

## THINKING CITY, WRITING CITY

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Des gares noires, des casernes, des hangars. Les brasseries sinistres qui se succèdent le long des Grands Boulevards, les devantures horribles. Ville bruyante ou déserte, livide ou hystérique, ville éventrée, saccagée, maculée, ville hérissée d'interdits, de barreaux, de grillages, de serrures. La ville-charnier: les halles pourries, les bidonvilles déguisés en grands ensembles, la zone au cœur de Paris, l'insupportable horreur des boulevards à flics, Haussman, Magenta; Charonne.

*Georges Perec*

Hell is more impressive than heaven. When a group of young boys from Cambridge, Massachusetts, were asked to describe their ideal world, they were baffled and even a little bored. When then requested to portray the worst environment they could imagine, they responded with glee and imagination.

*Kevin Lynch*

**WRITING CITY** is my hypothesis. The phrase bears three senses. I shall address in this paper the second and the third senses:

- First, as an ergative phrase. As in «this sweater washes easily», well: **this city writes wonderfully**. **City** in this sentence is the syntactic subject; the human agent, however, is only implied—and you can by no means add it. On the other side, there is no detachment of city as theme: all is city. We make do with **impure art**, an art of performance, of collective authorship. Limited, ephemeral creative acts.

- The second sense is transitive: **writing the city**. On one side, **city** is selected,

thrown out, as theme, or object. Symmetrically, the role of the agent—the author—is available. Creation, or foundation, is now the center.

• In the third sense **writing city** is a phrasal verb: as in «Baudelaire wrote city *Le Spleen de Paris*». The agent is still present—changed—but what was the theme has been absorbed into the predicate. The phrase itself cannot be pried apart, analysed into its elements. The theme is absorbed, from two we make one, and something new can be added at the other end. This is an aesthetics of recirculation, or recycling.

From 2 on to 3, this story can be read as history. Sense number 2 is the era of Realist fiction. But 3 is not simply an evolution: it is the double, always present, always negative, denouncing the timidity of 2. I'll now go on to describe the transitive sense.

In the beginning, the city was not a theme. What has happened when it has become one? I'd say that, in a way, things have fallen into order. You'll see the irony here. Two facts: a. the author lives the city, has her place in it. The private voice and the voice in privacy; b. the city is inscribed into an axiology: a negative valuation. The city is HELL.

There is an asymmetry here, in that the second component is much more stringent. And it is prior: the city is condemned before it becomes an object. How did it start? St Augustine says: «The first founder of the city on earth was a fratricide». Note that he's not making a narrative statement (he doesn't say, «It was Cain who etc»). He's inviting us to make a generalization. And it is an evaluative generalization: Augustine's source for this, the Hebrew Bible, is ferociously hostile to the city. Augustine himself has mixed feelings on the subject: he writes about the fall of Rome, a recurrent *topos* which we will often come across, and we must read there the trace of personal anxiety. What in fact he does, however, is condemn the city doubly: one as Hell, the other as a copy, a **slave**. We'll see.

The bad city has lived on. In the post-theological age, behind the condemnation of the city, what often lies hidden is the condemnation of Culture as opposed to Nature. The century of Rousseau is also the time when Hoggarth painted «Gin Lane»—a painting Poe made a reference to in «The Man of the Crowd»: the early period of massive migration to the cities and its attending evils. Or again, some fifty years later, the indictment of London in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*.

Why is the city condemned? Shall we look at it first from Cain's point of view, the point of view of the founder? According to archaeology and myth, the apparition of cities is sudden, unexpected. Kevin Lynch in *A Theory of Good City Form* underlines that the apparition of cities is a *cæsura* in history. Appropriately then, Cain's action is unmotivated, inscrutable. It is a massive affirmation: of what? Perhaps that is the origin of the connection between the city and death. Building a city is an attempt to counter death, by erecting a standpoint for dialogue with the gods. The city is Titanic in the most exact sense: its founding is a Promethean gesture against Death. The city is, of necessity, turned to God. That's why the building of the city is always accompanied by «anxiety and guilt» (Lynch, 13): because it is dangerously close to pride. It is «turned to God»: but it is an act of impiety.

