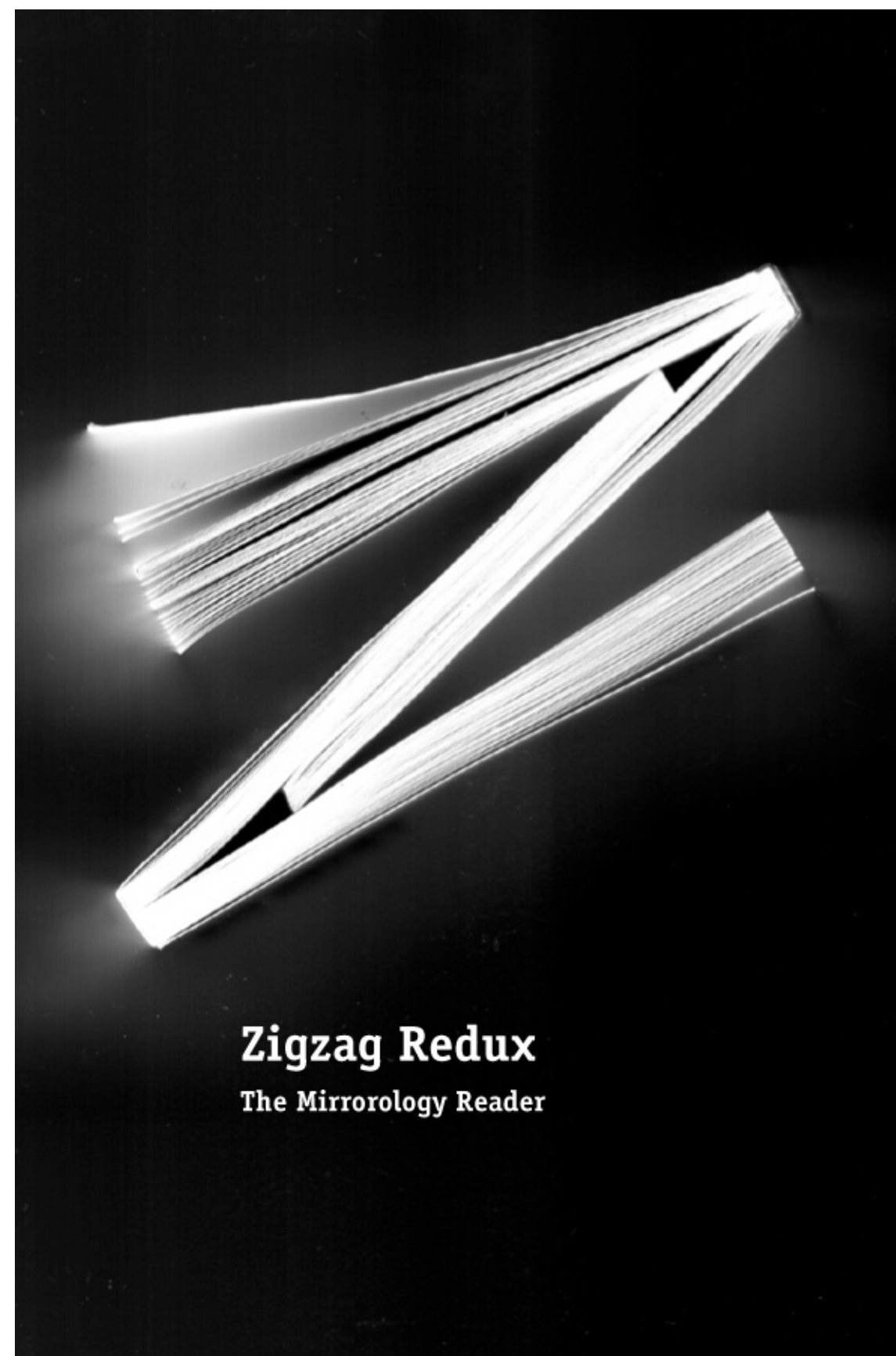


Zigzag Redux, Spring 2005
Trim: 6"x9"
Selection: Cover, pages 12-13, 22-23



M.M. Bakhtin

Epic and Novel

Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below, break open its external shell, look into its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it. (847)

Julian Barnes

Flaubert's Parrot

Then I saw it. Crouched on top of a high cupboard was another parrot. Also bright green. Also, according to both the gardienne and the label on its perch, the very parrot which Flaubert had borrowed from the Museum of Rouen for the writing of "Un coeur simple." I asked permission to take the second Loulou down, set him carefully on the corner of a display cabinet, and removed his glass dome.

How do you compare two parrots, one already idealised by memory and metaphor, the other a squawking intruder? My initial response was that the

second seemed less authentic than the first, mainly because it had a more benign air. The head was set straighter on the body, and its expression was less irritating than that of the bird at the Hôtel-Dieu. Then I realised the fallacy in this: Flaubert, after all, hadn't been given a choice of parrots; and even this second one, which looked the calmer company, might well get on your nerves after a couple of weeks. (21)

Roland Barthes

The Structuralist Activity

The simulacrum, thus constructed, does not render the world as it has found it, and it is here that structuralism is important ... it highlights the strictly human process by which men give meaning to things ... Ultimately, one might say that the object of structuralism is not man endowed with meanings, but man fabricating meanings, as if it could not be the content of meanings which exhausted the semantic goals of humanity, but only the act by which these meanings, historical and contingent variables, are produced. (1130)

The Death of the Author

Proust has given modern writing its epic: by a radical reversal, instead of putting his life into his novel, as is so often said, he made his life itself a work of which his own book was the model, so that it is quite clear to us

What is really on display for the addressee who insists on ‘speaking back’ is this rhetorical strategy where words are used to provide images with meanings they would not have otherwise ... What matters here is the effort to reconcile instead of enhance tensions by shedding verbal light on visual objects, and by imposing a particular, semiotically loaded order on chaos. (31)

Hence, the line is a piece of truth-speak in the precise sense: in its very stating of the truth — specifying that not all the material came from the same place — it is lying — suggesting that the representation is truthful. (47)

Charles Baudelaire

Au Lecteur

Hypocrite lecteur! Mon semblable, mon frère!

Les Sept Vieillards

À Victor Hugo

Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves,
Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant!
Les mystères partout coulent comme des sèves
Dans les canaux étroits du colosse puissant.

Un matin, cependant que dans la triste rue
Les maisons, dont la brume allongait la hauteur,
Simulaient les deux quais d’une rivière accrue,
Et que, décor semblable à l’âme de l’acteur,

Un brouillard sale et jaune inondait tout l’espace,
Je suivais, roidissant mes nerfs comme un héros
Et discutant avec mon âme déjà lasse,
Le faubourg secoué par les lourds tombereaux.

Tout à coup, un vieillard dont les guenilles jaunes
Imitaient la couleur de ce ciel pluvieux,
Et dont l’aspect aurait fait pleuvoir les aumônes,
Sans la méchanceté qui luisait dans ses yeux,

M’apparut. On eût dit sa prunelle trempée
Dans le fiel; son regard aiguisait les frimas,
Et sa barbe à longs poils, roide comme une épée,
Se projetait, pareille à celle de Judas.

Il n’était pas voûté, mais cassé, son échine
Faisant avec sa jambe un parfait angle droit,
Si bien que son bâton, parachevant sa mine,
Lui donnait la tournure et le pas maladroit