

Pastiche

An essay in the manner of Vladimir Jankélévitch

Pastiche is perhaps the only art that demands, as the prior condition of its success, the abolition of the one who practices it. For the painter who paints a landscape remains before his landscape; the translator who transposes a poem stands, so to speak, beside the text he accompanies; the commentator who glosses a philosopher situates himself in front of the thought he illuminates. But the pasticheur? The pasticheur enters *into* the voice of another as one enters an empty house whose arrangement of furniture one knows by heart, the smell of the rooms, the particular creak of the third step: he settles in, he adopts the habits of the place, he breathes to the rhythm of those sentences that are not his own — and the better he succeeds, the more he disappears. Here is the constitutive paradox of the enterprise: the perfect pastiche would be the one whose true author has become rigorously untraceable, dissolved in the thickness of a prose that belongs to someone dead or absent; the artisan of imitation volatilizes himself in the very perfection of his work, as the ideal ventriloquist would be the one whose lips we could no longer see, whose very existence we had forgotten. And yet this disappearance is never quite accomplished, never fully consummated, for there is always, between the model and his double, the irreducible thickness of a consciousness that *knows* it is playing, of a knowledge that cannot not know that it knows; the lucidity of the pasticheur is the ineliminable residue of the operation, the grain of sand in the mechanism of identification. So that pastiche oscillates perpetually between two symmetrical impossibilities: that of total coincidence, which

would suppress the pasticheur as subject, and that of irremediable distance, which would suppress the pastiche as pastiche. Between these two voids, the pasticheur inhabits a vertiginous *entre-deux* — too present to be transparent, too absent to be author.

One must not confuse this art with its neighbors. Plagiarism steals what it cannot become; it takes the words but refuses the voice, as a pickpocket takes the wallet but refuses the friendship. Parody exaggerates the voice in order to escape it; the parodist is the rebel who, in the very act of caricaturing the master, proclaims his independence, his irreducible exteriority; the parodist says *I am not you* precisely by saying *you* too loudly. Translation inhabits a different space altogether, for the translator works between two languages, whereas the pasticheur works within one language and between two souls — and it is always harder to cross from soul to soul than from tongue to tongue. Commentary, finally, stands at a respectful distance, speaks *about* what the other has said, never dares to speak *as* the other speaks; the commentator is the perpetual visitor, never the tenant; he admires the house from the sidewalk. The pasticheur alone crosses the threshold, removes his own shoes, and walks barefoot through rooms that do not belong to him, rooms where the trace of another foot is still warm in the carpet. What kind of knowledge is this that requires such trespass? What kind of love, or what kind of violence, do we name when we say that one writer has entered the voice of another?

For there is something uncanny, something vaguely spectral in the pasticheur's undertaking, something that recalls the old practices of possession and ventriloquism, of necromancy and mediumship — all those arts in which a living body lends itself to a voice that is not its own. The medium at the séance, the sibyl at the tripod, the actor on the tragic stage: each one speaks in a voice that arrives from elsewhere, from below, from before; each one opens the mouth only so that another sound may pass through. But the actor at least has a text, a script that delimits the zone of surrender; the medium at least has the excuse of trance, of a consciousness dimmed and therefore exculpated; the sibyl breathes the fumes that relieve her of responsibility. The pasticheur enjoys none of these protections. He is fully lucid, fully conscious, fully responsible — and yet he speaks in a voice that is not his. He has neither script nor trance nor divine afflatus: he has only an ear so finely trained, a memory so saturated with

another's cadences, that the foreign voice rises in him as naturally as his own breath. Is the pasticheur then a kind of voluntary medium, a lucid somnambulist, an athlete of dispossession? Or is he rather, as one might equally say, a lover so besotted with another's prose that he can no longer distinguish the beloved's intonation from his own — in which case pastiche would be not a technique but a condition, not an art but a symptom, not a choice but a fate?