*The city is a «great place», a release, a new world, and also a new oppression. Its layout is therefore carefully planned to reinforce the sense of awe, and to form a magnificent background for religious ceremony.* (Lynch 9)

More subtly, St Augustine underlines that Cain's act is arbitrary and inexplicable. Augustine says mysteriously that Cain's act was not motivated by jealousy. All this, and the suddenness of foundation, connects the act of foundation to artistic creation. At any rate, it is an act whose ambivalent meaning escapes us: it has been erased. Nobody has the right to enquire about the origin of the city. We **must** forget that the foundation of cities is ideological<sup>1</sup>. Or, as John Ashbery puts it: «*These lacustrine cities grew out of loathing / Into something forgetful, although angry with history*» (9). Ashbery's words are uncannily close to Kevin Lynch's **tone**:

*In the earliest capital of Shang China, pillared buildings rose on earthen platforms, and there was a human sacrifice under each important building, or even under every pillar. Anxiety and guilt accompanied city building.* (Lynch 13).

St Augustine grafts, onto the Biblical narrative, an alien tradition: that of participation in being, a hierarchical ontology. The city is beneath the city of God. Herein, in the integration of the Bible and Platonic ontology, resides the full thrust of Augustine's position: Cain's act is a copy, and as such, reprovable. But Augustine refrains from stating it overtly, since he has to account for the good there is in the city. The city cannot be of one piece. So he complicates his picture by introducing another level: in Book XV of *The City of God* we are told that there are two parts to the city on earth. One is the city proper—Cain's—, the other is the *imago* of the celestial city. It is an image, and by the same token, in Augustine's words, it is a slave. Because it is created to signify. The rub here is in the emphasis that it is a shadow, not a **representation**—he says so explicitly. There is no mimesis: the bad one is silenced, and the face of the city which is turned to God is not the product of human creation. So no mimesis—to admit that there was one would be too frightening: we were supposed to forget, remember? How was the city created, then? Of course, Augustine wrote in a period where the cities were physically disappearing, so he doesn't bother to avoid the trap. But what's crucial in Augustine is the introduction of the touchstone of **representation**, or *imago*: the notion will make it easier to pass the buck to the poets.

What will happen later, from the eleventh century on? This is the period of ascendance of the Christian city. It has to be justified, and by two moves: first, bringing in a Platonic distinction between good and bad mimesis, and vindicating the good mi-

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1. I wish to thank Professor Cagliero, to whose reflections on Jacques Derrida's *Otobiographies* this section is indebted.

mesis (the allegory of the three beds), the craftsman's mimesis (for craftsman, read urbanizer or architect); second, silencing the original foundation (the troublesome one, which is not, of course, the act of an urbanizer). The poet is the defendant, but he will be magnanimously pardoned, on the basis of a deal I'll now comment on.

Listen how a poet put it. In *Inferno*, Dante is shown the premises by Virgil. As pagan poet and, poetically, founder of Rome, Virgil has unlimited access to Hell. **But** there is a point where Virgil is at a loss, impotent. At the beginning of Canto IX, when they reach «lower Hell», the gates of the city of Dite are closed to them. The scene is comical in the incongruity of its sudden suspense: the Gorgon, the Medusa, looming threateningly over the two poets, is being egged on hysterically by the Furies, who urge her to take revenge—on Virgil and his fellow -traveller— for the action of Theseus. Theseus, you know, came to Hell to carry away Proserpina. That is, the two poets are suspected of attempting to plunder Hell, which is what they will do, in a way. Dante and Virgil are dumbfounded, they have no idea what to do or say—this wasn't on the script. At that moment, straight from the God of Heaven, in comes an angel who gets the gates open in the twinkling of an eye. But the angel has no word for Dante or Virgil. He doesn't even look at them: it is a purely military action. The poets, bearing a warrant issued by God, were detained: the **contract** must be reaffirmed, because now, in a way, Virgil and Dante are about to enter into a **precinct of the State**, where its worst enemies are confined. What is Dante telling us? Why are the poets humiliated?

This is not a deal between the poet and God: it is a contract between the poet and the republic. Dante's age is the springtime of the Christian city. It is a period of crisis, where the limits of the civil and religious authorities are yet to be defined. The *Divine Comedy* is a defense of the proper sphere of civil government. The poet has been allowed in, but he is in the payroll of the State, and the first thing which must be made clear is that the State has the monopoly of foundation. The nature of the first foundation must remain silenced, its contingency must be erased.

