During the late 1960s, French poetry experienced a crisis (the so-called "crise de poesie"). The emergence of "transgendered" critical concepts such as "texte" and "ecriture" was explicitly presented by prosators and poets alike as the end of the (now unnecessary) distinction between prose and poetry. Under such a new writing protocol it became superfluous to invest in any effort to uncover the true nature of poetry. Nevertheless, a few uncompromising writers and critics who still cling to the distinction between prose and poetry claimed that even though some poetry might indeed be "conventionalist" or even "dead," there was still a need to pursue the inquiry into the concept of "poetry" as the only possible path toward poeticity, as the sole way to contribute to an understanding of the plasticity of literature.

The purpose of this essay is to analyze how two of the most important contemporary writers, still attached, in many different ways, to the concept of poetry, have engaged the more encompassing visual culture by exploring photography—a medium they both liken to a kind of writing—from within their poetic practice (a practice that, in the tradition of the French avant-garde, can no longer be reduced, given the tension between poetry and poeticity, to the mere writing of poems).

DENIS ROCHE AND THE
SHOOTING OF TEXTS AND IMAGES

Since his 1972 assertion that poetry was "inadmissible," Denis Roche has been interested in the development of "fictions" that pursue the search for the "unknown." To that end, Roche often assembles series of photographs that, taken as a whole, construct apparent narrative fictions governed by time (a time stamp appearing as such, or as the title...
of the picture even, reinforces what is given in the most prosaic of narratives, but that in fact are not associated with explicit semantic contexts. In addition, within this fictitious linearity, each picture appears without internal elucidation and presents a mystery that is difficult to "interpret," either on its own or in relation to the complete series.

Roche's post-1970 prose-fictions increasingly engage the visual. For him, photography and literature today constitute an inseparable ensemble. Dans la maison du Sphinx, published in 1992, exemplifies this intermixture. Although the subtitle of the book reads Essais sur la matière littéraire, its starting point is a reflection on the materiality of photography (both as act of creation and as final printed product) and its relationship to the real. This consideration of photography and its connection to the world that it represents allows Roche, in turn, to tackle the question of "literary materiality" [la matière littéraire] for both photography and literature intellectually participate in the question of photographic reproduction as illusion and mystery.

From Venice, Paris, Chanteloup, and Giza, to Cuernavaca, Trinidad, Sri-Lanka, and Marrakech, Roche's photography spans the globe. In the "Avant-propos" to Dans la maison du Sphinx, Roche describes a picture that he took while having lunch at "The Sphinx House," a cafeteria catering to tourists outside Cairo (Fig. 1). In the dining room, whose walls are adorned with murals representing the pyramids and the Sphinx, large bay windows face the Giza plateau and allow diners to gaze directly at the real thing. Roche's photograph reflects upon this curious doubling:

So, in the same image, yes, in the same picture, I have the real pyramids and the real Sphinx, the fake pyramids and the fake sphinx, but through an ironic twist (one might say that reality is being playful and is playing me), I only capture in the picture the real pyramids and the real Sphinx as a falsified form of their reflection in the window, while the fake pyramids and the fake Sphinx appear as a direct vision through the window pane.

In fact Roche took several pictures of the same setting. The image entitled "22 septembre 1988"-published in Ellipse et laps-best ex-

2. Roche, "Avant-propos." Dans la maison du Sphinx, 12. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.
Figure 1. Denis Roche, 22 septembre 988 "From Ellipse et laps [Paris: Maeght, 1991] Courtesy Denis Roche
emphasizes the simultaneous co-presence of reality and illusion found in many of Roche's most enigmatic pictures.

The photograph collapses several multidimensional domains of reality (the monuments, the simulacral murals that depict them, the portrait of the photographer via his shadow, the cafeteria, etc.) into the flat materiality of the image. Any attempt to restitute the aggregated levels of depth is impaired by the tight overlapping of one layer onto the next, the result of the illusion created by the reflection in the window pane; while the window allows us to see what is outside behind the photographer (the chairs on the terrace and, further, the real Sphinx and pyramid), it also allows us to see what is in front of the photographer, what is visible through the glass inside (the tables set with white linens and coffee cups turned upside down, as well as the back wall onto which images of the Sphinx and pyramid have been painted). A more detailed view exposes the degree to which fake and true are imbricated within the general jumble (Fig. 2).

