DISCOURSE AND THE NOVEL FORM:

AUTHORIAL INTERLOCUTION IN THE LATER

WORKS OF CLAUDE SIMON

By

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ABSTRACT

DISCOURSE AND THE NOVEL FORM: AUTHORIAL INTERLOCUTION

IN THE LATER WORKS OF CLAUDE SIMON

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Discourse and the Novel Form elaborates a compre-
hensive strategy for detecting and describing the utterance
of the author within the textual fabric of Claude Simon's
novels. Operations and methodology are derived from areas
pertinent to literary criticism: linguistic and literary
pragmatics, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, phenomeno-
logy and narratology. Of significant importance is the im-
pact of traditional critical exegesis, undertaken in the
light of modern forms of analysis. The major finding is
that a form of intratextual authorship, defined as interlo-
cution, can be identified in the novel, and is crucial to
the reading of fictionality in Simon's narratives. Inter-
locution occurs as a specifically literary communication in
paradoxical counterpoint to the fictional component of the
narration. It provides a context in which narrative may be
recognised as mask.

The opening chapter examines the new novel's
polemical claim to the status of theoretical discourse,

with especial attention given to Simon's refutation of
realism and his reworking of the laws of verisimilitude.
A second chapter argues that a combination of fictionality
and literariness is peculiar to novelistic discourse.
The category of authorial interlocution is proposed to
describe the utterance which subtends the narrative voice.
The succeeding chapters treat four texts, in turn, _La
Bataille de Pharsale_, _Les Corps conducteurs_, _Triptyque_
and _Leçon de choses_, and portray the drama of inter-
locutions in its successive manifestation. They trace
the itinerary of the narration as it quests for a mono-
logic fictional environment proof against the iconoclastic
intrusion of authorial utterance.

The location of a level of authorial discourse which
deciphers the narration is especially helpful to an underst-
anding of Simon's later works, which defy the practice of
conventional modes of reading. His novels purport to
dramatise writing, narrated as an event. The story of
writing is shown to be co-extensive with the progressive
unfolding of an intertextual authorial condition, in which
each novel illustrates a developmental phase.

The anthropomorphic concerns of the author pervade
the logocentric design of the narrative and constitute a
symbiotic intelligence at work within the novel, decoding
the artifice of language into the shape of human ex-
perience.

For Harry and Joy

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INTRODUCTION

Claude Simon's public attitude to his work as a novelist has been characterised by a desire to frustrate the effects of realism in literary discourse. The concern is a persistent one, recurring in more or less nuanced form and with increasing frequency in recent interviews, talks and discussions. His opposition to the conventions of mimetic description was unequivocally expressed at the Cerisy colloquy of 1974, at which he admitted conceiving of Triptyque as a novel capable of resisting the platitudes of traditional interpretation: "J'avais le projet de faire un roman irréductible à tout schéma réaliste."[1] Triptyque would neither practice nor countenance a schematic reduction of novelistic representation to fit readerly expectations of a unified life-like world. The novel was designed to manifest particular independence from interpretation based upon psychological realism, from acts of complacently trite and misleading reference like that performed by a nameless critic on Simon's preceding novel, Les Corps conducteurs: "Un homme malade marche dans une rue et se souvient..."[2] The reading, while not indefensible, is at best speculative. It relies upon notions of the novel form unsupported and to some extent abandoned by the text: that

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narratorial consciousness proceeds from an identifiably
human source, and more precisely, a protagonist in the
work.

The stand adopted by Simon stems from a perception
that literary communication does not, as is commonly
held, necessarily emanate from nor profess a direct re-
lation to the human subject and his world. The novel is
first and foremost a linguistic event, and it is through
an attention to writing that the world of representation
can best relieve itself of its customary bond with external
reality. When seeking liberation from the strictures of
time, place and character, from unity of theme, situation
and psychological determinism, Simon anchors his polemical
stance in the advocacy of an intentional theory of lan-
guage. Meaning is not merely conveyed by a system of lin-
guistic signs, it first originates and resides within the
medium of the semiotic structure. In the discussion quoted
above, Simon continues by elaborating upon an observation
of Michel Deguy's, to demonstrate how internal association
between words and images is capable of generating
character, situation and anecdote:

> (...) ces correspondances, ou si vous préférez
> ces échos, ces interférences, ces courts-
> circuits, ces "convocations" (plus "crédibles"
> que des rapports découlant de quelque théorie
> ou système psychologique ou sociologique, tou-
> jours discutable) que permettent (et même
> suggèrent) ce que l'on appelle les "figures"
> par lesquelles, comme l'a dit Michel Deguy,
> "la langue parle avant nous" ("figures" qui sont,
> selon Littré, les métaphores, les tropes, les
> associations, les oppositions, etc: le lapin

> écorché et la femme nue sur le lit sont
> tous deux décrits, à quelques pages d'intervalle,
> en termes exactement semblables et en jouant sur
> le fait que l'on dit d'une personne nerveuse ou
> angoissée qu'elle a une sensibilité d'écorché).[3]

Simon reminds his audience that force is lent to such devices by the irreconcilable intertwining of the three major story lines of Triptyque, where each episode is contained within the others, but only as a text of some description, a film, a painting, a postcard, a poster. The real world, placed at a remove from the events of the novel, is usurped in its generative function. The workings of the written word supplant the motivational dynamics of the plot.

To hold a position so completely at odds with tradition incurs of necessity a more sceptical critical attention than might be the lot of a usual or conformist theoretical perspective. The new novel has been associated with acts of critical terrorism from its inception; a situation acknowledged by its practitioners in articles such as "Terrorisme, théorie". It might reasonably be argued that while Simon's narrative technique has undergone radical transformation his novelistic concerns have remained comfortably autobiographical. Doubt may be cast on the seriousness of the new novelists' critical positions, based on a futuristic comment by Robbe-Grillet in an interview published in Sub-Stance in 1976:

> Now they are talking about a new criticism
> which will be fictitious, which will have
> elements of fiction just as literature has ele-

ments of criticism. But for the moment, the se-
paration exists since the critic, like the pro-
fessor, must produce a discourse on literature.4

The intrusion of fiction into theory is, as Robbe-
Grillet remarks, hindered by the relationship between
criticism and literature. In the case of Claude Simon,
who abandoned unmediated autobiography after his first
novel, La Corde raide, his literary technique has served
to purify and filter out realism from the autobiographical
account. The manner in which Simon presents his thematic
material becomes progressively more obscure, as the mask
of language assumes responsibility for the prose. The
final frustrating incompleteness of the mask itself in
Simon's novels is suggestive of a fiction, where disbelief
is suspended, not banished. The principle of linguistic
generativity which appears in critical theory of the new
novel derives its justification from the praxis of the no-
vel. In this way the close and privileged relationship of
criticism to the new novel permits elements of the novel-
istic fiction to pass unnoticed into the critical account.

The present introduction will proceed to enlarge upon
the above hypothesis in order to sketch out a theoretical
position which will serve to give direction to the forth-
coming study of the relationship between fiction and narra-
tive in the works of Simon.