The State imposes a division between public and private: the individual has a purely theoretical right to privacy. But without privacy, there is no creation. And this is what the poet gets as his part in the deal. Let us see what is the experience of privacy in the city, and two ways in which the poet breaks the contract: we'll see that she hides, and not content with that, she starts trouble.

The concept of **public** and **private** as a duality has its origins in the civilization of the city. I will attempt now to explain how the duality derives from the spatial paradoxes which are inherent to the idea of city (one of which was mentioned above: we don't see the city as a whole; who claims to see it?). The exploration of the ideas of **space** and **city** will lead us to posit two images of the city.

There cannot be privacy, or publicity, without space (it is impossible to conceive privacy otherwise than connected to the idea of **space**). Therefore, in attempting to address the duality private/public, we must address space, and try to define what is the space of the city. One thing captures our attention immediately: in order to do this, we

need categories, such as EXTERIOR/INTERIOR, LIMIT, CENTER, SURFACE: how do they work in connection with the city? Let us start with «the interior of the city». The phrase is semantically dubious. So we ask, what is blocking the metaphor? Why can we, on the other hand, quite naturally refer to «the interior of a country»? If we can, it is because there is a hypermetaphor which can be verbalized thus: COUNTRIES ARE LIMITED SPACES. Limits are here more important than centers: one can perhaps speak of «spaces» («areas») without centres («centre» is an ancillary category). Limits are crucial: no country without limits. And precisely, it is difficult to determine exactly where the limit of the city is.

Another way to put this is by considering the notion of the «outside». If there is a space, there must be an «outside»: the only point of view from which the outside appears to be «visible» —in inverted commas, naturally— is from that of the planifier: when there is a plan and no more, an outside can indeed be pointed at. However, even as the city grows away, and something new appears besides the plan, that privileged point of view is no longer privileged, but all the contrary. The city is detached, alienated from its planifier. The plan cannot grow, the city will, encroaching precisely on «the outside». It is dubious that the interface between **inside** and **outside** will prove very useful.

What of the notion of surface? On the face of it, it seems even less promising, since then there can hardly be an interface (what shall we call what is not on the surface? where is it?) Yet, it is a fact that layers, strata, appear to be inseparable from our image of cities: in a city, you walk on a layer, which is on top of another (in the case of archaeology, this is not a mere metaphor). Archaeology is digging into the past: exactly what Joachim du Bellay instructs us to do with Rome in *Les Antiquités de Rome*, one of the first books about a city. At a given moment, a city is only surface. Next, I want to take the notion of **hiding**.

Privacy means hiding. We can have our own axiology here, and ask, is a city more or less hider-friendly? We may have pure exterior. In this case, to «city», we append a French adjective which has no exact equivalent in English: **uni**. It does mean «united», but it also means «homogeneous», and also, natural, free from artifice or sophistication. Here we meet our old friends nature and culture. A city where you cannot hide, where you are absolutely visible. All natural, guaranteed aseptic. And everything is controlled by the Eye: you have nothing to fear if you have nothing to hide, as the police would say. It became an obsession for planners in the late 19th century to flatten, erase, the slums, in order to destroy hide-outs (in Haussman's Paris, for instance, avenues had to be wide enough for policemen on horseback to suppress demonstrations: this was said openly). In the **ville unie**, everything is public.

However, there's no way, really, that even this ideal city will manage to be kept ironed out and starched. Tension provokes a distortion of the plan: the «ville unie» will inevitably tend to crumple. Surface has to keep growing faster and faster and space changes from two- to three-dimensional —population always increases at a rhythm

which the planner cannot foresee. A rumple to hide in is what you have if you manage to dig a hole. Next, you dig a hole within that hole: holes to hide in. A fractal model, and it all has caved in, as it were.

With the proliferation of hollows, we reach a transgression of topology: the surface of the hollow becomes internal, the hole is detached like a bubble. It is no longer a hollow but an inner sphere (an internal closed surface). The bubble within the system, if you want. I propose we label this «internal city», provisionally. It is important to underline both the **imaginative** appeal and the physical implausibility of this interior city: in the best figurations of it, those of Dante, Piranesi and Escher, the impossible geometry, the inconsistency of perspective—the center becoming the way of escape, are hidden behind realism of description/depiction.

