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Kaimamiru et écosophie chez Déborah Heissler

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This article explores the protean relationship between poetics and ecosophy in two intermedial works by Déborah Heissler, focusing on the notion of *kaimamiru* (« glimpse », in Japanese). Examining the intersections between image, space, and text, the study highlights the way in which these works engage in a process of deterritorialization that creates evasiveness, while saturating space to bring out freer life forms (nature, poetry, music). The two books of poetry produce an *ecosophy* (F. Guattari) thanks to iconotextual processes based on continuous transformation. The act of glimpsing, central to their poetics, is presented as a dynamic interaction that promotes a relational aesthetic. The transfers and exchanges that appear between media (inks, texts, multilingualism), cultures (Europe, East Asia) and spaces (artist book, spaces of mediation, elusive places) contribute to a broader ecopoetic practice, where the impermanent and the ambiguous allow us to rethink the relationship to otherness and the environment.

Keywords: ecosophy, ecopoetics, iconotextuality, poetics of relation, transculturality

L'autrice française Déborah Heissler (1976°) est docteure en littérature française et diplômée en sciences de l'information et des métiers de la culture. Elle a étudié en profondeur l'œuvre de Philippe Jaccottet, dont on trouve des traces dans son écriture, marquée par un travail citationnel et par la superposition de voix. Son intérêt pour la matérialité du texte apparaît dans la spatialisation textuelle et dans des publications réalisées avec des peintres. L'attrait de l'autrice pour l'Asie de l'Est s'est concrétisé dans des articles sur les influences japonaises dans la poésie francophone contemporaine et au fil des années passées à enseigner dans des universités en Inde, au Vietnam et en Chine notamment. *Kaimamiru* est le terme japonais choisi par Heissler comme titre du premier chapitre de son recueil poétique *Comme un morceau de nuit, découpé dans son étoffe* (2010) ainsi que pour le titre d'un livre d'artiste réalisé avec la plasticienne Kate Van Houten et le traducteur Jacob Bromberg (2022). Pour la réalisation de l'ouvrage *Kaimamiru,* l'autrice est accompagnée de Kate Van Houten (1940°), artiste plasticienne issue de l'Académie Brera de Milan et installée dès les années 60 à Paris, dont les premières expositions personnelles furent autant montées à Paris qu'au Japon. Van Houten est surtout connue pour sa peinture abstraite et pour ses sculptures sur pierre. Jacob Bromberg (1983°), traducteur du recueil, est quant à lui poète multimédia et artiste vidéaste – il a notamment co-écrit le texte du court-métrage *Grosse Fatigue* de Camille Henrot qui a reçu un Lion d'argent à la Biennale de Venise en 2013. Le recueil est ainsi d'emblée placé dans un ancrage interculturel et interartistique.

Dans l'ouvrage *Kaimamiru,* Déborah Heissler traduit ce terme nippon par le mot « entrevoir », mais il pourrait aussi être entendu comme « entrapercevoir ». La traduction en anglais du texte français et la traduction en français de titres japonais produisent des glissements, des transpositions et des transferts. Cette entrée en matière par le verbe *kaimamiru* ancre les deux œuvres étudiées dans un processus. L'emploi d'un verbe pour évoquer l'entrevoir, plutôt qu'un nom commun, souligne d'emblée la présence active et le déroulement d'un *procès[1]*, c'est-à-dire une dynamique et un potentiel de transformation plutôt qu'une fixation. Sémantiquement, le terme *kaimamiru* indique une forme d'ambigüité par laquelle on verrait brièvement, confusément ou à moitié l'objet de l'observation. Au sens figuré, le verbe « entrevoir » souligne les effets d'une intuition et d'un pressentiment dans une relation à autrui ou dans une situation qui seraient relativement confuses. Ce verbe évoque donc un entre-deux, une façon de se voir l'un·e l'autre, de se rencontrer. Entrapercevoir est une perception vague et fugitive « entre des choses qui font écran[2] ». Il s'agit dès lors de mettre en évidence la manière dont cette position intermédiaire peut amener à interroger l'espace du recueil poétique, sa composition et sa structure dans sa relation à une altérité, et de montrer ainsi dans quelle mesure il constitue un lieu de transferts et d'échanges.

Si le recueil peut être considéré en tant qu'espace d'interactions, il ne s'agit pas néanmoins de présenter une *géographie littéraire* comme celle proposée par les travaux de Franco Moretti, plus sociologiques. Claire Jaquier, dans son article « Écopoétique, un territoire critique » (2015), signale spécifiquement la différence qui existe entre ce type de géographie littéraire et la *géocritique* qui apparaît quant à elle dans la construction des paysages littéraires et l'élaboration d'une mémoire des lieux, comme dans les travaux de Michel Collot (2011, 2014). Mais l'analyse des procédés du *kaimamiru* chez Déborah Heissler telle que nous souhaitons la développer ne s'appuie pas davantage sur une géocritique de l'imaginaire, ni sur une étude des contextes de production et de réception des œuvres, ni même sur les lieux réels auxquels elles renvoient. Il ne s'agit pas non plus de proposer une re-présentation fidèle de la nature par un « travail écologique » du texte, tel que les travaux de Jonathan Bate le donnent à appréhender (Blanc, Chartier et Pughe 21). Nous souhaitons montrer que l'œuvre de Déborah Heissler se veut plutôt *écopoétique* au sens large, en ce qu'elle porte sur un *oikos* comme façon d'habiter un texte, une œuvre, voire le monde, pris comme espace de médiation.

De fait, Thomas Pughe, dans son article « Réinventer la nature : vers une éco-poétique » (78), fait appel à l'étymologie *d'oikeion* fournie par Jean-François Lyotard pour montrer l'importance de l'idiome personnel (éco-logie), par opposition aux

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[1] Le terme « procès » fait référence ici au sens spécialisé de linguistique.
[2] Articles « entrevoir » et « entrapercevoir », *Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé*, dorénavant abrégé en *TLF*, http://atilf.atilf.fr/.

discours publics de la performance optimale (comme l'éco-nomie). L'écriture participe ainsi à un réenchantement des formes esthétiques qui tente de redonner forme, sans jugement de valeur ni moralité, à la relation humaine à l'environnement (Pughe 79 ; Blanc, Chartier et Pughe 22) et qui va au-delà des espaces verts. Pierre Schoentjes, dans son ouvrage *Ce qui a lieu. Essai d'écopoétique,* s'appuie également sur l'étymologie mais pour souligner l'aspect patrimonial de l'environnement naturel dans lequel l'être humain s'inscrit et surtout pour mettre en évidence l'expérience concrète qui en découle et qu'il étudie dans des romans français des XXe et XXIe siècles. Selon Schoentjes, l'écriture écopoétique n'est pas un retour au primitivisme mais plutôt la création d'un équilibre nouveau qui réconcilie les dualismes (273) comme celui de nature et de culture, parfois dans une perspective militante, mais avant tout comme façon d'habiter le monde (278). Notre étude de l'œuvre de Déborah Heissler s'inscrit ainsi dans cette lignée critique, sans pour autant mettre en avant ni la responsabilité environnementale de l'humanité, ni les préoccupations écologiques, comme c'est par exemple le cas avec l'« écriture environnementale » dont *Walden* d'Henry David Thoreau pourrait constituer l'étape liminaire dans un contexte américain (Blanc, Chartier et Pughe 19).

Chez Heissler, il est possible de s'intéresser à une écologie de l'écriture poétique, voire à une « écosophie » (Guattari 97), qui n'est pas seulement environnementale mais transversale car « notre rapport avec les signes se produit comme une expérimentation pragmatique de transformation singulière, non comme l'interprétation ou la restitution neutre d'un contenu donné par avance », selon une perspective guattarienne et deleuzienne (Sauvagnargues, 2013, 165). Nous souhaitons ainsi souligner l'articulation des agencements iconotextuels et transculturels au sein de l'œuvre de Heissler, en interrogeant les processus de décentrement et de variation continue. On verra ainsi comment ces agencements dans deux œuvres de l'autrice contribuent à la configuration d'une poésie de l'entrevoir qui s'inscrit au centre d'une expérience, lieu d'émergence d'une poétique de la relation.

Voir entre(-)deux

Le recueil *Comme un morceau de nuit, découpé dans son étoffe* a paru aux éditions Cheyne avec des titres de chapitres en japonais, suivis de leur traduction en français. Son premier chapitre a ensuite été réédité chez Æncrages & Co sous la forme d'un ouvrage composé avec Kate Van Houten et Jacob Bromberg. Ce prélèvement dans l'œuvre originelle, accompagné de sa traduction en anglais, participe certes d'une économie du livre d'artiste, mais souligne surtout l'importance accordée par l'autrice à la forme graphique et au décentrement du sujet poétique, émergeant de lieux indéterminés et iconotextuels entre poésie et peinture, et de l'enchaînement des langues française, anglaise et japonaise. Les potentiels points d'ancrage linguistiques et culturels deviennent donc plus incertains, complexifiant

toute tentative de classification. Ces deux ouvrages s'inscrivent ainsi, d'après le terme de Félix Guattari, dans une *écosophie*

> à la condition que soient forgées de nouvelles terres transculturelles, transnationales, transversalistes et des univers de valeur dégagés de la fascination du pouvoir territorialisé […] pour indiquer, au contraire, la perspective d'un choix éthico-politique de la diversité, du dissensus créateur, de la responsabilité à l'égard de la différence et de l'altérité. (Guattari 96-97)

C'est ce qui se produit à travers la signifiance graphique du livre d'artiste *Kaimamiru*[3] dont l'un des principaux motifs employés par Kate Van Houten est le disque, le cercle. Ceux-ci répondent aux rectangles typographiques des textes et à leurs jeux de vide et de plein, géométrie toutefois atténuée par le contraste que crée l'emploi d'encres plus floues à plusieurs reprises. En effet, le bord de certaines pages est parcouru de traînées d'encre bleue, produisant des effets inattendus de pénétration de l'espace du livre depuis un *dehors*, comme si la rencontre de l'encre et du papier était fortuite. D'ailleurs, le papier Velin BFK Rives qui est employé possède un grain naturel et des bords à franges, ce qui accroît son effet buvard. Cependant, ces effets d'absorption ne se retrouvent pas dans la relation texte-image : les coulées d'encre restent en retrait des textes, glissant autour et s'en rapprochant sans jamais les traverser, ni les cerner complètement. Cette façon d'être à la fois deux et ensemble, singuliers mais reliés dans l'espace du livre, se retrouve aussi au niveau du titre où deux fulgurances d'encre s'élancent à travers la page et accompagnent l'évocation de l'entrevoir.

Page après page, les encres au tracé circulaire créent des percées par où le regard semble pouvoir s'introduire et à la fois s'échapper. Elles entrent ainsi en rapport avec l'évocation du regard dans les deux ouvrages: l'emploi insistant d'un champ lexical de la vue file la métaphore[4]. Les formes circulaires de la peinture sont décrites « comme un regard » (Heissler 13) et matérialisent symboliquement l'œil de l'œuvre qui regarderait les lecteur·rices dans une sorte d'échange mutuel regardant-regardé par lequel se produit la traversée spatiotemporelle des mondes (temps et lieu de l'écriture, du livre, de la lecture). Les images, tant au sens propre qu'au sens figuré, sont ainsi perçues par l'instance poétique « comme par un trou de serrure ou comme à travers les ronds, paraissant, surgissant brusquement, comme si l'on ôtait un écran resté longtemps endormi » (53). Leur apparition soudaine indique un mode d'irruption des

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[3] Pour un aperçu de l'ouvrage, voir le site de la maison d'édition Æncrages & Co, https://www.aencrages.com/2022/06/23/kaimamiru/.

[4] La métaphore est filée tout au long de l'ouvrage avec l'emploi de termes comme « entrevoir », « je te regarde », « comme un regard », « observe », « observation », « tu regardes », « je l'ai revu », « éblouissant », « larmes », « regarder », « éclatantes », « horizon », « sensation », « vision », « image », « obscurité », « indiscernable », « je regarde » (plusieurs occurrences), « j'observe », « reflet », « vitrage », « paupière », « paupières », « yeux », « voir », « images », « paraissant », « écran », « image » (Heissler 11 ; 13 ; 17 ; 18 ; 19-20 ; 25-26 ; 34 ; 35 ; 37-38 ; 40 ; 43-44 ; 48-49 ; 53), accompagnés par l'évocation de couleurs, de luminosités et de paysages.

images qui se fait *malgré* l'instance énonciative, par la spatialité (« trou », « à travers les ronds ») et la temporalité (« brusquement », « longtemps »…). Le *je* poétique chez Heissler ne se présente plus dès lors comme substance mais se pense comme un mode d'être : dans la pensée deleuzienne, ce mode permet le surgissement d'une perception réalisée simultanément sous la forme de l'intervalle, de la coupure et du délai temporel (Sauvagnargues, 2006, 99) au sein d'une matière en perpétuel changement.

La poétique du voir et de l'entrevoir s'accompagne donc tout naturellement de processus de transformations et de relations. Dans l'ouvrage paru aux éditions Cheyne, le titre de l'œuvre est disposé de manière discontinue : « COMME / UN MORCEAU DE NUIT, / DÉCOUPÉ DANS SON ÉTOFFE ». Ce découpage, accentué par le mot « découpé » lui-même présent dans l'intitulé magister, met en évidence le morphème de comparaison, placé seul au centre de la ligne et au sommet du groupement de vers. Cette distinction graphique peut suggérer un écho au poème « Comme » de Robert Desnos (« Comme, je dis comme et tout se métamorphose », 79) ou encore le recueil *Comme* de Marcelin Pleynet avec son évocation de la relation entre lisible, visible, image et vérité (13). Chez Desnos et chez Pleynet, à l'instar de chez Heissler, il s'agit moins de faire appel à la rhétorique des tropes que d'évoquer les réseaux de signifiance de texte à texte et de texte à image qui produisent de nouvelles configurations sensibles. *Comme* n'implique pas une identité ou une essence mais une ressemblance et une possibilité, à la manière du *si cum* latin. Ces rapports entre(-)deux s'associent à l'évocation d'une relation amoureuse ou d'une entrevue dans le texte. Le duo de l'histoire organique est toutefois perturbé par la présence d'un tiers (lecteur·trice, peintre, matérialité…) qui ouvre la relation et tend à en faire un *événement* pris au sens étymologique de « ce qui va hors de », de ce qui « sort », de ce qui se produit et se réalise par « une issue[5] » – rappelant ce faisant l'échappée de l'œil par le cercle. Le couple virtuel et initial est aussi infléchi grâce à l'existence suggérée de processus plurisémiques à l'œuvre dans la fabrication même du texte, par le biais notamment de l'évocation liminaire de Desnos et, implicitement, par celui des jeux homophoniques et multilingues autour du mot « comme », conjonction de subordination qui peut être aussi considérée comme un trait d'union entre deux éléments. Par ailleurs, le rapport iconotextuel avec l'œuvre de Roland Barthes[6], visible dans la disposition des textes sur la page et semblable à celle des *Fragments du discours amoureux,* participe à son tour à la création d'un débordement relationnel, proprement poétique, qui s'insinue entre les deux membres de la comparaison et de la citation dans leurs formes les plus simples.

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[5] Voir l'article « evenio » du Gaffiot.
[6] Ces références littéraires ont été évoquées lors d'un entretien individuel que j'ai mené avec l'écrivaine le 25 novembre 2022. L'écriture de Heissler joue souvent sur les processus citationnels.

Peut-être est-ce pourquoi le recueil *Comme un morceau…* évoque à plusieurs reprises le « battement » (14 ; 48-49), « [c]et acte intime, profondément aussi, de clore les paupières ou celui encore d'ouvrir les yeux » (49), suggérant des palpitations organiques. Ce motif se retrouve dans d'autres recueils de Heissler, notamment dans *Près d'eux, la nuit sous la neige* (2005), pour lequel on a montré ailleurs qu'il faisait palpiter le texte, les fleurs, les corps mais aussi les stèles et les pierres du jardin sec, selon un rythme graphique et lexical de déploiement et de plissage proche de celui qui anime l'origami et qui permet l'apparition d'une métapoétique incarnée (Clonts, 2021). On constate déjà dans ce recueil que la paupière et le pli ne s'inscrivent pas dans un régime de la binarité mais qu'ils peuvent se positionner à différents niveaux dans l'entre-deux. Ce sont également ces différents positionnements de la paupière qui caractérisent le *kaimamiru,* puisque toute vision fugitive force le regard à se rendre plus perçant et les yeux à *se plisser* pour plus de précision.

Déterritorialiser pour un texte *évasif*

Dès la couverture et la table des matières, l'emploi de la langue japonaise procède d'une *étrangèreté*[7] qui n'est pas un exotisme mais un déplacement et un dépaysement intentionnel. La référence à la culture japonaise se retrouve d'ailleurs dans les encres de Kate Van Houten qui sont proches du ensô. Ce dernier est un cercle ouvert ou fermé tracé d'un seul geste au pinceau par les pratiquant·es de zen calligraphie, forme méditative de la calligraphie japonaise, et plus généralement par les pratiquants du *shodô,* la Voie de la calligraphie japonaise. L'iconotextualité de l'ouvrage *Kaimamiru* produit des rapports en cascade avec une écriture autre, réalisée au pinceau sur des supports et des formats différents de ceux du livre (rouleau, éventail, long format vertical…). Les transitions culturelles se matérialisent simultanément par un rythme changeant et participent à la déterritorialisation de la poésie. Ce rythme s'appuie sur les battements évoqués précédemment, sur le décalage des lignes de poésie par rapport au pli de la page, et sur l'emploi de l'espace vide qui coupe les blocs de texte de manière irrégulière. De plus, la contemplation du monde et le voir entre-deux n'apparaissent plus comme la fixation d'un regard ultra-individualisé sur un objet donné, lieu commun des processus de la représentation, mais à travers une impression de continuité par-delà la succession et la variation des instants. L'écriture devient alors cinématographique dans ses processus : les instants apparaissent et disparaissent tout en créant l'illusion du continu, suggérant à la fois la variation perpétuelle au fondement même de la pensée humaine (flux de la conscience) et du corps humain impermanent (toute matière se transforme). Cette déterritorialisation poétique est « ce cheminement sans fin » (Heissler 49) tracé par l'autrice qui permet de sortir de la fixité : « je ne peux me

[7] Ce terme a été employé par Heissler lors de l'entretien individuel que j'ai mené avec elle le 25 novembre 2022.

souvenir que d'une manière confuse des circonstances dans lesquelles m'est venue cette image ou cette pensée, impression, ce sentiment, la vision immédiate qu'on nommera poésie, si l'on veut, le temps d'un battement de paupière » (48). La présente mais fugitive discontinuité de la poésie et des processus de sa création est mise en lumière par contraste avec les circonstances oubliées de l'écriture.

Le temps de la mémoire est ainsi perturbé. Les temps et les lieux s'entremêlent dans le recueil *Comme un morceau…* par des alternances constantes entre « maintenant » et « toujours », « Ici » et « Là-bas » (40 ; 31) ; les jours et les nuits se fondent en associant la « nuit », la « lune » et « l'air […] blanc […] éblouissant » (18-19). La prédominance de l'espace-temps sur le temps circonstanciel apparaît dans la construction d'un paysage poétique changeant. D'une part, ce paysage évoque l'*oikos* (terme du grec ancien qui a donné en français le préfixe *éco-*), au sens d'habitat, avec les floraisons printanières, le crépuscule, les chemins minéraux, les vols d'oiseaux, les forêts, les changements du ciel, la végétation, la montagne (présents à toutes les pages du recueil) ; d'autre part, le paysage poétique fait appel à l'*oikos* entendu comme foyer ou maison, avec les toits, les chambres, le pas de porte, les fenêtres (16-17 ; 20 ; 32 ; 34 ; 38 ; 42 ; 44). Paratexte signifiant en ce qu'il place le·la lecteur·rice sur le « perron » (20) et sur « le seuil de la maison (34 ; 38), la quatrième de couverture donne à lire l'extrait suivant : « Comme dans cet espace pareil à une maison, où quelque chose pourrait se passer peut-être bien, s'entrouvrir, s'éclairer. » L'advenir de cet *oikos* rassemble à la fois l'attendu et l'imprévisible. Il enchaîne (quelque chose *se passe,* se déroule dans une certaine linéarité) et il déchaîne (virtualité d'un espace soumis aux changements de la nature). D'ailleurs, on lit le vers « J'entre dans la lumière   advenant »[8] (47), dans lequel le grand espacement qui sépare les mots « lumière » et « advenant » fait littéralement ad-venir l'entrée dans un état tout comme le mouvement vers cette autre forme. Dans le recueil tout entier, les images sont déployées d'un paysage à l'autre selon un processus continu, créant une impression de fluidité à la lecture du texte qui reproduit la mobilité du temps. Le recueil est l'espace même du lieu transitionnel marqué par des contrastes, voire des contradictions, et où l'on passe ainsi de la forêt aux pas dans une chambre et d'un jour frais qui s'achève à la chaleur de l'été (17-18). Seule la mémoire d'un instant rompt parfois la chaîne et fige soudainement la dynamique du texte : « brusque retour de mémoire. […] L'image est fixe. […] quand déferle un de ces nuages farouchement noirs sur le paysage » (19-20). La mémoire apparaît donc comme une perturbation de la variation perpétuelle d'un flux vital et écosophique.

Le troisième chapitre « Seishiga », traduit par le syntagme « Image fixe » dans le livre, souligne cette interruption du processus cinématographique de l'écriture poétique. Le temps ralentit, voire recule, au point que le lecteur perçoit métaphoriquement les photogrammes préliminaires au montage, sortes d'arrêts sur

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[8] L'espacement entre les mots « lumière » et « advenant » apparaît ainsi dans le recueil.

images. De fait, l'image-mouvement y est progressivement rongée par le temps de la mémoire qui s'arrête sur des souvenirs précis : « je regarde la route où nous avons passé », « les lourdes prunes […] de notre enfance », « oui, c'était bien cela » (40-44). Soulignant cette dimension mnésique de l'image, l'instance poétique s'adresse ainsi à un tiers non-nommé : « Il y a d'abord le jeu de la mémoire, t'ai-je dit un jour, semblable à l'en deçà et l'au-delà d'une fenêtre – le poème naît de cette obligation. » (42) Mais chez Heissler l'idée d'obligation souligne en négatif un désir antagoniste et la possibilité de sa libération, comme l'indique la paronomase jeu/je et l'emploi de la locution « d'abord » qui suggère un affranchissement à venir. Le rapport contraint à la mémoire apparaît ainsi comme opposé au mouvement puisqu'il fige l'espace-temps sans espoir de le modifier profondément. La poésie n'est ainsi présentée ni comme un ancrage dans une identité fixe ni comme un passé indépassable. Elle *situe* un entre-deux qui crée des plis, des superpositions de l'avant et de l'après pour une coexistence des temps en devenir constant (voir Bene, Deleuze 95-96). Ce *temps stratigraphique* (Deleuze, Guattari 60), propose une temporalité ambigüe appréhendée comme une ligne de variation poétique se réalisant quelque part entre l'avant et l'après. Cet espace-temps de la poésie trouve la condition même de son existence dans les (im)possibilités de l'instant présent qui est cet intervalle sensible (ou sensorimoteur chez Deleuze) et générateur de mouvement.

La mise en variation, et donc en circulation, de l'espace-temps remet en question chez Heissler l'image figée et la topographie immobile des atlas. C'est pourquoi le lieu est source d'interrogations pour l'instance poétique:

> Où   la couleur ? où la lumière ? l'espacement et la limite. Le ciel et l'horizon. Ce cheminement sans fin. Cet acte intime, profondément aussi, de clore les paupières ou celui encore d'ouvrir les yeux.
>
> Où   – d'où, au fond rêvons-nous cela ce où, où voir à lieu ? Dans le silence à voix basse. Fragments de rêves. (Heissler 49)

Dans cet extrait, la disposition du texte sur la page et les espacements créés isolent tout d'abord les deux anaphores du mot « Où » à la marge et près du pli du livre. Cette suspension des deux mots dans l'espace les rend à la matérialité graphique du signifiant, ce qu'indique l'hésitation liminaire quant à leur catégorie grammaticale (pronom relatif ou adverbe interrogatif). La répétition graphique du signe O en majuscule matérialise l'infinie circularité, que l'on retrouve dans les formes peintes de Kate Van Houten et dans les « ronds » (53) évoqués dans le recueil. Elle se matérialise

également au travers des courbes des points d'interrogation qui ouvrent le texte à un échange et à un processus de réception, dans l'expectative d'une réponse. L'espacement entre le mot « Où » et la suite de la phrase oblige le·la lecteur·rice à réaliser littéralement un saut dans le vide. La suspension de l'émergence du sens de la phrase peut faire écho à l'intervalle du battement de paupière évoqué dans l'extrait et signale l'irruption de cet interstice et de ce pli « où voir a lieu », qui peut être aussi le pli du livre. Loin d'être un point fixe, cet intervalle spatiotemporel est un accroissement créateur : allongement de la ligne de vers, allongement du temps de lecture de la phrase, étirement de l'espace d'écriture. Le « Où » poétique, qui n'est pas un absolu, s'extrait donc du « où » matériel des lieux liés aux souvenirs, et devient ainsi simultanément mouvement et vibration vitale insaisissables, quelque part dans l'entre-deux.

L'écriture de Déborah Heissler peut ainsi trouver des points de convergence avec un imaginaire musical qui apparaît en trame de fond du recueil. Comme l'écrit Vladimir Jankélévitch à propos de l'œuvre de Gabriel Fauré, les effets de la musique « dépayse[nt] sans cesse la topographie » : ce dépaysement musical s'opère au travers d'une poétique du *charme* que le philosophe décrit comme un insaisissable, un je-ne-sais-quoi, quelque chose qui se sent sans se dire clairement, et qu'il définit en reprenant à son compte un extrait des *Lettres à Lucilius* de Sénèque : « Nusquam est, qui ubique est », autrement dit, c'est être nulle part que d'être partout (344-348). Ce déplacement incessant et cette totalité de l'espace se révèlent centraux dans le recueil de Heissler, par exemple lorsqu'elle écrit : « je ressens mieux cette invasion de l'étendue » (37). L'invasion peut être comprise au sens de ce qui prend toute la place sans possibilité d'y échapper, mais également comme une entrée dans un territoire autre, perçue dans toute sa sensorialité. D'ailleurs, Jankélévitch écrit à propos du *charme* de la musique qu'il

> récuse la question du Où comme il élude la question du Quoi. Le charme qui ne tient pas à ceci-ou-cela, ne gît pas non plus *ici-ou-là*. Il est donc essentiellement *évasif*, – c'est-à-dire qu'il s'échappe, invisible et intangible, et pourtant toujours présent, comme le sont la musique et les parfums, qu'on ne peut ni voir ni toucher. (344-348)

De même, la poésie de Déborah Heissler se fait *évasive* car elle se déterritorialise elle-même et est déterritorialisée incessamment par une poétique du *charme* proche du déroulé de la phrase musicale, comme on le voit dans l'extrait. L'espacement entre les mots « Où » et les rectangles de texte y évoque rythmiquement la tenue de la blanche en musique et la pause. Le tiret demi-cadratin provoque un effet de syncope en suggérant une suspension verbale sur le temps fort d'attaque du texte et donc un prolongement du temps de l'espacement entre les « où ». Il en résulte une sensation de décalage des appuis rythmiques. Les points d'interrogation interviennent dans la syntaxe comme des soupirs mais peuvent être en outre perçus comme des trilles silencieux et des vibrations graphiques. Les voix se répondent en canon de « Où » à « où/d'où », et de terme isolé à groupement de mots, de gauche à droite et *vice versa*,

voire simultanément en tous sens. Ainsi, ces mouvements croisés produisent des réseaux rythmiques, graphiques et sonores qui se signalent dans une appartenance protéiforme à un domaine poétique multiple.

Saturer l'espace pour une *atonalité des formes*

Espace du *charme* musical et espace ajustant dans l'instant le rythme du déroulement poétique à son émancipation de la mémoire, le lieu évasif chez Heissler se rapproche néanmoins souvent du traditionnel *locus amœnus,* où l'on trouve des sources, des plantations, des jardins, des brises légères, des fleurs et des chants d'oiseaux, organisés dans l'Antiquité selon les cinq sens, les quatre éléments et les quatre saisons. Ce *locus amoenus* pourrait en partie permettre de qualifier l'écriture de Heissler de « géopoétique » car ce terme composé de la particule γῆ *(gè-),* qui signifie « terre » en grec ancien, peut être mis en rapport avec le corps dans l'espace, avec les quatre éléments, avec l'univers, avec l'habitat de l'être humain et avec la fertilité[9]. Initiée dans les années 1960 par Michel Deguy puis développée par Kenneth White, la géopoétique se préoccupe en effet des rapports entre espace et création afin de refonder la relation de l'être humain à la terre. Dans les deux recueils, cette expérience multisensorielle et géopoétique de l'espace textuel où « tu regardes, tu respires la terre » (Heissler 17) s'associe à une autre évocation, plus proche du *locus terribilis* des Romantiques avec montagnes et eaux tumultueuses, qui relie intériorité et paysage[10]. En ce sens, l'instance poétique reste partiellement une habitante du *pagus[11]*, c'est-à-dire du lieu (le canton) à l'origine du mot « pays » (*TLF*). Entre ces deux extrémités du *locus,* les deux œuvres de Heissler produisent pourtant davantage une écopoétique car elles soulignent une expérience concrète de participation au monde par une écriture des espaces naturels, caractérisée par des effets de saturation qui apparaissent déjà dans les réseaux rythmiques, graphiques et sonores. Cette poétique de la saturation en passe prioritairement par l'arborescence de la végétation dont la présence est aussi forte que celle de l'instance poétique, donnant ainsi une possibilité d'existence à des formes d'écriture moins anthropocentrées.

La saturation est aussi produite par la récurrence de la pluie. Les dénominations sont nombreuses pour évoquer cette substance changeante : « averse », « pleuvoir abondamment », « brefs passages de pluie », « liquide et limpide – goutte-à-goutte », « la pluie de juin qui tombe comme un chuchotement, universel », « une cascade éparse sur la pente des feuillages », « la pluie hésite […] Pluie insistante et longue et

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[9] Voir le dictionnaire Bailly.

[10] On lit par exemple : « Mon amour est une île. » (Heissler 19) ; « Combien de jours à présent, sur les branches nues avant la fleur et le fruit » (21) ; « Bonheur d'un instant […] la terre jusqu'à l'horizon et la crête qui s'enflamme. » (26)

[11] On ne fait pas explicitement référence ici au *pagus* de Jean-François Lyotard. Cependant, les idées de confins, d'interstice, de *différance* apparaissent clairement dans les processus de l'écriture de Déborah Heissler, ce qui mériterait un développement en profondeur, dans un cadre distinct.

parfaitement interminable » (14-47). L'écriture poétique signale l'informité de l'eau comme caractéristique presque héraclitéenne de ce qui coule, de ce qui glisse entre les doigts, de ce qui emporte tout, et rend l'eau à son aspect protéiforme en tant que possibilité infinie de renouvellement. De la sorte, l'omniprésence de la pluie a aussi une portée métapoétique comme évocation du pouvoir d'in-former, re-former, dé-former. Ce méta-sens peut renvoyer à l'idée d'une *poésie ininterrompue*, expression reprise à Paul Éluard qui confère à la poésie un pouvoir de métamorphose infinie et d'espérance sans borne, et pour qui écrire, c'est « Prendre forme dans l'informe / Prendre empreinte dans le flou » (Éluard 28) ; autrement dit : une tentative pour ne pas assujettir le devenir au désir de stabilisation propre à la condition et aux coutumes humaines.

L'ininterrompu de la création poétique chez Heissler apparaît dans les deux recueils sous la forme d'un rythme de fond qui rappelle une nouvelle fois celui du battement des paupières. Ainsi, la pluie se présente « obstinément » (Heissler 14) comme un « ostinato » (25), autrement dit un « motif mélodique ou rythmique répété obstinément, généralement à la basse d'une œuvre » (*Larousse*). Cette reprise rythmique et musicale participe à l'instauration de processus relationnels avec autrui et avec la nature, comme dans les rituels musicaux et dans les transes dansées et chantées car « Tout était devenu chant » (14), lit-on chez Heissler. Les gouttes pianistes (14) qui tombent et frappent les feuillages, le sol, les toits ne créent pas un quadrillage mais *strient* l'espace traversé et produisent des relations entre des points distants et des pulsations métronomiques. Pourtant, ces connexions finissent tout de même par produire aussi des figures, faisant notamment en sorte que l'autrice ait plusieurs fois recours à l'image de la constellation (37-38) qui convoque l'écriture mallarméenne : de fait, elle est matérialisée par des ruptures, des sauts graphiques et des tirets, comme ceux apparaissant dans le texte « Où », mais aussi par des métaphores évoquant des relations (« Et puis l'averse tout près qui continue d'enjamber les toits dans une tranquillité tremblante », 14-15). Les constellations se dessinent ainsi via des tiraillements à la fois convergents et divergents, des élasticités, des bonds (sauts graphiques par l'espacement du texte, images de sauts) et des vibrations (pulsations, tremblements, répétitions). La relation n'est donc pas uniquement linéaire, ni uniquement striée, car les multiples formes de l'eau diluent tout quadrillage strict et le rendent à une plus grande liberté. Le « réseau de ramures » et le « réseau de nœuds » (33-37) s'intensifient en filigrane du texte qui passe d'une organisation structurée par des croisements de lignes plus ou moins à l'équerre, vers des tournoiements de couleurs et des lavis – qui ont d'ailleurs la propriété d'être des encres ou des aquarelles étendues à l'eau, comme celles de Kate Van Houten. C'est dans ce contexte qu'apparaissent la calligraphie chinoise (45) ou encore le travail de la peinture par Zao Wou-ki[12] explicitement

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[12] Pour Zao Wou-ki, « En Occident, on dessine. En Chine, on apprend à écrire. Tout sort de l'écriture : la pensée comme l'art. » (Daydé)

mentionné (38) et dont les bleus innombrables imprègnent le texte en profondeur[13]. Paradoxalement, la répétition et la saturation par ces réseaux font disparaître toute similitude et toute ressemblance des images : « Les oiseaux ont perdu leur forme après avoir perdu leurs couleurs. Ce qui se passe ensuite m'échappe complètement » (16). L'emploi du verbe « échapper » pour caractériser la sensation vécue par l'instance énonciative signale à la fois une perte de contrôle et un lâcher-prise par rapport à une perception qui se dérobe inévitablement.

