

rather the outrageous or illogical combination of details. For example: "The truth is that Marie has just hanged her mother. We realized this on account of the spinach not growing any more. But we don't dare start an investigation. Why not? Because Marie is a redhead." In *some* cases—particularly "Vishnu Takes His Revenge" and "The Cucumbers"—the illogicality is delightful, and some of the exercises might make surprising and welcome additions to those numerous college textbooks crammed with well-worn plotted stories. Students and their teachers well might question: are these exercises the work of a child, a madman, or a serious artist? Pinget also notes that "this little volume contains in embryo all the forms taken by my later work"—a comment which may deserve careful testing.

That Voice is, of course, a text containing not only numerous sentences which fade into a series of periods, but also characters and events which have as little stability as wind-swept cumulus clouds. At first one may read with the hope that some certainty will arrive, that some kind of traditional coherence will at last begin to emerge. But at the end all that remain are a few names, places, objects, which have been repeated in different combinations in an intricate collage. The text speaks of a slate, a meeting in a cemetery, papers or dossiers, an old man (dying or murdered), a nephew, a servant. At times the tone is conversational or gossipy (the repeated "pssps" is obviously onomatopoeic). "Cut" and "a missing link" are used frequently to signal gaps or hesitations or transitions. At times there is word play, as well as some humor and vulgarity: "A candle was burning at the deceased's bedside. A handle was churning up his diseased backside." Given the complete fluidity of the text, there is no conventional closure; perhaps Théodore, the nephew, actually ages, but, more importantly, toward the end the gossipy tones seem to disappear, short paragraphs predominate, new and peaceful images arrive.

If one reads such a text searching for some significance, I fear that at best Pinget may remind one that "life is just a few years of drifting nothings" (p. 60). The justification for *That Voice*, as in the case of other new novels, surely is in the very process of reading and not in some residual meaning. One listens to the tones (at times one must read aloud); one dreams of the "invisible manitou" which haunts the text; one's mind drifts along with the narrating voice that combines and recombines memories and imaginings.

Between Fantoine and Agapa seems to be a defiant, outrageous, youthful book, and in the long run probably a relatively unimportant one. *That Voice*, spoken by an older Pinget, is a verbal symphony which probably will be appreciated and reread only by readers already accustomed to other new novels. Finally, if the amount of criticism written in English is at all indicative, Pinget does not have a wide audience in English-speaking nations. Let us hope that Barbara Wright and the Red Dust press are preparing texts which one day will be in great demand.

Addendum: The Red Dust press has now published Pinget's *Someone* (1984), Barbara Wright's translation of *Quelqu'un* (1965). The novel begins with a lost bit of paper and gradually turns into another remarkable labyrinth, where, however, characters have far more stability than those in *That Voice*. Pinget can be witty, vulgar, trivial—and, we must remember, at times wonderfully sensitive, as he is in a long sequence (pp. 129-33) describing the narrator's holiday with the retarded servant boy, Fonfon. The volume contains two appendices: Barbara Wright's "The 'Trials' of Translating Pinget," reprinted from the *Review of Contemporary Fiction* (1983); and a speech delivered by Pinget on October 1, 1982, at New York University. The latter seems to be a valuable piece of self-analysis. Among other things, Pinget enumerates four kinds of repetitions which occur in his works and, lest there be any doubt, verifies that "my books are to be listened to, rather than to be read."

H. Ernest Lewald, ed. & trans.

THE WEB: STORIES BY ARGENTINE WOMEN

Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1983. Pp. 170.

\$8.00

Reviewed by María-Inés Lagos-Pope.

The Web, a collection of short stories by contemporary Argentine women writers in English translation is a welcome and timely publication. For the first time a broad selection of stories by representative women authors from a Latin-American country is accessible to the American public.

