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La Spirale: Joyce Carol Oates's French Connection

Monica Loeb

"Pour vivre, je ne dis pas heureux..., mais
tranquille, il faut se créer dehors de l'existence
visible...une autre existence interne et
inaccessible."

Gustave Flaubert

"We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and
our little life is rounded off with a sleep."

William Shakespeare

- 1 "The Spiral," a short story by Joyce Carol Oates, was first published in the 1969 winter issue of *Shenandoah*. With its focus on a man in crisis, it easily fits in with her series of reimagined stories where men and women find themselves facing various life crises that result in breakdowns.
- 2 Initially we may be lured into believing that this is a love story. Wendell, the protagonist, is anxiously awaiting a phone call in the park, as the story opens, a call that might change his life. He is 35, a medical doctor who is in love for the first time in his life. Joanne, his mistress, is married to another man, "a very disturbed man."¹ Their affair has been going on for a long time, giving Wendell insight into the "various secrets of a disintegrating marriage" (348). In this phone call Joanne will let him know whether she will leave her husband.
- 3 It all turns out in his favor. After their marriage, "everything has become perfect" (352). Before long they decide to have children. During the pregnancy Wendell suffers from "moods of depression;" he has headaches and feels nauseated. After the baby, a boy, is born, Joanne hopes that the child will be able to "make everything perfect" again (357).
- 4 However, Wendell's condition deteriorates gradually. In a final scene at a movie theater, with his wife and a male friend, he feels totally lost, paralyzed. He no longer

knows his friend's or his wife's name. And who is Stephen (their son)? He experiences a feeling of "nothingness," as he is drifting off into sleep upon returning home.

- 5 The reader has been prepared for Wendell's breakdown all along, although due to the fact that he is a successful professional and has a happy family life, there is a certain resistance to seeing the signs planted along the way. Wendell's father, for instance, the happy retiree, who is his opposite in that he is always on the go, constantly seeking new challenges in spite of his age, constitutes a parallel contrast to his son. Also, there are sections of the story where Wendell is recollecting the past, scenes from his childhood or student days, or when he enters a dream state, and, at times, he mixes the two. Oates has devised a concrete way of reflecting these different stages, as will be shown later on.
- 6 Oates's other reimagined short stories have all been based on famous classics written by the great masters of Western literature, such as Kafka, Joyce and Chekhov. "The Spiral," however, is based on Flaubert's little known sketchy outline for a novel, never written or published. Louis Bertrand's popularized book from 1921 written in the form of a dialogue with Flaubert who animatedly talks about his work does include *La Spirale*.²
- 7 In the words of Flaubert himself it is there called "a philosophical and transcendental novel!"³ After an extensive search, I found the text itself printed as an introduction to an article from 1958 entitled "Une trouvaille" by E.W. Fischer.⁴ It turns out that Flaubert's very rough plan simply consists of three handwritten pages, some in ink, some in pencil.⁵

La Spirale

- 8 Flaubert begins his outline with a clearly stated intention: "Make a book exciting-and moral-as conclusion prove that happiness is in the imagination."⁶ The apparent moral is that felicity resides in illusion, that dreams can save you from a basically mean life which only exposes the individual to suffering.
- 9 Flaubert's hero is a man, a painter, who has given up his art after traveling in the Orient. His mind is filled with impressions and images from that part of the world where he also acquired the habit of using marijuana. When reducing the dose he first becomes accustomed to merely smelling the bottle in order to reach a hallucinatory state. Then he no longer requires any stimulant; he can reach his visions by sheer will. That is when he reaches what Flaubert calls "l'état fantastique," a state of fantasy, dream and hallucination. The process of reaching this stage should be slow and progressive. Each visit to this higher level of being should be seen as a reward, an escape from reality. Eventually, the hero will reach a stage of "permanent somnambulism." This will grant him immunity to pain.
- 10 In real life the protagonist's miseries pile up one on top of another. "He is impoverished, betrayed, the object of slander...," a true failure.⁷ Even his love life is a source of pain: the woman he loves is married to another man, "an idiot." Although she rejects him, he continues to assist both her and her husband, and he is the one who brings up their child! The idea of doing good is apparently an important part of Flaubert's morality. Whenever his hero performs a bad or evil act, dreams will not come to him. In other words, dreams are a reward for virtuous acts, a kind of "bleeding,

a purgation." "Thus," Flaubert states, "the dream has an active moralizing influence on his life."⁸