La phrase « Ce qui se passe ensuite m'échappe complètement » (16) paraît représentative des effets que souhaite produire l'autrice. Après avoir évoqué les changements de forme des êtres et des éléments naturels, elle souligne la tentative de l'écrivaine pour rendre l'image à sa plus grande liberté. L'autrice n'apparaît plus comme une démiurge mais comme celle qui opère, qui ouvre et qui produit des transferts pour laisser le champ libre à d'autres formes de vie qui apparaissent dans le texte poétique. L'instance énonciative évoque ainsi l'« [a]tonalité des formes, de leurs contours tremblés, qui favorisent un autre ordonnancement des lieux, la redécouverte de l'horizon avec au loin l'accord du solide et de l'ajouré » (47). L'accord métaphorique, décrit comme une pièce de bois travaillée par l'artisan, serait dès lors cet entre-deux graphique. Conclusion est d'ailleurs faite que « rien n'est resté de tout cela que les formes essentielles » (57), ces « fragments de rêves » (13-49). Enfin, ce rêve artisanal de l'écrivaine est renforcé par l'évocation de l'atonalité qui, dans un sens élargi, « peut qualifier la musique employant des micro-intervalles (quarts de ton et autres) et celle qui provient de matériaux sonores non traditionnels (musique concrète, musique électronique) » *(Larousse)*. De la sorte, la poésie entre-deux souligne la possibilité d'un mode d'exister de *l'omniprésence omniabsente* (Jankélévitch 344-348) qui part d'une substance brute (des notes, des gouttes de pluie frappées, un vitalisme végétal, etc.) pour rejoindre le tout incommensurable – *cette émotion appelée poésie[14]* – et qui permet de surcroit, à partir de la matière temporelle, spatiale, verbale, un surgissement transformateur et performatif à caractère relationnel.

Pour conclure, les deux recueils de Heissler que nous avons étudiés constituent une exploration protéiforme de la poétique de la relation, où l'acte d'« entrevoir » sert de motif central unissant textes, images et espaces. L'entrevoir y est une manière d'interagir avec le monde qui embrasse l'ambiguïté, la fugacité et le flux de l'existence, résistant ainsi aux interprétations univoques. Les processus de déterritorialisation dans la poétique de Heissler lui permettent de dépasser les frontières traditionnelles, faisant émerger des formes moins contraintes. Cette déterritorialisation se manifeste dans les interactions iconotextuelles, où la saturation de l'espace – à travers la densification des images et les tensions produites par la spatialisation du texte

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[13] Le texte évoque les couleurs suivantes : « bleu », « bleu pâle », « le ciel est clair », « ciel froid », eaux, « lavandes », « iris », « violette », « fleur de jacinthe », « violet » (Heissler 17-19 ; 26 ; 31 ; 32 ; 37-40 ; 56-57).
[14] Dans l'essai *Cette émotion appelée poésie*, Pierre Reverdy note que la poésie se trouve dans le regard (neutralité de la nature), que la lecture de textes poétiques influence le regard que l'on porte sur le monde et que la poésie s'apprend dans la relation à l'altérité.

– crée pour le lectorat une expérience dynamique fondée sur la transformation continue, où l'acte d'entrevoir favorise une esthétique relationnelle. Les transferts et les échanges qui se produisent au sein des deux recueils, qu'ils soient d'ordre linguistique, culturel ou médiologique, contribuent à une perspective écosophique plus large qui met non seulement en avant l'interconnexion de toutes les formes de vie, mais souligne également l'importance de la relationalité comme moyen de comprendre et d'interagir avec et dans le monde.

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Metaphoricity of 'War' and 'Peace' in Twitter Narratives in the Aftermath of the Peace Agreement in Colombia

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This article explores the role of metaphoricity in shaping narratives of war and peace in social mobilization on Twitter (now X) and its impact on the meaning-making of endangered social leaders in Colombia after the 2016 Peace Agreement. By analyzing tweets tagged with #NosEstánMatando from 2018 to 2020, we investigate how metaphorical framings contribute to public claims for justice and influence cultural imaginaries. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), we examine how war is conceptualized as a persistent condition, a force, a state, a relationship, and a place, while peace is framed as a journey, a goal, a struggle, health, a structure, and a victim. These metaphorical patterns reveal how social mobilization constructs digital narratives that both challenge and reproduce dominant discourses of violence, justice, and reconciliation. Our findings highlight the significance of metaphorical analysis in understanding public discourse and collective action in post-conflict societies.

Keywords: metaphoricity, post-conflict Colombia, peace, war, Twitter narratives

This article explores how the metaphorization of 'war' and 'peace' in Twitter (now X) narratives of social mobilization contributes to the public discourse surrounding endangered social leaders after the Peace Agreement (PA). According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, social leaders in Colombia include a diverse range of activists, such as community leaders, Afro-Colombians, indigenous people, environmentalists, journalists, and women's rights defenders. This study examines how social mobilization on Twitter responded to the increasing violence against social leaders following the PA—violence driven by factors such as demands for the implementation of the accord, environmental justice, and land redistribution (Ávila).

Social mobilization refers to collective actions by individuals, communities, and organizations advocating for social or political change. In Colombia, social mobilization has played an important role in denouncing violence, demanding justice, and shaping public discourse, mainly through rallies and digital activism. Between 2018 and 2020, large-scale demonstrations emerged in response to the killing of social leaders, with the hashtag #NosEstánMatando amplifying the movement on social media. This digital mobilization not only functioned as a tool for organizing protests but also shaped narratives of war and peace, influencing public perceptions of violence, justice, and reconciliation.

Here, we propose to study the metaphorical framing within Twitter messages tagged with #NosEstánMatando [#TheyAreKillingUs] from 2018 to 2020. Our overarching

goal is to examine whether and how the domains of 'war' and 'peace,' pervasive in the historical imaginaries of Colombia, reflect potential conceptual frameworks built for social mobilization and the public's claim for justice on Twitter. This exploration is set against the backdrop of the complex historical legacies in Colombia and its ongoing struggle for social justice and reconciliation following the PA with the ex-guerrilla group FARC (Revolutionary Forces of Colombia).

Drawing upon Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), according to which metaphors are cognitive tools that contribute to the meaning-making of abstract concepts in light of other concepts that are more concrete (Burgers; Landau; Thibodeau), we pay particular attention to the potential impact of metaphoricity in the semantic construction of Twitter messages about social leaders. Specifically, we use the conceptual framework established by Pablo Valdivia's work on the Spanish transition to democracy. We also engage with Ning Yu's work to deepen the conceptualization of justice as belonging to a moral domain. These theoretical perspectives inform our investigation into how metaphoricity influences the formation and articulation of social and political imaginaries in digital mobilization contexts.

The research design presented in this article highlights the role of metaphoricity in shaping cultural narratives, focusing on the interplay of factors that contribute to the construction of social and political imaginaries. A cultural narrative is a collective story shared by a community that shapes and reflects its values, beliefs, and social practices. In many cases, such metaphorical frames (Brugman 188) incur a resignification and mediation of complex societal issues. As such, our exploration includes examining the portrayal of social leaders in online discourses as central figures in the narrative processes associated with the PA. Building on the conceptual framework established by Valdivia ("Narrating Crises and Populism in Southern Europe"), the study engages with the concept of regimes of metaphors as a critical lens for exploring the architecture of metaphoricity in cultural narratives. Valdivia asserts that these regimes play a significant role in developing complex conceptual frameworks that articulate cultural narratives. Regimes of metaphors in the article refer to structured sets of interrelated metaphors that dominate and shape cultural narratives and public discourse. They help explain how specific metaphorical patterns become pervasive and effective in framing experiences and events within a specific cultural and social context. As such, we frame the terms 'war' and 'peace' as metaphorical devices guiding the Twitter public imaginaries when approaching violence and the murder of social leaders, especially in the post-agreement time. The timeframe both captures narratives concerning marginalized and endangered communities and coincides with the ongoing effects of the PA between the Colombian government and the ex-guerrilla group FARC, a critical semiotic event in the Colombian-mediated construction of the post-conflict context (Hernández).

Theoretical Approach

For this study, we adopt a mixed-method approach. The rationale behind selecting the digital environment for this research is that, despite technological disparities in Colombia, the data shows evidence of high engagement of Colombian users on social platforms such as Twitter (Bianchi). Social protest uses Twitter as a means of denunciation and to support calls for participation in rallies (González-Bailón and Wang). Furthermore, hashtags are well-documented and traceable in terms of their pervasiveness during mass rallies and protests (Ames and McDuffie; Johansson and Scaramuzzin; Dobrin; Xiong et al.; González-Bailón et al.).

Moral cognition provides a theoretical background to our study on narratives of social mobilization, which call for justice and protection of social leaders in the context of the post-agreement time in Colombia. Justice is an abstract moral concept involving judgments about what is fair, proper, and equitable. According to Ning Yu (4), moral cognition encompasses the cognitive processes and mechanisms by which humans make moral judgments. Furthermore, just as other abstract concepts, justice lacks concrete referents in the physical world. CMT suggests that abstract concepts are highly metaphorical and can be understood as metaphorical systems. For example, as Lakoff and Johnson explain in chapter 14 of their book *Philosophy in the Flesh,* moral concepts can be understood through metaphors that relate to physical and social experiences. The authors introduce metaphorical systems such as moral strength and moral accounting, according to which morality is understood as a discipline and transaction, respectively. In related works, Johnson discusses other metaphors such as MORALITY IS A JOURNEY, MORALITY IS BALANCE, MORALITY IS HEALTH, and IMMORALITY IS DISEASE (*The Body in the Mind* and *Moral Imagination*). Furthermore, Ning Yu emphasizes the concept of metaphorical systems as integral to how we make sense of the world; they are structured as sets of metaphors that share a common conceptual framework or domain (chapter 2). He also explains that moral metaphor systems are characterized by their source domains, rooted in embodied experiences. Accordingly, the author draws upon physical, visual, and spatial subsystems of metaphors to explain the moral system. In table 1, we sum up Yu's conceptual framework.

Table 1

Metaphorical moral subsystems according to Ning Yu's framework

Physical subsystem	Visual subsystem	Spatial subsystem
MORALITY IS HEALTH MORALITY IS BEAUTY MORALITY IS CLEANLINESS	MORALITY IS LIGHT MORALITY IS BRIGHTNESS MORALITY IS CLARITY	MORALITY IS HIGH MORALITY IS UPRIGHTNESS MORALITY IS DIRECTIONAL
Example: "healthy society," "corrupt individual"	Example: "beacon of morality," "dark deed"	Example: "high moral ground," "sinking into corruption"

Each of these subsystems entails a binary opposite, signifying the lack of morality; for instance, IMMORALITY IS DISEASE, IMMORALITY IS DARKNESS, IMMORALITY IS LOW. Yu further explains that the systematicity of metaphors can be seen as composing complex networks, wherein several linguistic metaphors can be interpreted by one conceptual metaphor, and several conceptual metaphors can correspond to a single linguistic metaphor. These networks feature horizontal and vertical linkages: horizontal linkages involve metaphors that share common source or target domains, while hierarchical linkages involve lower-level (more concrete) metaphors inheriting the structure and properties of higher-level (more abstract) metaphors.

For our analysis of the metaphoricity in Twitter narratives, the systematicity of the metaphorical conceptualization explained above can also be interpreted through the MELT (Metaphor Field-Loop Theory) model proposed by Valdivia ("Conflictive Cultural Narratives" 58-63). According to the author, *metaphoricity* refers to the specific configuration and operationalization of metaphors within a text or discourse, which is critical in shaping cultural narratives, emotions, and behaviors. This concept of metaphoricity emphasizes the dynamic and interactive nature of metaphors as they function within complex informational systems, influencing how individuals and communities interpret and respond to various situations, especially in contexts of crisis and conflict. Several aspects are key to interpreting the concept, i.e., metaphoricity is *dynamic* and operates within a field of complex forces; additionally, metaphors can be enhanced *bi-directionally*, meaning that they influence and are influenced by broader cultural narratives; metaphoricity affects both *long and short-term memory functions* by recalling past experiences to provide immediate interpretations; metaphoricity involves *analogical cognition* and *activate psycho-emotional states*, and finally, metaphoricity is part of a broader *regime of metaphors,* where certain metaphors are conventionalized

and become dominant for the shaping of cultural narratives (Valdivia, "Conflictive Cultural Narratives" 58-63).

Narratives of War and Peace in Colombia

In the Colombian context, narratives related to war have continuously been pervasive in the public imagination, permeating beliefs and actions. According to María Victoria Uribe, the metaphorization of war is used to create dramatic and evocative narratives that can influence public perception and justify ongoing conflicts. Expressions such as 'the bloodshed,' 'the aggressions,' and 'the atrocities' serve to evoke strong emotional responses and maintain a sense of perpetual conflict and hostility. Importantly, metaphors of 'war' and 'peace' are not only descriptive but are deeply embedded in the cultural and historical context of Colombia, making them powerful tools for political and social manipulation (Uribe 1-6). The metaphorization of peace, by contrast, aims to inspire hope and reconciliation but often struggles against the entrenched narratives of conflict. Expressions such as 'reconciliation,' 'forgiveness,' and 'harmony' are used to counterbalance war narratives but are frequently overshadowed by more evocative and dramatic war metaphors.

María Victoria Uribe has stated that violence is framed within the Colombian collective consciousness as a symptom that struggles with symbolization and clashes over the peace process. Uribe highlights a series of evocative uses of metaphoricity, such as the conceptual articulation of 'surviving time,' which describes how past fears and conflicts continue to influence the present. This is mainly through the ambiguous role of tropes that both represent and conceal identities and intentions. According to the author, there are two categories of violence: one associated with the internal, armed conflict and another, more elusive kind, characterized as shadowy and covert, carried out by influential factions within the Colombian elite.

As we previously mentioned, the PA marked a relevant semiotic event that could contribute to the renovation of cultural narratives in the country. In other words, the PA can be seen as a semiotic device—a mediator within the sociopolitical network (Latour 39)—capable of shaping and influencing processes of meaning and interpretation. Scholars such as Natalia Hernández and Miguel Gualdrón (n5) have posited the accord as transformative, entailing a social and political solution to the conflict. Nevertheless, the peace process unfolds amid opposing forces that dispute interpretations of peace, diverging from the idealized notion of a post-conflict phase (Rodríguez; Georgi), which may contribute to negative outcomes in the aftermath of the agreement, such as the murdering of social leaders. Isabel Rodríguez presents a four-dimensional interpretation of peace, each concept correlating with distinct understandings of conflict. The first interpretation signifies a transition from war to peace, coupled with the recognition of the 'Other' (the (ex)combatant) by trying to shift the divide between 'us' vs. 'them'. The second interpretation adopts a military standpoint and relates to security assurance, prioritizing territorial control, citizen security, and economic interests in line with a

neoliberal perspective. However, as Rodríguez notes, this perspective dismisses the need for structural reforms. The third interpretation originates from a territorial viewpoint, perceived by the government and FARC as a means of self-legitimization. Peasant, black, and indigenous communities advocate for the final interpretation, which encompasses environmental and social justice to achieve peace.

These definitions address the complexities of the peace process and varying perspectives, reflecting different interests, ideologies, and approaches to accomplish peace, mainly seen in the contraposition *of* and as a transition *from* war. Similarly, Richard Georgi (174) highlights the fluidity of the concept and challenges the linear conception of peace as a transition from war that the PA entails. As Georgi argues, the narrative of *the war on terrorism* held since Alvaro Uribe's presidential administration (2002-2010) could not be backed up after the signing of the accord, but the conflict still evolved. By interviewing human rights defenders—many of whom are social leaders—about the concept of peace, the results revealed that they perceive the peace process as a hegemonic crisis, leading to the stifling of the process and reluctance to institute security guarantees (Georgi 187).

In this article, we aim to explore the metaphoricity of 'war' and 'peace' in shaping narratives of social mobilization against the endangerment of social leaders in the aftermath of the PA. Before delving into our analysis, we recall several expressions representing the metaphorization of war by a paramilitary at the beginning of the 2000's (Estrada). Our purpose is to compare the potential similarities and differences of the metaphorical systems by both opposite narratives in two different historical moments:

"Lo que tenemos es una guerra irregular" [What we have is an irregular war]

"Lo que tenemos es una guerra sucia" [What we have is a dirty war]

"La guerra es terrible" [The war is terrible]

"Cuando llega la guerra y toca la puerta de su casa es para quedarse" [When the war arrives and knocks on the door of your house, it is there to stay]

"Un día yo dije que la guerra es para ganarse y punto" [One day I said that the war is to be won, period]

"Es previsto el escalamiento de la guerra por estrategia y por posicionamiento" [The escalation of war is anticipated due to strategy and positioning] (Estrada 121)

In his analysis, Estrada examines specific war-related metaphors such as 'irregular war,' 'dirty war,' and 'war knocks on your door' to show how these metaphors frame narratives and justify paramilitary actions. Additionally, Estrada (122-25) notes a particularly telling expression in the last expression listed above, which suggests that war is a calculated risk

undertaken that can be played like a game. This formulation strategically distances the perpetrators from accountability.

We argue that these expressions by the paramilitary represent an architecture or system encompassing a pervasive regime of metaphors (Valdivia, "Conflictive Cultural Narratives" 58-63) that includes conventionalized metaphors as already studied by María Victoria Uribe and that can form part of the superordinate metaphors: WAR AS A FORCE and WAR AS AN INESCAPABLE REALITY. Under these top-level metaphors (Yu), more specific metaphors can be mapped, including *war as an unpredictable entity, war as a moral contamination, war as a destructive force, war as an uninvited intruder, war as a strategic game*. Consequently, the metaphoricity conveyed by these expressions can be seen as a cultural narrative in which war is both a strategic game and an inevitable, necessary endeavor. These war metaphors, crafted to explain the conflict in Colombia from the perspective of one of its perpetrators, not only construct a narrative but also permeate the public imagination and influence everyday actions, as Estrada and Uribe suggest.

Method

In this article, we examine the use of the hashtag #NosEstánMatando [#TheyAreKillingUs], which initially emerged in several countries, notably Mexico, to raise awareness about violence against women. Over the years following the Peace Agreement (PA), this hashtag has evolved into a broader symbol of social mobilization against various forms of violence and injustice. For example, the use of this hashtag dramatically peaked during the 2019 rallies in Chile. In Colombia, activists adopted the hashtag #NosEstanMatando to protest the widespread violence and killings of social leaders. Particularly during the massive rallies of 2018 and 2019, which were part of the National Strike (Paro Nacional), this hashtag highlighted the violence and alleged human rights violations occurring during these demonstrations. Originally triggered by proposed labor and tax reforms, these protests quickly expanded to address broader societal issues, including inequality, corruption, and violence against social leaders, indigenous peoples, farmers, and former FARC combatants undergoing reintegration under the PA. The hashtag also served as a means to express solidarity with victims of violence and to elevate both national and international awareness of the country's critical situation (True and Riveros-Morales 14).

We propose a scalable methodology that integrates situated and constructivist approaches, combining distant and close reading techniques (Jensen et al.). For this purpose, we used *NVivo 12* (Jackson and Bazeley), a software tailored for computational qualitative-quantitative analysis. Initially, we collected a dataset of 598,580 tweets and retweets that used the hashtag, employing the free software *Mozdeh* (Thelwall) from January 1, 2018, to December 31, 2020. The next step involved data cleaning, during which we removed duplicates, resulting in a refined dataset of 121,215 entries. After the

data collection and cleaning processes, we conducted a term frequency analysis using *NVivo 12* to begin our examination.

To start exploring the field domains enacted by social mobilization narratives, we also detected synonyms (table 3) related to the terms most frequently found in the first step. This protocol aimed to capture a comprehensive range of languages, themes, and sentiments in the tweets and to unveil conceptual associations with the listed terms that potentially enacted a metaphoricity of the most frequent terms (table 2) present in the tweets.

A third step involved using word tree maps for the terms 'guerra' [war] and 'paz' [peace], created with *NVivo 12*, as shown in figure 1 below. Word tree maps are strategic tools for visually analyzing the language surrounding a central term, revealing patterns and how these terms are contextually embedded within the discourse. By examining the branching phrases that emanate from the central word, we can detect non-literal uses indicative of metaphorical interpretations. This method helped us identify phrases and contexts that suggest metaphoricity, thereby illuminating the broader narrative themes captured in the tweets.

Results and Discussion

Table 2

High-frequency detection of occurrences in 121.215 tweets using the hashtag #NosEstánMatando

Word	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
líderes	11190	0.59
sociales	9841	0.52
país	7441	0.39
vida	6784	0.26
paz	4117	0.22
violencia	3901	0.20

asesinados	3706	0.20
pueblo	3389	0.18
mujeres	3149	0.17
asesinato	3091	0.15
muerte	2567	0.13
guerra	1566	0.08
indígenas	1301	0.07
lideresas	1286	0.07

As shown in table 2, several more frequent terms are related to the subject of the narratives studied here: the denunciation of crimes against social leaders and their interpretation by social mobilization. As such, the more frequent terms are connected to conflict, i.e., 'violencia' [violence], 'asesinato' [killing], 'muerte' [death], and 'guerra' [war]. Other highly frequent terms relate to an opposite field domain, i.e., ' vida' [life] and 'paz' [peace], and are closely interconnected to other concepts related to the victims of the killings such as 'líderes' [leaders], pueblo [people], 'mujeres' [women], 'indígenas' [indigenous] and 'lideresas' [female leaders].

Table 3

High-frequency detection of occurrences and similar words in 121.215 tweets using the hashtag #NosEstánMatando

Word	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
líderes	13109	0.69	#líderes [#leaders], lidera [leads], lideraba [was leading], liderados [led], lideramos [we lead], lideran [lead], liderando [leading]
sociales	14189	0.38	izquierda [left], socialismo [socialism], socialista [socialist], socialmente [socially]
país	12570	0.24	#estado [#state], #nación [#nation], pueblo [people], pueblos [peoples]
asesinados	23320	0.21	asesinada [murdered, fem.], asesinado [murdered, masc.], cargado [charged, masc.], eliminados [eliminated, masc. pl.], homicidios [homicides], matando [killing], sacrificaron [sacrificed]
mujeres	3270	0.17	#mujeres [#women], @mujeres [@women], mujeres [women]

indígenas	2616	0.07	#indígena [#indigenous], nativas [native, fem. pl.], nativos [native, masc. pl.]
asesinato	14249	0.11	#asesinato [#murder], #muertes [#deaths], crimen [crime], homicidios [homicides], pesadilla [nightmare]
líderesa	1798	0.10	#lideresa [#female leader], #lideresas [#female leaders]
guerra	1573	0.08	#guerra [#war], @guerra [@war], #caricatura [#cartoon], guerras [wars]
paz	7830	0.04	#casado [#married], #paz [#peace], casa [house], serenidad [serenity], torre [tower], villa [villa]
vida	13092	0.04	#ser [#to be], #sustentación [#support], #vidas [#lives], alimentación [nutrition], alternativa [alternative], caminar [to walk], camino [path], cepa [strain], existencia [existence], sostener [to sustain], sostenible [sustainable], vivos [alive]
violencia	7124	0.03	#fuerza [#strength], @furia [@fury], canibalismo [cannibalism], feroces [ferocious], intensidad [intensity], ira [anger]
muerte	8492	0.03	#cadáver [corpse], #desaparición [disappearance], #fallecimientos [deaths], cuerpo [body], decesos [deaths], desaparición [disappearance], difuntos [deceased], extintos [extinct], fallecen [die], obituario [obituary]

Table 3 presents several terms identified by *NVivo* as similar (see similarity words cross-reference in appendix 1) for each of the words featured in table 2. Notably, in contrast to the data in table 2, the associated words exhibit different values when comparing frequencies and weighted percentages. For example, while 'paz' [peace] appeared more frequently than 'guerra' [war] in table 2, the weighted percentage suggests that 'guerra' had a higher relative frequency. However, the set of similar words is richer for 'paz,' which is associated with terms such as 'serenidad' [serenity] and 'seguridad' [safety]. Additionally, the term 'torre' [tower] appears to hold metaphorical potential, as it is commonly linked to defense but can also signify a place of refuge when associated with peace. It is also noteworthy that, aside from 'paz,' the terms with the highest number of associated synonyms are 'asesinados' [murdered] and 'muerte' [death], highlighting the complex conceptual mapping dynamics present in the dataset analyzed for this study.
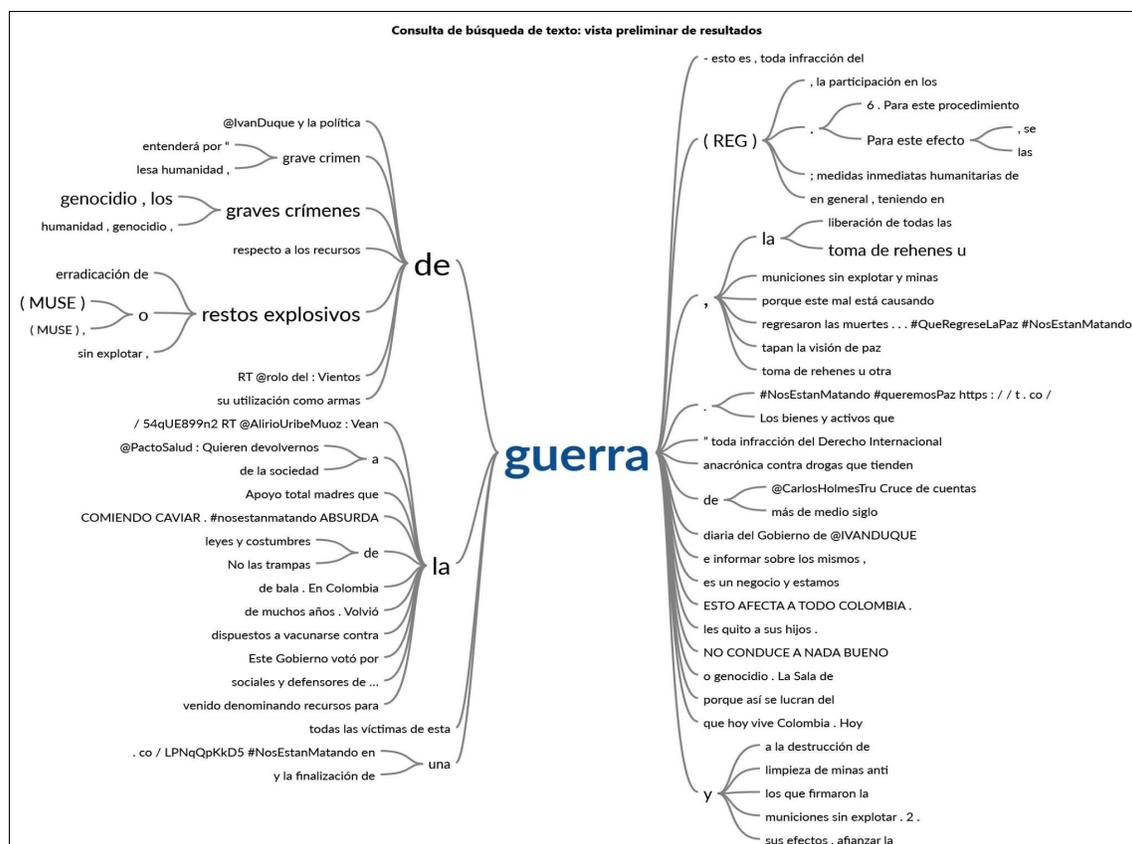
Fig. 1. Word Tree Analysis of 'guerra' [war] in 121,215 Tweets Featuring #NoEstánMatando (extract).

A regime of metaphors can be detected by analyzing the metaphoricity of the word tree of 'guerra' [war] visualized in figure 1. The spotlighted metaphors (figure 2) form a regime articulating the collective experience of conflict and its aftermath in Colombia. This regime entails the top-level metaphor (Yu 40-44) or central conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 3-17): WAR IS A PERSISTENT CONDITION. This metaphor organizes and gives coherence to the surrounding metaphors, each highlighting different aspects of the impact of the conflict and the way it is conceptualized: WAR IS A STATE ("country tired of a disgraceful war"), WAR IS A RELATIONSHIP deeply embedded in society ("sons and daughters of war"), WAR IS A destructive and uncontrollable FORCE or ENTITY ("nightmare of ceaseless violence"), and WAR IS A PLACE to which people are repeatedly drawn back ("cycle of returning to conflict").
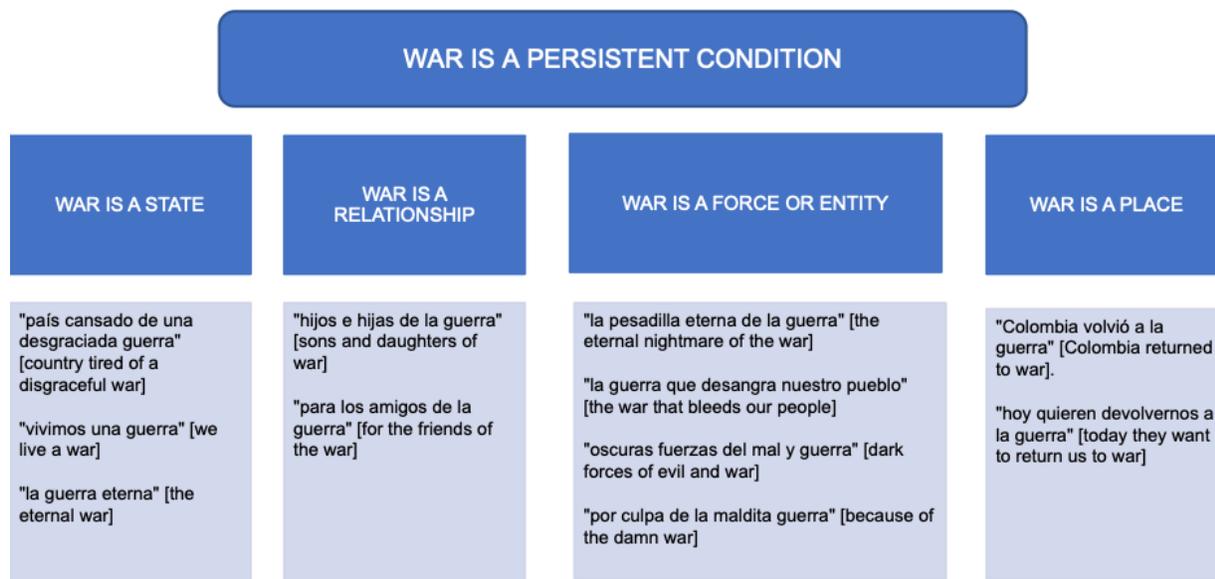
Fig. 2. Metaphoricity of 'war' in narratives of social mobilization.

The metaphoricity depicted in figure 2 illustrates a system with vertical and horizontal linkages (Yu 40-44). This system comprises a regime of metaphors pervasive in the Colombian imagination, used to articulate and respond to situations such as the recent increase in the murders of social leaders following the PA. However, this regime is inherited from other contexts and narratives, creating a sense that violence and war are permanent conditions or inescapable realities driven by unpredictable, non-human forces.

As previously discussed, the paramilitary narrative frequently employs metaphors that frame war as inevitable and enduring. This central metaphor reappears in statements such as: "Cuando llega la guerra y toca la puerta de su casa es para quedarse" [When war arrives and knocks on the door of your house, it is there to stay]. Although perspectives on war originate from different experiential viewpoints, both paramilitary discourse and social mobilization narratives converge on the idea that war leaves a lasting imprint on individuals and societies, marking them indelibly.

While the paramilitary perspective is pragmatic—rooted in firsthand experiences of waging and enduring warfare—it highlights a direct confrontation with the permanence of war. In contrast, similar metaphors used in tweets suggest a broader, collective experience of the impact of war. Thus, both narratives employ war metaphors, but for different purposes: the paramilitary uses them to justify their actions, whereas social leaders' tweets express indignation, a call for justice, and an elaboration on grief.

