cinema, conceived as writing, is such that "editing" (she means the internal exertions of the whole montage system) has the "ability to make the alphabet err into protean anagrams," materialized on "multiple channels" (158).

This is, in short, the "hieroglyph hypothesis" (158), and it comes nearest to my own formulation about the recurrence of a transegmental drift at lexical borders when Ropars asserts that this alphabetic errancy is engaged only "if the voice frees from the hold of the written word the text whose mark it will continue to bear" (159). To cast this in the explicit grammatological terms that she repeatedly courts: The "multiple channels" of signification interfere with each other in a shaking off of the letter that involves, at the same time, a further shackling to the trace.

Words S/Crawling By, Text T/Racing On: Toward a Dialectics of Succession

Ropars's "hieroglyph hypothesis" of course calls to mind the more famous "ideogram hypothesis" of half a century before. It is indeed Sergei Eisenstein who may lead us to a closer tie between the phi effect of the filmic apparatus and the ripple effect of cinematic *écriture*. For it was Eisenstein who defiantly minimized the element of succession itself in the filmstrip, subsuming sequence instead to a perceptual dialectic. Despite the rolling-past of images, film does not *read* as a textual scrolling but rather as a reciprocal displacement and mutual exclusion of image flashes. This is the base level of Eisenstein's claims for the destabilizing essence of the montage principle apart from—and before—an actual montage sequence. Eisenstein drives his ideogrammatic thesis (signification through visual collision) past even the contrasts within a single shot down to the vanishing borders between single photograms in the process of projection. Though on the strip we have the successive and sequential displacement of one image by its adjacent other, in the phenomenality of screen viewing, Eisenstein insists, there is no patient sequence of frames. There is only the instantaneous superimposition of one upon the other in that mix of sameness and difference—of perpetually deferred self-identity, if you will—that transforms the race of photograms into the fact of film: a continuously unsettled palimpsest. "For, in fact, each sequential element is perceived not *next* to the other, but on *top* of the other" (105)—in a perceptual "conflict" (105) that generates not so much the moving image (images are already speeding by) but the held image of another and *represented* motion, one autonomous rather than automated. Cinema is, in short, a conflictual tension that looks like action. It is, in a word, dialectical.[12] And to retrieve Eisenstein's dead metaphor for my literary model, some of the intervals involved in the conflicted lexicality of literary momentum do become all but "audible" in their graphonic syncopation. They do so through a process that grammatology itself would recog-

nize as a " 'dialectic' of protention and retention" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 117): the continuous alter(n)ation of phonemes and constitutive *blancs*.[13]

We are therefore ready to consider how the dialectical tension of the photogrammatic sequence takes what might be sensed as its homologous lexical toll on the narrative as well as the title of Chris Marker's *La Jetée*. In ways almost uncannily matched to the ironies of the film's tacit psychoanalytic plotting, its self-mutating title is a gestalt all its own, now alternative noun phrases, now wavering full clauses. Framing the story's post-Proustian allegory of psychic time travel, in a narrative pitched between science-fiction thriller and existential reverie, the uninvolving phrase *La Jetée* refers most obviously (and trivially) to the jetty (or outdoor passenger platform) at Orly airport, the walkway—and psychological transit zone—that locates the story's primal scene of eroticism and death. It was there, as a young boy, that the hero, smitten with a woman's face, saw what he realized only later must have been a man murdered. World War III follows precipitously, and in the aftermath the hero is made the subject of psychological experiments designed to send him back into his own fixated past as a way of training him for projection into the future, where he can gain access to the power supply necessary to keep the present remains of civilization moving along on its way into just that future. When the hero seeks finally to escape the underground laboratory of these experiments, he finds, back again on the jetty, that it was his own death that he had once (fore)seen—finds, in other words, that in the very moment and the very fact of going back again he has obliterated his own future, has killed off his own succession from boy to man.

It is according to something like this double pattern of anticipation and retrospection—or in an extrapolation from Derridean trace to the track of plot, of protention versus retention as a narrative double-cross—that the title begins to unravel its layers of imbricated syntactic pertinence. At issue here is of course not the instance but the principle. It does not matter for my argument that any given film text (whether by Marker or Godard) indulges in lexically erosive wordplay, but that all films perform something like the cinematic counterpart of this frictional byplay in the confounding (as well as foundational) overlap of simultaneity upon succession. For Joan Copjec's psychoanalytic reading of Marker's film, in which the plot turns on the hero's psychotic incapacity to disengage from the libidinal cathexis of an obsessional childhood image, the title ironically evokes that throwing-off, that "ejection," which has failed to release him (Copjec 36). In my reading, however, the lexical dynamic of the phrasing sustains a multiple self-ejection that removes all priority and therefore all possible exile. What it sustains is exactly that paradox of simultaneous alternatives that,

in terms of the plot's time-loop narrative, presents for its spatiotemporal agent an impossible double bind.