- 11 The road to final bliss, i.e., loss of pain, when all time, all cultures, "the Truth" so called, come together, is difficult and long. For Flaubert's protagonist it means that he will end up in a mental institution with other fools. He will speak the language of animals and will converse with "the Gods." In the eyes of the world he will appear insane, while for himself he has reached a stage voluntarily sought: "le bonheur consiste à être Fou...."⁹
- 12 This mixture of all times and cultures will expose him to some incredible people and scenes, which are simply listed by Flaubert. These include a stupid mayor, a conceited governor transformed into a cruel sultan, a woman metamorphosed into an odalisque, a marching army in the mountains, fisheries and palaces, a snake with a woman's face, a prince fencing with a monkey, a caravan in the desert, the Crusades, a revolution, a flogging, a woman Pythagorean etc. The intention is that he should sample, and endure, every kind of passion in order to triumph, in the end, over both others and himself.
- 13 The movement of the spiral implies both the gradual characteristics of the circular movement, and the movement away into infinity. Via the spiral form Flaubert aspired to leave the imperfections of human life to reach the higher spheres of Truth and Beauty. This was not a project void of risks. According to the very last notes of his outline, it is recommended that the story should open with a final letter from the hero, "summarizing his views on everything" and announcing at the same time his impending suicide. In fact, while holding a strong attraction for Flaubert, this desired state also frightened him tremendously.¹⁰ Perhaps this was one of the reasons why the project was never realized.

Autobiographical elements in *La Spirale*

- 14 There is no doubt that this sketchy plan for *La Spirale* contains many references to Flaubert's own life. Periodically he had experienced a great need to retreat from society or to escape from reality. He would close his window shutters, smoke his pipe, light candles and a fire, then drink coffee with punch, thus creating a kind of light drunkenness.
- 15 He was a dreamer often envisioning far-away places. In a letter to Louise Colet in 1842, his mistress, he is dreaming excitedly of anything from snowy roads to a sunny Mediterranean, or the sands of Syria where the stars are four times the size of our stars.¹¹ Bovarysme, or what Victor Brombert calls a "thirst for the impossible, this confrontation of dream and reality," was a guiding principle for Flaubert who preferred the idea of being out on the high seas to staying in a safe port.¹² In a letter from 1840, for instance, he identifies with "the melancholy of the barbarian races."¹³ He was often bored with life: "je n'ai rien que des désirs immenses et insatiables, un ennui atroce et des bâillements continus."¹⁴
- 16 In 1843 Flaubert suffered a health crisis. From his youth he had experienced hallucinations. To this condition was also added epileptic seizures and syphilis; he was to be "sickly" for the rest of his life suffering from various nervous afflictions. Ten years later in a letter, Flaubert states that he had no regrets when looking back on these years of sickness, in spite of suicidal thoughts and melancholy. Rather he saw

them as a good experience that provided him with insight into psychological states "to be used one day in a book (the metaphysical novel that I have told you about)."¹⁵ In fact, Flaubert sought "refuge in isolation and misanthropy"; illness became a kind of "precious alibi" for him, according to Brombert.¹⁶

