

The short "Of Nishivara, the Saint," written in a manner resembling the prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as "Chapter 1" of an apparently never-continued work allows for interesting conclusions regarding Grove's mystification of his own past. The gem among the four pieces is "Rebels All: Of the Interpretation of Individual Life." In this essay, Grove takes an early account of his achievement in life in his typical veiled manner, yet acknowledges aspects of his past that he would deny in his publications of later years. Not only does he mention a literary as well as a criminal past (p. 69), he even refers, without naming names, to his association with the German Decadents around Stefan George (p. 75-6). He refuses to accept the term "failure" for himself—"since each failure has helped to make me what I call 'me'" (p. 75)—yet he already gives an image of himself that he would preserve all through his life: "I am an utterly lonely man" (p. 68).

Grove's own pronouncements are supplemented by what the back cover text calls "essays on Grove by his most perceptive critics." Here again Hjartarson has assembled old and new material. In one of the two new articles, D.O. Spettigue established a coherence for Grove's oeuvre by linking the self-portrait Friedrich Karl Reelen in *Fanny Essler* to Edmund Clark, the youngest *Master of the Mill*. Both portraits demonstrate "the conflict between reason and emotion [a]s essential to Grove's art" (p. 61) and lead Spettigue to a definition of "the ultimate conflict in Grove and what he means by tragedy: the conflict between the heroic life that gives value to human action, and the meaninglessness of cosmic existence which denies it" (p. 62). The other new essay is—how could it be different in Grove scholarship?—concerned with Grove's biography. In his "Of Greve, Grove, and Other Strangers: The Autobiography of the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven," Paul Hjartarson has followed up Lynn DeVore's conclusion that Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* is based on the unpublished memoirs of the woman who had been Grove's wife in Germany, emigrated with him to the United States, was abandoned by him, and later became a Greenwich Village eccentric admired and feared by Marcel Duchamps, William Carlos Williams, and others. Hjartarson concludes his reading of Baroness Elsa's memoirs with the remark, "For Felix Paul Greve life was a text he kept revising and we, his readers, keep encountering new versions of the stories he lived and wrote" (p. 283). The story discussed by Hjartarson gives us some factual information on the "dark period" 1909 to 1912, but at the same time it means that we, too, have to revise our story about Grove's life.

The remainder of the book is taken up by previously published essays on Grove, ranging from W.J. Keith's "Grove's *Over Prairie Trails: A Re-Examination*," first published in 1972, to "Of Words and Understanding in Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh*," published by Camille Labossiere in 1985. Although Hjartarson has collected some of the finest articles written on Grove over the past 15 years—such as E.D. Blodgett's essay from *Configuration* and J.J. Healy's "Grove and the Matter of Germany"—the selection of essays constitutes the only weak point of *A Stranger to My Time*. Most of the essays included here are easily available in their original publication, and the interested reader could get hold of them with the help of the selected bibliography that concludes the book. At least this reader would have preferred some more new critical material instead.

*A Stranger to My Time* is a good and useful edition for anyone wanting to know more than is conveyed by Grove's novels. The volume contains enough material by and about Grove to sustain and deepen the interest which the reader had had at the outset. But it remains doubtful whether he or she will actually come to know the mysterious stranger. After all, Grove himself wrote into his diary on 6 April 1933, "I hardly know who the F.P.G. is who is compact of contradictions." (p. 307)

Ralph Sarkonak

*CLAUDE SIMON: LES CARREFOURS DU TEXTE*

Toronto: Les Editions Paratexte, 1986. Pp. 194

Reviewed by Doris Y. Kadish

The central ideas in Ralph Sarkonak's *Claude Simon: Les Carrefours du Texte* are not likely to surprise the New Novel specialists for whom this scholarly, carefully conceived, and well-executed work is intended. That for Simon the novel strives but ultimately fails to represent reality, that the only story is the story of writing, that the novel's purpose is to procure a

"plaisir du texte"—these main ideas of Sarkonak's book are tenets that Simon, Ricardou, and others have promoted or adhered to over the past twenty years. As a result, much Simonian criticism has remained firmly entrenched in a prison house of language that Sarkonak never contests. As he revealingly proclaims at one point, "la seule réalité qui compte [est] celle du langage" (p. 83).