Ventrilogos

A related example may justify a brief further delay. Postponing the analytic breakdown of Marker's (two-, three-, or four-word) title along its shifting internal fault lines, a comparison may be drawn from the actual soundtrack of another film. Though equally concerned with the parapraxis of the unconscious, the destabilizing overlays incident to dream life, this cinematic narrative does not intervene quite so irruptively in its own medium, as *La Jetée* does, to theorize the photogram's place in the metonymic slide of desire. The film I am thinking of, also a time-loop narrative in the genre of the uncanny, is the 1945 British thriller *Dead of Night*. It narrates, and hence comes to inhabit, a weird recurrent dream in which, by a dizzying regress, the participants tell the dreamer stories of their own uncanny past. The last of these, from a psychiatrist who happens to be on hand, concerns a ventriloquist's dummy who gradually siphons off the life of his master. This last inset story is launched in the retrospective telling by a marked narrative framework laying bare nothing less than sound cinema's own constitutive ventriloquism (human images wedded to voices issuing from a separate source): a close-up on a legal affidavit timed to the detached voice-over of the psychiatrist who is silently reading the narrative deposition to himself.

Inside the subsidiary plot evolved in this way, the first scene with the ventriloquist introduces us at once to the facile punning that characterizes his stage act. Hugo, the aggressive dummy, mishears his master's phrase, "Why, Hugo, that's clairvoyance" (in response to the dummy's offer to read a pretty customer's thoughts), and instead introduces himself to the woman with a vaguely lascivious "Good evening, Clair." From here out, the dummy's patter, onstage and off, is laced with just such puns, right down to the moment when he threatens to desert his master for a rival ventriloquist. The master seeks reassurance that Hugo would never leave, and the latter's ominously repeated "Wouldn't I?"—with its fleeting homophonic ambivalences—returns for threefold iteration in the violent finale of the frame narrative's encompassing nightmare. There, the hero, the original recurrent dreamer, has openly taken up the position of the ventriloquist (all dream avatars being merely the "throwing" of one's own voiced—or otherwise manifested—desires into the figure of the other) and finds himself being strangled to death by the dummy.

Now all articulation is the latter's alone. Where before there was a trisyl-

labic noun operating as phonemic rebus for a proper name (clairvoyance = Clair Voyance), at this point the homicidal enunciation of "Wouldn't I" installs a more lexically splintering torsion. From its obvious status as contracted rhetorical question, the wrenched because overinflected phrasing vacillates—as if sounded once for each of three possible decodings—between the slurred "wooden I" of the dummy's asserted identity (carved as well as constructed) and the too crisply enunciated "wouldn't die" of his homicidal self-preservation.[14] That last valence of this ambivalent phrasing is thereby rotated in rapid, emphatic repetition to "I wouldn't die." This stands—or, better, slips out from under itself—as a low modernist example of the same phonemic torque that springs that mystic transfiguration in Forster's *A Passage to India* (1922) by which the name Mrs. Moore, via the syllabic laxity of "Miss/es Moore," gets r/evolved into the Hindu goddess "Esmiss Esmoor" (225), its own bilingual version of what Forster calls in a different context "a religious pun, not a religious truth" (276).[15]

In that climactic repetition from *Dead of Night*, like the broken record of a denatured voice, we cannot, certainly on first viewing, be sure exactly what we have heard. What limits the interest of this example for my present argument is simply that we *have* heard it, however we decide to take it—that the relation of language to dreamplay, to the condensations and displacements of the unconscious, is in this case sounded out (and so *potentially* disambiguated) rather than merely, as in literary writing, inscribed for a ventriloqual if silent enunciation of our own. The latter case of hovering halftones in the reading experience, of course, involves a variety of phantasmal manifestation at least as close as is the audiovisual materiality of film to the undecidable fluxions—though not of course the specularity—of the unconscious. More than with the reception of continuous motion on film, however, such reading defers with a nervous resistance to those instantaneous deferrals of signifying elements that make for cognitive engagement with film and literary text alike. Encountered on page rather than screen, and maximized as *écriture*, is a signifying energy that can at any moment seem spun from the marginal doubling, duping, or punning—the overlapping "slant rhyme"—of a verbal shape (as in Stevenson's homophonic gothic) fractionally out of phase with the passing alterity for which it rushes to substitute itself.

Here I depart from Ropars, if only by taking her own logic a step farther. On her view, "vertical montage," the layering for instance of aural upon visual effects, opens that undecidable space of *différance* that is exactly what turns audiovisual automatism into "cinéscripture." I wish, though, to follow this lead into the plane of "horizontal montage" as well, and its cellular

its work cut out for it if it wants, first, to recast the place of vocalization (sounded or not) in the generation of literary language, in high modernists and Victorians alike (not to mention in Shakespeare through Keats), and, second, to bring out the link between the structuring of enunciation in literary language and the work of cinema: cinema in its aspect not as an apparitional medium but as a material process(ion), cinema not so much as a modern(ist) aesthetic form but rather as a theoretical (precisely because technological) inroad into the textual poetics of modernism.

