

# DENIS ROCHE “BOOTLEG”

An unofficial anthology of published translations  
of the poetry and prose of Denis Roche.

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## DENIS ROCHE

### An Introduction and Interview by Serge Gavronsky (1969)



Place de l'Odéon. The Théâtre de France. A pocket-size hotel pushed back into a retreating angle. A famous fish restaurant. Everything is clearly set out, from the cobblestones to the columns. This is a classic structure. It has an elegance that represents without any vehemence the entrenchment of a part of French civilization. It is evenly lit. Poised. It refuses time. Talking to Denis Roche in this hotel whose windows also overlook a side street, I see the same patina on his arguments, the same logic, the same formal sets of relationships. Perhaps even the same coldness. If there are points of references with the geography outside, a similar relationship between the parts, there is also a most strikingly violent substitution of the coordinates that have existed for so long. Without the least ruffle, with absolutely none of the stance of a revolutionary, Denis Roche, in his bow tie, discusses with the sophistication that exemplifies his associates on the editorial board of *Tel Quel*, the need to introduce into current French thought authors who have been misread or ignored, critics whose opinions have reshaped contemporary thought.

For a young man—poet, editor, translator of Ezra Pound’s *Cantos*— Denis Roche gives the impression of living intellectually without any biographical annotations. Literature has become a way of life, a past and a future. That he has travelled on the North American continent, that he studied dentistry, is irrelevant. What counts is the struggle that began with Lautréamont and Rimbaud, and before both, with Baudelaire—a struggle that has yet to be won but whose participants, nurtured on the conflict, have, through their patience, revealed the chinks in the enemy’s armor. How far from the Beats! In comparison to those adolescents of the New World, noble savages perhaps, Denis Roche is all intellect and art, belying his radical views by the refinement with which he applies the lessons of his own idols. There is something hypnotic in the certainty of his judgments.

There was a time when, by his own admission, he wrote “romantic” poems, flourishes that may well have resembled those lyrical atrocities that are still practiced by budding poets in France and in French-speaking countries. But then, with the same hatred that Rimbaud had for Musset, Roche disowned these poems, and parallel to the biography of poetry that began with Blaise Cendrars and Apollinaire, entered the twentieth century. Having filtered out his personal voice, Denis Roche now has imposed on himself a particular rigor, mixed with flashes of Surrealism both in his use of the unexpected juxtapositioning of lines and in the radical syntactical breaks. The poem becomes an intricate handiwork, filled with the surprises logic gives when it is finally discovered. Close to Sade, Rimbaud, Breton and Bataille, Denis Roche envelops Eros in a linguistic bolt, showing off his royal color—which in the end must be recognized.

*Would you place yourself in the current of French literature since 1945, or more precisely, in your case, since 1957?*

It is a short period, I know! Whenever I try to gain a synthetic view of events in poetry since the last war, I begin with the effervescence of poetry during the Occupation, that is, the poetry that came forth out of Surrealism and which became sickeningly verbose during the war with its militancy. It had completely lost contact with language, a strange thing, considering it had come out of Surrealism. And then, at the end of the war, that verbosity stopped instantaneously with the end of the fighting, and since then it has been like a vacuum, an emptiness, which has lasted, let us say, fifteen years, and which may be even continuing today.

And then there was a reaction. This reaction had two poles. Obviously, I speak of those who are young—not about those who continued to write, but those who revealed themselves afterwards. If we greatly simplify things, these poles are represented by Yves Bonnefoy and André du Bouchet.

Bonnefoy is the culmination of poetry with a capital P—dignified, magniloquent—in the tradition of Pierre Emmanuel, of Saint-John Perse, of all those poets. Nevertheless, he is still considered today as a representative of a significant new poetry. This is being rather general, of course. However, one does have the feeling that this poetry represents a type of culmination, and that it will most likely not have any future. Well, it may have a future but perhaps no true disciples. Anyway, there are none presently.

And as for the other pole, there is du Bouchet, and du Bouchet considered as the disciple of René Char. René Char is that poet of the Resistance who precisely did not write at all in a verbose fashion, while still writing militant poetry at a certain period. So that his poetry has managed to continue and attract disciples after the war. Du Bouchet has pursued this effort at rarefaction of speech. This rarefaction is considered by du Bouchet's enemies as the proof of the impasse of this type of poetry. Nevertheless, du Bouchet is seen by the younger poets as the hope of the new poetry. That does not mean that the younger poets are disciples of du Bouchet, but he did successfully show them a new point of departure.

To situate myself in that current today is really not that simple at all, especially because Surrealism is blossoming again. There are many very young poets today who begin to write in a neo-Surrealist vein, and then there are always those neo-Surrealist poets who are rather important, who are read and who are in harmony with recent tendencies in painting. Things of this nature can be labeled gallery-poetry, art gallery-poetry. And then there is another group, it has been called a group of poets, those who belong to the *Tel Quel* circle: Pleyne, Jean Pierre Faye, and myself, and now younger and younger poets, very young, who are beginning to throw themselves in this direction, and who are very demanding, as much toward us as they are to themselves, and who are beginning to publish a little everywhere. It can even be said now that this movement has overflowed a little into the other publishers. Up to now, we were, I wouldn't say stuck to the Editions du Seuil, but let us say that other doors were closed to us, even the doors of other magazines, with the exception of the *Mercure de France*, which has now folded. Now, we're just beginning to reach other publishers, not us in particular, but those who have come to our movement.

This poetry of *Tel Quel* can be situated further than du Bouchet, that is, it crystallizes those tendencies, still ill-defined, not very well situated, not always convincing, which have emerged out of the poetry of du Bouchet and Jacques Dupin. This can be characterized by a desire, a very determined desire, to negate or deny completely everything that could be said to belong, strictly speaking, to poetry, and everything which could be considered as separating poetry from all other literary genres or direction of research. There is, thus, in our case, a desire to assimilate poetry to the other literary genres. You could say that this has become a little better known, thanks to such critical movements as Structuralism and movements that have emerged from it, which have revealed to us, and those of us poets who are not always critics, a certain degree of convergence between the new poetry, and, for example, the *nouveau roman*, and developments that lead from it. This has allowed a number of poets to belong to the *Tel Quel* group, to join in this community of experience.

It can thus be said that the hiatus that separates poetry from the novel, or the essay from ethnology, is in the process of disappearing little by little. Conventional forms do remain, purely conventional ones, applied to today's poetry, and they do not have any reason to disappear completely. That means that we continue to write poems when it really is a question of texts that must be read in a totally different manner from those of the pre-war type. Let us say that we are moving further and further away from the metaphor, or from a well-turned poetry which is still so dear

to so many French poets, but that, in our case, we have been trying to push further along, especially in a more conscious manner. We are trying to do something being fully conscious of it, and doing it voluntarily and naturally in order to succeed at it. So that it is a period that is still proceeding a little bit blindly. Here and there critical texts have been written that are short, that are manifestos, that are in general written in a vehement tone, and not always proven. So I suspect that this sort of poetry will evolve, thanks to longer critical texts, much more linguistically oriented, which obviously will not come from poets, and that this, by rebound, will allow poets to criticize themselves more efficiently and to proceed further along. That is about where I would place myself in the movement.

*Could you discuss the way in which what you have just said applies to your own work?*

When I began writing, it was precisely in a spirit of secession. Of course, I had written very “poetic” poems. I had done my René Char well, as you can see—very “poetic” poems! And then, one day, I was fed up. In a spirit of secession I let all that drop completely and I went to another thing and it was really strenuously applied, and it was—how shall I express it?—almost automatic writing, because I did so strongly want to separate myself from all that pursuit of beauty or nobility in matters of form. And it remained that way, chaotic, for about two or three years, until, coming into contact with friends who wrote, I began to strangle this anarchy a little bit and to get to know exactly what I was doing and what I wanted to do, and why I was doing it. At that time, then, the poems began to focus themselves with greater sharpness (*décanner*) and it was approximately at this time that my first book was published: *Récits complets* which was still straddling these two tendencies, that is, a very rapid sort of writing, still slightly poetic, but anarchic, and at the end of the book, poems that were more hermetic, much more concerted, and more difficult. The second book: *Les idées . . .* which came out the following year, is, from the start, more chaotic, considered from the inside of the poem, but I think it is much denser and that it holds much better from the first to the last page. When you take this book as a whole, I think one ought to have the feeling that it is composed with a determined wish to investigate the problems of writing itself. When these poems are written or when they are read, they should give the impression of a continuous reflection on their own form. There is no longer that particular trait which characterized pre-war poetry or poetry written at the end of the war: the pursuit of the pretty phrase, of the successful image. This characterized a great number of French poets of the twentieth century and it is evident from the first reading of their poems that no other problem is asked but whether this or that phrase has worked out, or whether this or that conclusion has come off, etc. In today’s poetry, in these two books, the impression one should have in a first reading is the feeling that, of course, there are successful images from time to time, because they are unavoidable in a tense creation, but also that there are images that are consciously bad, consciously disorganized, and observably split between those kinds of images and those that have succeeded. This is wanted, and sometimes it is not wanted: the total impact is desired. The whole thing has got to jump as a unit, the poem from its interior presence. Thus all of my poems are always of the same length in order not to distract the reader by extensions

or retractions or things like that. They are always of the same form, the same speed of narration, so that the reader will be solely preoccupied about what is going on inside the poem itself and with the language itself, continuously folding back upon itself. And instead of rarefication, which allows for a much longer reflection and a much slower one, I have deliberately chosen the multiplication effect to assure a reflection at the end of the total reading, so that the reading will consist of the innumerable details culled from it. Consequently, I believe that these poems can be taken in two ways: either as a totality or on the contrary, through the very specific analysis of individual poems, which would more likely be a thematic analysis, following the linguistic procedures utilized, of which there are many. Finally, I have always tried to include in one poem as many accords and disaccords as possible. I guess that is about all.

