Techniques of the Living

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PREFACE

1. I will return to the issue of the gender of the source.

2. In *Body Story: The Ethics and Practice of Theoretical Conflict*, Richard Terdiman discusses this vexed relationship between “language and bodies” in twentieth-century fiction, noting its antecedents in Enlightenment texts such as Diderot’s. Brooke-Rose dramatizes this heritage and, like Terdiman, disputes claims of postmodern exceptionalism by including Diderot’s Jacques, the fatalist, as one of her characters in her metacritical novel, *Thru*. See Richard Terdiman, *Body and Story: The Ethics and Practice of Theoretical Conflict* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

CHAPTER ONE

1. Brooke-Rose’s notebooks for the story read like the compulsive note-taking of a medical student studying for an exam on the nervous system, replete with diagrams of brain function. As in her later fiction, she is scrupulous in employing scientific terminology to create the operative metaphors of the text. She takes pains to ensure that her sadistic phantom limb “haunts” his victim in scientifically
reputable ways. It is a tragic irony constantly apparent to Brooke-Rose that in her eighties she has suffered from polyneuritis of the extremities and a permanent burning feeling in her feet. As she says in a private correspondence, “Pain is a companion” (e-mail to author, 1 November 2001).

2. Quoted in Sharon Cameron, Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979) 28. Cameron describes the experience of pain in Dickinson’s poems as an experience of self-severing: “The self perceived as other” (28). She sees this as an explanation for the personification of body parts in Dickinson’s poems: “They are, in the telling, isolated from the rest of the body and hence, metaphorically at any rate, severed from it.” Cameron describes this experience as “survival.”


5. Roland Barthes’s own ‘fulcrum’ text between structuralism and poststructuralism, S/Z, can be fruitfully contrasted to Brooke-Rose’s essay. In the latter, the structuralist methodology produces the poststructuralist reading. In S/Z the systematicity of the codes coexists, but is never quite reconciled, with the starred sections of analysis. Barthes’s fascinating riffs on interpretation seem to undo the system itself.

6. On the subject of formal constraint and invention, see Wordsworth’s sonnet “Nuns Fret Not at Their Convent’s Narrow Room,” a poem about the sonnet form:

Nuns fret not at their convent’s narrow room;  
And hermits are contented with their cells;  
And students with their pensive citadels;  
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,  
Sit blithe and happy; bees that soar for bloom,  
High as the highest Peak of Furness-fells,  
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells:  
In truth the prison, unto which we doom  
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence for me,  
In sundry moods, ’t was pastime to be bound  
Within the Sonnet’s scanty plot of ground;  
Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)  
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,  
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.


8. Motte’s collection, which includes biographical and bibliographical material on the Oulipian group, cites only one woman, poet Michèle Métail, who joined the group in 1974. Among the best known Oulipians beside Queneau are Georges


10. An interesting side note is that Gilbert Adair, the translator, also published a novel called The Death of the Author.

11. I am reminded of an anecdote a close musician friend told me. Several years ago, Jim Hill, a very talented jazz guitarist, played a solo at the memorial service held for Bill Evans, one of the greatest jazz pianists and a musician with whom Hill had made a series of recordings. Hill played a tune that struck my friend as particularly odd, although she could not identify the reason for her discomfort. Many hours after the service ended, she realized what it was. Without announcing it, Hill had been playing the notes that he had played with Evans in one of their duos. What was missing was Evans’s part. Some time later, my friend saw Hill and mentioned her intuition. He told her she was the only one at the service who seemed to understand that Hill had expressed Evans’s absence technically through omission.

12. Francesco Orlando, Obsolete Objects in the Literary Imagination: Ruins, Relics, Rarities, Rubbish, Uninhabited Places, and Hidden Treasures, trans. Gabriel Pihas and Daniel Seidel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) 64. Orlando sees literature’s obsession with the nonfunctional as the return of the repressed, a negating of society’s emphasis on functionality and productivity.