Reflecting on reading as one of the practices of everyday life—on reading not as it is conceptually defined but as it is actually practiced in the event—Michel de Certeau evokes its contingencies just about as well as it is possible to do while leaving unsaid a whole dimension of reading praxis: "From analyses that follow the activity of reading in its detours, drifts across the page, metamorphoses and anamorphoses of the text produced by the travelling eye, imaginative or meditative flights taking off from a few words, overlappings of spaces on the militarily organized surfaces of the text, it is at least clear, as a first result, that one cannot maintain the division separating the readable text (a book, image, etc.) from the act of reading" (170). This point catches the spirit of the reading energies I want to investigate here, but it is in turn captured too much by the letter of that reading: in literary instances, by the visible mark rather than the phonemic cue.

De Certeau's metaphors are spatial; their agency, the roving eye. Detours and leaps, skimmings and skewings, anamorphic warpings and morphological mutations: all of this is true of and true to the reading act as an encounter with the visual ground of textual legibility ("book, image, etc."). But that "etc." is by no means exhaustive if we take it to encompass merely any other such readable surface. Distinct from the opened and marked page of a book are the acoustic signals triggered by linguistic inscription: what I have elsewhere called the "phonotext" of subvocal enunciation running simultaneously across, and sometimes fractionally out of sync with, the scriptive phenotext. Such syncopation must be kept, so to say, in syntactic line. Similarly, within a broad acceptation of de Certeau's deciphered "image," there is also the visual skimming of the cinematic field. To remain legible as image system, cinema must actively resist any "reading" that submits itself to a correlative (and equally constitutive) syncopation within the meshed increments of its representation. As with its literary counterpart, this resistance cannot always be assured. High modernism is only one name for a more than ordinary letting down of the guard.

constituents. There, by analogy with the "fracture internal to every graphic trace" ("Film Reader" 28), film is found to operate only by performing in eclipses its own version of an incremental default in continuity. Yet this jagged differential operates both to engineer and define a technological motion that simulates another sort of movement, and that does so by a vertical superimposition after all: Eisenstein's dialectic of frame advance as a tensed perceptual laminate rather than graded progression.[16]

Sans son: The Self-Jettisoned Signifier

The lexical and syntactic lamination of Marker's title, we are now primed to recognize—its dialectic conflation, I am now ready to argue—says it all, if only because its mode of saying is replayed within his film's most famous scene of liminal cinematic signification, its photograms coming awake as cinema. I have been delaying discussion of this title, this titular common noun phrase, until what I want to call its climactic *gratuitousness* for my argument should be obvious. Even when activated so that it "undercorrects"—and so undermines—the normative work of utterance, this phrasing as such remains one more "literary" example. At the same time, its relation to the analytic breakdown of filmic flow within this one film lends it an exemplary (if not explanatory) frisson. In its own frictional anamorphonics, it offers an isomorph of filmic articulation. More specifically, it evokes that cinemachination whose constitutive effects were necessarily more obvious in the "primitive" (and so in its own way modernist) phase of the medium's history. For what *La Jetée* recovers for strategic deployment, the new mimesis of the early cinema could not help but disclose, at least until developments in "flicker fusion" smoothed over the very traces of photogrammatic origin. It is in this sense that cinema as a modern representational system sheds a kind of stroboscopic light on the graph/phonic (graphonic) segues of letteral as well as visual signification.

How, then, is this line of thought entitled, finally, by the unprepossessing designation of Marker's film? The first break with lexical borders begins with the elision that would permit *Là j'étais* (the imperfect mode of a continuous past: "There I was") to emerge by close echo with the inscribed *La Jetée*, offering on the sly the hero's locative testimony of original and abiding presence on the jetty of his memory. No sooner has narrative displaced the naming of its in/augural (because ominous) dramatic site—by verbalizing at the same time the avowed presence to that place of the protagonist—than this elegiac clause begins stripping its linguistic gears. It slips or drifts, in other words, toward a more precisely demarcated temporality in its slide

from imperfect to perfect mode: the homophonic (and further elided) overtone of *Là j'ai été* ("There I have been").[17] This is a phrasing shadowed in turn by the faint adverbial expectancy of something like "once" or "often" or "until just now"—but no longer. For in the *there* of that having been, no here and now sustains its foothold. Even the past itself melts away toward the conjectural in yet a third modal overlay of the composite verb form: this time the past subjunctive ("[que] là j'aie été"), as in "I believed (hypothetically) that *I had been there*," with adverbial predication suspended in the ontological as well as grammatical limbo of all things "contrary to fact." Such is the last gesture of presence for a life lived wholly in the mood—as well as mode—of conjectural retrospect. If any verbal alternative of this sort occurs to or accurses our ears, bedeviling the linearity of this particular mimesis, then we are all the more likely to allow Marker's overcrowded title a last sem/antic latitude. The slippage would insinuate, this time, a less than strictly grammatical figure for the ironized season of an at once unrecoverable and inescapable past: *l'âge été*, that phantasmatic summer before the fall.

In all this we are registering a more site-specific and grammatically concretized (however fractured) version of the errant cinéscripture theorized and spottily audited by Ropars, whose suitably involuted formulation I take space to repeat: the sliding signifier of deconstruction does its work only "if the voice frees from the hold of the written word the text whose mark it will continue to bear." It is in this sense, and within a literary-historical framework, that I have hoped to elaborate on what Ropars has set herself more locally to demonstrate, namely, the "capacity of montage to constitute an operator of reading" ("Film Reader" 30). This is a montage, in Marker's case, only at its reductive lower limit. It is a montage that structures the almost visible *succession*, not just the self-succeeding visibility—the almost visible *différance*—of the cinematographic series. This is a series built upon the enchained photogram that differs from, but only by way of deferring, the phantasmal (and fractionally discrepant) double that is always overtaking it in order to take it over—or in Eisenstein's sense of dialectical superimposition, in order to put one over on it, one of the same-but-different.