Here, the straight black lines are revealed to be the painted limits of each faux stone on the cafeteria wall, yet they intersect the reflection of the actual stones of the retaining wall in front of the pyramid. The flat surface of the picture plane thereby establishes a new hybrid representation of its own reality where it is not necessary, not even jus-
ified, to distinguish between fake and true forms. In the world of flat surfaces the photo erases the distinctions between true and false that only have currency in a world where objects are measured by their dimensions, size and thickness.

In the same way, the colossal nature of the pyramid caught in the grid pattern of the wall becomes a dwarfed and tamed shape of reduced proportions (Fig. 3).

Flanked by the naive mural of the Sphinx, this faint reflection of the real pyramid seems to be a pyramid redux that one might find at a summer resort miniature-golf course called "The Seven Wonders of the World." The colossal monumentality that attracted Roche's camera in the first place (he was, after all, vacationing at the Pyramids, a necessary cultural pilgrimage to discover the origins of western civilization, a place at the very source of human knowledge) finds itself negated by the blending intermixture of the image. The picture hardly fosters a sense of admiration for the monument or for the knowledge that it inspires. Beyond the confusion between the true and the false that for Roche constitutes the bi-polar tension inherent in the picture, there is a more powerful dynamism at work. For the pyramid seems lost amid a jumble of banal objects depicted in the shot (from the cafeteria building, its windows, terrace, tables, chairs, and cups, to the cheap reproductions hanging on the walls). The monumentality of the original is lost in the haze, the hierarchy of knowledge that dictates the respect for the Pyramids and for the Sphinx is flattened and the elements are given as the equal components of an undistinguishable, disorderly jam.
At the core of this visual patchwork the co-presence of the true and the fake accentuates the carnivalesque nature of the representation. Deprived of their institutional hierarchical markings, the elements flattened in the space of the picture offer themselves as masked. For la maison du Sphinx is not home to the Sphinx (the monumental one) itself; it is merely a busy eatery that caters to the common needs of visitors from around the world, replete as it is with those modern concessions one finds at every tourist destination these days (food, sanitary facilities, kitschy souvenirs). The "House of the Sphinx," where the rocks are not real, where the "Sphinx" is a mere copy, is a locus dominated by simulacra, make believe, and illusion: "The Sphinx House," as Roche writes, "is not the Last Supper, nor the Grotto of the Nativity and even less a part of History. It is a cafeteria, one of these non-magical places of the world" ("Avant-propos," 14).

Among the masks and shades of illusion captured in the chiaroscuro of the expressionist cliche rests the veiled silhouette of the master of the photographic illusion (Fig.4).

Centered in the middle of the reflection of the frame of a narrow passageway that leads only who knows where, Roche memorializes
the moment when the picture is snapped, when the illusion is created. Internally embedding the photographer's presence as part of the composition, the self-insertion has been fully determined by objective conditions and the intent to appear at the exact point of contact between the two worlds (clear/obscure) that delineate the two spaces of the picture:

At the center, as the ultimate black layer, in the guise of a third effect and of an obscure signature, my silhouette occupies a good part of the window space and one can easily understand that, if I am figuring here in a dark manner," it is because I am standing in the shaded area of the terrace, foregrounding everything else that, behind me, is brilliantly exposed to the sun and everything that, in front of me, is lost in the innumerable shades of grey that compose the interior of the Sphinx House. ("A vant-propos," 13)

Masked by his camera, the author cum deus ex camera assumes responsibility for the disorder created in the photograph. Yet, as a piling up of mini-events captured in the fraction of a second, the composition is not quite the conscious choice of the photographer, for it is literally the act of the camera-whose lens is partly visible in the frame-that triggers the shot but cannot maintain responsibility for the result [déclencheur automatique]. What is being offered to the observer's gaze is the picture of an aleatory primary unknown material.