- 17 Oates certainly agrees with Flaubert, stressing the necessity of withdrawal and isolation on the part of the artist in order to be productive. In an article she even uses a quote from Flaubert to illustrate her point: "Thrown in the world, as Flaubert says, we are too confused to make sense of it; we must withdraw from the world in order to truly experience it." However, in this article on the short story, she also strongly expresses the belief that experience must precede literary production, i.e., "live first then tell."¹⁷
- 18 In addition to his own experiences of semi-hallucinations and unusual states of mind, Flaubert was greatly influenced by Baudelaire's prose poems, in particular the collection entitled *Les paradis artificiels*. These poems appeared in 1860 and speak very concretely of using drugs to attain the higher states that Flaubert desired. In the prose poem of the same title as the collection, Baudelaire frankly states that "true reality is but in dreams."¹⁸ Since man is in constant search of moments of bliss, however short and few, hashish is a means of attaining it.
- 19 Obviously these glorious descriptions of the effects of using drugs held a strong attraction for Flaubert. Although he was too scared to experiment with drugs himself (he had in his possession a prescription, never used, from a doctor), Baudelaire's descriptions furnished him with objective details that he could fuse with his own impressions and consequently transfer onto his projected protagonist in *La Spirale*.
- 20 The choice of title, according to E.W. Fischer, must be seen as symbolic, even metaphysical. Apparently Flaubert was enchanted by the images of circles rising and vanishing into space; the spiral was "une idée fixe" with him that he often referred to, as in the following quote from *Mémoires d'un fou*: "Oh! l'infini! l'infini! gouffre immense, spirale qui monte des abîmes aux plus hautes régions de l'inconnu." ¹⁹Fischer interprets this as an aspiration in Flaubert to surpass the limits of earthly existence, a symbol of what he calls "la délivrance du moi,...une ascension intellectuelle...."²⁰
- 21 To date Flaubert's sketchy manuscript we must rely on hypotheses since the text itself indicates no date at all. Fischer assumes that the novel mentioned in a letter to Louise Colet in early May of 1852 is *La Spirale*, since Flaubert speaks of a "metaphysical novel" that has preoccupied his thoughts for the last two weeks.²¹
- 22 Paul Dimoff is of the opinion that a later date, the end of 1860 or the beginning of 1861, would be more correct, since he feels that the influence from Baudelaire's *Les paradis artificiels*, published in 1860, was of decisive importance.²² However that may be, it is more interesting to speculate on the reasons why this particular project was never realized. On this point Dimoff agrees with Wilhelm Fischer who suggests three reasons why Flaubert never carried out his plans.
- 23 First of all, it was too personal, using his own health and experiences for the plot. Second and related, his writing had previously aimed for the esthetically impersonal; all great art should aim for the objective, leaving out the self of the artist. A third reason would be the strong similarity in subject and inspiration with *La tentation de Saint Antoine*. They are both about a sole individual, a male, whose inner life, his visions, gradually lead him into one long perpetual dream.²³

La Spirale/"The Spiral": a comparison

- 24 What intrigued Oates into writing her own version of Flaubert's sketchily outlined but never written or published novel *La Spirale*? She has often referred to a certain kinship with Flaubert and her debt to him. Oates has many times invoked the following quote from Flaubert that has been of great importance to her: "We must love one another in our art as the mystics love one another in God."²⁴ Once again she emphasizes the magic, nearly religious, quality of artistic activity, as well as the very basis of her series of reimagined works, i.e., the communal aspects of art, explaining that "[b]y knowing one another's creation we honor something that deeply connects us all, and goes beyond us."²⁵
- 25 What enticed Joyce Carol Oates in particular about Flaubert's outline for a novel was exactly its sketchy nature, "[t]he Spiral' as a novel-in-embryo. What a fascinating idea....," as she puts it.²⁶ Compared to her other "reimaginings," which have all been derived from completed works, this one provided her with quite a different challenge. In other words she could freely latch onto whatever ideas appealed to her and then proceed to create a story of her own. In the following analysis I will investigate what she has chosen to retain as intertextual elements, or to expand upon. Characters, major themes, the title, and the technique of juxtaposition will be examined below.

