

some of the essays are only partially successful in this. Gomme's essay "Jessie Chambers and Miriam Leivers," which questions whether Miriam had a chance against "the alliance of Lawrence and Paul," does not add new insights into the novel. The essay on Lawrence and art first assesses Lawrence's painting and his art criticism and then attempts to put Lawrence's art criticism into the tradition of that of Hegel, Merleau-Ponty, and Wittgenstein; yet these parallels are treated too superficially. Some of the essays are occasionally marred by exaggerated claims and inappropriate comparisons. The opening passage of the preface, for example, compares Lawrence's difficulties during World War I with the persecution suffered by such Russian writers as Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, and even Mandelstam who "was harried round Russia for ten years and finally done to death"—hardly an apt comparison.

Some of the essays, though, are very fine. Drain's essay on *Women in Love* analyzes alienation and role playing. Daleski's essay treats the depiction of relationships in the *Ladybird* tales as exploratory ventures leading to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Pritchard's survey of the works following *Women in Love* explores the theme of the isolated outsider and the concept of singleness, and Strickland's essay on the first *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is particularly useful for its discussion of Lawrence's humor, something that has been neglected by many critics.

This, then, is a very mixed collection. Some of the essays do not suggest new openings but others do indeed give us new perspectives on Lawrence. For these, the book is worthwhile.

Jenny Michaels

## RÉJEAN DUCHARME

### *Les enfantômes*

Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976.  
Pp. 285.

In the form of a memoir composed in an attic by the light of a single flickering candle, *Les enfantômes* traces the "odyssée improbable" (p. 63) of the "tartelu" Vincent

Falardeau from his childhood through his marriage near the end of World War II to his middle age. As in *L'Avalée des avalés*, *Le nez qui voque*, and *L'Océantume*, Ducharme's first three novels, astonishingly brilliant coruscations of philosophical wit and literary-historico-geographical erudition, the protagonist's odyssey may be described analogically as a "plongeon dans l'abîme émotif" (p. 12) of contemplation, where "le mouvement circulaire de la pensée" (p. 66) rules. Projected on the screen of his "rêves baroques" (p. 13), Vincent's life mirrors the truth of Schiller's maxim in the *Hyperion Fragment* ("Wir sind nichts; was wir suchen ist alles"; p. 116). The truth of this existentialist credo ironically leaves each individual in a hellish isolation (Sartre inverted) as on an "île immatérielle" (pp. 83, 85, 93, 116, 187, 266, 283). There, Vincent and his sister, Féérié, his symbolic twin mirroring his own mind and past, are separated from all others by a "fossé circulaire" (p. 85); they live their spiritual existence "tous les deux tusseuls ensembles" (pp. 36, 49, 72, 109, 121, 147, 266). The peripeties of Vincent's wanderings in love, sex, and politics are pointless ("Sans but. Sans joie. Sans tristesse. Sans vitesse. Sans rien enfin," p. 134), for he lives in an element without any "limite sensible" (p. 283), "l'absolu, l'infini" (p. 259), a kind of "jungle intérieure" (p. 247). His existence charts the principle of vertigo underlying the universe: ". . . tout dans nous faisait voyage rond comme les planètes dans le ciel, les atomes dans le sodium" (p. 231).

As an analogical study of politics, centered on the Eastern Townships and the Ottawa Valley, the novel is provocative and perceptive. As a baroque dreamer fond of citing James Joyce and Homero Aridjis, and given to a "metaphysical" play of word and idea, Vincent observes that love must be "sans équivoque" (p. 162): one partner must surrender his personality and past to the other so that both may live together in harmony. His marriage to Alberta/Ontaria Turnstiff, a daughter of "la clique presbytérienne" (p. 209)—a nice inversion of a convention of Canadian fiction as found in Ronald Sutherland's *Lark des Neiges*, for example—cannot succeed because neither will abdicate. His wife takes refuge in a self-pitying narcissism, and Vincent comes to learn that he cannot love, for his circular turn of thought, reflected in puns of various degrees of brilliance, for example, leads him to a "cul de sac," "le vide"

(p. 160). The only way "to be" acceptable to Vincent is the way of the bleeding rat (p. 118) and the ravaged wolf (pp. 187-88), the way of fierce and heroic independence, like that of the epic heroes he so much admires and imitates, though in a mocking way ("Disse d'un coup," p. 30). Eschewing sentimentality (including that of the patriot), he sees life as an unending war. Vincent's "patrie" is in his mind, not in the world where prevails "la décadence du populisme" (p. 156). He abhors easy nationalism.

The aim of Vincent's memoirs, as he tells us, is to edify, to convey to his reader the reality of the "rien" at the core of people, things and events (p. 268). Schiller's observation relates the truth that all people are "enfantômes," specters of their childhood, their history. The child is father to the man. They are, in that sense, radically individualized. And thus it is in his sister alone that Vincent finds some consolation in solidarity. Their isolation on an "île immatérielle" is a "paradis perdu" (p. 282), which with the inevitable decay of time and her death can now only be found "au fond du trou" of his memory (p. 282), "au fond de l'enfer" (p. 282, e.g.). In this hell works an equivocal logic of contraries by which optimism and pessi-

mism, tenderness and cruelty, disgust and compassion, attraction and repulsion alternate and coincide. The world of politics mirrors this abysmal logic: "L'ode et le désode, en 'même' tant, tout le tant, sinon l'hun après l'hôte" (p. 222). In the end, the man given to "la folie des rondeurs" (pp. 119, 133)—straightforward and curved at once—finds his "patrie" in himself, a void of endless irony turning on itself in isolation. As one living in the "cauchemar" (p. 143, e.g.) of a bad film, he loses his equilibrium ("le dizziquilibre," p. 94), to fall to the bottom "d'un gouffre où il n'y avait rien, même pas de fond" (p. 67). Doubling Henri Barbusse's words in *L'Enfer* (1908), "Tous est en moi . . . et il n'y a pas de bornes, et il n'y a pas de limites à moi" (1949 edition, pp. 265-66), Vincent explains to his sister that "on passe les bornes p'on n'a pu de limites" (p. 148). This serious and intelligent book is essential reading for the student of Canadian fiction.

Camille La Bossière