

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

appeared probably the soundest are Ruth Whittaker's *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark* (New York: St. Martin's, 1982), and Velma Bourgeois Richmond's *Muriel Spark* (New York: Ungar, 1985). Now, however, Joseph Hynes has not only given us the most perceptive treatment of Spark to date, but one of the most penetrating analyses of a contemporary novelist I have ever read.

As Hynes puts it at the outset, "a reader's job is to find out what kind of book an author writes (a task that I by no means underestimate), and then to enter into *that* kind of book" (15). Thus in his first chapter, devoted to Spark's second novel, *Robinson* (1958), Hynes tackles the problem which has probably given readers (and critics) of her books the greatest difficulty: the distinction between Spark's view of reality and the conventional view of realism. The principles he draws from this analysis he then applies, in the second chapter, to seven other novels, moving along a continuum from comedy to tragedy. The third chapter analyzes the tone and style of five additional novels, in order, as Hynes puts it, to "gain some insight into the ways in which Spark's textural qualities in general complement . . . broader structural traits" (97). The final chapter considers five novels from the point of view of Spark as creator, particularly with regard to her concern with both aesthetic and theistic problems.

Such a quick overview barely hints at the subtlety of analysis which Hynes brings to bear on Spark's seventeen novels (her latest, *A Far Cry from Kensington*, appeared too late for him to include). He is especially good in discussing Spark's view of reality, pointing out that "many readers like or dislike Spark's novels while missing what she means to do—and that the basis for confusion may well be her *seeming* to promise orthodox realism without delivering what we have come to expect of realistic writers" (17). And, in analyzing Spark's approach to the problem of free will, he observes that "God's knowing *how* we will choose to cooperate in achieving our own destiny is compatible with the genuineness of our freedom to choose. This basic tenet governs . . . all Spark books" (159).

For the enthralled but sometimes puzzled reader of Muriel Spark's novels Hynes has clarified the nature of the problems, problems which are perhaps all the more difficult to grasp because of the surface lucidity of the stories. But in clarifying much he has also resolved much; thus he helps us better to appreciate the unusual genius of Muriel Spark.

This is a fine book, beautifully written, with any number of precise distinctions supported by detailed readings of the novels. One would be hard pressed to find a sounder example of critical analysis.