13. In my decision to exclude Next and Verbivore from my reading of Brooke-Rose, I have taken my lead from her own assessment of the novels. In her summary of her novels in Invisible Author and in her critical discussions of her work in general, Brooke-Rose gives only cursory attention to Next and to Verbivore, her sequel to Xorandor. Calling Next her “least original in terms of subject matter (streetsleepers)” (19), she further admits that its reliance on dialect imposed a disconcerting visual screen between the reader and the text. Thus her assessment is that the “what” of the novel was less interesting and its “how” obstructive. It should be clear that the category of difficulty intrigues rather than daunts me; however, I do find Next both more predictable in its content (and politics) and less fruitful in its narrative experiments. For different reasons, Brooke-Rose dismisses Verbivore as the less successful of her two science fiction novels. Faulting herself for sending the manuscript too quickly to the publisher after its completion, Brooke-Rose opines that she missed an opportunity to develop a “splendid idea” further “(creatures feeding on our broadcast words and getting so overloaded they demolish all our systems)” (18). In this case, I am in sympathy with my writer’s criticism at the expense of her fiction. I, too, find the dialogic Xorandor, with its amalgamations of hardware, software, and wetware, a much more fascinating example than Verbivore of technology’s potential threat and possibilities.

CHAPTER TWO


3. Brooke-Rose has linked the almost trance-like state of *Out* to her own experience with serious illness in 1962, when she lost a kidney and almost died. “I was very much thinking of death as the meaning of life. And I began to write *Out*, which is a very ‘sick’ novel. I think one can feel that.” See Ellen G. Friedman and Miriam Fuchs, “A Conversation with Christine Brooke-Rose,” *Utterly Other Discourse: The Texts of Christine Brooke-Rose*, eds. Ellen G. Friedman and Richard Martin (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1995) 30.

4. In an earlier essay entitled “Dynamic Gradients” (1965), Brooke-Rose describes the way the subjective and objective converge in Sarraute’s writing: “The intensely subjective is treated, not just with ‘ironic detachment’—that critical cliché bestowed on most lady-novelists—but with total scientific objectivity and humility, qualities not found in Virginia Woolf with whom Nathalie Sarraute is so often compared. These half-conscious movements and murderous impulses are viewed like organisms caught and enlarged in an electron microscope.” Christine Brooke-Rose, “Dynamic Gradients,” *The London Magazine* March 1965: 93.

5. In *Christine Brooke-Rose and Contemporary Fiction*, Sarah Birch views the “new epistemology,” or what I am calling the “yoking” together of disparate realms, as a negative example of the “coercive use of metaphor” in *Out* (56). However, she does acknowledge another use of metaphor, which she links to the mind of the central consciousness who produces “creative metaphors which distort, subvert, and ‘mobilize’ the language of authority” (Birch 62–63). But the narratorless narrative is more labile than this parsing into good and bad uses would suggest. The coldness, what I am describing as the “flattening” effect of this yoking resembles the intellectual conceits of the Metaphysical poets. Brooke-Rose herself says that this kind of conceit “resolv[es] the contradictory aspects of emotional experience in relation to the changing validities of time and the physical world” (Christine Brooke-Rose, “The Baroque Imagination of Robbe-Grillet,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 11.4 [1965–66]: 410). In an excellent discussion of the novel, Ursula Heise says, “The peculiar disjunctiveness of perceptions in *Out* does not seem due to illness so much as to a world whose basic functional parameters have changed so radically that conventional reasoning cannot account for them anymore” (229).

6. In “‘Look into the Dark’: On Dystopia and the *Novum*,” Tom Moylan refers to Darko Suvin’s dictum that “a significant SF [science fiction] text must be based on ‘new configurations of reality in both inner and outer space’” (64).

7. The doctor tells the man, “We’re not only able to telescope a dependence that used to take years to build up, we telescope the let-down as well. You’ll see, the wrench will be fairly painless” (141).