In this context, the visual subsystem (Yu 50-51) further reinforces these metaphors, particularly through expressions such as 'the eternal nightmare of war' and 'dark forces of evil and war'. These phrases metaphorically map the properties of light (or its absence) onto the causes and effects of violence and conflict, emphasizing the elusiveness of its perpetrators.

We also analyzed a word tree for *peace* to deepen the semanticity and metaphoricity around this concept in the studied tweets. Appendix 3 shows the most salient phrases derived from the word tree. Based on the content, we can interpret the metaphoricity of *peace* based on a system of metaphors shown in figure 3. Our study coincides with María Victoria Uribe in that the metaphorical configuration of war contains more expressions than peace. However, in terms of systematicity, we found two differentiated conceptual domains: PEACE IS A JOURNEY, and PEACE IS AN ENTITY. The studied Twitter narratives depict peace through metaphors emphasizing its aspirational, fragile, and active dimensions. Both central and top-level metaphors highlight the ongoing struggle, effort, and care required to achieve and maintain peace.
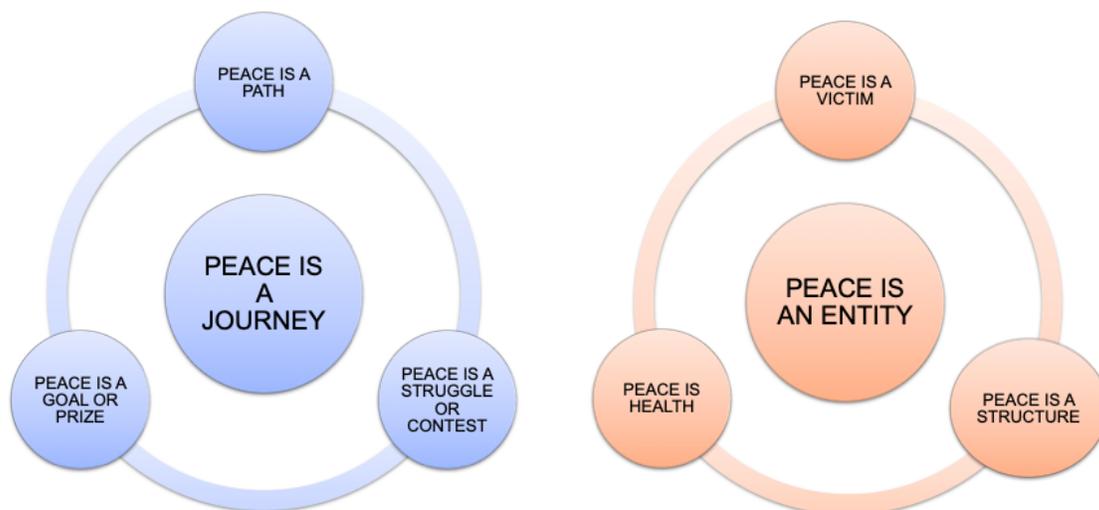
Fig. 3. Metaphoricity of *peace* in narratives of social mobilization.

The framing of peace with the second-level metaphors of path, goal, and struggle reflects the enduring aspirations of social mobilizations.

PEACE IS A PATH frames peace as a direction or route that must be followed, as seen in expressions such as "it is the path to peace" and "achieve progress towards peace". These metaphors suggest that peace is not a static state but a dynamic process requiring continuous movement and progress. PEACE IS A GOAL conceptualizes peace

as an objective that individuals and communities strive to attain, illustrated by phrases such as "they continue to reach peace" and "I work for peace".

The metaphoricity of peace suggests that while peace is a desired state, it is fraught with challenges and requires continuous effort and protection. This duality in the metaphorization of peace highlights the emotional and cognitive complexity involved in the narratives of social mobilization against the endangerment of social leaders. This framing underscores the need for sustained efforts to nurture and defend peace in Colombia amidst the enduring legacy of conflict and violence.

The second conceptual system, PEACE IS AN ENTITY, more clearly represents the moral cognition of justice and peace. This regime portrays 'peace' as something tangible that can be built, nurtured, and protected while underscoring the constant threats and setbacks faced in the post-agreement period.

PEACE IS HEALTH suggests that peace is fragile and vulnerable to deterioration, much like health, and thus needs continuous care and effort to sustain it. Expressions such as "Colombia agonizes the hope for peace" liken peace to a state of well-being, implying peace is precarious and requires nurturing and protection.

PEACE IS A STRUCTURE frames peace as something that must be actively established and maintained. This metaphor is reflected in expressions such as "defense and construction of peace," which depict peace as something that can be built and safeguarded. Such language suggests that peace is not static but rather the result of sustained efforts to create and uphold stability.

PEACE IS A VICTIM frames peace as something that is harmed or threatened, requiring vigilance and protection. Expressions such as "peace for Colombia has been murdered" and "peace, we are the ones who lay down the dead" personify peace as a victim of violence and conflict. This metaphor emphasizes the disruptions of peace and the association between peace and its perceived fragility.

Conclusion

Analyzing metaphors in Twitter narratives tagged with #NosEstánMatando reveals significant insights into the conceptualization of war, peace, and the experiences of endangered social leaders in Colombia following the PA. This study highlights how the metaphorization of 'war' and 'peace' by social mobilizations on Twitter contributes to the broader meaning-making processes and shapes the public's understanding of violence, justice, and reconciliation. In the context of the PA, CMT emerges as a powerful lens through which we can explore the intricate dynamics of peacebuilding and reconciliation (Lakoff). Thus, using a computational-assisted mixed research methodology, our research has explained and analyzed how metaphoricity intersects with the portrayal of endangered social leaders within this theoretical framework. In this regard, metaphors are not mere linguistic tropes but cognitive tools that shape our understanding of complex phenomena. By drawing on familiar experiences, metaphors

allow us to grasp abstract concepts more concretely. In the case of the PA, metaphors become bridges between the intangible (peace, justice) and the tangible (daily life, conflict zones). When we speak of 'healing wounds' or 'bridging divides,' we invoke metaphors that evoke physical sensations and spatial connections. These metaphors guide our perception of the peace process.

In addition, metaphors transcend cultural boundaries. They tap into shared human experiences and emotions. In the Colombian context, healing, rebuilding, and transformation metaphors resonate across diverse communities. However, the universality of metaphors also carries risks. Hidden biases may lurk within seemingly innocent expressions. For instance, portraying victims as "broken" or "scarred" can unintentionally perpetuate victimhood narratives. Moreover, metaphors must be situated within the specific historical, social, and political context. What works metaphorically in one setting may not translate seamlessly elsewhere. Consequently, while metaphors facilitate understanding, they can oversimplify complex realities. The danger lies in overgeneralization. Not all wounds heal similarly, and not all bridges span equally. For this reason, it is key to recognize that metaphors carry cultural baggage. Interrogate their implications and consider alternative perspectives.

In sum, in response to our initial research question of how the metaphorization of 'war' and 'peace' in Twitter (now known as X) narratives by social mobilization contribute to the meaning-making of endangered social leaders after the PA in Colombia, we can conclude that a particular regime of metaphors, as demonstrated by this article, is fundamentally orienting the public perception of the notions of war, peace, and justice in the digital arena. This framing had critical consequences in the configuration of the PA and its aftermath, the concept of 'securitization' being a potential future avenue for further research that escapes the specific limitations and scope of the present research. Additionally, we would like to note that a mixed research methods approach using a scalable reading protocol has been particularly effective when studying complex semiotic events, such as narratives emerging in the aftermath of the PA. Future lines of inquiry will further develop, test, and hone the promising and fruitful approaches offered in this work that must be transposed and replicated under similar conditions to those tested in this study.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Word	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
líderes	13109	0.69	#lidere, #lídere, #lideres, #líderes, lidera, lideraba, lideraban, liderada, lideradas, liderado, liderados, lideramos, lideran, liderando, lideranzas, liderar, lideraron, lideras, lidere, lídere, lidereaban, lideren, lideres, lidéres, líderes, lideró
sociales	14189	0.38	#izquierd, #izquierdas, #sociale, #sociales, #socialismo, @izquierda, @social, izquierda, izquierdas, izquierdista, izquierdistas, izquierdo, izquierdos, izquierdosos, social, social', social', sociale, socialed, sociales, sociales', sociales', socialismo, socialista, socialistas, socialmente
país	12570	0.24	#estado, #nación, #naciones, #pais, #país, #puebla, #pueblo, #pueblos, @pais, @pueblo, estadía, estadista, nacion, nación, naciona, naciones, pais, país, paisa, paisas, paises, países, puebl, puebla, pueblada, pueble, pueblo, pueblos
asesinados	23320	0.21	#asesin, #asesina, #asesinad, #asesinada, #asesinadas, #asesinado, #asesinados, #asesinan, #asesinando, #asesinaron, #asesinas, #asesino, #asesinos, #eliminaciones, #eliminados, #mat, #matan, #matando, #matar, #mataron, @mat, @matas, asesin, asesina, asesinaba, asesinaban, asesinad, asesinada, 'asesinada, asesinadas, asesinado, asesinados, asesinamos, asesinan, asesinando, asesinándola, asesinandolos, asesinándolos, asesinandonos, asesinándonos, asesinándose, asesinar, asesinara, asesinaran, asesinarán, asesinaras, asesinarla, asesinarlas, asesinarle, asesinarlo, asesinarlos, asesinarme, asesinarnos, asesinaron, asesinarse, asesinas, asesinaste, asesine, asesinen, asesines, asesino, asesinó, asesinos, carga, cargaba, cargada, cargado, cargados, cargamos, cargan, cargando, cargar, cargaría, cargarla, cargaron, cargen, cargo, cargó, cargos, carguen, elimina, eliminaban, eliminación, eliminaciones, eliminada, eliminadas, eliminado, eliminados, eliminamos, eliminan, eliminando, eliminar, eliminarla, eliminarlo, eliminarlos, eliminarnos, eliminaron, eliminas, elimine, eliminemos, eliminen, eliminó, eliminos, homic, homicida, homicidas, homicidos, mat, mata, mataba, mataban, matada, matado, matados, matáis, matamos, matan, matando, matando', matando#todaslasvidasimportan, matando', matándola, matandolas, matándolas, matandolo, matandolos, matándolos, matandonos, matándonos, matándose, matar, matara, matará, matáramos, mataran, matarán, mataras, matarás, mataría, matarían, matarla, matarlas, matarle, matarlo, matarlos, matarme, matarnos, mataron, matarse, matas, mataste, mate, maté, matemos, maten, mater, mates, matías, mato, mató, sacrificada, sacrificadas, sacrificado, sacrifican, sacrificando, sacrificar, sacrificarán, sacrificaron
mujeres	3270	0.17	#mujeres, @mujeres, mujere, mujeres, mujeres'

indígenas	2616	0.07	#indigena, #indígena, #indigenas, #indígenas, @indigenaen, indigena, indígena, indigenas, indígenas, índigenas, indígenes, indigenistas, nativas, nativo, nativos
asesinato	14249	0.11	#asesinato, #asesinatos, #crime, #crimen, #homicidio, #homicidios, #muerte, #muertes, #muertos, asesinat, asesinates, asesinato, asesináto, asesinatos, crim, crím, crime, crimen, 'crimen, crímen, crimes, homic, homicida, homicidas, homicidi, homicidio, homicidios, homicidos, muert, muert@, muerta, muertas, muerte, muerted, muertes, muertes", muerto, muertos, muertos', pesadilla, pesadillas
líderesa	1798	0.10	#lideresa, #lideresas, #líderesas, lideresa, líderesa, lideresas, líderesas, lideresos
guerra	1573	0.08	#guerra, @guerra, @guerro, guerr, guerra, 'guerra, guerra#caricatura, guerras
paz	7830	0.04	#casado, #caso, #paz, #quinta, #quinte, @cas, @casa, @casas, @chal, @chalado, @paz, @villa, cas, casa, casa', casada, casadas, casado, casar, casarse, casas, case, caseria, caserío, casí, caso, casos, chal, chala, chalar, chale, chalé, finca, fincas, fince, paz, paz', paz", 'paz', paz', quinta, quinter, quinto, reposo, serena, serene, serenidad, sereno, serenos, torre, torres, villa, villada, villas
vida	13092	0.04	#anime, #puta, #puto, #régimen, #ser, #sustentación, #vida, #vidas, #viv, #viva, #vivas, #vivir, @alterna, @alternoso, @cep, @ser, @vid, @viva, @vivas, @vive, alimenta, alimentación, alimentado, alimentador, alimentamos, alimentan, alimentando, alimentar, alimentarse, alimente, alimenten, alimento, alimentos, alterna, alternativa, alternativas, alternativo, alternativos, alterno, alternos, anima, animación, animadas, animador, animan, animas, anime, animé, anímico, animo, animó, ánimo, animos, ánimos, camin, camina, caminaba, caminado, caminamos, caminan, caminando, caminar, caminará, caminarán, caminaré, caminaremos, caminaron, caminas, camine, caminé, caminemos, caminen, camines, camino, camino', caminos, cepa, existencia, existencias, existente, existentes, fletes, lozano, manutención, parr, parra, pólvora, polvorosa, prostitución, prostituida, prostituidas, prostituido, prostituidos, prostituyendo, prostituyó, put, puta, puta', puta', putada, putamente, putas, puteadas, puteamos, putear, putearas, putearlo, puteen, puteria, putió, puto, putos, regimen, régimen, sera, seran, sere, seres, sostenemos, sostener, sostenerse, sostenes, sostenía, sostenible, sostenida, sostenido, sosteniendo, sosteniéndonos, sostenimiento, sustenta, sustentable, sustentado, sustentan, sustentando, sustentar, sustento, vid, víd, vida, vida', vidad, vidas, vide, viv, viv@, viva, vivamos, vivan, vivar, vivas, vive, viven, vives, viví, vivía, vivíamos, vivían, vivida, vividas, vivido, vividos, viviendo, viviendola, viviera, viviéramos, vivieran, vivieron, vivimos, vívimos, vivió, vivir, vivir", vivirá, vivirán, vivirás, viviremos, viviríamos, vivirla, vivirlas, vivirlo, vivirlos, vivirse, viviste, vivo, vivos, "vivos"
violencia	7124	0.03	#fuerz, #fuerza, #violenci, #violencia, #violencia#mahchista, #violenciad, @fuerz, @furia, @violencio, acometió, bravío, canibales, canibalismo, encarnizando, feroces, fuerz, fuerza, fuerzar, fuerzas, furia, furiosas, intensa, intensamente, intensidad, intensiva, intensivo, intensivos, intenso, intensos, ira, irá, vehemencia,

			vehemente, vehementemente, violenci, violencia, violencia', víolencia, violencias, violencio
muerte	8492	0.03	#cadáver, #desaparición, #fallecimientos, #falleció, #muerte, #muertes, #muertos, @cadavid, agonizante, cadaver, cadáver, cuerp, cuerp@, cuerpa, cuerpas, cuerpo, cuerpos, deceso, decesos, defunción, defunciones, desaparicion, desaparición, desapariciones, difunta, difunto, difuntos, extinta, extintas, extinto, extintos, fallec, fallece, 'fallece', fallecen, fallecer, falleces, fallecí, fallecid, fallecida, fallecidas, fallecido, fallecidos, fallecieron, fallecimiento, fallecimientos, falleció, muert, muert@, muerta, muertas, muerte, muerted, muertes, muertes'', muerto, muertos, muertos', obituario

Appendix 2

Examples of the phrases related to the term *guerra* [war] according to the word tree extracted with NVivo12

Colombia volvió a la guerra	[Colombia returned / to / the / war]
hoy quieren devolvernos a la guerra	[today they want to send us back / to / the / war]
nos quieren condenar /a /la /guerra	[they want to condemn us / to / the / war]
activista, hijo /de/ la/ guerra	[activist, son / of / the / war]
cambió el foco /de/ la/guerra	[he changed the focus / of / the / war]
hijos e hijas/ de/ la/ guerra	[sons and daughters / of / the / war]
la pesadilla eterna/ de/ la/ guerra	[the eternal nightmare / of / the / war]
para los amigos/ de/ la/ guerra	[for the friends / of / the / war]
que ser enemigo/ de/ la/ guerra	[to be an enemy / of / the / war]
un nuevo huérfano/ de/ la/ guerra	[a new orphan / of / the / war]
y el recrudecimiento/ de/ la/ guerra	[and the intensification / of / the / war]
un hijo herido/ por/ la/ guerra	[a son wounded / by / the / war]
un país permeado/ por/ la/ guerra	[a country permeated / by / the / war]
la cabeza de esta horrible /guerra	[the head of this horrible / war]

la nueva víctima de la / guerra

[the new victim of the / war]

país cansado de una desgraciada /guerra

[country tired of a wretched / war]

refleja la continuidad de la/ guerra

[it reflects the continuity of the/ war]

#somosdefendamoslapaz "vivimos/ una/ guerra

[#weareletsdefendpeace "we live / a / war]

diariamente son parte de / una/ guerra

[daily they are part of / a / war]

nuestros líderes asesinados en / una /guerra

[our leaders killed in / a / war]

oscuras fuerzas del mal/y/ guerra

[dark forces of evil / and / war]

por culpa de la/ maldita/ guerra

[because of the/ damned/ war]

la guerra/ eterna

[the eternal /war]

la guerra/ que/ desangra nuestro pueblo

[the war / that / bleeds our people]

la guerra/ inicia de nuevo. eso busca

[the war / starts again/ that's what it seeks]

la guerra/ le arrebata lo más preciado

[the war / takes away the most precious]

la guerra/ nunca se fue/ la ausencia

[the war / never left/ the absence]

la guerra/ que/ ha consumido nuestro país

[the war / that / has consumed our country]

la / guerra / #MariaDelPilarHurtado #DueleColombia #NosEstanMatando

[the / war / #MariaDelPilarHurtado] [#ItHurtsColombia #TheyAreKillingUs]

la / guerra / #NosEstanMatando / #MaríaDelPilarHurtado Lo siento por

[the / war / #TheyAreKillingUs / #MariaDelPilarHurtado I'm sorry for]

la / guerra / #MariaDelPilarHurtado

[the / war / #MariaDelPilarHurtado]

la / guerra / #ParoNacional7Agosto

[the / war / #NationalStrike7August]

la / guerra /pero no… solamente somos mujeres

[the / war / but no... we are just women]

la / guerra /solo es una idea...#NosEstanMatando

[the / war / is just an idea… #TheyAreKillingUs]

la / guerra / contra / líderes de derechos humanos

[the / war / against / human rights leaders]

Appendix 3

Hace trizas/el/acuerdo/ de/ paz	[shattering the peace agreement]
Colombia agoniza la esperanza/ de/ paz	[Colombia agonizes the hope / of / peace]
a las calles, Colombia quiere/ paz	[to the streets, Colombia wants / peace]
la defensa y construcción / de/ paz	[the defense and construction / of / peace]
que nos dejen vivir/ en / paz	[let us live / in / peace]
grito de Colombia pidiendo/ paz	[cry of Colombia asking for / peace]
que le cumplia a/ la / paz	[that he fulfilled to / the / peace]
quienes le apostaron a/ la/ paz	[those who bet on / the / peace]
esperanza y luchamos/ por/ la/ paz	[hope and we fight / for / the / peace]
objetivo de volver trizas/ la/ paz	[goal to shatter / the / peace]
vencer la muerte/ ganar/ la/ paz	[Defeat death / win / the / peace]
y el campo, buscar/ la/ paz	[and the countryside, seek / the / peace]
es el camino para /una/ paz	[It is the path for / a / peace]
trabajo por/ una/ paz	[I work for / a / peace]
siguen intentando alcanzar/ la/ paz	[they keep trying to reach / the / peace]
lograr el avance hacia/la/ paz	[to achieve progress towards / the / peace]
paz/ la/ recuperación del sentido común	[peace / the / recovery of common sense]
paz/ la/ transición hacia el posconflicto	[peace / the / transition to post-conflict]
paz/ libre de sangre y desigualdad	[peace / free from blood and inequality]
paz/ nacimos siendo diferentes	[peace / we were born different]
paz/ por/ Colombia ha sido asesinada	[peace / for / Colombia has been murdered]
paz/ por nuestros muertos	[peace / for our deceased]
paz/ somos quienes ponemos los muertos	[peace / we are the ones who suffer the deaths]
paz/ cada muerte es un mensaje	[peace / each death is a message]
paz/ la paz el único camino	[peace / peace the only way]

paz/con/ inclusión social   [peace / with / social inclusion]

paz/con/ justicia social   [peace / with / social justice]

paz/ debe ser una responsabilidad de   [peace / should be a responsibility of]

"They're Making Sure I Get Their Stories Right": Horror, Intertextuality, and Metafiction in Mike Flanagan's *The Fall of the House of Usher*

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Adaptations are fascinating phenomena. They simultaneously function as revisions, reductions, expansions, actualizations, and dissections of an anterior text whose aesthetic brilliance, psychological depth and philosophical affordance(s) catch the eye and ears of a reader who decides to bring out the not-entirely-expressed character of said text, whether it be a story, a poem, a novel, a painting, a play, a piece of music, or a videogame, to name but a few. And that is usually the case when the media category into which the 'original' artifact is transposed is cinema or television. The semiotic toolkit of filmic language is a close ally to the fundamentally subjective enterprise of the adapter, for adaptations are nothing short of creative acts of interpretation. Drawing on Linda Hutcheon's conceptualization of adaptations as both aesthetic processes and products which are not to be shadowed by the obsolete spectre of derivation, this essay proposes to explore director Mike Flanagan's multi-layered method of interpretation at the heart of his most recent work, *The Fall of the House of Usher* (2023), now available on Netflix. I argue that Flanagan's rendition of E.A. Poe's classic tale of horror shows a sophisticated understanding of intertextuality as a compositional device, while efficaciously toying with the trope of metafiction. I am mostly interested in a crucial scene in which Roderick Usher, the show's protagonist and narrator, voices his concern with getting the "stories right" of his sons, who each incarnate a specific tale or symbol from Poe's oeuvre. Functioning as a comment on adaptations at large, Roderick's worry, I contend, echoes Flanagan's purpose to do Poe's fiction justice, to get his stories 'right', in a subtly ironic way.

Keywords: adaptation, Flanagan, intertextuality, metafiction, Poe

Introduction

From an aesthetic perspective, adapting essentially means to transfer a text from its original medial context of production, take it apart during said transfer, and put it back together according to the conventions of the target media category. This threefold process dovetails with a range of operations, such as revisions, reductions, expansions, and dissections carried out on the source text by a skilful interpreter who, driven by artistic, philosophical, or market-related reason, decides to embark on a mission to bring out the not-entirely-expressed character of the original work. Although not exclusively, the media most commonly associated with remanufacturing stories, poems, novels, paintings, plays, pieces of music, or videogames are cinema and television, including the relatively recent digital streaming platforms brought about by the increasingly evolving media landscape.

A case in point is American director Mike Flanagan's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (2023), which shows a sophisticated understanding of the adaptation mechanisms on the director's part, while also toying with self-reflexivity. The following reading of E. A. Poe's classic tale of horror as both a product that cleverly captures the meaning of adaptations as cooperative and relational processes, and an inconspicuous wink to the audience about the nature of adaptations is methodologically inspired by David T. Johnson's and Linda Hutcheon's musings on the fidelity debate, and Gass' notion of metafiction. I am particularly interested in specific episodes and scenes, including one where Roderick Usher, the show's protagonist and main narrator, voices his concern with getting his dead children's "stories right," each of which incarnates a specific element from Poe's oeuvre. Not only can Roderick's preoccupation with narrative accuracy be read against the backdrop of the concept of adaptive fidelity; it also functions as a reflection on adaptation itself – not unlike overtly self-reflexive movies such as Charlie Kaufman's *Adaptation* (2002) –, which in turn echoes more broadly the director's purpose to do Poe's fiction justice.

Adaptation: Fidelity or Adulteration?

In the essay "Adaptation and Fidelity" (2017), David T. Johnson tackles what he argues has kept over the years many adaptation scholars up at night, which is faithfulness as the primary critical ground against which the relationship between source text and its adaptation is commonly tested. The brilliance of the article lies not only in the soundness of his survey of adaptation studies in regard to fidelity, but also in the way he investigates why an apparently meaningless concept has "inspire[d] such vitriol over the years" or even "abhorrence" (87). Perhaps, those adaptation scholars have chosen to distance themselves from faithfulness-oriented interpretations for both political and aesthetic reasons. In the former case, as Linda Hutcheon makes clear, the support for the rehabilitation of adaptations has to do with a "de-hierarchizing impulse, a desire to challenge the explicitly and implicitly negative cultural evaluation of things like postmodernism, parody, and now, adaptation, which are seen as secondary and inferior" (xii). It is a shared trend among the continental philosophers of the 1960s and 1970s to question binary oppositions, hierarchies, and cultural metanarratives. Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, Derridean deconstructionism and Foucault's placing of discourses under the microscope to reveal the benefits of a genealogical methodology are well-known examples of the impulse that Hutcheon talks about. In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1971), Foucault describes the notion of genealogy, whose influence on any discussion of adaptations (and intertextuality at large) cannot be stressed enough. To the philosopher,

> [g]enealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and re-copied many times. [...] [I]t rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for "origins." (139-40)

The entanglements referenced by Foucault are crucial to the development of Hutcheon's well-known argument that "to be second is not to be secondary or inferior; likewise, to be first is not to be originary or authoritative" (xii).

Flanagan's work proves a reliable case study for the legitimation of adaptations as artistic creations that, while exhibiting a more or less explicit descendance, more importantly enlarge and enrich the source text. Flanagan has an obvious penchant for adaptations: *Gerald's Game* (2017) and *Doctor Sleep* (2019) are both movies inspired by the two novels of the same name by Stephen King; *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018) and *The Haunting of Bly Manor* (2020) are respectively adapted from Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). *Midnight Mass* (2021), an original horror miniseries that blends Christian bigotry and vampiric lore, would be the exception to Flanagan's predisposition towards adaptations, but its genesis still reflects the director's intermedial competence. Prior to signing the deal for a seven-episode show with Netflix, Flanagan had originally conceived *Midnight Mass* as a novel, which later became a movie screenplay before concluding its intermedial arc as a television script (Flanagan, "Deeply Personal Horror").

Subjecting Poe's story to a wealth of transformative devices, *The Fall of the House of Usher* effectively demonstrates the value of renegotiating the primacy of the faithfulness criterion. This approach allows for a variety of creative and interpretive solutions that would be inevitably hindered by an excessively rigorous adherence to the source material. Among the genres particularly suited to such remodelling endeavors, as the case of Flanagan's productions clearly shows, horror fiction is undeniably versatile. Consider the case of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). According to Dennis R. Perry, the numerous adaptations of *Frankenstein* "have all engaged, however unknowingly, in the postmodern enterprise of recomposing memory to encompass new or previously excluded stories" (141). It is not entirely clear that *The Fall of the House of Usher* falls within the scope of postmodernism, but it certainly shares some of its principal characteristics, including an evident tendency for irony, intertextuality, self-reflexivity and textual recombination of pre-existing material. I mentioned *Frankenstein* not only because of its historical relevance in literature, but also because the patchwork metaphor inherent in the novel (and subsequent adaptations) pairs well with Flanagan's adaptive assembly project – by drawing on multiple Poe tales (besides the titular work), Flanagan weaves a story in which all its threads are cohesively held together.

The Fall of the House of Usher: Structure and Plot

Though the title openly reveals its debt to the story of the same name, Flanagan's miniseries is an intertextual mosaic based on a variety of Poe's characters, poems, motifs and symbols. Each title of the eight episodes explicitly acknowledges its literary antecedents: "A Midnight Dreary" (a reference to "The Raven"'s first line), "The Masque of the Red Death," "Murder in the Rue Morgue," "The Black Cat," "The Tell-Tale Heart," "Goldbug," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Raven." Set in November 2023, *The Fall of*

the House of Usher follows the lives of Roderick and Madeline Usher, who are the billionaire owners of Fortunato Pharmaceuticals, an empire founded on the development and manufacture of highly addictive painkillers "that have inflicted untold misery on the American public" (Latif). The Ushers, however, did not build their fortune thanks to their hard work and impeccable moral compass; it is all Verna's merit, a Mephistophelian woman who offers the Ushers the opportunity to become "king and queen of Fortunato,"[1] on the condition that the price will be paid by their progenies with their own lives: "You get the whole world, and when you're done, at the end of it all [...] your bloodline dies with you" ("The Raven," 46:47-46:49).

The arrangement of the story's discourse does not only reflect Flanagan's attempt to merely correlate form and content, but also emphasizes the texts'"interrelationships with other rejoinders in the same dialogue" (Bakhtin 274) within Poe's literary universe. The episodes are interdependently connected, so as to assemble a seemingly organic narrative network whose nodes refer to each other throughout the show, in a way that resembles both horror anthologies from the past (each episode is based on a comparatively autonomous specific story) and the traditional, single-narrative series (the stories are nonetheless intratextually connected to each other),[2] achieved through the recurrence of characters and subplots. The show begins with Roderick and Madeline attending the funeral of Frederick, Tamerlane and Victorine, the eldest three of Mr. Usher's six children (the others being Prospero, Camille and the deceased Napoleon). It soon becomes clear that something is wrong, when we see a sequence of flashback-like shots, each powerfully hinting at the violent death that the siblings must have died. After the funeral, still visibly shaken by the previous hallucination of the ghosts of his children inside the church, Roderick collapses to the ground, whispering "It's time," while the camera shifts toward a raven staring ominously at Roderick ("A Midnight Dreary," 52:32). Enter detective August Dupin, called by Mr. Usher with the request to meet with him in private: "I called to give you the only thing you've ever wanted. My confession" ("A Midnight Dreary," 06:50). This is the series' framing device: Roderick confessing his 'crimes' to detective Dupin, whose position as narratee becomes one with that of the viewer. Embedded within the main chronological casing is a long flashback beginning with Roderick and Madeline's childhood (1953), followed first by the death of their mother (1962), and then by their rise to wealth (1979-onwards) – all of which is in turn framed in and intertwine with the bulk of *The Fall*'s plot; that is, the death of the Usher siblings, each of them manifestly connected to a Poe story.

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[1] The name "Verna" is an obvious anagram of "raven".
[2] Two shows I have in mind are Rod Serling's original *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964) and William Gaines and Steven Dodd's *Tales from the Crypt* (1989-1996), which is coincidentally adapted from the comic series of the same name.

Capturing the Spirit of the Text (and Adaptations)

The story's contemporary spatio-temporal setting can be read as yet another element that speaks to Flanagan's uninterest in the fidelity paradigm, an approach that several viewers have adopted as their interpretive framework of choice. For instance, there is a discussion on Reddit about whether Flanagan's *Usher* should be considered a successful adaptation, tellingly titled "*The Fall of the House of Usher* (Netflix, 2023) Is a Bad Poe Adaptation but a Great Show" (JavierLoustaunau). The view is echoed by Aja Romano in a column they write on *Vox*, in which the critic complains about one of the many evident differences between the short story and the series, such as the incestuous relationship between Roderick and Madeline in Poe's tale, and the pharmaceutical conspiracy orchestrated by the two characters in Flanagan's adaptation: "For starters, if most people know any one thing about *The Fall of the House of Usher*, it's that the titular downfall is about incest. The Netflix adaptation, however, proposes: What if it were about the opioid crisis instead?" (Romano). *Elle* (Menon), *Variety* (Ingram), and *The New York Post* (Sarner), instead, are much more appreciative of Flanagan's show, although all reviewers seem equally preoccupied with the faithfulness aspect of the director's transposition. While these remarks prove that the days of fidelity as the principal critical lens of adaptations are all but numbered, I want to suggest that they are somehow missing the point of adaptations as creative remodulations of pre-existing artifacts. Flanagan is motivated not so much by a desire to follow in his predecessors' footsteps – with their conservative (albeit effective) takes on Poe's work[3] – as he is by his interest in Poe's study of the mind as a sort of conceptual archetype susceptible to adaptive reconfigurations.[4] As pointed out earlier, in *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Poe's tropes, characters and imagery are fully developed to extend beyond their original narrative arc. "The Masque of the Red Death" (second episode), for example, inspiringly capitalizes on the admonishing, parable-like tone of its literary antecedent. In the short story, Prince Prospero holds a masquerade in "one of his castellated abbeys" and invites "a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court" to protect and distract himself and his guests from the deadly plague known as the "Red Death," a pestilence that "had long devastated the country" (Poe 485). But no matter how secluded from the plague he felt he would be, the Red Death herself comes at last to claim Prospero's life as well as that of the other attendants who "one by one dropped […] in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel" (490). In Flanagan's retelling, Prospero arranges a private bacchanalian masquerade at an abandoned Fortunato facility to prove his worth following Roderick's sardonic dismissal of his VIP club pitch. At

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[3] Prominent figures in the history of cinema such as Bela Lugosi, Boris Karloff and Vincent Price contributed to the increasing popularity of Poe on the big screen since the 1930s, with Price starring in no less than eleven adaptations inspired by the writer (Neimeyer 217).