To return, then, to our final example: That all of this greased significatory slippage along the gathering creases of adverb, pronoun, and verb in their various contractions and decontractions (enunciatable on the run as *l'/là/âge/je/j'/é/ai/aie/été/ais*) should transpire to entitle a film so strikingly keyed, in its one moment of cinematic activation, to the skid of photograms underlying the flow of motion seems to me one culmination of an important "modernist" strain (both senses) of textual procedure. By analogy with

Marker's unprecedented bringing to light of "persistence of vision" as a founding phenomenon of the moving image, we may therefore speak in connection with the literary text of a certain "persistence of (subvocal) audition." This is the lexical (per)severing or syntactic s(p)licing that makes for meaning even while generating a sense of wording in excess of words. In both literary and cinematic cases, as they happen to collaborate in *La Jetée* at textual as well as thematic levels, evanescence and loss do not rob meaning but constitute it. Cinema proceeds on the serial trace of a vanishing, a forgetting-in-progress that is dialectically infused into each new intrusion within the frame. Persistence of vision explains the retention of the ephemeral as the dialectical other of the suddenly arrived. So, too, with the passage of word after word into the cognitive frame of sequential syntactic positioning, with a rapidity that keeps lexical integrity at risk. The superimposition (Eisenstein's model transposed to script) of one word upon another may surrender a letter or two, and hence reshuffle the phonemic sequence—but only as a subvocal drift cresting over the inscribed blank with a force sufficient to draw off the trace of the predecessor for the materialization of the subsequent lexeme. It all happens in the flick of an inscription, the blink of an eye, the flash of an inner ear. To the extent that such a phenomenon thwarts (or at least multiplies and so postpones) mimesis, it does so not as its antithesis but as its analysis, degrammatizing the fluent in service to the constituent, while in the process "turning structure into event."[18]

Such is the enunciated (even when unspoken) fluxion, both form and overflow at once, that sustains the filaments of ambiguity across the gaping integument of script. This is an oscillation beyond all operable signifying, one that the rival medium of cinema works at once to mechanize and to mask. Within the context of an international modernism newly detached from traditional mimetic obligations in verbal as well as pictorial media, film's alternative visuality marks its distance from experimental writing not only, as image system, by the seen world it simulates but also, as text, and here the distance narrows, by the different means of difference required to sustain that illusion. Within a common microdialectic of form, film suppresses what modernist writing releases. Movies elide the gap, the splice, that all reading must honor and at the same time surmount—an intermittent eclipse of script that intensive literary reading further unsettles, vexing the interval in the self-regrouping drive of lettered sense. But this is not to deny, precisely not, that a filmstrip becomes a movie in much the same way that writing becomes text. For all the divergences between arbitrary and analogous signification, it might in this sense be observed—according to a different teleological destiny than is usually sketched for either medium—

that cinema makes good on everything in literature that it fails to outmode as mimetic system, even as literature is divesting many of its own representational mandates. In so doing, filmic process renders almost tangible, albeit invisible, something very close to the underlying textual dynamism of a literary writing with which cinema's manifest kinetic picturation would never, at least before Marker's extremity, expect comparison.

The filmstrip, too, like the sentence, is an articulated sequence of signs. Montage on screen is to the incremental collage on the strip what the read page is to lexical structure and its bordering blanks. Photogram as much as phoneme, therefore, must disappear into the processed unit of signification as its inner lining and its negative imprint, at one and the same time the rudiment and the undoing of its linear effect. In this way cinema lends itself to the ethos of modernism in part to make palpable not the strict binarism of the linguistic system so much as the more mobile and fluid counterplays on which the flicker effect—and flicker fusion—of literary writing is also, and always, mounted. Or, to bring the metaphor closer to home in this essay, try figuring these signifying vibrations within the aural register of silent text production: as evidence, once again, of that sonic waiver in reading that imposes no ban on subvocalization. In reading between words, we no sooner produce than we process the extraneous phonic enunciation. Still within the orbit of an emergent cinematic paradigm, here modernist writing gets its new lease on subliminal vocalization. Without the insulation against background interference ordinarily provided by discourse (a normative discourse that protects its lexical flanks), the flicker effect of literary writing is accompanied at intervals—exactly at lexical intervals—by sensed tremors that penetrate the sound barrier of standard inscription. Here is the sprocket noise of textual machination as the very engine of reading's second sense: a whir that is every so often urged toward wording by the listening eye.