8. In my reading of *Disgrace*, I am indebted to two excellent lectures on the novel: Gayatri Spivak’s discussion of the desublimation and counter-focalization in the novel, (UC Irvine, 5/24/02); and Derek Attridge on the new fluidity of human relations in the South Africa of the novel (rev. and published in Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004]).


10. See Birch, 64–69; Canepari-Labib, 71–75 and 185–204; and Brooke-Rose, *Invisible Author*, 17.
11. It is the parsing of parts of the self (as in the case of the orbital “children”) that may account for this uncharacteristic reliance on speech mode and, along with it, the first person pronoun. In an exchange with Brooke-Rose, she balked at the description of her narrative sentence as “first-person,” surprised that she had somehow broken from the “narratorless” sentence she developed in *Out*: “When I read your description ‘1st person narrative’ I jumped (mentally). For years I have thought, and probably said, that the first three ‘experimental’ books from OUT develop ‘my’ Narrative Sentence (NS), in fact Robbe-Grillet’s in *JALOUSIE* but he doesn’t develop it further and returns to the 1st person, whereas I have played around with it throughout, with only a few sidesteps, for specific reasons each time (AMAL, XORANDOR, VERBIVORE . . . then back to the NS from REMAKE on, with experiments like NS in changing multiviewpoint.” Brooke-Rose acknowledges the presence of the personal pronoun in *Such*, but maintains that at the end of the novel, NS reappears and Larry’s ‘I’ vanishes (Brooke-Rose e-mail, 22 July 2004).

12. Brooke-Rose, who aggressively resists the label “Freudian,” read Jung, Freud, and Lacan in Paris. She has admitted reluctantly that for a brief time even before the Paris period, she was treated by a Jungian analyst who told her to record her dreams every morning (see “A Discussion with Christine Brooke-Rose”). Along with the essay “Id is, is id?,” Brooke-Rose’s analysis of James’s *The Turn of the Screw* in *A Rhetoric of the Unreal* draws most explicitly on Freud, including, in the latter essay, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*. In this reading, Brooke-Rose mentions the Freud text in detail, along with Jeffrey Mehlman’s fine interpretation in “How to Read Freud on Jokes: The Critic as Schadchen.”

In an e-mail to me about Freud, dated October 11, 2004, she writes that she “must have read Dreams and Jokes since everyone had. But there was no specific or personal F. influence till SUCH, and there it’s always Larry thinking or speaking, not me.”


CHAPTER THREE


2. This is not the place for airing my reservations about Barthes’s basic binary schema, which seems to characterize types of reading rather than to offer a typology of texts. For a helpful discussion of Barthes’s model, see Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

3. See chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of Thru, Brooke-Rose’s most explicit fictional engagement with French theory.

4. In an excellent article on Brooke-Rose’s fiction, Robert Caserio discusses the burdens this kind of free play places on the reader, who has to run to keep up with the hectic and unexpected trajectory of the narrative: “The xorandoric text needs a reader who is critically hyperactive. He who runs may not read any longer,
unless he runs and reads with an unparalleled quickness to catch up with and catch hold of meanings that are rigorous and self-contradictory, determinate and indeterminate, at crucial points” (293). In speaking of the “hectic mobility” of this type of contemporary fiction, Caserio uses Brooke-Rose’s own term, “xorandoric,” which refers to semantic disjunctions and incoherences more than to the kind of syntactic displacements described in Brooke-Rose’s statement above. *Between* relies on both syntactic errancies and semantic gaps of the sort Barthes describes to create a dizzying dislocation in the reader. See Robert L. Caserio, “Mobility and Masochism: Christine Brooke-Rose and J. G. Ballard,” *Novel* 21 (Winter–Spring 1988): 292–310.


