REVIEWS

René Girard. *Job: the Victim of his People*. Translated by Yvonne Freccero. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987.

1987 seems to have been a good year for René Girard: Stanford University Press published English translations of both the book under review (original title: *La Route antique des hommes pervers*, Paris: Grasset, 1987) and his *magnum opus Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde* (Paris: Grasset, 1987) as well as two essay collections pertaining to Girard's *"anthropologie fondamentale"* (*Violent Origins*, ed. Robert G. Hamerton-Kelley and *Violence and Truth*, ed. Paul Dumochel). Perhaps this is a sign that at least the American social scientists by whom Girard has been "so disappointed" (see *Paroles Gelées*, Vol. 5 (1987), p.11) are beginning to take notice of the radical and compelling thought of this literary critic *cum* anthropologist whose reputation in France is so well established. *Job: the Victim of his People* should help Girard's American reputation immensely: not only is it a concise exposition of his theory of the violent origins of human culture, the meaning of myth, and the anthropological revelations enabled by *l'écriture Judéo-Chrétienne*, it also suggests how powerful a tool of cultural critique Girard's scheme can be — and, by contrast, reveals some of the inadequacies of other currents of contemporary thought.

As might be expected, Girard's interpretation of the Book of Job contradicts almost every tradition and received opinion about the text: instead of representing a just man's cogitation on the source of evil or a tract on the rewards of patience, Job, especially in the Dialogues, discloses the scapegoat mechanism which structures both social order and religious belief in his community. Despite what we

are told in the Book's prologue and epilogue, argues Girard, the cause of Job's misfortunes is revealed by the Dialogues as neither "divine, satanic nor physical, but merely human" (3); Job's wealth and status have aroused his neighbors' envy and thereby polarized "a universal hatred" against him, resulting in his becoming "the scapegoat of his community" (5). One of Job's "friends," Eliphaz of Teman, calls this transfiguration from idol to scapegoat "the ancient trail trodden by the wicked" (14), a phrase which is for Girard emblematic of the way myth mystifies history, concealing the fact of the lynching of an innocent, arbitrarily chosen victim behind a carefully worked out story of the great man's sins, acknowledgement of culpability, and punishment at the hands of "just men" who "do God's will" (22-23). Though great care is taken to expunge any hint of the persecutors' culpability, Girard finds that careful textual exegesis can recover the traces of historical reality that spawned the myth. And since, in Girard's view, all myths hide an instance of scapegoating, they are all "persecution texts" — cunningly crafted lies designed to exonerate the persecutors from any wrongdoing.

The Book of Job, Girard reasons, must have begun as a myth: this accounts for the "sacralized" (55) discourse which diverts attention from the human cause of Job's misery which he repeatedly identifies in the Dialogues. Yet the Book of Job is also an *anti*-myth: Girard demonstrates this by comparing the Dialogues to Sophocles' myth of Oedipus. To Girard, myth presents Oedipus as a "successful scapegoat"(35): the Thebans' plague, according to the mythmakers, is the result of the king's sins of incest and parricide, and Oedipus' blinding and expulsion are the just penance for his sin against the gods and his community. For Girard, the victim's confession crystallizes myth's crucial function for persecutors: the confession brings about "an absolute faith in the victim's total power of evil that liberates the persecutors from reciprocal recriminations and, therefore, is identical with an absolute faith in the total power of good" (34). Oedipus' wholehearted assent to his own victimization effectively hides his innocence, making his success as a scapegoat a function of his never being acknolwedged as such. Job, however, is a "failed scapegoat" (35) precisely because his text portrays his refusal to acknowledge the "wickedness" imputed to him by his friends reveals him to be a scapegoat: therefore Job "derails the mythology that is meant to envelop him, by maintaining his own point of view in the

face of the formidable unanimity surrounding him" (35). The Book of Job is therefore consistent with Girard's overall interpretation of *l'écriture Judéo-Chrétienne;* the Bible, by repeatedly allowing victims to speak, emerges as a kind of demystifying gloss on myth and ritual: it both recovers historical fact from mythical distortion and exposes the ethical superiority of "the truth of the victim" (108).