Characters

- 26 Both authors have focused on men, intellectuals and professionals, one an artist, the other a medical doctor. While Flaubert's nineteenth-century man gives up his profession, Oates's man continues to be successful in his work. He has an idealistic deep desire to "go out into the world and heal people"(350). Although he is unwell, his patients are ironically doing well indeed.
- 27 But gradually the inner life of both these men takes over and exerts control over their respective lives. The suicidal ideas or the incarceration in a mental institution in Flaubert have not been adopted by Oates. Yet, there is room for such developments due to her story's open closure. Her protagonist is sinking into sleep at the end, perhaps indicative of suicidal thoughts or the sleep that Shakespeare speaks of as rounding off "our little life" in *The Tempest*. Wendell at this point only wishes for "the weightlessness of a perpetual sleep"(361).
- 28 Dreams are essential for both men to reach their inner selves. While Flaubert's man uses drugs to do so at the outset, Oates's Wendell does not repeat this pattern. For Wendell transformation is a mental stage. He appears to be a loner who keeps to himself, easily daydreaming in and out of time. Wendell does not fall in love, for instance, until the age of 33. At that point he believes that "[a] man must love and must be loved or he himself cannot be healed, cannot heal others"(350). The object of his feelings is a married woman, which is also the case in Flaubert's fragment of a story. In both cases the husbands are characterized similarly: an "idiot" in Flaubert and a "very disturbed man" in Oates (347). Wendell is lucky; he wins his woman, and he feels genuinely loved, but love does not solve his problems, as it turns out. Projecting his own feelings of inadequacy onto his wife, he claims that he can sense her desire "to escape, to get out-better leave this sick man while she is still healthy!"(356). Flaubert's nameless character fares less well; he never wins the woman's love, but lingers on

helping her and her family. He is also a miserable failure in everything he undertakes from love to duels and business; he is simply "successful at nothing."²⁷

- 29 A secondary character, a girl, has been added by Oates to her story to function as a parallel, or a mirror, held up as a frightening, yet attractive, example for Wendell. "What is the girl doing?" is the very first inquisitive sentence of the short story. Wendell observes her in the park, as he is waiting there for Joanne's magic telephone call that might change his life. This is a girl in her twenties, very thin, either mentally disturbed or drugged, oddly dressed in a colorful poncho. Barefoot, she ambles around like a somnambulator singing, unaware of others. Her face is described as "odd," caving inward, with tiny eyes, tiny nose and a chin that "seemed to melt away" (345). Everything about her is "blank:" her voice, her eyes. This adjective is repeated whenever the girl reappears. The very word is also used as a link to Wendell, as he feels a "puddle of blankness" beginning to form "[a]t the back of his skull...as if it were the shape of his existence...a premonition" (246). He is putting all his faith into a relationship with Joanne; life without her would be meaningless. In other words he can identify with the girl, who certainly seems to exist in her own world, but he expects Joanne, or love, to save him from an equally "blank," or meaningless life. As it turns out, neither one will do so.
- 30 At the end of the story, as if completing the circle, the girl reappears in his dreams, when he has been put to bed after the incident at the movie house. He can hear someone say: "*Don't stop breathing!*" This is yet another link between the two, an echo of what he himself told the girl as she fell to the ground that very first time he saw her in the park (361 and 351). Being a doctor he performs mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on her. Angrily he murmurs "*You are not going to die!*" twice, and does manage to bring her back to life (351). Is this a dream, his constant wish to do good, or a projection of his own fear of death?
- 31 Wendell's final encounter with the girl must certainly be a dream, as he is sleeping in his bed at home. He still feels as paralyzed as he had been at the theater. Yet, when the girl makes "an intimate gesture" with her hand, he begins to undress in the park. He sees the girl as "*his true bride*" (repeated three times), he falls to his knees, grasping her ankles, kissing her feet while weeping (347). He might be mixing her up with Joanne or see her as an elusive extension of things he cannot reach, but more likely his attraction to the girl's otherworldliness signifies a "marriage" of like minds.

