

In his Introduction, Stoltzfus defines "New Novel" (in terms of Robbe-Grillet) as referring to the works of the 1950s, and categorizes everything from *La Maison de rendez-vous* (1965) to the present as "New New Novel," coining the term "New (New) Novel" to apply to both periods. Originally serving to emphasize the differences between Robbe-Grillet's novels of the 1950s, and the two from 1965 and 1970 (*La Maison* and *Projet pour une révolution à New York*), the term *nouveau nouveau roman* has been less often used (and seems less useful) since the publication of Robbe-Grillet's assemblage novels of the 1970s and the mixed genres (grammar as fiction, fictive [auto]biography) of the 1980s. The works to which Stoltzfus devotes most attention in this book, in fact, are the original two New New Novels, particularly *Projet*, the assemblage novels (*Topologie* [1976] and *Souvenirs du triangle d'or* [1978]), and the films of the same period: *L'Immortelle* (1963), *Trans-Europ-Express* (1966), *L'Homme qui ment* (1968), *L'Eden et après* (1971), and *Glissements progressifs du plaisir* (1974).

It is also in his Introduction that Stoltzfus returns to the question of the two ways of reading Robbe-Grillet, citing Bruce Morrissette as "perhaps the best known of the so-called 'recuperative' critics," and Jean Ricardou as "an eloquent and prolific spokesman for a linguistic, nonmimetic interplay of verbal signs" (p. 13). Opting for a reconciliation of the two views, he recognizes that Robbe-Grillet's writing defines "a new narrative discourse whose form, in addition to speaking of itself, also tries to subvert establishment ideology." It is this "duality within Robbe-Grillet, as well as the duality in the critical methodologies applied to his work" that the subtitle of the present book, "*The Body of the Text*," is intended to reflect (p. 14). The two aspects of the subtitle are perhaps clearer in another context, where the reader's attention is drawn to "the body of the text and the nude bodies within the text on which Robbe-Grillet performs his serial experiments" (p. 81).

In broad outline Stoltzfus' study follows the program he announces here—combining sensitive tracings of, for example, nonmimetic modes of generating text, with carefully chosen quotations that at least prove Robbe-Grillet's revolutionary intent (during the period with which Stoltzfus is concerned) to free his readers from the manipulations of language and cultural myths. And yet at times, in his chronological summaries of the events of individual films, in his comments on the "meaning" of a word in a title (p. 129), in his descriptions of objects as "signifying" (for example) an emotion (p. 106), and even in his adoption of the "objective correlative" (pp. 107, 108), a term brought into Robbe-Grillet criticism by Bruce Morrissette, Stoltzfus seems to want to "recuperate" Robbe-Grillet's texts at least as much as Morrissette ever did. Nor is Stoltzfus the only critic not to have noticed that Morrissette (whose "recuperative" chronological summaries in the late 1950s and early 1960s were the sole American response at the time to Robbe-Grillet) altered his critical approach to incorporate greater indeterminacy in response to the changes in Robbe-Grillet's own work after *La Maison* (1965).

This is not the only book to read on Robbe-Grillet, either for the initiate or for the novice. When read as a collection of articles, however, it offers a depth of discussion on several topics worth anyone's attention. In addition to the careful tracing throughout of similar techniques in films and in novels, there are the occasional *aperçus*: for example, that it is not just Cubism's multiple and discontinuous viewpoints, but also the resultant "ambiguity in time" that we find reflected in the New (New) Novel (p. 89). A chapter on the *mise en abyme* or interior duplication extends the technique to "intertextuality . . . twins, double names, and dual identities" (p. 100). Particularly fascinating for this reader is a chapter on the labyrinth that traces the mythic aspect of the image as "tomb and temple" (p. 117), and delineates the time of myth as equally "reversible, nonlinear, and nonsequential" (p. 130) as the texts and films of Robbe-Grillet. These are articles that anyone seriously studying the works of Robbe-Grillet will want to read, and we can only be grateful for their availability within a single cover.