Such a conclusion is plain to Girard; in Job, however, of equal if not greater importance is why the world has so consistently failed to see it. Girard offers his explanation of this misreading, and not surprisingly, analyzes it in the rigorously logical terms of the scapegoating mechanisms developed in his discussions of Job and Oedipus. For example, the failure of contemporary human sciences to see "the mechanism of collective violence even in a text where it is displayed as spectacularly as in the Dialogues of Job" stems from the subordination of their "methods of analysis and ways of discrimination" to "scapegoat mechanisms" (104). The scapegoat mechanism to which contemporary criticism is subordinate Girard identifies as a "delirious differentialism" which "by distinguishing no difference among differences," finally "dispels itself in insignificance and boredom" (103), dismissing the "very real horrors of history" represented by the Dialogues as "only a metaphor" (105).

Were this dismissal limited to the domain of textual criticism, it could scarcely offend; but Girard's awareness moves quickly through the textual to the ethical:

> The current desire to "respect differences" reaches the point of putting all "truths" on the same level. It basically eliminated the very idea of truth, seeing it only as a source of conflict. . . . Avoiding participation is a deception. Any pretence at *impassiveness,* whether stoic, philosophic, or scientific, perpetuates the *status quo,* prolongs the occulting of the scapegoat, and makes us effective accomplices of the persecutors. (107)

Those familiar with Girard's past work have no doubt always seen such an insight lurking just behind Girard's exposition of the connection between ritual, myth, sacrifice, and his thesis of the violent unanimity which marked what he called in *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore, 1977) the "homonization" of the species. In *Job,* however, Girard seems no longer content to skirt the challenging implications of what in this book emerges as a *bona fide* hermeneutic

for understanding more than just myth and primitive religion. In this sense, *Job* seems to herald a new direction for Girard's career: more than ever, he seems convinced of the correctness of his theory, and, as a consequence, ready to grapple with a fundamental anthropology of modernity. My only disappointment with *Job* is that Girard just hints at this readiness: other than the fairly full and well developed critique of modern ethnology, Girard only scatters through his text glimpses at the parallels between Job's world and our own, as in the section of the book entitled "The Victim's Confession." In a chapter called "A Totalitarian Trial," Girard likens the necessity for Job's avowal of his crimes to the " 'spontaneous confession' so precious to dictatorial societies" and generalizes from there to say that:

> everything I have said about a religious regime can and should be applied to other regimes as well — if not, properly speaking, to a judiciary regime, then to police states and totalitarian governments. (114)

If *Job: the Victim of his People* presages more of this line of thinking, it seems that Girard's theory cannot help but be noticed, especially by those impatient with the more nihilistic conclusions of some currents of contemporary thought. Whether such notices come or not, however, is finally irrelevant: Girard's book is in itself an excellent and concise introduction to both the present scope and future potential of his thought.

Matthew Schneider, UCLA

Gérard Genette. *Seuils*. Paris: Seuil, Coll. Poétique, 1987.

Paratext = epitext + peritext. This equation sums up the main articulation of Genette's latest book, *Seuils*, in which he offers us a vast account of what is peripheral, but by no means unessential, to a literary text's body. With his usual acuity of vision and terminological precision, he classifies, mainly along functional lines, all these elements which constitute the thresholds of reading, which filter our engagement with the text at hand. Title, preface, postface, chapter titles, epigraphs, being all in physical conjunction with the text, constitute the peritextual. What is cut off from the book as unit — interviews, self-review, spontaneous comments of the author regarding his work — makes up the epitextual. With a great wealth of often

curious details seasoned with subtle witticisms, Genette develops a catalogue of these devices by examining the horizons of expectation they instill in the reader. Although the book mainly deals with nineteenth and twentieth-century paratextuality, it flirts with the impossible by giving a diachronic and cosmopolitan concern to its investigations.

Since he uses the term himself in an ironic denigration of so much effort, it is not unfair to Genette to qualify this compendium as *harassant*. It reads better as a dictionary than as a continuous whole. Its hurried pace, which the author often laments, always leaves one expecting more analytical depth, a desire fostered by the many side-glances and suggestions betraying the critical intelligence we know Genette to be. Dedicated as he is to the restrictive nature of his project, which is typological and descriptive, he seems to be sacrificing to it his vast talent for extensive theoretical discussion.