6. In Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit: An Heroi-Cyclic Novel* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1969) Brophy also uses air travel as the quintessential metaphor for twentieth-century culture: “I adopt the international airport idiom for my native. Come, be my world-oyster” (28). The narrator accepts the way the pure products of postmodern jet-age culture collapse the foreign into the familiar: “This airport was the happy ape of all other airports. Its display casecased and displayed the perfumes of Arabia and of Paris, packaged in the style to which they have become accustomed [sic] through the universal Excise of capital letters and full stops in the typography. Every artifact in sight excited me, raised me towards tip-toe. None was everyday. All were exotic. Yet nothing chilled or alienated me, since nothing was unfamiliar. The whole setting belonged to my century” (26). Brophy and Brooke-Rose were friends for many years.

7. In a letter to me, Brooke-Rose specified that this false start consisted of about twenty pages (Letter to author, August 5, 1992).


11. See Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *Forms of Violence: Narrative in Assyrian Art and Modern Culture* (New York: Schocken Books, 1985) for an antinarrative theory that privileges art that represents the “pleasurable movement” of desire and meaning (105) and Caserio’s critique of Bersani in his excellent discussion of Brooke-Rose in Caserio, “Mobility and Masochism: Christine Brooke-Rose and J. G. Ballard” 295–98.

12. In a critique of Ihab Hassan’s definitional distinctions between modernism and postmodernism, Brooke-Rose objects to the oppositional structure of his paradigm as much as to the overly broad and simplified categories she discovers in much theorizing of the postmodern: “I find both terms peculiarly unimaginative for a criticism that purports to deal with phenomena of which the most striking feature is imagination, and I shall use them only when discussing critics who use them. For one thing, they are purely historical, period words, and in that
sense, traditional” (“Eximplosions” 344). In recent years Brooke-Rose has come to identify her own experimentalism with postmodernism and does make use of the term. Still, her novels, including Between, explore the continuity between modernist and postmodernist literature, destroying the neat divisions hypothesized by many theorists. In Constructing Postmodernism (which I read after this chapter was written) Brian McHale categorizes Between as a modernist novel with a “postmodernist undertow” (215).


15. Brooke-Rose’s novel often echoes Eliot’s poetry of the twenties, such as The Waste Land and The Hollow Men, particularly in its insistent litany of “betweens” (“Between doing and not doing the body floats” [395], or as one character says, “We live between ideas, nicht wahr?” [413]. This cadence of the “between” conveys an Eliotic feeling of interstitiality, a sense of waiting for chronos, or “ordinary time,” to be transformed into kairos, or “time redeemed.” How to discover the sacred in the detritus of culture—this, the question of both Eliot and Pound—recurs in Between. “The gods have left this land says Siegfried now the boss” (431), the jaded former German soldier and past lover of the translator. Near the end of the novel, the anonymous translator and Bertrand, an aging French suitor who writes love letters to her, discuss Eliot’s poetry. He asks if she has ever read Eliot’s poem “la figlia che piange,” which reminds him of her, and he quotes some of its lines. She has only heard of Eliot: “He wrote something called The Waste Land didn’t he?” (548–49). “Tired of your still point?” Siegfried taunts the translator when she announces her plans to sell her domestic refuge in Wiltshire.

16. See Brooke-Rose’s discussion of Susan Suleiman’s “close reading and imaginative criticism” as opposed to a rigid, more flat-footed “biographical criticism,” against which Brooke-Rose has inveighed many times in print (“Splitlitcrit,” in Invisible Author 32–35).

17. I am indebted to Robert Caserio for this notion.

18. See also Blanchot’s exploration of passivity: 14–18.

19. The importance of prepositions in general can be seen in the titles of Brooke-Rose’s other novels as well—Out and Thru, included with Between in the four-novel collection Omnibus. For a meditation on the sexuality of grammar, see Shari Benstock, Textualizing the Feminine: On the Limits of Genre (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

20. All sorts of puns on the idea of height circulate in the novel: “I have conducted my higher education by transmitting other people’s ideas,” says Siegfried (Between 426).

