

measure of their potential, the drums seem to demand, provoke, caress and invite the dancers, leading them from mere rhythmic enjoyment to what the author calls "a moment of delirium." The cadence is accelerated, while the bodies perform in erotic convulsive ecstasy: "And what cries, what laughs, what gestures! The presence of so many men and of so many women, the beer, the hemp, the activity, the joy pushed the quivering heat of desire little by little to its culmination" (p. 93).

Ultimately, climax is achieved: a climax which not only suggests a sexual union between Yassi and Bissinguibi, but between nature, man, and the cosmos, as well. "Bissinguibi approached Yassi, kissed her and bending her in the embrace of her desire, took possession of her inner flesh" (p. 159). After the sexual union between the lovers finally occurs, the author dramatically decelerates the rhythm of the scene, creating a sense of sexual release and repose. The symbolic notion of eroticism slackens its beat in order to harmonize with the natural rhythm of the African universe: a universe in which all phases of life exist simultaneously; all responding to one another; all impregnating; all creating.

The powerful and persistent theme of eroticism in Maran's *Batouala* represents what Sartre calls "an enormous and perpetual coition. The black man," he suggests, "represents the natural Eros; he manifests it and incarnates it."⁷ This classic novel masterfully captures this underlying erotic current and reaffirms its deeply rooted presence in African literature of French expression.

Karen Smyley
Howard University

⁷Sartre, p. xxxiv.

A Note on Introductions: *The Fiction of André Pieyre de Mandiargues*

Mandiargues is neither a household word nor a literary one in English-speaking countries, and he is only now, in France, beginning to gain the fame that he so richly deserves. David J. Bond defines his task in *The Fiction of André Pieyre de Mandiargues* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982) as that of introducing the enigmatic work of this French writer to a larger public than he has known heretofore. To the degree that Bond presents, in summary fashion, representative novels and short stories, and informs his readers about many of the recurring motifs that appear in Mandiargues's fiction, he has accomplished his task. The "l'homme et l'oeuvre" approach that he uses resembles the one Twayne Publishers favor in their "World Author" series.

The first chapter of Bond's book is biographical, and in it he traces Mandiargues's steps from childhood to the present. Bond mentions Mandiargues's family, his studies, his friends, his participation in the Surrealist group surrounding Breton, his diverse writings, and his prizes. Mandiargues's first book of prose poems,

Dans les années sordides, came out in 1943, during the "sordid" war years. Since then, he has written several novels, the most important being *Le Lis de mer* (1956), *La Motocyclette* (1963), and *La Marge* (1967), many volumes of poetry and short stories, several books of essays, two plays, various translations, and numerous books on art. He has won a *Prix des critiques*, a *Prix de la nouvelle*, and a *Prix Goncourt*. It is time, indeed, for him to be recognized by a larger audience.

There are no facts in Bond's biographical sketch that have not already been presented by Mandiargues himself in *Le Désordre de la mémoire: Entretiens avec Francine Mallet* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975). But while stressing Mandiargues's interest in art, Bond does venture a conjecture about the influence that Mandiargues's mother had upon her son's work. Because she did not approve of his taste in the art of the avant-garde, the following inference is made: "To have his tastes repudiated by a mother whom he cherished must have influenced the archetypal image of woman that he creates in his work. By showing many of his women characters as docile, passive creatures to be used by men almost as they wish, he may be reacting against this rejection and affirming his own freedom and will to choose" (p. 2). Later, when Bond discusses the passive character of many of Mandiargues's heroines, this conjecture does not arise again. The reason for that, most likely, is that there is no evidence to support it.

