

Lack, Roland-François. "Intertextuality or Influence: Kristeva, Bloom and the *Poésies* of Isidore Ducasse." In *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, edited by Michael Worton and Judith Still, pp. 130-42. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1990.

Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*.¹

Close critical attention is rarely paid to Ducasse's *Poésies*, the seemingly slight, 'other' work by the author of *Maldoror*,² and its double importance for Kristeva, as a typically 'intertextual' and typically 'avant-garde' work, is a valuable redress of such neglect. That neglect itself had afforded the text a privileged place in a Post-Modern canon of the misread avant-garde, from Sade to Céline, a tradition that Kristeva and her contemporaries on *Tel Quel*,³ all textual practitioners, boldly continue in their own critical practice, effacing the distinction between literature and criticism: in this 'multiple textual space', all are equal. Such a bold gesture finds a precedent in the double character of *Poésies* itself, as both poetry and criticism, and finds a rationale in the theory of intertextuality, of which *Poésies* is, for Kristeva, an exemplary illustration. But it is exemplary in its most peculiar feature, the seventy-five or so 'corrective' citations that appropriate another's text and by slight modification reverse its sense, and a difficulty arises when 'the absorption of a multiplicity of texts (of meanings) in the poetic message'⁴ is illustrated with citations from *Poésies* that actually articulate only two texts: the appropriated pre-text and its correction. Hence the closest Kristeva comes to a close reading of *Poésies* in fact evokes not the 'multiple textual space' of Kristevan intertextuality but a closed arena where two combatants, or their texts, are, as the theorist of a different tradition might say, locked in poetic warfare.⁵ The inappropriateness of taking Ducasse's citational practice in *Poésies* as 'a striking example' of intertextuality's 'dialogue between discourses' is the more unfortunate in that *Poésies* is by far the example most frequently used by Kristeva.⁶ The same tendency to illustrate generalities with examples too particular for the task characterises her description of historical context. The dialogic process, she claims, 'is observable throughout literary history', a history which is then epitomised in the following observations: Poe was translated by Baudelaire, who influenced Mallarmé, who then translated Poe, who had been influenced by De Quincey, who had also been translated by Baudelaire. Not only is it highly cutaneous to treat influence, translation and citation as instances of the same phenomenon, but in taking for example so historically situated a conjunction in literature - the 'situation de Baudelaire', in Valéry's phrase⁷ - Kristeva undoes her own claim to have discovered in the 'complex movement of affirmation and negation' between texts a 'fundamental law' of specifically modern poetic production. 'The network can be multiplied, it would always express the same law', she insists, but on closer inspection the network proves less receptive. To give one

example, as ‘the simultaneous absorption and destruction of another text from the intertextual space’, Alfred de Musset’s thoroughly Romantic and un-modern 1828 adaptation of De Quincey should also belong in the network—but then dialogue between discourses would no longer be specifically a phenomenon of modernity. Or, to take another, the network might reach from Baudelaire and Mallarmé towards Valéry, three French poets who, in Eliot’s words, ‘represent the beginning, the middle and the end of a particular tradition in poetry’,⁸ but that would be to foreclose intertextual multiplicity and substitute a defunct High Modernism for Kristeva’s still-thriving Post-Modernity (a tradition that has thrived in France not least upon the determined wresting of Mallarmé from the misprisions of Valéry). In whichever circumstances, it is not Kristeva’s ambition to include Musset, Valéry or Eliot along with Ducasse among the forebears of her own textual practice. That it can be done shows, perhaps, that her critical attention to *Poésies* itself needs our closer attention.

Kristeva’s double error is firstly to read *Poésies* as no more than citational, and then to assimilate it to a generalising theory of intertextuality ill-adapted to its particular citational manner. *Poésies* is a text that needs both a continual re-thinking of its place in several literary traditions, poetic and otherwise, and a close attention to its unassimilable particularity. Following Sima Godfrey’s ‘Anxiety of anticipation: ulterior motives in French poetry’,⁹ a Bloomian approach might satisfy those needs left unfulfilled by Kristeva, although it is not, despite the many citations in his writing, as a theorist of citational intertextuality that Bloom proves useful. His close reading of the connections between texts is unlikely to elucidate Ducasse’s citational practice, since it is Bloom’s personal swerve away from convention to read together texts that wilfully deny their explicit relations. The Bloomian agon of strong poet and strong poet can be fought without either reading the other’s text, and it is not imitation but antithesis that locks them in battle; for Bloom an unwillingness to cite each other is proof of relations between poets.

