

(p. 146). There both is and is not truth in this. Similarly it is impossible that there should be a real conversation between Ahab and Flask—other than “Down, dog, and kennel!” But Melville employs many devices to work out the relationships of things and beings that do not seem to belong in the same world and yet do—such as Flask’s dream about his relationship with Ahab—and Starbuck is an intermediary, participating both in the worlds of Stubb and of Ahab.

Brodhead points out the striking similarities of *The Blithedale Romance* and *Pierre*, including their being finished in the same month, and concludes that these novels become contorted and chaotic “because in them the orders of meaning have become competitive, not complementary (pp. 110, 190). One can disagree. I grant *The Blithedale Romance’s* infelicities, but think it one of Hawthorne’s most interesting and successful achievements. But one must still appreciate Brodhead’s observations.

In conclusion he cites Hawthorne’s observation that “He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief” as “perhaps the most important and accurate assessment ever made of Melville” (p. 199). And he suggests this is also true of Hawthorne. They are not so much at home in the demystified world as later novelists are (p. 202). Yet Brodhead has earlier cited “the peculiar willingness of *Moby Dick* to be in uncertainty, to embrace contradictions without resolving their antinomies” (p. 151). *Hawthorne, Melville, and the Novel* demonstrates that the achievement of these writers in no small part is due to their peculiar kind of negative capability—both an unwillingness and a willingness to be in uncertainty about all the objects and characters of their fictional worlds. This is a fine and useful book.

Theodore Colson

## ANDRÉ HELBO

*L’Enjeu du discours: lecture de Sartre.*  
Bruxelles: Editions Complexe,  
1978. Pp. 294.

André Helbo’s *L’Enjeu du discours* is an important work because of the light it sheds both on modern criticism of the novel and on one very important modern novelist, Jean-Paul Sartre. Of the two achievements, it is undoubtedly the second which is the most noteworthy—the author’s expressed opinion to the contrary notwithstanding—for whereas there is much linguistic criticism of the kind practiced by Helbo available to us at the moment, there continues to be a pressing need for more modern criticism devoted to Sartre’s fiction. Helbo’s book goes far in meeting this need.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part introduces in clear, albeit technical, terms the linguistic bases of Helbo’s method; the second and third parts apply this method to Sartre’s fiction; the fourth part assesses, in conclusion, the validity of the method. Two remarks are in order about this organization, one of praise and the other of criticism. On the positive side is the fact that the introduction and conclusion provide a concise, coherent theoretical framework for the body of the work devoted to the Sartrian texts. On the negative side is the fact that the introduction fails to provide a clear enough explanation of the different goals Helbo pursues in Parts II and III and thus of the overall conception of the book. Only gradually does the difference become apparent: Part II deals with the explicit significance of language for Sartre (in his theoretical statements) and his characters (in the fiction); Helbo says that this part deals with “content” and that it serves to justify the use of a linguistic method for studying Sartre’s fiction. Part III deals with the implicit significance of language in Sartre’s fiction. It involves first a thematic, semantic analysis of the *énoncé* or meaning of the fiction; it then presents a semiological analysis of the *énonciation* or the subjective dimension of language. Language is conceived of throughout Helbo’s book as not only involving the conveying of explicit meaning, but also as involving complex, implicit relationships between the speaker (*le locuteur*), the listener (*l’allocutaire*), and the message exchanged between them.

Part II is entitled "Le Programme de Sartre." After having briefly examined Sartre's theoretical statements about language in this part, Helbo goes on to study Sartre's characters in a number of linguistic situations. In one, of which *La Nausée* and "Erostrate" serve as examples, the accent is on the *locuteur* and his attitude towards language; in another, of which the other stories of *Le Mur* serve as examples, the accent is on the *locuteur's* power over the *allocutaire*; in still another, of which the three published novels of *Les Chemins de la liberté* serve as examples, the accent is on the conflicting attitudes towards language of diverse social groups. Throughout, Helbo argues convincingly, although somewhat repetitiously, that the meaning of Sartre's fiction can only be grasped through an understanding of the significance of language acts for Sartre's characters.

The first part of Part III, entitled "L'Enoncé," analyzes recurrent words and themes in Sartre's fiction. Citing Bachelard, and recalling Jean-Pierre Richard at every turn, Helbo studies such thematic topics as animal, vegetal, and mineral images, colors, light, and bodily sensations. This first chapter concludes with a summary of the pertinent semantic axes of Sartre's fiction. The second chapter, entitled "L'Énonciation," represents the most complex and original part of the book. In it Helbo studies manifestations of subjectivity in the fictional text. The first section of this chapter, called "La marque de l'énonciation," deals with formal indicators—for example, personal pronouns and proper nouns. In the second and third sections, Helbo extends his consideration of manifestations of subjectivity to the discursive situation as a whole. The second section, called "La référence," deals with spatial indicators or "toponymes" through which the *locuteur* imposes his subjectivity, thereby transforming the *allocutaire's* notion of the text's spatial reference. The third part, called "La pré-supposition," deals with indicators of attitude—for example, of the *locuteur's* accepting responsibility for the text or of the bases of the *allocutaire's* understanding it. In the fourth section, Helbo analyzes one particular rhetorical form—the portrait, or physical description of characters—as a paradigm of linguistic communication in fiction.

The book closes with a lengthy bibliography of works on Sartre's fiction and

on literary theory which is unfortunately flawed by numerous omissions, mistakes, and inconsistencies in bibliographical format.

Doris Y. Kadish

## ARTURO USLAR-PIETRI

### *Oficio de Difuntos*

Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1976.  
Pp. 351.

The political novel in Latin-American literature is a significant tradition that has produced remarkable works from *Amalia* (1851-55) by the Argentine José Mármol to *El señor presidente* (1946) by the Guatemalan Nobel Prize winner, Miguel Ángel Asturias. During the last few years, the appearance of an important number of novels dealing with Latin-American dictators has demonstrated a renewed interest in the subject.

One such novel is *Oficio de Difuntos* (1976). Forty years after the death of Juan Vicente Gómez, the figure of this Venezuelan dictator comes to life in the pages of Arturo Uslar-Pietri's novel. The thin disguise of different names does not diminish the correspondence between Aparicio Peláez, one of the novel's two main characters, and Gómez himself. The parallel between Alberto Solana, the weak, lascivious and verbose priest of the novel and Father Carlos Borges, Gómez's military chaplain and "court jester" is also readily discerned.

The first pages of *Oficio de Difuntos* (Requiem Mass) show Father Solana reading the famous funeral orations of Bossuet, a classical model. Solana is preparing for the unwanted task of delivering the oration at the funeral services for General Peláez, "lleno de temores, con ganas de borrarse, de desaparecer, de caer en un inmenso pozo de olvido" (p. 8). As he pages through the high-sounding words of Bossuet, Solana begins to evoke Peláez's past, filling in all the necessary details with his own imagination. He demonstrates a determined effort to understand the elusive political figure, his rise to power, and his political survival through 27 years of autocratic rule: "Se iba del presente y