The statement by Michel Deguy that language is ante-
rior to human utterance serves in the context of Simon's
elaboration to insulate the novel against a traditional

misreading. The textual fabric represents the world in a particular speculum, one shielding the reader from the fixational petrifaction of gorgon realism. Removal of the need for certain time-honored novelistic ingredients, as Frank Kermode remarks of Robbe-Grillet and the new novel in general, provides the reader with a new challenge, by depriving him of his customary habits:

> (...) it is the old ones who talk about the need for plot, character, and so forth, who have the theories. And without them one can achieve a new realism, and a narrative in which "le temps se trouve coupé de la temporalité. Il ne coule plus." And so we have a novel in which the reader will find none of the gratification to be had from sham temporality, sham causality, falsely certain description, clear story. The new novel "repeats itself, bisects itself, modifies itself, contradicts itself, without even accumulating enough bulk to constitute a past - and thus a "story", in the traditional sense of the word." The reader is not offered easy satisfactions, but a challenge to creative cooperation.5

To circumscribe the role of the new reader entails at least some recognition of the distinction to be maintained between innovation and convention. Incorporated into the literary text at a given level, such a distinction may at once serve and disserve the very opposition it sets up, as Kermode remarks of <u>Dans le Labyrinthe</u>:

> It is a question how far these books could make their effect if we were genuinely, as Robbe-Grillet thinks we should be, indifferent to all conventional expectations. In some sense they must be there to be defeated.6

What a first would seem to mitigate the splendid isolation of the new novel, in fact contributes to its

effective dramatisation of the defeat of realism. It is
not surprising that Simon's work also contains realistic
elements "there to be defeated", and that, for this reason,
he experiences such difficulty in obviating a realist
reading of his novels. The defeat is also an affirmation
of realism as an opponent necessary to struggle.

The case of Robbe-Grillet's Dans le Labyrinthe pre-
sents features analogous with Simon's Les Corps conduct-
eurs, which can be read as the journal of a sick, at times,
delirious, man. The persistence of realism is more complex
and subterranean in other, less forced dimensions of
Simon's work. The distinction between new and traditional
forms does not obligatorily take the shape of a polarised
opposition. The world explored in Simon's novels may be
regarded as uncharted territory, that which is missing from
the map of familiar novelistic features. In this regard
the topology of the new novel assumes a recognisable form,
that of utopia, and may be explored as such; an imaginary
or fictional perception and construct that ultimately ex-
poses itself, if not in the explicitly sardonic fashion
of the self-evident utopia, such as Zamiatin's We or
Huxley's Brave New World, then at least in an implicit dis-
qualification of itself as a viable form, a nowhere as
opposed to an Erewhon.

Born of organising properties manifested by the word
in relation to its symbolic environment, the reflective
surface of discourse provides a shield for the reader,

segregating him from the real world by interposing the image of language in progress. Reality is reputedly neutralised by this tactic, in which the text turns in upon itself in auto-reflexive fashion to preserve itself intact and autonomous.

The self-sufficiency of such self-reflective appraisal shares with utopist thought a penchant for the narcissistic and the complacently totalitarian, yet Simon's novels have attracted critical attention largely through their very dramatisation of the linguistic condition of man. Readers of Simon have been fascinated by his depiction of onomastic play and have tended to tag his work with inverted propositions of the kind, "l'écriture d'une aventure devient aventure d'une écriture."[7] The act of writing does, of course, frequently intrude upon narration of a story in literature, but in Simon's texts the roles are taken to be completely reversed. For, if the representation of man is preceded and subtended by the linguistic account, then any description of his behaviour can be no more than a superficially directed analysis of language.

The temptation to anthropomorphise, to locate an unwell interlocutor in Les Corps conducteurs, generally takes place in a vacuum; the critical operation involved takes no heed of the prevailing climate of theoretical opinion on the text at hand.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the later works of Claude Simon, those which most irretrievably

deflect the convention of novelistic realism, from a perspective which neither endorses nor resists Simon's conception of the novel, but which seeks to locate and describe in context the utopia of language. The context will be that of the human subject, expressed through the structure of desire which motivates narrative.

Peter Brooks, in his article "Freud's Masterplot" highlights the necessary relation of metonymy to narrative, in addition to the role of metaphor. For the new novel metaphor operates as narrative, rather than the reverse, which constitutes Brooks' more traditional perspective. It may be deduced from Brooks' argument that the totalizing effect of metaphor narrativising itself is not independent from metonymy qua desire.

> Narrative operates as metaphor in its affirmation
> of resemblance, in that it brings into relation
> different actions, combines them through per-
> ceived similarities (Todorov's common predicate
> term) appropriates them to a common plot, which
> implies the rejection of merely contingent (or
> unassimilable) incident or action. The plotting
> of meaning cannot do without metaphor, for mean-
> ing in plot is the structure of action in closed
> and legible wholes. Metaphor is in this sense
> totalizing. Yet it is equally apparent that the
> key figure of narrative must in some sense be not
> metaphor but metonymy: the figure of contiguity
> and combination, the figure of syntagmatic rela-
> tions. The description of narrative needs
> metonymy as the figure of movement, of linkage in
> the signifying chain, of the slippage of the
> signified under the signifier. That Jacques
> Lacan has equated metonymy and desire is of the
> utmost pertinence since desire must be considered
> the very motor of narrative, its dynamic prin-
> ciple.8

The logomorphic condition of Simon's narrators

dramatises the satiation and transformation of anthropo-
centric desire into a free and open economy of metaphoric
interplay and exchange. But if Simon's novels borrow from
the ateleological desire of schizophrenic discourse, they
do so within narrowly circumscribed bounds. The canons of
realism define the horizons of Simon's art, they represent
the forbidden zone of genetic structure, one, in Jean
Piaget's description, closed under transformation. Realism
delimits a boundary not to be transgressed, under pain of
entering a world of stories and plots, beginnings and end-
ings. But utopia too, must be entered and left, and it is
in the moment of change that a dialectic between real and
ideal forms is established, that the human subject merges
with the pronoun shifter "I". Schizophrenic desire is re-
gionalised as an aspect, an extension of normal desire to
an ultimate absolute condition, where motivation and grati-
fication coincide, where dialogue becomes monologue and
utopia occurs.

For those fortunate few who inhabit the realms of an
Eldorado, the fall from grace implies the intrusion of
deferral into the principle of instantaneous gratification
characteristic of bliss. The imposition of limits on the
domain of perfection, topographical or other, has this
function. It serves to fuel the desire for elsewhere, for
the other, since these limits may not be exceeded. They
symbolise the force of interdiction, which desire must con-
front and so itself be thwarted. The very aspect of the

unwelcome limit is foreign to the notion of utopia, but intrinsic to its formulation.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam is free to partake of the apple and transgress the commandment of his God, although he would have no access to his freedom, were it not for the presence of the tree of knowledge as a perimeter of negation. His fall in literary terms operates on one level as a rhetorical convenience introduced to permit focus on his subsequent fate. Conversely the modern novel desires to dissociate itself from the macula of its tainted past in order to return to a state of linguistic immaculation. Distanciation is conveniently achieved by the recreation of a boundary enclosing a latterday linguistic garden. But similar conditions for temptation apply as for the original garden eastward in Eden; here realism provides a horizon of interdiction; hence the archetypal transgression of Les Corps conducteurs in assuming a psychological consistency.