NOTES

1. Since my argument for the "transegmental drift" as the lexical limit case of the literary "phonotext," two recent publications tend (I like to think) to confirm as well as extend my line of inquiry. Kittler, without mentioning Kristeva, historicizes the importance of maternal orality in the inculcation of phonetic principles in childhood reading (25–69) in a way that anticipates the "maternal" core (*chora*) of semiotic pulsion in Kristeva's work (Stewart 125, 270–71). So that "when later in life children picked up a book, they would not see letters but hear, with irrepressible longing, a voice between the lines" (Kittler 32). Part of this tendency toward the "oralization" of reading Kittler draws from Foucault's history of the linguistic episteme in *The Order of Things* (32). It is an earlier aspect of Foucault's work, on

the modernist literary experimentation of Raymond Roussel (Stewart 118–26), that has been taken up more recently by Douglas Kahn in "Death in the Light of the Phonograph: Raymond Roussel's *Locus Solus*" (Kahn and Whitehead 69–104): "Despite what has been noted as Foucault's antivisualism, he does not demonstrate any heightened sense of aurality; for him Roussel is text, that is mute" (70). So "Why listen to a Roussel novel?" asks Kahn (70), stressing the "homophonics" (72) of Roussel's post-phonographic inscription in a way that can be readily assimilated, as Foucault's own best examples go to show, to a notion of "text" that, however "mute," is not narrowly graphological.

2. See especially his and Linda R. Waugh's last chapter, punningly titled "The Spell of Speech Sounds" (181–234), for the application of certain phonological principles to literary structure.

3. For which Derrida himself is scarcely to be held accountable, having gone out of his way in both commentary and example to honor the phonematic stratum of language. Indeed, in "+ R (Into the Bargain)," he unites instance and exegesis when closing in on an explicitly cross-lexical wordplay in the opening line of a poem he published at age seventeen: "*Glas* emerges twice in it, in pieces, cut from itself, . . . once in a single word, once inapparent or inaudible, detached from itself by the chasm between two words: it is read, seen written or drawn, held to silence (etan*g* *l*ait [pond milk], entity [*étant*] become milk [*lait*] again" (161). It is just this "chasm between words" whose aleatory bridging I have called the "transegmental drift," and whose further workings this essay has set out to explore.

4. For a fuller discussion of the Derridean position and the confusion it has sometimes sown in its application by other critics, see Stewart 104–7.

5. Against the *epos* of the speaking voice Derrida stresses up to a point "the purely graphic stratum within the structure of the literary text within the history of the becoming-literary of literality, notably in its 'modernity' " (*Of Grammatology* 117).

6. For a testing on *Jane Eyre* of the theories of Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, I am indebted to Herman Rapaport's tentative integration of their version of psychoanalytic reading ("cryptonymy") with that of Lacan. Rapaport's claims about a "poetic of hauntedness" (1093) center on the mourninglike effects of those encrypted signifiers in Brontë that circle the unsaid bilingual *mère* both of Jane's patriarchal "nightmare" (1101) and of the orphaned Jane's own paternal name: the Law of the Father thus manifested and evaded at once in the "psychotic voices" (1103) of a signifying maternal Other. In the context of echoing phonic chains such as "ère, air, aware, beware, nightmare, glare, terror, but also eye, ire, Ireland, I, Vampyre, wild" (1098), Rapaport finds a subterranean "verbarium" strung together in Brontë's novel out of what Abraham and Torok call lexical "allosemes." These are ghostly, self-haunted echoes of one another slipping into signification along "paths of avoidance" (1107) that one might call repression were it not for their perpetual return, a return both within and upon themselves. As for the passage presently under discussion from *Jane Eyre*, my own sense of "ire" and "I" in relation to the "Eyre" of both "Ireland" and "Eyrie" finds such lexical dissemination taking a different "path of avoidance"—via the frictional erosion of what might instead be called overlapping "allophonic" variants.

7. In this specialized use of the term "matrix" (here and with the Stevens pas-

sage below), I allude to Riffaterre's *Semiotics of Poetry*, despite his own disinclination to operate at this phonemic level.

8. See William Veeder, "Collated Fractions of the Manuscript Drafts of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*" (Veeder and Hirsch 20).

9. See the treatment of such "appositive genitives" in Brooke-Rose 154–60, where perhaps the most immediately apparent example is "the fire of love" (154).

10. This continuity is also made possible by the projector's shutter interrupting the beam often enough (two or three times per frame at twenty-four frames per second) to mute or smooth the oscillating recurrence of nearly identical frames, thus inducing "critical flicker fusion" (Bordwell and Thompson 6).

11. See Veeder and Hirsch for an illustration of the 1912 instance (212), as well as for an earlier publicity shot, also involving superimposed images of the title characters, used to advertise an 1887–88 stage adaptation.

12. Metz has a similar point in mind when he declares that "montage itself, at the base of all cinema, is already a perpetual *trucage*, without being reduced to the *false* in usual cases" (Metz 672).

