

Roger Zelazny. The format for entries in all sections is the same: bibliographic information followed by a descriptive paragraph or summary of the item. This arrangement is so very clear and obvious that the lengthy indexes (sixty-one pages) are scarcely needed.

The authors have done a good job in keeping the number of entries to manageable size by omitting book reviews (covered in H. W. Hall's annual *Science Fiction Book Review Index*), catalogs, columns, and introductions to fictional works. Most entries are American; a few are British. Much that is written about science fiction appears in "fanzines" like *Algol*; the authors have included from such sources only those pieces which seem to have scholarly value. There are some inconsistencies in their choices. Among single-figure periodicals, for instance, the one devoted to James Branch Cabell, *Kalki*, is included, while *The Baum Bugle* is not.

The most conspicuous flaw in the book is the great variation in the nature of the annotative paragraphs. These range from brief descriptions to detailed abstracts, from less than a dozen words to well over a hundred. Under the heading "Stanley Kubrick," for example, a book by Daniel De Vries is summed up tersely as "Contain[ing] analyses of *Dr. Strangelove, 2001*, and *A Clockwork Orange*," while an article from the *Georgia Review* is revealed as stating that "Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* demonstrates the limitations of words as a tool for metaphysical inquiry. The critics of the movie are baffled by his treatment of words and are therefore unable to follow what is happening in the narrative. To follow it one must see, first, that his story can only be told in moving images, and second, that its action divides into three stages: the bestial, rational, and imaginative periods in man's growth."

This inequity of treatment does not invalidate the book, but it does mean that some entries are considerably more helpful than others, with no discernible selection factor governing the differences. A related weakness is the frequent use of quoted material within the descriptive paragraph: in some cases the words seem to be taken directly from the source and in others from some unknown third party's comments upon it. Some entries are made up entirely of quotation, which precludes the evaluation given to other works, the ones that are described as "cogent" or

"invaluable" or "amusing" or even "brief." The authors should strive, within the limitations imposed by time and access, to coordinate their efforts and thus turn a useful tool into an indispensable one.

The book is, nevertheless, the best thing of its kind. Libraries should acquire it; scholars, critics, and teachers should have access to it; students should learn of its existence. Along with Clareson's initial volume, forthcoming volumes of the same series, Schlobin's and Tymn's other works, and the many specialized listings of science fiction anthologies, science fiction magazines, and the like that have appeared in the last decade, it should prevent a great deal of unnecessary searching on the part of researchers in and newcomers to the field.

Brian Attebery

GÜNTER GRASS

Das Treffen in Telgte

Darmstadt: Luchterhand Verlag, 1979. Pp. 182.

Das Treffen in Telgte is an ingenious and convincing representation of German baroque poets and dramatists taking part in a fictitious meeting in 1647. Grass evokes these sacred cows of German literature with the same mixture of irreverence and intuitive understanding of style and epoch as Anthony Burgess uses in *A Clockwork Testament* to conjure up minor Elizabethan dramatists and to satirize the dryadust pedantry with which academics treat them. Through a combination of vivid character sketches and tantalizing snippets of quotation, through his evocation of the catastrophic Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and most importantly through the suggestion of parallels with post W.W. II Germany, Grass has achieved a brilliant historical novel of contemporary relevance.

Grass suggests political and literary parallels between this fictitious meeting in 1647 and the real meetings of the "Gruppe 47" of which he himself was a prominent member. With the secular authorities so

completely discredited in the holocausts of 1618-48 and 1933-45, Günter Grass asks himself what contribution to civilization could be expected from the nation's unacknowledged literary and spiritual leaders. Are poets and writers "das andere, das wahrhaftige Deutschland" (p. 92)—a self-consciously anachronistic phrase in this novel, but a phrase which was much flung around in the soul-searching years after W.W. II—or are they a motley crew of destructive, squabbling egoists who would never make statesmen. As Grass portrays them, they are as divided on principles of religious freedom and responsible government as they are on the theory of artistic genre and literary evaluation. Their disputes are ferocious and witty, but the objective consensus and practical results are nil. One feels a mature Grass echoing the resigned words of the meeting's convener, Simon Dach, who says: "Es fehle den Dichtern alle Macht, außer der einen, richtige, wenn auch unnütze Wörter zu setzen" (p. 94).