Themes

- 32 As seen above, both protagonists share a basic wish to be good, to do good deeds. For Flaubert's man, acts of goodness will be rewarded by dreams that enable him to escape. Immediately following the initial suicide note, "an opportunity to do good presents itself," and that will start off the entire action of the novel.²⁸ Wendell also has a strong need to be a good person in his profession. Like Christ he would like to raise people from the dead, but realizes his powers are limited to at least "snatch[ing] the living away from death at the very last second, stirring their limbs, breathing his own life into them"(350). That is literally what he does, or dreams of doing, to the girl in the park. The tragedy of it is that he can heal others, but not himself. His belief is that everyone shares this desire to be good, that it is "a way of managing life"(347).

- 33 Connected to the theme of doing good is the sense of doubleness experienced by both characters. They are torn between reality and dream. Flaubert states that for his, "real life situations must be found that are as intense as possible--filled with drama and sentiment." Real life is where the character fails miserably, while his greatest successes will come in his fantasy life. "The unhappier he is in fact, the happier he is in the dream."²⁹
- 34 The same goes for Wendell who appears to be a loner who retreats into a dream world where he performs wonders. While Flaubert's man quickly moves from one exotic scene to another, from one problem to another, Wendell also moves between different levels, from reality to fantasy, into the past as well. That is also recommended by Flaubert who suggests a gradual return from the Orient to feudalism, revolution, even the crusades: "Commence by any action, (a trial?) that brings him back to his grandfather's time." Dreams should be prepared; "they are interrupted by sudden awakenings when they are at their best," Flaubert exhorts.³⁰
- 35 Change is another theme shared by the two texts. Both major characters are looking for change. Wendell believes that marriage will turn his life around at the outset of the short story. At the end we realize that this was not so. Flaubert's man seeks to move from the real into the fantastic state. However, Flaubert emphasizes several times that this change must be "progressive" or "gradual." The aim for Flaubert is "a state of permanent somnambulism" and immunity to pain. In reality that means life in a mental hospital where the world will regard him as crazy. This is indeed an example of the myth of the "happy fool." "Happiness resides in being an Idiot," according to Flaubert.³¹
- 36 Wendell has similar thoughts. Once when eating a hot dog he reflects upon "his spirit, whimsically, lifting itself from his body." This is a sensation he compares to a mist lifting from a bog. He asks himself whether this change signifies "[f]reedom or dissolution?" thus signalling uncertainty(347). At the end, in the movie theater, Wendell feels that he has "succumbed to nothingness, now that he is no longer a man"(358). Even as a young man Wendell has the premonition that "[l]ife will leak out of him" due to life's many "scratches" that he can foresee (350).

Juxtaposition

- 37 Typographically Oates has devised a means of juxtaposition that indicates a shift from one temporal or spatial level to another, from reality to dream. These are labeled MATTER and ANTIMATTER. The first one is always placed on the left-hand side of the page, while the second is found on the right-hand side. Both are capitalized and used as headlines. Oates has physically realized on the page the fluctuations between the two stages, "la vie réelle" and "l'état fantastique," that Flaubert describes in his sketchy outline. His *Tentation de Saint Antoine* in fact ends in an extatic "descent into the very heart of matter -- being matter!"³²
- 38 These time shifts not only reflect the mental condition of the character in question. They also tie in with the central themes of change, doubleness and the gradual progression toward either a breakdown, as in Oates, or total folly, as in Flaubert. Ultimately, all these elements coalesce in the spiralling movement in the direction of infinity implied by the title itself.
- 39 Yet another means of projecting Wendell's breakdown is the intertextual link provided by the film that he goes to see with his wife and a Pakistani intern friend. They see

François Truffaut's *Jules et Jim* (1961). Not only does this particular film provide us with a French cultural connection, but its central plot is an echo of the triangular dramas in both Flaubert and Oates.

