

politically): ". . . the more he talks and the more he attempts to impose meaning on what happened, the more he realizes that the facts are elusive" (Foreword). The characters and language have a life of their own; they rebel against their "creator" and escape his grip. As Ricardou so aptly put it, the modern, or postmodern novel, is not the writing of adventures but the adventures of writing.

Red White & Blue does, in spite of its "artiness," in fact because of it, yield a message as the two epigraphs to the book seem to suggest: it is not the American flag that is made fun of but a certain organization, the I.R.S., the three pillars of a certain American society: Religious intolerance, Research for profit, "Rehabilitated sexuality." Ben Stoltzfus does not preach against the "three R's", he merely lets the reader-player come to the conclusion that they are but constructs of a certain ideology which camouflages itself as "natural" and "moral." At the end of the book, these three pillars do not support anything anymore as the novel has self-destructed.

In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, writes Eco, the composition of a work of art was akin to the organization of an imperialistic or theocratic society; the laws that governed writing or reading were the same as the laws prescribed by an authoritarian government, guiding men towards certain aims and giving them the means to reach them. A nontotalitarian form of government provides the climate for a different form of art, multidirectional, collaborative, in constant recreation and reappraisal. Reciprocally, Ben Stoltzfus shows us in his novel, how this type of art can undermine any drift toward Fascism which, in the author's words, "always tries to justify itself in the name of law and order, God, and common sense."

Red White & Blue creates a "Calderian" (spatial, mobile) poetic and political world.

Dorothy Kelly

FICTIONAL GENDERS: ROLE AND REPRESENTATION IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH NARRATIVE

Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989. Pp. 216. \$25.00

Reviewed by Terence Dawson

Dorothy Kelly's study explores the problems raised by the ambivalence of gender in relation to institutions, rhetoric, and representation, as they manifest themselves in an unequal spread of realist, fantastic, and decadent texts. With an introductory chapter on Freud, Lacan, and Derrida, it is not surprising that the author describes her own critical stance as deconstructive *feminism*, the italicization of the substantive being designed to situate her study in the tradition not of American feminism, more concerned with establishing an authentic female discourse and identity, but of that aspect of French feminism which is more interested in theoretical considerations.

The first chapter sets out to establish that institutions heavily influence the definition of gender identity. Kelly argues that the class distinctions in Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le noir*, the familial divisions of power in *La Cousine Bette*

and the assignation of gender along economic lines in *Eugénie Grandet*, all relate to gender distinctions. The second chapter looks at certain metaphors and clichés of femininity in three other works by Balzac, *Le Lys dans la vallée*, "Une Passion dans le désert," and *Sarrasine*, and concludes that the rhetorical structures used to define femininity in these works have three prejudicial consequences for women: they divide them into pure mother and desiring beast; they divide a woman from herself by cutting off an aspect of her nature in a symbolic castration; and they separate women from men by emphasizing the difference between them. The third chapter looks at expressions of franker role reversals, and shows how the femiocentric *Madame Bovary* moves towards androgyny, whilst the more androcentric elements in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* and *L'Éducation sentimentale* return to a homogenous male mode. Next, Kelly examines *Monsieur Vénus*, and argues that Rachilde removes gender from the "real" world in order to situate it in language, and another work by Balzac, *Séraphita*, in which she concludes that realist texts define gender on the basis of sameness: woman is just like a man missing only one thing. The predictability of such conclusions belies the interest of the road by which she arrives at them.

Kelly's questions are all worth asking, and for this reason alone her study can be strongly recommended. Her arguments are not only provocative in themselves, but offer many original and valuable insights. I wish, however, she had related her interest in gender considerations more closely to an overall grasp of her texts or the period. Balzac, for example, is central to her argument, and yet his work is repeatedly shown to have been so conditioned by the codes of the society in which he lived that it can only illustrate the inevitable gulf which separated (and still separates?) men and women. Textual analysis leads only to theoretical gender distinctions. No attempt is made to tie together the various remarks about Balzac. Even more startling is the failure to make more of the section on Rachilde, the only woman novelist discussed, or to include works by other women writers. Nevertheless, this study, which is lucidly written, serves as an excellent general introduction to the problems posed by gender in nineteenth-century French fiction.

Joseph Hynes

THE ART OF THE REAL: MURIEL SPARK'S NOVELS

Rutherford N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988. Pp. 199

Reviewed by Maurice Legris

As Gabriel Josipovici once expressed it, reviewing Spark's *The Only Problem* in the *TLS*, "Muriel Spark's novels are a joy to read and a nightmare to talk about" (Sept. 7, 1984, 989). The critics who have devoted books to Spark are few, and they have trod gingerly, recognizing that, beneath the apparent simplicity of the stories she tells in her eighteen novels, her view of "Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven"—to quote the epigraph from *Memento Mori* (1959)—is enormously complex.

The first full-scale treatment was Peter Kemp's *Muriel Spark* (London: Elek, 1974), a fine analysis but now dated. Of the few other books which have