But, however frustrating for the reader proclivious to prolonged theoretical voyaging, Genette's restraint is pregnant with the allure of a manifesto. His tone can become cuttingly ironic when he refers to the visionary excesses of French literary and critical movements of the sixties and seventies. His derision, more salient for being muffled, is nevertheless tempered by his intimate acquaintance with, for lack of a better term, "avant-garde" manifestations. His enthusiasm for recent paratextual practices, which punctuates the terseness of his observations, alleviates a tendency to snigger which often seems a bit supercilious. His urgings toward the laying down of solid foundations on which literary discourse can build should be welcome to those of us who are concerned with signification, a process so complex that many would rather dismiss it as transparent rather than question its pernicious ease. Genette's exhortation to the study of the paratext can thus fruitfully be construed as a new call for theoretical exigence. After all, this is a period where theory is being scoffed at in the name of a pragamatics which seeks to get back to the discovery of the buried jackpot of the signified, and to put to rest the *mauvaise conscience* of those who insist that that which most makes sense is often indicial of the beam in one's eye.

These comments, however, are not meant to enroll Genette on the side of the academics struggling to vindicate the advances which psycho-analytic and post-deconstructive criticism have initiated in our complacent institutional hallways. He clearly states that the respective claims of those representing these tendencies leave him

assez perplexe. He continually speaks of an ascertainable authorial intentionality propelling texts onward. But, victim of some mysterious scrupple, he is careful to reserve the last pages of his book to qualify the *dessin de l'auteur* as a *croyance*, a belief system which is closer to an ideology than to a truth. It is in the paratext, especially in its prefatorial aspect, that this creed finds its most rooted expression, and Genette's program calls for a meticulously tooled research into the mechanisms promulgating it: "Pour l'accepter [l'action du paratexte], mais aussi pour [la] refuser, mieux vaut la percevoir en toute lumière."

It is sad that Genette's authoritative pronouncements do nothing to indicate whence such a *lumière* might originate. Inasmuch as it is typical of the book's constant refusal to take frank positions, its last paragraph deserves careful attention for its blurry complexity, its skillfull rhetorical manipulations, and as the explicit commentary of the *slogan simple*: "attention au paratexte!" Besides, it is itself implicated in paratextuality in a way Genette does not recognize in the body of his work (there is no room for the conclusion in his typology).

Physically, all last paragraphs are poised on the lip of a paradoxical abyss, a lip through which is voiced the silence necessary for the scriptor/reader exchange to occur. Genette consciously plays on this eminently specular moment in a text's reading, and puts twenty years of literary critical endeavors into the abyss to apparently offer his own prescriptions which, upon scrutiny, leave one rather *perplexe*. Initially, he launches an attack on the past advocates of the *Texte clos*, who have idolized, fetishized the object of their attention. The Freudian and Marxist connotations of the term *fétiche* are not digested by the critic's usually so controlled developments. We are simply told that the paratext should not in turn become fetishized, a self-contained idol, a tutelar divinity. Immediately, however, a blatant contradiction slips in. This paratext which has been granted the virtue to open an illusionary textual unity, is branded an auxiliary, an accessory to the Text. As Derrida has shown, such notions of supplementarity ineluctably instal the logocentric presence of the God to which they bow, and the ancient idol *Texte clos* is resoundingly restored as object to be venerated. An (unhappy?) image then follows, metamorphosing the paratext into the cornac of the text, the elephant it prods along. Without this cornac, the pachyderm is termed a *puissance infirme*, and, without its subservient mammoth,

the cornac a *parade inepte*. If everything falls into place, we may assume that the ponderous ceremony will make its festive, solemn way through the streets of our city to finally reach a Golden Temple. Is it fair to ask to whose or what exotic God it is dedicated? Baroquely, this simile is extended to the critical activity: the critic produces a para/paratexte, becomes the cornac of a cornac: "Aussi le discours sur le paratexte doit-il ne jamais oublier qu'il porte sur un discours qui porte sur un discours, et que le sens de son objet tient à l'objet de ce sens, qui est encore un sens." Genette had earlier compared the paratextual phenomenon to a water-lock, allowing ordered transitions from one domain to another. But this urge to make the intentionality of intention become apparent is itself so involuted that a radical drift ensues, an unpredictable current going forward and backward at the same time, as some Euripus waiting treacherously to drown its would-be lucid Aristotle. To conjure away this dangerous *dérive*, the text finally comes to a stop epigramatically, referring to its title, paratextually aware of its liminarity but conceptually burrying *seuil* in an ontologically denegative statement, *ne . . . que*: "Il n'est de seuil qu'à franchir." The *seuil* is because it isn't, appears because it disappears within the movement of reading. The *sententia* therefore brings back to the fore the problematic of *clôture* and, for that matter, of opening. But it once more undermines the indeterminacy it proposes against the advocates of the *Texte clos* by suspending itself on the blankness of ending, the paginal, physical demonstration of *clôture*.

