

charming tale (from the Hispanist's viewpoint) is that of what happened to "a Dean of Santiago and Don Yllán, the Grand Master of Toledo" (pp. 67-71). This example was glossed by Azorín and remembered more recently by such illustrious moderns as Enrique Anderson-Imbert and Jorge Luis Borges. Unfortunately, the translators do themselves less than justice in their version. For example, "entraron dos omnes" (Don Juan Manuel, *El Conde Lucanor*. Ed. J. M. Blecua. Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1969, p. 95) becomes "two men appeared" (p. 69). "Pero puso en su coração de non dexar aquel estudio tan ayna" (p. 95) is rendered as "But he decided not to leave his most interesting study" (p. 95). "Et en estas fablas estudiaron desque ovieron yantado fasta que fue ora de çena" (p. 95) has for its translation "Now they continued to talk from lunch time till dinner time" (p. 68). And finally, "et fueron descendiendo por ella muy grand peça, en guisa que paresçia que estavan tan vaxos que passaba el rio de Tajo por çima dellos" (p. 95) is translated as follows "and descended for such a distance that it seemed as though they were down far enough to be below the river Tagus" (p. 69).

Keller and Keating have decided, quite justifiably, to avoid a phony medieval style. There is every reason to shy away from an English fourteenth-century rendering of *omnes* (modern *hombres*), *coraçon* (modern *corazón*), *dexar* (modern *dejar*), *et* (modern *y*) with their changes in both spelling and pronunciation. However, it is less justifiable to replace a concrete word *entraron* with an abstract one "appeared," or to translate *puso en su coraçon* (with its overtones of greed and desire) by "decided" (which suggests a current of rational, logical decision making). The rendering of the clause *desque ovieron yantado fasta que fue ora de çena* as "from lunch time till dinner time" is also deficient as the translation weakens the time structure which plays such an important part in this particular tale. Again, whereas the image of the river Tagus which *passaba . . . por çima dellos* is, to a certain extent, symbolic of the river of death which takes away memory, the English version in which "it seemed as though they were down far enough to be below the river Tagus" loses that symbolism.

Keller and Keating have opted for a twentieth-century English translation

which is consistent and by no means unpleasing. Their positive achievements outweigh any negative criticism, and they have produced a reliable, well documented, modern translation of an important Spanish work that was previously remarkably unattainable in English. Don Juan Manuel enthusiasts will be pleased as *The Book of Count Lucanor and Patronio* will now be made available to a much larger English speaking public.

Roger Moore

## MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS

### *Une liaison parisienne*

Montréal: Les Editions Internationales Alain Stanké et Les Editions Quinze, 1975. Pp. 175.

The Québec of Marie-Claire Blais's earlier works may be described as a hellish stage of unreason on which are enacted the horror-filled scenes of human bestiality, rendered in the manner of the *Grand Guignol*. *Une liaison parisienne* appears to present us with quite another Québec, as seen from a European perspective. The events of the novel, however, eventually reveal that this madness projected as outer setting, though somewhat refined by the muses of Parnasse, has merely been transposed to another geographical setting. The tale's protagonist, Mathieu Lelièvre, a Québécois aesthete proud of his rationality ("sa vigilance rationnelle le sauverait toujours de tout péril," p. 12), flees from a Québec "virginal de coeur et d'esprit" (p. 9), where he has been raised by loved and loving parents, to Paris, where he assumes that the cult of art and intelligence is practised scrupulously, and that, as a consequence, his first novel, to be published there, will be received with enthusiasm. His first work, a volume of poetry published in Québec, had been roundly condemned by his countrymen for its febrile disinterestedness. This inexperienced young man of twenty undertakes the voyage to Paris in the hope of coming to a deeper knowledge of life and art as refined in the ancient crucible of Gallic culture.

The events subsequent to his arrival in Paris are perhaps all too predictable for the reader of *fin-de-siècle* literature (or Mario Praz's *The Romantic Agony*). Here, Lelièvre enters the "enfer douillet" (p. 163), the "féerie sociale" (p. 33), of the d'Argenti family, where "l'animalité fougueuse" (p. 43), "la fougue sanguinaire" (p. 112), and "la fougue mystique" (p. 17) interchange and unite as in the fiction of Huysmans and the world of the Goncourts' journal. Pederasty and Buddhism, love and hate, pornography and "la rigueur classique" (p. 18), concupiscence and asceticism, duplicity and frankness are indistinguishable in this world, a congruence analogous to "le paradoxe de la vérité" (p. 76), that fiction and fact are inseparable companions. Lelièvre is both enchanted and repelled by the "don décadent" (p. 33), the amorality, ironically enough, of this ambiguous world of illusion and reality, the world, as he perceives it, of art and intelligence: ". . . ce qui est faux . . . ce qui est vrai. . . Quelle différence aujourd'hui?" (p. 76). Suspended between art and life, truth and deception, he learns in a world of surprises and improbabilities that he is in fact a hero in a novel (p. 12, for example), an actor in a play (p. 133, for example). Having been enlightened in an erotic/artistic relationship with Yvonne d'Argenti, an admirer of the refinements of romantic French poetry, he returns to Québec, a sadder and a wiser man. Thus the hellish stage of Québec, the universal ambience of the writer, as Blais reveals, is not restricted to New France. The refined and barbarous d'Argenti family bears strong resemblances with the Québécois families of her earlier fictions; and the minatory criticism of Lelièvre's novel proffered by French reviewers is analogous to the earlier criticism by Québécois reviewers of his volume of poetry.

Blais's translation of the sometimes claustrophobic and sulfuric atmosphere of Québec to a broader stage seems to me equivocal in merit, for, as with Lelièvre's novel condemned for being Québécois and for not being so, *Une liaison parisienne* appears to remove from the author her greatest strength, her ability to evoke powerfully and movingly her experience of the heart of darkness in Québec. There, she is matched by Réjean Ducharme only. But *Une liaison parisienne* finds Blais in a world which many before her have examined, and she suffers the consequent advantages and disadvantages of being a

stranger in a strange land. Her vision in this fiction may be read as fresh and redundant at once. The theme of *Une liaison parisienne* is a commonplace, and its expression does not rise above competence. This point is perhaps best suggested by a comparison with a work strikingly similar in theme, *The Arrow of Gold*: a young foreigner, secure in his false ability to distinguish fact from fiction, art from life, enters the bedlam-like and hellish world of aesthetes and revolutionaries in late nineteenth-century Marseilles, there to be disabused, by way of art and erotic love, of his illusory belief in reason. In terms of either artistry of expression or depth of subject, Conrad's work, generally recognized as the worst of his long fictions, seems to me not to suffer additional indignities in a comparison with *Une liaison parisienne*.

Camille R. La Bossière

## MARK INSINGEL

### *A Course of Time*

Translated from the Dutch by  
Adrienne Dixon  
New York: Red Dust, 1977. Pp.  
126.

When reviewing Mark Insingel's first novel, *Reflections* (*IFR*, 1. No. 1 [1974], 68-69, we stressed the fact that this "novel" does not tell a story, construct a plot, or describe an action, but merely conveys impressions, recalls moods, and expresses feelings; we then added that these are some of the characteristics one usually associates with lyric but not with narrative poetry.

Likewise in his second novel, *A Course of Time* (originally published in Holland as *Een Tijdsverloop*, 1970), Mark Insingel does not depict incidents, analyze characters, or explain motivations; he is mainly involved in projecting emotions and reflecting inner experiences. His experimental "narrative" techniques, which are based on non-naturalistic devices such as distortion and abstraction, and his style, which is predominantly lyrical, intensify the suggestive nature of this book.