I

The Lover's Knowledge

There are two ways of knowing a style, and they are as different from each other as the anatomist's knowledge of the body is different from the lover's. The anatomist opens, separates, names the parts; he produces diagrams, taxonomies, nomenclatures; he can tell you that this author favors the subordinate clause, that that one avoids the passive voice, that a third deploys the semicolon with unusual frequency. The anatomist's knowledge is precise, explicit, transferable; it fills articles in stylistics journals and feeds the databases of computational linguistics. But this knowledge, for all its rigor, could never produce a pastiche. The anatomist can dissect a style into its component features and label each one with an index card, and at the end of this long labor he will know everything about the style and understand nothing of it; he will have what the scholastics called *notitia*, knowledge-about, and lack what they called *sapientia*, knowledge-of, the sapid knowledge that comes only from tasting. The lover, by contrast, does not analyze; the lover absorbs, steeps, marinates; the lover lies in the style as one lies in a bath, until the heat has entered the bones and the rhythm has become indistinguishable from the pulse. The lover of a prose does not count semicolons; the lover hears a music, feels a tempo, senses the precise weight that a particular consciousness gives to its silences. It is

this knowledge — the absorbed, saturated, practically carnal knowledge of another's way of thinking-in-sentences — that the pasticheur requires. And this is why pastiche is not a technique that can be taught in a manual, not a set of rules that can be codified and transmitted, but something closer to a disposition, a condition of the soul, a long apprenticeship of the ear that resembles, more than anything else, the apprenticeship of love.

For consider what the pasticheur must know. He must know not only what the author says but *how the author's mind moves between things it says*; not only the vocabulary but the rhythm of thought, the characteristic hesitation before a subordinate clause, the way a sentence opens with confidence and then suddenly doubles back upon itself in a parenthesis of doubt, or conversely the way it begins in uncertainty and gathers force as it goes, accumulating clauses like a river accumulating tributaries, until it arrives, swollen and irresistible, at a conclusion it could not have foreseen at its outset. The pasticheur must know the author's unconscious habits — the tics, the reflexes, the automatisms that the author himself does not notice, precisely because they are too intimate, too deeply embedded in the musculature of thought to be accessible to introspection. Every writer has such habits: a characteristic way of beginning paragraphs, a certain preference for one conjunction over another, an instinctive tendency to place the most important word at the end of the sentence or at the beginning or (in the case of the more devious stylists) in the exact middle, where it hides like a stone in a fruit. The writer himself does not know these things about his own writing, just as the walker does not know the precise angle at which his foot strikes the ground, just as the singer does not know the exact shape of the resonance in his sinuses; and it is precisely this unconscious knowledge, this knowledge that even the knower does not possess as knowledge, that the pasticheur must somehow acquire and reproduce. The pasticheur must know the author better than the author knows himself. And here we touch upon something genuinely strange, something that perhaps explains the faint aura of the illicit, the slightly transgressive character that has always attached itself to the practice of pastiche: for to know someone's unconscious habits is to know them with an intimacy they have not consented to, an intimacy that exceeds what even friendship or conversation could provide; it is the intimacy of the spy, of the stalker, of the analyst — or of the lover who, having spent a thousand nights listening

to the other breathe, could reproduce the exact rhythm of that breathing even after the other has departed, even after the other is dead.

But this intimate knowledge is also, in its way, the deepest form of literary criticism. Proust understood this, perhaps better than anyone. His *Pastiches et mélanges* are not merely exercises in virtuosity, not merely parlor games for the amusement of the Guermantes (though they are also that); they are acts of critical understanding so profound that they bypass the intellect entirely and lodge themselves in the musculature of prose. To pastiche Balzac is to understand Balzac — not in the way that Taine understood him (from outside, as a specimen of his milieu and his moment) nor in the way that Curtius understood him (from above, as a system of recurring themes and mythological patterns), but from within, as a living rhythm, as a way of breathing in sentences; it is to have felt, in one's own fingers, the impulse that makes a Balzacian paragraph begin with a vast panoramic sweep of social description and then suddenly plunge, through a trapdoor of free indirect speech, into the intimate and panicked consciousness of an individual — this movement that is Balzac's signature, this lurch from the general to the particular, from the sociological to the psychological, that is more Balzac than any enumeration of his themes could ever be. And Proust, who pastiche Balzac in order to exorcise Balzac, who pastiche Flaubert in order to cure himself of the Flaubertian temptation, who pastiche Saint-Simon and the Goncourts and Renan and even the journalist of the *Figaro* — Proust understood that the pasticheur's knowledge is therapeutic precisely because it is so intimate: one cannot exorcise what one has not first inhabited, one cannot free oneself from an influence that one has not first pushed to its limit, carried to its extreme consequence, ridden to the very end of its logic. The pastiche is the homeopathic cure for influence: *similia similibus curantur*; the poison of another's style, administered in a concentrated dose, becomes its own antidote.