Roche refers to this as the effect of the "white chamber" [la chambre blanche." As opposed to the camera obscura, or to Barthes' "chambre claire," the concept for Roche foregrounds the compositional nature of the shot. In French the term" chambre blanche" designates a laboratory, a sterile chamber, a place where a "pure" transformation occurs according to unaltered scientific laws and objective procedures. This white chamber is the analogical laboratory for a poem and a photograph. For both are marked by the necessity of the squaring that frames the space that defines the inside and outside of the piece. Photography: "Inside a lapse of time has been captured: all around it is the ellipse" (Ellipse et laps, 9). Poem: "... every time that I write, I internalize the violence of the space; thus it becomes impossible for me to write in any other fashion than within the same pattern: square or rectangle of fifteen or twenty lines at the most."> Thus there exists a cer-

tain similarity in Roche's approach to the "shooting" of the picture and the text as a "shot": "The idea was to propose to the observer a correspondence between the photographic framing, external, physical, and the intellectual framing, that of literature."? In many instances Roche indicates that for him the "squaring" of the picture—the horizontal and vertical framing—is a very serious and meticulous affair that precedes the shot; in the text that accompanies "Photo Four" (in Ellipse et laps) Roche comments on the circumstances of the shooting of the picture: "I am framing the picture so as not to have in it the frame of the window"; in regards to "Photo Six" (also in Ellipse et laps) he develops a long explanation about the fact that the first shot was taken while the camera on its tripod was askew and thus he disregards that picture and takes another one while the tripod has been correctly leveled with a book of matches. In both cases, the shot kills time ("To kill time I shoot pictures").

As in the jumble of events stopped in time by the picture, for Roche the poem is a pyramidal "piling up" [empilement] of lines shot in a squared frame. Reading and understanding a poem is directed by the layout of the text; in English (or in French) we read from left to right, top to bottom, linearly, over time. Pictures, on the other hand, introduce the aleatory instantaneity of simultaneism, the superficial shapes of the visual components found within the frame of the picture do not intervene in any way in our "reading" of the shot over time. Literary spatiality and photographic spatiality have many elements in common, but photography presents other advantages that can be exploited to advance the uncanniness of an image. In all cases it is an unadulterated recomposition (white chamber) of several co-present realities within the frame of the photograph. Certainly the recomposition can be "helped" by the original framing of the shot and, as I have indicated, Roche takes great care of the technical disposition of the framing. Three examples of these elementary technical tricks are found in Roche's photographic portfolio: the "doubling of the figure" [dedoublement] (see, for example, "24 juillet 1985" or "8 mai 1996"), the double presence...
ence of the same person in the same picture through the use of a small mirror (1120 avril 1979 *; 1126 juillet 1994*  L) and the use of several pictures to construct a "full narrative" [recit complet] often conceived as a parody of the roman-photo, a popular genre made famous in the 1970s (see 116 aout 1984/1 or 1126 decembre 1999*).13

Critics of Roche's pictographic poetic activity such as Christian Prigent and Jean-Marie Gleize have used the term "photomontage" to describe Roche's photographic practice. Originally "photomontage" refers to a technique invented by Dada to juxtapose items that have already been extracted from the reality of everyday life (newspapers clippings, transportation tickets)! and to mix them to produce a new reality born out of their assemblage. But as Roche acknowledges, photomontages, by the simple fact that they are a montage and not a simple aleatory assemblage, produce meaning. I do not believe that Roche has embraced photography as a complement to poetry because photography, as a technique, is a means to enhance the production of meaning. For Roche, certainly, photography inherently explores the symbolic order, but the white chamber of photography is the great machine that transforms reality into a tabula rasa of knowledge. The fa-

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12. Denis Roche: Les preuves du temps, 50 and 150.

13. If time matters, then the order of appearance of the pictures becomes paramount to the understanding of the plot. On this question and the layout of a series of pictures (*31 juillet 1975*; land the linearity of the "plot" [recit] see Hubert Damisch's remarks in his contribution ("Deadline") to Ellipse et laps, 21. The series does not really build a "narrative" (as I indicated, since the publication of Recits complets [Paris: Seuil, 1963] the term recit [narrative story] is a provocative misnomer for Roche), but realizes the ideal project of Perce's Lieux (Places) as explained in Perce's own letter to Nadeau dated July 7, 1969: namely, to come back to the same place at regular intervals to document the evolution of the lieu. Close witnesses of Roche's work, such as Prigent or Gleize, could argue that while in Perce's project the main goal of the document was to show in a graphic way how the aging of a place could be used to measure the aging of the writing, the presence in Roche's picture of the same feminine central character is the more important aspect of the chronicle: time passes and yet she remains a part of Roche's auto-photographic celebration of his love story. The modifications throughout the years in the garden found below in the picture are not as important as the steadiness of the presence of the woman as a continuous part of Roche's represented universe. His "rock of ages," so to speak.