21. Even the “myths” of deconstruction are caught in this euphemizing, this gendering. In his essay “Des Tours de Babel,” Derrida tropes the translator as the male in hot pursuit of the virgin translation: “The always intact, the intangible, the untouchable (unberührbar) is what fascinates and orients the work of the translator. He wants to touch the untouchable, that which remains of the text when one has
extracted from it the communicable meaning. . . . If one can risk a proposition in appearance so absurd, the text will be even more virgin after the passage of the translator, and the hymen, sign of virginity, more jealous of itself after the other hymen, the contract signed and the marriage consummated” (191–92).

22. For the most thorough description of Brooke-Rose’s development of her “narratorless present tense” narrative sentence (153), her main narrative “constraint” in her novels since Out, see “The Author is Dead: Long Live the Author” in Brooke-Rose, Invisible Author.

23. The “distant brain” in Between is technologically updated in Brooke-Rose’s novel T extermination by the “aerobrain”—both a vehicle of transportation on which characters travel (and thus a “vehicle” of plot) and a computer-like memory containing a host of fictional characters from various literary traditions and periods.

CHAPTER FOUR


5. In “SplitlitCrit,” she comments on “the great innovation of Structuralism,” which signaled a “new attention to narrative structure—new, I mean, in the West” (Invisible Author 24).

6. See de Man, The Resistance to Theory. “Nothing can overcome the resistance to theory since theory is itself this resistance. . . . Yet literary theory is not in danger of going under; it cannot but flourish, and the more it is resisted, the more it flourishes, since the language it speaks is the language of self-resistance” (19–20).

7. See, for example, her discussion of the structure of the imaginary, in “The Turn of the Screw,” Christine Brooke-Rose, A Rhetoric of the Unreal 47.


11. In representing the contents of the girl’s dream, Brooke-Rose joins Lacan in linking the problem of “Who speaks” with the perception that the problem is
related to the operations of the unconscious. “I am merely referring obliquely to . . . the right way to reply to the question, ‘Who is speaking?’, when it is the subject of the unconscious that is at issue. For this reply cannot come from that subject if he does not know what he is saying, or even if he is speaking, as the entire experience of analysis has taught us” (See “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious” [Lacan, Écrits 299]). The self-reflexivity of the narrative in Thru, however, exceeds any single “key,” including psychoanalysis as a reading practice.

12. See Birch’s fine discussion of Greimas’s paradigm (91–92).


14. Martin Jay notes that in Sartre’s work, as in Bataille’s, “the eye is identified . . . with liquid images of the fetus or womb, which links it to the mother in repellent ways” (281).

15. Glossing this section, Brooke-Rose refers to “the wax tablets or early writing (stone and parchment written horizontally), as well as Freud’s mystic writing pad as discussed by Derrida (1978)” (Invisible Author 76).

16. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane, eds., In Dora’s Case: Freud-Hysteria-Feminism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) 2. In “Woman as Semiotic Object,” Brooke-Rose alludes to Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément’s discussion of hysteria in The Newly Born Woman and observes that the very word “hyste-

17. A number of reviews of the novel confirm the risk involved in the writing strategy.


20. See Brad Buchanan, “‘A Blind Spot in Your Own Youdipeon Discourse’: Christine Brooke-Rose, Oedipus, and the Synecdochic Narrative,” Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies 5.2 (1999): 195–208. Brooke-Rose acknowledges the richness and staying power of the myth of Oedipus that underwrites cultural narratives so durably, and displays no nostalgia for the narrative. Contrast Steven Spielberg’s treatment of the Freudian Oedipal narrative in AI. Although the film is highly imaginative technically and technologically (according to the norms of science fiction), it is surprisingly traditional in envisioning the radical future. The film ends with an Oedipal wish—to sleep in the bed of the mother. For all the technical adventurousness and dark apocalyptic resonance, resolution seems to lie in the body of the mother.


CHAPTER FIVE


2. Mira has an intertextual presence in both *Verbivore* and *Textermination*. Indeed, there is speculation within *Textermination* that Mira is the author of the text, and in *Verbivore* she creates one of the other characters on her computer. This “transfer” between texts might be one playful meaning of the term “Intercom” in Brooke-Rose’s phrase for the grouping of her four novels.