As exhortation to the study of the paratext, this intricate gesturing is far from encouraging. The *lumière* which would guide us onward is flickering, refusing to take definite positions and foreboding a sinister exhaustion at the very *seuil* of the territory to be explored.

Marc-André Wiesmann, UCLA

The 1988 UCLA French Symposium: *French Writers / Foreign Texts*

The slash dividing the two antagonistic parties of this title preserves the notion of strict mutual exclusion while also connoting a reluctant overlapping, a kind of resisted alliance. Additional lexical niceties make of the slash a locus for meditation. In English, its technical name is "virgule", the French for "comma". The dissonance thus

created by the clash of semantic values of the same word in two different idioms acquires a visual dimension: the straight slanted line, impassable barrier, is undermined by the conciliatory bridging implied by the curving lip. This union, peering beneath the mark of exclusion, was the thematic linking our participants' interventions, and the virgule the emblematic bridge they were seeking to elucidate, the type of bridge which Heidegger has described in these terms:

> It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. . . . It brings stream and bank and land into each other's neighborhood.[1]

The first pair of participants, Jonathan Culler and Marjorie Perloff, stood on the French shore to examine how it was and is being constituted by this vaulting between itself and its American other. As Perloff reminded us, *américain*, for the French, is a definite linguistic entity not to be confused with English or British. Culler reentered an often travelled territory, the literary relations between Poe and Baudelaire, to examine how they were to decisively shape the new visage of French poetics. He traced suggestive networks of thematic filiations between the American's short stories and *Petits poèmes en prose*. Culler noted how, very often, Baudelaire's text follows a concern evident in a body of Poe's short-stories in order to generate a prose poem. For instance, some of the least appreciated of Poe's stories (*The Power of Words*, *Loss of Breath*, etc. . .) reflect on how utterance can produce an event, how an initial pun spells out the plot lines of a story. Such an obsession with language's influence upon "reality" is prevalent throughout the *Petits poèmes*. In "Le gallant tireur", for example, the cliché *tuer le temps* is given literal presence: a marksman shoots in order to while away a few moments. In his analysis of the famous "Un mauvais vitrier", Culler went further in underlining this taste of Baudelaire for the *calembour en action*. He suggested that the *pot de fleurs*, the acrimoniously unjust hero uses against the *vitrier*, can be read as a very complex *calembour*, where the *pot* evokes Poe, and the *fleurs* pull in paratextual considerations refering to the title *Fleurs du Mal*. The *pot de fleurs* used as a projectile is indeed "des fleurs qui font du mal". While many would shrug off these observations as the oversubtle divagations of the critic, Culler marshalled evidence which can only con-

found the sceptics. Too often, and this is Culler's implicit commentary, punning is dismissed as gratuitous merrymaking. Baudelaire, however, is fond of the *calembour* because it points to a necessity, a correspondance between the productive capabilities of poetic texts and the hoped-for cosmic oneness which would dispel the painful drifts, the irreconciliable scars of alterity. In this perspective, Poe's name itself is a performative actualizing the POET and his emancipation through poetry, making him necessary in a world which cruelly casts him off as an epiphenomenon. But punning also points to the fact that within language there exists a process of intralingual translation, as Jakobson terms it, which interprets linguistic signs by means of other signs. As Derrida insists, language is always at war with itself, and "there exists a violent love-hate relationship between letter and spirit, which is already a problem of translation within the original text"[2]. Unfortunately, Culler did not pursue these theoretical speculations. But his careful textual analyses of Baudelaire's inscription of Poe's thematics strongly suggest them and cry out for their elaboration.

Illustrating in a contemporary context the United States' adepteness at excluding any practice which puts, as Poe's did, the signified under the question of the signifier, Marjorie Perloff contrasted the choices evinced by French and American anthologies of recent American poetry. Slashed out of major anthologizing endeavors are precisely the poets which exercise the most fascination and provoke the most enthusiasm in France. Overly arbitrarily, these can be characterized as the representatives of the "language school of poetry", whose immediate antecedents are Olson, Williams and Creeley. Influential avant-garde voices on the French literary scene, such as Jacques Roubaud and Michel Deguy, have systematically articulated the similarity of their writing stances to those of a host of younger American poets experiencing difficulties in being acknowledged by the institutional temples of American aesthetic reflexion. Artists as David Antin, Harry Mathews, Susan Howe are *passés sous silence* in the monopolistic academic arenas which feel safer in dealing with and canonizing the "jogger type" of writer whose continued published production is assured by the obtention of major grants and university posts. The hallmark of their success seems to be the Wordsworthian paradigms to which they subscribe, the creed in the possibility of a confidentiality, of a revelation of the writer's inner self to his/her reader. And this revelation is no less than the