Creation involves privacy. We'll leave it at that. No time. Remember that the act of creation was already said to be blasphemous. What else is it that the creator does in her sphere which merits such severity? The creator is locked up, away from sight, in her cell. She's cheating!: the eye of authority is denied access to that innermost recess. It is in the interest in the artist that the city should be as infernal as possible. The underground escapes control. First breach of contract, first reversal.

An example of this in the *topos* of light. Artificial light is vital in the interior city. There is no exterior: the interior city is dark; it is illuminated from within and all the light there is is artificial (originally, the light of fire). It is a realm of shadows, as Rembrandt and Goya well knew. All great artists will revel in this lurid light. Notice in this respect the importance of the theme of electricity in contemporary American fiction (for instance, in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and in the episode of Byron the Bulb in *Gravity's Rainbow*).

What about the act of reading? The Classical locus of reading is also a sphere: the reading room. And just as creation was said to be silence, the Classical form of reading is silent reading. This is a created institution: even Chaucer, at the beginning of *The Book of the Duchesse*, reports suffering from insomnia and having somebody read him a book<sup>2</sup>. So the institution was not universal in the 14th century. All this business, in private spheres, requires a world made up of bubbles, holes. Literature, after Dante and Chaucer, is thus made possible by the city. The paradox of the city, the other side of the coin, is that the more privacy there is, the more solitude. This confirms the infernal status of the city. The play of spheres might be prosaically represented by a formula:

#### PRIVATE-PRIVATE

At this point, the contract between the writer and the State, of which we had an early version, needs to be revised. In the run-up to the period of Realism, it all became a question of anchoring *mimesis*—to the public good. Since literature requires privacy at

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2. Professor Bob Shephard pointed this out to me.

both ends, it contributes to constructing the «private citizen», the citizen as the reader of fictions, as consumer of worlds. It has been made clear to the writer that these ought to be complete, coherent worlds —complete should not be confused with «exhaustive»—, as opposed to the incomplete worlds of Medieval romance.

But you don't want worlds to be as similar to the «real world» that the citizens are misled. At the same time, you are wary of providing ways of escape to the citizens. You are gently told to mind your business. The State to the writer: «you, writer, for God's sake, keep to your place, make up your mind where you are going to settle down, and don't wander around». But as long as the author minds her own business, the number of private readers may and will keep growing: bigger and bigger audiences. Slowly, literature, fiction especially, became a matter of public interest, for good and bad. *Mimesis*, however, is still *mimesis*, the evil one, the reprobate. We reach a point where our formula might be best changed to:

#### PRIVATE–PUBLIC

With the city now become like a sponge, surface can be as interior as you want. Here we come up with another reversal: between public and private. Hollows in effect are become surfaces. The more hollows there are, the more difficult it is to get from one to another cell — and yet the closer they stand to one another. (This is the paradox of the labyrinth). Proximity and isolation have now to be taken together (thence the famous aphorism that one is never so lonely as in a crowd).

Melville's problem in «Bartleby» — and we'll see Ellison posing it one century later — is, OK, let's have a story, where am I to stand? how is it possible to tell a story from nowhere? One tends to forget that not only Bartleby, but the narrator, have no place of their own: the lawyer is inextricably bound up in a bundle of incongruent planes. After introducing himself as a private public man, the narrator goes on to describe in some detail the **geometry** of his office. And a few paragraphs later, he has this flabbergasting remark: «*I procured a high green folding screen, which might entirely isolate Bartleby from my sight, though not remove him from my voice. And thus, in a manner, privacy and society were conjoined*» (Melville 67).

«Bartleby», or «things that should happen privately take place in public» — which, by the way, is the essence of Sade's topology. What happens when, as «Bartleby's» narrator puts it, we «*[throw] open these doors*»? It's a honeycomb, what we get when we take away one of the separating cloisons. The secret cell becomes absolutely public. Ponder what «gopher» means, its etymology, its use in American culture, and even its use in Internet: and yet the etymology is from the French «gaufre», Manneken Pis's familiar waffle.