Further analogy with Adam and his God yields a structure of anomaly in Simon's works which profits his novelistic goal. By eating fruit from the tree of knowledge Adam risks death. The ambivalence of his projected demise might be likened to the divergent etymological meanings of the Latin transpassare, which becomes to trespass in English, but trépasser in French. Adam does not encounter mortality directly, but as a result of his topographically precise passing over. His trespass against the law of his God

entails expulsion from the garden. Access to knowledge
bars him from life. He cannot return to the site of the
tree to life, but for reasons beyond the cherubim and the
flaming sword. These manifestations are no more than sym-
bolic demarcations of the frontier between experience gain-
ed and innocence lost.

The logic of Adam's position is thus far impeccably
framed. The cautionary tale of Adam and Eve introduces
a third interlocutor disruptive of the symmetry attained.
God has the function of a horizon, and so partakes freely
of both innocence and experience. God makes this synthesis
explicit upon Adam's confession; Adam has not now been ex-
cluded from the class of the first person plural, but has
been included:

> "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is
> become as one of us, to know good and evil."9

God is not bound by his own instructions to Adam, but
obeys a different logic, that of the dihedral limit, in
which trespass, stripped of its moral sense of mortal trans-
gression, is topographically inherent as bidirectional
transit. Inclusion is the operative principle of God's
mobility. In passing over, God subtly alters the nature of
limits, calling their definition into question.

Simon treats the question of circumscription in two
distinct manners, imaginatively and polemically, and is not
averse to the inconsistency so implied. On the one hand
limits are redefined in a novel and provocative manner,

on the other they are held to be abolished.

Adam's situation is clearly less complex than that of his God, and it is in the implicit comparison between the two that within the biblical account not only must God appear ineffable, but Adam naive, his expulsion expedient; it is one possible solution to the latter's condition, and does not apply to all of the class "us". Simon is concerned less with the condition of Adam than that of his maker. Simon's ready rejection of realism serves to focus his attention upon rendering effable a new interpretation of limits.

Simon's most recent work to date, Leçon de choses contains a section entitled "Courts Circuits" which dramatises the facticity of hermetic systems of knowledge. The short circuitry of the novel explodes the reader's compartmentalised intelligence of the novel's workings by the introduction ex post facto of a separate order of intelligibility to the events narrated. The text becomes a common ground for multiple categories of explication and a model for inclusive epistemological inquiry.

The multivalence of discourse proposed by Leçon de choses is founded upon the topography of transit. The passage between incompatible systems, from there to here, discloses moreover, the hermeneutic potential thus trans-ported. A topology of knowledge formalised by Michel Serres in L'Interférence attributes to the graph of l'ici-ailleurs[10] the shape of science itself, and founds

epistemology upon the proliferation of connective tissue.

> Mobile sur un graphe qui est un réseau de transports, l'épistémologue considère ce graphe comme la science même, et ce transport comme son mouvement. Or, pour le savant même, la mobilité devient secret de la découverte. Si le progrès des sciences est multiplicatif, de complication et d'application (au sens de mise en correspondance), l'ars inveniendi perd son mystère – et le génie son aura de sacralisation – pour devenir ars interveniendi: multiplication des interférences, et instauration de courts-circuits. Inventer, ce n'est point produire, c'est traduire.11

Simon's preoccupation with short circuitry furnishes an exciting project for the rereading of his novels, in which one circuit, that of linguistic autonomy, remains mysteriously intact throughout. The very integrity of the system invites reappraisal of its overweening pretensions.

In light of the insight that interdiction encourages serpentine transgression, it is not surprising to note that Simon has in certain of his polemical pronouncements sought to generalise his quarrel with realism into a thoroughgoing rejection of the psyche in favour of a monistic theory of language; a defensive attitude reflected in his narrators' concerns. The effect of such a strategy is especially impressive in a fictional landscape, and it is here that Simon achieves its most uncompromising articulation. In a resolutely materialistic environment, the limits imposed by a duality of matter with mind are rendered obsolete; transparent from within, they become

expendable. In the latterday paradise of the text, where
the narrative voice is protagonist, Adam's attention has
been displaced away from God: the narrator remains ignorant
of the authorial interlocutor's caveat emptor. Where no
other forms of knowledge are available, Edenic fiction
accedes to truth and the attendant impression of a deus
absconditus and missing paraphernalia, tree and serpent,
subsides.

With the passing of knowledge disappears its first
manifestation, self-knowledge. The narrator, triumphantly
naked, dispenses with the veil of verisimilitude and
parades, immortal, as a linguistic shifter englobed in a
transformational-generative grammar of narrative. The
human condition, otiose, translates into the properly in-
effable.

The fashionable popularity which has greeted Simon's
transparently and sometimes playfully manipulative ploy
demands corrective vision, if his novels are to be appre-
ciated in their full behavioural complexity and not succumb
to the charge of being period pieces.

In the Eden of Simon's novels the sole intimation of
mortality lies with the indwelling creator, who alone is
effabilis. Thanks to recent research into narratology,
it has become feasible to label an internal authorial
figure, half man, half work, a voice emanating from the
shadowy recesses of the textual corpse. The character of
this recorded communication is habitually described in

partisan manner. The Ricardolian school employs the term scriptor, thereby privileging the recording apparatus' mechanical aspect. Wayne Booth prefers the term implied author, thereby neglecting the functioning of the machine. John Hillis Miller has most sensitively described the phenomenon as an indwelling immanence, but this means little in terms of a practical application of the concept.

Without entering into the full implications of an as yet tentative narratological formulation, a crude analogy with man's use of machinery is apposite. The tool, in any Heideggerian analysis, is characterised by the use to which it is put. The user may in turn be described in terms of a purposive behaviour. The novel is a complex tool, incorporating principles of self-portrayal and illusion; it may be considered deliberately redundant and inappropriate to its stated task. The user is hereby enabled to depict and perform tasks other than that ostensibly executed. In this further activity the user describes himself accurately. His description is conditioned by the relation of the general design of the tool to the specific task at hand. The novel, imprinted with a particular occasion of usage, contains a formal and thematic record of intentional behaviour beyond that overtly stated.

The above analogy is largely satisfactory as a proposition to form a point of departure for theoretical debate on the nature of fictionality and literariness. Subsequent discussion will focus upon Simon's novels with a view to

isolating and individualising the voice of an authorial interlocutor.

The task of inventing (_inventer_) an interlocutor displaced to the realm of the forbidden, that which lies beyond the fiction of linguistic autonomy, may be carried out by a calling forth, a translation (_traduire_) of the interlocutor, not to the Edenic domain of the bidden, but to the dialogic mode of bidding, as a voice which forms a horizon of otherness. The interlocutor cannot be produced, (_produire_) or denoted as part of the fiction, for he is to that fiction as God to Adam. In setting a limit to Adam's activity God must ironically reveal knowledge of otherness, for it is the nature of the limit to show what lies beyond the bounds of the looking glass. For this reason the tree of knowledge is identified from the first as present in the garden, yet the tree of life is identified only when Adam exits the garden. The interlocutor, godlike, does not share in his narrator's bliss, but forms a dialogic environing against which the narrator stands forth, his fiction contextualised and thereby unveiled.

A calling forth of the interlocutor presents special problems in Simon's novels, which are characterised by a discoherent thematic material in which anecdotal content is related in episodic form. A set of different storylines are interwoven and presented serially to form a progression of seemingly unrelated vignettes. Cohesion appears to derive from linguistic interplay rather than purposive

development; indeed the individual event is frequently irreducible to a single narrative frame, but is appropriated in turn by different storylines. In the midst of the confusion, the text is liberally besprinkled with a perfusion of overdetermined signifying material, which directs in arbitrary Rousselian onomasia the itinerary of the narration.

