

*Locus Desolatus, or Hypermodernism and the Dust of Suns*¹

Drawer One.²

I³ might begin⁴ with the children, or rather the many sets of children, that have bred in the dust that many things begin from. Raymond, Germaine, and George. Raymond, Suzanne, Gaston (Jacques, of course), Yvonne, Magdeleine, and Marcel. Marcel D. Etc. Etc. As M. Cabanne has noted, their births were 'spaced out in a surprising regularity', as if organization in such matters was unlikely to the point of improbability.

Or it could begin with the other Marcel, Marcel P., and his brother Robert. Or the mothers of either Marcel, indeed, whose wombs were salons and whose salons were wombs. Or, forgetting families and biological beginnings entirely, I could just as easily begin with Michel, the young man politely waiting for the bookseller⁵ and I to finish speaking. He didn't know who I was, of course.

1 There are three titles here, the first is overarching, and the second (*Hypermodernism*) is the first of the two books contained with *Locus Desolatus*.

2 The first chapter is 'drawer one', but subsequent chapters are not 'drawers'. They are 'shelves', 'vials', 'folders', amongst other kinds of containers.

3 Who is the 'I'? The writer, well-known amongst a certain kind of reader, whose papers these are. Who are we, whose words sit beneath the line? We act as if we were editors, proposing things like the following:

4 **Here is a skeleton extraction of chapter one, a read-through that in some ways generates another box of fragments from your original chapter.**

5 Jose Corti.

Any of these tidy little stories (they are not even tidy. They are filled with mess) might begin the altogether less tidy one they are part of, where puzzles within puzzles make a solution all the less likely with every passing word and line, and where lines themselves are corrupted in their mirror-images.⁶

In dust free rooms, I am forced to concede, there is very often dust breeding; and the most perfidious form of dust at that. The dust of suns and of sons, and of the sons of suns, in ever more obscure and deformed generations.

6 Let us know if you think this leads anywhere, if it opens back into the visual for you at all (in terms of images along with the text). And I'm interested if such an approach feeds into your work on future chapters....

I could, indeed, begin with myself, and with the arrival of Jonathan G.,⁷ covered in another kind of dust – the charred air-born debris of a fire. Fire, fed by air, and its arial distribution of charred messages, the broadcast of ashes.

The secret is altogether more twisted than games such as these.

I need not excuse the ellipses that so quickly form in recounting even the beginnings of this greater ellipse.

I need not excuse the fact that whilst concealing certain truths so many words have been spent in misinterpretation.

I need not feel compelled to give up these secrets easily, without paying respect to the forms that grant them secrecy.

I need not fear speaking the native tongue of secrecy in revealing secrets.⁸

The end of my account will be its end, irrefutable and terminated. I have set my claims and my intentions out quite clearly, I think. Air has seeped in. I will begin, after all, with a beginning of the usual kind.⁹

7 Another editor.

8 I think I'm perhaps extracting gestures and some kind of architecture from the text, but it's not as separated from the narrative and autobiographical elements as I might have expected...

9 We spoke of David Markson, and now I wonder if he *wrote* himself into corners, or edited himself into them.

THE BOX

The founding members of the coven of papers that bury the secret were contained within a box, and remained so until I opened that box. I was, I admit, surprised to discover that the box was not locked.

There is a great dishonesty in leaving things to a chosen kind of chance. It is like playing a tasteless war game whilst an actual war is taking place.

Brandeston. Kettleburgh. Framlingham. Bruisyard. Bruise-yard. The bruise yard. A yard of bruises! Peasenhall. Sibton Church. Darsham. Westleton.

And then the sea, on the site of disappeared docks. A lunar expedition such as this is an example the truly sur-real, skimming as it does across the all too real land. I cannot help but think of the vulgarity of Morris-dancers and of the grace of migrating birds as I think of this, immobile as I am.