So, the secret cell becomes absolutely public. This opening up of the cell gives origin to the most radical irregularity in the city: what is most private becoming public, suddenly. «Amazing thickness», indeed:

*The yard was entirely quiet. It was not accessible to the common prisoners. The surrounding walls, of amazing thickness, kept off all sounds behind them. The Egyptian character of the masonry weighed upon me with its gloom. But a soft imprisoned turf grew under foot. The heart of the eternal pyramids, it seemed, wherein, by some strange magic, through the clefts, grass-seed, dropped by birds, had sprung. (Melville 98)*

What is modern narrative? We find ourselves listening to a voice, and, **maybe**, we shouldn't be listening. Was it intended for us to hear? Take the prologue to *Invisible Man*: there is no evidence that the invisible man's act of narration takes place **outside**: his voice, it is true, is heard outside. The narrator has left his hide-out, but **gone in again**, his voice is simultaneously on both sides of the partition. If we have a physical image of the narrator's body at all, it is rather like the image we have of underground animals shown inside their burrows in documentals — gophers, say — where we wonder where the camera was placed.

What does the act of constructing fictions create? What is this space like? To envision the ideas of absolute privacy and absolute publicity, at one and the same time, one has to open oneself to the notion of «folding» or «fold». According to Webster's New World Dictionary, «to fold» is:

1. *a)* to bend or press (something) so that one part is over another; double up on itself. . . *b)* to make more compact by so doubling a number of times 2. to draw together and intertwine

So, the idea of two places at once. Language in fiction, for instance, is something we use daily, yet it is something else as well. In terms of city, this translates into the «folded city» — folded onto itself—. It is by this that we have exploded the notion of the old **ville unie**. What the fiction of the city ushers in is the **ville pliée**, to substitute the provisional «internal city» (the reason for bringing in the French is not only symmetry, but Gilles Deleuze's notion of **pli** in the book by the same title; it is for him a central feature of the Baroque mentality). Fold or layer? One of my favourite versions of the **ville pliée** is small and homely: sitting at the centre of World War Two London, Tyrone Slothrop's desk is a city all of its own:

*Tantivy shares it with an American colleague, Lt. Tyrone Slothrop... Tantivy's desk is neat, Slothrop's is a godawful mess. It hasn't been cleaned down to the original wood surface since 1942. Things have fallen roughly into layers, over a base of bureaucratic smegma that sifts steadily to the bottom, made up of millions of tiny red and brown curls of rubber eraser, pencil shavings, dried tea and coffee stains, traces of sugar and Household Milk, much cigarette ash, very fine black debris picked and flung from typewriter ribbons, decomposing literary paste, broken aspirins ground to powder. Then comes a scatter of paperclips ... above that a layer of forgotten memoranda... an empty Kreml hair tonic bottle... Tackled to the wall next to Slothrop's desk is a map of London ... (Pynchon 18).*

Note that this is our introduction to Tyrone Slothrop, the central character of the book.

So, we have two reversals: the reversal of axiology and the reversal of the duality public/private. Before we move on, let us remain poised to see the origin of one central *topos* of **city**. In **la ville unie**, one is always at the same place (everything is the same: change is impossible, and so is movement): we don't get the feeling that Dante and Virgil travel. So how did the realization of «le voyage» appear? In the city of narrative, which has suffered those inversions, there indeed voyage is conceivable, and in many guises. This travelling must of necessity be tortuous, intestine: the epitome of a **ville pliée** is that which can be explored through the sewer, like Boston in *Gravity's Rainbow*. And voyage is at the same time way in, way out. If the paradox can be solved, we are in a **ville unie**. In other words, you can never really escape from a city (this is the basis of the structure and theme of Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*). And you shouldn't: fight on! But, inevitably, because it is impossible, the yearning for escape is ever present in literature (as we know since Kerouac's *On the Road*, to mention another Beat).

Just as we are about to go on to the third sense, one question about objects. One characteristic of cities is excess, abundance and superfluity: there is more than we can use, at any moment. What happens with these supererogatory objects? Either they sink down and take their place in the jigsaw puzzle, becoming invisible, or they waken our attention by themselves. We are arrested, taken in by the object, possibly in more senses than one. There is no ethic judgement in this: simply the generalization of incertitude. The aesthetic of the city? A constant circulation of objects. No hierarchy. Remember which was the first mention of hierarchy? In mimesis.

Yes, this directly leads to a third and last inversion. Now we are into the third sense of **writing city**. If the ethos of Realism is one of exclusion or selection, think of what is «left in». The proliferation of objects in our lives in the cities means that Realism becomes the proliferation of copies. Since those things are themselves ambiguous (they may be emancipated from meaning or utility), Realistic mimesis ends up enshrining imitations of objects *qua* objects. In spite of its avowed intentions, Realism becomes a fraud: the pretension of transparency, of «showing» only enshrines the triumph of the simulacra. The author may flinch from the full implication of this fact, and thereupon cling to the transitive sense.