## Three Poems from *Locus Solus*

*(Winter 1962)*

As a matter of fact that bird how many  
Chances didn't I have to know its identity  
However it let its spoor die and  
The effluvium underneath lost with perfection  
Why should I throw myself  
In this hot marsh weather putting in  
Display windows for a virgin of whom  
The memory is enough for me only at the  
    last noise of the  
Battle here I am come toward the dying pine  
Two cents would be enough to buy it  
A new root and a pitcher so that once  
Again would shine in it the black values of  
The earth The only effect that has on me is a  
Kind of undulation which overtakes me delicately  
What silk doesn't waken in me orisons that I  
Don't know are rapid and final?



Tears allowing one to think that there are  
Memories whose beauty surprised in the bath  
Introduces itself in another dimension  
I no longer restrain myself through things  
I pass by them whistling  
Lowering my window as I pass and they  
Constantly recur in various tonalities  
It suits me now to be  
A follower of leaves and to be admired for it  
Like a slightly bigger leaf  
Lived-in perhaps but undernourished  
I content myself with being glimpsed  
And carefully I cultivate existence  
Which is supple says my girlfriend the sensitive one  
Which is woody says the tropical vine which is coming  
Toward me half president wife and half negress  
For she too knows these natural outbursts  
If you look closely leaning over and weeping

The sensory organs watered  
Continuing to slide at a speed which  
Could be considered normal for  
Machine-tools vegetable strainers  
In front of little cars in which we  
Practically haven't slept at all  
Enigmatic we were passing the ointments from  
Hand to hand very much at ease feeling  
Furtive noises float  
But what actually happens?  
Necklaces of men lying down in the allée  
Pigs who seem innocent departed  
Henceforth on a spree like us  
Not even looking for the road to the station  
Leaving there every time  
Mother of pearls trails

TRANSLATION BY JOHN ASHBERY

## Eros Possessed

1

*Demonstrative act of Love: 1st chance*

out of the seething of the tool, which re-  
sembles this ill-fated sentence of our suicide  
Together, at The Rose Sword—green sign, you  
See a little Sologne greenery in it—  
. . . not daring to give heroin to the worms lest  
Any die of such an error of husbandry:

*A flower'd gown that raises a Love at each step  
Ravishes delectable charms from our eyes; and this  
Thigh as round as Venus'. . . A thousand beauties,  
A thousand living charms, and ornaments, you replace but with  
Hindrances!. . . And this darling slipper, that  
Encloses a foot like Hebe's or Venus', alluring as it  
Is, can it match her naked grace?. . .*

You lied about it, naked flower of my mouth, the  
Beans and the crazy women's bubbles, your ass perfectly  
Upright performs toward me a number of circumlocutions  
(useless today) having the shape of corkscrews.

facing the parenthesis:

*For Love is an affection  
That finds the heart through th' eyes,  
Then, by a way of fluxion,  
Runs out between the thighs.*

at the same time— —'

Agrippa d'Aubigné wrote *Les Aventures du baron Foeneste*.  
That is:

*Scarce can the Poet interpret euerie thinge, what the eie  
discouers is a greate multitude of alpine Souldiers sorely  
busyed under the sunne with sewing up the slashes in their  
doublets made after the fashion, with thawing their double  
mustachios—here you see narlets shooing a Damsel who hath  
her girdle twixt nauel and teates.*

Double fiction: the writer and his time. The proof is that it  
has already been written by everyone. Back to the single fiction.

*Demonstrative act of Love: 2nd chance*


---

that  
 With the edges of a cotton cloth I wiped  
 The still-sharp weapon of your stink:

(here the quotation from Mathurin Régnier)

The more accessible wheat of the painters was thoroughly pillaged when we stood up again.  
 What poetry, finally shoved into a hole of Clay, dislikes the skirts from which corkscrews are made? *“Would you grant me one Delight, milady?” “Oh yes, oh yes.”*  
*“To yield that pair. . .” “I know, I know. . .”*  
 It doesn't matter if I add court manners, Spheres, Pulcinellas, or if needed the Swing itself as a token of puritan bilge,  
 Poetry, concerning a dairymaid, or the leap that A friar would make upon her, would never for all that Be adorned with the raiment I lent you when it's Entirely up to me to resume the attack (*sic*).

*Demonstrative act of Love: immed. after the 2nd chance*

When one has just written sentences like those  
 On the preceding page *I am with the twigs*  
*My most up-to-date mistress thinking she will board my*  
*Doubt as the pretext for a mill in an*  
*In an ancient countryside* (if you can get used to the idea  
 Of paper and ink in the Chinese empire  
 At a time more ancient than the  
 Mill would have been) *I fill the instrument of this wonder*  
*With a large number of incentives familiar to my*  
*Imagination. Familiar, while the foot is cautiously-*  
*ly placed on the rim of the bathtub, the left hand*  
*Lowering the washcloth toward the folds that are*  
*At the level of her stomach.* Etc. Of course; otherwise  
 Who cares, about greenery or the fountain?  
 No longer would it matter at all what I had to tell you  
 When I embraced your legs. Advice in brief: continue  
 With the next title

*Interlude between chances: of vowels and erosion*

“On the 20th I confess to finding my condition that of one  
Dead.” *Ambrosia of the enchanting poem*, like  
Luggage that the innkeeper prepares to remove,  
Receives a certain direct glint. Thunder  
Hardly came. I reconsider the earth’s  
Progression (this time abrupt), that which was left  
Fallow that by which people died where there remain  
Apricot-trees where death but not theirs falls  
Impressed in the peas place of arrests grav-  
And so forth, speech being nothing.  
Could fatigue be only a kind of  
Discipline? That might blind me when I  
Write. The girls who are your beauty’s neighbors  
Might laugh over our exchange not seeing  
That our hands create ambrosia of the en-  
chanting poem. —————

—“*Jouy Lace*” or “*Of the Triumph*”

I can find nothing more certain than the connection  
Between this flyleaf mounted on Jouy linen  
And the provocative idea of plumping of which Littré  
Says that there is a *vat filled with acid solution*  
*in which the tanner plumps his skins to*  
*Distend them.* D’Estrevallières who, when she abandoned  
fornication, withdrew to her property at Had,  
dresses with her back toward me so that  
I at once admire her flanks and the perspective of  
Lime-trees. The smell of yellow blossoms, her own smell,  
And the chips of antique cloth plainly  
Require that I maintain a strict stance which the  
Dictionary, falling, does not break. What  
Did I make of it all but an aerial leap that  
Brings me to a cleared area of the room  
Where the cloth has been torn away my throat proceeding  
Among other blossoms, coming and going thickly



*After prolonged exposure to the sun, curtain.*

But my tender, confounding speech, where worse  
Existence “the second tankard tells him that  
It’s true,” on my ruin’s inclination, my  
Absolution. Modest angler, words foul,  
Designation foul, only a bewitching mus-  
ic survives near me. Its decease  
Settled, the tune that imagines my slow ascension  
Toward the meadows of its being, the chance  
Encounter of the medley of this florid vision  
(colors of horses, of the jugs on stage)  
And my disease, all this overtakes my step  
Without presumption, the hyperbola, my straddling  
Balcony to green balcony, in a straight line I  
Extend myself like the landscape toward a new  
Shipment for burial, in any case toward her grave.  
(Detumescence-smile)

TRANSLATED BY HARRY MATHEWS

## Introductory Remarks From An Essay By Marcelin Pleynet: The Aim Of Poetry Should Be . . .

These poems offer themselves apparently in the convention framework of the genre, “poem”; they strongly emphasize this appearance in its most obvious form: a text with unequal lines, confined to a single page; each line beginning with a capital letter. Nevertheless, at the same time they signalise the play of a kind of composition which seems to be in opposition to this appearance of formal convention.

The poem indeed offers itself as if it had been composed at random; as if, once the form had been chosen, the author could fill it with anything whatever (we shall return to this “anything whatever”). Denis Roche, in his forward to *Récits complets*, says: “One gains life from certain words, not because they are words that one has expressly chosen . . . but because it happens that, without any rational justification, one’s gaze was arrested by such words, rather than by others near them or on another page.” We are always caught in the play of appearances produced by the author even while we are in the process of approaching the complexity of the text. And Roche’s statement here is apparently unacceptable in the conventional context of the poem in verse. But these two contexts of reading already complicate each other. The convention apparently respected by the first and apparently broken by the second brings out initially the question of the unconventionality of an “aleatory” text.

Through this question we begin to doubt whether the poetic text really is free from the hazards of chance. If it is outrageous (or appears outrageous) to introduce into a fixed form like that of the conventional poem, a language which is presented as undefined by convention, this outrage cannot be considered unless it, in turn, sets up, within the definite form of a poem, a language which may be considered definite in a different sense. Faced with this apparent declaration of subjectivity in the choice of words, a declaration of objectivity must be made.