15. Roche has studied these historic photomontages, including the well-known anti-Nazi work of John Heartfield. See Jean-Marie Gleize, Poesie et figuration (Paris: Seuil, 1983),255.

miliar, the realistic, is rendered enigmatic. The materialized image delivers an opacity of the visible that defeats the comfort of the already known. For Roche it is this mystery that activates the "dance of the mind" and the dance of words that surround the square of the picture, that creates the consubstantial relationship between photography and poetry: "The framing [of the picture] implies that there is something around a picture and, for me, it is literature that one finds around the picture." 17

As Hubert Damisch remarks in his foreword to *Ellipse et laps*, Roche's interest in photography is of recent vintage; for a long time Roche invoked the analogy with painting, and particularly contemporary abstract painting, to describe the discovery of knowledge through poetry. In his preface to *Potestie amazonide* (1962), Roche sees contemporary poetry as a "revealateur," which in French refers to both photographic chemical developer and to something that "reveals" the secrets of the world. The conclusion of the text reinforces the similarity with modern painting: "A printed poem functions like an abstract painting: a certain amount of emotional space to be filled up beyond which the reader or the observer continues the quest. Writing stops precisely at a point beyond which imagination still can wander." 18 Thirty years later Roche flees the by then insufferable order of textual squaring-the vertical composition of horizontally similar lines-to give himself a chance, through photography, to fix and kill time and to give himself, as an outside observer, the possibility of exploring the mystery of a new kind of spontaneous reality that the white chamber has given him. This is a new chance for an eciture of unconstrained knowledge. Since for Roche, no reality can escape signs, the "dance of the intellect among words," as Pound would say, can now explore the complexity of the mystery and attempt to answer the enigma:

Every picture brings together an obscure ... collection of enigmas. It exposes to our eyes the deficient perception of people and actions, of places and the pain they put on display; all ostentatious emblems full

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17. "La question que je pose," 1.
18. La poesie est inadmissible. 10.
19. "A quoi sert le lynx? A rien, comme Mozart," Dans la maison du Sphinx, 197. Pound recognizes three models of "poetry": "melopoeia" (in which the poem explores the realms of sound and rhythm), "phanopoeia" (the play with image and visuality), and "logopoeia," which engages the meaning of word and corresponds with what Pound calls "the dance of the intellect among words."
of meaning fixed by the light gloss of the picture. But here there is no
Sphinx to defend any narrow passage to understanding. No training, no
ritual needed. At best we are confronted by a Minotaur but the labyrinth
is missing.>^'

The symbolic value of the picture entitled 1122 septembre 1988" now becomes clear. It is not only a jumble created by the chiaroscuro
of the different realities co-existing in one frame. It is, in fact, a bio-
graphic image of Roche capturing the very instantaneous fraction of a
second of the passage from organized reality to a "collection of enig-
mas." The moment when reality escapes the sagacity of the Sphinx, the
very instant when he escapes the Sphinx House, the symbol of organ-
ized reality preventing us from seeing reality as an enigma. The mo-
ment when photography becomes literature.

Anecdotally, it is worth noting that for Roche's mythology of the
Sphinx to work as a symbolic explanation of his analogous under-
standing of poetry and photography, it is necessary for him to wield his
talents as a writer so as to operate a slight displacement of knowledge.
It was the Greek Sphinx of Thebes that, through riddles and enigma,
would check the degree of common knowledge of the passing strangers,
and thus guarded the narrow path to salvation. Its distant homonym,
the Sphinx of Giza, was a benevolent protector. Not indifferent to this
study, however, is the fact that the Egyptian name for the Giza Sphinx
was shesep ankh, usually translated as "living image."

JEAN-MARIE GLEIZE AND THE
REALNESS OF POLAROID POST-P(OET)ICS

While Jean-Marie Gleize is a prolific writer and critic who has been part
of the experimental literature scene in France for more than twenty
years, his texts are not yet well known to the English-speaking public.
Thus I believe that it is necessary to offer a preliminary contextualiza-
tion of his work as it relates to the contemporary field of French liter-
ary creation and photographic plasticity.