Eroticism and cruelty are frequently encountered in Mandiargues's fiction. In "Eros and Pan" and "Eros and Thanatos" (Chapters 2 and 3), Bond uses Georges Bataille's ideas on transgression and the relationship that the erotic has with death to discuss *Le Lis de mer*, *La Motocyclette*, *La Marge*, and various short stories. He shows how certain scenes in these novels represent symbolic ritual sacrifices. In *La Motocyclette*, he interprets various statements that are made about Rebecca, the heroine, as being veiled references to Christ, "the most celebrated of all sacrificial victims" (p. 17). Christ notwithstanding, the oblique cross that Rebecca forms as she is tied to an arched pipe in the bathhouse is an emblem that possesses multivalent qualities. It is richly diversified in its symbolic properties. The St. Andrew's cross that Rebecca's body forms within the oval not only relates to the Tarot card X and to the Wheel of Fortune, but also to the ancient problem of the squaring of the circle, to the Pythagorean Tetraktis, to Renaissance figures to Vitruvian man, to the mandala, and to emblematic figures of androgyny. The recognition of the polyvalent qualities of Mandiargues's symbols constitutes one of the most difficult and most rewarding tasks that one faces when one reads and tries to interpret his work. Instead of calling attention to these qualities in a general and introductory way, as Bond does on various occasions, it would have been helpful for him to have given his readers a taste of the ramifications of Mandiargues's knowledge of the occult by devoting a chapter to one short story and by analyzing it minutely.

Bond chooses to present and discuss many of the most important themes and symbols that recur in Mandiargues's fiction: life and death, male and female, black and white, flight from temporality, rituals of initiation, geometric patterns, binary juxtapositions, mystic drives, the maze, the mandala, the tree, the egg, passages, bridges, androgyny, monsters, hair, et al. Most of the statements made about these motifs are useful to our interpretation of Mandiargues's work, especially Bond's perceptive reading of the short novel *Marbre*, but the tone he uses is often peremptory. He flatly asserts, for instance, that the maze "represents symbolically the internal organs of the female and the path to the womb . . . the place where dwells the goddess of life" (p. 64). It is "a protective device" that keeps the unwelcome away from the deity, and the hero's return to the womb is "an incestuous return to the womb of mother nature" (p. 78). While the maze can represent "the internal organs of the female," it does represent so much more than that. But no further significance is adduced, no multiplicities of allusions are proposed.

In the central chapters of his book, "The Mythic Quest" and "The Uses of Myth," Bond compares the role of several of Mandiargues's heroes and heroines methodological models that have been delineated by Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung. As most serious readers of literature are likely to know, the "mythic quest," as it is presented by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, is composed of a series of steps that go from the hero's hearing the call to adventure and eventually descending to the underworld, to his uniting with the deity and returning triumphantly at the end. Bond shows how the main characters in various short stories, in *Le Lis de mer*, in *La Motocyclette*, and in *La Marge* follow the patterns established by Joseph Campbell. Then he concludes: "Mandiargues's heroines are, in nearly every detail, comparable to the maid of the myth who achieves union with the deity. But many of his characters are men, and cannot be fitted into exactly the same pattern" (p. 55). Because he cannot fit them "into exactly the same pattern," Bond reaches for another explicative model. He finds it in the more ancient myth, as Campbell would have it, of the "mystical marriage of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the world." The Great Mother, the Earth Goddess, or "the Great Venus Meretrix," as Mandiargues calls her in "L'Archéologue," becomes the goal of the quest.

In "Uses of Myth" Bond relies on Jung's theory of archetypes to explain Mandiargues's symbols of tree, mandala, androgyny, etc. But once again, the endings of these stories cannot be adjusted to the mold: they "appear to be the only point at which they depart from the archetypal myth. . . . Only Sarah [in "Le Diamant"] among Mandiargues's heroes and heroines seems more or less to fit this pattern" (p. 69).

Part of the frustration as well as of the pleasure that one experiences in trying to come to terms with Mandiargues's protean elusiveness is that he cannot be "fitted" into any preconceived models or sets of categories. Bond is certainly aware of this, for he states that Mandiargues "presents no all-embracing system for our edification, draws no dramatic conclusions, and points to no course of action that we must take. His art is not didactic in that sense" (p. 69). But it does seem inconsistent to have, on the one hand, a number of instances that "cannot be fitted into exactly the same pattern," and on the other, a belief that Mandiargues "presents no all-embracing system for our edification." Is Mandiargues at his best, then, when it comes to what can be fitted into the system, or when it comes to what cannot be accommodated to it? Bond might answer this query by repeating his conclusion to "The Uses of Myth": "The irrational, paradoxical, complex, and marvelous nature of life can be expressed in no other way than in symbols. Since it is myth that deals most consistently and thoroughly with this paradoxical complexity, Mandiargues naturally arranges his symbols in mythical patterns" (p. 70). The reader of Bond's book cannot but be left with the suspicion that Mandiargues is worth reading only when he has "arranged his symbols" according to the "mythical patterns" delineated by Campbell and Jung.

