

## BRIEF MENTIONS

### JÜRGEN SCHRAMKE

*Zur Theorie des modernen Romans.*  
München: C. H. Beck, 1974.  
Pp. 196. No price given.

What are the characteristics of the modern novel? How is it structured? From where did it develop? These are some of the questions Schramke tries to answer in his book. He is mainly concerned with the following novelists: Hermann Broch, Robert Musil, Alfred Döblin, Thomas Mann, Otto Flake, Joseph Roth, Hans Henny Jahnn, Marcel Proust, André Gide, Jean-Paul Sartre, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf. As to the theory of the modern novel, Schramke quotes the novelists mentioned above plus Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, Nathalie Sarraute, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, Georg Lukács, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Siegfried Kracauer, Theodor W. Adorno, Henri Bergson, Hans Robert Jauss, and Emile Zola.

This list of names points to one aspect of the book: the author is a specialist in French literature; and he is familiar with modern German writing. As to English literature, Schramke mentions two names only. Percy Lubbock's *Craft of Fiction*, for instance, is not mentioned, and American authors and critics are completely ignored.

What Schramke has, in fact, been doing is this: he has read the novels of the above. He has then read the essays, diaries, letters etc. of the same authors plus the theoretical writings of some critics of the novel. This material he has organized in chapters on historical thinking about the "genre" of the epic, on the dual world (inner and outer, soul and matter, reality and consciousness) of the novel and on the problem of time. From all this he has drawn his conclusions: the modern novel has a tendency towards getting away from describing everyday realities and towards creating its own world. There is a further tendency towards self-analysis, "essayism," reflection.

What Schramke says, is convincing; the examples are well chosen and bear out his contentions. One exception: Schramke takes Otto Flake and his novel *Die Stadt des Hims* too seriously. Flake's theory in the introduction is one thing, the novel another: the novel is a compilation of tales (partly published previously) of extraordinary banality—as to content and form. But there is almost nothing new in Schramke's book: we have known all this before. Nevertheless, it offers a lot of details; the specialist will be interested in this or that quotation which he did not know before, in an observation here or there which will inspire him to some further thinking and in some formulations which are especially happy.

Ingrid Schuster

### RAYMOND FEDERMAN, ED.

*Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow.*

Chicago: Swallow Press.  
Pp. 294. \$10.00.

*Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow* is a collection of nineteen essays by eighteen contemporary novelists and critics of contemporary fiction. Edited and with an introduction by Raymond Federman, an experimental novelist who teaches creative writing at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and who is equally well-known for his critical studies of Samuel Beckett, the work poses questions and offers a variety of possible answers concerning the present condition of fiction and its potential future.

Federman and the authors whose work he has collected in this volume avoid the major traps into which studies of contemporary fiction tend to fall. Without debating the death of the novel, without assuming that all novels are written in English, and without supposing that an