In its use of different critical vocabularies, however, Bloom’s writing is objectively intertextual, and throws light on *Poésies* by analogy. The greater part of Ducasse’s text is not, in fact, in Kristeva’s sense ‘a mosaic of citations’, or a tessellation in Bloom’s sense,¹⁰ but like both *Revolution in Poetic Language* and *The Anxiety of Influence*, *Poésies* is a montage of diverse theories. Whereas the mark of such diversity in Kristeva’s work is its fourteen pages of bibliography, in Bloom it is the nomenclature of the ‘six revisionary ratios’: *clinamen*, *tessera*, *kenosis*, *daemonization*, *askesis*, *apophrades*, credited respectively to Lucretius (via Alfred Jarry), ancient mystery cults, Saint Paul, Neo-Platonism, Empedocles and Athenian civic ritual. If the vocabulary of *Poésies* is just as diverse, its immediate origins in contemporary philosophy, from Proudhon to Taine, are only hinted at (and Ducasse includes no bibliography). The display of names is saved for the familiarly Bloomian

genealogies of imagination that proliferate in *Poésies*: Corneille and Racine; Dante and Milton; Hugo, Lamartine and Musset—the text is littered with the great dead names, entered in lists, grouped into parties and pitted against each other, fathers against sons. In an adaptation of Bloom to the context of French Romanticism, the solitary struggle of the poet with his precursor gives way to a theatre of cultural war, the critical scene where the combatants are schools of thought and polemical judgements, and the prize is institutionalised authority. *Poésies* itself is this ‘staged scene’, a ‘court of judgment’ such as Bloom discovers in Browning’s *Childe Roland* and a play of authors-as-puppets, ‘marionettes with frayed strings’,¹ animate only in the critical discourse that puts them to use. The primal scene of this drama was enacted by Victor Hugo in his *Preface to Cromwell* to criticise just such a critical practice:

Again, the names of the dead are always thrown in the teeth of the living; Corneille stoned with Tasso and Guarini (Guarini!) as later Racine will be stoned with Corneille, Voltaire with Racine, and as every genius who shows his face today is stoned with Corneille, Racine and Voltaire. These tactics, as we see, are played out, but still they must have some merit, for they are still resorted to.²

As they are resorted to forty years later when Ducasse turns on Hugo: ‘The barbarous vaudevilles of Hugo do not proclaim duty. The melodramas of Racine, of Corneille, the novels of La Calprenède do. Lamartine is incapable of composing Pradon’s *Phèdre*; nor Hugo, Rotrou’s *Venceslas*; nor Sainte-Beuve, the tragedies of Laharpe or of Marmontel . . .’ (*Poésies*, p. 68). Ducasse contests such ‘insane prefaces as the preface to *Cromwell*’ (*Poésies*, p. 34) by making a pawn of the giant Hugo, kept down as much by the lesser (Rotrou!) as the great. The pre-texts of Ducasse’s critique are not those particular plays by Pradon and Rotrou, nor the dramatic works of Laharpe and Marmontel. The Scenes of Instruction are commonplace ones: the schoolroom, where it is taught that Rotrou and Pradon are nothing more than the lesser contemporaries of Corneille and Racine, and the discourse of conventional criticism in which Laharpe and Marmontel are Voltaire’s lesser disciples and nothing more. The hundred or so names wielded in *Poésies* are commonly read as the precursors of the poet Ducasse, but they are merely quotations from Literature, agents of institutional precursors (School, Press and Academy) which are collectively invulnerable to the assaults of the individual poet. Ducasse’s tactical response is to play off these institutions against their agents, picking them off one by one: ‘I isolate the most beautiful poems of Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Byron and Baudelaire, and I correct them in the sense of hope; I show what ought to have been done’ (*Poésies*, p. 126). Of these subjects for revision, only Hugo is still alive in 1870. It is Hugo who, in Bloom’s overview of influences on Baudelaire, alone among French poets fits the type of the strong poet with whom the lesser must compete: ‘Valéry, unlike both Formalist and Post-Structuralist critics, understood that Hugo was to French poetry what Whitman was to