Gleize belongs to the intellectual generation that came of age in
1968. He characterizes his poetics as a kind of "post-poetry" [post-
poesie], a term he coined at the turn of the millennium after having pro-
posed a long list of prior "labels" including "poesie non," "p.o.e.z.i.e,
and "straight poesie." The necessity for Gleize to invent such terms

stems from his desire to define his unease vis-a-vis "traditional poetry," his agreement with Roche's 1968 statement that "poetry is inadmissible," and his position that the disappearance of poetry is premature. For him, even if the "laurels of poetry have been cut" - to invoke Edouard Dujardin— even if one can no longer speak of specific poetic forms, poetry, or more particularly post-poetry, lives on:

"Otherwise I don't think in terms of discontinuity or rupture. If I say post-poetry, I mean to say first of all that we are dealing with taking note of the fact that "poetry" (as an established genre, continuing to claim its formal specificity, its specific difference, whether it be in regards to forms held to be "essential," or "basic" forms) is behind us, or beside the point, that we no longer need to be protesting against poetry, but instead should formulate other sites, other devices and produce the tools and the theoretical framework that permit them to be considered as such. At the same time (and this is why I am not insisting upon the fantasy of "rupture"), it's always through relating to poetry, or "the poetry" that "post-poetry" (as its name indicates) situates itself."

Gleize's focus on the act of poeticization over the finished literary product explains the fact that he defines his own approach vis-a-vis poetry as an "interior exit". While he continues to produce poetry, his practice remains on the margins of more traditional poetic forms. Gleize abandons all central preoccupations about the definition and identity of poetry founded on formal criteria, the space of experimental poetics is characterized not only by the absence of an elaboration of the traditional formal constraints of any textual or graphic production now conceived as "installation," but also by a discourse that dismisses any critical approach or production of poetry that places form at the center of its project. Nevertheless, there is an overwhelming concern about form as shape as far as this term involves the material form of the literary text. In a way, the purpose of this limited study is to present how Gleize's post-poetry generates textual forms that explore plasticity while rejecting the notion of "form" as a set of formal prescriptions and principles at the core of the traditional formalist or neo-rhetorical canon of intra-textual poetry. The form-shape of post-poetry is a way to take into account the pragmatic component of the esthetic process.

In addition to post-poetry, the second term that is usually attached to Gleize's poetics is "realness" [réalisme]; this term applies both to the status of the poet and to the type of text that should emerge from this reevaluation of what post-poetry should be. For Gleize, post-poetry rejects the glorification of the persona of the poet; rather, he is a humble recorder of the surrounding world. The text he produces should therefore be in the form of humble "prose" that refuses the traditional features that define" poetry. Also, the purpose of post-poetry is not to provide a rhapsodic and sacred glorification of the world, but a prosaic rendering (a "topical document") of the writer's experience of the real: "It should be prose, an actual prose, flat and neat, in black, just as if it were a mere copy of life."23 This "realness," as a heightened form of perception and apprehension of physical reality, forms the basis of Gleize's literal poetics [poétique littérale]. As a result, he has proposed that his writings could be recognized as part of a new discursive mode that he calls the "infinitesimal journal" [le journal infime].24 This double movement of degentrification of poetry both as a social product and as a Gongoric construct as we mostly know it historically explains why Gleize's post-poetry has been associated (as has the work of Anne-Marie Albiach and Jean Daive) with a "minimalist" trend in contemporary poetry, one that seeks to free the constitutive elements of poeticity from the restrictive rules of traditional poetry in order to foreground the fundamental dynamics of poetry's questioning of ordinary language. Not unlike Albiach and Daive, Gleize's practice has generated a fair amount of controversy in Europe, coming from the worlds of both established poetry and poetics. Gleize's poetic views are considered to be closely related to the minimalist aesthetic of American artists from the late 1960s (Frank Stella, Dan Flavin, and Robert Morris, among others) who emphasized the shape of the materials used to

24. The English translation is inadequate to reproduce the density of the inventive French terminology. The term created by Gleize, modeled on the French expression "journal intimc" (diary), is semantically ambiguous since it can be understood both as an "unimportant chronicle" and as "the chronicle of the unimportant." It is a distant echo of Perce's "infra-ordinary" [l'infra-ordinaire], a type of writing that supposedly has no other purpose than to report the "little facts/ events" that the writer observes at a specific place and at a specific point in time. See my article "Du hareng saur au caviar ou l'autoprotait bien ordinaire selon G. Perce." in Georges Perce: Inventivite, posteiite, Yvonne Goga and Mireille Ribiere, eds. (Cluj, Romania: Casa Cartii, 2006), 292-310. Offer an analysis of this type of self portraiture by Perce and compare it to Jacques Roubaud's similar attempt in his Tokyo iniia-ordinaire.
produce a piece rather than the general-formal or representative-aspects of the realized artistic object offered up to the observer for examination.