And yet — and here the dialectical paradox begins to tighten its spiral — this knowledge that is so intimate, so carnal, so close to love, is also, in another aspect, a knowledge of death. For what the pasticheur knows of the other's style he knows precisely *as style*, which is to say: as something that has become sufficiently fixed, sufficiently crystallized, sufficiently repeatable to be identified, isolated, and reproduced. One does not pastiche

a style that is still in the process of forming itself, a voice that is still searching for its own timbre; one pastiches only what has already hardened into a recognizable idiom, what has already become, in some sense, a monument, a completed oeuvre, a finished thing. The very possibility of pastiche implies that the model's style has ceased to be the living medium of a thought in motion and has become instead a *thing*, an object available for inspection and imitation — which is to say that pastiche always arrives too late, always comes after the period of creative intensity has passed, always works upon a style that is already, in some crucial sense, dead. This is why we pastiche the classics and not the contemporaries (or when we pastiche the contemporaries, it is in order to fix them prematurely into classicality, to embalm them while they still breathe, which is the cruelest form of homage); this is why pastiche has about it always a certain autumnal quality, a certain melancholy of the belated, a certain fragrance of pressed flowers and old libraries. The pasticheur is the entomologist of prose: he pins the butterfly of style to the board of his own page, and what he produces is indeed the butterfly, with its exact coloring and the precise venation of its wings — but it is the butterfly immobilized, the butterfly that no longer flies. Between the living style and its pastiche there is the same distance as between the face and the death mask: the resemblance is perfect, the contours exact, and yet something essential — the quiver of the lip, the fleeting light in the eye, the imperceptible movement of thought behind the forehead — has been lost in the casting. The pasticheur knows this. The pasticheur always knows this. And it is this knowledge, melancholy and lucid, that gives to the best pastiches their particular tonality — not the tonality of triumph (though the technical achievement may be remarkable) but the tonality of elegy, of a gesture that acknowledges, in the very perfection of its reproduction, the irreproducibility of the thing reproduced.

II

The Space Between Two Voices

If pastiche is, as we have said, the art of inhabiting another's voice, we must now ask: what happens to the pasticheur's own voice during this inhabitation? Does it disappear entirely, absorbed without remainder into the foreign idiom? Or does it persist, a murmur beneath the borrowed music, like the hum of a ground bass beneath a melody that seems to sing alone? And if it persists, where does it persist — in what fold of the prose, in what interstice of the syntax, in what silence between sentences does the pasticheur's irreducible self take refuge?

The first thing to say is that the pasticheur's own voice is never entirely absent. However perfect the imitation, however seamless the ventriloquism, there is always a residue, a remainder, a *je ne sais quoi* that escapes the logic of reproduction and betrays the presence of a second consciousness within the first. This residue is not necessarily a flaw; it is not the visible stitch in the seam, the false note in the chord, the moment where the mask slips and the actor's own face shows through (though such moments exist, and they are the mark of the failed pastiche, the pastiche that has not crossed the threshold of inhabitation and remains stuck in the vestibule of external imitation). No: the residue of which I speak is subtler than any mistake, more pervasive than any lapse; it is the irreducible fact that the pastiche is being performed by someone, that an act of will sustains the identification at every moment, that the foreign voice is being *held* in place by a consciousness that could, at any instant, release it and return to its own idiom. The pastiche is always, in this sense, a sustained act of concentration, a continuous expenditure of effort — whereas the original was effortless, was simply the way the author thought, the natural exhalation of a consciousness that knew no other way of being. The model breathes his style as he breathes air, unconsciously, necessarily; the pasticheur breathes the model's style the way a diver breathes underwater, deliberately, with an awareness of the medium that the natural swimmer

lacks. And this awareness, this perpetual *savoir* that accompanies the pastiche like a shadow, is what gives to even the most brilliant imitations their characteristic quality of tension, of slight exertion, of something held rather than simply given — a quality that the attentive ear detects even when the intellect can identify no specific point of failure.