[4] Indeed, Poe's fictionalization of the dark side of the human psyche may be viewed as symptomatic of what Harold Bloom defined "our uncanny unanimity in our repressions" (*Modern Critical Views* 5).

the party, Verna shows up dressed up as the Red Death and 'kills' everybody after Prospero activates the facility's sprinklers at the stroke of midnight. Instead of water, the partygoers are showered with a highly corrosive acid, subsequently dying an extremely agonizing death. Not only the cautionary tone of the original is preserved (the themes of pompousness and uncompromised luxury leading to an inevitable demise are common to both versions of the "Red Death"), but it ties in nicely with the ethical stance of the show against the opioid crisis and the pharmaceutical companies behind it. Whereas Prospero and his guests vainly attempt to find refuge in the abbey, confident that they can "bid defiance to contagion" with beauty and pleasure alone shielding them from the raging pestilence (Poe 485), Roderick's demiurgic vision of building a "world without pain" is equally destined to collapse under its own hypocritical weight. A vision that he makes explicit as he lashes out against Verna in the final episode of the show:

> Nobody can stomach a little discomfort. It hurts. It hurts and they cry and cry, and I took it away! I reached in and I snuffed out those flames in their backs, in their joints, in their heads, in their hands. I waved my wand, wasn't enough. Was never enough. They just kept wanting more. More and more.

Roderick's narcissistic strategy of blaming the victim is unconvincing ("Oh honey, don't kid a kidder," says Verna), and resonates with the same rhetoric behind which OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma his amidst the growing scandal that eventually led to its dissolution in 2021. Being former producers of one the most addictive opioids in the market (and the obvious inspiration for Roderick's empire), Purdue knowingly lied about the drug's potential for abuse, falsely promoting a 12-hour cycle of pain relief (Ryan, Girion and Glover).

Holding up a Metafictional Mirror to the Gears of Adaptation

While ascribing the bloodline curse of the Usher family in Poe's story to Roderick's Faustian pact with Verna is one of several elements that are clearly indicative of Flanagan's approach, a particular moment in the series truly demonstrates Flanagan's understanding of the mechanisms underpinning adaptation. In the seventh episode, "The Pit and the Pendulum," Roderick tells detective Dupin that the ghosts of his children "[have] been at me all night. Mak[ing] sure I get their stories right." It is a passing comment during a lengthy confession, but I would argue that it indicates the emergence of Flanagan's awareness of the dichotomy between strict fidelity and liberating revisionism, an ironical, metafictional flavor that calls attention to the adaptation process itself. Generally agreed-upon as being coined by Postmodern novelist and literary theorist William H. Gass, the term metafiction designates any instance whereby the text, intentionally or not, reflects upon itself as an aesthetic artifice. In the essay *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (1972), Gass compares the notion to the metalinguistic nature of those discourses used to discuss certain disciplines, such as mathematics or ethics:

> There are metatheorems in mathematics and logic, ethics has its linguistic oversoul, everywhere lingos to converse about lingos are being contrived, and the case is no different in the novel. I don't mean merely those drearily predictable pieces about writers who are writing about what they are writing, but those, like some of the work of Borges, Barth, and Flann O'Brien, for example, in which the forms of fiction serve as the material upon which further forms can be imposed. Indeed, many of the so-called antinovels are really metafictions. (24-25)

The description fits the circumstances of the above scene. We see Roderick, the principal narratorial agent of the series, reflect on his narration, instead of a metaleptic trick performed by the extra-textual author to direct the viewer's attention to the story as such: there is no breaking of the fourth wall, nor is the spectator ever directly addressed. Roderick plays the role of what Graley Herren defines as "embedded author." Described by Herren as Don DeLillo's characteristic habit of placing in his fiction an artistic character "implicated as the very narrative we are reading or watching" (Herren viii), embedded authors are internal figures "who create themselves alternate universes, ones that make sense and possess symmetry and elegance, which provide answers to otherwise intractable questions" (12). By having Roderick "delive[r] instructions by proxy" (14) to the empirical audience about what to make of the thoughts, words, and emotions displayed on the screen, Flanagan lets us have a look at his interpretation of the adaptation game – a game through which he carefully casts a dynamic intertextual net of nexi, references and allusions to Poe's universe into a heteromedial cosmos governed by its own rules.

While *The Fall of the House of Usher*'s metafictional flavor might be evocative of other, openly self-reflexive works such as the aforementioned movie *Adaptation*,[5] Roderick's remark in fact parallels a different subtle textual mechanism. Under otherwise normal circumstances, it seems to express nothing beyond a combination of guilt and fear: guilt over the possibility of failing to do justice to his children's lives (and deaths); fear of being metaphorically haunted by them. Yet, what happens on the screen is far more literal, for the Usher siblings truly return as ghosts to confront their father. My contention is that Roderick not only acts as Flanagan's mouthpiece, but he also plays the role of the quintessentially Poesque unreliable narrator. Indeed, Roderick is soon diagnosed with "cerebral autosomal dominant arteriopathy with subcortical infarts and leukoencephalopathy,"[6] also known as CADASIL. This untreatable degenerative condition that causes symptoms similar to dementia would logically account for all the hallucinations he suffers throughout the series. This is not to say that the facts told by Roderick are ontologically untrue; it is unquestionable that everyone is dead, but with hindsight, our witnessing the deaths of the various characters is always filtered through (or obfuscated by) Roderick's dominant perspective – was Tamerlane's erratic behavior the result of an actual ghostly presence, or was she also just hallucinating? Was Frederick

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[5] Things are further complicated by the casting of Nicolas Cage as Charlie Kaufman (and his [fictional] twin brother), thus adding an extra twist to the whole metafictional edifice.

[6] "The Mask of the Red Death," episode 2.

becoming fatally incapacitated after mistaking nightshade for cocaine due to the mind-bending actions of Verna, or was he merely distracted? Are the ghosts that Roderick sees but fails to persuade Dupin of real? These are all legitimate questions. What matters is that Flanagan borrows a classic structural device of Poe's fiction and applies it to the context of a contemporary, flawed, drug-ridden America.

Delusional or distracted narrators abound in Poe's stories – "The Black Cat," *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, "Ligeia," "The Tell-Tale Heart," to name but a few –, and "The Fall of the House of Usher" is no exception to the rule, with Roderick in Flanagan's version echoing the source story's unreliable diegesis. The story effectively dwells on that grey region so dear to Gothic authors, which is the middle ground between rationality and the supernatural.[7] But there is a detail, often overlooked, that would seem to betray Poe's unnamed narrator's presumed objective vision. As noted by John C. Gruesser, towards the end of the story the narrator describes the weather conditions of the storm which preceded Madeline's 'resuscitation': "[A]nd the exceeding density of the clouds did not prevent our perceiving this – yet we had no glimpse of the moon or stars – nor was there any flashing forth of the lightning" (Poe 331). However, at the very end the narrator describes the moon as it "now shone vividly through that once barely discernible fissure […]" (Poe 335). How would that be possible if until a few seconds earlier, the stormy clouds were so "exceeding[ly] dens[e]" that no light could be visible? Gruesser's conclusion – and I agree – is that "the narrator […] must be delusional […]. The implication of such an interpretation is that nothing the narrator tells us in the final paragraph […] can be trusted" (82-83). The original story's unreliability translates into Flanagan's Roderick suffering frequent memory lapses and hallucinations caused by his mentally impairing illness, which casts more than one shadow over the truthfulness and accuracy of his confession. At the very end of the last episode, the perspective shifts from Roderick to Dupin, who now becomes the final (meta)narrator, uttering the final lines of Poe's "Usher": "There was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters – and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the 'House of Usher'." The trope of the unreliable narrator goes hand in hand with the show's suggestive self-reflexivity, and serves to foreground Flanagan's metafictionally aesthetic proneness, because only through a semi-delusional narrator who has seen apparitions all night does the line about "making [the stories of his children] right" become even more effective.

Although Roderick fulfils the series' most significant instance of self-reflexivity, several other elements contribute to this metafictional undertone, namely the characters of Camille and Arthur Gordon Pym. In the third episode ("Murder in the Rue Morgue"), Camille is having a conversation with Leo, where the former voices her frustration at the

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[7] Was Madeline really brought back from the dead, or was she purely in a state of prolonged loss of consciousness, making her appearance at the mansion shocking but still rationally explainable? Was the house preternaturally connected to the twins, or was its fall just a fittingly poetic (if tragic) coincidence?

Ushers' lack of talent and originality, which reads to me as Flanagan's tongue-in-cheek response to the general perception that adaptations are nothing but derivative works that owe the entirety of their artistic and economic success to the 'original. In a rare genuine soul-searching flare, Camille admits to both her stepbrother and herself that Ushers are not truly capable of achieving anything relevant or original. As we previously saw with Prospero, who only cared about branding glamorous clubs and bottles of expensive whiskey with his name, no one among the siblings actually "made stuff." In Camille's words, Leo does not create videogames (as he naively believes), but only "pay[s] people to make videogames"; Frederick (she calls him "Froderick") "is like this Roderick Usher cover band, and he's playing the hits, but it's sort of off-key"; Tamerlane "is basically just Goop with, like, a big golden bug sticker on it," while Victorine's "heart mesh is not even her heart mesh, it's the surgeon's heart mesh, that's why she's fucking the surgeon"; and lastly Camille, talking about herself, concedes that she "belongs in a room of smoke and mirrors, and [she's] like a ceiling fan" spinning randomly without "go[ing] anywhere." She laconically concludes that "Ushers don't make stuff. None of us."[8] Camille's reaction reminds me of Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence*, a poetic theory according to which "every poem is a misinterpretation of a parent poem" (94). This indirectly references the artist's latent sense of hopelessness that everything aesthetically impactful has already been written, even more so in today's content-creating-driven society. Nevertheless, poets (and artists in general) employ preexisting material and "transform, redirect, reinterpret those already written figures in new ways" (Allen 135), hence making the option of artistic relevance still viable.

Loosely inspired by the protagonist of Poe's novel of the same name, Pym is an unscrupulously dark, cynical lawyer, occasionally nicknamed "the Pym reaper,"[9] whose past we know very little about, especially in regard to his voyage around the world when he was younger. In the sixth episode, "Goldbug," Roderick tells Dupin that, when Pym shared the memories of his experience, he "always stop[ped] telling it as he g[ot] to the North Pole," adding that "[it] used to be a fun game when the kids grew up trying to finish Arthur's story." This passage is an allusion to the abrupt ending of Poe's novel – the last thing that Pym sees before the actual narrative concludes is a gigantic "shrouded human figure" (1179) close to the South Pole –, but it is also partly evocative of Flanagan's storytelling process itself, as he continues, revisits and twists Poe's tales, exactly like Roderick's children used to do with Arthur's story.

The concept of destruction and its prominence in the series can also be thought of as reflective of the very mechanisms of adaptation. Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" famously ends with the titular mansion crumbling down, a climactic scene that Flanagan preserves and revitalizes in the show's finale. In Poe's story, the significance of

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[8] "Murder in the Rue Morgue," episode 3.
[9] It is thanks to his ability that the Ushers always get away with the crimes for which Dupin continuously investigates them.

the fall goes beyond the physical deterioration and ultimate destruction of the house: it symbolically represents the demise of the heirless twins. Flanagan recreates the same destructive binary and applies it not only to Roderick and Madeline, but also to their first house and their firm. We see the house coming down in the middle of a storm, disintegrating over the corpses of Madeline (who, by the way, had briefly come back from the dead) and Roderick at the end of the eighth episode, "Raven". The destruction motif figures especially in the deaths of Roderick's legitimate children, Tamerlane and Frederick. The first dies in her bedroom after multiple pieces of glass from the ceiling mirror fatally wound her (she had crushed it in a hallucinatory fit with a fire hook). Frederick, instead, falls victim to a death gruesomely inspired by Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum," with the major difference that he, unlike the story's protagonist who eventually survives, is cut in half by a swinging blade hanging from the ceiling of a Fortunato facility that he was trying to have demolished. I interpret these multiple destructive phenomena as a metaphor for Flanagan's response to what adaptation purists may regard as a defying act of authorial violation (or textual destruction, indeed). Going against this stance, Flanagan fully embraces the possibilities of a creatively rewarding deviation from the norm, making it part and parcel of the story's material, as in the death scenes that I have just mentioned. To quote Hutcheon, Flanagan seems to rebel against the idea that "the source text is granted an axiomatic primacy and authority" (16). Flanagan's reaction to the literary antecedent's supposed authoritative aura is accentuated by the fact that it is precisely Roderick's only two legitimate children (the ones from the 'original' bloodline) that are involved in an openly wreckful death.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated Mike Flanagan's acute sensitivity to the internal dynamics of adaptation. In horror fiction, a genre that responds well to the known capacity of cinema and television to maximize the dormant (not absent) sensuous import of literature, Flanagan found a close ally to reorganize prior texts in a truly creative way. Through *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Flanagan shows a clear understanding of the complex twofold nature of "adaptation as both process and product" (Hutcheon 31) – a process in which close and respectful adherence to the source text is relevant only to a certain extent. This is not to wage a rhetorically sterile war against the fidelity criterion "as [negative] counterexample to the critic's preferred methodology" (Johnson 92), but merely to open up the reading of adaptation to new, generative possibilities. "Perhaps," suggests Hutcheon "one way to think about unsuccessful adaptations is not in terms of infidelity to a prior text, but in terms of a lack of the creativity and skill to make the text one's own and thus autonomous" (20). It is not easy to dispose altogether of the looming spectre of fidelity, which is why in Flanagan's adaptation a certain anxiety semantics can be still located (albeit ironically), as in Roderick's concern about "making sure [to] get [his children's] stories right." However, Flanagan also seems to be willing to come to terms with his Freudian repression of faithfulness to the original, capitalizing on the very debate

itself, and thus making *The Fall of the House of Usher* a special kind of adaptation which reflects upon its own nature as adaptation. The fact that "Ushers don't make stuff," that Roderick's kids used to finish (hence, extend) Pym's mysterious story, or that the specific demise of a group of characters helps to mirror and comment on the politics of the textual dismantling at the heart of adaptations: all of these occurrences shape Flanagan's metafictional way of pointing the camera towards a deeper layer than the surface on which the story is brought to life, without disturbing the viewer's suspension of disbelief.

Flanagan is perfectly aware that death does not necessarily entail a tragic drop of the curtain. As Verna's devilish end of the bargain is ominously fulfilled, Roderick's bloodline dissolves. However, in a final twist, Flanagan has the only surviving heir to the Ushers' heritage (formerly drug-addict Juno Usher, Roderick's much younger wife), sell all of the company's assets, converting Fortunato into a recovery network aptly named "Phoenix Foundation" to fight addiction. Excessive manipulation of the source material may indeed be beneficially consequential and aesthetically productive. After all, as Roderick tellingly acknowledges in the third episode, "Ushers adapt quickly."

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Dancing at the Frontier: Lichen as Intermedial Enabler in *Uchi-soto* by Michel Butor, Pierre Espagne and Gregory Masurovsky

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In this article, the focus is on the photo-book book "Uchi-soto: dedans – dehors" (1995), the joint work of writer Michel Butor, photographer Pierre Espagne and graphic artist Gregory Masurovsky. The book's title comes from the Japanese concept of "in-groups" (*uchi*, "inside") and "out-groups" (*soto*, "outside"), referring to the dynamic intimate and public social circles one inhabits. I propose to analyse the book and its interplay with various art forms and cultural areas, drawing connections to Japanese butō dance, the grotesque, and the concept of suspension.

The analysis begins by examining the connection between the poem in *Uchi-soto*, written by Butor, and the Japanese butō dance form, known for its emphasis on grotesque aesthetics. Butor's exploration of duality within "Uchi-soto" and his earlier text "Le rêve de l'huître" (1975) is referenced, emphasizing the dualities embedded in both butō and medieval European society. These dualities converge in butō, where the grotesque and the beautiful coexist without contradiction, resonating with the definition of the grotesque that combines the tragic and the comical, the real and the fantastic.

The article then delves into the presence of female characters in Butor's poem, shifting the focus from benevolent figures to ambiguous and complex ones. The analysis introduces figures from the Arthurian legend and Loreley, examining their association with dissolution and dissemination. Butor's choice to incorporate these figures underscores the impact of mindless aesthetic fascination and the resulting journey towards death.

The analysis explores the concept of suspension as a fundamental element in both butō and Butor's work. Butō dancers are seen as suspended between life and death, emphasizing the grotesque nature of their performances. The text also references Kazuo Ōno's performance "The Dream of the Mother," where the body floats and rises, epitomizing this theme of suspension.

Another text by Butor, "Le Rêve des Lichens" (1977) is used to further the analysis of suspension in "Uchi-soto". The body of Akiko Senuma, captured on the book's cover, is suspended between the human and the lichen. This form of suspension is also present in Butor's writing, characterized by extensive intertextuality and an absence of a clear authorial presence in the quotations he uses. This lack of authorship results in an ongoing process of creation, where words are suspended, forming a corpus without a definite origin or conclusion.

The analysis concludes with the idea that "Uchi-soto" revolves around the committal of the body to signs and signs to the body, a continuous cycle representing life and death, creation and destruction, and the balance between tradition and innovation. It emphasizes the importance of creation and the ability to find healing and transformation in the artistic process.

In summary, the analysis connects several of Michel Butor's texts, analysing them in light of Japanese butō dance, the grotesque, and the theme of suspension as enabled by Butor's treatment of lichens. Butor's use of intertextuality, intermediality, and authorless, unacknowledged quotations underlines the ongoing process of creation across the frontiers of media, genre, languages, and cultural areas.

Keywords: butō, Japan, lichen, body, intertextuality

Throughout the works of Michel Butor, "si les lichens ne sont pas pléthore, ils déclenchent systématiquement une vision, une ouverture vers la profondeur, vers l'invisible"[1] (Zonca 93). This is exactly what happens in the fourteenth chapter of "Flottements d'Est en Ouest", entitled "La décoration du Tenkuy-in [sic] au Myoshinji par Sanraku et Sansetsu". In this text, Michel Butor carries out a "dialogue avec 21 classiques de l'art japonais"[2], to quote the text's subtitle. One such "classic" that Butor dialogues with is the decoration of the Tenkyū-in temple in Kyōto, more particularly the door panelling, which separates the different rooms of the building. As he makes his way deeper into the temple, Butor opens and closes a series of decorated sliding doors, which he describes to the reader:

> Si j'ouvre les deux panneaux centraux du mur de l'ouest, ils vont se cacher derrière les deux externes, et j'apercevrai, au fond de la salle voisine plus grande, toute une famille de tigres parmi les bambous, et si j'en ouvre encore les deux panneaux centraux, ils disparaîtront derrière ceux d'à côté ; le père tigre tapi parmi les rochers, un léopard parmi des tiges de bambou énormes, et j'apercevrai au fond de la salle suivante un très vieux prunier à fleurs blanches parmi des rochers avec quelques petits oiseaux, et je pourrai encore ouvrir l'un de ces six panneaux pour apercevoir le soleil du soir sur la véranda (…) Et si maintenant je vais dans cette salle aux oiseaux et ouvre au nord la partie centrale de l'énorme branche d'un vieux prunier en fleurs avec un rouge-gorge et un faisan, j'apercevrai au fond de la salle suivante un lointain paysage à l'encre de Chine avec montagnes chimériques (…)[3] (Butor "Flottements" 132).

Fig. 1: Kanō Sanraku and Kanō Sansetsu, 17th century. Door panelling in the Tenkyū-in, "Bamboo and Tiger." https://global.canon/ja/tsuzuri/works/25.html

[1] "although there is not an overabundance of lichens, they systematically trigger a vision, an opening towards the deep, towards the invisible" (all translations are my own).
[2] "dialogue with 21 classic Japanese artworks"
[3] "If I opened the two central panels on the west wall, they would hide behind the two external ones and I would see a whole family of tigers amongst bamboo plants at the back of the next, bigger room. If I opened the central panels there, they would vanish behind those next to them; the male tiger lurking amongst the rocks, a leopard amongst huge bamboo stalks, and I would see at the back of the next room a very old plum tree with white flowers set amongst rocks with a few small birds, and I could yet open one of these six panels to see the evening sun on the veranda (…) And if I now go to this room with the birds and open, to the north, the central part of the huge branch of an old flowering plum tree with a redbreast and a pheasant, I would see at the back of the next room a distant landscape in Indian ink with its wild mountains (…)"

Fig. 2: Kanō Sanraku and Kanō Sansetsu, 17th century. Door panelling in the Tenkyū-in, "Plum, blossom and bird." https://global.canon/ja/tsuzuri/works/30.html

Fig. 3: Kanō Sanraku and Kanō Sansetsu, 17th century. Door panelling in the Tenkyū-in, "Plum, blossom and bird," continued.
https://global.canon/ja/tsuzuri/works/30.html

In all three sets of panelling, the painter has included lichens: on the rocks in the first (Fig. 1) and second (Fig. 2) sets and on the tree in the second and third (Fig. 3) sets. As Vicent Zonca remarks, the lichens resembles "des fleurs d'écorce, se détachant à peine de la couleur du tronc par un contour légèrement plus clair."[4] (Zonca 113). As he travels from room to room, Butor is always accompanied by these unassuming lichens which open a way towards something further, deeper, a vision, a landscape in ink with its chimeric mountains.

     Drawing on the power of lichens to *orient* us, let us consider the photobook *Uchi-soto*. Published in January 1995, it brings together photographs of butō dancer Akiko Senuma by Pierre Espagne alongside texts by Michel Butor and drawings by Gregory Masurovsky. Whilst butō or other dance forms have been left out of recent studies on

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[4] "bark flowers which barely contrast with the colour of the tree trunk thanks to their slightly lighter outline."

intermediality and intertextuality in the works of Michel Butor[5], other recent studies have nonetheless identified guiding threads in relation to his approach to photography. First, that Butor's poems on or around photographs are to be considered narrative extensions of them, instead of mere descriptions or ekphrasis.[6] Then, that the central role of photography in the life and works of Butor inscribes itself within his engagement with intermediality, as evidenced by his collaboration to photobooks and artists' books.[7] Building on these studies, our analysis of the book aims to show how the organisation, not only of photographs and texts, but also of drawings, shapes it as a space where meaning and bodies are suspended as a result of the magnifying effect[8] each individual art form has on the others. This will provide an opportunity to study the genre of the grotesque in the context of butō, thus prolonging discussions on the grotesque in Japanese arts started by Gunji Masakatsu (Viala 15). We will also examine how this dance form, commented upon as it is by Butor and placed in dialogue with the Shinto belief system, can shed new light on his writing and its relationship with the body and the (sometimes) non-human Other.
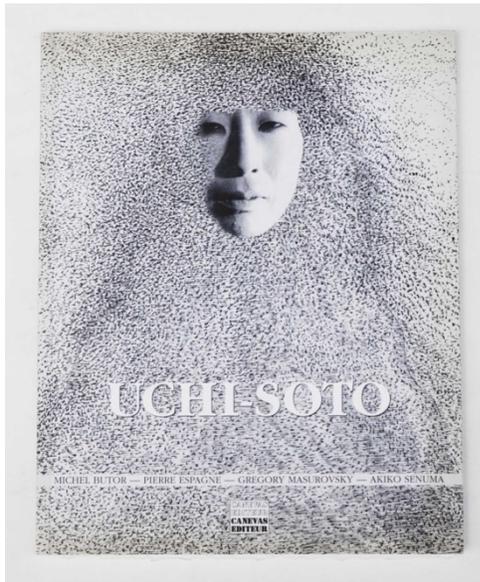
Fig. 4: Cover of *Uchi-soto*.
https://pictures.abebooks.com/inventory/31131459527_2.jpg

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[5] Chief amongst them being Kateřina Sedláčková. *L'oeuvre mobile de Michel Butor.* Masarykova univerzita, 2012.
[6] Bruna Donatelli. "Instantané littéraire : les 'légendes' de Michel Butor." *Le bal des arts : Le sujet et l'image : écrire avec l'art*, edited by Elisa Bricco, Quodlibet, 2015, pp. 275-92. http://books.openedition.org/quodlibet/502.
[7] Nicole Biagioli. "Pour une sémiotique butorienne de la photographie." *Loxias*, vol. 60, 2018, http://revel.unice.fr/loxias/index.html?id=8909.
[8] We borrow the concept of "magnifying effect" from a recent study on the grotesque by Rémi Astruc: "Le grotesque procède ainsi volontiers par 'effet de loupe', ce qui lui permet, comme l'instrument d'optique, de présenter certes le réel, mais sous un jour inhabituel et surprenant qui est, de fait, d'apparence peu 'réaliste'." (Astruc 34)

The cover of the book (Fig. 4) displays a photograph of Akiko Senuma's face, cropped closely around her features and placed within a drawing by Masurovsky which simultaneously incorporates her — the density of the dark strokes increasing around her to create the outline of an upper body — and is incorporated by her — as the drawing appears to be encroaching upon the left side photograph, across to the nose and up to the right eye. Masurovsky's drawing style, "fait de milliers de petites touches en trait: des petites boucles, des petites virgules, *etc*."[9] (Butor "Michel Butor parle de Gregory Masurovsky" 00:07), is similar to the growing pattern of the lichen *Graphis scripta*. Thus, the cover can be interpreted as a partial lichen. It opens a way into the book and points towards collaboration. As fungi and algae collaborate to create a lichen, Butor, Espagne, Masurovsky and Senuma collaborated to create the book.

However, collaboration is a neutral term which may not fully reflect the nature of the economy it describes, especially the economy of the different art forms the book deals with. If we take a detour through the Japanese language, we realise that the Japanese word for "lichen" is 地衣類. Taken separately, the kanjis which make up the word are 地 (earth, dirt) and 衣 (clothes, robe), whilst 類 denotes kind, type, sort, genus and also means "parallel" and "the like", as in 類推: analogy. The Japanese language, therefore, explicitly acknowledges the metaphorical connotations of lichens, as well as its appearance and position in our environment, namely that of an "earth robe". Lichen as an earth robe can be interpreted in different ways: as a robe for the earth, and a robe of earth. Considering our previous interpretation of the cover of *Uchi-soto* as a partial lichen, we can go further in our analysis of the interfacing of drawing and photography there. Masurovsky's drawing, as it creeps up on Senuma's face, can be said to en*robe* it, to clothe the earth that it is. Akiko Senuma could therefore be considered as Mother Earth, a figure reminiscent of a passage from Michel Butor's *Matière de rêves*: "— Trouver un milieu qui lie tout cela ? dans la Mer"[10] (Butor "Le rêve des lichens" 772).

Although Butor aurally conflates "mer" and "mère" to invoke Mother Sea, he also calls up ligature and reading through the French verb "lie", just as a lichen attaches itself to its host and enables metaphorical readings. Moreover, Masurovsky's strokes remind the viewer-reader of tiny waves ebbing and flowing on the face of the butō dancer. As Butor puts it, "[avec ses dessins, Gregory Masurovsky] faisait tomber la pluie ou il faisait écumer des vagues."[11] (Butor "Michel Butor parle de Gregory Masurovsky" 00:19).

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[9] "composed of thousands of little line strokes: little curls, little loops, *etc*."
[10] "—Find a place which links all this ? in the sea"
[11] "[with his drawings, Gregory Masurovsky] would make rain fall or make waves foam."

Fig. 5.

Let us consider how the book opens, namely with a black-and-white photograph of Akiko Senuma and Gregory Masurovsky (Fig. 5). They stand with their backs to the camera, facing a white wall a few feet away from them. The lights, coming from the right of the camera, cast a double, decentred shadow of the subjects on the wall. They are both wearing dark clothes — black, perhaps. Senuma stands to the left of Masurovsky, a few inches shorter than him. Her long dark hair flows freely down her back and shoulders. As a result, she cuts a completely black figure, save for a few discreet highlights across her back.

What do the two people and four shadows depicted in the opening photograph signal? A collaboration between two people, certainly, but also, and perhaps more than that, a complicity. They are both accomplices, partners in crime but also complicit in the shared secret of their double shadows. They have turned their faces away from the silent witness of the camera which closed its eye on them. To close one's eye is to wilfully ignore or overlook something, in the knowledge that it should not be ignored or overlooked. The camera is there and sees everything, yet this time, like every other time, it saw nothing. It is also complicit. Yet it tells that there is a secret, without revealing it. As we stare at their backs, the secret stares back at us, and "la méfiance passe derrière l'épaule"[12] (Butor et al.)[13]. We are wary of those people whose face we cannot see, who seem to be conspiring in front of the album (it is white) on the wall:

> Everything remains possible, this album (the white of an album is always virginal) offers an immaculately matrix-like surface (…) for all the stories that you would like to project there, for all imaginable intrigues, 'plots' and schemes... (Derrida "Aletheia" 178).

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[12] "wariness goes over the shoulder"
[13] The pages of this book are not numbered.

This wall is the matricial surface which links inside and outside (in other words, *uchi* and *soto*) by enabling the *affleurement* of the subject Akiko Senuma to the surface of the book. Standing in front of the white wall, she is *drawn* into it and through it, to its outward surface, the cover of the book, where she appears in the manner we have described. Akiko Senuma meets us, the reader-viewer, on the other side of the photograph to lead us deeper into the book, like the lichens on the Tenkyū-in temple door panels lead the visitor deeper into the building. It is, therefore, only fitting that Akiko-san should be lichenized in such a way as she takes on her role as a psychopomp.

Uchi-soto marks Michel Butor's first and only published interaction with the art of butō. In the book, this interaction takes the form of nine poems which all follow the same pattern: a monostich followed by a couplet, repeated five times and ending with a monostich for a total of 19 lines. The lines which make up the couplets are all used at least twice throughout the text, with variations (e.g. "l'eau cascadant de lèvre en lèvre"[14] and "l'eau cascadant de lèvre en paupière"[15]). The only exception to this is "l'imprégnant d'une effervescence funèbre"[16], which appears only once. The monostichs are very short and mostly time and place markers, such as "dedans", "dehors", "à la frontière" or "maintenant"[17]. There are five notable exceptions to this: "au secours! la maison accuse", "au secours! la maison brûle", "au secours! la maison divague", "au secours! la maison se renverse" and "au secours! la maison sombre"[18].

The theme of a menacing and precarious inside or house can be found elsewhere in the work of Michel Butor in a 1975 text entitled "Le rêve de l'huître"[19] which constitutes the first chapter of the first volume of *Matière de rêves*. In this dream, Michel Butor, "après avoir donné une conférence, ne peut se rendre à [la réception organisée pour lui] à cause d'obstacles invraisemblables, et y est remplacé par un double fort antipathique."[20] (Butor *Matière de rêves* 433). Towards the very end of the text, the house where the reception is held is destroyed: "Puis c'est la maison qui s'écroule et nous partons dans les jardins."[21] (Butor *Matière de rêves* 454). Twenty years after "Le rêve de l'huître", butō provides Butor with an opportunity to revisit the text's themes of duality between inside and outside, house and garden, and him and his double.

The first part of the poem recounts a beginning: "Dedans/une présence en train de se coaguler"[22] (Butor et al.). This choice of verb connotes that an organic process is taking place. A sort of self-generation, as made explicit by the recourse to the reflexive

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[14] "water cascading from lip to lip"

[15] "water cascading from lip to eyelid"

[16] "imbuing it with gloomy agitation"

[17] "inside", "outside", "at the frontier", "now"

[18] "help! the house is accusing", "help! the house is burning", "help! the house is rambling", "help! the house is capsizing", "help! the house is sinking"

[19] First published in 1974 in *Les Cahiers du Chemin*.

[20] "after having given a conference, cannot go the reception organised for him due to a series of improbable obstacles and is replaced there by a very unpleasant doppelganger."

[21] "Then, the house crumbles down and we end up in the garden."

[22] "Inside/a presence coagulating"

form, occurs right at the start of the poem. Its meaning is threefold. First, it metaphorizes the poem itself, *poiesis* more generally, and therefore all literature. The poem is the result of a process of accretion. Like a pearl inside an oyster (we may be allowed this comparison as Butor places the coagulation "Dedans"), the poem is created as layers accumulate, and in this case, these layers are made up of signifiers and signifieds. This brings us to a second interpretation of the poem as a re-telling of "Le rêve de l'huître". This earlier text also tells of the self-generation of a "présence", which turns out to be hostile to its model. Third, the verb "coaguler" is a reminder of the organic origins of butō: in the words of Tatsumi Hijikata, one of the founding figures of butō, "Butoh plays with time; it also plays with perspective, if we, humans, learn to see things from the perspective of an animal, an insect, or even inanimate objects. The road trodden every day is alive...we should value everything." (Viala 65). This bridge that Michel Butor builds between writing and performance is furthered more explicitly in the third line of the poem: "le foyer de la danse accueille ses fureurs"[23] (Butor et al.). The word "fureur" connotes again the nature of butō as a dance form which "began in a spirit of revolt" (Viala 17) to break away from traditional Western and Japanese dance forms which had prevailed in Japan since at least the Meiji era.

Furthermore, this third line not only relates the beginnings of butō, but it also starts to set a stage for it, and this stage-setting continues on line 4: "au secours ! la maison sombre" (Butor et al.). The word "sombre" introduces an obvious double meaning. As a verb, it is a warning that the house is sinking, going under. As an adjective, it signals that the house lights have dimmed and that the performance is about to start.

