

illuminate the meaning of the stories. The books that Bill and Nick talk about in "Three Day Blow," for example, add a great deal of substance to the meaning of the tale. The story-lines in the books, known to both of the teenagers, contribute to the total impact of the short story itself.

Johnston's book is only fair in terms of its appearance. The type face is small and ugly, with a few too many typos; and because most of the chapters appeared separately over a fifteen year period, there is a bit of repetitiveness in expression, especially on the iceberg motif. But these are mere quibbles. The book is a valuable addition to scholarship on a major twentieth century American author.

Charles Bonn

*LE ROMAN ALGÉRIEN DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE,  
VERS UN ESPACE DE COMMUNICATION  
LITTÉRAIRE DÉCOLONISÉ?*

Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal and Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985. Pp. 359

Reviewed by Eric Sellin

*Le Roman algérien* is based on Charles Bonn's doctoral thesis. In this study, Bonn once again explores the notions of geography, space, and the reader's psychological interaction with, or "reception" of, the literary work, themes which he had broached earlier in his important study, *La Littérature algérienne de langue française et ses lectures, Imaginaire et discours d'idées* (Sherbrooke: Naaman, 1974).

Bonn is interested in the large strokes of the literature he deals with and sometimes he relies on too few works to establish his chronologies or generalizations; no doubt the exigencies of a thesis in the French system (one must not concentrate on one person only, but demonstrate vast competence) have left their mark on the study's structure. Thus, when Bonn takes a handful of classics to illustrate his premise, one cannot help but think of other examples which might serve to bolster or to contradict the premise.

The presentation of the book is in the fragmented style preferred by many contemporary critics who have forsaken the art of critical transition or the essay "qui se suffit" and which possesses a special "inevitable" progression of argument. Because of the broad strokes and the fragmented approach, there are lacunae which--I am sure--are not the result of any deficiency of knowledge, for Charles Bonn is a widely read and extremely conscientious scholar, but rather the result of chinks in the exposition. On page 25, for example, Bonn--relying on Jean Déjeux's charts in the latter's monumental but somewhat dated work, *Littérature maghrébine de langue française* (Ottawa [the first edition was not published in Sherbrooke as Bonn has it]: Naaman, 1973)--asserts that "le courant ethnographique, jusque-là continu depuis 1945 avec une seule interruption en 1959, s'arrêterait net à l'Indépendance, pour ne plus se manifester ensuite qu'une fois, en 1970, avec *Le Village des asphodèles*, d'Ali Boumahdi." Bonn agrees that the Revolution, and especially, the Independence, "peuvent donc être considérées comme une sommation de l'écrivain par l'Histoire."

The ethnographic novel, or the *Bildungsroman*, has continued, however, to be a convenient, almost traditional, way for young novelists to enter the literature. Recent examples--and they do not deal with the History of the revolution but rather the contemporary history the younger Algerians have lived through--are the first novels or *récits* by Tahar Djaout, Rabah Belamri, and Mohamed Magani, to name but a few.

But I would not wish the above cavils to give the reader the impression that this study by Bonn is not superior, only that it is not encyclopedic and does have some shortcomings. By and large, *Le Roman algérien de langue française* is a brilliant study. The discourse of the study is provocative and many passages excite the imagination and make the reader mull over the passage, to his intellectual advantage.

Many scholars have tackled the structure and style of Kateb's masterpiece *Nedjma*, discussing the relationship between the novel's curious structure and the events the novel describes. As with *Stonehenge*, the novel seems to beg to be decoded. Like Marc Gontard, Kristine Aurbakken, Antoine Raybaud, Bernard Aresu, the late Jacqueline Arnaud, and others, Charles Bonn proposes fairly precise concepts. However, as in the case of the criticism of these other scholars, *Nedjma* has been nicked at but not broken. The novel remains huge and defiant before its explicators. It seems to me that the novel is somehow best penetrated by generalization, and Bonn has been very instructive in this regard. I derive less understanding about the novel from the detailed demonstration Bonn lays down than I do from general comments regarding *Nedjma's* relative historicity (see, e.g., 63-64).

Some critics will feel that the chapter on the circumstantial writing about the Revolution, such as the récits which were published in the FLN's cultural journal, *Promesses*, is a digression, both in tone and in substance, for those stories are generally lacking in literary quality and the stories are not novels, per se, although the novel is the subject of the book. Critics may also take issue with Bonn's choice, in his third chapter, of "Les Cinq Romains les plus marquants depuis l'Indépendance": Kateb's *Le Polygone étoilé*, Bourboune's *Le Muezzin*, Boudjedra's *La Répudiation*, Farès's *L'Exil et le désarroi*, and Dib's *Habel*. Surely there are other works--more important in the pure literary sense, even by some of the same authors--which are equally illustrative of Bonn's motif in this chapter of "L'Inscription spatiale d'un écart." But then, one can always find alternative examples for anything!

I am sorry if, even as I praise Bonn's book, I seem to debate its merits. This is one of the strengths of the study. In short, *Le Roman algérien* is instructive and worthy reading for those interested in the Francophone novel; but it goes beyond that, providing, as well, remarks which both the specialist and the general literary critic will find stimulating and provocative.

Roger Allen, compiler and editor

## **MODERN ARABIC LITERATURE**

New York: The Ungar Publishing Company, 1987. Pp. xxxiii + 370.

Reviewed by Issa J. Boullata

This is an anthology of excerpts of literary criticism on 20th-century Arabic literature culled from the writings of over two hundred Arab and Western critics. The Arabic texts have been translated by Roger Allen and interwoven with a selection of English texts compiled by him, both sets of edited texts dealing critically with a total of seventy-three modern Arab poets, fiction writers, and playwrights arranged alphabetically by name. The volume seems to explore, in excerpts of criticism, the works of modern Arab authors rather than the trends in methods and schools of literary criticism. In the sixteen-page Introduction, only two or three pages are devoted to the development of Arabic literary criticism and theory, the rest being a general survey of historical developments in modern Arabic poetry, fiction, and drama.

Readers of this fiction journal may be interested to know that about half of the authors dealt with critically in this book are novelists and short story writers, the others being predominantly poets along with a small number of playwrights. Concentrating on the