- 40 Truffaut in turn based his film on a novel by Henri Pierre Roché.³³ Set in Paris before the First World War, Truffaut's now classic film focuses on a ménage-à-trois between one woman and two men. We get to follow them through the years to see how their relations change. It is the final scene where the husband, the sole survivor, is lamenting the passing of the two others that leaves a lasting impression upon Wendell. As a medical man, he is fascinated by the "bones" at the end. In a cremation scene bones from the two dead bodies are ground down and placed in two different boxes, although Jules had wanted them to remain mixed and together even in death. Wendell wonders whether you could actually "tell the bones apart?" or why there is no reaction on the man's face (358). At this point he identifies with the bones of the dead, believing that his two companions will "stare at him as if staring at bones, mere bones, seeing no value in him...." He feels reduced to nothing. His Pakistani friend shakes his head and laughs at the film. From his cultural perspective it is a foolish and strange film. Joanne reacts emotionally. She is moved: "What a strange ending, after all that...all that passion" (359). She might be speaking about her own (second) marriage, without knowing it.

Title

- 41 This short title is in spite of its brevity filled to the brim with meaning. As Fischer has pointed out, it serves both a symbolic and metaphysical function. Briefly, it symbolizes the protagonists' slow detachment from reality into spatial spheres toward infinity. It also reflects the major themes of change and gradual movement in the form of ever-widening spirals. Since this was an *idée fixe* with Flaubert, this aspiration toward the unknown, the metaphysical implication is an intellectual ascension.
- 42 Further elucidation may be sought in one of Baudelaire's *Petits poèmes en prose*, a prose poem dedicated to Franz Liszt whom he greatly admired and whose immortality he wanted to celebrate. Entitled "Le Thyrses," this poem may shed some further light on the subject of spirals. Since its title was difficult to understand, Baudelaire carefully explained what a "thyrses" was, i.e., a staff in the hands of priests or priestesses for ritual ceremonies. It is simply a hard and straight wooden stick, surrounded by garlands of flowers, thus incorporating both the male and the female principle as well as the spiralling movement. "The baton is your volition, straight, firm and unwavering; the flowers- they are the promenade of your fantasy around your volition."³⁴
- 43 Flaubert had most likely read and been inspired by "Le Thyrses" when it appeared in *La Revue Nationale*, in 1863. Reality is more of a straight, wooden and bare stick to him, while the meandering, even dancing, garlands of flowers then would represent the beauty of dreams and fantasy. For Oates, on the other hand, Flaubert's skeletal outline may appear as the bare staff, or bone, onto which she can graft her decorations, to fill out and round off, for a completed story called "The Spiral." In a personal communication to me Oates explains the intra-authorial relationship as follows: "The symbolism of *Marriages and Infidelities* is the 'marriage' of the writer of male consciousness with the writer of female consciousness." As a consequence, Oates has started with the bare facts from Flaubert's embryo of escape from the constraints of the

real, time-bound world and shown us one contemporary man's way of reaching a transcendental realm outside of time and reality.