The lack of differentiation in the presentation of thematic material draws attention to the specificity of the text as a minimalist design. Simon has claimed to have written certain texts in accordance with colour coded models. The concision to which the novel is constrained by the self-limiting key of a thematic spectrum has tended to displace interest away from the progression of events within a given storyline toward the myriad varieties of linguistic intersection assuming responsibility for the story. Concern for the temporal and causal logic of narrative sequence has all but been eclipsed.

The colour coordination undertaken by Simon is insensitive to many aspects of the literary text. Closure is viewed as aesthetic, polydirectional completion of a pictural mosaic of themes, irrespective of the different treatments a single theme may receive in the course of its trajectory. Affective coloration is eschewed in favour of protective colouring. The interplay of images of birth and death forms a significant component of Simon's novelistic technique, but remains subdued, at variance with the

novel's professed pictorial concerns.

An appreciation of the logic of connotation may help to contextualise and make intelligible postlapsarian man's refusal to confront death. The voice of the authorial interlocutor is audible <u>en sourdine</u> as a manner of depicting the narrator's adherence to the tired but time-honoured <u>topos</u> of <u>exegi monumentum</u>. A compulsive identification with material displacement in language and an insistence upon mechanical linguistic cloning of robotic human behaviour reveal themselves to be symptoms of overwhelming death anxiety. Investigation of those histrionic areas of discourse which dramatise the narrator's condition will serve to characterise the voice of an authorial interlocutor preferring aphasia at the Edenic level of fiction.

NOTES

[1] Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie, Proc. of the Colloque de Cerisy, 1-8 Jul. 1974 (Paris: U.G.E., 10/18 1975), p. 424.

[2] Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie, p. 424.

[3] Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie, p. 425.

[4] Interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet by Katherine Passias, "New Novel, New New Novel" Sub-Stance, no. 13 (1976), p. 135.

[5] Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending (1966; rpt. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 19.

[6] Kermode, p. 20.

[7] Françoise van Rossum-Guyon, "Le Nouveau Roman comme critique du roman," in Problèmes généraux, Vol. I of Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui, Proc. of a Colloque de Cerisy, 20-30 Jul. 1971 (Paris: U.G.E., 10/18, 1972), p.229.

[8] Peter Brooks, "Freud's Masterplot," Yale French Studies, 55/6 (1977), 280-1.

[9] The Holy Bible (Authorised Version), Genesis III, 22.

[10] Michel Serres, L'Interférence (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972), p. 16.

[11] Serres, p. 65.

CHAPTER I

THE STATUS OF THE NOVEL QUA THEORY

The claims made for the novel both by the new novelists
and their critical adherents have not gained the widespread
attention that the resourcefulness and ingenuity of their
arguments deserve. For reasons of fashion and taste perhaps
rather than of judgement the sizeable body of literature
dedicated to the new novel has been more discarded than
refuted. The interaction of the novel with theory was a
postulation as revolutionary as it was ephemeral. Dismissed
after only cursory scrutiny as a form of radical chic, which
it undoubtedly was in part, the notion of a theoretical
novel combined extreme positions with incisive commentary
and insight into the novel form. The complex interaction of
novelistic theory and practice is not to be lightly set
aside in the present endeavour to return to a more tradi-
tional reading of Simon's works. The novel's status qua
theory demands painstaking examination if it is to be
shifted from a systemic to a thematic condition of the text,
for it calls into question many of the unspoken conventions
upon which rest the reader's assumptions as to the defini-
tion of the novel form.

Claude Simon explains his attempt to institute an irreducible plurality of meaning in Triptyque in terms of his desire to attest the literal incommunicability of human experience through language. Simon leads his reader to believe that the novel does not impart or yield a message to a receiver. Reading is the diversion afforded by an appreciation of abstract linguistic interplay within the space of the text. The absence of an addressee liberates the writer from his sense of purposeful communication and the linguistic medium from its vehicular function of address.

Unquestioning acceptance of Simon's point of view is made difficult by the absence of any means of the reader's disposal to appreciate art in this form. Simon employs realistic discourse in his theoretical explanations at a moment when he is rejecting tout schéma réaliste as a less than credible novelistic illusion. If the novel is to be considered only as a statement by language about itself, then theory becomes indistinguishable from art. Simon's considerations are themselves compromised by the fact of their utterance, for, according to his position, the ineffability of language as a closed intransitive system cannot be reduced to the illusory mode of intellection practised by reader and author in communication.

The identification of the novel as a type of theory is the bastion of modern criticism and also its Achilles' heel. The popular refutation of realism as a literary convention

seeks its justification in the postulate of an interchange-
ability of art and research, yet the intelligibility of
textual exegesis depends upon a generic distinction. The
implicit assumption that all art is theory but not all
theory is art is untenable because Simon's critical per-
spective insists that language is unmediated by the inten-
tionality of human utterance.

The crisis of realism depicted in the New Novel may
more profitably be viewed as a narrative strategy destined
to reassert the novel's capacity for fascination with the
exploration of the unfamiliar. The self-imposed task of
Simon has been the disruption of a firmly entrenched com-
placency in reading habits occasioned by the atrophy of
realism as a tradition of the novel. The willing suspen-
sion of disbelief indicated by Coleridge has been eclipsed
by reading practices which take as their rationale a
corollary belief in the direct equivalence of art and life.

Simon's more extreme articulations are to be understood
in the climate of terrorism which characterises contemporary
debate on the new novel. His implementation of these
claims, when examined from an historical perspective,
reveals a novelistic practice which has explored rather than
escaped the boundaries of verisimilitude. Unlike his theo-
retical statements, Simon's work as a novelist encourages
new habits of reading and investigates original avenues for
realistic portrayal of the human condition.

The opinion that spontaneous acts of language precede
and are more credible than the mind's power of representa-
tion was voiced by Simon at Cerisy. It is a statement des-
tructive of the categories by which a novel customarily
simulates reality. In its negative aspect the observation
is a terrorist act; it generates a nihilistic ideology in
which humanistic psychology has no part. The narrator and
his characters serve to expose the chimera of sentience pro-
duced by language. The authorial interlocutor is to be in-
ferred as a concept superseded by the linguistic sign. He
represents no more than the capacity of the signifier to
produce apparently meaningful images as it pursues a random
itinerary. Simon's most recent novels situate themselves
within the fabric of language and attempt to chart the ad-
ventures of a subject without purpose or identity. The
writer's sole task is represented as that of an automaton
who performs the act of inscription. His libidinal pre-
sence is neutralised by the arbitrary logic which governs
the relationship between language and the natural world. As
an autoreflexive form the text maintains an insular logic of
word association and transformation.

