

focuses on *The Rainbow* which most critics, Holderness says, have viewed as a historical chronicle. Leavis, for example, sees the novel as a true account of society in transition from a rural, organic past to an urban, industrialized present. According to Holderness, however, Lawrence does not describe an actual but a mythical world, created in protest against the values of his own society. The three different settings, agricultural pastoral, rural village and industrialized city, are used only as backdrop for the drama of human relationships. The novel, Holderness concludes, amounts to a denial of history and an affirmation of ideology.

Holderness then describes the historical and ideological contexts of World War I, a period of crisis for Lawrence. Although *Women in Love* does not directly address the war, it contains, in fact, Lawrence's response to the war, in Holderness' estimation. He argues that it focuses on the social system which produced the war, that is, industrial capitalism, symbolized as always in Lawrence by the mining industry.

The last novel analyzed in the study is *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Holderness describes Lawrence's visit to England in 1926 which gave rise to the novel. He points out how bewildered Lawrence was by the labor unrest in the mining industry at the time. The first version of the novel is more realistic and makes the reader aware of the forces of social change while the final version retreats from history into a "mythological space liberated from the pressures and constrictions of industrial society" (p. 226). Holderness concludes his discussion of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (and the whole study) by noting that the conflict in this novel between 'life' and 'society,' between the dead collective form and the living, atomized individual is typical of all of Lawrence's works. He attributes this to the "social contradictions encountered and lived through all those years before by a child in a working-class family in a small industrial town of the English Midlands" (p. 227). Lawrence's writing, he believes, was decisively shaped by his early experiences of social conflicts.

If used along with other critical approaches, Holderness' historical, materialist approach can contribute valuably to understanding the complex world of Lawrence's fiction. When this approach is used alone, however, it sometimes tends to distort Lawrence's works, and this seems to me to be the major shortcoming of the study. This is particularly evident in the analysis of *Women in Love*, although other similar examples oc-

cur throughout the study. Since Holderness focuses chiefly on the Crich family, he gives this family a more important role than it actually plays in the novel; the carefully worked out contrast between the viewpoints of the two couples in the novel is lost in his discussion. Holderness summarizes the novel's purpose thus: "It attempts to offer a complete, comprehensive, final statement about the inevitable tragic destruction of industrial capitalism" (p. 215). Such an interpretation, while valid in part, ignores many other important aspects and distorts this rich and complex work. Yet in several respects this well-written book adds new dimensions to Lawrence criticism. It succeeds well in illuminating Lawrence's relationship to his times, showing how he reacts to historical and social change. It is particularly helpful in setting Lawrence's works into their historical and social background and in measuring the accuracy of Lawrence's depiction of his contemporary society. The study also gives insights into Lawrence's debt to aestheticism (an appendix contains Lawrence's most important comments about this movement).

Jennifer E. Michaels

PATRICIA A. DEDUCK
*Realism, Reality, and the Fictional
Theory of Alain Robbe-Grillet and
Anais Nin*

Washington, D.C.: University
Press of America, 1982. Pp. 118.
\$19.00.

Given the widely disparate controversies surrounding the works of Robbe-Grillet and Nin, one might well expect that a book comparing these radically different authors would discuss the one topic regularly included in critical studies of both writers: the degree to which stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity have informed their respective ideas of fictional reality. But this is not the case at all. Deduck restricts herself to the purpose she outlines in her preface: "to acquaint the reader not only with the two writers' theoretical works and ideas, but also with the relation of their the-

ories to the Western mimetic tradition" (p. vii). In studying Nin's and Robbe-Grillet's trend towards neo-realism, Deduck hopes to expand the general reader's appreciation and understanding of all contemporary experimental fiction and further, to refute the charges of anti-humanism and dehumanization so often leveled at twentieth-century novels and particularly the *nouveau roman* of Robbe-Grillet.

The presentation of the major aspects of both authors' theories of fictional reality is well-organized and accurate; Deduck does not, however, consider examples from Nin's and Robbe-Grillet's novels which generate and in turn are generated by their theories. While this limitation to theory offers the potential spatial advantage of dealing adequately with such topics as realism and reality, it poses the disadvantage of discussing ideas that are not securely tied to specific texts, thus running the risk of misplaced emphasis. The broad and often superficial similarities she draws between the authors' ideas are so strongly emphasized that their fundamental and profound differences, though noted, are consistently overshadowed and minimized. The resulting analysis—while valuable in fleshing out instances of a generally coherent twentieth-century stance on realism and reality—opens the door for the reader unfamiliar with the writings of Robbe-Grillet and Nin to a misconception of their basic incompatibility. Even though Deduck seems to be aware of the dramatic contrasts between the novels of the two writers, she never dwells on the high degree of antagonism that their theories themselves presuppose. In fact, she sees the differences in their novels as proof only of the "formal and technical freedom" that their common aesthetic of experimental fiction allows, and believes that this holds great hope for the future of the novel which, if this neo-realistic trend continues, is far from moribund (pp. 89-90). Such a conclusion, while perhaps true, is ultimately of limited significance. Her basis for a comparison between Robbe-Grillet and Nin is essentially negative, relying on "their rejection of traditional fictional methods for presenting reality" (p. 17). Deduck's topic, mimesis in contemporary fiction, is both an interesting and important subject for study, but her choice of authors to illustrate it raises more problems than her comparisons can accommodate.