4. “This century seems to us more and more fortuitous despite all our attempts at rational planning, scientific analysis, and system-building (including rhetoric). Never before have the meaning-making means at our disposal (linguistic, economic, political, scientific) appeared so inadequate, not only to cope with the enormity of the problems we continue to create (since every apparent solution creates new problems), but simply to explain the world.” Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal* 6.

5. In *A Rhetoric of the Unreal*, Brooke-Rose comments on what she calls the “gnostic dream of the best of scientific, technological and artistic brainstuff enveloping the earth” in terms that provide a gloss to the neologism “Oblitopia” in *Amalgamemnon*. She compares this “dream” to “Wells’s collective mind or worldwide information service . . . which presupposes an unprecedented harmony of minds: a mad and perhaps naïve fusion of oblivion and utopia one could call oblitopia” (388–89). She calls this fantasy “an elitist dream” (388).


9. In an undated letter commenting on an early version of *Amalgamemnon* entitled “Soon” that Brooke-Rose sent to him, Joseph McElroy shrewdly but gently assesses the tonal successes and weaknesses that result from the constraint of nonconstative verbs. He comments on the “worldweariness” of parts of the novel, which he says is “so much at odds with the bursting appetite that lives in the book’s main voice.” He contrasts this weary tone with those sections where “the future tense becomes a mad, rich sluice or pivot or music that lets us into good possibilities. So I wd say, go easy on the future’s I’ve-seen-it-all resignation and use the ingneuities [sic] and poignance of speculation more.” McElroy’s letter can be found in the Brooke-Rose archive at the Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

10. Brooke-Rose also identifies Jean-Jacques Lecercle’s excellent discussion of the omission of constative sentences as a help to her in clarifying her own technique (48). For Lecercle’s essay, see Jean-Jacques Lecercle, “Reading *Amalgamem-
non,’’ in Utterly Other Discourse: The Texts of Christine Brooke-Rose 153–69.


12. Xorandor is an example that could qualify as alternative fiction, as is the dystopian novel, Out.


14. In “‘I draw the line as a rule between one solar system and another’: The Postmodernism(s) of Christine Brooke-Rose,” Brian McHale refers to characters “ontologically enfeebled by their ‘native’ context” [in Amalgamemnon], and makes the intriguing suggestion that their reappearance in later novels of the Intercom Quartet helps them “somehow” acquire “a degree of ontological robustness between texts, in the passage from their home text to its sequel” (202).

15. See Michela Canepari-Labib’s detailed discussion of the shifting ontological levels in Amalgamemnon in Word-Worlds 83–94.

CHAPTER SIX

1. In ET, adult receptivity is gendered: the mother is child-like and incompetent, more on the wavelength of her children than the scientific/patriarchal continuum of either her husband or the scientists who invade her home. In Xorandor, the mother’s irritability seems to be a symptom of her marginality and frustration. The twins report, but do not dwelling on, her sometimes bizarre public behavior.

2. Brooke-Rose, an inveterate researcher who takes copious notes from scientific source material for some of her novels, has said that in writing Xorandor, she relied on Terrence W. Pratt’s Programming Languages: Design and Implementation, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984). See Pratt 68.


4. Bolter goes on to say that the design of the digital computer “is perfectly logical down to the scale of electrons; it has conquered the disorder of the natural world by the hierarchical principles of symbolic logic” (73–74).


6. In “The Dissolution of Character in the Novel II,” Brooke-Rose herself points to the limitations of the binary logic of the computer, though citing different failings, namely, a reification of the dominant binaries of Western civilization exposed in deconstruction, particularly the persistence of phallocentricism in the multiple semiological systems. She argues that Western society has been locked in such thinking for centuries, and computers, unless creatively used, could merely reify and confirm these coded clichés. She says, “[C]omputer science seems
to root our thought structures—either again (i.e., despite the apparent escape of deconstruction) or even more deeply—in the absolute limitation imposed by logical operations based on binary oppositions, whose positive and negative values, since they are mere electric impulses, are of course completely neutral and unprivileged” (194).