There is much scatological humor and ribald vulgarity. Chaucer and Rabelais live again but with twists of savage black humor. Mother Courage makes a far more grotesque appearance than she does in Bert Brecht's play and her ghoulish corpse-robbing at Magdeburg seems to suggest a scene at a Nazi extermination camp.

Grass poses some disturbing politico-literary and religious questions in *Das Treffen in Telgte*: are the literary as well as the political utterances of these poets invalidated by their position as kept mistresses of the royal courts? Does all-pervasive Christian theology have a perjorative effect on the sincerity of baroque verse? Are the poets' secular insights blunted by their spiritual preoccupations? The most fascinating literary problem which Grass sets his characters and his readers is: which is the more striking vehicle for artistic expression, the many German dialects or the elevated High German? Grass reveals his sympathies when he shows how the satiric Plattdeutsch versifier, Lauberg, "spielte das unverdorbene Nedderdütsch gegen die gestelzte, affektierte, sich hier kringelnde, dort zum Wust gestaute Kanzlei—oder Hochdeutsche Sprache aus: 'Se is so lappisch und so verbrüdisch, Dat men schier nicht west off idt Welsch is edder Düdisch . . .'" (pp. 39-40). When Grass presses the question of "Was sie [die deutsche Sprache] zerstört habe und woran sie gesunden könne" (p. 31), he is

presumably thinking of both the avalanche of foreign words into contemporary German and also of the damage that National Socialism did to the German language through macabre euphemisms, bureaucratese and fake exhumations of some mythical Aryan-Teutonic language.

Grass teases the reader into believing that *Das Treffen in Telgte* is rambling, low-key and perhaps even esoteric in theme. Only in the last third of his tale does he draw independent threads together to create a morally devastating climax which rises unexpectedly out of a roistering feast. The poets' protestations of piety and preaching of *vanitas vanitatum* are put to an alarming practical test. In a structural repetition of the Magdeburg incident (cf. p. 52), the war crimes of both sides intrude into the poets' "Musenhain" and rob them of their otherworldly innocence. The provisions for their feast are revealed to have come from the murder of an innocent farmer's family and the party's exuberance ends in "Jammer" and "Graum," or as Grass's spokesman Simon Dach puts it: "Seht, wie, was lebt, zum Ende leufft,/ Wisst, daß des Todes Rüssel/ Mit vns aus einem Glase säufft/Vnd frisst aus einer Schüssel" (p. 129). In vain the poets try to shed their communal guilt by making their uneducated, soldierly protector, Grimmelshausen into their scapegoat. But he deflects their attack by accusing them of living in an ostriches' paradise, prostituting their talent to the aristocrats and composing in styles of epigonal irrelevance to the Thirty Years' Holocaust. Grimmelshausen's antidote is to dedicate himself to a truer art, a socio-politically and linguistically honest mirror of contemporary chaos and evil. And so the soldier turns writer and creates the century's blockbuster, *Simplicissimus*.

Initially one is struck in *Das Treffen in Telgte* by the absence of extravagant word-play and grotesque symbolism so characteristic of the Danzig-trilogy. But in the last third of this novel inauspicious symbols suddenly achieve dramatic depth and associative strength. Even Simon Dach's modest "Kürbislaube" (p. 166) becomes the hope for an idyllic refuge for all poets both from exploitation by aristocratic patrons and from the gruesome horrors of war. The most important image is of course the thistle: "Taub, stehend, vom Wind versät, des Esels Fraß, des Bauern Fluch, des strafenden Gottes Zorngewächs und Wucherplage, das hier, die Distel, sei