American poetry, and Wordsworth was to all British poetry after him: the inescapable precursor.’³ Baudelaire’s failure to escape Hugo’s influence is made much of by Bloom, too much, given Godfrey’s persuasive demonstration that the truly inescapable authority over modern French poets, even over Baudelaire, is Boileau: ‘Charles Baudelaire ou Boileau hystérique’ is the formula she cites from a critic of the 1860’s.⁴ For a modern poet like Baudelaire, or for the author of *Maldoror*, each readily the Satan of a Bloomian scenario, Hugo may be, in Bloom’s words for Milton’s God, the dead but still embarrassingly potent and present ancestor (*AI*, p. 20). But for both, such Satanism is role-playing, a fact Ducasse underscores by assuming the name and persona of the Comte de Lautrémont, last of the ‘poètes maudits’ (*Poésies*, p. 124) and only a fiction, a marionette operated by Ducasse for the purpose of exploding the myths of literary Satanism. That done, Ducasse takes up, unhysterically, the properly French concern with poetic theory that starts from Boileau - and his own ‘art poétique’ is *Poésies*. This is not to say that his *œuvre* cannot accommodate an orthodox Bloomian reading. If ever Bloom comes to preface a volume of *Modern Critical Views on Lautrémont*, he might well choose to cite this passage, the post-scriptum to a letter from the young Ducasse to Hugo, into which can be read all the tremulous subjection of the ephebe before the ancestral poet: ‘You cannot know how happy you might make a human being, if you were to write me a few words. [. . .] Having come to the end of my letter, I contemplate my audacity more calmly, and I tremble at having written to you, I who am still nothing in this century, whereas you, you are All.’⁵ So suitable a candidate for the role of ephebe in a Bloomian agon might reasonably be expected to have developed, as theorist, into a theorist of poetic influence, even if, as Bloom might contend, a pathological refusal to be Bloomian is as likely an outcome and as compatible with the theory. Ducasse’s critical revision of Literature does make several Bloomian gestures. *Poésies* is criticism of the kind that, as Bloom would have it, tends to become poetry as poetry tends to become criticism. Ducasse, like Bloom, meditates upon misreading and, at least no less than does Bloom, offers instruction in the practical criticism of poetry. But what Ducasse means by practical criticism is the correctional citation of deviant texts, refusing the authority Bloom invests in ‘the poet as poet’ and, to paraphrase Kristeva, installing intertextuality in the place of intersubjectivity. The overwhelming personal prestige of Victor Hugo, who still awes Bloom today, no longer impresses the ephebe Ducasse: Hugo belongs with Baudelaire, Lamartine and Sainte-Beuve, among the deceased (though he actually outlived Ducasse by fifteen years). In a Bloomian history, Hugo’s longevity is a dark shadow cast over the period’s literature, dominating four generations of contemporaries. In Ducasse’s literary history, all poets, from Aeschylus to Zorrilla, are dead poets, ‘poètes maudits’, and contemporaries in the grave. The mission of *Poésies* is the salvation of their texts.