8. Zab, in particular, refers to Plato often, including a Derridean reading of Plato’s logocentric privileging of speech over writing. Her explanation to Jip is Brooke-Rose’s playful citation of Derrida’s “Plato’s Pharmacy” and refers to reading notes she took on Derrida’s 1968 essay, first published in French in Tel Quel. She took the notes when working on Pound, but used them later in Xorandor and in an allusion to Derrida’s essay in Thru: “. . . what begins in banality has to go through the whole signifying chain from idyll to catastrophe until it can be returned to banality, beneath contempt, amusing maybe and harmless, a poison and a pharmakon that immunises. And he is the temporary pharmakos or scapegoat, but only for a time.” Christine Brooke-Rose, Thru 711–12.


10. In her essay, “Id is, is id?” published a year after Xorandor (and reprinted in Stories, Theories and Things), Brooke-Rose speculates on how Freud and Derrida would make use of the technological possibilities of computer memory to “update” Freud’s analogy between the mystical writing pad and psychic memory. In mentioning Derrida’s essay, Brooke-Rose emphasizes the link between death and memory explicit in the French term for computer memory, or Read-Only Memory (ROM), mémoire morte. In the same article, Brooke-Rose refers to Derrida’s description of the machine as “a mechanism without its own energy. The machine is dead, it is death.” Christine Brooke-Rose, “Id is, is id,” Stories, Theories and Things 35–36.

11. The impulse to write beyond the ending of the story is one that Brooke-Rose pursues in the “sequel” to Xorandor, Verbivore, which takes place twenty-three years after the events of Xorandor. The sacrifice of Xorandor has not put an end to the nuclear threat, as interference from Xorandor’s offspring wreak havoc on the world economy. Brooke-Rose has admitted her own dissatisfaction with the novel.


CHAPTER SEVEN


2. However, as the narrative progresses, we discover the identities of some of its “authors.”
3. See Brian McHale’s discussion of the “ontological effects” of characters appearing in a text and its sequel. “These effects, familiar from realist (e.g., Balzac) and modernist (e.g., Faulkner) as well as postmodernist poetics (e.g., Barth, Pynchon), arise because characters who exist ‘between’ texts, intertextually, seem to approach the ontological status of beings who exist ‘outside’ texts, in the real world.” McHale specifically mentions the transfer of characters, including Mira Enketei, from *Amalgamemnon* to *Verbivore*, which, he says, “has the effect of actualizing them retroactively. It is as if these characters, ontologically so enfeebled by their ‘native’ context [i.e., the lack of ‘realized’ tenses], somehow acquired a degree of ontological robustness ‘between’ texts, in the passage from their home text to its sequel” (202). Brian McHale, “‘I draw the line as a rule between one solar system and another’: The Postmodernism(s) of Christine Brooke-Rose,” *Utterly Other Discourse* 192–213. Brooke-Rose includes a joking allusion to the “non-realized” tenses of *Amalgamemnon* in a piece of dialogue in which Mansall Roberts comments on her speech: “That’s a lot of conditionals, my dear Miss er-Inkytie . . . .” (Texttermination 101)

4. One can see this kind of “speculation” as a fictional analogue to the critical conjecture of Virginia Woolf, who ponders what kind of novel Jane Austen would have produced had she written after *Persuasion*: “Her sense of security would have been shaken. Her comedy would have suffered. She would have trusted less (this is already perceptible in *Persuasion*) to dialogue and more to reflection to give us a knowledge of her characters” (231). See “Jane Austen,” in *The Virginia Woolf Reader*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska 220–32. Into the future, beyond Woolf’s surmise, Brooke-Rose casts Emma, giving her a postmodern afterlife that is manifested in a split sense of identity.