With few exceptions among contemporary authors, Spanish and Spanish-American literary works are not readily available in English. It is not surprising, then, that works by women novelists are even more difficult to find in English translation. For example, Carmen Laforet's *Nada*, one of the most significant post-Civil War Spanish novels, winner of the Eugenio Nadal prize in 1944, has not yet appeared in translation. Nevertheless, there is hope the tide is turning, evident by the present anthology and by the recent publication of an excellent translation by Richard and Lucía Cunningham of a collection of short stories by the Chilean María Luisa Bombal (1910-1980), *New Islands and Other Stories*.

In the last two decades throughout Latin America there has been an enormous increment of writing by women, especially in Mexico and Argentina that, for many reasons, have witnessed a flourishing activity among women authors. It is all the more important, then, to make them known beyond the boundaries of their homeland, not only to show that women are not silent in Latin America, but rather to publicize these writers and make their work known and available. *The Web* includes short stories by twelve authors, from Luisa Mercedes Levinson, born in 1914, who started publishing in the early fifties, to a young writer, Reina Roffé, who began her career in the seventies. Thus, the collection covers three generations of women and shows how their preoccupations, techniques, style, and political consciousness have evolved through the decades. Although these authors are better known for their novels, their selection was based on their short stories, and for that reason it is not surprising that novelists like Marta Traba, Sara Gallardo, and others were not included. The editor has focused his selection on one topic, the portrayal of the female-male relationship in an urban society. This, however, does not preclude the fact that these women have also written on a variety of subjects including social and political issues. By limiting the collection to one topic, the editor gives it cohesion and provides the reader with the possibility of tracing its development and evolution through the short stories.

The introduction and the biographical presentations of the individual authors are very useful, although at times one wishes the critic had discussed the stories in greater detail in order to provide the foreign reader with a better insight into the literary and cultural backgrounds. The editor should be commended for including recent and unpublished stories by young writers, such as Reina Roffé and Luisa Valenzuela (whose "Change of Guard" has, in the meantime, appeared in Spanish in the United States in a volume entitled *Cambio de armas* [Hanover, N.H.: Ediciones del Norte, 1982]). Although *The Web* is a fine collection of representative works by Argentine women, there are some aspects that could be improved for later editions. Inasmuch as the anthology follows a chronological order, it is not clear why the editor chose to alter this in the case of the first two entries. Luisa Mercedes Levinson (b. 1914) precedes Silvina Ocampo although the latter was born in 1906, and, what is most significant, she began publishing in 1937, while Levinson did not do so until the early fifties. The individual bibliographies included after each introduction are very useful, but, unfortunately, these are not always accurate or complete. For example, Silvina Bullrich's *Bodas de cristal* was not her first publication; she had written *Su vida y yo* (1941), *La redoma del primer angel* (1943, and not 1967), and *La tercera versión* (1944), before *Bodas de cristal* in 1951, and not 1953 as it is listed. Another example is the omission of Luisa Valenzuela's *Como en la guerra* (1977) and *Libro que no muerde* (1980); and no source reference is given for "El que busca." Another suggestion regarding bibliographical information would be to include the source of each of the selections in the introductions. This information, to be sure, is provided sometimes in the introduction, however, that is not always the case. Thus, one must resort to finding it among the list of acknowledgments that, incidentally, do not follow any order. Moreover, there are also a few typographical errors, and several accents missing from titles and names.

In conclusion, *The Web* will draw much-needed attention to the work of Latin-American women writers, and provide material for those college courses that deal with the literature of Latin America in translation, which for the most part have concentrated only on male authors.

Katerina Clark

THE SOVIET NOVEL: HISTORY AS RITUAL

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. Pp.

xvi + 293

Reviewed by Victor Terras

Lazar Fleishman's recent books, *Pasternak in the 1920s* (1981) and *Pasternak in the 1930s* (1984) deal, like Professor Clark's excellent study, with the functioning of the literary process under the peculiar conditions prevailing in the Soviet Union. The detailed account given by him (over 400 pages for a single decade, dealing with a single writer) shows how this process