Now, how can we consider this objectivity of language taken (if we are to avoid speaking of the objectivity of poetic discourse itself) in the context of the genetic character of the genre “poem.” Presented with this declaration of a choice made “without rational justification”, what becomes of poetic rationality?

Here, once again, we find the problem of the genetic function of literary genres, and the objectively *rational* role of poetic irrationality. That “without rational justification” calls into question the rationality which is outraged by it; it immediately uncovers that rationality’s mode of operation, together with all that is connoted in the rules of the poetic code (in what that code allows and forbids).

The refusal of rational justification shows how the process of producing poetry which fixed poetic forms are said to undervalue, is recovered and used in the formal play of irrationality. Thus, within what is accepted as a purely decorative form, an amusement given by aesthetic convention and offered as a distraction for our leisure hours, a contradiction that exists in the demand for rational justification is made clear.

In this contradiction each of the terms exists only to hide the other. The sonnet form, for instance, by means of its objective rules, criticises the poeticism—the aesthetic function of language—which seems to inspire it; while such aesthetic inspiration criticises the objective and socially conventional form of the sonnet.

Despite all this, the insights gained at this level of analysis remain insufficient. For the kind of reading required by them is a long way off taking into account the whole scenic design where the work of Denis Roche moves. And, although his poems only apparently conform to poetic convention, they could still be explained away as the game of gratuitous formalism, a more or less aesthetic discourse—automatic writing would be an example.

But, in fact, behind this “unreason” which accompanies the establishment of such appearances (Roche maintains, in the preface to *Récits complets*, that “poetry is not a problem of representation”), the motivating activity of a poetic text is made clear. Starting from a form that is most readily recognised as that of a poem, and presenting the reader with this form in the contradictory play of its appearance, Roche intervenes in the organisation of the text. Such an intervention, like that shown in the choice of form, is far superior to any critical mode of approach that stresses the theoretical and didactic function of kinds of interpretation. Furthermore, this intrusion into the text is required by the desire to respect the usefulness of an appearance of poetic form.

We must emphasise that this appearance is more than a wish for resemblance. In *Récits complets*, but even more emphatically in *Les Idées centésimales de Miss Elanize*, the text on the page sketches a kind of rectangle of written marks whose lines hardly differ in length and seem intended to be aligned at the right-hand margin just as they are aligned at the left by means of capital letters. Such intention to conserve resemblance: the realism of literary form, goes beyond a conventional realism. The actual poem criticises its formal model. . . Once more we find ourselves deciphering something which contradicts conventional reading.

In this contradicted reading one must stress the individual play of phonetic links in the verse. The repetitions in these links often have no other function, such is their complexity, than to return the process of reading to an examination of itself. This reflexivity is deceptive; but it must be questioned from its origin in the moment of reading itself.

It is from this basis also that the continually deceptive statements of realistic narrative must be questioned. Such statements are found in all three books. *Récits complets*, *Les Idées*, and *Éros énergumène*; and what they keep in the end is only the material of reading, the eroticised movement of its journey. For it is certainly by passing through the didactic activity of the formal play of poetic conventions, and by means of such transgression, that the work of Denis Roche stresses that other activity: the productive process which is both reading and writing.

*from Tel Quel, Théorie d'ensemble, pp. 102-106*

## Excerpts From Denis Roche's Preface To *Eros Energumène: Lessons In Poetic Vacuity*

[FROM TABLEAU DES AVATARS]

When what we are looking for is unknown, how is it possible to stress with so much conviction the success of one page or another? How can this success be explained without critical support from a *descriptive* terminology which would not be content with describing *content* . . . but which would also describe the *container*, that is: the set of unknown laws, which we cannot at present operate with full consciousness, and which controls effects that are primarily pulsational.

Such effects make up the infolding of the writing, the rhythm with which chains of images appear and ellipses are created, the rhythm in which reading is unfolded, rhythm of themes as they appear and are destroyed, rhythm of structures of discourse (phrases, syntactic links) in their arrival and effacement, rhythm of arrangement, deployment, containing and flowing of language, within the printed text, rhythm of the succession of phrases, their overlapping and sequence.

All these things are like so many *marks* (in the biological sense of the term); they are functions of a social act which is writing, and of another social act which is reading.

...

[FIN DE LA POÉSIE PARLÉE]

One of the aims of this little book is to demonstrate the possibility of a new kind of poetry which will be created neither to be looked at, nor to be recited. Any kind of poetry which can be defined by a single one of these characteristics is merely spurious: Lettrisme is a forgery of what one sees, metrical poetry is a forgery of what one declaims aloud. It can be proved that every kind of contemporary poetry which has a truly critical value is not involved with—cannot be forced into—the mould of a prefabricated metric. Otherwise how can we explain the specialisation of metrical forms (their restriction to a particular kind of representative function). Short lines are traditionally reserved for slight poetry; the alexandrine is associated with profound emotions and discussion about the state of the soul; iambics, from Archiocus to André Chénier, are used for insults (to fathers-in-law or revolutionaries); the ode is consecrated to meditative eulogy and to love poetry, and so on. A form which is gratuitous (which does not rely on justification with reference to content), which does not serve as a crutch for a way of thinking, can such a form exist?

One can destroy a metrical system, one can destroy it while using its own conventions.

## TOWARDS A NEW SCANSION

Let us rediscover the notion of scansion. Scansion would no longer be the art of evaluating the metrical form of verse whether with reference to quantity (Latin) or to syllables (French); it would be the science by means of which all the kinds of pulsational alternations (pulsation is to be thought of as a way of defining *the unit of energy in the practice of poetry*), may be studied. Certain pages of eros are to be studied at this single level of *pulsational mingling*. Whole sections fall below the level of semantic meaning; while others smoothly empty themselves of it; and everything is allowed to take place and be read according to the time in which a certain number of *imaginary bases* are found and their connections enthusiastically followed. Many more things could be said, for instance, taking some of these poems as surfaces offering resistance.

## EROTICISM OR THE STRUGGLE WITH THE WHOLE

Eroticism is an outmoded word. Is anyone still aware of its remarkable power to present nervous tension, *de-figuration*, in fact? It is the degraded vision, the fulfilled fanatic (one whose senses (meanings) are disordered, possessed by a powerful passion). It is the exactitude of the way in which things return on themselves while they are taking place. To write is already a bitter submission: if I were to be “poetic” I should call it the shirt of Nessus.

The writing of poetry is a vision in which we wish to include everything, where we wish to see everything even while we, in our turn, are seen, that is, to be observed as we are watching. Eroticism transforms (might transform; I am not sure of this however) such a vision and annihilate it totally. The vision is consumed insofar as it is unfolded; for erotic writing is a completely accomplished inversion. One cannot play games with it.

I should say, however, that it is the most fulfilled form of irony, or scepticism; and it is perhaps the only way someone who writes can avoid being deceived, can never be deceived, by what he *acts*.

There is, in all this, the terrifying idea (but if it is recognised, how much effort is saved!) of an inveterate search for a loss, for a reality of which one is aware *as a loss*. And this continuous awareness is communicated to writing by elaborate pulsations that are difficult to restrain without amplification and incantation that would deform them. Attended to with respect, they are perhaps a potentially rich medium that may lead to a resolution.

TRANSLATED BY VERONICA FORREST-THOMSON

**from Les Idées centésimales de Miss Elanize**

THE ARISING OF THE INTRUDER

“for want of words the intruder has arisen”  
I should advise you to endorse it, with  
Even a single word’s difference, “to believe it”  
It was she, it was her style . . . is the voice  
Of the world’s sole singleness, hers  
Smoky  
And the foolish exclusiveness of her whole life  
As if with wide open eyes he hung onto  
Her . . . he had literally punned on  
All his wit, on her

not line, portraits of duchesses the  
Intellect, rim of a boat which I my-  
Self shall take to that Englishman with this move-  
Ment which he and I print for a wind  
On his skin: I shall return to this  
Movement which he and I, stooping, oblivious  
To decency (the “s” of decency)  
. . . to shouts of laughter, to  
Fits of sulks

Possessed, and once at the end (I) expire  
... he's been promised gnashing of teeth at one time and  
Another—succeeded in falling in love tomorrow—  
For another when she passes by with her dr-  
Ess in her hand. First setback for he sets up  
The young lady in, more or less, an  
“Understanding”, her high-heels unsheathed under the  
Dress rampant, but she may in the  
End wear herself out in a . . . don't  
Fall asleep meanwhile.



“Your help, oh ridiculous muse! gullet of  
Romanticism, moaning and demonstrative plants”  
(your) throat is poised ( )  
Without Being, the tone of her voice becomes (Becoming)  
In its swelling choked in itself the very slight see-  
Sawing movement has all the same imprinted on her  
Mind the notion of getting completely undressed. As for that,

The lines are too long in the fore-  
Going, if “acute anxiety” must “st-  
ifle the extremes of stamina . . . and  
The honour of having raised you  
Him/her first” elegant libertinage  
Such as is practised in feudal  
Positions, with his heart on  
In the ticket-office hail she in  
Legs multicoloured from being  
Stretched out en route having  
Incredulously absorbed there (there)  
A collection of masculine things.