In *Poésies II*, six stanzas from Hugo's *Tristesse d'Olympio* are revised by Ducasse, but the citation is not of the kind that for Kristeva exemplifies intertextuality (inverting key terms, reversing the sense and retaining the form). If the beginning and end of the passage are recognisably out of Hugo,⁶ between them the text has been purged of its own language and opened to a quite extraneous voice: '[Love] is no longer severe towards the object of its wishes, rendering justice unto itself: the expansion is accepted. The senses no longer have their thorn to excite the sexes of the flesh. The love of humanity is beginning.' (*Poésies*, p. 70) At least one allusion here can be traced: 'l'aiguillon de la chair', the thorn in the flesh, is the 'messenger of Satan' that St Paul describes buffeting him (II Corinthians XII:7). The point of this allusion is clear enough since in this chapter and in the epistle as a whole Paul describes the incursion into the human province (the world, the body, the heart) of the extra-human, be it by the grace of God in Christ's Incarnation or by the operation of Satan. In *Poésies* Paul's text repeats the gesture by entering Hugo's poem as an agent of the divine. 'An intermediary being, neither divine or human, enters into the adept to aid him', Bloom might say (*AI*, p. 15). But what Paul describes is not quite Bloom's *daemonization*. Satan, standing here, as in the Book of Job, in God's service as man's 'adversary', is a close but an external threat, the enemy 'before you', as are the inhabitants of the land before the Israelites, in the Old Testament passage to which Paul's text alludes:

And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers: and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as *thorns in your sides*, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.
(Judges II: 1-3, Revised Version, my italics.)

The same God, with the same intent, lays a different landscape before man in Hugo's *Tristesse d'Olympio*: 'Gods lends us a moment the meadows and the fountains to place there our hearts, our dreams, our loves. Then He takes them from us.'⁷ This sentimentalised nature, the physical world of externalised passions, is discarded by Ducasse in the textual revision of Hugo's poem. He expands Paul's phrase to include love, the object of Hugo's morbid nostalgia, here purged of its mystery at the source: 'the sexes of the flesh'. The hostile, Old Testament terrain and its ensnaring gods were left behind by Paul in his conversion to Christ. Repeating the gesture, Ducasse repudiates the passions, strange gods of the romantic landscape, as Paul repudiates the merely physical persecutions of Satan. 'And when he tells us There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, what is he saying but that his suffering was confined to the physical domain' (St

John Chrysostom, *Sixth homily on Saint Paul*).⁸ This is the suffering of which Hugo's poem is purged by Ducasse when he excises reference to the landscape: this textual revision is, literally, a conversion. The poem that remains in *Poésies* is only apparently diminished, converted from verse to prose and emptied of its properly poetical content (an emptying-out – *kenosis* - not in Bloom's sense,⁹ though he takes it from St Paul). The communicant text is made open to receive, quite literally, the 'flesh' of another. Citation is a form of grace:

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

(II Corinthians XII: 8-10)

This 'return of the dead', of Christ in His power, is not the dismal or unlucky day of Bloom's *apophrades*, when 'the dead returned to reinhabit the houses in which they had lived' (*AI*, p. 15), but an occasion to glory. If Paul's words describe the Devil's external influence, their citation by Ducasse is an Imitation of Christ, an appropriation of the force of the Christian covenant in its corrective movement: a *clinamen*, or swerve 'so as to make change possible in the universe', (*AI*, p. 14).²⁰ Bloom's taking of Lucretius' language of physics to describe poetic misreading is, of course, itself a misreading, the critic's gesture an Imitation of the poet's: the swerve from a 'true' sense of the appropriated vocabulary is always intended. My figural use of grace for misprision in *Poésies* does the same, in imitation of Ducasse' s secularising appropriation of Christianity's true sense.² In *Tristesse d'Olympio* Hugo is a Christian poet: 'The soul, in a dark recess where all seems to expire, senses something throbbing still beneath a veil . . . It is you who sleeps in the shadows, o sacred memory!' In *Poésies* (p. 70) this text is converted to that of the anti-Christian Ducasse: 'The love of humanity is beginning. In these days when man senses that he becomes an altar adorned with his virtues. . . the soul, in a recess of the heart where all seems to be reborn, senses something that no longer throbs. I have named memory.' Ducasse' s removal of the 'veil' from Hugo's text imitates the gesture performed by Christ, in the New Testament passage to which Hugo alludes:

for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away with in Christ.