Gleize's poetic doctrine is grounded in the fragmentary capture of the snapshot \([prise]\). Yet the goal of Gleize's \textit{instantaneous} capturing (in prose, poetry, or photography, for that matter) is by no means the celebration or glorification of what is seen. Hardly an encomiastic\text" selection\" of the real, for Gleize a photograph is merely vision stripped of its contents. A photograph is literally an empty vision. Nothing is to be seen in a photograph, and one must be careful not to associate photography with monumentalization, for this type of festive and commemorative photography (theorized in France by Pierre Bourdieu), epitomized in the cherished "Kodak moment" ("Kodak: the emotion of the instant!"), belongs to a world of effusive lyricism. Nothing as such in Gleize's own photographs; for him a photograph offers an unadorned glimpse of reality at its most raw, as the elements of the material world are delivered in a state of objective nakedness.

It is no wonder, then, that, for Gleize, the Polaroid is the instrument of choice (as was the case in the early years of Denis Roche's own experimentation with the medium). The Polaroid is a privileged tool precisely because in a pre-digital age it allows for a mechanical seizure of the real without the mediation of a negative. Moreover, the Polaroid is a unique snapshot: not only is it difficult to manipulate, it can't be made into multiple prints. And since it develops almost magically in seconds, the Polaroid constitutes a direct, immediate, "natural" means of instantaneously capturing the real. The Polaroid, therefore, delivers a depthless representation of reality, one that merely skims the surface of things. Void, as it is, of the usual signs and signals that encourage viewers to seek "understanding" from the image, the Polaroid, for Gleize, refuses to cooperate. Since the world according to Gleize is fuzzy, indistinct, blurry and unrecognizable, his photographs often suggest his own disorientation in the hope of respecting the obligation of strict literality, an idea that informs the basic credo of his post-poetry. As he writes:

The Polaroid image is a bad image. In all cases it could be said that the Polaroid picture is a flawed picture: albeit interesting … because it is deficient. The color is never the right one; it is always taken from too close or from too far. This formal mediocrity should be expected …. Even if it is not impossible to shoot a landscape or a group of people, or any kind of grouped objects observed from afar, I insist that a Polaroid
can only capture a close view of an object. We are here in the domain of an ultra sensitive constraint of the detail, of a myopic vision, fully related to a discontinuous capture of reality, to a particular attention to discontinuity, the incomplete, the fragmentary. All of which are aspects that characterize an alternate poetics based on inconsistent syntactical functions regulating discursive, logical and narrative relationships of proximity and hierarchy. As a result all semantic connections are affected by severe turbulences. Black holes.

In this quote, Gleize establishes an analogical relation between photography and post-poetic discourse. An analysis of one of his Polaroids offers even more insight into this analogy (Fig. 5).

The print is fuzzy. Not only is it difficult to establish what it is that we see here, but the image escapes identification, or what could be

called" depth" of meaning. The hasty, crossed-out note attached at its base ("copy with a Polaroid-unpublished and Californian. J.M.") is an allegorical text about the photo itself (a redundant commentary); the only information provided refers to place.

After some careful sleuthing (for what is the role of the critic if not to elucidate and clarify, indeed to help decipher the codes of artistic production?), I managed to discover what, precisely, the photograph represents: a polychromatic statue of an angel or a saint in the Spanish style of New World Colonization (the note does point, after all, to the adjective "Californian"). We might find (or recover) the original at the "Misión La Punsima Concepción De María Santísima," a Catholic mission north of Santa Ynez, in Southern California. The "postcard"
[carte postale] version of this image is explicit (Fig. 6). In Gleize's Polaroid snapshot version, the image is blurred, the angle and the field are of a fragmentary nature (a torso, a head, an arm); the Polaroid crushes the shapes and volumes and achieves a simple impenetrable surface-level interpretation of the snapshot. The de-contextualized result, stripped of its ceremony and its surroundings, escapes the fixation of idolatry that constitutes the photo-chromo postcard. In Gleize's works, the "high place" [haut-lieu] has been emptied of its monumentality; it no longer takes part in a cult of a legendary saint or martyr, or a peculiar social custom. Any way one looks at it, the cliche is absent. The scene of realness captured has been yanked out from the network of established knowledge that, in usual circumstances, would have helped the observer identify it immediately and restitute it to the common cultural system of intellectual references. Gleize's Polaroid image must be apprehended on its own, first and foremost as a surface of shapes diversely distributed; the process of comprehension has to be limited to the material surface under consideration.

