

Tutuola. The fantastic is given a catholic definition by Eric Rabkin: that which offers an alternative to the real world. Certainly his selections "rejuvenate the familiar by transplanting it to the wonderful soil of fantastic worlds" (p. xi); and his book will make an excellent class text as well as offering stirring bedtime reading to the general reader of fiction.

These three books are, as I say, either collections or specialist studies. Of more direct interest to students of the novel are the books by Professor Lord and Professor Kestner. The first links up to some extent with Professor Oinas's symposium, in that it is concerned, in part at least, with the *Odyssey*. Professor Lord concentrates his attention, however, less on the heroic than on "literature that criticizes and modifies the heroic tradition or appeals from it to other standards"—"standards that," Dr Lord specifies, "while often appearing to be unheroic, attain in the long run a greater validity than those they replace" (p. 13). The scope is once more admirably wide, sometimes almost perversely so; I was not myself convinced by the detailed comparison and contrast between the spurious games at Llanabba School in *Decline and Fall* by Evelyn Waugh and the epic Homeric and Virgilian games. Nor, to be candid, did I feel that the topic merited book-length treatment; Professor Lord clearly took a lot of trouble over it ("Rarely has a book so small incurred such a heavy load of indebtedness," p. 9), but the discussion lacks rigor and the conclusion ("the most serious things are too serious to be treated seriously," p. 135), while admirable in itself, does not—for this reader at least—emerge with compelling inevitability from the demonstration and the examples. Perhaps the weakness of the book is that it arose out of seminar teaching at Yale. We have all, I am sure, experienced disappointment at rereading notes made after a particularly stimulating class with bright undergraduates: somehow the dazzlement we felt at the time evaporates—like a heady perfume from an uncorked bottle—surprisingly rapidly.

If some readers will feel that Professor Lord is almost too urbane, others may find Professor Kestner's remorseless seriousness disconcerting in a different way. He uses diagrams, employs technical language ("genidentic," for example) and peppers nearly every page with titles of novels in italics, rarely doing more than allude to a book he assumes all his readers

will be familiar with. Perhaps Dr Lord is right, and the most serious matters—such as the role of space in the novel—are too serious to be treated seriously. There is no doubt about the importance, even the centrality of the topic; but there must remain some doubt about Professor Kestner's success in handling it. My confidence was a little shaken, for instance, by finding what is for me the most astounding, and the most puzzling, instance of pictorial illusion in fiction—the sighting of Chad and Madame de Vionnet by Strether, "framed" (as it were) in a Lambinet—despatched in a typically brisk aside: "In *The Ambassadors* (1903), Strether sees his quarry and its lure indelibly framed on the river Seine" (pp. 77-78). Is that all, I wondered, that one can say about such an extraordinary passage, such a controlled and sustained "pictorialization" of a fictional episode? So for me, this was a disappointing book; but it will remain an important one, if only for the admirable summary of previous theories of spatiality in narrative given in the first chapter, and the frequently challenging readings of passages that one thought one knew well, such as the famous "Il voyagea" ("He traveled") which opens the penultimate chapter of Flaubert's *L'Education sentimentale*, and which Professor Kestner discusses—albeit, it must be said, with tantalizing curtness once again—in his penultimate chapter.

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Practices of the New Novel in Claude Simon's L'Herbe and La Route des Flandres

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Kadish treats *L'Herbe* and *La Route des Flandres* as paradigmatic new novels. She makes, moreover, a pertinent distinction between the new novel and the new-new novel (of Simon's later period) in which virtually all traditional elements are excluded. In *L'Herbe* and *La Route*, she studies four elements: plot, character, description and point of view; plot and character are minimized to a great extent through the means of blurring or the lack of details,

whereas description and the point of view are emphasized. This reversal of the traditional emphasis induces a more poetic effect in the novels.

Description, without moral or psychological implications, maintains an independent status as "a perceiving, recording consciousness sees and writes, as it were, the world" (p. 20). Temporal description is exemplified in *L'Herbe* by the T shape of the light entering the shutters in the aunt's bedroom; it reveals the interaction of time and space (this geometric design is obviously akin to those precise mathematical descriptions of Robbe-Grillet). Literary description might assume the form of a *mise en abyme*, or "a miniature version of an entire work within that text" (p. 46). In *L'Herbe*, for example, the cover on the aunt's biscuit box depicts a woman seated in the grass holding a box, just as the heroine (Louise) does in the novel. Finally, erotic descriptions (the grass in *L'Herbe*, the riding of horses in *La Route*) obscure the distinction between people and things (shades of Émile Zola's *La Terre* or *La Bête humaine*).

In regard to the point of view, abrupt temporal shifts betray the fact that Simon is not adhering to strict, chronological time. In *La Route*, confusion enters with the shift in focus from the first to the third person narrator (actually the same person, Georges). Furthermore, the fact that Georges is fatigued, excited or inebriated influences the point of view.

In composing these two novels, Simon "creates a structure out of odds and ends from the past" (p. 27). This fragmentation, or *bricolage*, leaves the novel in an incomplete state; in terms of criticism, Kadish offers a *bricolage* by restricting her study to an exposition of the four elements (plot, character, description, and point of view). In the process, she eschews interpretation; in *L'Herbe*, she questions the generally held viewpoint that Louise derives a lesson from the aunt's death (an interpretation which Kadish considers "incompatible with the underlying narrative conception of Simon's new novel," p. 34).

In the conclusion, Kadish outlines the essential features of *Le Palace* and *L'Histoire*, since these novels also belong to Simon's "central period." With the appearance of *La Bataille de Pharsale* (1969), however, Simon enters his new-new novel phase, a period wherein a novel strives

"to reflect the complex workings of writing, not consciousness" (p. 95). Also in the conclusion, Kadish sets limits for interpretative criticism and she proposes certain values for the semiological approach to criticism, especially for the new-new novel. Aware of the excessive linguistic terminology used by practitioners of the semiological stamp, Kadish presents a modified approach, more à la portée of the general reader.

J. A. E. Loubère's study of Simon is omitted in the bibliography (hurried proof-reading or the *Druckteufel*?) *L'Histoire* is absent from the list of Simon's novels and the date of publication given for *Le Palace* is 1967 instead of 1962. Kadish insists that the movement of the new novel begins in 1958 (in order to coincide with the appearance of *L'Herbe*); devotees of Sarraute, Butor, and Robbe-Grillet will no doubt not accept this position. Finally, Kadish relegates *Le Vent* (1957) to the category of the traditional novel; if this novel possesses many Faulknerian elements, then *L'Herbe* betrays certain affinities with *As I Lay Dying*. It must be stated that Kadish advances subtle, yet perceptive, reasons which support her choice of *L'Herbe* as the first of Simon's new novels.

In order to appreciate *La Route*, the active participation of the reader is sought ("on the reader and on the reader's artistic vision," p. 84). In general the new novel has projected this author-reader intimacy (cf. the enigmatic "vous" of Butor's *La Modification*); with the new-new novel, however, it might seem that this relationship has been repudiated. Kadish's unpretentious but lucid treatment of Claude Simon, although restricted to two new novels, will help to overcome this estrangement, inasmuch as "narrowing the gap between Simon and his potential readers is the most urgent task of Simonian criticism" (p. 102).

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