But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

The 'veil' is lifted, and that which was hidden beneath the veil is abolished, 'no longer throbs. I have named memory.' Conversion of the heretic here swerves from the true Christian sense by desecrating, literally, the converted text: Hugo's 'memory' is purged of its epithet ('sacred') so that he might receive a secular grace. By contracting Hugo's poem into prose, Ducasse has made possible the reading of the precursor text: correction is redemption. By redeeming the text Ducasse lifts the burden of the past and becomes the Christ of a secular humanism, whose grace is this death of memory.²²

Ducasse's projected correction of his forebears Hugo, Lamartine, Musset, Byron and Baudelaire was to feature 'at the same time six of the wickedest passages from my cursed books'. The only trace of this is on p. 68 of *Poésies*, a revision of strophe 5 from the first *Chant de Maldoror*. This pre-text from *Maldoror* acts there as preface to a Sadeian burlesque of Christian redemption. Its last lines are a derisive prayer for the gift of grace: 'God [. . .] it is you I invoke. Show me a man who is good!—But let your grace centuple my natural powers, for I may die of terror beholding the monster; men have died of less.'²³ In using his own text as pre-text Ducasse seems to have avoided 'the immense anxieties of indebtedness' that 'self-appropriation involves' necessarily for Bloom (*AI*, p. 5), but the pretext itself is indebted to a pre-text, a discussion of grace from Ernest Naville's 1868 *Le Problème du mal*: 'It is sometimes asked, Why did not God make the creature incapable of sin, that is to say, necessarily good?'²⁴ The incredible 'monster' of the *Chants de Maldoror* is clearly a perversion of Naville's Christ:

Not only do you think that there has never been a man who has always chosen Good; but, in the actual condition of humanity, you do not believe it possible for a perfectly good man to exist. No one believes it; and I could desire no better proof than the controversies which are ever waging around the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Those who pronounce Him perfectly good infer without hesitation from this perfect goodness His Divine nature, and those who deny His divinity do not hesitate to deny the historical reality of this perfectly good man.

(*The Problem of Evil*, pp. 119-120)

When in *Poésies* the *Chants de Maldoror* are corrected, the passage is purged of its explicit reference to grace and distanced from this pre-text in Naville. If Ducasse will have a strong precursor, it will be not Hugo but Christ, the strongest of all and not 'simply a figure for any truly strong poet'.²⁵ And when His strength is dissipated in mediation through texts, there will be no more strong precursors to speak of. The weak remain to remind us of what might have been: in the place of the precursor stands Naville. Not only is his Christian reading of modern poetry the archetype and test of Ducasse's own judgements but, as Ducasse points out to his publisher, he is also a tangible forebear whom the ephebe might, reversing the flow in Bloomian style, influence in turn.²⁶ But

it seems Ducasse has missed an important point: the ephebe must challenge the strong, not the weak (as Coleridge does Milton, now Cowper), if he is to be a strong poet himself; or, if he is to become a critic, challenge a strong critic (as Pater does Ruskin, not Swinburne); or else convert all precursors into critics of some kind and pitch against their collective strength (as Bloom does). Ducasse does 'follow' Bloom in this last respect, except that he challenges the collective weakness of his precursors. The oppositions in *Poésies* between groups of writers result in minor victories (Hugo and Lamartine over Musset, Racine and Corneille over Hugo), but in the lists of his precursors Ducasse is ultimately, in the last of them (*Poésies* p. 76), a leveller: 'Poor Hugo! Poor Racine! Poor Coppée! Poor Corneille! Poor Boileau! Poor Scarron! Tics, tics, tics.'