Without, then, presenting a truly new view of his subject, Sarkonak does succeed admirably in fleshing out and refining central ideas about Simon's writing. The book is divided into two main parts. Both parts draw their examples primarily from the small, well-selected corpus of *Histoire* and *La Bataille de Pharsale*, while reaching out when appropriate to examples from other texts. The writing and organization are commendably clear, as is the use of contemporary literary theory and criticism on Simon. Sarkonak's extensive references to Derrida, Ricardou, Barthes, Genette, and Kristeva are invariably intelligent and original. Rather than slavishly following Ricardou, for example, as some New Novel critics have done, he develops a method that is more consistently immanent than Ricardou's and that is applied to a Simonian intratext rather than a New Novel intertext. Similarly noteworthy is his application to Simon of Kristeva's notion of the semiotic.

The first part of *Les Carrefours du texte*, which highlights the problematic status of mimesis for Simon, succeeds in demonstrating the important extent to which Simon thematizes the issue of mimesis, in ways that have often escaped attention, notably, in relation to such diverse themes as money, sex, chemistry, memory, and war. To argue his point in this first part that Simon's central theme is the failure of mimesis, the impossible quest to capture reality, Sarkonak treats four different imitative forms or types of "mimétisme" in Simon's work: "le mimétisme référentiel," the characters' problematic relation to language; "le mimétisme cratylien," the impossible search for a necessary link between signifiers and signifieds; "le mimétisme graphique," the text's attempts at representing pictures or other texts; and "le mimétisme auto-référentiel," the various sorts of "mise en abyme."

The second part of the book, "Le Langage producteur," focuses on the self-generative processes of language or "jeux de l'écriture." Among the questions considered in this part are how key words trigger new directions within or among narrative sequences, how sequences combine in coherent patterns, and how sequences function from one place in the Simonian intratext to another. An extended, enlightening analysis of *Histoire*, tracing the generative properties of such key words as "lac," "larmes," "lait," and "elle," provides answers to these questions and shows how the novel's meaning derives from the kernel semantic elements of femininity and fluidity.

A number of inconsistencies should perhaps be noted. One involves Sarkonak's concept of a global Simonian Text, which calls into question the generally accepted division into beginning, central, and later periods: ". . . nous sommes loin d'être sûr qu'il soit possible de couper si facilement une telle oeuvre en compartiments étanches . . ." (p. 12). The inconsistency arises because Sarkonak uses the notion of the Text to deemphasize the more mimetic stages of the earlier fiction, while he later reverts to using just those divisions that he earlier called into question. Another inconsistency concerns the difficulty of reading Simon's novels, which Sarkonak recognizes (Simon himself has often denied it): indeed at one point (p. 15), Sarkonak even suggests that without a modern theoretical background, readers would be unable to read Simon. And elsewhere, he states: "Il n'est donc pas étonnant que certains lecteurs soient agacés, voire même irrités par des textes si 'illisibles'" (p. 158). But since Sarkonak speaks repeatedly of the "plaisir du texte," one wonders whether "pleasure" is not then being used polemically, less to describe how readers *do* read than to prescribe how they *should*. These objections aside, Sarkonak's book is clearly a significant work from which readers interested in Simon and the New Novel will derive unquestionable benefit.

Ruth R. Wisse, ed.

*A SHTETL AND OTHER YIDDISH NOVELLAS*

Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986. Pp. 359, \$17.50

Reviewed by Miriam Roshwald

The present volume is a labor of love dedicated to Yiddish literature and its spread among the English speaking public. The editor and translator of three out of the five novellas, Ruth Wisse, wrote an informative introduction in which she traces the history of Yiddish literature. In addition, she provides a valuable preface for each of the five writers chosen. The five