Paule Marshall

*PRAISESONG FOR THE WIDOW*

New York: E. P. Dutton, 1984. Pp. 285

Reviewed by Ann Armstrong Scarborough

The breadth of this most recent of Paule Marshall's novels is admirable and exciting. In addition to witnessing the spiritual rebirth of a middle-aged black widow, the reader participates in an intense experience with the protagonist's unconscious mind so that his perceptions of his own reality are enriched as well. Avey Johnson is the epitome of the middle-class woman

who has achieved financial and social success after many years of struggle and self-sacrifice. As the novel begins, she is on a luxurious Caribbean cruise with two black girl friends and a ship filled with whites. Avey has just decided to jump ship, leaving the cruise at the next stopping point of Grenada, without even knowing why she is compelled to leave. As the novel develops, it becomes clear that her unconscious mind is directing her actions and there is even a hint of divine intervention—she is certainly listening to her inner voice as she departs. Dreams play the role of rituals of purification in this novel in the sense that it is through them that Avey is put in touch with her deepest fears and longings.

The richness and power of Avey's past are revealed from the first pages. The descriptions of events like her family's summer excursion up the Hudson river with lots of friends, her childhood visits to her great-aunt Cuney in Tatem, South Carolina, the religious ceremony of the Ring Shout in Tatem, the minister's oration on a hot Easter Sunday in Harlem, deepen the texture of the novel while they teach us more about Avey. By the time Avey participates in the ancestral celebration of life on the island of Carriacou, the reader has learned all there is to know about her early life and her passionate, difficult marriage. The portrayal of the modern black man's struggle becomes part of the tale about Avey in spite of the fact that the focus of the book is on roots and spiritual renewal, because the reality is that such struggle exists and is part and parcel of those roots.

This is a remarkable novel not only because the psychological journey is presented astutely but also because it is artistic. Marshall weaves countless threads of repeated images, dreams, flashbacks, mother-daughter conversations, ethnic poetry and religious experiences into her narrative so that the reader is constantly being reminded of yet another aspect of the story. This artistic quality is reminiscent of Marshall's earlier novels (see, for instance, L. Lee Talbert, "The Poetics of Prophecy in Paule Marshall's *Clap Hands and Sing*," *MELUS*, 5 No. 1 (1978), 49-56, and Marcia Keisz, "Themes and Style in the Works of Paule Marshall," *Negro American Literature Forum*, 9 No. 3 (1975), 71-76).

By the end of the novel it is clear that Avey has completed the process of psychological reintegration. She has found a new spiritual power and she finds herself "moving suddenly with a vigor and passion she hadn't felt in years, and with something of the stylishness and sass she had once been known for" (p. 249). Embodied in this description is the notion that we are each possessed with a unique spirit, something that is ours alone, a quality which may seem to vanish at some points during our lives but which in fact never disappears and can be rediscovered. *Praisesong for the Widow* is every bit as much Marshall's praisesong as it is Avey's. The novel embodies a continuation of the path toward self-identity which Marshall began in 1959 with *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, and we leave it with the feeling that Marshall has herself reached the end of an important journey. Indeed, she has said that one must come to terms with everything one is, before she is free to become her true self. We can only anticipate with great interest this author's next offering.

Chris Ackerley and Lawrence J. Clipper  
*A COMPANION TO UNDER THE VOLCANO*  
Vancouver, B.C.: University of British Columbia Press,  
1984. Pp. 492. \$45.00  
Reviewed by R. T. Chapman

*Ulysses* had Stuart Gilbert, *Lolita* had Alfred Appel, now *Under the Volcano* has found its scrupulous exegetes—Chris Ackerley and Lawrence J. Clipper. With a coincidence that would have appealed to Lowry, both scholars—unaware of each other's work—submitted their manuscripts to the same publisher in the same month. This "Companion" is a combination of their independent studies. Like Joyce's ideal reader, Lowry's too should suffer from an ideal insomnia. His fiction teems with allusions—mundane and arcane—which function on both mimetic and symbolic levels. Ackerley and Clipper tease these out in some 1,700 notes (with page references to Penguin and Cape editions) in a manner more useful to magus than to neophyte. Anyone encountering *Under the Volcano* for the first time could be confused by the Stakhanovite detail in these notes. There are better ways into the dark wood of Lowry's fiction.