The ratios may be different from Bloom's, but the point is still that readings are necessarily misreadings, and there is a map to be drawn of the Ducassian landscape. Bloom uses ratios to determine 'the poet's stance— rhetorical, psychological, imagistic—as he writes his poem': 'The figure that a poet makes, not so much in or by his poem, but as the poem relates to other poems, is the figure I seek to isolate, define, and describe by adequate gradations' (*B%*, p. 7). Possession, Conversion, Salvation, Redemption, etc. are all terms available if the ratios in *Poésies* need names. But the anti-messianic figure made in and by that text (the poet as ant- not antæchrist) is made not by the poet but by the reader, as s/he relates the poem to other, messianic, poems, and it is as much the stance of the reader that the names adequately describe. 'No reader [. . .] can describe her or his relationship to a prior text without taking up a stance no less tropological than that occupied by the text itself' (*B%*, p. 30). When Sollers writes of 'Lautréamont's science' and Kristeva uses algebraic equations to represent what happens in *Poésies*,²⁷ not only is their stance 'no less tropological' than Ducasse's, but it is so in what they believe is the same way, troping on both poet and critics as 'scientists of the text' and effacing the distinctions between them. Bloom's different stance may have the advantage of accounting for such wayward tropologies, but in arguing that the language of poetry and the language of criticism are equally tropological he shares with Kristeva and Sollers a desire to assume the same stance as that 'occupied by the text itself', effacing the distinction between critic and poet: their languages 'cannot differ, in more than degree' (*B%*, p. 29). Bloom has eloquently argued that criticism is as tropological as its object: 'all poetry necessarily becomes verse criticism, just as all criticism becomes prose-poetry' (*AI*, p. 95), and he enjoys the scandal this has spread among those traditional critics who have always behaved as if criticism could avoid contagion from its tropological object. But it may not be literature that corrupts. When Bloom seems so often to make the poems he reads read as if he had written them, and when readings of Bloom - even this one - seem momentarily unable to avoid the same impression, it is he who becomes the carrier: 'Influence is Influenza - an astral disease' (*AI*, p. 95). How he caught this disease

and how he passes it on is a story told in his books. His description of poetic influence is a description of how he was influenced by poets, and he is interested only in the theory of influence and of relations between poets insofar as he himself - the Critic as Poet - has relations of his own with other poets, or insofar as relations between other poets serve as figures for those relations of his own. When he supports the theory of misprision with quotations from Shelley, Stevens or Ashbery that describe the same process figuratively, he makes of these poets the types of poetical critic that he has become. Poetry necessarily becomes verse-criticism, certainly, when it is read by a critic bent on writing prose-poetry. In such circumstances he is right to insist that criticism is as tropological as poetry, even if that insistence too is necessarily a trope. But poetry need not be tropological 'in the same way' as criticism, need not assume the same stance as the critic himself, and the assumption that it does is also, just as necessarily, a trope, one that serves Bloom's ambition. *Poésies* is poetry that resists such wholesale appropriation by the critic: my reading of Ducasse through Bloom can use only those parts of *Poésies* (the relation to precursors and the appropriation of 'other', authoritative language) that anticipate the theory of influence, albeit antithetically; Kristeva can use *Poésies* to illustrate intertextuality where the theory of intertextuality is anticipated by its citational practice, albeit partially. The object of the reading is troped, anxiously perhaps,²⁸ as an anticipation of the reading. The evident partiality of such readings leaves the text's integrity untouched and available to other readings. Shelley, Stevens and Ashbery, if they are strong poets, will survive Bloom's reading of them, as Ducasse has survived Symbolists, Surrealists, Existentialists and Scientists of the Text. The relative appropriateness of Bloom's theory of influence and of Kristeva's intertextuality as approaches to reading Ducasse may be measured, finally, by the distance each keeps: the misappropriations of each remain obvious, and it is the usefulness of such readings that they never come close, since they then may still serve as the ante- (or anti-) models for other, if not closer, readings.

Notes

1. Julia Kristeva, 'Word, dialogue and novel' in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi, Oxford, 1986, p. 37.
2. *Lautréamont's Maldoror*, trans. Alexis Lykiard, London, 1970.
3. Cf. *Théorie d'ensemble*, Paris, 1968.
4. Kristeva, *Sémiotiké, recherches pour une sémanalyse*, Paris, 1969 (re-issued 1978), p. 194. All citations from Kristeva are from this and the following page. Her principal discussions of *Poésies* are in this chapter, 'Poésie et négativité', and in the section on 'Le contexte présupposé' from *La Révolution du langage poétique*, Paris, 1974, pp. 337- 58. The English translation of this book omits Kristeva's discussions of Ducasse's work.