signified passing through the screens of syntax and morphologies unhindered, miraculously surviving the warping effects of the medium of expression. What precisely determines exclusion from the grove of good repute is any concentrated attempt to gauge such diffractions. For example, the poet David Antin, much prized in France, claims that rhythm must be rethought, and creates his own rhythm by orally cultivating the slippage between the intention of the sentence and its unfolding. The *brouillons* of a Francis Ponge exhibit the affinities of Gallic practices with Antin's meditations, and French and American literary phenomena find themselves apposed to each other with a virgule, not a slash.

The next pair of participants, Renée Hubert and Joseph Riddel, altered the focus of the proceedings by situating themselves on the other side, on the American shore, in order to observe how the consciousness of bridging an ocean endows its banks with revelatory topographical features. Renée Hubert engaged the question of foreignness by discussing the French translations of the work of Gertrude Stein, archetypal American exile. The attempts, in the 1930's, of George Hugnet and Bernard Faye, although very aware of the linguistic and formal characteristics of the works of Stein they tackled, fail by not giving its due to the radical nature of the expatriate's literary gesture. They still operate under the myopic constraints of an illusive *signifié* they try to duplicate. It is only in the late sixties and the seventies that Stein's stature is fully appreciated as that of a great precursor of the textual primacy at the core of *Tel Quel*'s efforts and, more recently, of unfolding post-modern aesthetics. Once more, as in the case of certain American poets, it is in France that Stein's work is germinating. The recent renderings of aspects of her *oeuvre* by Jacques Roubaud and Denis Roche deepen our insights in the workings of Stein's revolutionary manoeuvres. For Roubaud, her texts force the reader to become the writer in the process of writing, and he thereby assigns to them what Roland Barthes has baptized the *scriptible*, the intransitive nature of a text which produces its reader as the reader produces it. He also situates Stein as a major exponent of a *crise du vers* which, ever since Mallarmé, has shaken and defined what one might still call the lyrical mode in literature. Denis Roche, in his translations of Stein, goes even further by demonstrating the final impossibility of translation. As the writer proceeds, his own text is irremediably invaded by the American of the target text.

The very notion of the other is subverted until integral quotation alone, the hallmark of post-modern practice, remains as a viable determination of what otherness might be. We find ourselves in presence of the resounding Borgesian paradox: Pierre Ménard, author of *Don Quijote*. By projecting herself into alien soil, Stein has thus triggered in the alien the realization of his/her alienhood. As a bridge, she has created two banks. But the mirror image of one bank, to its other, becomes uncannily the same. Baudelaire still cannot distinguish himself from Poe.

It is with the expert eye of the Americanist that Joseph Riddel delineated for us important elements of the literary imagination and imaginaries of the United States. He depicted a Poe very different from Culler's, who had mediated him through the glasses of French literary consciousness. The truly American Poe is the one W. C. Williams vindicates as the instigator of this typically New World gesture: to clear the ground, to destroy the inherited structures of the European ethos. Nevertheless, the bridge analogy we have been pursuing is still operative: as Riddel stressed, it is always from a Janus-faced stance, looking forward and backward, that America, conscious of its transitional position, has defined the two shores without which it would not be. Poe's envisaged new language needs the old as the necessary other in order to reject it, to self-consciously atomize it so that it may become pure as sand, sticking to nothing, looking for a non-identity consonant with the needs of a future democratic Man. Thus, in this light, Poe is striving for a radical non-alienation, and the estrangement which Baudelaire predilected in the American's social position is a mere phantasm, a return of the repressed of the French mind seeking to exorcise its own alienation. An atomized language exhibits no nostalgia for the original block whence it eroded into self-sufficient particles. For Emerson, this realization leads to an aesthetic of the creative quotation, a simultaneous decomposition (wrenching it away from the block) and composition (performing it anew, making it act) that can be mapped by no dialectical law. Quotation becomes fabulous (it has no origin), fabulating (it fictionalizes an origin), carrying things away into their other. The problem of originality, this orphic enthusiasm, is eradicated. Art, for Emerson, only circles, echoes, parodies this enthusiasm, quotes it. Literature mimes our desire to be original and thus produces a different idea of originality. In analyses pursuing these problematics

through the writings of Henry James and Gertrude Stein, Riddel gradually elaborated a vocabulary which seemed to merge with the proclamations of post-modernism, especially where the important question of quotation arises. Using Stein as his mouth-piece, Riddel branded the American mode as one of dissociative repetition.