But there is a deeper question. For if the pasticheur's own voice persists within the borrowed voice, it persists not as a simple given, not as an unalterable substrate that remains unchanged beneath the surface transformations of pastiche; it persists as something that is itself being transformed by the experience of inhabitation. The mask, worn long enough, changes the face beneath; the borrowed voice, sustained long enough, alters the native voice that sustains it; the pasticheur who returns from a long sojourn in another's prose returns to a self that is no longer quite the self he left. Every writer knows this: one does not read a hundred pages of Proust without finding, for the next day or the next week, that one's own sentences have grown longer, more sinuous, more laden with parenthetical qualifications; one does not immerse oneself in Hemingway without emerging, for a time, stripped and bare, suspicious of every adjective. If mere reading produces such effects, how much more powerfully must pastiche — which is not reading but *performing*, not receiving but *producing*, not listening but *singing in the other's voice* — transform the consciousness that undertakes it? The pasticheur does not emerge from the exercise unchanged. He emerges contaminated, enriched, destabilized; he has lost something of his own voice (a certain naïve confidence, a certain unconscious ease) and gained something of the model's (a new syntactic possibility, a new way of thinking through subordination, a new tempo); and the voice in which he subsequently writes, the voice that is nominally his own, is henceforth a voice marked by its passage through the foreign idiom, a voice that bears within it, like a geological stratum, the trace of its sojourn in another's prose. In this sense, pastiche is never an innocent exercise, never a neutral experiment that leaves the experimenter intact; it is an ordeal, a *Wandlung*, a passage through the fire of another's consciousness from which one returns altered, branded, scarred. Proust knew this, and this is why he practiced pastiche as therapy: the violence of the transformation was precisely the point; one pastiche Flaubert not despite but *be-*

cause of the risk of being changed by Flaubert; the cure works only if the disease has truly entered the blood.

And here we encounter the most vertiginous moment of the dialectic, the point where the two voices become genuinely indistinguishable, where the pasticheur no longer knows — no longer *can* know — whether the sentence he is writing belongs to the model or to himself. For there comes a point, in every sustained pastiche, where the effort of imitation crosses a threshold and becomes something else: not imitation at all but a kind of co-creation, a genuine collaboration between the living consciousness and the absent voice, in which sentences arise that neither the model nor the pasticheur could have produced alone — sentences that are, in a sense, the product of their encounter, their superposition, their interference pattern. This moment, which is the summit and the crisis of the pastiche, is terrifying in its implications. For if such sentences are possible — sentences that belong to no one, or to both — then the border between voices is not the sharp line that our ontology of authorship requires; it is a zone, a gradient, a region of transition where the question *who is speaking?* admits of no stable answer. The pasticheur, at this moment of supreme identification, is like the man who has walked so far into the fog that he can no longer tell whether the footsteps he hears are his own or another's; and the page he produces is the record of this undecidability, this trembling of identity at the threshold where self and other meet. It is this moment that Proust, with his incomparable precision, called *le miracle d'une identification* — and it is a miracle precisely because it is, in the strict sense, impossible: two consciousnesses cannot occupy the same space, two voices cannot speak simultaneously through the same mouth, and yet, in the instant of the pastiche, this impossibility is momentarily realized, or rather it is not so much realized as it is *performed*, enacted, staged in a prose that trembles with the effort of sustaining a coincidence that reason tells us cannot be sustained. This instant does not last. It cannot last. Like the instant of intuition in Bergson, like the point of tangency between the finite and the Absolute in the philosophies of Malebranche and Spinoza, like the moment of grace in the theology of the Jansenists, the moment of perfect coincidence between pasticheur and model is a flash, an apex, a summit without duration — and the pastiche, in all the sentences that follow, is

nothing but the extended echo of this vanishing instant, the long and melancholy diminuendo that follows the single struck chord.

For the instant passes, and the pasticheur falls back into the consciousness of his separation. The effort of identification, which for a moment had attained its object, relaxes; the attention, which for a moment had been entirely absorbed in the foreign voice, returns to itself; and with this return comes the awareness — bitter, sobering, inescapable — that the voice in which one has been speaking is not one's own, that one has been, all along, only performing, only pretending, only playing at being someone else. This is the *retombée*, the falling-back, the moment of deflation that follows every summit of identification; and it is in this moment that the pastiche reveals its affinity not with love (as we suggested earlier) but with mourning. For what the pasticheur experiences, in the instant of disidentification, is something very close to bereavement: the loss of a presence that had been, for a moment, as vivid and as intimate as any real presence; the withdrawal of a voice that had been, for a moment, as close as the voice of one's own thought; the collapse of an inhabitation that had been, for a moment, so complete that the distinction between host and guest, between self and other, had seemed to dissolve entirely. And now the house is empty again. And now the rooms are cold. And now the pasticheur stands in the doorway of a prose that no longer belongs to him, that perhaps never belonged to him, and feels the particular desolation of the one who has been, briefly and impossibly, someone else — and must now return to the poverty of being merely himself.