ihrer aller Blum und Vaterland!" (p. 172). Here the thistle expresses the only comfort left to the assembled poets in their political impotence: the consolation that they derive from metaphorical expression of their grief. As the narrator says of their "distelwüchsige[s] Deutschland," "Fast sah es aus, als seien wir nun zufrieden und auf deutsche Art froh über die Bildkräftigkeit unseres Jammers" (p. 172). Like Goethe's Tasso, the only comfort of poets then and now is: "Wenn die anderen in ihrer Qual verstummen gab mir ein Gott zu sagen wie ich leide." But how these baroque poets speak! Grass celebrates the glorious variety of their styles: Greflinger's Arcadian pastorals; Birken's visual figure poems; Spee's haunting condemnation of the Inquisition; Paul Gerhardt's well satirized, fanatical protestantism; Angelus Silesius's aphoristic mysticism; and most startling of all, misanthropist Gryphius's powerful expression of betrayal, evil, and futility on the stage of world history. For here is a novel which is rich in literary treasures as well as in political and religious problems.

David A. Myers

ROBERT M. HENKELS, JR.

Robert Pinget: The Novel as Quest
Birmingham, Ala.: University of
Alabama Press, 1979. Pp. 277.

Mr Henkels's opening cluster of quotations draws back the curtain on the theme of genesis in Robert Pinget's work: all the obscure inner births, contradictory and unassimilable, to which the writer gives voice. Who begets what, and over what derisive kingdom does the would-be creator hold sway? A Pinget novel is a groping literary project which decomposes as it composes, curls back as it advances, interferes with itself as it reaches outwards. It is an ambiguous and inconclusive quest "qui se détruit elle-même au fur et à mesure," as Robbe-Grillet might say. It sets on stage, not the "man-in-his-acts" or *l'homme en situation* of the Sartrean moment, but "man-in-his-language": an embryonic being embedded in an intractable and paradoxical medium which makes a mockery of novelistic conventions, ordered chronology, and autobiographical stability.

Calling on the three broad cycles outlined by the critic Jean Roudaut, the "mystical," the "realistic," and the "mythological," Henkels suggestively traces the evolution of Pinget's novels (though it should be said that these pseudo-cycles act only as dubious markers largely alien to the fluency, overlap, and backtrack of the author's ongoing pursuit, just as to lean on Gide's distinction between *roman* and *récit* and to call *Quelqu'un* one and *Fable* the other is to invoke an already congealed criterion and to minimize Pinget's dissolution of the whole notion of genre). The first period, that of *Entre Fantoine et Agapa* (1951), *Mahu ou le matériau* (1952), *Le Renard et la boussole* (1955), *Graal Flûbuste* (1956) and *Baga* (1958), is characterized by a spirit of parody and surrealist fantasy, illogicality, and dreamlike effects, acrobatic leaps between the real and the imaginary. Here the reader is plunged into fragments and indirections, lacunae and outrageous metamorphoses. The second stage, less concerned with toppling the house of fiction in zany and capricious manner, becomes more densely (and yet perhaps more vacuously) introspective. *Le Fiston* (1959), *Clope au dossier* (1961), and *L'Inquisiteur* (1961) take the form of an infinite inquisition, a hide-and-seek of question and answer, pseudo-detective novels which lose their way at every intersection and solve nothing; while *Quelqu'un* (1965) focuses all the more on the evasive verbal process which can never be transformed into anything more than an increasingly involved and confused "preliminary hearing." The most recent period, comprising *Le Libera* (1967), *Passacaille* (1969), *Fable* (1971), and *Cette voix* (1975), moves further from time and space, real or imaginary, into the echo chamber of an inner tone, played and re-played until it is tantamount to silence. Henkels speaks of a "flirtation with verbal suicide" (p. 170). The novel itself seems almost uninhabited, the only characters being the endless verbal and aural permutations weaving their own plaintive and beautiful forms in frustrated anticipation of an ultimate *innommable*. Words here become, as Michel Butor has said of his own fiction, "de véritables personnages de roman, qui avaient des aventures."

Mr Henkels clearly appreciates a main critical problem in dealing with an author such as Pinget. It would require, he says, "the talents of a scribe both learned in the art of glossing complex tropes and willing to smudge the end of his nose on pages of black ink in order to get to the level