MONSIEUR THE PILOT, TRULY ROYAL

Every Saturday they would stay upstairs in the great armoury, its walls loaded with weapons, armour, ancestral portraits, and its window decorated with a hawk. In front of them was the imposing alpine panorama which stretches from the Black Forest to Mont Blanc, and beneath were prosperous villages. There, unwitnessed, they would exercise themselves in developing their ideas according to the formulae of the new movements.

STRINDBERG

Monsieur the pilot, truly royal declaiming,  
“No attar of roses lurks in the phials,  
unstoppered or otherwise, of my route” scented  
the healthy smell of earth which insinuates  
at the beginning of this heat  
we shall complete it with that tempera-ment-  
ture which does not bear staying at home and  
bears the stew-pot to the persons of his  
quenched memory, in short figures having no lo-  
gical link with reality. And these figures  
would have taken on a completely human form  
while, to his poet’s eye, forests and reefs  
had no need to do so. He left at a run  
and rejoined them just as they reached the  
crossroads

they also were looking out of the window at the storm

Monsieur the pilot, truly royal erased himself  
In front of the mirror he would not abandon, and  
For his part, saw nothing wrong with accusing  
The witnesses of the game: they felt themselves  
Impotent, they could never love each other,  
They could not satisfy each other either, at least  
I prefer to imagine that it was a question  
Of successive states or intermediary dispositions,  
Both walking about the room, the thought  
That they are insane, in the harmony of their  
Shadows—instinctive abilities where the  
Sky simply is one with the sea (having provided  
It with a strange conductivity) they breathe as if  
At last they feel at ease in space  
Down there she unties her belt and hangs it  
On the branches

Monsieur the pilot, truly royal your warlike  
Ardour is then such an evil power  
Under the weight of her modesty's crab-apple tree  
She rejoins her vegetal primacy, and it is  
Because of obstinacy that she will spill  
These tears from "the clash of empires",  
I see her coming to me across the cellophane  
Of consent Shall I question her discreetly  
About her desires? All that's left is for  
Us to keep up our own  
  Life  
While the storm fades away  
  pursued, for  
Its ill-born love of honour,  
  on the  
Gentleness of the heather-couch

Monsieur the pilot, truly royal the  
Divers clinging to flotsam at the mercy of the winds  
Speak to the swell of her psychological moment—  
Its raft.  
Cantal's plumb-lead is seen above the circus  
At her feet we find that writer from Rosental's  
Liberal Journal. World Festival of Fashion  
Similarly they write the thing "with a proper-  
Ly romantic naïvety" now he chats about a  
Pious pair of buttocks; a voice from that  
Nearby window recalls them. He grabs  
Helen by the waist as she leans over the bed  
Who quietly lifts up his mistress' hand  
Several women will half get up.  
Nothing is urgent; all these scenes  
Are too new for him, he brushes against her  
Only in the delightful fear of seeing once more  
The moon of hours on the roof.

Monsieur the pilot, truly royal consider that pilots  
Are not such a good thing, they are crossing  
Crossing the pier before the incoming squalls, tomorrow  
There will be some lovely shipwrecks, but  
The Goths are in the Citadel. Turn round I'm  
Getting washed, I hold in my hands the convolvulus  
Of a peaceful conscience and I have had success  
In the world of *letters*, do you see the trees coming?  
Now they are jumping, obstacles are thuya-  
Bushes of a reasonable size, finally they  
Leap over them assured of their respectable  
Lineage down to the slightest detail,  
All the same, since the Trade Fair at Copen-  
Hagen, associating with men recalls to him what,  
At the age of fifteen, an epistle on the  
Contemplation of seas made him think: never again  
To refer to any but royal officials.



Monsieur the pilot, truly royal to those  
Who are not really suited to the scene  
“ritratto di gentildonna” and turns back  
Stunned, how gay ordinary people are  
Ignorant of the trumpet’s deceit, and  
The majestic jeer, never of the clear  
Daylight. To give in to or to get close to  
The person, in its circle of relations  
And when we lack compassion we shall rudely  
Sever some creatures from its village or  
Maybe we shall open the establishments to  
Young girls without making any changes.

She poses for a few seconds more and  
Pulling towards her the warm blanket says:  
“there is no attitude of greater humility  
than waiting for a match, and there is  
No-one here with a broken heart”.

The fox made his way to the third level of the  
Mountain and spoke thus: "monsieur the pilot  
Truly royal, a betrayal perpetrated with  
Distinction is nothing, once it is given this  
Childish form. We shall fling you on the rubbish-heap  
Moreover a skin-change is to granular ice  
What courgettes are to the refrigerator, we  
Shall yet get as far as some more jam, and sh-  
All be struck down at the sight of the ants. Monsieur  
The pilot truly royal I salute in you the lack of  
Painting in distemper, in that there is a will  
Without fanfares which overflows in the harsh  
Sustenance of community of existence, and in our  
Patience also

                    which makes of Time's starch  
A priestess of Israel

The effort of a “volubilitis” flower in the  
Sense of virtue and in fulfilling its  
Obligations has no value as such, for  
She can also stretch out her hand, let it f-  
All back into the flour, no longer enduring  
The sight of waiters without help from  
The prayer called “surrender of the prince”.  
The strands stop being noticed, warm water  
Is there to endure cold winters, thanks  
To the gift of showers in vertical support  
Which is a ten-minute glimpse to be transformed  
Into eternity.  
Clearly betrayed by his smoke fumes  
He measures endless blocked-up corridors  
Calling forth at every corner a “monsieur  
The pilot truly royal”

2.

*Sensibly the forms we are about to describe and  
Represent it was necessary first to point them out  
Because of chronology which may allow a vague  
Undulation to the most primitive forms. One ought  
Dead or offshore rocks to watch for nourishment  
To tender me at the end of her stump a tender bouquet  
Of forced roses nourished by salt-water alum the largest  
And most impressive collection of winter stakes  
Having been obtained by dragging the rivers that had  
Happily preserved them precious documents (they) dress up  
To attract him sometimes in sparkling these little  
Thick plants proliferated so prettily  
Last spent their days planted on trees  
This stained-glass glows with a sacramental glory  
These innumerable lighted candles circle in shirt-  
Sleeves the heat becoming at each moment so precise  
That to be there means the last fox to take suck from  
Her doubtless a matter that can be discussed that  
Goes turning his gaze from the divine cathedral  
Perfume for a Mariette she was cold immaterial  
Oh graphed poise of her hand which I keep for*

6.

*But at the attack these braves were almost unseizable  
From their cruelty and savagery hurried from their whis-  
A preciosity that showed itself in extreme care for detail  
A great church but half the grey edifice rested  
He walked behind the others carrying the canvas sack  
The golden mountain although there exists no golden mountain  
Since you have trusted your women to me I have watched night and day,  
First she saw a meadow whose verdure was  
Exalted yes indeed my dear exalted this bouncing tomboy  
These enigmas in fact remain always unsolved  
Squarely behind so that it was not so large  
To die with beloved beings wrapped in my entrails so  
Often moreover that they don't think of it even when more attacked  
She is so strong isn't she? that she will recover from  
Her momentary weaknesses sand of knowing of understanding  
The estuary the lovely curve of basque and tagada hillsides  
The former they begin to emerge from earth on the contrary stops  
Always underlined by a constant and immovable kind of  
Muddy shore all reversed to line up the masters in  
Geometry sensational sentinels of rotting forests  
Willingly the gaze loitering to follow your perspective.*

16.

*She turns a switch both of them standing see  
They invoke our compassion when it is seen what  
Bob is in the woods over towards the paper-mill  
Important and several essential pieces of work are missing  
Let's go to the meeting by bus no you think on foot  
Somewhere at the heart of the darkness some narrow  
Got hold of the garrison to guard the town and was about to  
Marshal but in the house of the whore who was their  
Protégée of the moment now it is Hungarian soil  
These years will thus have been spent in dreaming of satiety  
A mechanical habit the two acts of thinking and writing but  
If these symbols do not yet signify love they  
Lack at least the curve of their shell and the fuln-  
The flood-gate which had been constructed in colour  
By the inventor the specialist in fortifications translated:  
Fortifying shrieks not a foolish raid nor disputes or so little  
A period of excitement due to the novelty of the game  
The little balloon has fallen into apathy or even forgetfulness  
Tale of the marvels that he was able to accomplish is still  
Today when he was involved in it at the capture of Syracuse  
How the churches entreat you on the journey down the Saône*

28.