The last participant, François Rigolot, stood alone inasmuch as he addressed a bridge spanning waters not synchronic and geographical, but diachronic. The texts he confronted were not only alien to their French counterparts by their linguistic fabric. They were also representative of the authority of the Past. In the imagination, the past is also a country, and it was relative to its frontiers that a national literary identity was being constituted. Rigolot outlined the polemical positions which pitted *translatio* against *imitatio*. Choosing as a starting point the *giovenile errore* of Petrarch's first sonnet of the monumental *Canzoniere*, he traced its subsequent avatars to Scève, Pernette de Guillet, Tyard and Ronsard. Using *erreur* as the tennis-ball they bounce against the great ancestor and each other, these writers weave, with the trajectories of their play, the tapestry which gives them an ontological claim on the literary scene. *Erreur* and *contre-erreur* become the metaphor of the wanderings of writing itself, these slippages from the authoritative itinerary of Petrarch which create their own map of mis-defined territory. Whereas Petrarch's filiation with his French Renaissance imitators is relatively easy to trace, the problem of Dante's reception in France is a much more arduous one. Rigolot masterfully illuminated one of its aspects in the text of Rabelais. Ever since antiquity, the middle of any construct has been endowed with a magical or mystical power. The middle of the *Comedia* is the center of the 17th Canto of Purgatorio, where Dante's verses posit Love as the ultimate concurring force which unites all creatures in their creator. Rabelais, displaying erudition and phenomenological *doigté*, recounts, in the 17th chapter of *Pantagruel*, the exact middle of the work, Alcofrybas Nasier's encounter in the Underworld with his literary creation Panurge. Although separated by three centuries and by antithetical generic identities, *Pantagruel* and the *Comedia* are thereby linked in a vertiginous display of intertextuality. Dante's theocentric timelessness becomes traversed by the negativity of Panurgian historicity which heralds a new era in the socio-political dimensions of literature. The similarity Rabelais' text wishes to exhibit with Dante's turns the latter upside down, forcing him to serve as the unwilling but necessary

spokesman for a Frenchman's new world-vision. Rigolot's work thereby makes us reflect about what T. S. Eliot so wisely articulated in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent". The appearance of a new work of art alters our perceptions of every antecedent element formative of the chain of literary history. Reading alone can bridge diachronic abysses, and it is from this bridge that the reader actualizes the formation and tranformation of selves into others and vice-versa.

It is unfortunate that Heidegger, who provided us with the valuable notion of bridging we have followed throughout this exposé, was also one to proclaim, with imperialistic flourish, that Greek and German were the only two languages of truth existing. To better encapsulate the nature of the endeavors of the participants in our 1988 symposium, I would like to refer to a passage of Walter Benjamin's essay, "The task of the translator", which seems specifically to take Heidegger to task:

> If there is such a thing as a language of truth, the tensionless and even silent depository of the ultimate truth which all thought strives for, then this language of truth is — the true language. And this very language. . . . is concealed in concentrated fashion in translation.[3]

Translation, etymologically, means an active displacement, and Benjamin is insisting that it is only by forcing a linguistic construct out of its own native *locus* that one can make it function toward the attainment of truth. Peering through his thoughts is Mallarmé's famous pronouncement: "Les langues imparfaites en cela que plusieurs, manque la suprême." Therein, the opposition poetic vs. philosophic becomes blurred and the linguistic quest universalized. The supreme tongue, the Idea, the arch-Other, is a specter whose phantasmal gaze arises from the shock, the translative encounter among all these lesser, imperfect media. It is this encounter our participants have studied, thereby conjuring the arch of that impossible Other wherein all pain and otherness, whose voices drive us on, would be forever silenced.

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Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking", in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p.152.

2. Barbara Johnson, "Taking fidelity philosophically", in *Difference in Translation*, J. F. Graham, ed. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.147.

3. Walter Benjamin, "The task of the transaltor", in *Illuminations* by Walter Benjamin (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p.77.

PAROLES GELEES

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Ce serait le moment de philosopher et de
rechercher si, par hasard, se trouverait
ici l'endroit où de telles paroles déglent.

Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*

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