

us, like the characters it favors, in "a continuous adaptation to indeterminacy" (179).

Celia Britton

*CLAUDE SIMON: WRITING THE VISIBLE*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. Pp. 234.

Reviewed by Doris Y. Kadish

The time is ripe for reevaluating certain key theories that French new novelists have espoused to explain their art. In a deconstructive spirit, Celia Britton attempts such a reevaluation in *Claude Simon: Writing the Visible* by focusing on the dual issues of representation and textuality. Instead of relegating representation to an early phase, as new-novel authors and critics have tended to do, Britton identifies it as an ongoing tendency, one pole in an unresolved tension, of which the other is pure textual production. According to Britton, the drive to representation, which takes the form of a desire for the visible, marks all of Simon's works, even the later ones that the author claims are chiefly anti-representational. Britton's largely psychoanalytic, Lacanian study focuses consistently on Simon's desire for the visible, as well as on the textual processes through which that desire is manifested. Overall, the Lacanian approach serves Britton well in bringing Simon's writing into a new focus, although at times she seems to be belaboring the same issues and descriptive passages that have preoccupied other Simonian critics.

*Claude Simon: Writing the Visible* comprises seven chapters, each of which draws on examples from the entire corpus of Simon's works. Each chapter details the modalities, in different registers, of the workings of desire, representation, vision, and textuality; each elaborates the central thesis that neither representation nor textuality alone explains the complex workings of Simon's writing. Chapter I, "The Theoretical Context," shows how a belief in representation is connected with desire and fantasy, with representation allowing the reader to adopt the position of subject in a fantasy. Point of view and focalization are seen to play privileged roles in the process. Chapter II, "Vision and Textuality," explores the intricate relations among specularly, sexuality, and language. Language produces the visible as fantasy, and this visible constitutes what is sexually desirable, in a Lacanian process involving an endless repetition of specular acts. Thus Britton shows that in Simon's works women are desirable in their visibility whereas they are negative as speaking subjects. Chapter III, "The Mirror and the Letter: Modalities of the Subject," focuses first on mirror images: from a Lacanian perspective, Britton shows the constituting of the subject as mirage and as mirror image. Next she focuses on the constituting of the self through the Other, notably through father figures who are consistently linked to the written word. Chapter IV, "Words and Pictures," assesses the representational and anti-representational functions of pictures described and texts quoted in the text. She finds that both largely function anti-representationally, but not only through self-referentiality, as

claim. Chapter V, "The Unseen and the Unsaid," dwells on issues of repression and fetishism. In the first half of the chapter, a detailed analysis of curtains serves to illustrate the workings of Simon's unseen: curtains cover up the threatening female (mother's) body and assuage the narrator's anxiety of castration. In the second half of the chapter, language too is seen as a curtain, which functions to hide, defer, and eroticize meaning.

The last two chapters of the book deserve special mention because of the larger issues they raise. Chapter VI, "The Invisibility of History," assesses the pessimistic outlook that can be inferred from Simon's presentation of historical events and concepts. She explains his pessimism through recourse to the Lacanian Real: history is negative for Simon because, like the Real, it escapes the visible and resists meaning. Thus Simon tends to reject historical theories like Marxism in favor of geographical presentations of events. Chapter VII, "Fiction Word by Word," assesses the limitations and weaknesses of new-novel criticism itself, including Simon's descriptions of his work and Britton's own critical endeavor. Acknowledging that, by focusing on small descriptive passages, her approach has privileged the non-representational, since the illusion of reality arises in larger stretches of writing, she maintains that she has tried nevertheless to show the countervailing drive toward the representational in Simon's writing, which he himself has tended to deny, perhaps to sidestep the deep-seated obsessions which that drive reveals. In Chapter VII Britton also takes on the thorny issue of feminism, noting both the reactionary nature of Simon's ideas about women as well as their value for an understanding of how male sexuality is constructed.

D.A. Miller

*THE NOVEL AND THE POLICE*

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. Pp. xv + 222.

Reviewed by Glenda A. Hudson

One of the most noticeable things about D.A. Miller's exceptional book *The Novel and the Police* is the cover. The author, a Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley, stands with sinewy arms folded across his T-shirted chest against a background of corrugated iron. Miller's work is as unorthodox and sensational as his pose on the cover. The book presents a series of essays previously published between 1980 and 1986. The title is, as Miller himself confesses, misleading. The study focuses not so much on the police in fiction as "the ramification . . . of less visible, less visibly violent modes of 'social control'" (viii) operating or uncovered in the novels of Dickens, Trollope, and Wilkie Collins. Drawing on the philosophical criticism of Michel Foucault, Miller investigates the discreet disciplinary power of the nineteenth-century novel and fictional methods of public surveillance and incarceration. The result is an extraordinary and arresting series of essays.

Miller moves "the question of policing out of the streets, as it were, into the closet—I mean, into the private and domestic sphere on which the very identity