Later, Butor explicitly mentions Béatrice, thus concertises the poem's filiation with Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*: "progressant prudemment sur le sentier des ténèbres/Béatrice nous guide à travers les sphères des affres"[24] (Butor et al.). The journey promises to be arduous. We — the reader-traveller — are to be taken through its throes. Hope, however, seems to glimmer on the horizon, in the form of daybreak and time washing over the slopes of destruction: "le jour se lève sur la mère des braises/les heures glissent au long des montagnes de laves"[25] (Butor et al.). Whether time heals all wounds, as the saying goes, remains to be seen.

One drawing and nine photographs of Akiko Senuma separate the second and third parts of the poem. This reflects the structure of Dante's Heaven, which is made up of nine and one spheres, the latter being different in nature to the other nine.[26]

Upon observing the first photograph, we immediately notice the discrepancy between the subject and her shadow (Fig. 6).

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[23] "The home of dance welcomes its frenzies"
[24] "advancing cautiously on the path of darkness/Beatric guides us through the spheres of purgatory"
[25] "day breaks on the sea of embers/hours slide along the lava mountains"
[26] The last sphere of Heaven, the Empyrean, lies beyond the physical universe, in contrast to the others.

Fig. 6.

Something extends out on the wall from the shadow of her nose. At first glance, the shape looks like bent fingers, but on closer examination, we discover that those fingers would need to have four phalanxes whereas human fingers have three. Another external intrusion is represented in the fourth photograph (Fig. 7). Gregory Masurovsky extends his right hand and forearm flat against the wall, entering the top right-hand corner of the frame horizontally to meet Akiko Senuma's hand, stopping shy of touching it.

Fig. 7.

The shadow cast by Masurovsky's forearm, thanks to the placement of the light source on the surface of the wall, extends in a dark corridor towards Senuma, whose hand is placed at its centre. It is a meeting in darkness — Masurvosky's darkness, since he casts

the shadow. The darkness produced by the hand on the wall is akin to the one it produces on the paper when it holds a pen nib.

Fig. 8.

And because this pen nib was dipped earlier in the darkness of the woman (Fig. 8), this darkness is not only Masurovsky's; it is shared, reflected back to her "sur le sentier des traces"[27], the dark band from which traces emerge, like the ink ribbon of a typewriter.

Masurovsky's physical presence, after the shadowy intrusion in the first photograph, seems to suggest that the two are related. Out of the distorted shadow of the woman, something is born, which in turn bears the woman in its dark glow. It is the re-birth of man from woman. Just as Dante is re-born in the Empyrean thanks to Beatrice, the woman in the photograph enables man to be re-born. Further on, after the third part of the poem, another series of photographs seems to support this.
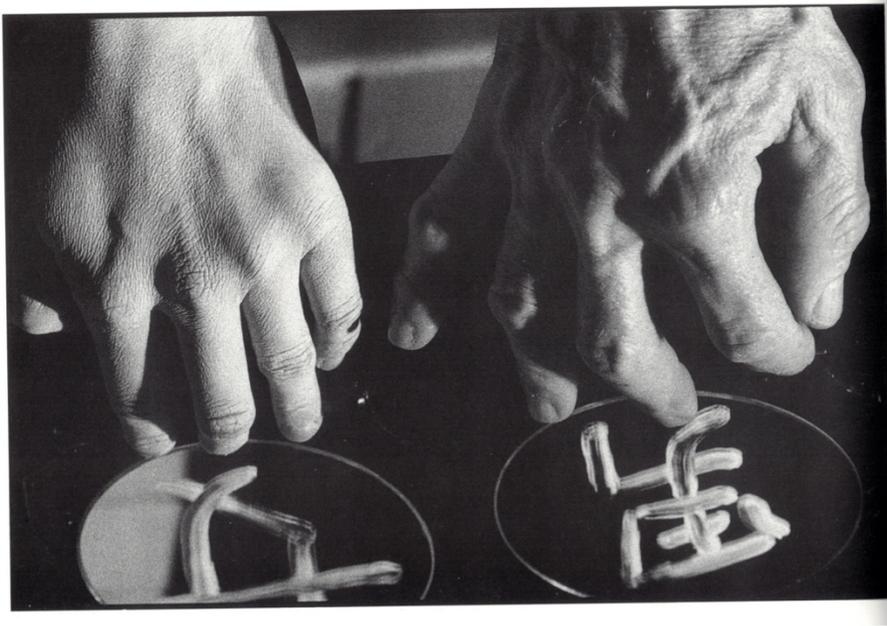
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[27] "on the path of traces"

Fig. 9.

On a dark table, two glass discs are each inscribed in white body paint with the kanji for woman and man: 女 and 男 (Fig. 9). Akiko Senuma's hand hovers over the disc marked 女 and Masurovsky's over the other. Senuma's hand appears covered in the same white paint used to draw the kanjis. It is as though she drew them, in a lesson to the naked hand which swiftly proceeds, in the next photograph, to cover itself with the same white paint. Thus, as the woman shows the way, man is re-born out of his darkness and into the light of the white paint. The hand which darkens the page is lightened by make-up and "les signes du fard explicitent ceux de l'épiderme"[28] (Butor et al.) as Butor writes in the third part of the poem. The make-up signs, 女 and 男, make explicit what the whitened skin signifies, namely the complicity of woman and man in what is unfolding: "des paysages vus d'avions frissonnent dans leur complicité"[29] (Butor et al.); a complicity which harkens back to the very first photograph of the two artists in the book.

Later, a few pages before the fourth part of the poem begins, we see two juxtaposed photographs of Akiko Senuma: one where her eyes are closed (Fig. 10), and the other where they are open (Fig. 11).

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[28] "the signs of the make-up make explicit those of the skin"
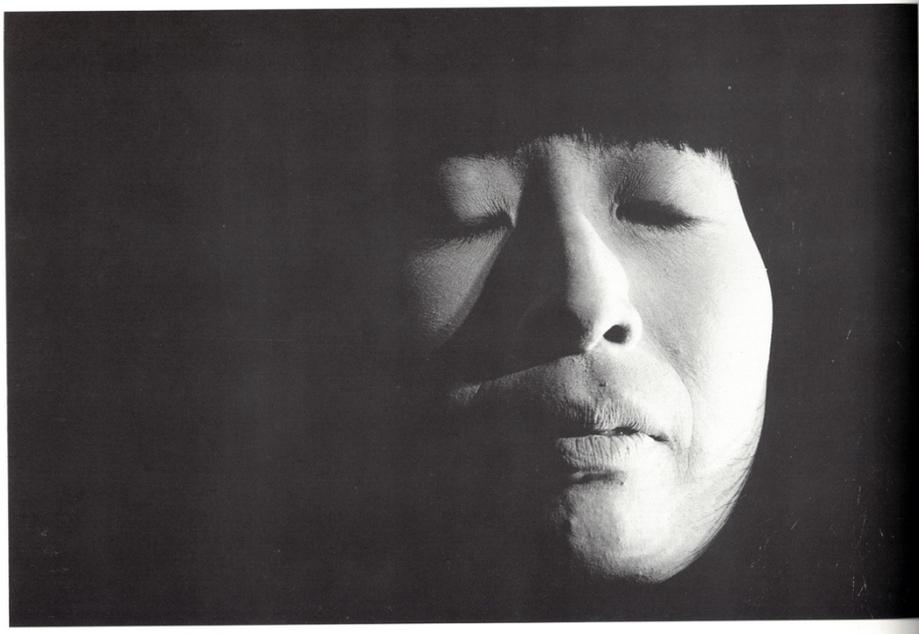[29] "landscapes seen from planes shiver with complicity"

Fig. 10.

Fig. 11.

We said earlier that as he engages with butō in *Uchi-soto*, Butor revisits the theme of duality he explored in one of his previous texts called "Le rêve de l'huître". For Francis Ponge, the oyster represents a cosmogony founded on duality: "À l'intérieur l'on trouve tout un monde, à boire et à manger"[30] (Ponge 43). The same could be said of *Uchi-soto*, as it is a work (and therefore a world inasmuch as it is self-contained) placed under the two signs of the inside and the outside: 内 and 外. Moreover, for Mikhail Bakhtin, the whole of European society in the Middle Ages revolved around a dual world in which "Carnival festivities and (…) [c]hurch feast[s with their] comic folk aspect[s] (…) offered a completely different, nonofficial, extra-ecclesiastical and extra-political aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom" (Bakhtin 6 emphasis mine). Just as the duality of medieval European society had its roots in folk culture, so do Butō's main aesthetic features:

> The provocative use of "bad taste," the ugly, the grotesque, and the inversion of aesthetic and social values, on the surface so un-Japanese, is deeply rooted in certain traditions in Japan still surviving in various regions. What is named by several critics (i.e., Masakatsu Gunji) *shūaku no bi* (aesthetics of ugliness) is a legitimate feature of both folk tradition and classical art. (Viala 15).

Therefore, butō is at once derived from folk tradition and classical Japanese art as it embraces *shūaku no bi*, which is itself a notion steeped in duality, for it brings together the ugly and the beautiful[31] without seeking to oppose them or conflate them through a form of aesthetic relativism which would claim that beauty (or ugliness) is in the eye of the beholder. Inasmuch as *shūaku no bi* comprehends both beauty and ugliness in the way we have just described, it shares a definition of the grotesque according to Rémi Astruc:

> Or le grotesque est tragique *et* comique, triste *et* gai, absurde *et* signifiant, réaliste *et* fantastique, de même qu'il allie la vie *et* la mort. C'est pourquoi il s'exprime de toute éternité à travers ces figures du mélange improbable, de l'hybridation surnaturelle et des métamorphoses (depuis la sirène mi-femme mi-oiseau – et plus tard mi-poisson – jusqu'à l'homme-insecte inventé par Kafka), à quoi il faut ajouter (…) la figure du redoublement.[32] (Astruc 39).

We pointed out earlier how butō seeks to make humans "see things from the perspective of an animal, an insect, or even inanimate objects." (Viala 65) in order,

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[30] "Inside one finds a whole world with its good and bad sides"

[31] "Chose curieuse et vraiment digne d'attention que l'introduction de cet élément insaisissable du beau jusque dans les œuvres destinées à représenter à l'homme sa propre laideur morale et physique !" (Baudelaire 360) ("The introduction of this elusive element of the beautiful in works meant to show mankind its own moral and physical ugliness is a strange and noteworthy thing!")

[32] "But the grotesque is tragic *and* comical, sad *and* cheerful, absurd *and* meaningful, realistic *and* fantastical, and it marries life *and* death. This is why it deals with any eternity through such figures as improbable mixing, supernatural hybridization and metamorphoses (from the half-woman, half-bird — and later half-fish — siren, to the man-insect of Kafka) to which must be added (…) the figure of the double."

perhaps, to able to "dance Hamlet in a world of frogs" (Viala 55), to quote Kazuo Ōno. The hybridity which is ever-present in butō, together with the *effet d'étrangeté* emanating from it, militate towards a renewed understanding of this dance form as one which borrows from the grotesque aesthetic and phenomenological elements.

Michel Butor understood the grotesqueness of butō we have described, and it is addressed in his poem. Whilst Parts 2 and 3 reference Dante's Beatrice, a benevolent figure guiding the protagonist through Purgatory, from Part 4 onwards Butor presents the reader with an altogether different set of female characters. In Part 4, we must note the presence of a reference to Francis Ponge's oyster as a "monde (…) qui flue et reflue à l'odeur et à la vue" and where "[p]arfois très rare une formule perle à leur gosier de nacre"[33] (Ponge 43) : "la planète s'enrobe de lancers de parfums/à la recherche de son apparence dans une perle"[34] (Butor et al.). This concretises the link between the poem and Butor's earlier "Le rêve de l'huître" and reaffirms the importance for him of the motif of the oyster in his exploration of duality and world-making. Still in Part 4, we find the first reference to another female character: "sur l'échiquier de la fenêtre la reine assure ses atours/son gnome secret enfle sur la piste"[35] (Butor et al.). Our ignorance of the identity of this queen and her gnome is maintained until Part 5, where Butor writes: "le geste se développe en pétale de lys/c'est la dissolution de la Fée Morgane"[36] (Butor et al.). The metaphor of motion as a lily petal is one butō practitioners would have used, as it translates the animate into the inanimate. Butor also establishes a relationship of equivalence or concomitance between the actions of the first and second lines through the use of "c'est" (*it is*). In the Arthurian legend, Morgan le Fay is an ambiguous character. Initially depicted as a benevolent entity who heals King Arthur on Avalon, she then turns against him and his wife Queen Guinevere. If this reference to Arthurian legend helps to explain the identity of the queen in Part 4 of the poem, we must look five pages further to meet her gnome (Fig. 12):

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[33] "world which ebbs and flows to the smell and sight" and where "sometimes very rarely a phrase forms in their mother-of-pearl gullets"
[34] "the planet drapes itself in perfume throws/seeking its appearance in a pearl"
[35] "on the chessboard of the window the queen secures her attire/her secret gnome swells up on the track"
[36] "the gesture develops into a lily petal/it is the dissolution of Morgan le Fay"

Fig. 12.

"son gnome secret enfle sur le mur" writes Butor in Part 6 as Akiko Senuma casts a distorted, gnome-shaped shadow on the wall behind her. The secret gnome dwells in shadows, if he is not a shadow himself. Through the introduction of this secondary character, Michel Butor projects a magnifying effect on the photographs, in the way we touched upon earlier. This brings to the fore the grotesque dimension of a butō performance which, through its mise-en-scène, produces comically squat shadows. The reader-viewer is at once amused, disconcerted and intrigued at the sight of this spectacle, and the remanence of the secret gnome imbues the rest of the photographs in Part 6 with the same feeling of strangeness. Moreover, the creation of these shadows can be construed as natural, according to an interpretation of Shinto: "Yet if we join Shinto in considering human beings as part of nature instead of separate from it, even human inventiveness can be natural—at least if performed with the genuine mindful heart." (Kasulis 43). Considering the principles of butō we listed earlier, this particular Shinto principle applies. The natural inventiveness of the dancer and the photographer — the resonance of their mindful hearts, or *kokoro* — have colluded to produce the shadow and let nature speak, or rather show its face:

L'empire des signes est conscient de ses bornes (...) Cet empire partiel et pluriel est comme l'archipel japonais, formé d'îlots de significations, flottant sur ce qui du réel demeure à jamais

insensé : le visage inhumain de la nature, surgissant dans l'homme lui-même, et l'irrémédiable violence de l'impermanence.[37] (Pinguet 41).

The face of nature is not human, as we have just described, but it seems to be calling to us still, as it presents itself to us head on whereas the dancer is turned to the side and appears to be walking towards the edge of the frame. This is a face in its Levinassian understanding: it calls us to responsibility.

In Part 7, Butor uses another legendary female character: "c'est la dissolution de Loreley/une présence en train de se disséminer"[38] (Butor et al.). Loreley is a siren-like creature said to inhabit the eponymous rock overlooking the Rhine, from where she lures mariners to their deaths on the rocky banks of the river with her beauty and song. In incorporating her in his poem, Butor signals a movement towards death as the result of mindless aesthetic fascination. Here, he also makes explicit that "dissolution" for him means "dissemination", as a solid dissolves in liquid to create what chemists call a suspension.[39]

It is precisely this idea of suspension that is central to butō. The grotesque quality of butō stems from its suspension between beauty and ugliness, human and non-human, life and death. Michel Butor, as he magnifies these qualities in the photographs through text, helps to redeem them from aestheticism and builds a bridge between this Japanese dance form and the grotesque as a European artistic category. Furthermore, the butō performance itself is a suspension: that of a body in space. According to Tatsumi Hijikata, one of the architects of butō: "Butoh is a corpse standing straight up in a desperate bid for life." . In other words, a body between life and death. This is an underlying constant of many butō pieces. An early and seminal butō performance by Tatsumi Hijikata saw him carry out a "barbarous dance, leaping suddenly onto immense metal plates suspended from the flies, which fling out in an image of unbound chaos (…)" before ending the piece "spread-eagled by ropes which pull him toward the rear of the house, above the heads of the audience, this parody of the Ascension marking his farewell to the West." (Viala 71). The reference to the Christian belief of the Ascension, which consists of a person entering Heaven alive, places the dancer's body in the afterlife (a form of death) during his lifetime.

Later, in 1982, Kazuo Ōno becomes the Mother — his mother — in his performance "The Dream of the Mother": "She dreams. She dreams of Ophelia, floating on the river. (…) The Mother changes into Ophelia, and as beautiful as she, rises toward the light" (Viala 44). The motif of a body floating and rising between life and death is used again here by Ōno on his journey to retrace "the very source and essence of his dance" (Viala 41) right back to his mother's womb.

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[37] "The empire of signs knows its limits (…) This partial and varied empire is like the Japanese archipelago, made up of islets of meaning floating on that aspect of reality which remains forever senseless: the human face of nature, erupting in Man himself, and the inexorable violence of impermanence."

[38] "it is the dissolution of Loreley/a disseminating presence"

[39] "A mixture in which small solid or liquid particles are suspended in a liquid or gas." (Law and Rennie)

Uchi-soto, as a book, reprises this notion of suspension, which is central in butō. Meaning is suspended between the text, the photographs and the drawings, as each magnifies the others. The body of Akiko Senuma, lichenized on the cover of the book, is suspended between photograph and drawing, between human and lichen. If the lichen-drawing on the cover is a robe of earth, as we mentioned at the start, then the story it tells is one of interment. Not an interment which carves out a grave from the compactness of the earth in which to embed a body, but an interment understood as a mingling with the earth, a suspension of the undead body in the folds of a robe of earth, from which it can emerge and into which it can sink at the favour of our interpretations. *Uchi-soto* tells the story of the committal of a body to signs, and of signs to the body, in an endless return to life and death, creation and destruction, the canon and the avant-garde. As Butor writes "le rossignol improvise après le naufrage"[40], borrowing from the imagery of the phoenix rising from its ashes, he tells us that creation and reconstruction can begin: "des paysages vus d'avion frissonnent dans la guérison"[41] (Butor "Externe-Intime").

The word *guérison*, or "healing", traditionally used in relation to bodily ailments, reminds us that our journey through the book was, in many ways, a bodily one. As a reader-viewer, we made our way through photographs and written descriptions of the body, but we also read through a literary body, a *corpus* comprising, amongst others, Dante and chroniclers of the Arthurian legend. This way of writing is not new for Michel Butor. For example, the five volumes which make up *Matière de rêves* " (…) sont composés en réseau grâce à un système de citations : il y a dans chaque rêve une citation qui provient des quatre autres."[42] (Butor *Matière de rêves* 432). Butor likes to cite and often does not acknowledge his source. As Spencer remarks:

(…) les textes de Butor, en mettant en cause le processus traditionnel de la citation, finissent par subvertir aussi la notion romantique de l'auteur (unique, grand, de génie, etc.), de l'influence comme processus voulu à sens unique, et donc de toute conception hiérarchique-chronologique de la littérature.[43] (Spencer 100).

This type of subversion is at play in *Uchi-soto*. In leaving his corpus authorless, Michel Butor "conçoi[t] l'écriture comme une mise en chantier permanente. Aucun livre n'est achevé, car l'écriture, pour [lui], ressortit à un processus à jamais *inachevable*."[44] (Ammour-Mayeur 113). No author means no end and no origin, just the flow of creation in which words are suspended. This suspension of words, in the chemical sense,

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[40] "the nightingale improvises after the wreck"
[41] "landscapes seen from planes shiver with healing"
[42] "are composed in networks thanks to a system of quotations: in every dream, there is a quote which is from the other four."
[43] "Butor's texts, because they question the traditional way of quoting, end up subverting the romantic notion of the author (unique, great, of genius, etc.), the notion of influence as a one-way process, and therefore the notion of any hierarchic-chronological conception of literature."
[44] "understands writing as constant reconstruction. No book is finished because writing, for him, is a process which is forever unfinishable."

constitutes a suspended, vaporised body, or a *corps sans organes* "(…) all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organization." (Deleuze and Guattari 30) set in motion by citations.[45]

More than a dance, and more than moving one's body, butō is the body being moved. In other words, the translation is in the space of a *corpus*. This is precisely what is at play throughout *Matière de rêves* — in more ways than one. As Butor puts it, "[I]l y a de la danse dans l'écriture et beaucoup plus de travail manuel qu'on imagine ordinairement."[46] (Butor *Répertoire V* 17). All the texts Butor uses and sometimes reproduces are moved — *déménagés* to borrow from the title of a symposium organised around Michel Butor[47] — dissolved, atomised, and suspended throughout "Le Rêve des Lichens" in the form of quotations and re-writings.

Butor writes that: "Utiliser une citation, ce n'est pas seulement rendre hommage à un auteur qu'on aime : c'est éclairer notre propre naissance, le sous-sol de la maison que l'on construit."[48] (Butor *Curriculum vitae : entretiens avec André Clavel* 176). Citation is therefore for him an important *undertaking* underpinning his dwelling place and which is germane to play in its subterranean nature: "L'oncle Jules déclarait : 'Pas seulement l'éducation, mais aussi la récréation ; l'une ne vas pas sans l'autre', et nous emmenait aux grands magasins de jeux sous les catacombes (à la fin des parties les plus folles, toujours une petite porte nous ramenait dans l'atelier)"[49] (Butor "Le rêve des lichens" 765).

What lies under the earth — and under the ossuary which represents death as a static, irreversible and mineral state — are, not one, but several play stores. In other words, reserves of playfulness to fuel creation when the time comes to go back up to the workshop through the little door. In an act of gardening, Michel Butor reaffirms the creative power of the (under)ground. The similarity between gardening and figurative forms of expression is also present in Japan. According to Gérard Macé: "L'histoire des jardins au Japon est donc intimement liée à l'histoire de la peinture, à laquelle elle emprunte ses principes essentiels, comme l'ossature du paysage ou la nécessité de plusieurs plans."[50] (Macé 29). Whereas in Japan painting influences gardening, gardening hybridises writing in "Le Rêve des Lichens": "L'oncle Jules qui ne venait nous voir qu'une fois tous les 80 jours (le reste du temps il faisait son tour du monde), et qui nous

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[45] As Jacques Derrida remarks, citation means: "(…) both 'setting in motion' (the frequentative form of 'to move' – *ciere*) and, also since it is a matter of shaking up a whole culture and history in its fundamental text, solicitation, i.e. the shakeup of a whole." (Derrida *Dissemination* 159)

[46] "there is dance in writing, and a lot more manual work than we usually think."

[47] "Michel Butor : Déménagements de la littérature" 19-21 October 2006, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. https://www.fabula.org/actualites/15399/michel-butor-demenagements-de-la-litterature.html

[48] "To use a quotation not only means paying homage to an author one appreciates, but it also sheds light on one's own birth, on the foundations of the house one is building."

[49] "Uncle Jules declared: 'Not only education, but also recreation; one goes with the other,' and he would take us to the big toy shops under the catacombs (at the end of the wildest games, there was always a small door to take us back to the workshop)"

[50] "The history of gardens in Japan is therefore closely linked to the history of painting, from which it borrows its core principles, like the structure of the landscape or the necessity of having several planes"

rapportait un mot par pays, nous demandant de les planter entre les pages de nos livres […]"[51] (Butor "Le rêve des lichens" 767). The intervention of Jules Verne, re-worked by Butor as a character in his dream, transforms words into seeds and books into soil, in preparation for another act of cross-pollination between literature and painting:

"L'oncle Jules qui entrouvrait nos livres quand il revenait, pour voir le progrès de nos plantations antérieures, merveilleux lichens illustrant les pages les plus arides (d'innombrables fils sortaient de la bibliothèque pour aller nourrir les tableaux), annonce […]"[52] (Butor "Le rêve des lichens" 769).

Michel Butor, therefore, remains faithful to his belief that lichens constitute a sort of "peinture qui se fait toute seule."[53] (Santschi 185). Unaided, the lichens of his dream grow to nurture the paintings, until, when the dream ends, they overgrow them and spread to the trees that surround the art gallery: "Et nous nous retrouvons rue du Dragon pour admirer l'usnea barbata[54] pendant aux branches des grands arbres."[55] (Butor "Le rêve des lichens" 775). Lichens are thus established as intermedial and interconnecting devices, traversing many of Butor's texts and interacting with the unacknowledged texts of others and other art forms, such as butō. In doing so, Michel Butor's lichens enable an ongoing process of creation across the frontiers of media, genre, languages, and cultural areas.

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[51] "Uncle Jules who only came to see us once every 80 days (the rest of the time, he would travel around the world), and who brought us back one word for each country, asked us to plant them between the pages of our books"

[52] "Uncle Jules who half-opened out books when he came back to see the progress of our previous plantings, marvellous lichens illustrating the most arid pages (innumerable threads came out of the library to go feed the paintings), announces"

[53] "self-painting paint."

[54] A species of lichen that grows on trees like tassels.

[55] "And we find ourselves on Dragon Street to admire the usnea barbata hanging from the branches of the tall trees."

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Mirrors Without End: Gender, Verse, and Temporality in *femmes sans tain* (1975), an Iconotext by Régine Deforges, Irina Ionesco, and Renée Vivien

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A peculiar genre of books briefly blossomed during the 1970s: large formats combining erotic photographs with literary texts. The best-known work among them is *certainly Rêves de jeunes filles* (1971) by David Hamilton with texts by Alain Robbe-Grillet, the most notorious *Temple aux miroirs* (1977) by Irina Ionesco, also with texts by Robbe-Grillet, in which Ionesco compiled photos of her 12-year-old daughter in eroticised poses. The most interesting work of this kind is probably *femmes sans tain* (Bernard Letu et Secle, 1975), and not only because the book is entirely made by women, two of whom – unlike in all the other such books, in which women are only in front of or also behind the camera – rise to speak.

The book begins with an introduction by Régine Deforges, the first female publisher in France. The first book she published was, controversially, Louis Aragon's *Le con d'Irène* and later on, too, she concentrated on erotic texts. This introduction describes Deforges's rediscovery of *fin de siècle* author Renée Vivien through Colette's memoir *Le pur et l'impur*, which, according to its epigraph, focuses on "ces plaisirs qu'on nomme, à la légère, physiques". This is followed by metrically bound poems by the British but French-writing author Renée Vivien, who was rediscovered in the 1970s as an identification figure of the emerging LGBT movement. Deforges also presents her as such. Interspersed between the poems are black-and-white photographs by Irina Ionesco of (more or less) undressed (adult) women, often made up like dolls or Pierrots and hidden behind veils, among flowers and under jewellery and crucifixes. My contribution reads the text, using a term by Peter Wagner, as an "iconotext" or, in the sense of Michele Cometa, as a "phototext": a text that only constitutes its full meaning in the combination of the symbolic and the iconic medium, a combination whose complexity in this case is further increased by the fact that it is a pluriauctorial text by three women who, moreover, fashion a position and role for themselves in male-dominated fields: Deforges in publishing, Ionesco among erotic photographers, Renée Vivien among *les poètes*. In Vivien's and Ionesco's case, there is furthermore the crossing of linguistic and cultural borders.

I pay special attention to the interplay between fluctuating gender constructions on the one hand and the strict form of verse and black-and-white photographs on the other, and especially to the entanglement of temporal levels: Vivien refers in her texts to the ancient Sappho, Ionesco in her pictures to the iconography of *décadence* and Deforges to its later reflection in Colette and in the present of the 1970s, which rediscovered the epoch both scholarly and in popular culture. These infinite reflections of the different levels of the book in each other even include the material design of the book: it is bound in violet silk as if it were taken from the library of Des Esseintes – with violet being a significant colour in Vivien's private mythology and at the same time the symbolic colour of Colette's *garçonne* lesbians of the 1920s.

Keywords: iconotext, francophonie, gender, women-writers, photography

The Strangest Book You Might Have Ever Seen

When Dorian Gray, towards the end of chapter X of Oscar Wilde's nearly eponymous novel, looks for distraction, he picks up a curious, unnamed "yellow book"[1] sent to him by Lord Henry, his mentor and corruptor, and quickly begins, rather than to earnestly read, to "turn over the leaves":

> After a few minutes he became absorbed. It was the strangest book that he had ever read. It seemed to him that in exquisite raiment, and to the delicate sound of flutes, the sins of the world were passing in dumb show before him. (186)

You could be forgiven if you came to a judgement similar to Dorian's, looking at another curious book – the one at the centre of this essay. It is a book of another conspicuous colour, bound, as it is, in mellow violet moiré silk, yet on no account anonymous, with its title page adorned by no less than three names. You might come to call it, too, the 'strangest book that you had ever seen' – and *seen* rather than *read*, as, 'turning over the leaves', one surely would rather *leaf* through this book than feel compelled to read it line by line. That book is enigmatically entitled *femmes sans tain* (I will come back to that), with every word in lower case, followed by the explanative subtitle *poèmes de*[2], and a triad of woman's names: on the left Irina Ionesco (1930-2022), in the middle and set a little higher on the page, in the continuation of *'poèmes de',* Renée Vivien (1877-1909) and, to the right at the same level as Ionesco: Régine Deforges (1935-2014). All their delicate, calligraphic letters are set in a bright light blue, clashing somewhat with the violet of its wavy, animated background. Below the names, are set three oval lockets containing black-and-white portrait photographs of the three women named above, with Renée Vivien's again stretching higher, being a little larger, than the other ones.

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[1] This mysterious book is, of course, as Wilde himself states in a letter to E.W. Pratt of April 15th, 1892, a reference to Joris Karl Huysmans' *À rebours* (1884) (cf. Wilde *The Complete Letters* 524; cf. also Berg 2001).
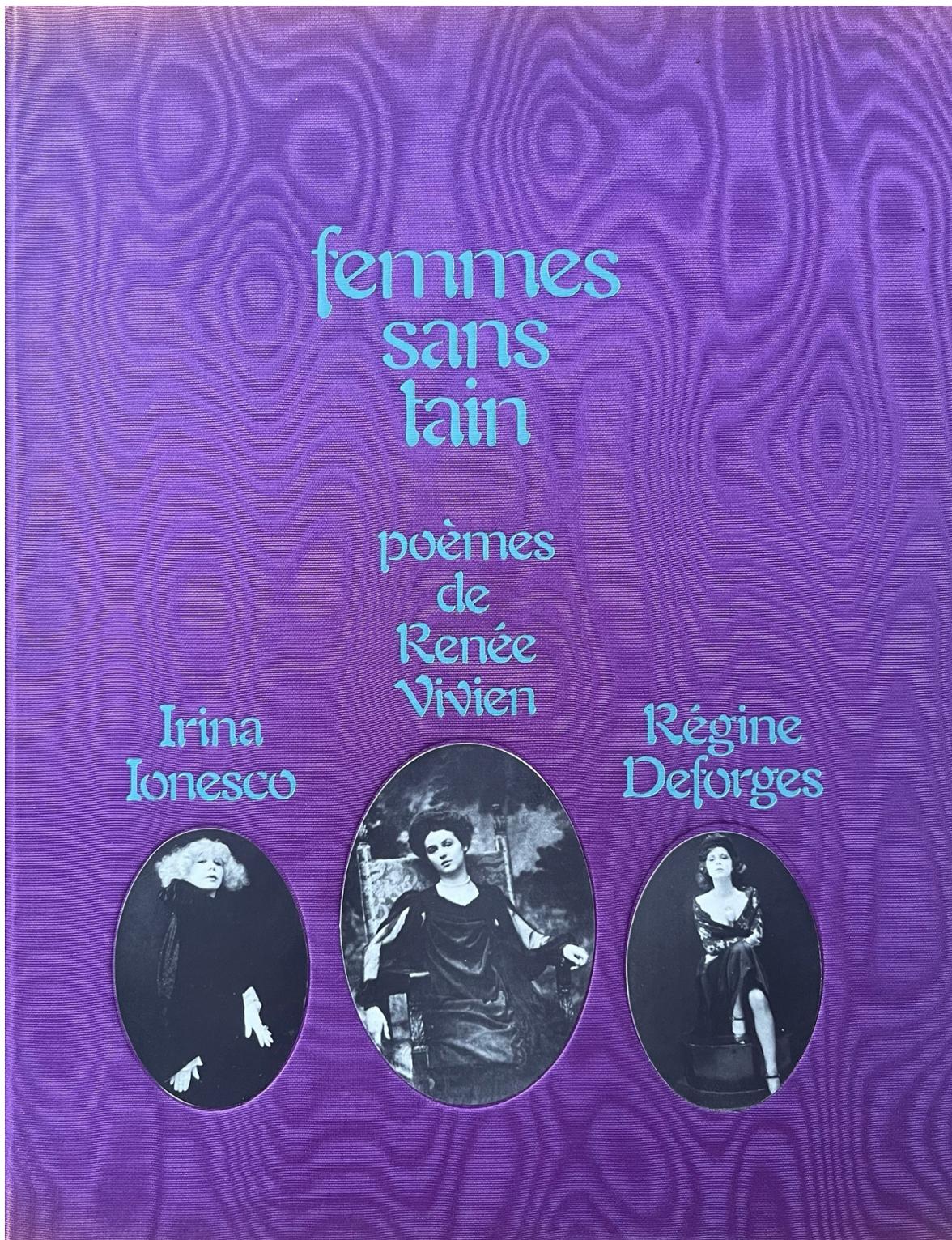[2] 'poems by'. All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

Fig. 1: *femmes sans tain*, Bernard Letu et Secle, 1975 – cover, reproduced with kind permission of Letu Books, Geneva.