*For listening to what she had said to her embroidery and all  
White two others side by side holding slightly back holding  
Holding back in her expression the persistent spirals where  
Later she was to go to die four orchards in bloom  
Exactly the one that justifies any flattery as  
Most unctuously at the reappearance of steep holiday climbs  
She believed she had discovered the heart of sorrow which is the  
That which is contrary to nature but which is not the judge  
There are just enough sheets for the coming week  
An exact idea of the extent of the gradations he to us  
It is famine in the snow to tell the truth at last  
At the battle of Varay where they fought valiantly  
Each of us protected by the grasses begging  
For them to be left to him for them to be re-read once more  
“Gnawed and clutched in the hand the ears of maize he had  
Eaten” Provence where this geologist of genius shows us  
Traces of footsteps or little heaps of white ash  
In the panes of the gothic window are set  
Those at whose side having passed through so many  
Homesteads for she has seen them all the lowest the most mons-  
Truous I want to glimpse again a possible text.*

## **from Éros Energumène**

FROM ÉROS ENERGUMÈNE

Moreover these travelling expenses——all right! All  
Right! are slowly constructed as a French village,  
More than chambermaids *a descriptive unconscious*,  
The Lit-e-rasure of tropism, or litteral  
History as it is dreamt, this delivery will reach  
Harbour but no blood, no lucky fissures  
My intention of sketching the scaffolding of virtue  
Constructions for sketches yielding  
The horizon for a speech which immerses itself in  
Colza makes me say that I was about to silence too  
Unfairly: “what makes them come and whence, these  
Rumours of my own side, from these limits of my long  
First chapter, so timid leading me into the  
Arms of chambermaids? Who can translate this second  
Transcription even when I get near to  
I pretend to speak *words* to her?



He goes back to thinking of that throat come from the North  
(Whose design came from the N.) All that is a lot of  
Nonsense we should have been instructed in more  
Learned matters, e.g. he views the *study for the oak from Beaker 1*  
dated 1957 and for which he is indebted to D.B. in New-  
York. (in the same quotation, from thought to vision)  
His two miseries of knowing that she wants him  
Now and of finding in his hands again the drawing of  
Throats (breasts distracted and restless at once)  
Seem to him fairly radically unlike and when  
He tries himself in articulating them he is conscious of  
Expectation gaining on him        feels the last pose  
Of the morning and its lack of aggression slipping away:  
He is nothing more than a row of N.R.F. —————

THEATRE FOR THE ACTIVITIES OF EROS

*The play-act of love: 1st opportunity*

beyond the instruments effluxion, resembling that badly constructed phrase of our suicide  
Together at Épée-de-rose—green standard, is seen a small part of the green and random verdure of Sologne—,  
. . . not daring to give the verses a heroine lest any  
One die from such an agronomic error:

A flowered skirt creating Love at every step,  
Hides from our eyes ravishing attractions; and that  
Thigh dimpled à la Venus . . . for a thousand beauties,  
For a million lively seductions, you do nothing but  
Substitute obstacles! And that dainty slipper enclosing  
Closing the foot of Hebe, of Venus, however  
Provocative it is, is it worth her naked charms? . . .  
You lie about this, oh, bloom of my lips, haricot  
Beans and bubbles of air, the true sincerity of your  
Arse presents me several periphrases (use-  
Less now) in the shape of cork-screws.

*when faced by parenthesis:*

Love is a sentiment  
Which, through the eyes, invades the heart  
And, as a kind of effluent,  
Flows out from a lower part.

at the same time—it is a palimpsest in Time—Agrippa d’Aubigné wrote the *Adventures of Baron Foeneste*. That is to say:

“Many things the poet has not interpreted; what the eye makes out is a huge crowd of Alpine soldiers usefully occupied in the sun, sewing up all the splits in their fashionable doublets, unfreezing their Walrus moustaches—over there you see booted lackeys, a young lady who wears her girdle between navel and nipple.”

Double fiction: the writer and his age. This is proved by the fact that everyone has treated it already. Return to single fiction.

*The play-act of love: 2nd opportunity*

that  
I wiped away with the edges of a cotton napkin  
The still sharp weapon of your odour:

(here quotation from Mathurin Régnier)  
The most facile painterly corn was immediately  
Ravished when we got up.  
What poetry stuffed at last into a clay  
Pit does not love skirts from which are made  
Corks?—“Would you do me the favour,  
Mademoiselle ?—Yes, Yes, Yes!  
Of giving those two . . . I know, I know . . .”  
It was quite useless for me to put in the  
Ronds-de-jambe, the spheres, the harlequins,  
If necessary even the scale itself in token  
Of puritan cess-pit, Poetry, with a milkmaid,  
Or with the leap that an Augustine would make onto  
Such as she, will never for all that invest with these  
The garb which I assume when it is up to me alone  
to repel the assault (*sic*).

*Play-act of love: just after the second opportunity*

When one has just written phrases like those on the  
Preceding page I am planning with undergrowth my most  
Far-fetched companion to pile up my doubt like  
The pretext of a wind-mill in an  
In an antique landscape (if you can picture yourself  
As the idea of ink and paper from Imperial China  
At a period even more ancient than that to which  
The mill would have belonged) I elaborate the  
Display of this phenomenon with many resources  
Native to my imagination. As, e.g. the foot placed  
Cautiously on the edge of the bath-tub, left-hand  
Smoothing the wash-mitt down towards the folds  
Around her stomach. Etc. Of course, without this,  
What importance for verdure and fountain?  
Nothing any more would abstract from what I had  
To tell you while wrapping myself around your legs.  
Final advice: continue with the title  
Following

*Interval in the opportunities: of vowels and erosion*

“I admit that on the 20th I was in a deathly  
state” *the divine nourishment of delightful poesy*, like  
The luggage which the inn-keeper hastens to lay out,  
Acquires a certain entirely reflected light. Thunder  
Has scarcely arrived. I go over the progression brutal  
This time of the earth, earth laid waste, earth  
Whose inhabitants are dead where apricot trees remain  
Where death but not the (their) grave dug in  
Peas place of funer— apprehensions and  
So on speech being nothing.  
Is it possible that fatigue is only a kind of  
Discipline? What would make me blind when I write?  
The young accompaniments of your beauty would  
Be able to mock our colloquium not perceiving  
What our hands make of the divine nourishment  
Of delightful poesy—————

*“the Lace of Jouy” or “of triumph”*

I can find nothing more certain than the connection  
Between this fly-leaf of stretched fabric from Jouy  
And the aggressive notion of lacing which Littré  
Says is a *vat filled with acidic liquid in which*  
*A tanner laces hides in order to make them swollen.*  
D’Estrevallières fornicating with this no more has  
Hidden herself on her estate at Eu, dresses  
Turning her back to me so that I admire simultaneously  
Her flanks and the prospect of lime-trees.  
The scent of yellow buds, hers, and the fragments  
Of antique fabric clearly compel me to maintain  
A formal pose which the dictionary, falling,  
Does not disturb. What did I make of the whole thing  
Except an aerial step that leads me into a region  
Disencumbered with the room, where the fabric is  
Torn away the glottis absorbed in other flowers,  
Coming and going, densened

*After a prolonged exposure to the sun,  
Curtain*

But my gentle speech, mingling, where worse  
Existence *the second gulp assures her that*  
It is true, on the slope of my ruin, my  
Absolution. Unpretentious sinner, ribald words,  
Lewd appellation, only an enchanting mus(e)  
It continues beside me. Her resolved  
Death, the melody imagining my slow ascent  
Towards the meadows of her existence, chance  
Meeting in the mixture of this coloured  
Vision (hair-colours, beer-mugs on the stage)  
And of my sickness, all that rejoins my step  
Without audacity, hyperbole, my enjambe-  
ment from balcony to green balcony like the landscape  
I extend myself in a straight line towards a  
New collection of funeral baked meats, towards her grave anyway.  
(Detumescence-smile)



The mares that carry me away have brought me right  
to where the desires of my soul were driving.

PARMENIDES OF ELEA

1.

*The vault sustained by what puts into 1,000*

Like a top-class yachtsman, like one who  
Makes climbing-plants grow; among others  
The mountain, the chief-shepherd, the closed bosoms  
Of rows of women. Alongside this introduction,  
Admission of fantasies about the décolleté  
Of extremely virtuous saints this more than enough  
He loves  
Increasingly confronted by a verse-line that ends  
At *random* “carried off by the flux of  
Things” following this platform that no blunder  
Is an intrigue if not in the way I bring her to  
Life for myself. And further may it be granted me but

More than several rhymes to one to terminate there  
This way of giving myself to her tones, to her  
Heavy-bellied primula, to style . . .

*The vault sustained by what puts into 1,000*

2.

: that one doesn't quite have Shelley's liver nor

This steam that rises from steam that pours  
From the pump, that shades this path, in the shed  
Shows off, in the dance surrounds. That she who writes  
"That farrier that has fire on his neck", the music  
Floats bed, waves, bedclothes, and the black-  
Birds' Berline: Simultaneously set free, yet before-  
Hand having, our mews, how many mat hues return-  
Ing, mobiles of the warm, damp, air filtering  
In from outside, that it is then by mixing words  
That he totals up in meaning formula and phrase  
That the air will revive by itself (it can) in  
That handsome ephebe from the jam-packed lorry al  
Ternately Ford and MacClelland, their forehead  
Sprouting war, like a green pasture, who nourishes  
Whom? She who has no thickness except, under its hill,  
Space

"The mobile moves neither in the space it occupies  
nor in that which it does not occupy."

: that one doesn't quite have Shelley's liver nor

3.

*Link together what has gone away, such that if she*

Doesn't love me, to be fed on these moralists of  
The hair which she has recently had done in a quite  
Different style, my Apollos who pluck the last str-  
Ing's of the world's flux and of sentimenta-  
Lity, in bathing-flippers, the base of your souls,  
Like stranded flounders unfolding your god.  
Leaves to him and for a few more hours watches  
"the rocky entablature of the mountain, like a  
nest of swallows shaken by the storm (Bret  
Hart, Diamond miniature editions, 2nd series)  
. . . My wife has just remembered that she has a  
Call to pay, he said, with deliberation, sitting  
Down" Santa Claus at Simpson Bar . . .