Robbe-Grillet,pursuing a similar argument during the
Cerisy colloquy on his own work in 1975, modified this posi-
tion by the admission of a level of affectivity in his
writing. The text represents an effort to neutralise
authorial intentionality by exposing it as the gratuitous

result of the autarchic signifying activity of language.
In an ambivalent statement not unworthy of that which con-
veys Valmont's attitude to love, "il faut avant tout, le
combattre et l'approfondir,"[1] Robbe-Grillet expresses a
concern to attack and subdue his libidinal, affective pre-
occupations precisely by selecting them as the novel's
apparent themes, which language will expose as the random
phantasms of unrelated series of signs:

> Au contraire, le matériau auquel il faut
> s'attaquer le plus est celui qui sera le moins
> neutre. Bien entendu, je renonce quand même à
> l'idée de mon individualité intérieure et je
> reconnais, dans mes fantasmes, ceux de toute une
> société. Néanmoins, dans la grande banque des
> fantasmes de la société, j'ai choisi avec une
> obstination assez remarquable un certain nombre
> de thèmes, qui ne sont pas du tout statistique-
> ment communs à tout le monde, mais au contraire
> ceux qui constituent, dans une certaine mesure
> ce qu'on pourrait appeler moi. Et c'est à cela
> que le processus de neutralisation a été
> appliqué.[2]

One may suspect that Robbe-Grillet's decision to pre-
serve his affectivity by attacking it, "présent à l'intér-
ieur même de la sérialité qui le travaille,"[3] rather than
suppressing it,"[4] évacuer l'affect pour commencer," is not
simply a tactical manoeuvre, but is fundamental to his de-
sire to write novels and persists for this reason in his
writing. As François Jost astutely remarks, the neutralisa-
tion of the libido implies at some level the articulation
of the affective dimension which is being nullified: "il
s'agit toujours d'une affectivité <u>neutralisée</u>, mais quand
même d'une affectivité."[5]

The position adopted by Simon and Robbe-Grillet allows for no distinction between discourse in general and the novel form in particular. However, the novel appears to Jost to provide an experience of individual libidinal preoccupations foreign to scientific expression. The neutrality of language is invaded by a principle of self-portrayal by virtue of the very existence of a neutralising process. The language of Simon's novels cannot be neutral if it requires neutralisation, for the act of castration is dramatic in character; it points out what is missing.

All of literature is a mask, according to Roland Barthes' formulation: "Toute la littérature peut dire: Larvatus prodeo, je m'avance en désignant mon masque du doigt."[6] The generalisation that the mask provides a universal discursive form may be qualified by the observation that the mask performs a variety of functions. The mask indicated by a historical document is a form of linguistic transparency which permits apprehension of a world of objects or facts. The novel form is composed of a narrative characterised by opacity. At some point novelistic discourse is expected to manifest its own fictional content in the shape of a falsification, an independence from the real external world.

The distinction between the theory of criticism and the art of the novel reflects a dichotomy of purpose in the principle of mask. The plausible lucidity of Simon's

commentary on his work contrasts with the impenetrable con-
fusion which envelops his novelistic world. Literature may
focus attention upon itself as mask in opposite ways. A
reconciliation of the polarity is imperative for the vindi-
cation of the new novel as theory. Revelation of the con-
ditions of production of linguistic discourse must be seen
to remain a consistent procedure, undifferentiated by the
circumstances of individual communication.

The interrelationship between the theoretical articu-
lation of literary criticism and the practice of novelistic
composition has understandably become a subject of concern
for critics and practitioners of the new novel alike. A
concerted attempt has been made to undermine generic dis-
tinctions in literature in order to obviate the objection
that a novel cannot provide a sustained theory of language
and that criticism cannot participate in the novel's special
power of illusion. A synopsis of this endeavour is helpful
in the task of locating the problems which confront a reader
concerned to understand Simon's later works as novels.

Literary criticism has become a self-conscious activity
which aspires to make textual exegesis contingent upon ana-
lysis of the critical method selected to perform a given
reading. In the introduction to her recent study on André
Gide, Martine Maisani-Léonard quotes from Henri Meschonnic,
Pour la poétique, to illustrate that the close reading of
a literary work entails a constant attention to the text,

and also requires a sensitivity to the nature of the res-
ponse elicited from the reader or solicited by him from the
work: "On ne peut séparer l'étude d'un objet de l'étude
de la méthodologie à la découverte de cet objet."[7] Maisani-
Léonard identifies two fields of inquiry open to the literary
critic; that which is provided by the specialists in the
works of a particular author and that supplied by a growing
body of literature on the nature of critical discourse:

> Il est devenu "dangereux" de s'aventurer dans
> une étude critique, dans la mesure où elle devra
> s'adresser non seulement aux spécialistes d'un
> auteur donné, mais aussi à des critiques à la
> recherche d'une méthode d'analyse.[8]

The dangers attendant upon a venture into literary
criticism stem from the burgeoning corpus of research into
readerly response. The apparent peril of a desertion of the
literary text in favour of a solipsistic science of reading
has been anticipated by critics of the new novel. Prevalent
amongst leading exponents is the vision of a Janus-faced
text in which the actualisation of novelistic practice and
the pure hypothesis of critical theory are indissolubly
linked as the coextensive surfaces of a dihedron or inter-
face.

The article "Terrorisme, Théorie" contributed by Jean
Ricardou to the Cerisy colloquy on the French new novelist
Alain Robbe-Grillet takes as its first prefatory epigraph
a model for the interaction of theory and practice proposed
by Novalis in his Grand répertoire: "La semi-théorie

éloigne de la pratique; la théorie complète y ramène."[9]

The corollary to this statement, that practice may achieve
the status of theory, has also become popular. The French
new novel has engaged in a response to new critical direc-
tions, and has sought to manifest iconoclastic techniques
in its confrontation with theoretical debate. Renato
Barilli refers to a dialectical process in the collision
of creative and analytical forces, which he christens with
the term culturological:

> Mais il serait plus juste de le (mon type de
> lecture) définir culturologique, parce que dans
> ce cas le point de vue sous lequel on se place
> est celui d'une unité plus large et indivise,
> celle de la culture, à la formation de laquelle
> concourent conjointement tous les types d'acti-
> vité, pratique et théorique, sans que l'on
> accorde un privilège substantiel à l'un d'entre.[10]

The new novelists have incorporated the ongoing dialogue
between theory and practice into their work by isolating
the novel proper from its novelistic components. Sollers
claims that the novel must divest itself of identifiable
features: "Le roman doit brûler et consumer toutes traces
du roman ou se résigner à n'être qu'un roman."[11] Gerald
Prince has distinguished Sollers, work from that of other
new novelists by reversing the categories of form and prac-
tice for the latter group. Whereas the new novel, that of
Sollers, offers "le roman sans romanesque,"[12] the new new
novel would provide "le romanesque sans roman."[13] The
novelistic elements combine to form the plot, a disconnected
tissue of events which do not emerge as a coherent story

line. The subnarratives of <u>Triptyque</u>, three mutually in-
compatible stories, resist synthesis in the frame of a
ternary structure. Each fragment attests the logical im-
possibility of the other two and is itself irretrievably
disseminated throughout the three panels of the triptych.