Is the pasticheur, then, a figure of melancholy? There is something in his condition that recalls the melancholic's attachment to a lost object, the melancholic's refusal to relinquish a presence that is no longer present, the melancholic's insistence on keeping alive, by the sheer force of memory and desire, a voice that has fallen silent. The pasticheur, like the melancholic, clings to what is gone; the pasticheur, like the melancholic, inhabits the space of absence with a tenacity that borders on the pathological; the pasticheur, like the melancholic, finds in the faithful reproduction of the lost voice a consolation that is also, and simultaneously, a deepening of the wound. For the more perfect the reproduction, the more vivid the awareness of what has been lost: the pastiche that most closely resembles the original is also the pastiche that most poignantly reminds us

that the original is no longer producing itself, that the hand that wrote those sentences is still, that the consciousness that shaped those rhythms has dissolved into the undifferentiated silence from which no voice returns. In this sense, every pastiche is an act of mourning, every pastiche is a séance in which the living attempt to make the dead speak one more time — and every pastiche, however brilliant, however technically accomplished, however close to the impossible ideal of total coincidence, is also and always a failure, a confession of the irreversibility of death, a monument erected not to the presence of the model but to his absence.

III

The Archaeology of the Original

But perhaps we have been too hasty in opposing the original to the pastiche, the model to the copy, the voice that creates to the voice that imitates. For this opposition, convenient as it may be, rests upon an assumption that a moment's reflection suffices to undermine: the assumption that there exists, somewhere, an original voice — a voice that imitates nothing, that derives from nothing, that springs from no prior source and carries within itself no trace of any earlier influence. Does such a voice exist? Has it ever existed? When Homer composed the *Iliad*, was he not working within a tradition of oral formulae, inherited epithets, received storylines that had been told and retold for generations before him? When Dante composed the *Commedia*, was he not weaving together the threads of Virgil, of Aquinas, of the Provençal troubadours, of the Sicilian poets, of the *dolce stil novo* that was itself already an elaboration of earlier models? When Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*, was he not transforming an older play (the so-called *Ur-Hamlet*, possibly by Kyd), which was itself the transformation of a story told by Saxo Grammaticus, which was itself the elaboration of a legend whose origins disappear into the mists of Scandinavian an-

tiquity? Everywhere we look, at every point in the history of literature, we find not originals but transformations, not creations *ex nihilo* but re-creations, re-workings, re-voicings of material that was already there, already shaped, already spoken by someone else. The “original” text, examined closely, turns out to be a palimpsest: beneath the visible writing, the earlier writing shows through, and beneath that earlier writing, still earlier writing, and so on, layer beneath layer, all the way down to a hypothetical first utterance that we can never reach because it has always already been covered over by the utterances that followed it. What we call originality is, in this light, not the absence of imitation but the forgetting of it; the original voice is not the voice that imitates nothing but the voice that has so thoroughly absorbed its models that it no longer recognizes them as models, the voice in which the traces of prior influence have been so completely digested that they have become indistinguishable from the tissue of the voice itself.

If this is so — if every voice is, in its deepest stratum, a pastiche of the voices that preceded it — then the pasticheur is not the anomaly, not the deviation, not the parasitic exception to a norm of originality; the pasticheur is rather the figure who makes explicit what is implicit in all writing, the one who brings to consciousness the process that ordinary writing leaves unconscious. The “original” writer imitates without knowing that he imitates; the pasticheur imitates knowing that he imitates; and this difference, which is the whole difference between innocence and experience, between the spontaneous gesture and the deliberate act, is also the difference between a truth that is lived and a truth that is understood. The pasticheur *understands* what the original writer merely *does*; the pasticheur has *knowledge* of the mechanism that the original writer operates blindly, instinctively, by a kind of grace that is indistinguishable from ignorance. And this knowledge, far from being a degradation of the original act, is in some sense its fulfillment, its coming-to-consciousness, its arrival at the truth of itself. For what the pasticheur reveals, in the very act of imitating, is that creation is never creation from nothing, that every style is a transformation of earlier styles, that the “original” voice is always already a chorus — and to reveal this is not to diminish the achievement of the original but to situate it correctly within the vast historical process of which it is a part, a process in which every voice takes up and transforms the

voices that came before it, and is in turn taken up and transformed by the voices that come after. The pasticheur is, in this sense, the historian of style — not the historian who stands outside the process and describes it from a distance, but the historian who enters the process and re-enacts it from within, who demonstrates the truth of literary history not by arguing it in a treatise but by performing it in a prose that is at once his own and someone else's.