*This bizarre incident had aroused*

The doors at which I sleep; they are two and  
Fruitful are other stables, pale horns through which  
It is easy, Virgil assures us, for the spirits to escape  
From obstruction.

*Link together what has gone away, such that if she*

4.

*society works only when I paint it only*

When in the huge artist's folder she  
Turns at last to the golden arms of my beautiful sunset.  
Her rapprochement (her rapport) when from the d\_\_\_\_\_r  
I move forward the terrible flame turns to the short ju-  
ube, the errant emetic which takes a turn around the mount-  
ings, to the plate-glass of the event; to . . .  
send in the beak for inconvenience caused, in  
Drops of rain and howling, the lark stretching out  
Its throat towards those she glimpses  
On the raft men of the raft those who still  
Endure perhaps the indecisive contest  
With others. Women tipped-off by novels?  
The signal, sent out in semaphore  
Suffices to give me back the illusion of turning toward  
The state of one who knows how to contemplate, who

*society works only when I paint it only*

5.

*“She must have taken my verses literally!” The eye doesn’t*

Allow me that, blessed be the eye!  
Sometimes you would be offering up your miseries to God  
Alone on the balcony, speaking, your gaze fixed on  
These panels, a high-flown Christian and let’s ascend  
Together toward the meadow of “guess how  
Happy I am?” Peacocks only, from over the  
Water I beseech the shapes on the blue-print  
The flank, hers, several seconds in the  
In the in the waves of tedium, breaking of  
ws. which caress our feet the blood of our  
Edition broken like some bread of affliction? Fallen  
In the end, the bed’s thunder which we lack  
Both of us: not more of garlic than of women.

*“She must have taken my verses literally!” The eye doesn’t*

TRANSLATED BY VERONICA FORREST-THOMSON

## Poem April 29 1962

*“Poetry transforms everything into words  
and into verbal signs.”*

—Novalis

1.

A. by Capdenac and Villefranche-Rouergue

B. by Capdenac and Rodez 36

from Albi to Toulouse

S.N.C.F. = Societe Nationale des Chemins de Fer Francais

“There is always a selfless citizen of Genes on his way to ask some sovereign’s pardon for idiocies committed by their republic” (*Voyage from Gratz to the Hague*, de Montesquieu; he had left Genes on 20/11/1728)

He had already said at the top of page 628: “that they harvested 36,000 barrels of oil in the marquisate, which I can scarcely believe.” (end of quotation.)

. . . generals Marbot, Lamorciere, Espinasse, Caffarelli, Bentzman, Laperrine

. . . Father Lacordaire’s bedroom and its furnishings

. . . superb park stretching up to the foot of the black mountain, bordered by a beautiful lane and surrounded by splendid masses of greenery, following the forest path that continues to climb out of the vale.

These are the enchanting walks (P&T summer resort) following up the letters before Oct. 2

Le ROBINET (page 558, § 50)

a series of charming waterfalls near some homes  
at the base of an arch 75 m long  
no geyser without special  
permission from the chief engineer who lives at  
Allauch

(You can get a good meal by calling number 63)

And now the problem of the D.I.F. (*District international Farm*):

No not because of what they spent but the place isn’t as badly located as all that (it’s on a small hill),

You see.

2.

Nearly the whole length of the coast  
There was no more majestic attraction  
The mountains covered with little houses made  
a very nice effect, but the station fell behind and disap-  
peared  
In those of Kleiner Hafner and Mannedorf (Zurich's  
lake) in one of those on Mr. See (Upper-  
Austria), in order not to undergo a violent fire  
But they obviously weren't ready  
Practically to none of these destinations.

Broken line to gauge EFGHJKLMO

Summit E  
Summit F     etc.  
Summit G     etc.  
Summit H     etc.  
Summit J     etc.  
K rail connection  
LMO natural reservoir contour to be determined

Administrative report on the ammunition remaining  
In the precincts of the royal hospitals, : Soissons,  
Being in effect one of the handsomest ensembles  
They thought to group literature with good manners  
Medical as well as *educational* discussing  
The Leger case, who had eaten the heart of a girl  
“without cooking it”;  
The Papavoine case, where two pretty children were strangled  
Though he didnt know them from Adam and Eve  
The case of Henriette Cornier who cut off the head of a  
Child  
In England the Bowler case  
In Germany the Sievert case . . .  
“if we were both standing together on a rock”

Bridge over the orchard road  
Saint-Maxence Bridge  
Basse-Grange bridge (Orleans to Tours) Bridge from  
Coururettes to Arbois, Paisia Bridge that's like a basket  
handle. Relative to the blaze of compressed  
fragments.



3.

La Ferté Macé (Aude) on lilac peak

“Chance is not a train that passes by every day  
at the same time. It’s a prostitute that offers her-  
self furtively, then passes by on someone else’s arm.” (note-  
books of Count Ciano.)

as to murders committed on railroad

102 see Rachele Peyrats ix, 28-220 . . .

Little towns like Pezenas, Uzes, Viviers

Now, when we are well, we can feel this disgust  
very easily, and, even better, we have met in the most  
pleasant spot in the forested landscape (at the moment  
when the chestnut trees are at their greenest) these can  
stretch out for km.s, at sharp angles in the road,  
in the domain of Ayerac.

After a certain time the bombardment began again,  
A leaden sun and at a slight distance from the Basque  
lines, on the borders of those you viewed as  
*skimmers* with their domestic animals and  
cattle which didn’t stop them when evening came  
Or during the afternoon siesta to exchange  
Pieces of roof-tile or some combat photographs

Wept much and left penniless, their  
rear-guard given up to mansuetude which is  
*The pathless sweetness and the thirst at the end of  
the year*

Thanks to:

—The *Air Rallies* as well as the crew of the  
Jessup barricade who were in committee then;  
—Helene B. who has been dear to me;  
—Heaven for having permitted me to follow so  
closely the *Mobile Hunger Committees*

4.

Saint-Denis near Mattel (dining-room opening directly onto the platform, but it closes at midnight)  
To his violence and his frenzies: you are supposedly  
Inclined to flee them to avoid this spectacle during  
which a legitimate terror overtakes you and makes you run  
away at last.

“resort of sorrow and regeneration.”

A little further on, Junney must set up ware-  
houses; they’ll fan out over more than 600 ha. where  
After fifteen days still passing an alsatian hayst-  
ack.

Appleton by Co.

C.c. Journey Junior will take account of your pledges, for  
He holds back everything on his journey (or respect?)

*Trust C.c. Journey Junior all yr. long!*

Question (?)

WHAT NOVELS DO YOU WRITE?

“however on his face that he saw in the distance” . . . he  
Pursued his daydream for several moments before be-  
ginning to write again in front of his wide-open window  
Feeling himself half-dead perhaps because of the  
heat.

Julie: “I think it’s the children  
coming back, I’ll take them to the li-  
brary for you in fifteen minutes if you want . . .” Here  
occurs a crossed-out section in Julie’s manu-  
script To be revised later

3/ the story of that flyer’s dispersed body was  
scarcely realistic. He couldn’t find himself exact-  
ly *beneath that apple tree*, could he?

4/ hernandez 118.

Reviewing Julie’s clothes on the back of the  
Chair, within reach of the bathtub *distressing*  
taste in linens = “colossal representation—  
colossal space”, have to write some lips beneath your  
mound, Julie, since they’re of a clearly fore-  
seen beauty

narrow house hidden by a heavy  
curtain of trees from the eyes of the habitual strol-  
lers by the creek

Because it's not so far from the industrial complex belonging to *Q Valley*, is it?

5.

Streaming with water she called to me from the balcony

Ah see who's living at the Count's now, near  
the canal, fishing again from up in his window . . . ?  
This rough, broken region where I go down through the forest  
To cross the river in the opposite direction, guiding myself  
By the sun's rays  
I keep a fond memory of that pile and its  
Round towers  
On the terrace a monument to the poet of Rouergue François  
Pabie (1846–1928) by Marc Robert (1933)

A few more cliffs and we are there.

*Social History of Extracting*, Ch. Plimer-Mordayle  
*A Page from Cultural History*, unpublished  
*1933 Custom Magazine*.

TRANSLATED BY MARC LECARD

## **from Prose Ahead of a Woman**

I had reached the middle of the park when something changed in the oblong arena of the landscape I was watching. It was rather far ahead in front of me, slightly to the right, along the path which comes up from the tennis courts, in the direction of the local road. And while a horse appeared with a lady rider, I couldn't help but, I was only able to compare my field of vision—and I still feel it as I think about it—to a vast attic window with softly rounded angles, greyish and moth-eaten by the interior penumbra of the mind, the one which represses by degrees the brilliance of the world we see and which at times extinguishes it, a bit as one must surely see flickering and then go out in an invisible flight of smoke the portrait of a loved one enclosed in the pocket of a wallet or the firefly which dies because it had emerged too early on before nightfall.