The new novel dramatises the randomly distributive
nature of language in order to constitute itself as theory.
As a fiction about discourse the novel promotes itself to
the status of a commentary upon the linguistic signifier
as an agent subversive of narrative cohesion. The novel
appears in the guise of a discourse about fiction. The
tidiness of the exchange is essential to the act of trans-
vestism. A hallucinatory clarity englobes and obscures the
misrepresentation of the novel as theory to the point where
novelist and critic alike anthropomorphise language:

> En s'affirmant comme aventure d'une écriture
> au lieu de l'écriture d'une aventure (...)
> le Nouveau Roman (...) se constitue en théorie
> du roman puisqu'il met à nu sa condition de
> possibilité selon laquelle c'est la narration
> qui institue la fiction et non l'inverse.[14]

The claims made respectively for Simon and Robbe-Gillet
are extreme, even terrorist, in part because of the radical
nature of their enterprise. Both are trying to redress the
balance of tradition by obliging the reader to remain in a
state of suspended disbelief towards a story at a time when
verisimilitude has frequently become, as Jean Ricardou sug-
gests, a belief, sometimes preposterous, in the interpene-
tration of art and life: "Je pourrais mentionner de mon

côté l'avis d'un lecteur m'assurant: <u>L'observatoire de</u>
<u>Cannes</u>, mais c'est exactement mes vacances à Cannes!"[15]
This putative reader, unaware that his own holidays in
Cannes may be no more to him than a representation afforded
by memory, is resolutely determined to confuse the illusion
of reference afforded by the novel with the object of re-
ference, the reality of Cannes itself.   This phenomenon is,
according to Ricardou, so pervasive as to be all but uni-
versal:

> ...mais je songe à tous les gens qui pensent
> à propos de tel roman: moi, à la place de tel
> personnage, j'aurais fait autre chose.   Qui ne
> l'a pensé, à part vous?   Eh bien ces gens font
> en quelque sorte passer un personnage du domaine
> du signifié à celui du référent.   Ils substituent
> à un être signifié un être quotidien en chair
> et en os qui pourrait leur servir de référent.[16]

The Saussurean distinction made by Ricardou between
the signified and the referent is unsatisfactory in that it
makes no allowance for the status of the latter within the
reader's consciousness.   Admission of the object of refer-
ence to the realm of intelligibility constitutes an anomaly
within the binary system of the sign as signifier/signified.
The uncertainty which Ricardou manifests in his remarks on
the transition between signified and referent are due to the
inability of semiotics to explain the relationship, which
exists, "en quelque sorte" between the referent and the sig-
nified.   The domain to which the explanation properly belongs
is that of phenomenology, which deals with the relationship
of concepts to things.   While the dubious compatibility of

semiotics and phenomenology remains in contention, the
latter certainly supplies a plausible model for the illus-
tration of Ricardou's precept.

Consciousness, according to Husserl in the _Méditations_
cartésiennes, is dependent upon the constitution of the
object as _cogitatum_ or intentional object in the perceiving
consciousness. The object of reference is never actually
present, but is transformed by the veil of the mind into
recognisable or idealised shape: "Le mot _intentionnalité_
ne signifie rien d'autre que cette particularité foncière
et générale qu'a la conscience d'être conscience _de_ quelque
chose, de porter, en sa qualité de _cogito_, son _cogitatum_
en elle-même."[17] In a semiotic system, perception of the
referent may be designated more accurately as the creation
of a signified in the subject's consciousness by an inten-
tional inference of the referent as a signifier. The struc-
ture of the sign remains intact at this spontaneous level,
described by Husserl as _réflexion naturelle_, and serves as
a base upon which further sign systems may be imposed. At
a secondary level the subject engages upon the activity of
reflection as opposed to perception. This process, one of
réflexion transcendentale according to Husserl, reduplicates
the act of perception, but infers its signifier not from the
referent but from the signified already present within the
reflective consciousness: "d'autre part, les _réflexions_
(actes réflexifs) qui nous révèlent ces actes spontanés et

qui sont elles-mêmes des actes perceptifs (erfassend) d'un
ordre nouveau."[18]

The phenomenon described by Ricardou as a substitution
of the referent for the signified can be determined as a
short circuit in the mind's eye of the reader. The latter
imposes a description of Cannes upon his memory of Cannes.
The exchange is more complex than at first appears, both
images are transcendental signifieds: the novel purveys
for the reader a primary or natural representation upon
which a particular reading is predicated, forming a second-
ary or transcendental representation; the memory of Cannes
is likewise superimposed upon the original impression. Both
the reading and the memory, enjoying a similar status, can
fuse to form a single image. Foucault's discussion of Don
Quixote in Les mots et les choses provides an illuminating
example of the propensity for referential illusion in lan-
guage: "Dans la seconde partie du roman, Don Quichotte
rencontre des personnages qui ont lu la première partie du
texte et qui le reconnaissent, lui, homme réel, pour le
héros du livre."[19]

In this instance the novel mimics the activity of the
reader, but reverses the categories of fiction and the
natural world. The novel attests the authenticity of its
own world by appropriating a dimension beyond the horizon
of fictional experience. The first volume of Don Quixote,
an actual work, is presented as evidence that the second

part is identifiable as the reality which contains the
first. Just as the reader recruits fiction to establish
and restructure his own sense of identity, so the novel
accedes to truth both by assuming and reordering the shape
of the external world. But when the domain of the novel is
taken to be no more than the simple reduplication of actual
experience, the reader is no longer engaged in art; he has
embarked upon life and has ceased to read accurately. The
failure to respond to the polyvalence or undecidability of
the narrative fiction represents an attempt to escape from
the novel experience of a new order by the reimposition of
familiar reality upon the strangeness of the text.

The "schéma réaliste" opposed and abandoned by Simon,
has as its central tenet the supposition that the novel
should encourage the reader to familiarise his experience
of the text by reference to the real world as it is usually
represented. The task of the novel is to impose an order
upon the real world, an undertaking considered by Jonathan
Culler in Structuralist Poetics as fundamental to works of
narrative fiction: "More than any other literary form,
more perhaps than any other type of writing, the novel
serves as the model by which society conceives of itself,
the discourse in and through which it articulates the
world."[20] The novel offers a world ordered or articulated
as the fabric of a coherent structure, one which constitutes
an illusion of recognition: "(If) the basic convention

governing the novel is the expectation that readers will, through their contact with the text, be able to recognise a world which it produces or to which it refers (...)."[21]

The simulation of order projected by the reading of a text does not have to correspond to the natural world, only to the manner in which the reader is accustomed to organise and familiarise artistic experience. Tzvetan Todorov pursues the distinction between order and reality by referring to Northrop Frye's treatment of the latter in art as a form of conventional artifice:

> Et qu'est-ce que le vraisemblable? Son contraire est-il seulement la propriété d'histoires où les personnages peuvent faire n'importe quoi (p. 51)? Frye lui-même en donnera ailleurs une autre interprétation qui met en question ce premier sens du mot (p. 132: Un peintre original sait, bien entendu, que lorsque le public lui demande une fidélité à la réalité (to an object), il veut, en régle générale, exactement le contraire: une fidélité aux conventions picturales qui lui sont familières).[22]

A reading public more concerned with preconceived notions of reality than with original modes of artistic expression provides a stultifying atmosphere for the innovative novelist. The iconoclastic pose struck by Simon signifies an attempt to disrupt habitual patterns of aesthetic response, but succeeds in a manner different from that anticipated. Instead of abolishing realism, his work illustrates Frye's thesis that art contains its own formal logic and only breaks with the convention in order to "rediscover convention on a deeper level."[23]

The earlier novels of Simon sought to reinstitute a
sense of unfamiliarity in the reader by taking realism to
an extreme form, beyond that of the realists. Culler des-
cribes the work of Flaubert as the suppression of thematic
context in favour of a referential illusion:

> The fundamental character of a 'realistic' or
> referential discourse is, as Philippe Hamon says,
> to deny the story or to make it impossible by
> producing a thematic emptiness (une thématique
> vide) ('Qu'est-ce qu'une description?', p. 485).[24]

In "L'Effet de réel" Barthes suggests that thematic
material, the signified, is excluded from the sign by the
establishment of a direct relation between referent and sig-
nifier. The process results in an objectivisation of detail
as concrete form: "Sémiotiquement, le" détail concret" est
constitué par la collusion directe d'un référent et d'un
signifiant; le signifié est expulsé du signe."[25] Culler
demonstrates Flaubert's command of objective description by
illustrating the indirection of meaning which can result
from referential illusion; he recruits Barthe's insight into
the undecidable significance of objects to buttress his own
reading of realism as heralding a dislocation of the text
from the world:

> By blocking access to concepts Flaubert shows his
> mastery of what Barthes calls the indirect lan-
> guage of literature: 'the best way for a language
> to be indirect is to refer as constantly as possi-
> ble to things themselves rather than to their con-
> cepts, for the meaning of an object always flick-
> ers, but not that of the concept.' (Essais cri-
> tiques, p. 232). Relying upon this referential

> function, Flaubert produces descriptions which
> seem determined only by a desire for objectivity
> and thus leads the reader to construct a world
> which he takes as real but whose meaning he finds
> difficult to grasp.[26]

Realism became transmuted in succeeding works such as

Sartre's La Nausée into a discomfort with objects which

bordered upon hallucination. In the raw novel concrete de-

tial served, as Culler indicates, to focus attention upon

the subversion of reality by a writing which was unremit-

tingly referential, but startlingly unpredictable, a writ-

ing which would juxtapose irreconcilable accounts of the

real world. At first, however, writing was less concerned

to manifest its own independence than to reflect obsessive

states of consciousness. Concrete detail appeared as the

objective correlative of phenomenological deformation and

disorientation in perceived reality.

The new novelists attempted to refer to the object

itself rather than to the concept by the technique of

chosisme; this practice typified the early works of Simon

and especially Robbe-Grillet. Yet the radical departure

from the convention of realism was less iconoclastic than

had been anticipated, for the fascination with objects in

what has come to be known as the phenomenological novel of

the early 1960's proved itself susceptible to traditional

modes of interpretation. Even Les Corps conducteurs was

seen by Simon as a victim of a conventional style of criti-

cism. The depiction of a phenomenological consciousness in

the act of perceiving the natural world, réflexion natur-
elle, was based upon an opposition between man and the world
which was little different from that which was displayed in
the novels of the preceding century. In their effort to
suppress the subject, the new novelists placed greater em-
phasis on the object at the moment of its assimilation into
human consciousness. The reflective act, réflexion trans-
cendentale, was eliminated in favour of a demonstration of
the mythomanic propensity for distortion within the réflex-
ion naturelle:

> Le grand mérite du Robbe-Grillet première
> manière est d'avoir découvert que même les états
> mentaux apparemment les plus irréels vivent dans
> le dehors, renversés sur les objets. Ainsi le
> narrateur quérit la pensée phénoménologique
> d'Husserl des tendances conscientialisantes
> qui la poussaient à priviléaier le moment du
> sujet par rapport au moment de l'objet.[27]

The desire evidenced by the new novel to dispense
with subjectivity was at this time based on the very premise
that they wished to abolish, that of a polarity between man
as the cogito and the world as cogitatum. As this contra-
diction became apparent, Simon and Robbe-Grillet turned to
what has been described by Barilli as a model of absence or
différance:

> Modèle de l'absence, donc, pour les derniers
> romans et ciné-romans de Robbe-Grillet. Ceci
> veut dire: disparition définitive du sujet,
> du je, qui dominait au contraire, fût-ce sous
> une forme sournoise, dans les romans du cycle
> phénoménologique.[28]

Whereas Simon's earlier attempts to avoid psychological realism were partly unsuccessful because he had not fully succeeded in overturning the traditional cateoories of subject and object, his later works accomplish a more thoroughgoing reversal of realistic techniques. The method is an inversion of Barthes' recommendations for indirection in language. The _réflexion transcendentale_ of the narrator is privileged over the _réflexion naturelle_. The reader is thus estranged from the world of objects and marooned within a thematic context which has no area of contact with reality as he is accustomed to recoonise it. The novel provides a superstructure of sians which refer autoreflexively and reciprocally to themselves without providing a consistent foundation in natural perception. The model of absence is installed by the promotion of an irretrievable confusion between life and art in the story line or narrative signified, and a constant exchange and transformation of lexical items in the syntax or signifying chain of the text. Reality undergoes this process of neutralisation as it enters the domain of representation in order "to refer as constantly as possible" not to things, but to their absence. The territory of novelistic experience can no lonoer be directly familiarised by the imposition of a readerly convention such as the illusion of reference. The barrier between art as _réflexion transcendentale_ and life as _réflexion naturelle_ which exists within the mind of the reader is

transgressed with impunity. The reader is left with the
impression of the fruitlessness of his task, and that his
reading is to be considered as no more than a topographical
schematisation predicated on the text by the independently
distributive function of language.

The history of the new novelist's reaction against
literary realism reveals a limitedly successful polemic.
The rejection of a dichotomy between man and the world is
undertaken phenomenologically through the ostracism of man
from a capacity to signify, and the somewhat inconsistent
corollary of an objectification of sensory stimuli or <u>ré-
flexion transcendentale</u> in language.

> Le modèle phénoménologique rend assez bien compte,
> disons de 70%, du Nouveau Roman première manière,
> tandis qu'il perd du terrain et tombe même en
> désuétude au début des années 60; pour le modèle
> de l'absence, c'est exactement le contraire:
> il est timidement appliqué dans les années 50,
> il voit augmenter son degré de congruence de
> plus en plus si on l'applique aux oeuvres
> récentes.[29]

Both phases of the novel explore new facets of the
novel's power of illusion and reject the old. The latest
of Simon's novels progress towards pure self-representation,
and most successfully dispel the convention of realism. In
Ricardolian terminology, this effect is achieved by the
confrontation of <u>redoublement</u> by <u>dédoublement</u>. The former
unifies illusion by instituting a direct mimetic equiva-
lence of life and art, the latter disperses illusion by
revealing its workings or diegetic content at the expense

of its referential capacity:

> le redoublement suscite l'effet représentatif,
> le dédoublement suscite l'autoreprésentatif.
> Or j'ai démontré ailleurs aue l'autoreprésenta-
> tif agit comme contestation du représentatif.[30]

Since representation is not excluded from either of

Jean Ricardou's categories, a meta-structure exists; both

function in analogous but mutually inimical fashion. "La

fascination qu'exercent les aventures d'un récit est in-

versement proportionnelle à l'exhibition des procédures

génératrices."[31]

No final supremacy is possible in terms of the literal

obliteration of <u>redoublement</u> because of an equivalence of

this form on the metaphorical dimension of the text. Inter-

nal reduplication or <u>dédoublement</u> is a dependent form, and

must therefore exist also in a paradigmatic relation of

direct proportion to representation, a logic intuited in

Ricardou's following observation:

> La mise en abyme tend à restreindre l'éparpille-
> ment des récits fraqmentaires selon un aroupement
> de récits métaphoriques. Tel est son rôle anti-
> thétique: l'unité, elle la divise; la dispersion,
> elle l'unit.[32]

The two forms are both similar and different. They

function simultaneously on two levels of the text according

to Genette's formulation of the Greek adverb <u>au</u>, "semblable-

ment mais différemment."[33] In order to pursue the metaphor-

ical representation of reality in Claude Simon's later

works, an expansion of the somewhat narrow equivalence of

verisimilitude with literary realism becomes desirable. If,

as Frye suggests, conventions of art may be stripped from
the process of artistic creation only to reveal convention
in another dimension of the work, then realism must be
understood not only as a form of referential illusion, but
as one manifestation among others of the novel's power to
create truth through illusion, the principle of verisimili-
tude.