After an introductory chapter discussing the mimetic tradition and characteristics of the twentieth-century experimental novel, Deduck concentrates on Nin's and Robbe-

Grillet's fictional theory: the origins and purpose of their ideas (Chapter 2), their definitions of and distinctions between realism and reality in the novel (Chapter 3), their similar view of the novel as a quest for reality (Chapter 4), and their shared hopes for the future of the novel (Chapter 5). In the first chapter she stresses the fact that modern science has helped initiate and verify the breakdown in trust in absolute truth and in a commonly perceived, orderly universe on which the mimetic tradition has always depended. In response, the arts, and especially the novel, have asserted a "belief in the reality of individual perception" which ushers in a plurality of truths and realities (p. 3). This implies "a conception of reality as a potential, continually formed and reformed by the human mind" (p. 3). The difficulty that this chapter shares with the entire book is a lack of specificity. Deduck maintains that "as modern science has demonstrated, the object of observation is not independent of the observer" (p. 12), using this as a basis for subjectivity in art. But such a statement, bereft of any substantiating explanation or reference to a particular scientific context seems to imply that science denies the existence of an external material reality, and as such is dangerously misleading, if not false.

Deduck points out that the concept of realism found in the nineteenth-century novel is no longer appropriate to contemporary fiction because it affirms a universally acknowledged reality. The twentieth-century novel's rejection of this "realism" is represented in the decline and demise of plot based on causality, character development, chronological time and syntactical form. Reality, in the modern novels of Nin and Robbe-Grillet, is being continually created, recreated or invented by the author; it is no longer a faithful copying of a commonly perceived external reality but creates its own significance and reality as it proceeds. Deduck compares Nin's and Robbe-Grillet's fictional theories in terms of their joint concern with the problem of reality in modern fiction, drawing from Nin's most complete critical statement, *The Novel of the Future* (1968) and Robbe-Grillet's collection of essays (dating from 1953-63) in *Pour un nouveau roman*. Although she cites earlier articles by both authors, she does not discuss any of Robbe-Grillet's more recent commentaries on contemporary fiction.

Both Nin and Robbe-Grillet see the changes in the contemporary novel heralding an evolution of man and consciousness and both assign not only a revolutionary but

a humanizing role to the novel and its creator. But Deduck does not clearly explain that this humanizing role holds vastly different connotations for Nin and Robbe-Grillet. For Nin, it is essentially a psychologically revelatory one. Nin writes: "I was bored with the deceptive surface and drawn to the subterranean rivers which contained not the mystery of our physical birth but of our psychic birth and the secret of its behavior above the ground" (p. 19, *The Novel of the Future*). This suggests not simply that humanness resides in psychological processes, but that the novelist is bound to uncover truths (significance, meaning) hidden by external actions and events, i.e., that there is a path by which approximations of the truth may be approached and discovered.

To Robbe-Grillet, the humanizing role of the novel and its author is to reveal ultimately the lack of meaning in the world around us by presenting conflicting and contradictory versions of perception. As such he redefines and reconstructs the proper sphere of the human as that which endlessly projects superfluous signification onto an essentially alien environment. The degree of opposition in these views is misunderstood by Deduck who merely points out that "Nin's analysis of the mechanics of this humanizing process in *The Novel of the Future* is developed more explicitly and in greater detail than is Robbe-Grillet's. A major difference between the two in this instance is that Nin discusses the humanizing role of the novelist in psychoanalytic terms . . ." (p. 34). The real difference is not only in the degree of development as Deduck suggests, but lies instead in the very substance of the individual authors' stances.

Discussing the two writers' approaches to the novelistic representation of reality, Deduck perceives a shared concept of the novel as quest, its reality being in the process of becoming, not as a predetermined or absolute truth. For Robbe-Grillet, any "truth" resulting from a reading of a new novel is essentially fortuitous and should not be the result of the author's conscious design. Nin, on the other hand, visualizes the role of the author as more deliberate and interpretive, one which is calculated to "shake up" traditional views of reality by offering an alternative one. On the spectrum of absolutes, then, Nin's authorial interpretation and assignment of meaning comes much closer to influencing or controlling the reader's concept of truth than Robbe-Grillet's does. In *The Novel of the Future*, Nin distinguishes between "reportage" and "unconscious

writing." She believes that the new novel, which should fuse these two extremes of objective appearance and subjective significance, will depend on the writer's interpretive process which assigns a meaningful pattern to outward manifestations of the unconscious. "Reportage," the "mere objective scientific relating of facts without interpretation," is not reality according to Nin since it lacks the emotional dimension needed to convey reality to the reader (p. 50).