Alternatively, if mass consumption runs wild, why shouldn't *mimesis*? It has always been condemned, suspect. Now it's got the opportunity to really misbehave. The emblem of this is William Gaddis's *The Recognitions*, a novel about sham, voyage and creation. And a novel where cities are crucial, although you would rarely find it in anthologies of urban description.

Churning out copies: things as things. Exhaustive inventories, worlds so exhaustive and yet so incoherent, that they end up bending our own snug world. And at this point, the question may well come up, the damning question, which had never been asked: what is the original?

Or, to put it another way, what if life imitates Art? Very well, we change our formula to:

PRIVATE–PUBLIC–PRIVATE

What about the «left-hand side» of this last formula? It concerns **material** and producer: what gets to be private? The producer may use material which is, to some extent, public, **socialized**. She fusses about for material which is «lying about».

What is more public than **city**? Where are there more things «lying around»? The artist who incorporates the city as his basic material is incorporating his own life, not directly, but circuitously, his life as it has been alienated from him. He keeps adding something to **city**, and now forages about in the city. He is, in effect, **recycling**. This must not be understood in any narrow thematical sense: faces, lives, but also rhythms, voices, ways of going about one's business —form— may find their way into the artwork. This suggests two interesting derivations.

Intertextuality, the circulation of texts, is an example of recycling. Not in any narrowly verbal sense, but also formally. One important characteristic of the novel in the 20th century is the recurrence of the Baroque element, the exploitation of device and artifice. Even in novels written after 1960, this comes in two distinct variants. One is that of people like John Barth, who carefully engineer ways of foregrounding ontology (that is, worlds, and, accessorially, things); theirs is a poetics which takes over from the Medieval fables or *exempla*. On the other hand, there are those authors who are interested in the **seams**, in **connection**, like Thomas Pynchon. This goes way beyond the thematization of paranoia or conspiracy: Brian McHale makes this remark in connection with **procedural writing** (the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, Oulipo, etc):

*In certain cases, the conspiracies themselves, the objects or representation of conspiracy fiction, prove to have been determined or guided by arbitrary linguistic patterns akin to the generative procedures of procedural writing.*  
(McHale 184)

A less radical instance of this is provided by another novel by William Gaddis, *JR*, a novel which is made up of **ready-mades**. Linguistically: odds and ends of conversations, bits of language, recurrent words and phrases not used primarily for character depiction, written language read aloud (the American Constitution; advertising; the radio, as already in *The Recognitions*), voices on the phone. In this monumental novel by Gaddis, and in an even longer one by Joseph McElroy, *Women and Men*, recycling is not limited to strict collage, it is not only verbal: it is also thematical-formal, foregrounding the arbitrariness and the proliferation of connections, by juxtaposing different planes, echoing the incessant noise of city-life.

The second implication of the formula is a particular way of recycling: of sheer life. This, a new way of using autobiography, has provided the basis for much important writing in the last 30 years: the mixture of fictional and autobiographical material, especially if the latter is not masked. For this, we have the antecedent of Proust. In a completely different vein, some of William Burroughs's novels — novels of citylife —, and the work of Raymond Federman. A variant of this is recycling simultaneously history and (city)life — not necessarily autobiography — some of what Linda Hutcheon has labelled «historiographic metafiction» would come into this category: Don De Lillo's *Libra*, or Robert Coover's *The Public Burning*.

After completing this paper, I discovered that its point had already been made by Roland Barthes's in his famous distinction between **textes lisibles** and **textes scriptibles**. I still think it was worth doing, however, for two reasons. First, because, in a way, Barthes missed the mark: it has often been remarked that he only assumed the supremacy of the **texte scriptible** to go on to focus on its opposite, a classical Realist text. I think what we should add to his distinction, what American literature teaches us is, first, the centrality of the city — if one is to work with **scriptibles**. Realism is never so clearly revealed as insufficient as in the cityscapes we live in. And the second lesson of American literature is connected to the relation between life, art and fiction. It is one point which I cannot develop here. We need a new theory of expression, adapted to the age of the city. This is what William Gaddis, William Burroughs, Robert Coover, Joseph McElroy, Raymond Federman tell us.

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