13. Without reference to Eisenstein's dialectic of succession as superimposition, Mowitt's account of Ropars's attempt to get past "the complicity between phonecentrism [*sic*] and iconic fetishism" (Mowitt 17) in the alignment of film with a grammatological model highlights her recourse to Eisenstein's concept of the ideogram, the composite signifier, or in other words, "the hieroglyph's graphic embodiment of a cohabitation of figurative, symbolic, abstract and phonetic elements" (Mowitt 171). Though Mowitt follows Ropars in a sense of spacing that extends far beyond my concern here with the Derridean *blanc* between words, still Mowitt's next formulation, and not least in its relation to Eisenstein's thought, coincides with my own emphasis on a "modernist" sense of the cinematic image in its constitutive failure (as in the case of the literary lexeme) entirely to coincide with itself: "From this perspective, filmic writing qualifies as 'writing,' not because it generates aesthetic effects (like literary writing), but because it is, in many ways, a consummately 'modern' articulation of the heterogeneous spacing that comprises writing *in general*" (Mowitt 171).

14. It is in the nature of these dialectical auditions that they often emerge from the dialogics of interpretative discussion. I am grateful to Jeff Netto for pointing out to me the second of these punning overtones, via the dental liaison that assimilates *t* to *I* in a context where, as it were, the *die* is immediately cast.

15. The locus classicus, whether before or after the fact, of any such rotational phrasing, all such spun punning, is of course Joyce. The famous section of the *Wake* that begins "O / tell me all about / Anna Livia" (196) quickly reiterates the command with "Tell me all. Tell me now" (196), only to close twenty pages later, after the speaker's identification with the insentient environs ("I feel as old as yonder elm" [215]), with "Tell me, tell me, tell me, elm!" (216), where the vocative syllable is transegmentally released from the belling repetition of the imperative form.

16. It should be clarified that Ropars uses the term "horizontal" (as in "Graphic" 148) in something of the way I am applying it above to the sequential unfolding of plot "phases" in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. This is not to be confused with the actual passage of the strip through the projector, which is in turn not the

sense of "vertical" when it is applied to the editorial (rather than projective) work of montage. Where "vertical montage" (Ropars-Wuilleumier, "Film Reader" 22) designates the layered elements that make up the projected ensemble of image and sound, "horizontal montage" captures the sense that this material elapses in time, moving from here to there (often *as if* laterally, and quite possibly by analogy with the left-to-right movement of the reading rather than viewing eye in Western culture) while the image track races (from top to bottom) through the projector.

17. My thanks to Nataša Ďurovičová for first calling to mind's ear this instance of the French perfect tense.

18. This was a phrase used by Michael Holquist to characterize my investigation when part of this essay was read as a conference paper at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, in 1994.

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The Shape and W/Ring of Words

When the habit of reading becomes embroiled in the textual densities of such a modernist program, it is for the most part merely an aggravation of standard practice. Inadvertent phonemic hurdles are always being overcome in literary reading, as well as desired intensifications undergone. This is not often recognized by literary-historical schemata. According, for instance, to Fredric Jameson, Joseph Conrad's denaturing and anything but transparent style makes him in effect (at least among novelists) the first modernist *writer*, an early master of *écriture* (Jameson 206). This seems absolutely right as far as it goes. Pinning the assertion to instances, however, one senses how much of Conrad's textual experiment rings familiar, borrowing as it does from the trusted vein of Victorian rhetorical sonority and its more tactical phonetic emphases.

Conrad's preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* is, of course, one of the leading early manifestos for a new turn in prose fiction. Though his stress falls most famously on making the reader *see*, there is a little-noted and self-exampling passage on the aural contour of fictional writing, on prose as a timbre as well as a structure of prompted images. Here Conrad insists that "it is only through an unremitting, never-discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to color, and that the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words" (Conrad 12). The notion of "plasticity" in this passage does not give way to that of "color" fast enough to rule out its transitional reference to the malleable acoustic matter of language. Nor is it just the internal slant rhymes of "scent" against "stant," "place" against "face," "evanescent" against "instant" that catch the resonance as well as the glint of which he speaks. Even in dismissing that slackness of language that must be forsworn, Conrad makes its very devaluation ring. For he glosses that "commonplace surface of words" as follows after a colon: "of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage." Capped by the further echo of "ages" against "usage," this implied economy in the use value of words is one in which the dead metaphor of "defaced" suggests by contrast the chink—or "ring"—of a newly minted narrative lexicon. So that finally what the modernist writer as craftsman must eschew, in rejecting (here via imitative redundancy) the "old, old words," is something exactly halfway between the poverty of "old, doled" and the numbness of "old, dulled" words. It is one (metaphoric) thing to have the rhetorical edge of language blunted by a cheapening wear and tear;

it is another (phonemic) thing to have the surfaces of words wear away at each other, productively, under the duress of sheer attention.

Shortly after finishing a book on more or less the latter subject, I chanced upon a Modern Language Association session about music and literature at which Marshall Brown was giving a paper in part on Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." I myself had written about the relaxing slack in enunciation that turns "dost tease us out of thought" into the elided "dost ease us out of thought" (Stewart 160).[1] But Brown "heard" something earlier in the poem as well, when figures on the static, voiceless urn are called upon to "Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone" (l. 14). He noted the "note" in no tone. Thinking of this phantom scriptive annotation as evoking the way in which all sound in literature exists only under erasure as text is a way of starting to think forward through the evidence I want here to examine. The question remains: Why are these textual "notations" so easy to hear and so hard to speak—that is, to speak about in critical discussion (Brown's happy discovery a decided exception at this or any other MLA)? There is at least one ready answer.