Although Deduck does not draw attention to the fact, Nin's disparaging definition of "reportage" closely approximates Robbe-Grillet's tendency towards prolonged and thorough description of the position and presence of physical objects, for him an essential ingredient of external as well as novelistic reality. Instead of revealing possible hidden or transcendent signification, the world created in Robbe-Grillet's work claims no external reference; it is a world wholly self-referential. Thus, in a reciprocal fashion, Robbe-Grillet would undoubtedly consider Nin to be a product of what he calls the "old realism" of transcendent signification, creating as she does an anthropocentric world. Acknowledging their divergence in this area Deduck remarks: "Robbe-Grillet claims that we can no longer have any faith in this sort of 'depth'—the depth which is, to Nin, the integral element constituting fictional reality . . ." (p. 66). However it is precisely this emphasis of Nin's on unconscious truth in fictional reality which links her to the "old realism" and the lack of such a claim on Robbe-Grillet's part that situates him more firmly as a neo-realist of modern fiction.

Although both Nin and Robbe-Grillet perceive the contemporary novel as a search for reality, Robbe-Grillet believes there should be no ultimate goal established or accomplished by the novelist in a given novel. Nin, however, proposes a focus for the novelistic quest; it should be a search for the self, to be accomplished through improvisation, free association and spontaneity. She believes the novelist has a duty not to "add to the confusion" in an already confused world (p. 77). In contrast, Robbe-Grillet's novel "assumes the form of a quest which in its essence is problematical, uncertain, and even contradictory" (p. 72). Characteristically, Deduck attenuates these conflicting perspectives by asserting that Nin's view is simply more fully developed than Robbe-Grillet's. In so doing, she is claiming a superficial correspondence to be a fundamen-

tal one: "Nin's view of the design of the quest is more precise and focused but not substantially different than Robbe-Grillet's, for like him, she views the quest as a viable format for the novel by which man can achieve some understanding of his experience" (p. 75).

Early in this study Deduck points out that both Nin and Robbe-Grillet formulated their fictional theories in an attempt to explain their individual novels. Similarly, in the larger view, fictional theory should be dependent on the particular manifestations of fiction which spawned it. Deduck's study, however, seems to work toward the construction of a coherent twentieth-century stance on realism at the expense of the particular fiction itself. The similarities between Robbe-Grillet and Nin—negative and broad as they are—could have been drawn among other experimental authors, thus avoiding the specific problems of juxtaposing these two writers whose differences, both in theory and in fiction, are more marked than their affinities. Any time that the generalizations of theory obscure the unique characteristics of the fiction that gave them life, those generalizations must be viewed with suspicion.

Margaret Simonton

E. BRETON DE NIJS

Faded Portraits

Trans. Donald and Elsie Sturtevant

Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1982. Pp. 176. \$15.00.

As the original Dutch title (*Vergeelde portretten uit een Indisch familiealbum*, 1954) suggests, *Faded Portraits* is a fictionalized family chronicle of Dutch colonialists in what was called "the Indies." Its opening chapter describes the death in 1940 of the sixty-year-old Sophie de Pauly, the aunt of the first-person narrator, E. B. de Nijs (pseudonym of Rob Nieuwenhuys). In the following chapters, through the technique of flashbacks, the narrator describes the life of Aunt Sophie—her frustrated longing for love, her failure to preserve the "purity" of the family

name. In short, when de Nijs's aunts, uncles and parents "were alive, they represented a dying class." Clearly, the novel can be read as a metaphor for the death of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia as well as for the liberation of the narrator from the tight family clan into which he was born.

In the epilogue, the narrator once more turns to death and reflects that now (1953), ten years after he wrote the first chapter, all the members (with the exception of one uncle) of Aunt Sophie's generation have died and that his own generation lives "uprooted" and "aimless" in the Netherlands. The narrator remembers his particular family with the observing and admiring eyes of a small child, yet places their actions within the more general pathological pattern of colonialism.

As if paging through a not-always-chronologically-arranged family album, the narrator describes a class obsessed with skin color, manners, and family ties. Sophie's younger brother, Alex, lives on a plantation with a "native" woman, Titi. Of course, his sisters consider "that woman" to be their inferior—no matter what their brother's relationship to her may be. Titi is only on rare occasions allowed to be in the front part of Sophie's house, and even when Alex lies dead in his sister's house, a sobbing Titi is taken to the servant quarters. Sophie and her sister Christine are appalled that Alex has children by "that woman," but insist that they be allowed to give "the girls" a proper European upbringing. For, as Aunt Sophie argues, though they have dark skin, they are "not natives after all, but De Paulys" (p. 134). Thus develops the antagonistic and spiteful relationship between the aunts and "the girls," a relationship that culminates in the strange behavior of the girls as Aunt Sophie is dying. "They had coolly continued to sit around the radio, while the sound of the dying woman could be heard all the way to the rear veranda." When the Aunt does die, the girls "neither shed a tear nor showed any sorrow: they merely stood there rigidly and were noticeably relieved when they were allowed to leave the room again."

Sophie's attitude to her dark-skinned nieces is based on contempt for their mother as a member of an inferior class. As the Aunt claims to teach them "European" manners, thereby alienating them from their mother and the native population, she constantly reminds them and everyone else of the hopelessness of her task. Sophie's patronizing feelings for the children of her brother contrast sharply with her admira-