There is, however, a crucial asymmetry that we must not overlook. The original writer who absorbs his influences unconsciously — who transforms Virgil into Dante, who transmutes Kyd into Shakespeare — produces something new, something that did not exist before, something that adds to the world a voice it had not previously heard. The pasticheur who imitates consciously — who transforms Balzac into a pastiche of Balzac, who transmutes Flaubert into a reproduction of Flaubert — produces something that, however skillfully made, does not add a new voice to the world but rather reiterates an existing one, gives back to the world what the world already possesses. The original is prospective: it looks forward, it opens a future, it creates possibilities that were not there before. The pastiche is retrospective: it looks backward, it closes a circle, it returns to what was already there. The original is a spring; the pastiche is a mirror. And no amount of dialectical ingenuity can quite abolish this difference, this asymmetry between the gesture that opens and the gesture that returns, between the first time and the second, between the word that is spoken for the first time (and that, being spoken for the first time, trembles with all the fragility and all the audacity of the unprecedented) and the word that is spoken for the second time (and that, being spoken for the second time, carries within itself, however faintly, the echo of its own prior utterance). The pasticheur may know more than the original writer; the pasticheur may understand better what the original writer does; but the pasticheur does not do what the original writer does. He does something else — something that is, in its own way, astonishing, admirable, moving, profound; but something else.

What, then, does the pasticheur do? He preserves. He transmits. He keeps alive, by the sheer force of repetition, a voice that would otherwise fall silent. This is not a negligible function; it is, on the contrary, one of the most essential functions that literature performs. For voices die. Styles be-

come unintelligible. The prose that once seemed as natural as breathing becomes, with the passage of centuries, as opaque and as foreign as an inscription in a dead language. Who, today, can read Rabelais without a glossary? Who can hear, in the cadences of Bossuet, the living thunder that shook the chapels of the Grand Siècle? Who can feel, in the involutions of Sir Thomas Browne, the precise quality of wonder that animated a seventeenth-century physician contemplating the mysteries of *urn burial* and *quincuncial plantation*? These voices, which were once the natural speech of living men, have become monuments, relics, curiosities of the museum of prose; and the only way to restore to them something of their original vitality is to perform them again, to pass them once more through a living consciousness, to make them resonate once more in a body that breathes and a hand that writes. This is what the pasticheur does. The pasticheur is the musician who plays the score of a dead composer, the actor who speaks the lines of a dead playwright, the celebrant who re-enacts the rites of a dead religion. He does not create; he resurrects. He does not invent; he remembers. And if his remembering is always also, and necessarily, a transformation — if the Balzac that emerges from Proust's pastiche is not quite the same Balzac that wrote the *Comédie humaine*, just as the Bach that emerges from Glenn Gould's piano is not quite the same Bach that composed the *Goldberg Variations* — this transformation is not a betrayal of the original but its only possible survival, its only chance of continuing to live in a world that has moved on, that has forgotten, that no longer speaks the language in which the original was written. Better a Balzac slightly altered by his passage through Proust than no Balzac at all. Better a Bach slightly transformed by his encounter with the twentieth century than a Bach preserved in amber, pristine and inaudible, a notation that no one plays.

And so we arrive, by a circuitous route, at the strange conclusion toward which this whole meditation has been tending: that pastiche is neither the opposite of originality nor its enemy, but rather its necessary complement, its shadow, its faithful and indispensable companion through time. Originality creates; pastiche preserves. Originality speaks for the first time; pastiche speaks for the second time, and the third, and the thousandth, and keeps speaking, keeps holding the voice alive, long after the original speaker has fallen silent. Originality is spring: sudden, unpredict-