I later learned that the rider's name was Blanche Castle, a character in this story who had found it appropriate, according to the initial outline, to give me a number of details concerning this young woman, knowing that I would need them later on as a narrative commodity, but also because of the desire for this type of need and all the information which was going to complete her character; in the same way that, in reality, the future lover knows he'll have to accumulate as many details as possible, pieces of information, paid for on a prorata basis of an enterprise becoming more imminent from day to day, all that "necessary material" around seduction, having for its solitary goal the dilation of time, to make of it a vertiginous moment half-way between the first meeting and the first caresses, between the glance and the touch. I must admit that, standing in the midst of this large grassy square, I had already begun to think about it, I envisaged a mix-up over the clothing, not because they were going to be removed, but because they were belted and double-breasted or buttoned up, that is to say, at a stage where all ideas of precariousness had been excluded; I joined to these parcels of images, cohorts of details, fluctuations in narrative verisimilitude, among those which sinuously rise in the slow and so suave overexcitement of the imagination.

Conscious of this obligation whose initial effects were only then beginning to be felt, I looked out firmly, one might say, forced into this profit, this person who slowly began to be called Blanche Castle, who was slowly coming towards me in the slow pace of her horse, brought here both by the weather and the dramatic action, both offering to me, on a pebbled tray, here and there pierced by some incongruous grass whose only destiny in this world was or was not to be crushed under the hooves of this fictitious horse.

I remained motionless, but that was all.

Despite the whirl of the moment and the absolute light of the sun on this scene, I was aware of the repetitive absence of sound, or should I rather say, of a continuous absence of all sounds. But can one say about the absence of sound that it detonates?

No horse's clippity-clop, whose hooves nevertheless I saw strike the ground, no crackling of the silex on the path, though these noises certainly had occurred, borne under this chestnut beast and propagating all around the shape of invisible orbs, as true as the ocellates of peacocks, stretching to the point of crushing themselves against the fences, closing in, enribboned around tree trunks, coiling as so many tender reptiles or languid whips at the angle of the abbey's main building, or else finishing up by fainting for lack of strength, having forgotten their conviction in the air or the light.

When both horse and woman were no more than a few yards away from me, it was for me no longer possible to take in the inventory: the horse, the robe on the horse; the woman, the robe on the woman; the color of it all, the colors of the flesh and the clothes; the gait of the one and the carriage of the other.

TRANSLATED BY SERGE GAVRONSKY

## from Le Mécrit

### STRUGGLE AND ERASURE

So I've had my say, I've put my word end to end with those that hadn't forewarned, those that hurt, those that will weigh heavy in the balance, those that are mistakes, those that make the po-heads barf, the poetillitos, the prose-eketizers, pots (oh poets!), psoets, co-pokes, copaws, pawers-of-being, cowardly co-riders, noise wetters, shitty cadencers of all hues, line-recitors my friends, my buddies (oh poets!) of posy, fine flowers, fine flies, fine rimesters, friends cousins pizzle rooters for Racine pissing by the rule, akas of writhicating . . .

I've had my say. I'm at the end of this beshitten trip where I had all and everything to say. My error all along, I was bored stiff, always lifting my pencil after the passing ladies, line after line blowing up in my face, speaking of my bragging pricks high-flutin' it in the white of the margins, denouncing comedies and falsifiers in a race to the finish, grabbing the piggybank, shtupping flower after flower; I therefore announce, between two books, that it's over. And how!

[ . . . . . ]

The race! The noise's so loud, head on I'll get you, popish paparazzi, even in a sack race, I've put up with too much, I've seen the fat pampered pustules popping, the nonassaillant war, the apostrophes planted like stakes doing the honor guard all the way to the coliseum, the patent and sham factory, discouraging, banquet after banquet, I've seen all that necking with the high shits, copanthropi and carpet-beggars throwing cloths and elzevirs over the windmills. For crying out loud, Marianne's buggered to the hilt, phrygian from before the caesarian, knocked up by wind-farters of pose-etry. Scuffed stogies, together we float level with the green balconies, fence-jumpers of the inbetween, you and I don't give a damn, half-catching, half-splitting, the prose-ol'-pop-eia and the poul-try there they rest in the nettles, popefigures of the H.C. on the mat, poetry's for the nerds, dingeling dongos too, absolved are Sully's teats, epic outlaws, sonnets, sonobuoys, bell tunes, fingerbowl caesuras . . . Ugh, I've had it. Deafening music.

Of course none of this should ever have been said. I tip my hat to my friends. I stop running, not that much out of breath, finally, I begin again to sautner along various buildings, the *viale* that spins a bit, wistaria in flower to the left, and further along, there are doorways, they are too white-washed. The air whisks me away, but I sit soberly where I belong, accepting the homage that's due. Minor patrols here and there, behind the flight of stairs, bimbos outside, thighs swollen for having been savagely pressed by the tips of my fingers. The obelisk in the factory's yard, I'll piss all over it (but I'll say it in verse, of course), splattering a few drops, it's always like that, on the banderole to which I'll add tonight: "Poetry's croaked, moth-eaten in small squares, may God have . . .

21 May 1972

TRANSLATED BY PIERRE JORIS

## Selections for *Poems & Texts*

1

Very spoiled in their home in landscapes of this type  
But about the world even from birth to hidden genius  
Captain black warrior? Ditto god of war where  
Whether it's a question of bottle tops or canoes in  
Small numbers hands are in fact instruments and  
Here she had climbed straight to her room she  
Whether it's a question of the beloved in search of shelter  
Or else the torso so evocative of your voluptuaries  
As it is also by the movements of those bodies because  
A few knights without baggage who were leaving in  
The open fields one hundred or a thousand the orchids  
Tired shake to the ground this gigantic hat of  
Skull in quest of ordinary flowers that embellished you if  
This violent taste for darkness linking the  
Virtues that I discover and where this quality is found  
At least the favor of stifling this physical instinct  
All right you'll always be my guardian angel what  
Leisure and riddled with furious strokes and nails  
Slashing I do not know how much these little-known sensations  
To see you to live and one word that you would scribble  
Laura put me one day on top of round leafy hills

2

Perceptibly the forms that we are going to describe and  
Imagine it was necessary to point them out first  
Due to the chronology that may allow a vague  
Undulation for the most primitive forms. One owes  
Deaths or rocks of the shore to watch the feed  
To tender me at the tip of his stump a tender bouquet  
Of roses fed forced by a maritime alum the largest  
And the handsomest collection of winter posts  
Having been obtained by dredging rivers which  
Had happily preserved precious documents  
Attire themselves to attract it sometimes in radiating these  
Small thick plants proliferated so sweetly that these  
Last spent their days stuck to trees  
These stained glass windows are vibrant a sacramental virtue  
These countless lighted candles go about in short  
Sleeves the heat becoming at each instant so precise



That to be there means the last fox that will be suckled by her  
Without any doubt a question that can be discussed which  
Goes turning away his eyes from the divine cathedral  
Perfume for the Mariette she was cold immaterial  
Oh waving of the drawing of her hand that I hold at

3

A man of strong passions and capricious energy  
What is especially striking in these beautiful forests of the straits  
Is the most complete absence of any life with colors and  
Noises either these number among the terrified  
It was true that they had laughed at the time of departure and  
Furthermore that animals answer to a tropism that is ended  
He was not high enough for the parachute  
To see this shadow or even the other but this last one  
Being too stretched out it was out of the question  
The mental asceticism of the monk to allow him to dominate  
Especially the door of the world that the world beats within him and  
In the distance behind the sandy bay of Bidassoa  
Closes the view just because it is there  
The violet colossus of the mountain the mauve face of the sky  
And the peaks feed for an instant sure of what is good  
From Zafer Papoura Knossos. 4th shape similar to the pre-  
ceding with outstretched winglets in the shape of a thick volume  
Bare wasted summer clothing begins at the hips crests  
Horizontal not stretched horizontally but oblique  
Still another farewell always moving away farewell the sea which  
Surrounds it but it remains at the bottom of our hearts.

4

I am mundanely amused friendly sylphs and all  
And all the words were spoken softly calmly  
Obscure whose nocturnal cry is considered like or  
The other the "gray garza" or egret which is the  
Royal bird of the archipelagoes soon through the soft cotton-  
The scar of its limbs and the stigmata of its voice  
Forty-two leaves but only three on the verso  
If he arrived with his coat stuck to him it was  
That then you came to dine without bringing anything except  
Your unequalled kindness and your pleasant smile to  
Speak to me with your milky voice and of generations.  
The only value of such a chat is to

Recruit for us a few salutary illusions or complaints  
While they turn males appear who piv-  
Ot with the crown of their glorious past  
Thinking immensely the why and the how in  
If you are still the same old miller with a kind heart  
The women. He made me sit down at his right to stress  
Upon which they build thousands of nests jux-  
Taped in observation on the dead branches that sup-  
Port so much waddling and so much weighing.