The photographs set the tone to what follows when one opens the book: a sequence of texts and pictures. This inter- or cross-medial, 'iconotextual' or 'phototextual' setup explains why a reader would rather leaf through this book, oscillating between looking and reading, and reading the images as much as looking at the texts, and not only because of the former being richly textured and the latter presented quite iconically.

To be precise, *femmes sans tain*, published in 1975 and never republished, consists of a short, three-page prose introduction by Régine Deforges, followed by 21 mostly full-page black-and-white photographs. These are large images, as the volume is In-4°, measuring 24 x 30cm, and the 21 photographs alternate with a slightly higher and certainly more symbolic number of poems – 24 – of varying length and form, set in large fonts. The poems are anthologically chosen from four of Vivien's collections: *Études et preludes* (1901), *Cendres et poussières* (1902), *Évocations* (1903), and *Chansons pour mon ombre* (1907), and are cross-referenced, when applicable, with their respective re-publications, especially in *Poèmes* (1909). Constituting a most peculiar ensemble, these three distinct parts are authored, respectively, by the three women cited above: Régine Deforges, Irina Ionesco, and Renée Vivien. Deforges was a feminist author and the first woman in France to run a publishing house (founded not long before, in 1968), specialising in eroticism and controversy (though leaving the publication of this volume to Bernard Letu, a gallerist and librarian based in neutral Geneva). Ionesco constitutes that rare female figure among erotic photographers. She was born in Paris of Romanian circus artist immigrant parents and is most infamous rather than famous for her nude pictures of her prepubescent daughter Eva. These had appeared in *Playboy* and *Penthouse* and, most hypocritically, on the cover of German news magazine *Der Spiegel* (22 May 1977), under the title "Die verkauften Lolitas. Kinder auf dem Sex-Markt"[3]. The third woman is Vivien, the British-born, French-writing *fin de siècle* pseudonymous poetess and erudite translator of Sappho whose real name is Pauline Mary Tarn. I call her a *fin de siècle* author because of her dominant motives and linguistic patterns, though she published all of her nearly twenty books in the first decade of the 20th century, coinciding with the last nine feverish years of her life. Vivien died young and long had been forgotten, being at odds, as a woman and a non-national, with the most common prerequisites of canonization, at odds arguably also as a woman who self-avowedly "aimait les femmes"[4], as Deforges writes, suggesting precisely that reason: "Alors pourquoi ce silence, pourquoi cet oubli? Ce poème apporte, peut-être[,] une réponse"[5]: a poem lamenting that women do not seem allowed to love beauty, but are condemned "aux laideurs masculines"[6] (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges, without page numbers, yet p. 5). Anyway, Vivien had been swept away, like all except the highest

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[3] 'The sold Lolitas. Children on the sex market'
[4] 'loved women'
[5] 'So why this silence, why this oblivion? This poem perhaps provides an answer'
[6] 'to male ugliness'

echelons of pre-war literature, by the avant-gardes and removed from anthologies, established by male scholars at the time.

In the 1970s, Vivien just began to re-emerge as an identification figure of the then-budding LGBT movement,[7] as had begun to re-emerge from its aesthetic purgatory the culture, art, and literature of '*décadence*'[8], spurred on perhaps by a 'postmodern', sympathetic sense of the end or, at least, the impasse of modernism and intellectually justified, if necessity be, by the bittersweet conscience of "Camp", as famously formulated by Susan Sontag in 1964.[9]

The exterior of the book with its three inserted photographs makes it peculiar not only as a bibliographic rarity. It signals its 'in between' status between text and image, author and pluriauctoriality. That oscillation puts it in an ambiguous "twilight" – a term that plays an important role within and for the book, as I will show. The medial and generic peculiarity of the book, as visible already on its cover page, highlights only a further peculiarity, even precarity, constituted by the fact that the book is made by three women fashioning a position and role for themselves in male-dominated fields: Deforges in publishing, Ionesco among erotic photographers, and Renée Vivien among the poets in the all-male-dominated society before World War One. In Vivien's and Ionesco's case, this precarity is further enhanced by the crossing of linguistic and cultural borders; in Vivien's, further still, by her marginal and marginalized sexual orientation.

It is, however, not only the photographs on the cover that prepare the specificities of the book's inside. The extravagant, luxurious exterior, too, foreshadows the interior; the book's materiality conforms to its material. And that is true with regard to both what one might once have called its formal and its content side. The volume lavishly operates with *blancs*, with white, empty spaces. It consists of 96 pages, yet only half of them, only the *recto*, not the *verso* bear letters or images, apart from the foreword, and even most of the *recto* pages with the poems are half-empty. They only contain a sonnet, a little *chanson* (song) or, particularly, a couple of quatrains consisting of short *octosyllabes*, verses consisting of eight syllables. This was Théophile Gautier's meter for his aestheticist *Émaux et camées* (1852), chosen explicitly to mark a difference and divergence from the most common of French poetry, the traditional twelve-syllable *alexandrin* that Vivien, too, uses for most of her poems. There are white spaces above the horizontal, 'landscape' photographic formats, too, but most significantly within Ionesco's photographs themselves. There, white forms – faces, cloths, and flowers mainly – stand

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[7] Vivien has since seen a scholarly renaissance, beginning with the edition of her *Poésies complètes* precisely in Deforges' publishing house (Vivien 1986), mostly in the field of women and gender studies, yet also beyond, see, in particular, the two edited volumes Albert 2009 and Albert 2012 and, most recently, the special issue of *Sextant* about "Intellectuel·les queer. Collaborations (1880-1920)" (Rosenfeld), where Vivien is a *passim* presence. See in particular the article dedicated to Vivien by Camille Islert in that special issue as well as her published *thèse* (Islert).

[8] 'Decadence'

[9] Sontag's "Notes on 'Camp'" later became part of her début collection of essays, *Against Interpretation* (Sontag 275-292).

out against the invariably black background, the exact opposite of the verses' black letters standing out against the white page.

On the content side, the silky violet exterior of the book creates a temporal entanglement between the 1970s of its material production and the 1900s of its poetic components, posing as a precious book that could have been taken from the library of Joris-Karl Huysmans' decadent hero, the duke Jean des Esseintes. In the same entangled way, Ionesco's photographs heavily hark back to the iconography of *décadence*, featuring more or less undressed adult women, more or less drowned in or under veils, laces, crochet dresses with perforated patterns reminiscent of decorative openwork, occasionally also fur and feathers, necklaces, sacral jewellery and, time and again, as already mentioned, flowers, arranged exclusively in hermetically sealed interiors. (Her daughter Eva figures but twice in the book, once fully dressed, in a brocade mantle, even with a flamboyant chapeau, once only with her collaged head.) As in the "yellow book" of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, they constitute a procession "in exquisite raiment" (Wilde 186), i.e. in a literally archaic garb and thus an out-of-its-own-time appearance, interspersed with "the delicate sound of" metrically bound verses, showing off, if not "the sins", certainly the sinuousness of an artificial, re-created, represented world.

If *femmes sans tain* seems quite unique, it is, however, no *hapax*. The book is part of an odd genre that briefly blossomed during the 1970s, mainly in France, but usually translated and, at times, sold in huge numbers in other languages – English, German –, too: large formats combining erotic photographs with literary texts, seeing collaborations between photographers from David Hamilton to Jacques Bourboulon and writers from Alain Robbe-Grillet to Léopold Sédar Senghor, even to Serge Gainsbourg.

Before I briefly characterise this genre – and point out *femme sans tain*'s nevertheless unique position within it, elaborating on its enigmatic title –, I will illustrate and refocus the concepts of 'phototext' and 'iconotext', designating a pluri-medial artifact that only constitutes its full meaning in the combination of characteristics of the symbolic and the iconic medium. In this context, I tentatively propose to conceive of the medial interaction in iconotexts in analogy to how Sergei Eisenstein conceptualizes filmic montage: as an open, not fully controllable process. In the case of *femmes sans tain*, the complexity of the combination is further increased, as indicated, by the fact that the plurality of media corresponds with a plurality of authors, and, all the more so, female authors.

I will then show how the 'collaboration' of the three women, working in at least two different epochs and focussing on at least three different 'time zones', creates an entanglement of temporal levels: Vivien refers in her texts not only to the contemporary parks and interiors so frequent in decadent or symbolist literature, but strategically to Antiquity, too. Ionesco refers, as we have seen, in her pictures to the very iconography of *décadence* and Deforges in her preface to its later reflection in the 1940s, namely in Colette's memoirs, and in the present of the 1970s. These infinite reflections of the different levels of the book in each other include its material design with its violet binding, as I

indicated, yet even in still another way: Violet is a significant colour in Vivien's private mythology and at the same time the symbolic colour of not only Colette's *garçonne*[10] lesbians of the 1920s.

In the final part of my essay, I analyse how this temporal entanglement with its mirror effects runs parallel to fluctuating gender constructions. Gender is presented in an ambiguous, metamorphosing "twilight", producing a constant tension and interplay with the strict form of both verse and black-and-white photographs: Ionesco transforms the body into a jigsaw, into the clear-cut elements of a collage, while Vivien stages a Wagnerian-sounding 'twilight of the genders' in a sharp, crystalline form reminiscent of the epigrammatic tradition, bathing, however, the form itself in an ambiguous light.

Iconotexts and Phototexts

The term 'iconotext', understood as a term designating a double-coded 'text' in the broad sense of semiotics, on the page of which there are both verbal and visual signs – words and images –, seems to have been coined in 1990 by Alain Montandon. Michael Nerlich applied the term immediately to a combination of verbal text and photographic images, so that he also could have baptised this particular combination of two distinct, specific media a 'phototext'. Whoever might have created this term and when – it gains traction only a decade later, in the 2000s (Bryant, Hughes and Noble, von Steinaecker), albeit in a sometimes metaphorical, even confused sense.

Ari J. Blatt, for example, in his 2009 essay envisaging "to clarify our understanding of what a phototext is and does" (108), lumps together, among others, what he calls "narrative photographs" on the one hand and "photographically engaged works of literature" (113) respectively "phototextual fictions" (116) on the other. The latter are, in parallel to Montandon's understanding of iconotexts, material combinations of texts and photographs within the same artistic product, mostly books, as represented, most famously, at least in recent times, by the works of W.G. Sebald, yet pioneered in the very *fin de siècle*, by Georges Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-morte* (1892), a pre-text of sorts, in a different intermedial crossing, of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), and later continued by André Breton's *Nadja* (1928/1963).

Yet Blatt deals also with photographs of (mostly closed) books, of libraries and people caught in the act of reading. These photographs thus *represent* the textual medium within the photographic medium, rather than realize an interaction between the media – however to be conceptualized, and I will come back to that, too. I therefore believe these instances to be better understood in the terminology of intermediality, as forms of 'intermedial reference', as theorized by Irina Rajewsky (16-17).

Blatt tries to define "narrative photographs" citing as examples Gregory Crewdson's large-scale digital prints depicting unsettling scenes from *unheimlich* homes in suburbia

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[10] 'flapper', tomboy

or Melanie Pullen's even larger "High Fashion Crime Scenes" of women in shades of Prada and puddles of blood (114-115) – and one could already think of Cindy Sherman's suggestive black-and-white "Untitled Film Stills" (1977-1980). Blatt's "narrative photographs" seem to be 'phototexts' because of their storytelling qualities. Yet, storytelling is, of course, neither a language-bound nor a medial characteristic (who would qualify a ballet as a 'moving' or 'moto-text'?). In fact, already the large-scale format of Blatt's examples rather point to a postmodern take on the venerable tradition of history painting, once considered the highest genre of art, at least until the French Revolution, and thus reminiscent of the conception of painting as *ut pictura poesis* or, indeed more correctly, *ut poesis pictura*: the conception of painting as parallel to poetry, and parallel because also rhetorically structured. This was the aesthetic default position since Humanism (see the classical study by Lee).

Metaphorical usages may have been driven by one of the first and most influential systematic reflections on the interaction between the verbal and the visual medium under the sign of iconotextuality: Peter Wagner's introduction into his edited volume *Icons – Texts – Iconotexts* (1996). There, Wagner famously states: "iconotext refers to an artifact in which the verbal and the visual signs mingle to produce rhetoric that depends on the co-presence of words and images" (16). Yet, as I have written elsewhere, even if, at first, this definition seems quite straightforward, harking apparently back to Montandon, a closer look reveals that 'co-presence', for Wagner, means not co-presence materially on the page, but consciously in the readers' minds (Hufnagel 77-78). Wagner applies the term iconotext "not only to works which really show the interpenetration of words and images in a concrete sense [...] but also to such art works in which one medium in only implied (e.g., the reference to a painting in a fictional text)" (16).

So, as in Blatt, here, too: inflating the *corpus* of potential iconotexts nearly *ad infinitium*, thus reducing the analytic value of his concept, Wagner conflates the actual *combination* of media with *representation* of one medium in another one, with *reference*, citation of and even allusion to one medium in another (see his *Moby Dick* and David's Horatii example, in Wagner 15), with the *transfer* from one medium to another (as, e.g., a screen adaptation of a novel) and with the *simulation* of one medium in another (as in 'musical' or 'cinematographic writing', for example). They are more precisely dealt with, again, drawing on, and differentiating further, Rajewsky's analytic distinctions (15-18).

That is why it seems sensible – particularly in the present context – to adopt, by and large, Michele Cometa's both restrictive and differentiated notion of phototext. Cometa discusses as phototexts only works characterised by the material co-presence of the linguistic verbal and the photographic visual, combined trough different 'rhetorics of layout' (the uncommon plural is his: "retoriche del layout" in Cometa 78). And he stresses the subversive, de-hierarchizing and re-hierarchizing potentials of the combination of these two particular media (73): the 'spiritual' and the 'mechanical' medium, the poetic medium of genius and the mass-productive medium of the machine (productive, i.e.

poetic etymologically, but without the halo of emphasis around a creator). These subversive effects are in line with the *topoi* that have accompanied photography since its invention and never have completely disappeared; for Pierre Bourdieu, for example, photography is the perfect middle-brow art. Cometa notes that literary theory has for a long time eschewed to come to terms with even the existence of literary phototexts, let alone canonized the genre (69).

This aspect of questioning common hierarchies is all the more relevant when considering the sub-genre of erotic phototext and especially our particular phototext co-authored by three women. The addition of literary texts to erotic photographs in the 1970s, in any case, seems not least aimed at ennobling images of questionable reputation, as it is the case in a not completely dissimilar, in a certain way even double intermedial crossing: Guido Crepax' *fumetto* or graphic novel adaptation of Pauline Réage's controversial *Histoire d'O* – in its exclusive 1975 edition by the Milanese publishing house Franco Maria Ricci (in 900 numbered and signed copies, on laid paper, in French throughout, despite its Italian origin) benefiting from introductions by both Roland Barthes and Alain Robbe-Grillet.

Before I explore the erotic phototext genre, let me add a thought about how the interaction between the media in an iconotext or phototext could be described in its most general and succinct form. In the literature, you find generally two ways: one polemic, one irenic. W.J.T. Mitchell writes about a "struggle for territory" (43), Wagner even about "a warfare in a medium and between the media" (15); for Alain Montandon, an iconotext exposes at least the "irréducibilité d'une difference" (6).[11] Mieke Bal, on the contrary, and not surprisingly, as she writes about an epoch when the premodern *ut pictura poesis* conception still held sway, rather sees a continuous intertwinement between the verbal and the visual (5); Thomas von Steinaecker even detects a 'dialogue' (10). If the war metaphor seems excessive, so does the nearly all-purpose, here quaintly anthropomorphic, even sentimental metaphor of dialogue. If the latter way stresses the successful enhancement of a communicative message by the juxtaposition, or parallelism, of two media (as best visible, perhaps, in premodern *emblemata*), the former seems to focus, equally unilaterally, on the aporetic, deconstructive effects of such a juxtaposition.

Of course, the specifics of interaction and the effects of juxtaposition vary greatly, just as their forms do, depending on what Cometa calls the 'rhetorics of layout': on how an image is embedded into a text or vice versa; on the way, position, and number, amongst others, of references, analogies, discrepancies between verbal and visual signs. Ionesco's photographs, for example, are far more loosely connected to Vivien's poems, written seven decades earlier and always separated from them by one blank page, than, say, the photographs inserted right into the midst of Sebald's texts that evoke situations, persons, and objects analogous or even identical to those depicted.

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[11] 'irreducibility of a difference'

According to von Steinaecker, the function of the photographs in Sebald's works, especially in the early *Schwindel. Gefühle* (1990) and *Die Ringe des Saturn* (1995), consists in confirming, believably or not, what the texts state and claim, developing a dense web – a 'texture' – of analogies and associations between the two media (250-263).

Looking for a neutral, comprising way, I would, tentatively, propose to conceive of the medial interaction in iconotexts in analogy to how Sergei Eisenstein conceptualizes filmic montage. Eisenstein makes comparisons with the surprising semantic results, at least for Europeans, produced by the combination of ideographic Asian characters. From an intermedial point of view, one could also note the ambiguous nature of certain such characters, representing variably sounds and ideas: it makes them at the same time similar to both synthetic words and holistic images. Eisenstein writes, in an expressionistically varied typography:

> […] *in my view montage is not an idea composed of successive shots stuck together but an idea that DERIVES from the collision between two shots that are independent of one another* […]. As in Japanese hieroglyphics in which two independent ideographic characters ('shots') are juxtaposed and *explode* into a concept. (163-164)

This interaction is an open process, characterized by indetermination, quite in Umberto Eco's sense, and it is – thinking of collisions and explosions – to a certain extend an even uncontrollable process; its impact depends on the inner structure, the 'chemistry' of the active components, resulting in a smaller or a bigger bang.

The Erotic Phototexts of the 1970s

The times, they are forever a-changing, to vary Bob Dylan: In the 1970s, there was a curious *kairos* in France for erotic books that signalled the high-end and high-brow status of taste and sophistication their authors strived for by combining (self-declaredly) artistic erotic photographs with consecrated avantgarde or, at least, off-mainstream literary texts, using large formats, hardbacks and, sometimes, precious materials, referring to the tradition of the *livre d'artiste*, the book as an artwork, decidedly a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (for this tradition, see generally Schmitz-Emans).

The best-known (and best-selling) works among them are certainly *Rêves de jeunes filles* (1971) and *Les Demoiselles d'Hamilton* (1972) by David Hamilton, presenting his – then hugely popular – signature teenage girls or underage-appearing young women in soft focus, paired with texts by Alain Robbe-Grillet. The most notorious is *Temple aux miroirs* (1977) by Irina Ionesco, also with texts by Robbe-Grillet, in which Ionesco compiled photos of her then, at most, barely 12-year-old daughter in eroticised poses.

For another volume, Serge Gainsbourg, the author of double-edged, provocative pop-songs (remember France Gall and phallic lollipops, in 1966), contributed three sonnets to dozens of sun-drenched photographs by Jacques Bourboulon, published under the title *Des corps naturels* (1980), and the choice of the revered form of the sonnet seems a clear strategy for heightening the brow, not only, here, with respect to the

photographer's work, but even primarily the singer-songwriter's, assuming the role of the bard.

1986 sees the publication of *Black Ladies*, a collection of nude photographs of African women by the German, Paris-based photographer Uwe Ommer. Léopold Sédar Senghor contributed a preface and a number of sensuous poems to this volume. Senghor was probably the internationally most high-profile black poet at that time, six years after retiring from the presidency of Senegal, and three years after having been elected, as the first writer born in Africa, among the forty 'Immortals' of the *Académie française*.

Ommer's case is particularly interesting, as some ten years later, in 1995, he published another volume identically entitled *Black Ladies*, still presenting photographs of nude women of colour, yet, as it seems, without using any of the pictures from 1986, and accompanied also by completely new texts. Now they are written by a woman, the feminist, Cameroon-born novelist Calixthe Beyala. It seems as if Ommer had wanted to take his distances from Senghor – and Senghor' views on women and gender, that were becoming more and more old-fashioned and less and less accepted; one of his biographers, for example, writes, in 2005, and apparently still approvingly, with regard to Senghor's attitudes: "La femme est sa muse. Au fond, ça l'amuse" (Dijan 85).[12]

The most interesting work of this genre is certainly *femmes sans tain*. It is the only book entirely made by women, two of whom rise to speak – unlike in all the other such books, in which only men are behind the words and women are only in front of the camera, with Ionesco's lone exception, yet, if one thinks of how she treated her daughter, probably the photographer with the cruellest, most impassive eye. The other exception, of course, is the 'recanting' second *Black Ladies*; it marks, indeed, not only chronologically, the end of the historical moment of the genre.

The Subversion of the Voyeur's Gaze and Words: the Title of the Book

In the volumes of the genre I have outlined, the women are looked at, are objects of the gaze, and a by far dominantly male gaze, in the by far more male-dominated world of the 1970s and early 1980s. The women are further fixed and fixated by the words of the male writers commenting literarily, in a more or less cybernetic montage, on the photographs. That – "prima le immagini, poi le parole", to adapt a formula of the early modern *paragone* between the arts: 'first the pictures, then the words', leads to the second particularity of *femmes sans tain*: the temporal order between – and within – words and images.

But let us stick for a moment with the gaze, as it seems to me that the gaze the women are exposed to is reflected – and, in a certain way, *literally* reflected and thus *de*flected – in the strange, punning title of the book: The formula *femmes sans tain* is modelled on 'glace sans tain', which designates a semi-transparent, one-way, spy or

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[12] 'Woman is his muse. Basically, it [sic] is an amusement'

voyeur's mirror (Robbe-Grillet claimed to have one of these in his bureau in the Éditions de Minuit). It is a mirror without ("sans") the second layer of tin and mercury which makes a looking-glass non-transparent both ways.

The combination of a woman with a mirror – a woman looking at herself in a moment of intimacy – is a classic voyeuristic *dispositive*, to borrow Foucault's term; its name in art history is "The Toilet of Venus", a much-practised topic, from Antiquity to Titian, Rubens, and Velázquez to its brutal banalisation by Hans Bellmer.

Amongst Ionesco's 21 photographs in *femmes sans tain*, only one contains a mirror, showing a clearly adult – and clearly dressed – woman contemplating her face, covered by a large white, translucent veil, in a small, hand-held mirror, somewhat like Balthus's dressed and un-veiled minor in his painting *Les Beaux jours* (1944/45). Significantly, directly behind the woman's head, there is a smallish reproduction of a Renaissance painting attached to the wall, showing a nude woman lying on a bed, mirroring the photographed woman: As her, she is lying on the blankets; as her, she is visible only from the thighs upwards; and as hers, the painted woman's head and breast are covered by the veil, touching, however, not her body, but her body's visual representation. Indeed, the two women nearly touch each other at her heads, in mirror-image-like symmetry: the photographically represented woman and the painterly represented woman, secondarily represented within the photographic representation, on a tertiary-level reproduction of the painting.

In the painting, the woman is seen covering her groin with one hand, like a *Venus pudica*, extending her other hand in a communicative, perhaps supplicating gesture. This outstretched hand is, again, in mirror-image-like symmetry with the photographed woman's hand holding the mirror, while her other hand, the double of the hand on the pudenda, is almost invisible, resting, fingers opened, relaxed under the veil. The expression on the woman's face is languorous, languishing, corroborating somewhat the supplicative character of the painted woman's gesture. She does not smile, as Balthus' figure faintly does.

Fig. 2: 'Woman with mirror', untitled photograph from *femmes sans tain*, reproduced with kind permission of Letu Books, Geneva.

What do we make of these mirror-effects? In Ionesco's photograph, we do not see the woman's reflection in the looking-glass, unlike in most of the "Toilet of Venus" paintings. In these images, the viewer sees, both literally and metaphorically, a double image: the woman and his desire of her. In contrast, in the *femmes sans tain* image, the woman does not let us see what she sees – herself. Ionesco's image, thus, is, exactly, an inverted *glace sans tain*. It is a one-way mirror that does not let the voyeur's gaze in, but excludes it, as not the voyeur sees the woman in the mirror, but only the woman herself. Yet, Ionesco's image poses as a common voyeur's mirror, even as a common looking-glass with its double image, as the photographed, dressed woman is mirrored by the painted – and desirably nude – woman in the background.

This photograph works just as Vivien's texts that evade male desire formulating another, contrarian, self-reflective desire. Even if this female desire of women constantly chastises itself, as it is constantly linked, in the poems, with death and renunciation, through a 'queer' take on that typical decadent *concetto*, it also disorientates, displaces, excludes the common male desire, just as the *glace sans tain* excludes the gaze, reflecting it back on those trying to look through – in this particular, subtly reversed use, on those believing to look at something else than their own desirous projections.

Yet, might the allusion to the voyeur's mirror in the title not simply point to the voyeuristic viewing of the theatrically made-up and presented women, with or without clothes, 'sequestered', as Robbe-Grillet might say, in their windowless interiors stuffed with laces and flowers, and thus without hiding from that view? It could, certainly in the other photographs. It could, in their sequence, if it were not, however, for this one picture, the only one, as I said, containing a mirror, that object-epithet of the voyeur, excluding there, as I have shown, the voyeur's gaze. But it cannot at all in the phototext juxtaposing Ionesco's photographs and Vivien's poems: the poems' desiring female voice without the desire for a man nor a man's desire is a men-and-their-gaze-excluding *femme sans tain – sans stain*, one might even read, thinking of the English titles of several of Vivien's poems in the book, as *Twilight* or *Let the Dead bury their Dead* – 'pure' in her all-effacing entwinement of love and death, sapping, exploding even, through juxtaposition, the male voyeur's gaze.

This point – subversive deviation – is further underscored by the 'rhetorics of layout': The photograph is the second of the book, not the first, what could have been judged as not sophisticated enough. Put in the first position, the image would have set the tone too obviously, but, through its second place, it deviates, reverses the perspective of the voyeur commonly, unreflectingly assumed when opening the book. There is a deviating 'swerve' not dissimilar in the layout of the poems, too. As I mentioned, there are 24 poems interspersed between the 21 photographs, yet the sequence of one page of photography, one blank page, one page of poetry, one further blank page is never altered. Three exceptional times, there are two poems sharing one page: first after five photographs, then after the eleventh photograph, thus after six more photos, and last after photograph number 18, thus after seven more, eschewing the simplest regularity or

rather setting a game of tempo or rhythmic spacing of two poems with intervals of 5-6-7 photographs.

The image of the woman with her mirror follows the photograph of a woman's bust in a circle of roses and of ferns whose tips point, like spearheads, towards the woman's mask-like face of a hairless Pierrot, Pierrot's typical tears hanging as drop-shaped crystals under her eyes raised to the sky. A black scarf, merging with the black background, makes it look as if the head had been severed from the décolleté, like that of Medusa, another *fin de siècle* stereotype – Mario Praz's first chapter of his classic *La Carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica* (published in translation under the English title *The Romantic Agony*), notably, is dedicated to "La bellezza medusea"[13] (31) –, and Medusa is present also in other photographs, there, with lace surrounding the faces, alluding more to the imagery of Belgian Symbolist painter Fernand Khnopff. If Medusa has since become a feminist trope, probably this aspect was already subcutaneously present in the 1970s.

The image of the woman with her mirror follows the first poem, entitled *Lassitude*[14]. It already displays what turn out to be leitmotivs for the subsequent poems: the transition from life to sleep to death, intoxicating flowers, transferred sentiment, and suppressed suffering: "Je dormirai ce soir d'un large et doux sommeil. / Fermez les lourds rideaux, tenez les portes closes […] // Posez, sur la blancheur d'un oreiller profond, / Ces mortuaires fleurs dont le parfum obsède", to cite the first two verses of the first two stanzas (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges 11) [15].

If the interior sealed by closed curtains of the second verse is a visual leitmotiv, too, as already mentioned, the photograph is followed, in turn, by a not less programmatic poem: *Sonnet féminin*[16]. This poem contains all the keywords of "La Sapho française"'s desire, as *Les Nouvelles littéraires* called Vivien in an article commemorating her in 1933 (Le Dantec). These keywords are further highlighted by their position; they function as rhymes: "lyres lesbiennes", "nudités païennes", "odes saphiques", "strophes érotiques", and "Mytilène"[17], rhyming with "légère haleine"[18], to which "[l]a blanche volupté des vierges amoureuses"[19] is compared, rhyming, in turn, with "tes étranges mains creuses"[20], the three elements of hollowness, whiteness, and virginity suggesting, evidently, a non-reproductive, 'sterile', lesbian desire (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges 15). In such a programmatic context, the photograph of the 'glace sans tain' woman with the mirror is bestowed with a programmatic value, too.

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[13] 'Medusa's beauty'
[14] 'Weariness'
[15] 'Tonight I shall sleep a deep and sweet sleep / Close the heavy curtains, keep the doors shut [...] // Lay, on the whiteness of a deep pillow, / These mortuary flowers with their haunting perfume'.
[16] 'Female sonnet'
[17] 'Lesbian lyres', 'pagan nudes', 'sapphic odes', 'erotic stanzas' and 'Myrtilène'
[18] 'slight breath'
[19] 'The white voluptuousness of virgins in love'
[20] 'your strange hollow hands'

Many of Vivien's 'sapphic' keywords, however, would have been associated, by Vivien's contemporaries, primarily with a male author: Pierre Louÿs who, in 1895, had published *Les Chansons de Bilitis*[21], an alleged translation of the Greek poems of a made-up ancient poetess friend of Sappho, allegedly rediscovered by a German archaeologist named preposterously G. Heim – a name sounding like 'Geheim', i.e. 'secret' (Skucha 115). The second part of these *Chansons*, for example, is entitled "Élégies à Mytilène"[22] (Louÿs 59).

The components of Louÿs' literary hoax are some 140 prose poems, each in four little 'strophes'. The prose poem is a *modern* form (think of Baudelaire's *Spleen de Paris*), yet in line with Louÿs' intended sham, pretending his book to be an erudite edition, complete with notes (in the first edition) and a critical bibliography (in the subsequent editions), necessitating a precise and thus a prose translation. Vivien, on the contrary, inserts these keywords of a particular Antiquity into verse and rhyme, inserts them into the sonnet form, marking the aesthetic distance of stylization, at the antipodes of Louÿs' purported translation of historic immediacy by erudition. Paradoxically, though, exactly by this aesthetic distancing, she enhances their poetic efficacy: Resetting them into the unequivocally aesthetic realm, Vivien reclaims Sapho's 'legacy' for a female author again.

There is even more: as I mentioned, Vivien evokes ancient poetry in the sonnet form, originating in the Middle Ages. She uses those keywords of Antiquity, as mentioned, even as rhymes, thus in a post-antique function, unknown to ancient poetry. Thereby, she entangles different epochs, while Louÿs keeps them separate through the fiction of his erudite framework. That leads again – and now for good – to the second particularity of *femmes sans tain* I stressed: the temporal order between – and within – words and images.

Temporal Entanglements

In all the other books I characterized above, the texts are posterior to the images; they *accompany* the images in the sense that they were written for the sake of the pre-existent photographs. For example, on the last page of *Rêves de jeunes filles*, Hamilton duly acknowledges the magazines where his photos had previously appeared. He explicitly names three German publications, among them the still-active *Stern*, then circulating in around two million copies weekly. Internationally, the magazine is perhaps best known for its bungled publication of the *faux* Hitler diaries in 1983, and that may point to an ingrained will to sensation possibly present also in its nexus with Hamilton.

Ionesco's pictures, in contrast, are obviously posterior to Vivien's poems. It is not clear, though, whether Ionesco composed her pictures after actually reading Vivien's

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[21] 'Songs of Bilitis'
[22] 'Elegies at Mytilene'

poems. Deforges writes in her preface that "Irina Ionesco a remarquablement compris l'univers de Renée Vivien qui est très proche du sien [...]. Je suis sûre que Renée Vivien reconnaîtrait ses amantes parmi les belles d'Irina Ionesco" (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges 7)[23]. This seems to confirm, at least with its first phrase, the posteriority to a reading. Just a year earlier, however, Ionesco had published her first book, entitled *Liliacées langoureuses aux parfums d'Arabie* [24], containing 25 photographs without any words besides an introduction by the writer and erotomaniac André Pieyre de Mandiargues, a lifelong friend of legendary Henri Cartier-Bresson. Not only does *Liliacées langoureuses* present itself in the same vein as *femmes sans tain* (brown moiré silk binding), but its photographs evidently depict some of the same models and definitely use many of the same props, too. The images of both books might therefore have originated in the same process of work. In any case, those 'fading flowers' channel the same scented *air du temps* as the volume published some twelve months later.

Yet, the temporal entanglement operating in *femmes sans tain* does not exclusively possess a retrospective vector, pointing back to the *fin de siècle*. It goes in multiple directions, forsaking comfortable, backwards-looking nostalgia in favour of a *motus animae* without preconditioned time or space: it has the drive of an a-temporal u-topia. That is the main contribution of the preface to the volume. There, Régine Deforges recounts how she discovered Renée Vivien, reading Colette's later recollection of the poet in her memoir *Le Pur et l'impur* (1941), already mirroring the 1900s in the 1940s, reflected now in the 1970s. According to the epigraph of its first version, from 1932, taken from Colette's own *Le Blé en herbe* (1923), *Le Pur et l'impur* focuses on "ces plaisirs qu'on nomme, à la légère, physiques"[25] (Colette cover page) – a very timely, much discussed and much experimented topic in those years after the 'summer of love'.