able, irruptive, a shattering of the old order and the inauguration of the new. Pastiche is autumn: gradual, retrospective, elegiac, the gathering-in of what spring has scattered, the harvest of what the earlier season has sown. And just as autumn is not the enemy of spring but its necessary consequence, just as the harvest is not the negation of the sowing but its fulfillment, so pastiche is not the negation of originality but the form in which originality survives the death of its creator, the medium through which the original voice continues to vibrate in a world from which the original consciousness has withdrawn. Spring without autumn would be a catastrophe: an endless bursting-forth without gathering, an infinite proliferation without consolidation, a forest in which new growth perpetually smothers the old. Autumn without spring would be equally catastrophic: a perpetual harvesting of what no one has planted, an infinite retrospection with nothing to look back upon, a museum without exhibits. Literature needs both: the creative violence of the original and the preservative patience of the copy; the genius who shatters the mold and the pasticheur who keeps the broken pieces; the voice that speaks for the first time and the ear that remembers what it said. Between them — between the recklessness of the spring and the fidelity of the autumn — there lies the whole history of human expression, the whole tragicomedy of voices that arise, flourish, fade, and are taken up again by other voices that arise, flourish, fade in their turn, in a cycle that is perhaps as old as speech itself and that will perhaps continue as long as there are mouths to speak and ears to remember.

But the pasticheur is not only the preserver of dead voices; he is also, and perhaps more importantly, the revealer of living ones. For to pastiche a style is to make it visible, to bring it out of the transparency of habitual use and into the opacity of conscious examination; and to make a style visible is to make visible something that the original writer, precisely because it is his style, cannot see. We do not see the air we breathe; we do not hear the accent in which we speak; we do not notice the particular way we walk until someone mimics our gait. The original writer does not see his own style because his style is, for him, not a style at all but simply the way things are, the natural and inevitable form of thought; it is only when this style is performed by someone else, detached from its original context and placed in the artificial setting of the pastiche, that it becomes visible as a *style*, as a particular and contingent way of thinking-in-sentences among

other possible ways, as a choice (or a fate) rather than a necessity. The pastiche is the mirror in which the original writer sees, for the first time, his own face — and this face, familiar and yet strange, intimate and yet alien, is the face of style itself, the face of that which is most one's own and yet most opaque to one's own perception. This is why writers are so often disturbed by pastiche of their work, so often react to it with a mixture of fascination and unease, of flattery and alarm: for the pastiche shows them something they had not known about themselves, something they had not consented to reveal, something that belongs to them more intimately than any secret and yet has been, without their permission, made public, made visible, made available for the inspection of others. The pasticheur, in this respect, is not merely the lover or the mourner or the archaeologist of style; he is also its diagnostician, its analyst, its inadvertent critic — the one who, by the simple act of reproducing a voice, reveals the structure that sustains it, the skeleton beneath the flesh, the grammar beneath the music.

IV

The Mortal Instrument

We said that pastiche is the art of the ventriloquist, the necromancer, the medium who lends his body to a voice from elsewhere. But we have not yet asked the simplest and most troubling question: *why?* Why does the pasticheur undertake this strange labor of self-effacement? What drives a consciousness to abandon, even temporarily, the comfort of its own idiom and to submit to the disciplines, the constraints, the alien rhythms of another's prose? The question is not trivial, for the motive illuminates the act; and the motives of the pasticheur, when we examine them closely, turn out to be as various and as contradictory as the motives of love itself.

There is, first, the motive of admiration — pure, disinterested, almost devotional admiration for a style that seems, to the one who admires it, to have achieved a perfection that renders all commentary inadequate. What can the critic say about a perfect sentence? He can parse it, he can diagram it, he can situate it in its historical context, he can compare it to other sentences that aspire to similar effects — but none of these operations will touch the essential thing, the thing that made him catch his breath when he first read it, the quality of inevitability, of rightness, of a thought that has found the only words in which it could be expressed. In the face of such perfection, analysis feels impotent; and the impulse to pastiche is, in part, the impulse to respond to perfection in the only way that perfection can truly be honored: not by explaining it but by reproducing it, not by describing the music but by playing it again, not by pointing at the sunset but by painting another sunset that has, within it, the memory of the first. The pasticheur who works from admiration is the pilgrim who walks to the shrine not because he expects a miracle but because the act of walking, the submission of the body to the discipline of the road, is itself a form of prayer.

There is, second, the motive of understanding — the desire to know from the inside what analysis can know only from the outside. We said already that the pasticheur's knowledge is deeper than the critic's; but we must add now that this depth is not a luxury, not an ornament, not a refinement available to those who have exhausted the resources of conventional criticism; it is, on the contrary, the only form of understanding that truly grasps the object, the only form that does not leave a residue of uncomprehended mystery at the heart of the thing known. To understand a style is to be able to produce it; everything else is approximation, paraphrase, circling at a distance. The musician does not understand a sonata until he has played it; the dancer does not understand a choreography until she has danced it; the pasticheur does not understand a prose until he has written in it. And this understanding, which is a knowledge of the muscles and not of the mind, a knowledge of the fingers and not of the concepts, is the understanding that transforms — that makes the knower different from what he was before, that leaves in his body the trace of a movement that is not his own, that inscribes in his nervous system a pattern that will continue to resonate long after the conscious effort of imitation has ceased.