5. 'A poetic "text" [. . .] is a psychic battlefield upon which authentic forces struggle for the only victory worth winning, the divinating triumph over oblivion.' Harold Bloom, *Poetry and Repression*, New Haven, 1976, p. 2.
6. In what follows I am indebted to Jonathan Culler's discussion of Kristeva and Bloom, in his chapter on 'Presupposition and intertextuality' in *The Pursuit of Signs*, London, 1981, pp. 105-111.
7. Paul Valéry, 'Situation de Baudelaire' in *Variétés II, Œuvres I*, Paris, 1957, pp. 598-613.
8. T. S. Eliot, 'From Poe to Valéry' in *To Criticise the Critic*, London, 1965, p. 28.
9. Sima Godfrey (ed.), *Yale French Studies*, LXVI, 1984, pp. 1-26.
10. 'I take the word (*tessera*) not from mosaic-making.' Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, Oxford, 1973, p. 14. Hereinafter *AI* and cited in the text.
11. Ducasse, *Poésies*, trans. Alexis Lykiard, London, 1978, p. 40. Hereinafter *Poésies* and cited in the text. Lykiard's translation is too free to show clearly the relation to certain pre-texts so I have used my own.
12. *Preface to Oliver Cromwell*, in Victor Hugo, *Dramas*, trans. I. G. Burnham, London, 1896, p. 24.
13. Bloom (ed.), *Charles Baudelaire*, New York, 1987, p.3.
14. Alcide Dusolier, writing in *Le Nain jaune*, April, 1864, cited in Godfrey, op. cit., p. 20.
15. Letter dated 10 November 1868 and recently discovered in a copy of the first *Chant de Maldoror* that had been sent by Ducasse to Hugo. First published in the *Bulletin du bibliophile*, I, 1983, pp. 13-22.
16. Victor Hugo, *Les Rayons et les ombres*, in *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, Montreal, 1944, p. 239-40.
17. Op. cit. My translation.
18. My translation from *Homélies sur Saint Paul*, Paris, 1980, p. 94.
19. For Bloom, *kenosis* 'is a movement towards discontinuity with the precursor' (*AI* , p. 14), whereas the action of grace I am describing is the reverse.
20. To conjoin Lucretian materialism and medieval Christian mysticism as here is not so inappropriate. The publication history of Thomas à Kempis's book could itself be a repertoire of ratios for misprision: issued anonymously under the exhortation to 'Inquire not who said this, but attend to what is said' (I, v); then variously attributed authors until a copyist signed his transcription and gave it his name; then variously rewritten, 'corrected' or truncated, in Protestant translations; then discovered to have been written for the most part not as prose but as poetry; and so on.
21. For a more detailed discussion of Ducasse's anti-Christian stance, see my 'The precursors

- and pretexts of *Poésies*', *French Studies Bulletin* XXXIII, 1990.
22. This is akin to Bloom's Death of Love: 'This voiding of the sense of others and otherness, and so of the possibility of any eros save self-love, represents a renewal of the Gnostic "call" of the Alien God, the true estranged Divinity who has been thrust aside by Jehovah the Demiurge, the mere god of nature and the Creation . . .', 'Auras: the sublime crossing and the death of love', *Oxford Literary Review*, IV, 3, 1984, p. 15.
 23. Adapted from John Rodker's translation in *The Lay of Maldoror*, London, 1924, p. 7.
 24. *The Problem of Evil. Seven lectures by Ernest Naville, translated from the French by E. W. Shalders*, Edinburgh, 1871, p. 184.
 25. Bloom, *The Breaking of the Vessels*, 1982, p. 36. Hereinafter *BV*.
 26. For a more detailed discussion of Ducasse's relation to Naville, see my 'The precursors and pretexts of *Poésies*'.
 27. Philippe Sollers, 'La science de Lautréamont' in *Logiques*, Paris, 1968, pp. 250-301, and Kristeva, 'Le contexte présupposé' (op. cit.).
 28. This is not the Anxiety of Anticipation of which Godfrey writes (op. cit.).