Gleize's Polaroid yields the simplification, the erasure, the stripping bare, the photographic unrobing of a sacred object that no longer carries value in and of itself. In the postcard, the disguise of the production, the ceremony, the orientation of the work turns the real into a freak show: comprachico. Gleize's photograph, blurring the real, does not profit from the object, but restores its non-commercial value. Literally, there is nothing here except for a photo in a state of complete nakedness.

Gleize is not one of those who believes, like Lautreamont, that everything is explicable. If there is an approach of elucidation in his writings, it is that which consists in confirming the "undecipherable, senseless [character] of the real." Concerning Neon,26 one of his most recent works, Gleize can therefore affirm: "The idea that the real is obscure and that one goes forward in an incomprehensible (and absolutely inflexible) reality is taken charge of by this prose that conserves and realizes this part of obscurity of the real. Here one comes across a precept of Ponge, which I support: 'above all else, do not arrange things!" In this way, Gleize's "literal realism" neglects the use of form in its double aspect of image (as a rhetorical cliché borrowed from a vast abundance of literature such that in itself time doesn't change it) and met-

tics (relating to the tightly controlled prosodic system resulting in a simple linguistic densification that conceals or rearranges the things of the world). The omission of form in Gleize's most contemporary writings assures the deficit of meaning for the benefit of the direct transcription of the surface of the real and superficially gives rise to the outline of things. That surface of the photographic or discursive material works as an impenetrable screen that prevents the photographer or the writer from exploring the depth beyond the surface and restrains him from the temptation in so doing to give rise to a parasitic hypertrophy of derisory meaning.

Even if Gleize's post-poetic approach to issues of plasticity in discourse and photography may seem close to Roche's in the sense that both deal with mystery, differences exists. Most importantly, where Roche believes there is a distinction to be made between literature and photography, Gleize does not. When Roche prepares the shot, for example, he manifests a clear sense of perception of reality as it is culturally interpreted, his work takes as point of departure the clear control of the objects or events that will be captured, as well as an educated, contextualized understanding of the world as a system determined by order, hierarchy and "syntactical functions" that culturally regulate the real, and that provide a grid for a conformist deciphering (see his description of the elements that compose the "Sphinx House" picture as well as his description of their spatial distribution in the field of the frame). Roche also accepts the principle that he can mobilize his technical know-how to "arrange" the framing of the shot. All this attention, understanding, and competence is geared toward the felicitous nature of the shot that will deliver a non-standard image, an image that does not fit into the pre-established common" storehouse of knowledge and technique" ("depot de savoir et technique," as Roche calls it). It is then with childish glee that Roche slips and slides away on that glossy enigmatic space of fiction where he escapes time and contingent meaning, where the" dance of the words" gives way to a complex discourse of a reality of a higher materiality.

No such thing with Gleize. The capture, discursive or photographic, occurs on the spur of the moment, no special "arrangements" are involved before or after. Rather, Gleize prefers to capture the intellectual obscurity of "realness." His esthetic contribution is to render it as such without embellishment, interpretation, or gloss that would offer a path to any form of understanding or reinsertion within the realm of common knowledge of the world in which we live. Avoiding any heuristic
temptation born out of altruistic semiophilia, Gleize elaborates a discourse that espouses and hugs the surface of things so as to map out a topological disposition of the material universe that we occupy. It is an empirical declaration focusing on the situation of the material components so as to strictly restrict discourse to the apodictic order. The text or the Polaroid is presented as a manifestation of a hermeneutical aporia. For Gleize, to give an explanation, to offer a narrative plot, to link shapes together, would be in effect to create thickness, depth, and meaning in a universe that should only be known and understood as a flat space of discontinuous fragments, cut-ups, and disjointed materials. Any esthetic project to access any type of inner logic is an intellectual illusion that can only result in the disfiguration of realness and its grotesque misshapenness.