NOTES

1. Joyce Carol Oates, "The Spiral" in *Marriages and Infidelities* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1972) 347. All future references to this work will be placed within parentheses in the text.
2. Louis Bertrand, *Flaubert à Paris ou Le Mort Vivant* (Paris: Grasset, Les Cahiers Verts, 1921) 69-74.
3. Bertrand, 69. My translation of the original: "roman philosophique et transcendental!"
4. E.W. Fischer, "Une trouvaille," in *La Table Ronde* 124, April 1958: 99-124.
5. Since I have been unable to find any English translation of this text I have of necessity completed my own translation, which I will refer to throughout this article.
6. Original: "Faire un livre exaltant - et moral - comme conclusion prouver que le bonheur est dans l'imagination."
7. Original: "Il est dépouillé, trahi, calomnié...."
8. Original: "une saignée une purgation." "Ainsi le rêve a une influence active, moralisante, sur sa vie."
9. Translation: "happiness is being a fool."
10. Enid Starkie, *Flaubert: The Making of the Master* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1967) 195.
11. Paul Dimoff, "Autour d'un projet de roman de Flaubert: "La Spirale," in *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 48, 1949: 324.
12. Victor Brombert, "Flaubert and the Impossible Artist Hero," in *The Southern Review* 5:4, 1969, 986.
13. Dimoff, 323. My translation of the original: "Je porte en moi la mélancolie des races barbares...."
14. Letter from 1840 quoted in Dimoff, 324. My translation: "I experience nothing but immense and unsatiable desires, a frightful boredom and incessant yawnings."
15. Letter to Louise Colet quoted in Dimoff, 329-330. My translation of the original: "...quelque jour, en l'utilisant dans un livre (ce roman métaphysique...dont je t'ai parlé)."
16. Brombert 1969: 981.
17. Joyce Carol Oates, "The Short Story" in *Southern Humanities Review* 5:3, 1971: 213.
18. Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire* (Paris: Ancienne Maison Michel Levy Frères, 1885) 155. My translation of the original: "La vraie réalité n'est que dans les rêves." I am very grateful to the Ellen Key Foundation for a stipend to spend time in Ellen Key's house where I was very fortunate to find Baudelaire's book in her private library.
19. E.W. Fischer 101. My translation: "Oh! infinity! infinity! immense abyss, spiral that mounts from depths to the highest regions of the unknown."
20. *ibid.* My translation: "the deliverance of the self,... an intellectual ascension."
21. *ibid.*, 100.
22. Dimoff 333-334.
23. Wilhelm Fischer, *Etudes sur Flaubert Inédits*. Transl. Count François d'Aiguy (Leipzig: J Zeitler, 1908) 129-131.
24. Leif Sjöberg, "An Interview with Joyce Carol Oates," *Contemporary Literature*, Summer 1982. Rpt. in *Conversations with Joyce Carol Oates*, ed. Lee Milazzo (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1989) 105.

25. Robert Phillips, "Joyce Carol Oates: The Art of Fiction." From *The Paris Review* 74, Fall 1978. Rpt. in Milazzo, 81.
 26. Correspondence to me, October 24, 1998.
 27. Original: "pour vivre, il change de métiers et aucun ne lui réussit."
 28. Original: "une occasion se présente de faire le bien -"
 29. Original: "Plus il sera malheureux dans le fait, plus(il) sera heureux dans le rêve."
 30. Original: "Commencer par une action quelconque, (un procès?) qui le reporte au temps de son grand-père." "-ils sont coupés par des réveils brusques, au plus beau moment."
 31. Original: "...un état de somnambulisme permanent..." "...le bonheur consiste à être Fou..."
 32. *La tentation de Saint Antoine* (Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1954) 276. Original: "descendre jusqu'au fond de la matière, -- être la matière!"
 33. In a recent *Dagens Nyheter* article (1999), Jens Christian Brandt informs us of the real background for Roché's book. Roché had met Franz Hessel, a German author, and Helen Grund, also a German, when they were all young in Paris. The two Germans married, divorced and remarried; Roché was the third partner. The movie's key scene when the woman throws herself into the Seine is directly taken from their lives. All three later wrote about their threesome set-up. As an old woman Helen Grund saw Truffaut's film innumerable times. Reportedly she loved Jeanne Moreau as a copy of herself.
 34. Baudelaire 104-105. My translation of the original: "Le baton, c'est votre volonté, droite, ferme et inébranlable; les fleurs, c'est la promenade de votre fantaisie autour de votre volonté."
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AUTHORS

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Umeå University, Suède Monica Loeb holds a BA degree in French from Barnard College, Columbia University and a PhD in English from Umeå University (northern Sweden) where she is currently employed as Assistant Professor. She has previously published work on Kurt Vonnegut, Alice Walker, American dirty realism, slave narratives and black women writers, Anita Desai, and Joyce Carol Oates whose poetry she has translated into Swedish. She is the editor of *Dangerous Crossing*, on transgression in literature and culture.