**CHAPTER EIGHT**


5. With the author’s permission, I have reproduced this chart in Figure A (pages 172–173). The chart itself is mentioned in chapter 7 of *Invisible Author* in which Brooke-Rose discusses giving it to her publisher and literary executor “to help possible translators, if any, who could otherwise, especially in Romance languages, bring in an unwanted reflexive (pronominalized) verb, often equivalent
to an English intransitive; or fall into other traps in the Slavic languages, which can do without pronouns altogether except for emphasis.” Brooke-Rose, *Invisible Author: Last Essays* 155.

6. Although Brooke-Rose is a master of creating poetic metaphors for altered states of being and consciousness, this impulse to represent the basic materials of life in such playfully material language seems to infect scientific journalism (and possibly even scientific writing) as well as her novels. Journalistic representations of the startling completion of the map of the human genome in 2001 include a surprising amount of such language, as found in a striking article in *The New York Times* Science section entitled “Genome Shows Evolution Has an Eye for Hyperbole” by Natalie Angier. In the article Angier describes scientists as having gathered “clues to the sticky, stringy, springy, dynamic, garrulous, gorgeous and preposterous molecule of life that resides in nearly every cell of every human being on earth” (D1), (Science Times, Tuesday, February 13, 2001, D1, D5). Eric Lander of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research describes the parasite LINE (Long Interspersed Element) as “the ultimate selfish element that evolved at the beginning of eukaryotes. . . . It’s been wildly successful. It’s the perfect parasite” (D5). Some kind of pull toward metaphor as well as mimetic exuberance infects the language of science when it is called upon to convey such momentous discoveries in familiar terms.


10. Brooke-Rose’s notes include references to theories of gender differentiation within “a masculine mode of signification.” Brooke-Rose Archive, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas.


CHAPTER NINE

1. In a telephone conversation, 27 July 2005.


3. In the chapter “Remaking” in *Invisible Author*, Brooke-Rose discusses her use of this device. See 164–65.

4. Here Brooke-Rose plays on the various geometries of narrative confrontation imagined in structuralist paradigms, a theme developed fictionally in *Between* and *Thru*. As we have seen, the gendered aspects of these paradigms, involving white knights rescuing damsels from evil dragons, is a continuing theme in Brooke-Rose’s fiction, replayed in *Remake*. As Brooke-Rose has pointed out, there are constraints for women writers in these paradigms, constraints unacknowledged by male theorists and critics like Todorov, Benveniste, and Jakobson.
5. “So I wrote down my life as I remembered it, in a conventional order, and the result was dreadful. The general formula, to exaggerate a little, was “And then . . . I—this, and then . . . I—that.” It was my own life, my own experience, but even I couldn’t reread it. So I put it aside” (55). As Brooke-Rose recounts it, the sudden idea of the constraint against personal pronouns freed her to write her autobiography: “Now this was a real challenge: an autobiography without personal pronouns. Suddenly, I got interested again. I had the constraint I needed” (57).


7. Peter Consenstein, Literary Memory, Consciousness, and the Group Oulipo (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002) 39. Consenstein points out that Jacque Roubaud’s La Boucle is a life-story that employs the constraint of using the present tense to narrate the life (48). La Boucle was published in 1993.


9. In the chapter, “File: Pro-nouns” in Remake, which includes the diary entry on her mother’s death, the old lady describes her mother’s convent surroundings as “Serenity everywhere. But she is isolated in her god-Routine” (28).

10. Paraphrase replaces quotation in this last text because, in a further case of life and art intertwining, Brooke-Rose, the author, like the invalid, can no longer ascend the stairs of her own home. Her access to her library and her computer is therefore limited to the assistance of the few people she hires to assist her.

11. Brooke-Rose described the way the book records a “clinging to the world, a world completely filtered by one’s own memory.” It captures the way that old people “see the body bits going” (telephone conversation with author, July 29, 2005). One thinks back to “The Foot.”