But, to return to the barely verifiable event in question, a set of engravings were amended by the young Raymond, to be found later on by the younger Marcel.

Conjecture, it should be remembered, is no shameful practice. It is the formation of a conclusion without evidence, but in so doing it is so very close to the creative act; and therefore very close to the reader's act. It is the perversion of thought's raw matter into meaning, and for obvious reasons I must believe that there is honour in this, and the possibility of a final recuperation of sense.¹⁰

'Secreters', I may call them, rather than 'secret-bearers'. 'Conspirators' suggests something far too crass, and 'secreters' suggests the practice as well as the status of those who hold secrets. With every hour that it remains within their possession they secrete it despite their best efforts not to. 'Out, damn scab' the secret cries, without the anxious guilt of a human being.¹¹

10 You've more or less isolated those parts of the first chapter that point outwards from the text into the world, rather than those that look back at the narrator (however fictitious he might be).

11 What I mean is, these fragments seem to refer to shapes and

THE BOX

The box. So material is this artefact (container of artefacts, repository, depository) that it resists digression and evasion. Its contents are quite clear in their statement and script if not their register and tone.¹² They seem to me, who has kept them for so long, to have sharpened in their material form and become like microfilms, or even the writing on the screen of a computer-terminal.

The word 'representation' is very often mis-used, the user forgetting that there is meant to be a re-presentation occurring. But what if the representation in question is not only the very first presentation of that which it supposedly represents, and is furthermore a derived presentation? The matter is not merely semantic.

I am, I must concede, perhaps guilty of having become happy in performing the role of their concealer. The keys to a crypt, after all, are not held without some degree of privilege, and their weight (far beyond material weight, and far less than it too.

And, certainly, far more poisonous) has anchored me in my decline. I feel as if I am holding back, but that I must release my knowledge slowly. Not merely to avoid error (although this is almost inevitable), but to safely balance the atmospheres of concealment and disclosure, closure and unconcealment.

The box contains, in no particular order that I can discern: the letter I have already described, the co-signed letter within it, a list of initials, some of which are circled, some of which are not, notes and diagrams pertaining to both a chess problem and a crossword puzzle, a small panel of glass both of whose sides are written on (in brown ink) in the respective hands of its two authors, a shirt-collar, and a key to what I have always supposed must be another such box.

structures, and people, and in so doing seem to outline the cultures the whole text demarcates, if that makes sense.

12 You mentioned 'another box of fragments from your original chapter'. That process could be infinite, or infinitely regressive. Or infinitely progressive.

THE LIST OF INITIALS

The initials that are uncircled, first of all, are the following:

AC AQ ARG MD BH BSJ JC MA AA JF¹³

The initials that are circled in pencil are:

CR MF JA SD MP

One name is circled in both pencil and blue ink: RR This is not a great surprise. The others circled in blue ink are:

AN JG RW ML AJ JC AJ RH

RD I believe that the list is incomplete.

¹³ The reader will guess many of these, perhaps all of them.

THE CROSSWORD AND THE CHESS NOTES

I have been unable to discern their meaning, at least until very recently.

THE GLASS PANEL

I can confidently say that one side is written by Raymond, and the other by Marcel. Not all of the text is abundantly clear, but Raymond's side appears to describe a device that enables the user to convert light into time and time into light.¹⁴

¹⁴ I think that what I mean is that the extraction process might work very well with a counterweight; a countertext.

THE SHIRT-COLLAR

This I can only assume to be an example of the sort of collar that Raymond was known for the very frequent changing of due to what is most often thought of as a kind of hygiene-mania combined with the less attractive symptoms of excessive wealth.

I suppose that Raymond was something like a gentleman-criminal, or terrorist- riddler, or producer of rumours about people who do not exist in the first place. But I am guilty myself of spreading disinformation, or what must seem at the present time to be disinformation, by listing and beginning to describe these objects whilst suppressing their meanings. The box itself is not especially remarkable.