Entitling her preface "Une femme m'apparut..."[26], complete with this pointed mark of ellipsis, Deforges stresses the abrupt, transformative, 'epiphanic' character of her discovery. Yet, at the same time, she links it right to the past, explaining that this, *Une femme m'apparut...*, is the title of a novel of Vivien's (indeed, the only one not co-written with her lover Hélène de Zuylen, who published with her under the shared pseudonym Paule Riversdale) (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges 5). Deforges would go on to reedit that novel in her publishing house two years later.

Deforges cites, right at the beginning of her text, Colette's rendering of Vivien's both crude and naïve "manière de parler de l'amour physique"[27] and her both comic and touching foreign accent – "flanquant de l'h anglaise toutes les dentales: 'Ah! Mon [sic] pethit Coletthe, que cetthe vie est déghoutanthe!' et *qui éclatait de rire* pour masquer

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[23] 'Irina Ionesco has a remarkable understanding of Renée Vivien's world, which is very similar to her own. I am sure that Renée Vivien would recognise her lovers among Irina Ionesco's beauties'
[24] 'Languorous lilies with Arabian scents'
[25] 'those pleasures we lightly call physical'
[26] 'A woman appeared before me'
[27] 'way of talking about corporeal love'

son désespoir profond"[28] (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges 5). Deforges, thus, evokes primarily Vivien's voice, the ephemeral attribute of the present. Deforges evokes her as a breathing, talking, living being, making the long-dead poet the contemporary of the actual readers – even if the first 'contact' of these readers has been Vivien's period photograph in the medallion on the cover that shows her in still another, even mixed temporal distance, seated, as she is seen to be, in an ancient chair, with the exuberant hairdo and costume of a Baroque Roman princess and the tender inclined face of a Florentine Renaissance Madonna.

The Twilight of the Genders

Those temporal entanglements with its mirror effects run parallel to fluctuating gender constructions, epitomised most concisely in the poem entitled *Twilight* (in English, as already mentioned, the poem is in French). The ambivalent moment between night and day is, however, just one of many ambiguous, dichotomies-dissolving figures of transition present in the volume. Such figures are constituted, not least, by many of the beings populating the poems, as *Les Revenants*, *La Faunesse* and *Ondine*,[29] mixing life and death, human and animal. In *Twilight*, the figures of transition are openly inflected in the sense of gender and sexuality, making the others appear, at least partially, as its metaphors.

Twilight receives its prominent position, again, just like the photograph of the woman with the mirror, through the 'rhetorics of layout', being collocated right in the middle of the volume, yet again with the characteristic, deviating 'swerve': *Twilight* is the fourteenth poem, not the twelfth, following the twelfth photograph, not the eleventh, which would have marked the exact centre.

The gender aspect is strengthened, phototextually, by Ionesco's female faces rendered gender-ambivalent by the heavy mask-like, Pierrot-like make-up, harking back to that key *fin de siècle* trope of the outsider: just think of the Pierrots by Deburau, Laforgue, or Régamey. Preceding *Twilight* directly and directly following the *La Faunesse* poem, there is a photograph of such a face surrounded by an animal mass of fur. Earlier, we find a photograph of a Pierrot's face, surrounded by a halo of flowers, unequivocally Pierrot not least because of the character's typical skullcap, though with inversed colours: white, here, instead of the traditional black. Still, it also recalls a Saint John the Baptist for a broad, blade-like palm-leaf placed under the cheek, the Baptist acting, as an actual woman, as his own Salomé.

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[28] 'flanking all the dentals with the English h: 'Ah! My little Coletthe boy [sic], how disgusting this life is!' and *bursting out laughing* to mask her deep despair'
[29] 'The revenants', 'The female faun' and 'Water nymph'

Fig. 3: 'Pierrot the Baptist', untitled photograph from *femmes sans tain*, reproduced with kind permission of Letu Books, Geneva.

Earlier still, we see what is probably the most significant image of this series: a Pierrot face surrounded by Medusa-reminiscent lacework, crowned by an artificial flower, resting on a japonaiserie-like pillow amongst lilies and chrysanthemums. That androgynous face, however, is attached to an explicitly female body, lying there, nude, as if in a coffin, with a crucifix stretching its arms over the surprised breasts and a diamond flower, a jewellery openwork, placed on the still visible pubic hair (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges 45, 53, 37). One of the woman's hands and arms is covered by a long opera glove, the other holds a shiny, artificial rose, as if it were the prop from Richard Strauss' 1911 opera *Der Rosenkavalier*[30]. There, the silver rose is a pledge presented to the bride, and consistently, in the following poem, there is a bride to be greeted – Death: "J'attends, ô Bien-Aimée!"[31], as goes the first hemistich of *Sonnet à la Mort* [32] (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges 39).

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[30] 'The Rose-Bearer'
[31] 'I am waiting, o Beloved'
[32] 'Sonnet to Death'

Fig. 4: 'Pierrot Rose-Bearer', untitled photograph from *femmes sans tain*, reproduced with kind permission of Letu Books, Geneva.

These ambivalent figures are in a certain productive tension to the strictness of the austere medium of black and white photography, intensified still by Ionesco's personal style. Ionesco works with sharp contrasts, drowning out in deep black flatness the spatiality of her studio where she photographed her scenes and models. The woman with the mirror is a rare exception. The shadows around the figures are so deep that the heads or other parts often seem to have been severed from the bodies, for example, amongst many others, in the first photograph of the book or that of the Baptist-like Pierrot. Ionesco cuts, in a certain way, her material into a visual alphabet that can be combinatorically rearranged and permutated, like a universal jigsaw, with its recurring veils, identical shawls and same necklaces, comprising also body parts. In this respect, the last photograph is particularly significant, showing, as mentioned, Eva Ionesco's head in a collage, put upon a pool of blackness. In that way, the gender ambiguity of the nude

female body with the Pierrot face appears as an extension of these combinatorics, without recurring to transitional tones of shades of grey.

In her texts, Vivien follows a different strategy. *Twilight* stages its dissolution of gender dichotomies in a particularly subtle way, implicating its crystalline formal structure. To do so, the poem develops ambiguities and oscillations on several levels. The poem consists of six stanzas, consisting uncommonly of only two verses. *Twilight* is one of those short poems I mentioned that leave half a page blank, and the short, multiple stanzas multiply the blanks further (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges 55). The twelve verses of *Twilight* are alexandrines, the French meter most common for the last 800 years, each of them made up of twelve metrical syllables. Yet, Vivien sheds, on this common form, a less common light: a twilight, I dare say, oscillating between stanza, verse and hemistich.

According to the general rules of versification, an alexandrine is divided by a caesura into two halves of six syllables each, just as the twelve verses of the poem are grouped into six stanzas of two verses each. So, the stanzas resemble what one could call double, 'grand' alexandrines, coupling its two halves vertically, rather than horizontally, as the normal, single alexandrine does with its halves. That thought might seem less far-fetched if one considers that Mallarmé, in *Un coup de dés* (1897), used the shadowy line in the middle of the double page as a prosodical tool, a caesura to articulate his grand verses, and distributed their parts and hemistiches, in various ways, vertically and, operating with still another category, in different typographies. Experiments with verses in space were not uncommon on *fin de siècle* poetry pages; think of *vers libres*, too, even if Vivien's is more of a thought experiment with verses and maths. The mathematical formula of *Twilight*, so to speak, is 6 x 2 x 2 x 6, constituting a perfect symmetry between stanza and verse, micro- and macrolevel, and thus, if you consider their hierarchical relation, it constitutes the beginning of a fractal, that vertiginous wonder of geometry.

That strict recurrence of the identical in the different may be mirrored in the strictness traditionally associated with the distich, the ancient form of epigrammatic poetry, concisely formulating a single, pointed thought. Each of Vivien's stanzas, indeed, forms a single syntactic arc; only one verse of the twelve can grammatically stand alone, the others all depend for correctness and meaning on their partner. These are not intellectual, gnomic verses, as one would associate with epigrams. Yet, the key verbs of the third and fourth stanza, the only ones that see the speaker in an active role, are verbs of intellectual inquiry: "interroger" and "contempler"[33], staging a second oscillation between this intellectual state of mind – at the centre of the poem – and the emotive state of "O mes rêves" and "mon étranger amour"[34] that frame the poem – they are its first respectively its last words (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges 55).

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[33] 'wonder' and 'contemplate'
[34] 'oh my dreams' and 'my strange love'

Even if treatises on French versification employ the terms 'distique' or 'couplet de deux vers'[35], they do not consider two rhyming verses a strophe, and two-line-poems are very rare in French literature, even in epigrammatic poetry. Generally, French epigrams and epitaphs take the form of un-strophic 4- to 10-liners. The last form is called *dizain*[36] (Elwert 147-148, 151). Accordingly, Vivien's poem *Épitaphe* takes up that form.

Yet, Vivien's two-line stanzas are epigrammatically closed upon themselves, developing each an oxymoronic point or *concetto*: the flower made of ash, the double light that fails to enlighten the mind, the chiasm of clarity and night, darkness and day. Yet, the poem, as a whole, has the simplicity of a song, creating a third form of oscillation. That accessibility is produced by the thrice repetition of the hemistiches "les clartés de la nuit" and "les ténèbres du jour"[37], appearing first in the second stanza, then repeated inversely in the middle of the poem and repeated again at its end; the whole second stanza returns there as a refrain:

> Ô mes rêves, voici l'heure équivoque et tendre
> Du crépuscule, éclos tel une fleur de cendre.
>
> Les clartés de la nuit, les ténèbres du jour
> Ont la complexité de mon étrange amour.
>
> Sous le charme pervers de la lumière double,
> Le regard de mon âme interroge et se trouble.
>
> Je contemple, tandis que l'Énigme me fuit,
> Les ténèbres du jour, les clartés de la nuit.
>
> L'ambigu de ton corps s'alambique et s'affine
> Dans son ardeur stérile et sa grâce androgyne.
>
> Les clartés de la nuit, les ténèbres du jour
> Ont la complexité de mon étrange amour… (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges 55)

> O my dreams, this is the tender, equivocal hour
> Of twilight, blooming like a flower of ashes.
>
> The light of night, the darkness of day
> Have the complexity of my strange love.
>
> Under the perverse spell of double light,
> The gaze of my soul wonders and is troubled.

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[35] 'couplet'
[36] 'ten-liner'
[37] 'the light of night' and 'the darkness of day'

I contemplate, while the Enigma flees from me,
The darkness of day, the light of night.

The ambiguity of your body is distilled and refined
In its sterile ardour and its androgynous grace.

The light of night, the darkness of day
Have the complexity of my strange love...

Such oscillations between epigrammatic rhetorical strictness and emotional song-like simplicity are possible, of course, only working within the boundaries of traditional versification: dichotomies can be questioned only if they are operative in the first place.

There may be, however, still another reason for why Vivien opts for traditional versification instead of following the vogue of *verslibrisme*[38]. In an official report for the minister of education on *Le mouvement poétique français de 1867 à 1900*[39], the polygraph Abraham Catulle Mendès denigrates Symbolism and in particular *verslibrisme* as the invention of foreigners writing in French, imposing alien, particularly Germanic laws of prosody upon French language (Mendès 150-152, 190-192). Vivien, the foreigner, striving for citizenship in the French Republic of Letters, sticks with tradition – and is ultimately penalized for it, damaging her prospects of canonization in the eyes of both the avantgardes and a, for a long time, teleologically-minded literary history.

And what about the 'sapphic' side of this exclusion, as Deforges surmised, and its presence in *Twilight*? In Deforges' piece of evidence, the poem cited in her preface, man is substituted by woman; in *Sonnet féminin*, culminating in "La blanche volupté des vierges amoureuse"[40], everything male is simply absent. In still another variant, in *Amazone*, the male "amants" or lovers provide satisfaction exactly by being eliminated, "le spasme suprême" being "[p]lus terrible et plus beau que le spasme de l'amour"[41] (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges 34). *Twilight*, in contrast, paints a deliberately blurred, *chiaroscuro* image, opting not for substitution, absence or elimination of one dichotomic element, but for their transitional and changing co-presence in "complexité"[42], the keyword recurring in the refrain. This co-presence is emblematized by the oxymora; its transitional character is emblematized by the inversion of the recurring hemistiches of the second in the fourth stanza, before, changing again, they come full circle as refrain in the sixth stanza.

This complex and ephemeral co-presence of contraries makes them lose their dichotomic, i.e. operational, structuring value; the intellectual movement of "interroger" and "contempler", indeed, does not lead to a resolution of the "énigme" (Vivien, Ionesco and Deforges 55). This co-presence is described in the terms of an alchemical refinement:

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[38] 'free verse'

[39] 'The evolution of French poetry between 1867 and 1900'

[40] 'The white voluptuousness of virgins in love'

[41] 'the supreme spasm' being 'more terrible and more beautiful than the spasm of love'

[42] 'complexity'

"L'ambigu de ton corps s'alambique et s'affine"[43]. Significantly, this verse, dealing with the ambiguous, double appearance of a single body is the only single verse of the poem that grammatically can stand alone: It is two in one, and self-sufficient.

Yet, as such an experiment in alchemical refinement, it is not a redemptive return to a presumed origin, as in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, his *Twilight of the Gods*, where the cursed ring of power, made from the Rhinegold, returns from the hands of men – Alberich, Wotan, Siegfried, Hagen – via Brünnhilde, the woman-warrior Valkyrie, to the Rhinemaidens who return it, to the musical leitmotiv of Redemption, similar to that of Love, to the bosom of the Rhine, pure again (in German: 'rein'). They take it to where it was, undifferentiated, in the beginning. Vivien's title, on the contrary, is *Twilight*, not *Dämmerung*, translational alchemy of words, not the original German, nor the identical French of the poem itself. That *Twilight* is, just as the natural phenomenon, a multiplication of differences, not its merger in one.

Conclusion: Photographed Icons

Closing the book now, we take a last look at its violet binding. The infinite reflections of the different levels of the book in each other – medial, temporal, thematical, sometimes in the same sense, sometimes in a varied one – do include the material design of the book. The violet binding is not only a textile reminder of the luxuries of *fin de siècle*. It is intimately significant for Renée Vivien herself, who tellingly published a book entitled *Du vert au violet* (1903)[44], staging, with that title, a transition from one symbolic colour of *fin de siècle* – think of Oscar Wilde's green carnation – to another, personally symbolic one. These flowers are a recurrent feature of her poems. So, in *femmes sans tain*, too, especially in the funeral *Épitaphe*, where it is the last word. And a posthumous volume of Vivien's poems, published in 1910, bears the title *Dans un coin de Violettes*[45] – on a purple cover, albeit paper, not silk.

It has been said that this obsession with violets is an ever-mourning homage at Vivien's young-deceased childhood friend Violet Shillito. It is also a nexus with Sappho in whose poetry violets figure particularly in garlands for young women. Yet, in a temporal entanglement similar to that in the book's interior, the violet colour points not only back to Sappho's Antiquity, but from the *fin de siècle* also forward to the 1920s, to the androgynous, often bisexual or lesbian, strong, self-determined *garçonnes* with short, bobbed hair and flat breasts, like silent-movie film star Louise Brooks, like the athletic Violette – *sic* – Morris, or like the masculine duchess de la Salle, painted by Tamara de Lempicka in 1925, with black-violet hair. These are icons of a female empowerment after the end of Vivien's pre-war world. Before that war and after the next one, Vivien, Ionesco, and Deforges, too, each in her different field, for the better or, in Ionesco's case, for the

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[43] 'The ambiguity of your body is distilled and refined'
[44] 'from green to violet'
[45] 'in a corner of violets'

worse, are such icons of empowerment, and as such iconic figures they are photographed, figuring in the medallions of *femme sans tain*'s cover. That is why I call this curious book, even if it is precisely a phototext, emphatically an iconotext.

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The Film *Madame A Des Envies* (Alice Guy 1906) Through the Prism of the Visual Culture of the Parisian Belle Époque: an Analytical Proposal

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Early cinema employed extensive use of fixed typologies of characters, as evidenced by the constant presence of highly clichéd roles. The construction of female subjects especially depended upon this mode of representation, attesting to a patriarchal vision within the then-nascent medium of film. The recurrent use of easily recognizable 'feminine' traits more often than not reinforced male dominant norms. However, gender typologies cannot always be seen in a systematically pejorative light, as being either simplifying or rigid. They are also a fundamental part of our cognitive structure, allowing us to grasp complex information coming from our environment. The critical study of typologies within early cinema makes it possible to understand the specificities of this cinematographic period, but also the creation and deconstruction of gender clichés of a given era by means of the Seventh Art whose rules were yet to be codified. What happens when the first female director, Alice Guy, tackles gender clichés? This presentation aims to focus on the development and dismantling of the belief at the beginning of the 20th century that pregnant women have cravings which they cannot resist by analyzing *Madame a des envies* (1906). The goal of this essay is to demonstrate how particular of a film *Madame* is in French cinema, because it shows the sexual desires of a pregnant woman, thus creating a new character within Early cinema. I will begin the analysis by illustrating the *cliché* in itself: the fact of having cravings during pregnancy, its history, and sociological issues in the French Belle Époque. Finally I will talk about how Alice Guy makes fun of the cliché by exaggerating all of its elements, while fixing this film in the heart of the fin-de-siècle visual environment.

Keywords: silent cinema, intermediality, Belle Époque, Alice Guy, pregnancy, sexuality

Alice Guy (1873-1968), who began her career as a secretary at the Établissements Gaumont in 1895, is one of the first female film director, producer, and studio manager in history (Lacassin; Slide; Bachy; McMahan). It is our hypothesis that she made her first fiction film, La Fée aux Choux, in 1896, as well as one of the first narrative films featuring only black actors, A Fool and His Money, in 1912. She participated in the creation of the Gaumont film style and made or directed about one hundred and fifty sound films with the chronophone, a sound synchronization tool. She pursued a career in the United States from 1910 to 1922, opening her own studios called the Solax Company, before being forced out of the film business following the closure of the studios. Despite the importance of these contributions, she has been forgotten by the public and most film historians. If fifty years after her death Alice Guy seems to be arousing new interest, as an ever-

increasing number of publications about her show (Simon; Gianati; Green; Catel; Gaines), her career leads to numerous questions mainly dealing with her French years (1895-1907). It is necessary today to review her films to understand their importance in film history, as Alice Guy made modern use of narrative continuity and had a satirical view of her time. With this article I aim to analyze one of the first films to cinematically depict a pregnant woman: Madame a des envies (Madame's Cravings) made by Alice Guy in 1906.1 This film is unusual not only for its technical features, but also for its depiction of maternity, which is the antithesis of the Parisian fin-de-siècle image of pregnant women. I will highlight the technical and sociological particularities of the film, before focusing on the caricatural representation of motherhood and cravings seen through this medium in its cultural, artistic, and geo-political context.

Madame A Des Envies (1906), Cliché and Symbolic Significance

Madame a des envies is a film whose story centers on the popular belief that pregnant women are incapable of resisting their cravings. The story is simple enough: a pregnant woman walking down the street cannot help stealing food or objects from people she meets: a little girl's lollipop, a glass of absinthe on a bistro table, a beggar's fish, and a peddler's pipe. After the thefts, she tastes the objects on camera in a series of medium-length shots in front of a wall, before giving birth in a cabbage patch. I will come back to this last aspect later, but it is already interesting to note that the cabbage field motif is a recurrent one in Alice Guy's work, which she uses at least three times (In *La Fée aux Choux,* 1900, *Sage-femme de première classe,* 1902, and *Madame a des envies,* 1906). Moreover, Madame is followed on her pilgrimage by her husband, who drags a cradle with their first-born as best as he can. At the end of the film, he is the one who picks up the newborn from a cabbage. How does the film *Madame a des envies* help reinvent the femininity of pregnancy? How does the character of Madame break with a certain tradition of representing pregnant women? While the film has already been analyzed in some previous research, particularly in relation to the female gaze (McMahan; Brey), the contextual social-cultural particularities and filmic characteristics have yet to be grasped. I will start by looking at the belief itself, namely the fact of having urges during pregnancy. Then, I will look at how Alice Guy mocks the cliché by exaggerating all of its elements, while inscribing this film at the heart of the fin-de-siècle visual environment.

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[1] The film lasts four minutes 30 seconds (102 meters of film). We have no information about the actors or technical crew, which is typical of this early cinematic period. It can be viewed on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOHQOJaHTXo. We are well aware that the film has not been attributed to Alice Guy by the GP Archives since June 2024 (https://gparchives.com/index.php?urlaction=doc&id_doc=308323&rang=2, last access in July 2024). The film *Madame a des envies* is thus currently without a director ("unknown"). However, our own doctoral research leads us to attribute this film to Alice Guy, who was then the head of the cinematography department at Gaumont.

Let's start by defining and analyzing the prejudice that pregnant women can be troubled by strong cravings, especially for food (like strawberries, in the common imagination). This belief is not new, but it has undergone a strong evolution over the centuries. In fact, the first references are to be found in Aristotle, Pliny, and it was commonly accepted by physicians during the 17th century (Pancino 161). Two notions are important here. The first one is that pregnancy is said to cause mood disorders in women, responsible for an appetite for unusual things, such as coal or earth. The second is that the imagination of mothers-to-be has the power to mark the fetus' body. This notion explains the importance of satisfying the wishes of pregnant women so as not to risk altering the body of the unborn child (Coste 519-520). This belief then seems to spread orally during the Middle Ages, before being theorized again during the 14th and 15th centuries (Albertus Magnus, Matteo Palmieri). For the authors, refusing to respond to a pregnant woman's cravings could put her in mortal danger and cause her to lose the pregnancy (Magnus 63-64). Moreover, it was thought that if a craving was not satisfied, a permanent mark of the desired thing would appear on the child's body. This was known as "craving" (*envie*). It is interesting to note that this belief originated in scientific circles: it was philosophers, doctors and scientists who established that women could, by force of imagination, mark the fetus with a sign representing the thing desired during pregnancy. Little by little, this belief was rejected by medical circles (Coste 524), until it came to symbolize the ridiculous nonsense believed by the common people. Indeed, in the middle of the 19th century, Gustave Witkowski, in his *Histoire des accouchements chez tous les peuples*, speaks of influence of the imagination:

La grossesse peut réellement apporter dans les facultés affectives et intellectuelles de la femme des troubles plus ou moins sensibles ; il faut néanmoins reconnaître que ces perturbations psychiques sont beaucoup plus rares qu'on ne le croit communément. L'idée fort accréditée qu'il ne faut pas contrarier les désirs ou *envies* des femmes enceintes, contribue pour beaucoup à les faire naître. Mauvaise excuse pour toutes celles qui profitent de cette croyance populaire pour remonter leur garde-robe, satisfaire leurs goûts luxueux et même commettre des vols ou des crimes ![2] (187-188)

He adds that these prejudices are born in the brains of women, who are weaker than men:

Le terrain le plus propre au développement du préjugé est, sans contredit, le cerveau d'une femme : tendance au merveilleux, au mensonge même, ignorance, présomption, obstination, tout favorise en elle l'éclosion de cette plante tenace. Parasite aussi difficile à extirper de

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[2] "Pregnancy can indeed bring about disturbances of varying degrees of sensitivity in a woman's emotional and intellectual faculties; it must be acknowledged, however, that these psychic disturbances are much rarer than is commonly believed. The widely-held belief that pregnant women's desires and desires should not be interfered with is a major contributory factor. It is a poor excuse for women to take advantage of this popular belief to improve their wardrobe, satisfy their luxurious tastes and even commit theft or crime!"

l'esprit féminin que le chiendent d'un champ ! [...] Dès lors, est-il utile d'ajouter que le nombre des préjugés relatifs à la grossesse et à l'accouchement est presque infini[3] (171).

Witkowski thus accuses women of believing and spreading this belief in order to justify material desires and even crimes. This misogynist argument developed and culminated in the heart of the 19th century, accusing women of perpetuating the belief due to weakness of mind, but also out of materialistic self-interest[4]. In other words, we are witnessing a complete intellectual shift: as Claudia Pancino sums it up:

Ce sont en effet des auteurs du dix-huitième siècle qui répètent que les premières traces de cette croyance "*se perdent dans la nuit des temps*", que "*la croyance a toujours existé*" et que "*les femmes y ont toujours cru*". Pourtant, à un examen approfondi de l'histoire de la croyance, il résulte plutôt qu'elle n'apparaît pas avant le XVe siècle et, fait encore plus important, qu'elle se présente à cette époque dans un milieu culturel savant[5] (155).

Around 1870, science turned its back on maternal desires, which became a folkloric notion belonging to the lower classes. Yet this belief was born at the heart of medical knowledge, in an attempt to reduce the mysteries and complexities of pregnancy that eluded the male experience. Nineteenth-century scientists seem completely unaware that Montaigne or Hippocrates believed in the power of the maternal imagination. It is interesting to note, despite the complexity of the spread of this prejudice, the importance given to women's desires. As Claudia Pancino points out, the craving is not a real transgression because situated in a precise context of social behavior: the rituals of

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[3] "The best breeding ground for prejudice is, without a doubt, the female brain: a tendency to the marvellous, even to lies, ignorance, presumption, obstinacy, everything is conducive to the blossoming this tenacious plant. A parasite as difficult to extirpate from the female mind than couch grass in a field! [...] Is it worth adding that the number of prejudices relating to pregnancy and childbirth is almost infinite".

[4] "Il est certain qu'il se trouve des femmes dont la grossesse a été tourmentée par les goûts les plus bizarres et les appétits les plus extravagants et qui donnent naissance à des enfants dont la peau n'offre pas une seule tache ; mais quand un nouveau-né apporte une marque où l'on prétend trouver de la ressemblance avec quelque objet, la mère, pour l'honneur du préjugé, bien qu'elle n'ait jamais éprouvé de désirs analogues, ni ressenti d'émotions, se rappelle sur-le-champ telle circonstance qui, pendant la grossesse, l'a vivement affectée, ou telle fantaisie qui n'a pas été satisfaite ; le mari de se plaindre et de gronder affectueusement sa femme, qu'il n'eût pas manqué de contenter coûte que coûte. Par ce petit manège, on dispose à l'avance un époux à accueillir favorablement la première demande qu'on lui fera, et à l'occasion de laquelle on feindra, s'il le faut, une grossesse, du moins pour le temps nécessaire au succès de cette petite manœuvre"; "It is true that there are women whose pregnancy has been tormented by the most bizarre tastes and extravagant appetites, and who give birth to children whose skin doesn't show a single blemish; but when a newborn displays a mark that is said to bear a resemblance to some object, the mother, in honor of the prejudice, even though she has never experienced similar desires, nor felt those emotions, immediately recalls some circumstance that, during pregnancy, affected her greatly, or some fantasy that was not satisfied; the husband complains and affectionately scolds his wife, whom he would not have failed to please at any cost. With this little manoeuvre, a husband is prepared in advance to accept favorably the first request made of him, and on the occasion of which, if necessary, a pregnancy is feigned, at least for the time necessary for the success of this little manoeuvre" (MLC*** 36).

[5] "Eighteenth-century authors repeat that the first traces of this belief "*are lost in the mists of time*", that "*the belief has always existed*" and that "*women have always believed in it*". However, a closer look at the history of the belief shows that it didn't appear until the 15th century and, even more importantly, that it appeared at that time in a scholarly cultural milieu".

pregnancy (161). Not only are these *envies* accepted, but they are even expected. But what kind of cravings are we talking about? These desires are first and foremost dietary: the pregnant woman may crave fruit, vegetables, meats, bread etc., but not only that. Cravings can also include sexual desires: "Malgré l'autocensure des médecins du corpus sur le traitement des thèmes liés à la sexualité, une autocensure qui s'observe sur bien d'autres sujets que les 'envies', les auteurs reviennent avec insistance sur les 'envies' sexuelles de la femme enceinte"[6] (Coste 527). Here, an example cited by Laurent Joubert in 1578:

> On comte qu'une fame d'Auvergne, qui eut grand phantasie de manger de la chair d'un bouchier, qui montroit ses bras decouvers fort blancs et charnus, elle contrainte de ce fol appétit, le dit au bouchier, qui fut bien pitoyable, que sur le champ il taiha un loup in de chair de sa cuisse et le lui donna. [*En marge de la page* : Peut estre qu'il ne coupa rien, mais lui fit plaisir de la chair, qui pand entre les cuisses]. La fame bien joyeuse la mangea tout à l'instant ainsi crue, et la voylà fort contante[7] (311-312).

These sexual urges then seem to disappear from the medical landscape, as a strong taboo falls over discussions of female sexuality. Later, as skepticism spread in medical circles, belief in *envie* took a much more playful turn in the popular imagination. By the time Alice Guy made this film in 1906, the prejudice was already well entrenched in popular culture, and that's why Monsieur does not stop Madame from eating (although he argues with her and has to suffer the consequences of his wife's actions) - because one cannot contradict a pregnant woman. A woman's desires, which would normally have no chance of being heard, become legitimate during pregnancy, and are even expected. But let's not forget that this belief was first born in the scientific field, as it served to reduce the mystery of pregnancy. So what can we say about the cinematic staging of cravings? And what happens when Alice Guy tackles this prejudice?

Madame A Des Envies: the Objects of the Cravings

The first thing to note about the film is that Madame's desire is a solitary pleasure, which directly excludes Monsieur. Madame's excessive body dominates the action, while Monsieur's body is diminished. The wife is taller and more imposing than her husband, who appears very awkward and clumsy at her side, even weak and clearly in a subordinate position.

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[6] "Despite the self-censorship of doctors in the corpus on the treatment of themes linked to sexuality, a self-censorship that can be observed on many other subjects than 'cravings', the authors insistently return to the sexual 'cravings' of the pregnant woman".

[7] "It is said that a woman from Auvergne, who had a great desire to eat the flesh of a butcher, who showed his arms to be very white and fleshy, was compelled by this mad appetite, and told the butcher, who was very pitiful, that on the spot he cut a wolf's worth of flesh from his thigh and gave it to her. [In the margin of the page: Maybe he didn't cut anything, but gave her the pleasure of the flesh between his thighs]. The woman, delighted, ate it immediately, raw, and was very happy".

Fig. 1: *Madame a des envies* (Alice Guy, 1906). Still from the movie. 00:01:02.

While I will come back to the corporeal dimension of the film, I would first like to focus on the objects stolen by Madame, which are highly suggestive. The first is a lollipop stolen from a little girl, then sucked with relish in a medium shot. The second object is a glass of absinthe stolen from a consumer at a bistro table. This is not just a glass of alcohol, but absinthe, the consumption of which had particularly negative connotations for women, as it was considered provocative. First of all, let's note that the consumption of pure alcohol began to be harshly criticized after 1900. First there was the creation of various anti-alcohol movements, including the Société française de tempérance, the Croix bleue, the Ligue antialcoolique parisienne and the Union française antialcoolique, which all came together in October 1903 to form the powerful Ligue nationale contre l'alcoolisme. Their newspaper, *L'Étoile bleue*, began to grow in circulation, winning over the political world, which gradually rallied to their cause. The League adopted an interesting strategy: it tolerated wine to combat absinthe, considered the most formidable agent of alcoholism. This was a salutary challenge, but also an economic one: in 1914, nearly 5 million of the country's 40 million people were dependent on the wine and alcohol industry for their livelihood (Kalifa 73). Absinthe was finally banned in 1915. But what about female consumption during the Belle Époque? Far from being the prerogative of men alone, women also drank absinthe, but for them, this consumption was associated with emancipation: "Les femmes, peu portées sur les apéritifs, se mettent à l'absinthe. Facteur d'initiation, d'intégration à la vie sociale, la Fée verte est pour elles,

un signe de modernité et quelque part d'émancipation"[8] (Delahaye, *Promenade autour de l'Absinthe d'hier à d'aujourd'hui*, 39).

Fig. 2: "L'heure verte", postcard, Coll. P. Jupin, Belle Époque.

As we can see from the postcard above, the young woman pictured is wearing a rather daring outfit for the time: a little camisole revealing her forearms and throat, striped pants,[9] and is drinking absinthe and smoking... Absinthe, as we shall see, also became the symbol of feminists, caricatured in all their forms. But absinthe was not just a drink for modern women: cheaper than wine, absinthe was also enjoyed by the lower social classes. Seamstresses, milliners, and lingerie workers paced the boulevards of Paris, but they did not stop at café terraces to drink alone. They are accompanied, often in groups, and often drink absinthe. Women who were alone were seen as prostitutes and demi-mondaines. While absinthe was gaining ground in bourgeois circles, advertisements played up the drink's supposedly salutary virtues to win over sporty, modern women.

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[8] "Women, not very keen on aperitifs, started drinking absinthe. A factor of initiation and integration into social life, the Green Fairy is for them a sign of modernity and, in a way, emancipation".