The Ear Inert: Conspiracy Theory

When Roman Jakobson writes of the " 'figure of sound' " ("Linguistics" 312; his own quotation marks), the concept itself is figurative. So also when he writes of "the sound shapes of words," where he has in mind a decidedly *mixed* but not a dead metaphor, even when language takes the form of written text.[2] In its literary manifestations, Jakobson's object of study is of course the graphically fashioned but in large part phonemically realized formal infrastructure of textual representation. Literary writing is, in other words, shaped or configured by sound patterns even when they are not voiced. Recently, however, it is just this formal infrastructure of literature that has been questioned, flattened, vitiated by poststructuralist attacks from opposite directions, a prominent brand of deconstruction on one side, a leading mode of discourse analysis on the other. Each manner of attack summarily conflates the "sound figure" or "sound shape" with variously supposed manifestations of Voice, that shibboleth of the humanist literary tradition. Any such conflation, however, is premature and disabling for a full account of the reading dynamic. This is because it conspires theoretically against a differential tension fundamental to the linguistic structure of literary textuality.

From one direction, in service to a deconstruction of textual reference, the signifying system of literary representation is now widely understood

not as a trace or index of the imagined world (or, more to the point here, speaker) it evokes, but instead as a series of differential *traces*. The term is of course Derrida's, along with its own often misleading metaphoric associations.[3] Though such a trace is for Derrida by no means simply the mark on the page, it has come to be thought of in these terms by many of his Anglo-American followers: more like a tracery of letters as phantom afterimage of presence than like a marked (but always invisible) difference within each letter from its pertinent opposite in word formation. And once trace is subsumed to script in this way, the phonematic dimensions of difference and deferral are consigned to silence.[4] From another direction, in the service of exposing and dismantling literature's constructed subjectivity as a strategically devised discourse of autonomous interiority, the literary system has been taken as the intentional fabrication of a unitary speaking voice. Thus, from each perspective by turns, a speech-based linguistics and an ideology of the subject are seen as literature's twin mystifications. The irony is that the phonemic texture of literary language is given almost opposite weight in these two frequent moves against the centering Voice, against text as voicing.

I speak mostly of tendencies adding up rather than of considered positions shored up. Yet the animus against phonological response is widely apparent. From the point of view of a narrowly conceived deconstruction, the phonocentric text is an illusion promoted by the figurative notion of "expressive utterance" where there is only writing. Alternately, the critique of the subject as a literary fiction finds in the poetic text a surplus of phonemic material, of enunciative options, that must be curtailed in order to sustain the myth of the univocal point of origin. Where deconstruction (in the hands of a practitioner such as Paul de Man) wholly subordinates phonological issues to the tropological indeterminacy of signification as mute inscription, a critic such as Antony Easthope in *Poetry as Discourse* attempts to historicize the enshrinement of a speaking subject as the necessary staving off of too much extraneous (rather than an altogether nonexistent) voicing. Though exiled by linguistic definition in certain deconstructive practices and so theorized out of existence, Voice is instead seen constrained only up to a certain point according to Easthope's discourse analysis, with the enunciating subject certified by classic texts precisely when its acknowledged phonemic multiplicity is held in check. Either way, the detectable phonophobia of these approaches—whether braced against the notion of sound's materialization through script or steeled against babble's invasion of simulated vocal discourse—sells short the linguistic tensility (and phonemic undertow) of literary writing in any period.

To force an uneasy wedding of the two positions is not, of course, impossible or unfamiliar. Phonemic along with graphic turmoil can become not an encumbrance to but, rather, the star-crossed destiny of literary writing in a certain version of the historical long view. Discourse eventually submits in this way to the maddening incestuous embrace of its own origin in a less regimented textuality. Something like this. So far, I have polarized the ruling claims only to expose the suppression of phonological textures that they each—and oppositely—entail. Their most obvious point of contact occurs in leading accounts of the "modernist" advent (loosely defined), with "modernity" understood either as an ahistorical condition of disclosed materiality in one approach or as a telos of literary history in the other—advent as an unscheduled adventure or a timed arrival. For deconstruction, especially and explicitly in Derrida, textual "modernity" is a dehistoricized term for the eruption into literary writing of what J. Hillis Miller would later call (in a book by that name) "the linguistic moment," a moment that disperses any vestige of naive mimesis (including of the speaking voice) to unfold the production of language itself under the sign of grammatology rather than phonology.[5] By contrast, literary history is for Easthope founded on and maintained by the vigilant "overcorrection" (106) of a certain signifying surcharge in text production. With coherent speaking subjects emerging from texts only via the protocols of containment by which phonemic excess is kept in place rather than at play, modernism is nevertheless the end in view. It is the breached limit that proves the rule.