Since Bond does believe in using theories to explain mythic and symbolic phenomena, one wonders why he finds Campbell and Jung sufficient, and why he ignores Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Ernst Cassirer's *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, or Claude Lévi-Strauss's ideas about binary juxtapositions. Bond puts a great deal of emphasis on the dichotomies that are evident everywhere in Mandiargues's work. For this reason, Lévi-Strauss's conclusion, which is based upon his own studies of myths, that it is characteristic of the structures of the mind to divide experience into binary forms (black/white, male/female, life/death) in order to understand it and resolve the tensions that such contradictions create, would have served Bond well in his and our understanding of Mandiargues. But more crucial still are the writings of René Guénon. His books on *Initiation and Spiritual Realization*, on *The*

King of the World, on *The Symbolism of the Cross*, are all well known to Mandiargues. Guénon's statements about initiation, the tree and the serpent, the symbol of the swastika, geometrical representation of the degrees of existence, the yin-yang symbol, and the metaphysical equivalence of birth and death, are highly pertinent to the symbols and motifs that Mandiargues uses.

Two other lacunae are worth mentioning. None of the translations that Mandiargues has made of Landolfi, Octavio Paz, W. B. Yeats, and Mishima appears in an otherwise helpful bibliography. "Le Fils de rat," a short story that is the best known of all of Mandiargues's stories to English-speaking audiences, is mentioned only once and in passing (p. 9). This short story is read by many students in a Harper & Row edition entitled *Contes modernes*. It seems to me that an English-language book on Mandiargues should at least include a discussion of the short story that English-speaking people know best.

Several books by Mandiargues have appeared since Bond's manuscript went to press: *Le Trésor cruel de Hans Bellmer* (Ed. Le Sphinx, 1979), *Crachefeu: Eaux-fortes de Carlo Guarienti* (Nouveau Cercle Parisien du Livre, 1980), *Miranda: eaux-fortes de Miró* (R. L. D., 1979), *Arsène et Cléopâtre* (Gallimard, 1981), and *Un Saturne gai: Entretiens avec Yvonne Caroutch* (Gallimard, 1982). In the latter volume, the author reveals more information about himself. The book is preceded by an astrological "reading" of his life that was written by Yvonne Caroutch.

In the final chapter of his book, Bond locates Mandiargues's place in modern literature: he shows where the author stands in relation to the *nouveau roman* (certain techniques are shared), to the "absurdist" philosophers (Mandiargues is both alike and different from them), and to the Surrealists ("in their artistic theory and practice, and in their general attitudes, Mandiargues and the Surrealists are often indistinguishable"; p. 99). While Mandiargues's tastes for Baudelaire, Jarry, Lautréamont, the Gothic novel, Elizabethan literature, and others, are evoked, and his use of myth is placed in a "very old tradition" that goes from Dante to C. S. Lewis, the "fantastique" tradition in which he participates is not addressed as such. Balzac, Gauthier, Mérimée, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Jean Lorrain, Georges Rodenbach, and Maupassant are never mentioned. Instead of evaluating Mandiargues's place in literature in relation to the "absurdist" philosophers whom he resembles the least, it would seem appropriate to situate him within the "fantastique" tradition as it is represented by the authors just named. That is where he obviously belongs.

Bond's book is prefaced by a gracious letter from Mandiargues himself, and, as a frontispiece, there is the reproduction of a beautiful painting of the author by his wife, Bona.

Joyce O. Lowrie
Wesleyan University

ERRATUM

The article "The Joycean Faun" which appeared in Volume 10, No. 1 (Winter 1983), 44-47, is by Professor Donald Haberman and not by Angela Habermann. I apologize for this confusion.

The Editor