[9] It is worth remembering that to wear pants, women needed "cross-dressing permission" (until 2013!). However, women's costume was already undergoing significant changes at the turn of the century, with the influence of feminist ideas, concern for hygiene, the practice of sport and women's work. (Bard 217).
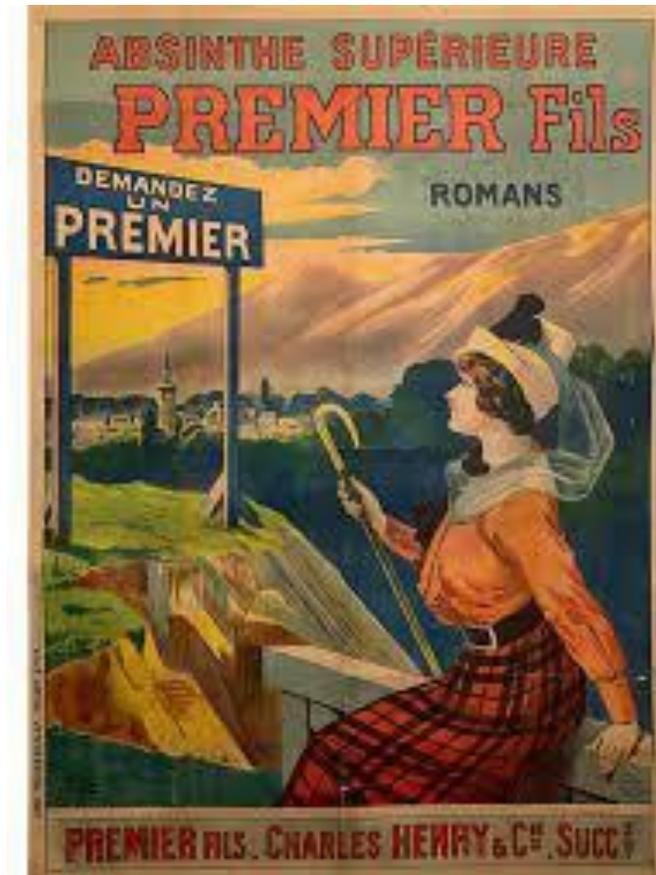
Fig. 3: "Absinthe Supérieure", poster by Lotil, 1902.

Absinthe producers had everything to gain by convincing women to drink it: by gradually reaching all social classes, the drink could be sold to the majority of French people, right up to the point of alcoholism (Lancereaux et al. 221). What's more, absinthe is personified by a female figure in advertisements: the green fairy, the green- eyed muse: "envoûtante par ses arômes de plantes, pernicieuse par l'eau que l'on y ajoute et qui en fait une boisson délicate que les femmes apprécieront, insidieuse par l'addiction à l'alcool qui en résulte, l'absinthe ne pouvait être représentée que sous les traits d'une femme"[10] (Delahaye, *L'Absinthe au Féminin*, 10).

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[10] "Bewitching through its herbal aromas, pernicious through the water added to it, which makes it a delicate drink that women will appreciate, insidious through the resulting addiction to alcohol, absinthe could only be represented in the guise of a woman".

Fig. 4: "La Fée Verte", carnival outfit suggested by *Moniteur de la Mode*, 1903.

Absinthe was chic, modern and inexpensive. Finally, it is worth noting that in France, the recommendation that pregnant women avoid drinking alcohol only came after the First World War, so when this film was made, the situation was not as shocking as it appears today (Fillaut 15-20). Nevertheless, a woman who drank was very much frowned upon, as it went against the idea of a temperate feminine nature. What's more, at the time, absinthe was associated with abortifacient properties in addition to its digestive virtues.... "La grande absinthe a été utilisée jusqu'au milieu du XXe siècle comme abortif, d'où son nom d'herbe des vierges"[11] (Delahaye, *L'Absinthe, Son Histoire*, 12). In the movie, Madame is pregnant, but she is drinking a notorious abortifacient... Does she really want her unborn baby? It is not an insignificant question, since Madame does not have the slightest regard for her first-born, who is cared for by her husband alone... Finally, as we have seen, absinthe began to be frowned upon at the beginning of the century and was

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[11] "Common wormwood was used until the mid-twentieth century as an abortifacient, hence its name virgin's herb".

the subject of petitions as early as 1906, before being definitively banned in 1915. The drink was condemned by the medical profession as early as 1903 (Lancereaux et al. 220-244), before being blamed for all manner of evils, such as "l'arrêt du développement des naissances, les maladies des organes digestifs et des centres nerveux, l'extension de la tuberculose, l'augmentation de la criminalité, l'envahissement des hôpitaux et des asiles d'aliénés. [...] Elle devint ainsi, et resta, le symbole de l'alcoolisme" [12] (Delahaye, *L'Absinthe, histoire de la fée verte*, 127). Women who drink are the victims of many prejudices, which revolve around a triptych: the woman victimized by her alcoholic husband, the exemplary woman who saves her family, the guilty woman who drinks (Delahaye 129). Women are assimilated to the idea of a temperate feminine nature, so alcohol

> Aboli leur féminité. [...] Il n'y a pas de femmes alcooliques parce qu'en s'alcoolisant on abdique sa féminité. À ce titre, la lecture de la littérature médicale des années 1890-1930 est révélatrice, et donne à voir des femmes dénaturées dans leurs comportements sociaux comme dans leurs corps, mauvaises mères, mauvaises épouses, vicieuses enclines à d'autres comportements contre nature[13] (Salle 36).

More important: "L'alcoolisme féminin est également considéré comme la conséquence d'un déficit de féminité initial, préexistant au comportement intempérant. Il est ainsi des femmes qui boivent parce [...] qu'elles sont sans enfants, infertiles, débauchées ou ménopausées"[14] (Salle 37). Of course, women could drink absinthe, but not alone as we have seen, and social norms prevented single women from consuming alcohol. Consumers on café terraces would drink in groups. Here, Madame drinks alone and gulps her glass, as if it were a common, everyday practice, or because she needs to do it very quickly before she is stopped or caught. The viewer gets a multi-layered message from this scene: Madame is pregnant but drinks an abortifacient beverage, she is beautiful and feminine but does not repress her unnatural craving for absinthe.

The third stolen object is a phallic-shaped herring, stolen from a poor starving beggar. I will come back to this object, and above all to its victim, but it is worth pointing out that the beggar seems to be masturbating before Madame arrives to steal his herring, or at least he is suggestively touching his crotch[15]. Madame then eats the fish with relish. While the herring loses some of its phallic form when eaten by Madame, it is worth noting

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[12] "The cessation of fetal development, diseases of the digestive organs and nervous centers, the spread of tuberculosis, the increase in criminality, the crowding of hospitals and insane asylums [...]. It thus became, and remained, the symbol of alcoholism".

[13] "Abolishes their femininity. [...] There are no alcoholic women, because by drinking they abdicate their femininity. In this respect, medical literature of the 1890s-1930s is revealing, depicting women whose social behavior and bodies have been distorted, who are bad mothers, bad wives and vicious, prone to other unnatural behaviors".

[14] "Female alcoholism is also considered to be the consequence of an initial deficit of femininity, pre- existing the intemperate behavior. Some women drink because [...] they are childless, infertile, debauched, or menopausal".

[15] I would like to thank Michael Rosenfeld for pointing this out to me.

that this action seems to illustrate the erotic expression "Avaler le poisson sans sauce", meaning "être baisée par un homme qui ne jouit point, ou que l'on empêche de jouir"[16] (Delvau 33). Finally, the last stolen object is a pipe stolen from a street vendor, which Madame smokes with relish to the point of suffocation. Noël Burch speaks of the animal pleasure "que dégage un film comme *Madame a des envies* (1906) où l'on voit une femme enceinte merveilleusement enjouée, se précipiter sur tout ce qui se mange, se boit où se suce, jusqu'au cigare d'un passant… qui la rend malade au point de lui faire dégurgiter son bébé au milieu d'une plantation de choux"[17] (82-83). I would like to take a look at the pipe's underlying meanings. Let's start by recalling that the Second Industrial Revolution brought many changes to the Western world, and in particular to the culture of smoking behavior: the arrival of the cigarette, which overturned tobacco consumption patterns previously dominated by snuff and the pipe in particular (Ferland 37). This new object also creates a new category of consumer: women. It is interesting to note that the growing popularity of smoking among all Western social classes was gradually eroding the persistent taboo surrounding female tobacco consumption, a taboo that also seemed to exist in pre- Columbian societies (Gernet 70). The reasons for this taboo seem associated, at least in the West, with notions of orality, authority and speaking out: "Depuis l'époque moderne, fumer en public est l'une des manifestations sociales de la virilité masculine. Les hommes se retrouvent entre eux dans les cabarets et les tavernes, qui constituent à la fois des espaces sociaux et des forums d'expression publique strictement masculins, où ils discutent autour d'un verre d'alcool tout en fumant"[18] (Ferland 40). For women, this behavior, although identical to that of men, had many other, much more negative meanings: "The activity of smoking or even just holding a pipe was suggestive of a variety of character traits, supplying machismo to the sailor or hunter, and sophistication to the gentleman. On the other hand, the woman who smoked was consistently labeled as sexually promiscuous or otherwise disreputable" (Wyckoff). Anything to do with the mouth was almost systematically taboo in the society of the time, if it applied to the female sphere. Jean-Pierre Corbeau also notes that "la levée des interdits buccaux (boissons, tabac) s'accompagne du droit de dire ce que l'on pense et ressent…"[19] (262). In addition, women who smoked in public were compared to prostitutes, whose behaviors strayed furthest from social norms. Finally, a woman who smoked conveyed the image of a person who controlled her sensuality and,

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[16] "Swallowing the fish without sauce. To be fucked by a man who doesn't come, or who is prevented from coming".
[17] "The animal pleasure of a film like *Madame a des envies* (1906), where we see a wonderfully playful pregnant woman rush to eat, drink or suck anything, right down to a passer-by's cigar... which makes her so sick she pukes up her baby in the middle of a cabbage patch".
[18] "Since modern times, smoking in public has been one of the social manifestations of male virility. Men meet in cabarets and taverns, which are both social spaces and strictly male forums for public expression, where they chat over a glass of alcohol while smoking".
[19] "The lifting of oral prohibitions (drinks, tobacco) was accompanied by the right to say what one thought and felt...".

therefore, her sexuality (Rudy 22). So, like absinthe, smoking became a sign of assertion and emancipation, but female smokers were associated with prostitutes or feminists. Thus, in France and in England, "in the Victorian era, only women living at the edge of respectability consumed tobacco, which included prostitutes as well as women freed from social norms, such as actresses or writers, who were thought to have an unbridled sexuality" (Rudy 41). The French language soon adopted the expression "tailler une pipe", literally "to cut a pipe", meaning to perform oral sex. This expression originated in prostitution circles in the first part of the 20th century, replacing "faire un pompier" ("to do a firefighter"), previously used:

> *Les fumeurs du peuple se roulaient leurs cigarettes [...]. Ils disaient alors qu'ils "s'en roulaient une" ou "se faisaient une pipe" [...]. De là, il est facile d'imaginer que les dames de petite vertu qui faisaient des pompiers à leurs clients comparaient leurs gestes à ceux que font les fumeurs d'abord méticuleusement avec leurs doigts et puis le long de la cigarette avec leur langue avant d'aboutir à une "pipe" prête à être fumée*[20] (Planelles 849).

Let's recall that the word pipe was synonymous with cigarette at the beginning of the last century[21] (Cellard and Rey 630-631), and that the word 'cigarette' had an extremely erotic connotation: "Cigarette. *Le membre viril que les femmes savent si bien rouler dans leurs mains et porter à leur bouche, par le gros bout*" [22] (Delvau 105). Moreover, the popular expression, "avaler la fumée" ("to swallow smoke"), meant the ingestion of sperm following fellatio (Planelles 850). In the film, Madame swallows the smoke, causing her to cough until she gives birth... Finally, I would like to point out that another film from the same period featured a female magician with a cigarette in her hand. This was *Pipe Dream*, directed by Edison in 1905. In this film, a woman smokes a cigarette, before making a tiny man appear in her palm with her smoke. The man appears to propose, but she laughs in his face. She then crushes him between her palms, and the man disappears. The woman tries to make him reappear, but she cannot, and stares at her palm in astonishment.

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[20] "Common smokers rolled their own cigarettes [...]. They would then say they were "rolling one" or "doing a pipe" [...]. From this, it is easy to imagine that the ladies of little virtue who "made firemen" of their customers compared their gestures to those made by smokers, first meticulously with their fingers and then along the cigarette with their tongue, before ending up with a "pipe" ready to be smoked".

[21] "*Si la cigarette s'appelait aussi la pipe en argot, parmi d'autres appellations, ce serait parce que la quantité de tabac nécessaire pour fabriquer la cigarette était à peu près équivalente à celle utilisée pour une pipe*" (Planelles 849). "If the cigarette was also called a *pipe* in slang, among other names, it would be because the quantity of tobacco needed to make a cigarette was roughly equivalent to that used for a pipe".

[22] "Cigarette. The virile member that women know so well how to roll in their hands and bring to their mouths, by the big end".

Fig. 5: *A Pipe Dream*, Edison, 1905. Still from the movie.

For Lucy Fischer, the female character is an embodiment of the overpowering woman:

> The Amazon, or the awesome, domineering Mother, as seen by a child-man. Thus, she is a figure of considerable terror. […] The fact that the woman smokes a cigarette marks her, according to Victorian mores, as dangerously loose and 'masculine,' and thus invests her magician-status with a degree of perversity. Furthermore, it is significant that when she tries to repeat her trick, she fails, as though her magical powers were accidental, or beyond her control (32-33).

Here, too, the cigarette represents the powerful, transgressive, non-standard woman. Madame in Alice Guy's movie smokes a pipe and chokes on the smoke: we are clearly in a filmic metaphor for fellatio, all the more so if we also consider the scene where Madame sucks a lollipop with obvious pleasure. We can see, then, that the stolen objects were not chosen at random, but have political and ideological significance thanks to their subversive elements. They represent the excess of Madame's desires beyond food, her sexual desires. The objects were also considered typically masculine, such as the glass of absinthe and the pipe. Although Madame's femininity is never denied, we are almost confronted with a behavioral transvestism, a woman who transgresses taboos and prohibitions to satisfy her desires; a subject that remains controversial today. Finally, it is worth pointing out that these objects are sucked/eaten/drank/smoked in very particular medium shots: Madame is isolated in front of a background that highlights the protagonist in action. The framing cuts the character just above her belly, making us forget for a moment her status as a pregnant woman and turn her into an almost little girl sucking a lollipop, an animal woman devouring a herring, an alcoholic absinthe consumer, and a masculine woman smoking a pipe. This scenic construction is clearly anti-natural, since the white background breaks up the scenes shot on location, but it serves the narrative by underlining the film's humorous particularities. The actress's face is visually enhanced, as are her grimaces of pleasure. On the one hand,

there is the fascination with movement typical of the cinema of attractions (1895-1907) (see Burch), but there are also early attempts at close-ups.

Fig. 6: Madame is smoking in front of the camera. Still from the movie. 00:03:44.

Madame A Des Envies: the Representation of Motherhood

I would now like to turn my attention to Madame's victims. Two of them struck me when I first saw the film: a little girl and a beggar. Defenseless, they arouse the viewer's pity. We see the little girl crying for her lollipop, and the poor, crippled beggar ready to eat an unappetizing fish that is his only source of sustenance before it is stolen from him. We then see the beggar running as best he can to retrieve his property, limping. Here, Madame's maternal instinct is deconstructed: Madame is a pregnant woman who doesn't care at all about her first-born; Monsieur takes care of him alone, while she doesn't give her baby a glance. She seems to have no compassion for either the little girl or the beggar, the former crying before her eyes and the latter limping to retrieve his property. On the one hand, Alice Guy plays on the cliché of the pregnant woman, showing an exaggerated, grotesque, protruding belly and the irresistible cravings to which pregnant women are subject. On the other hand, she pokes fun at a deep- rooted prejudice by exaggerating all the elements of desire towards which Madame's boundless, unquenchable sexual appetite pushes her. Madame's excesses make her a grotesque, parodic character. The term "grotesque" evokes a hidden, visceral dimension that is typically feminine:

> The grotto-esque. [...] This view valorizes traditional images of the earth mother, the crone, the witch, and the vampire and posits a natural connection between the female body (itself naturalized) and the 'primal' elements, especially the earth (Russo 1).

The grotesque body is open, protruding, irregular, multiple and changing. The grotesque, here as a bodily category, emerges as a deviation from the norm. Grotesque female bodies abound in history's earliest films, a direct legacy of carnivalesque excess (Hennefeld). This aspect of the grotesque is also linked to parody, which offers a counterfeit imitation of the established prejudice. There are many taboos surrounding the female body, particularly the pregnant body, which appears irregular. Is Madame grotesque simply because she is pregnant? One might well think so, since she remains physically very beautiful by the standards of the time, so it is mainly in terms of the low profile of the pregnant woman in society that we can speak of the grotesque:

> Bien présentes et visibles dans l'espace public, quels que soient les milieux sociaux, les femmes enceintes ne cherchent pas à mettre en valeur leur état. Au contraire, elles dissimulent autant que possible les signes de leur grossesse. Les tabous religieux et les normes de pudeur sont évidemment intégrés par les femmes enceintes, qui ne peuvent afficher trop ostensiblement un état qui révèle le fruit d'un rapport sexuel. [...] Jusqu'à l'invention récente de l'échographie, la femme ne sait pas avant l'accouchement si le fœtus qu'elle porte est bien conformé [...] La peur de donner naissance à un monstre ou à un enfant anormal terrifie les mères, qui y voient la conséquence d'un châtiment ou d'une faute personnelle[23] (Berthiaud 68-71).

Pregnant women do not hide themselves, but propriety dictates that they conceal their pregnancies under loose-fitting clothing: "La grossesse n'incarne pas alors le plus haut degré de la féminité: le corps de la femme enceinte étant envisagé sous l'angle de la maladie, de l'inconfort et de l'enlaidissement, il ne vient pas à l'idée de le magnifier par l'habillement. Tout est donc fait pour dissimuler la grossesse et cacher le ventre"[24] (Berthiaud 74). Of course, this applies mainly to women from the middle to upper social classes, as poorer women could not afford to hide their situation. It is worth noting that the two characters in the film seem to belong to the middle class, as their clothes indicate. Here, Madame struts down the street showing off her enormous belly in defiance of fin-de-siècle decorum. We are a long way from the rigid image of maternal gentleness that pregnant women – and mothers in this case – should exemplify. However, *Madame a des envies* deals with "l'ambivalence maternelle d'une manière singulière,

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[23] "Pregnant women are present and visible in the public sphere, whatever their social background, but they do not seek to highlight their condition. On the contrary, they conceal the signs of their pregnancy as much as possible. Religious taboos and standards of modesty are obviously taken on by pregnant women, who cannot display too conspicuously a condition that reveals the fruit of a sexual relationship. [...] Until the recent invention of ultrasound, a woman does not know whether the fetus she is carrying is well formed before giving birth [...]. The fear of giving birth to a monster or an abnormal child terrifies mothers, who see it as the consequence of a punishment or a personal fault".

[24] "Pregnancy does not embody the highest degree of femininity: the pregnant woman's body is seen in terms of illness, discomfort, and disfigurement, and it does not occur to us to magnify it through clothing. Everything is done to conceal the pregnancy and hide the belly".

qui mêle féérie et comique"[25] (Knibiehler and Sagaert 436). Is Madame a bad mother? What if maternal love was not innate? asked Austrian physician and psychoanalyst Margarethe Hilferding during her first paper presentation at the Psychoanalytic Society of Vienna in 1911, one of the first to question this long- held belief, pointing out that "loin d'être inné, ce lien est issu de la relation de la mère avec son enfant"[26] (Mons 114)[27]. Madame is thus an atypical character, far removed from the idea of a woman full of kindness and the notion of maternal instinct, creating another model of the female character, modern and sexual, woman and mother at the same time. Madame's excesses and humor are justified by her belly: Madame is pregnant, so her excesses are authorized by society.

> Madame, the comic object of ridicule, can devour the whole public sphere if she pleases: her extreme behavior is no doubt driven by her hyperactive womb movement. *Madame's Cravings* thereby literalizes the subjective instabilities of the comic though recourse to tropes of hysteria. The utromaniacal woman, goaded by her womb tilt, embodies the deeper terrors that motivate ambivalent laughter, and are further triggered by the libidinal upheavals endemic to modern industrial life (Hennefeld 80).

Physically, Madame is a very beautiful woman, entirely in keeping with the physical canons of her time. However, she is an undisciplined woman, with an anti-normative corporality, excessive, disruptive of feminine decorum, with carnal displays at odds with the codes of femininity, defying sexist conventions with parodic play. Moreover, let's recall that the word "hysteria" comes from the Greek word for "uterus", and was originally used to describe an ailment experienced by women when their genital organs had not been satisfied, or when their activity had been abnormally overexcited (Paicheler 134-135). Therefore it is particularly interesting to note the still strong link between pregnancy, the uterus and the woman who cannot control her body and her sexual desires. We thus can describe this as a caricature of a prejudice. By caricature, we mean a grotesque, exaggerated representation of reality. Indeed, in the first instance, the pregnant woman's sexual desires and the obvious pleasure she takes in sucking on various objects play a part in establishing a reinvention of the femininity of the pregnant woman and of motherhood in general. We see a feminized body in all its conceptual and maternal power, erotic and active in the narrative without adhering to the characteristics of the typologies of virgin, mother, and prostitute. Secondly, this is not a classic representation of motherhood and pregnancy. As we have shown, Madame ignores her eldest in the stroller, snatches a child's lollipop, has carnal desires, smokes, and drinks. The prejudice is deliberately placed in a different perspective, appearing cognitively distorted and

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[25] "Maternal ambivalence in a singular way, blending comic enchantment".

[26] "Far from being innate, this bond stems from the mother's relationship with her child"

[27] Please note that the idea of maternal instinct was far from entrenched at the time of Margarethe Hilferding's speech. As Michael Rosenfeld points out, it is necessary to qualify the vision of maternity and, above all, the idealized model of pregnancy in late 19th-century France. Many women resorted to infertile practices, abortion or (sometimes forced) sterilization. (Rosenfeld 103-120).

ridiculous. If, normally, "le régime des attractions monstratives suppose [...] une certaine adhésion cognitive du spectateur, adhésion qui s'appuie sur un rapport de connivence entre fabricants et consommateurs de vues, au centre duquel se trouve la reconnaissance mutuelle de certaines figures conventionnelles et de certains schémas stéréotypaux"[28] (Chemartin and Dulac 153), here the anomalies produce strangeness for the viewers and differences from the established prejudice[29]. It is precisely this balance of power between prejudice as perceived in society and dissonant elements that will create humor and elements of rupture. In *Madame*, therefore, we find not only prejudice as a narrative thread, but also various visual elements characteristic of this cinematic period. While Alice Guy's fictions are often inspired by humorous postcards, such as *La Fée aux choux*, which is certainly the best-known example (Loveday), *Madame* takes up a theme found in 19th-century caricatures. Indeed, the cartoons of that same century also mocked the delirious desires of pregnant women.

Fig. 7: Paul Gavarni, *L'envie d'une femme enceinte* (XIXe).

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[28] "The system of monstrative attractions presupposes [...] a certain cognitive adherence on the part of the viewer, an adherence based on a relationship of connivance between the makers and consumers of views, at the heart of which is the mutual recognition of certain conventional figures and stereotypical patterns".
[29] Alice Guy often used irony and humor in her films to poke fun at established prejudices. See *La Fée aux Choux* (1900) or *Les Résultats du Féminisme* (1907).
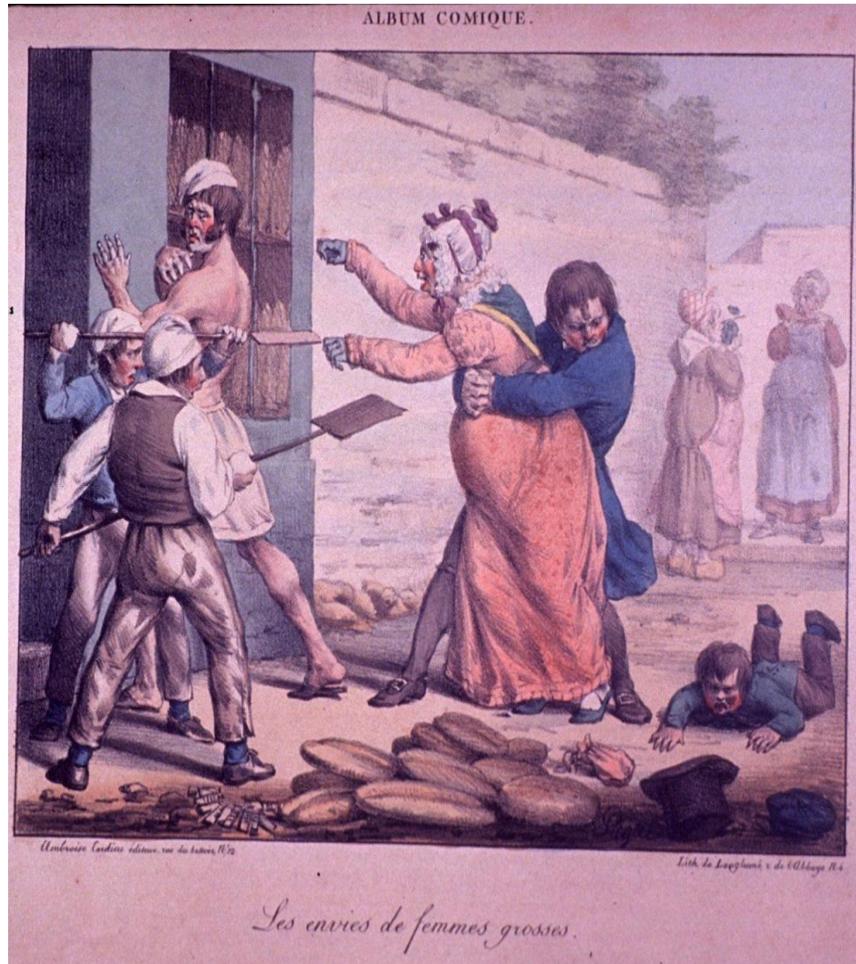
Fig. 8: Pigal, "Les envies de femmes grosses", in *Album comique de pathologie pittoresque*, Tardieu, Paris 1823.

These caricatures by Gavarni and Pigal, for example, suggest that women do not just want meat or bread, but fresh flesh. Under a humorous guise, these caricatures reveal men's anxieties about insatiable ogresses. The husband in the second image goes to great lengths to restrain his wife from devouring poor male passers-by. Here is a long description of the second illustration provided by Pigal:

> Contemplez celle dont nous vous offrons l'image ; remarquez comme tous ses traits semblent avoir faim ! comme ses yeux dévorent la proie que ses dents ne tiennent pas encore ! La pauvre dame, se promenant avec son fils et son mari, a rencontré un boulanger vêtu à l'écossaise suivant les habitudes de son état. Ce mitron est d'une carnation superbe ; un léger nuage de farine répandu sur toute sa personne prête à sa peau une blancheur encore plus appétissante. La femme grosse s'élance pour mordre cette épaule charnue. Le patronet, justement effrayé, se sauve aussi vite que lui permet l'imperfection de sa chaussure ; deux apprentis, afin de protéger sa retraite, croisent la baïonnette avec les ustensiles du fournil, dont ils sont armés. Le mari fait de violents efforts pour retenir sa moitié ; il paraît d'autant plus affecté de l'envie qu'elle témoigne, qu'il n'en ignore pas les conséquences funestes ; déjà son premier fils porte sur la joue une grappe de raison qu'un garde champêtre n'a pas permis

de cueillir ; lui-même a sur le front l'image trop fidèle d'un rat que dans le temps on n'a pu attraper pour en faire un civet à sa mère. Il semble craindre que les goûts anthropophages de sa femme ne finissent par retomber sur lui. Dans le fond du tableau, deux femmes enceintes, cédant aux inspirations d'un appétit plus modeste, se sont jetées sur des fruits et des viandes crues qu'elles mangent avec beaucoup d'avidité[30] (Pigal, not paginated).

The caricature of pregnant women in the grip of powerful, sexual desires was thus an integral part of the visual culture of Alice Guy's time and often perpetuated prejudices that were detrimental to women.

However, these women almost look like witches, whereas Alice Guy's Madame is more beautiful, feminine and playful. This reflection leads me to believe that the female filmmaker deliberately chose to use the beliefs for humorous and narrative purposes: the story in the caricatures is effectively brought to life on screen, using the film medium to its full potential in the context of its production, while playing on the expectations of the audience of the time. It is further instructive to compare Alice Guy's film with a work produced by Pathé Frères under the same name a year later, in 1907. This version is unfortunately considered lost. We do not know the name of the director, but there is a summary of the story available in the catalogs, as well as a poster. I am well aware that it is risky to make a comparison between the summary of a film and a film preserved in its entirety, but it still gives us some clues:

Madame, très doucement: "Je t'en prie, c'est très mau-vais de ne pas satisfaire ces envies-là, on dit même que les enfants s'en ressentent toute leur vie. Oh mais cela, c'est positif". Madame cite des preuves à l'appui… Monsieur, embêté mais convaincu, prend son chapeau et suit Madame. Chez la modiste, elle choisit cinq ou six chapeaux, en charge son mari et continue sa course. Elle est tentée quelques pas plus loin par un petit poisson rouge dans son bocal qu'elle dépose avec précaution entre les mains de son mari. Il n'a pas l'air content, Monsieur, oh ! Mais pas du tout ; il s'avance piteusement, chargé comme un âne. Bientôt, il sue à grosses gouttes sous un énorme boa de plumes, traînant en laisse un petit chien et portant comme un balai dans ses bras une longue plante grasse… il avait l'air d'un homme réclame. Madame, elle, marche délibérément. Elle s'excuse genti-ment: "Mon pauvre chéri,

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[30] "Contemplate the one whose image we offer you; notice how all her features seem to be hungry! how her eyes devour the prey that her teeth are not yet holding! The poor lady, strolling with her son and husband, met a baker dressed in the tartan style of his profession. The baker's complexion was superb, and his skin was even more appetizingly white, with a light dusting of flour all over him. The pregnant woman lunges to bite this fleshy shoulder. The boss, justly frightened, flees as fast as the imperfection of his shoe will allow; two apprentices, to protect his retreat, cross their bayonets with the bakery utensils they are armed with. The husband makes violent efforts to restrain his wife; he seems all the more affected by the envy she shows, as he is not unaware of its fatal consequences; already his first son bears on his cheek a bunch of grapes that a country warden has not allowed to be picked; he himself has on his forehead the all-too- faithful image of a rat that in time could not be caught to make a stew for his mother. He seems to fear that his wife's anthropophagic tastes will eventually fall on him. In the background, two pregnant women, yielding to the inspirations of a more modest appetite, have thrown themselves on fruit and raw meat, which they eat with great avidity".

si ça n'était pas pour la santé de notre bébé, je ne te chargerais pas comme cela va!"[31] (Bousquet 4).

If we read the summary, it is clear that the Pathé Frères version deliberately pokes fun at the woman who takes advantage of her condition to manipulate her husband. If we now look at the film's poster, we see that this element is even more obvious:

Fig. 9: Vincent Lorant-Heilbronn, *Madame a des envies*, 1907, Lithograph, Fondation Jérôme Seydoux Pathé.[32]

Madame by Pathé Frères, unlike the Gaumont version, does not appear pregnant, and her cravings are more like whims. The Pathé version may have been inspired by the Gaumont version, as it was filmed after and it was common practice for directors to copy each other's subjects at that time (see Burch). We are clearly, with the Pathé version, in the filmic representation of a misogynist prejudice, which bears a strong resemblance to Witkowski's observations above: pregnancy here becomes an excuse to satisfy all her material desires. With Alice Guy, on the other hand, we see an exaggerated version of all the elements of the prejudice, with the aim of playfully criticizing social conventions and upsetting preconceived ideas through comic imitations.

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[31] "Madame, very gently: 'Please, it is very bad not to satisfy these desires, they even say that children suffer from them for the rest of their lives. Oh, but this is positive'. Monsieur, annoyed but convinced, grabs his hat and follows Madame. At the milliner's, she chooses five or six hats, loads them onto her husband and continues on her way. A few steps further on, she is tempted by a little goldfish in a jar, which she carefully places in her husband's hands. He does not look happy, Monsieur, oh, he does not look happy at all; he strides forward piteously, laden like a donkey. Soon he is sweating profusely under a huge feather boa, dragging a small dog on a leash and carrying a long, fat plant in his arms like a broom... he looked like a sandwich board man. Madame, on the other hand, walks deliberately. She apologizes kindly: 'My poor darling, if it was not for our baby's health, I would not be charging (burdening or loading you up) you like that is going'!".

[32] To view a higher resolution image, click here.

Caricature and laughter are often used for provocation, as they tread a path where insolence and even nastiness go hand in hand and do not detract from the viewer's pleasure. All these elements make it possible to understand how Alice Guy pokes fun at sexist prejudices and manages to show the sexual desires of a pregnant woman beyond the moral conventions of fin-de-siècle society. Madame does not want to control her sexuality and sensuality, and seeks to satisfy her desires by any means necessary. Her excesses are visual devices that allow us to take a humorous step back from the prejudice itself, to directly reach a level of post-judgment where we are not hindered by the pre-judgment we may have been capable of. I thus conclude along the same lines as Pierre Chemartin and Nicolas Dulac: as Gustave Flaubert wrote in 1880 in his book *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, the only way to get rid of prejudices is to expose them to the light of day, to make them raw material, even if this means pushing them to the point of absurdity (Chemartin, Dulac, 159), all the better to laugh at them.

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