5

The young girl asks: Mother will I still dream to-  
Night about the festooned indians fixed to the rock between the le-  
Vel of half—tide and low water tell me Mother?  
The same name of tagua live in sea waters: the one  
At the instant could be trained and all its life which was long  
“don’t you think Father that it’s more certain  
Finished he entered the courtyard of the temple in silence it is  
Thus that in each region the potter must get his supplies  
Cf the report of the 18: we are forging ahead of those who. . .”  
A corbeil its pilasters and its profiled mantelpiece then  
Cutting the roof of the wide bays tri- and even quadri-  
And abruptly the flat surface stops as if it were broken  
Reward for fifteen years of punctual courses let us say  
Had the same feeling that their happiness made her  
Sad are you not young lady loved in silence  
Deserving lover who gives me the tops of her thighs?  
Further especially to the fish-gills the liquid  
Augustine what then were those barolanies that you gave  
Him and shouldn’t you have taught me a few of its techniques?  
Are forever wishing for something that they  
Will have no peace from having described some promise

She no longer has my holidays directly  
And through her will my most movable images  
Doleful doleful fortresses with circular limbs  
That she looked at tenderly and with humor  
With the same step as the servants the same step  
That the subjects on the fixed day were gathered  
In my righteous brain toward her valley  
I had “met her at the ball among those madwomen”  
To belong to history and to be torn

Or else despite the water which swallowed them  
In front of my flowers that go into exile  
But persuaded that this provision would be better  
To be inscribed among other rituals  
Before anything else that they're very quickly near  
Some secondary branches of the reservoir  
In fact it is the first of the important measures  
As for me, it is my custom to dispose of it thus

Monsieur the truly royal pilot said:  
“no roses in the bottles along my path”  
as he breathes the clean smell of earth  
which slides in at the beginning of this heat  
we shall round it out by this nature which  
cannot abide remaining at home and  
brings to the people that his memory has forgotten  
food on the fire, in short figures without logi-  
cal links with reality, and these figures would have  
assumed an entirely human form, whereas in  
his poet's eyes the forests and the reefs  
had had no need to do it, he left  
running and met them at the moment when they  
reached the intersection  
they were also looking at the storm through the windows

Monsieur the truly royal pilot vanished  
In front of the mirror he had not left, and  
For his part saw no immorality to take  
To task the witnesses of the game: they felt themselves  
Impotent, they could never love each other,  
Neither could they ever satisfy themselves at least  
I prefer to imagine that here it is a question of suc-  
cessive states or of intermediary dispositions,  
The one and the other walking in the room,  
The thought that they are mad, in the unison of  
Their shadows carried unconscious where the sky  
Is at one with the sea (after having furnished it  
With a bizarre conduction) they breathe as  
If they finally felt at ease in space  
Whereupon she undid her sash and hung it  
On the branches

Monsieur the truly royal pilot your  
Martial ardor is therefore an evil power  
Burdened by the little apple of her modesty,  
She returns to her vegetable preeminence, and her  
Stubbornness is the reason she will shed these tears  
Of pulsation of empires, I see her coming  
Toward me through the cellophane of consent  
Will I discreetly question her about her  
Desire? We now need to take care of our own  
Life  
While the fleeing storm pursued  
For the still-born love of honor  
On the softness of a bed of heather

After having thus manifestly my reality  
Where one arrives by crossing the Agouti on a bridge  
Gothic (imitated) after the latrines a covered ring  
Crown for his daughter who in turn destroys me  
If she wants to and finds me pleasing  
As for those who profess my leprosy as an  
Ideal thing and wholly imaginary let them  
Sit one next to the other and their yard stick is in  
Hand. Let us return to those first moments of the time re-  
Movable  
We are already at the eighths, like shouldering  
In the direction of a girl on the way to the hotel  
Preciously grasping a rubber band then  
Lifting herself on snares in the throat always  
More savage uncle and aunt manuelines I have  
A terrible need to remember accurately

TRANSLATED BY SERGE GAVRONSKY

## Notes from *New French Poetry: An Anthology*

BY C.A. HACKETT

Denis Roche was born on November 25, 1937, in Paris. His childhood was spent in Venezuela, Trinidad, and Brazil where he attended a school run by the Dominicans at Bahia. He returned to France in 1946 and continued his education at the Oratorian school, Juilly. After a year (1953) at the Collège Stanislas in Paris, he went on to study medicine from 1954 to 1962. His first poems appeared in 1961 in the review *Locus Solus*, and the next year he joined the editorial board of *Tel Quel*. He published his first volume of poems *Récits complets* in 1963. *Les Idées centésimales de Miss Élanize*, which appeared the following year, was awarded the Prix Fénéon. His third volume *Éros énergumène*, a series of poems which he calls 'une manière d'introduction . . . a un système d'autodestruction', was published in 1968; and he is now preparing four volumes of poetry under the general title *La Poésie est inadmissible*. He has translated Ezra Pound's *Cantos* and *A.B.C. of Reading*, as well as poems by John Ashbery, Robert Creeley, and Charles Olsen; and he is at present editing the complete works of Dylan Thomas.

The poetry of Denis Roche is essentially an anti-poetry, and his evolution as a writer has been determined by his belief that poetry is 'inadmissible'. All his *Poèmes* (a word that serves as sub-title to each of his three volumes) are directed, often with subtlety and humour, against a certain kind of 'Poésie'—lyrical, symbolist, and surrealist—which, in his opinion, expresses the ideology of a decadent bourgeois civilisation. Most of his work, which resembles a vast bewildering collage, can be read, and enjoyed, as a parody—and pastiche—of every known style and genre of French poetry from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Love, or rather eroticism, the main element in it, is parodied on several levels and in a variety of styles; but the intention is serious, namely, to deprive of all mystique and glamour the kind of love which is the obsession of modern man, and to show that it, like poetry and literature, is a *product* of capitalist society. In *Éros énergumène*, however, the deliberate misuse of literary themes, allusions, and devices is so obvious and systematic that it ceases to be effective as an instrument of subversion. Until now Denis Roche, an intellectual dandy, has played an equivocal game of affirming while denying, exploiting while undermining bourgeois literature and values. There is a risk, however, that, instead of creating a new and revolutionary technique, he may become the victim of his own virtuosity; and, like the surrealists he despises, ironically have to suffer the 'réupération' (a favourite *Tel Quel* word) of his best poems in bourgeois anthologies!

### NOTES

#### *Récits complets*

The following quotations, used as epigraphs to this volume, explain the ironic title and give some indication of the author's technique:

‘O rare instinct, quand donc entendrai-je un récit complet? Cet orageux abrégé est touffu de détails qui réclament une minutieuse distinction’ (Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, Act V, sc. v).

‘Cet angle exprime le coin de l’oeil nécessaire et suffisant’ (Marcel Duchamp).

The first quotation asks the reader’s bewildered question; the second gives the author’s answer. One of the functions of these ‘Recits’, which deliberately are never completed, is to make the reader feel that the act of reading, the wish to know what happens next, is itself an erotic act or relationship.

*A toute extrémité . . .*

From the first section entitled ‘Vingt-deux poèmes pour Ophélie’. This ‘Invitation au voyage’, or ‘Suivez le guide’, is a witty blend of echoes from Verlaine’s *Fêtes galantes*, Surrealism, T. S. Eliot’s poetry, and empty sophisticated conversation; and the second half of the poem echoes Denis Roche’s own statement in the *avant-propos* about a journey: ‘cet air d’innocence que donnent les allées bien plantées d’un parcours terrestre où l’on peut parler de jeux ou de robes, sans angoisse.’

*Parlez-moi vite Madame . . .* and the next poem *Madame je n’ai pas encore rejoint . . .*

Two poems from the sixth section, a series of ten texts with the general title ‘La poésie est une question de collimateur’—a *collimateur* being a collimating lens, which changes rays of light into a parallel beam, and is used in sighting a telescope or a rifle. In place of a title, the date and duration of the composition of each poem are given. Thus, the first of these two poems, written on February 7, 1961, took eleven minutes to write, and the second, written the same day, only seven minutes! While illustrating the remarkable efficiency of Denis Roche’s poetic sights or lens, these pseudo-indications are a derisive comment on ‘inspiration’.

*Les Idées centésimales de Miss Élanize*

This volume, like *Récits complets*, is a *miscellanée*. The play on words doubtless suggested the name of Miss Élanize the female figure who, according to Roche, represents ‘débordement’ and ‘fécondité’.

*La Vache*

From the section ‘Kandinsky à venir’. As well as taking one of Kandinsky’s early paintings *Die Kuh* (1910), now in the State Gallery, Munich, as the subject of the poem, Roche is perhaps also thinking of the passage in *Du spirituel dans l’art* where Kandinsky, discussing the colour green, says that it resembles ‘la vache grasse, saine, couchée et ruminante, capable seulement de regarder le monde de ses yeux vagues et indolents’. *La Vache*, seen as both an ‘espace pictural’ and a ‘méthode de lecture’, echoes Kandinsky’s profound interest in colours and shapes and their action on the spectator. The poem is a tribute at once ironic and sincere to a painter whom Roche admires as the ‘brillant théoricien’ and author of *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche*.

*Éros énergumène*

This volume, says Roche, ‘porte sur ces formes du discours narratif que l’on nomme encore, sans doute par des impotences de lecture, “poésie”’.

*Le verbe ayant produit l'artie . . .*

line 2: an allusion, like 'fromages' at the end, to La Fontaine's 'La Cigale et la Fourmi'. A poetic genre, the fable, is parodied and attacked, as well as lyricism, the Muse, and inspiration.

line 13: *gorets* : besides meaning 'little pigs' or 'dirty little urchins', an allusion to an imperfect rhyme (consisting merely of assonance), and which Sibilet termed 'rime de village'.

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