There is, third, the motive of liberation — paradoxical as it may seem to seek freedom in the submission to another's voice. And yet Proust's testimony is decisive on this point: one pastiches in order to be cured, one imitates in order to cease imitating. The writer who feels the gravitational pull of a powerful influence, who hears in his own sentences the echo of a cadence that is not his, who catches himself reaching for an image or a construction that belongs to someone else — this writer has two options. He can resist the influence, fight it, deny it, pretend that his voice is entirely his own; but this resistance, as psychoanalysis teaches us, only strengthens the influence it opposes, driving it underground where it continues to operate unseen, unacknowledged, all the more powerful for being unconscious. Or he can submit to it deliberately, push it to its extreme, carry it to the point of caricature — and in this deliberate, exaggerated, fully conscious submission, find the distance that mere resistance could never provide. The pastiche is the controlled burn that prevents the wildfire; the voluntary fever that breaks the chronic infection; the homeopathic dose of the very poison from which one seeks to be healed. The pasticheur who works from the motive of liberation is the patient who, on the analyst's couch, repeats the traumatic experience in order to master it — who re-enters the dream in order to wake up.

And there is, finally, a fourth motive, the most difficult to articulate because it is the most intimate, the most personal, the most resistant to the generalizations of philosophical discourse: the motive of love. Not admiration, which maintains a distance; not understanding, which instrumentalizes the object; not liberation, which uses the object as a means to its own freedom; but love, which wants nothing, which seeks no advantage, which submits to the beloved without calculation and without reserve. The pasticheur who works from love does not want to understand the model, does not want to be cured of the model, does not even, in the last analysis, want to reproduce the model; he wants simply to be *near* the model, to inhabit for a time the space in which the model lived and thought and wrote, to breathe the air that the model breathed, to feel on his own skin the warmth of a sun that set long ago. This is the pastiche as pilgrimage to the sites of the beloved: one visits the room in which Keats died, one walks the streets of Dublin on June 16th, one sits at the desk in the Bibliothèque nationale where Borges read — not because these places communicate any

information, not because they add anything to our knowledge, but because the physical proximity to the traces of a departed consciousness provides a consolation that no amount of knowledge can supply. The pasticheur who works from love is the one who copies out, by hand, the sentences of the beloved author — not because the copy has any value as a document, not because the act of copying produces any insight, but because the physical passage of those sentences through the pasticheur's hand and arm and shoulder and brain constitutes a form of communion, a touching of the dead by the living, a laying-on of hands across the gulf of time. And if this act is, as we have said, finally impossible — if the dead remain dead, if the voice that has fallen silent cannot truly be made to speak again, if the pastiche, however perfect, is always and only a simulacrum, a shadow, a memory of a presence that is no longer present — the impossibility does not diminish the act but rather consecrates it, raises it from the level of the technical exercise to the level of the sacred gesture, the ritual, the liturgy of loss.

And so the paradox closes upon itself. The pasticheur, who began by wanting to disappear into the voice of another, ends by making both voices visible: the voice of the model, which becomes, through the pastiche, an object of perception for the first time; and his own voice, which persists, beneath and within the borrowed music, as the ineliminable residue of a consciousness that cannot fully coincide with any consciousness other than its own. The pastiche does not abolish the distinction between self and other; it intensifies it, dramatizes it, stages it as a spectacle — the spectacle of one voice striving to become another voice and failing, exquisitely, poignantly, instructively failing, so that in the space of this failure both voices become audible with a clarity that neither could have achieved alone. The pasticheur is the artist of this failure, this productive, luminous, revelatory failure; and if his art has about it, as we have said, something autumnal, something elegiac, something tinged with the melancholy of all that is belated and retrospective, it has about it also something irreplaceable — the irreplaceable pathos of the creature who knows that he cannot be what he loves, and who loves all the more for knowing it; the irreplaceable beauty of the gesture that reaches toward an impossible coincidence and, in the very arc of its reaching, traces the outline of the distance that will always separate the living from the dead, the copy from the original,

the echo from the voice, the autumn from the spring that it remembers and to which it can never return.