On this showing, Renaissance poetic practice closes ranks around the speaking persona, where in Shakespeare's Sonnet 73, for example (the example is Easthope's, 106), the phrase "Death's second self" must be articulated to defeat a pointless elision of sibilants that no integrated persona could be conceived to intend, not to mention (as Easthope does not) the anarchic irruption of an entire clause from these three slurred words: "Death seconds self." Orchestrating the institution of the modern (though not the modernist) lyric, we are told, is a "coherent polysemy" that permits "very little sliding of the signifier over the signified" (99). Following on this Renaissance consolidation of integrated (however mystified) phonocentric origin, the Augustans, according to Easthope, only tightened the reins. The Romantics cut loose again in their own way, though still within the dispensation of a centered lyric utterance. Modernism then arrives as the point of no return for the foregrounded inscription (rather than transcribed utterance) of verse and prose fiction alike, where all aura of vocalization dissipates into a (strictly metaphoric) textual noise.

Before this ruptural turning point, however, as many such arguments

would go, the constructed—and all too easily deconstructed—persona of a Shakespeare sonnet or a first-person Victorian bildungsroman (each expressive and introspective at once; each, in other words, the work of a speaking and of a subject) rules the practices of literary representation. All such literary personae betray an ideology of the subject so deeply implicated in the artificially buttressed myth of an uttering agency that a double imperative is found to hold sway: namely, that the sound shapes of literary language must not only veil their purely graphic origin but fence in their textual truancy in order to sustain the notion of a generative psychic center. So runs the prevailing assumption, but what happens when it runs up against disturbing (because all too prevalent) counterexamples?

We will be moving to some classic "readerly" instances (Barthes's sense) from the Victorian period after a brief further reflection on the tendency in criticism to hold such reading hostage to the labors of the deciphering eye alone. The tendency is still very much with us. In 1993's *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism*, Jerome McGann consistently highlights the graphic physicality of the textual medium as its predominant modernist dimension, his commentary often tuning out entirely the aural register. As it happens, he tracks the high modernist emphasis on literary typography, on the biblio/graphic in this sense, back to the Victorian renaissance of printing in the work of William Morris. Against the maximized physical aspects of the protomodernist text as iconic rather than vehicular, inscriptive before signifying, McGann sets (almost nostalgically) "the material features (morphemic and phonemic) of poetic language as we have received them through a first-order set of (ballad) conventions" (46)—with (we might add) the implied derivation of such features, as in Easthope and others, from the bardic discourse of the speaking subject. Even when remarking in connection with the modernist Wallace Stevens that there "are graces available to writing when it gives its entire faith over to Language" (24), McGann's emphasis falls on the former, on the mechanical production of inscription and its print formats, rather than on the full ensemble of linguistic properties as produced in reading. In this respect it seems appropriate that McGann's title, alluding to a typesetter's inked rollers or "riders," should make no allusion to the potential play on such technical argot in the title of Wallace Stevens's famous essay, "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," a play that may perhaps be operable beneath the more obvious phonemic pun on "writer." What Stevens's title goes on to spell out—on the other side of the conjunction—is of course the aural authority for any and all such verbal free rides. This is to say that the "sound of words" evokes not simply (as is the main point of Stevens's essay) the differing force of writing's human-

ist reception from generation to generation, but also (as in Stevens's poetic practice, to which we will later be turning) the differential roll and rumble of words in their gallop across the page.

Another recent study, though concentrating on certain theoretical resistances to the rule of the visual in Western culture, has little to say of the reading ear as alternative. If one scans Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (1993) for any sustained emphasis on the relegation of print textuality to phonemic production, one searches in vain. This is mostly as it should be, historically speaking, since vision is "denigrated" from Jay's perspective largely in being *decried* by major French thinkers for its ideological hegemony, not in being intermittently *demoted* as the dominant textual register of literary practice. In such an overview, however, certain theories of writing do get short shrift. The granulated vocality of Barthes's "pleasure of the text," for instance, is decidedly marginalized in its force as a countering seduction to the visual monopoly explored elsewhere in Barthes's work on photographically based images (437–58). Only at the end of Jay's survey, arrived at the phonemic resistances of an antispecular *écriture feminine*, is a programmatically theorized modernist textuality given full hearing, a modernism *athwart* the letter that finds its peculiar version of "writerliness" distilled in an epigraph from Hélène Cixous: "I always privilege the ear over the eye. I am always trying to write with my eyes closed" (Jay 493). In this same spirit, we will soon be attempting to come at even some "transparent" nineteenth-century writing with our ears open.

On the way, a third recent point of departure. In *Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock*, Tom Cohen accords no privilege in the undermining of explicit signification to high modernist over nineteenth-century texts, arguing for an antimimetic or "pre-figural" (prerepresentational) reading of Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville as much as of Conrad and Alfred Hitchcock. The trouble is, they all end up sounding, or at least looking, like minor Joycean imitators. Cohen's emphasis on "the facticity of the textual event itself . . . thematized on the level of inscription, sound, letters, signature, and other figures" (1) is a retroactive postmodernist inroad into the bastions of semantic coherence carried out both in the nonname of a no longer coherent (writing or reading) subject and in the institutional service of a "materialist" reading that might outlast and reroute the turn from textual to contextual studies. So far so good. The effort is, for him, a stand against "retro-humanism" (1), and it derives from his opening question: "What is the interventionist role of 'reading' (indeed of too close reading) after the era of cultural studies?" (1). That phrase "too close reading" might seem an invitation to demurral, but one ends up concurring. His readings