Verisimilitude has proved a difficult term to encom-
pass with a simple definition. Both in its literal accep-
tation as likeness to truth and in common usage as true to
life or mimetic, the notion is susceptible to uneasy, eva-
sive description. Life, truth and reality are Protean forms
which elude the critical grasp and confound the powers of
intellection. The inevitable confusion between representa-
tion and reality which occurs when literature purports to
convey truth is indicated by Jacques Derrida in his article,
"Le facteur de la vérité": "C'est la métaphore de la
vérité. On peut dire aussi bien la métaphore de la méta-
phore, la vérité de la vérité, la vérité de la métaphore."[34]
Literature, suggests Derrida, does not so much convey as it
does purvey truth, and the truth within its purview is per-
ceptible as the movement of paradox. Representation and
reality are present each in terms of the other. Reality is
garbed in the invisible raiment of representation; con-
versely, the latter is to be viewed as that which clothes
the hidden figure of the former. The image presented in

Hans Andersen's fairy tale, The Emperor's New Clothes, is an allegory of the process which unifies form and content: "Telle unité se trouve, en une structure indémaillable, mise en scène sous la forme d'une nudité et d'un vêtement invisibles, d'un tissu visible pour les uns, invisible pour les autres, nudité à la fois inapparente et exhibée."[35]

Confronted by the insight that art cannot be true to life, but that each is true only when apprehended indirectly through the presence of the other, Derrida conceives of truth as the drama of invisibility. Différance is revealed to be truth in motion, "un mouvement de l'aletheia"[36] within Andersen's text. The movement, both modest and exhibitionist, is one of veiling: "La détermination du texte comme voile dans l'espace de la vérité."[37]

The introjection of the literary text into the fabric of reality permits the undecidability of paradox. Truth can no longer be granted the privilege of a transcendental meaning, it has been invaded by a principle of representation. The movement generated by literature goes beyond decidable truth, now obfuscated within an aesthetic of revelation through concealment: "Une littérature peut donc produire, mettre en scène et en avant quelque chose comme la vérité. Elle est donc plus puissante que la vérité dont elle est capable. (...) Cet espace (de la vérité décidable) est débordé par des puissances de simulacre."[38]

Verisimilitude may be said to allow the veil of

literature to be either transparent or opaoue, accordina to
the function of the literary sign as mimetic or dieoetic,
true to life or true to art. The veil is, however, never
fully penetrable or impenetrable. Similarlv in Andersen's
fable, no consensus can be reached as to whether the king
is naked or clothed. In either case the flickerina mystery
of literary truth would become unintelligible as the apod-
icticity of certitude.

Decidable truth is for Derrida a contradiction in terms
which defies the linguistic core of human experience.
Derrida perceives Lacan as havina betrayed himself in sub-
jecting truth to a criterion of verifiability. Gayatri
Spivak summarises the disaoreement in her introduction to
the Enolish translation of De la orammatoloqie:

> It appears to Derrida that, in spite of oivino
> to the unconscious the structure of a lanouaoe,
> Lacan has contrived to entrench Freud's meta-
> physical suaqestions by making the unconscious
> the seat of verification and truth.[39]

Reality, from a Derridean perspective, exists within
the mind as a deferred presence, reconstituted by the
faculty of perception and clothed in the mask of languaqe:
"Whereas Derrida sees 'truth' (if one can risk that word)
as being constituted by 'fiction' (if one can risk that
word), Lacan seems to use fiction as a clue to truth."[40]
Lacan is interpreted by Derrida as imposinq a common sense
division between reality and fiction. The latter serves
as a vehicle for decidable truth because Lacan has preserved

a traditional distinction between reality and truth.

Derrida's refutation of decidable truth is founded upon
a sense of man's linguistic character. Truth is ineffable,
for it cannot be communicated without being subjected to
semiosis, at which point it becomes undecidable. His formu-
lation extends beyond novelistic verisimilitude. Despite
Spivak's use of the term fiction, Derrida's account pertains
principally to the deformation inherent in all communicative
activity. As such it is more exactly an analysis of semio-
tic verisimilitude, of which fiction is an incidental com-
plication; in Spivak's usage, however, fiction is to be un-
derstood as no more than the veil of the text.

Verisimilitude exists within language as a principle
of intelligibility and cannot be reduced to the category of
reality. The latter is absent from Derrida's formulation of
truth, it is a void abhorred by nature: "c'est que la
nudité n'appartient pas à la nature et qu'elle a sa vérité
dans la pudeur."[41] "Le facteur de la vérité" contains a
potential equation of the unintelligibility of the real
world or its oneiric reflection, with decidable truth. A
quotation from The Interpretation of Dreams, incorporated
into Derrida's article, elaborates the process by which re-
presentation subsumes the real world:

> Il n'est pas très hardi de supposer que le con-
> tenu incompréhensible du rêve (der unverständliche
> Trauminhalt) a incité à chercher une Einkleidung
> (...), un déguisement (un vêtement qui dissimule
> et travestit) dans lequel la situation dont le
> souvenir était présent devant nous devînt riche

de sens (<u>sinnreich</u>). Celle-ci (la situation)
est ainsi privé (beraubt) de sa sionification
originaire (<u>ursprüngliche Bedeutung</u>), rendue
disponible à des fins étrangères.[42]

Derrida indicated a structural complication which en-
folds Freud's account. The <u>Einkleidung</u> of the retelling
is preceded by that of recall, the record does not accede
to the nudity of its object of reference. Derrida does not
pursue this point, but it is evident that the original mean-
ing of the dream is not faithfully conveyed by memories of
the dream. The <u>unverständliche Trauminhalt</u> has already been
veiled by the act of recollecting the dream prior to its
literary renderings. Furthermore the dream itself does not
constitute a decidable counterpart to the natural world, it
is already a representation of that reality in imaginative
form.

The <u>Einkleidung</u> has a parallel function in the novel;
the interpreter or author conceals the world of experience
by projecting it into the polyvalent medium of representa-
tion, thereby obscuring its original decidability, the
immediate mystery of its presence. Derrida's dissertation
upon the nature of truth identifies verisimilitude as a
model of <u>différance</u> which centres attention upon represen-
tation as a simultaneous veiling and unveiling. The staging
takes precedence over the reality hidden behind the mask of
art, for the object is absent from view, but made recognis-
able and intelligible by the revelation of its disguise:
"Bouhours, cité par Condillac dans <u>De l'art d'écrire</u>: Les

métaphores sont des voiles transparents qui laissent voir ce qu'ils couvrent, ou des habits de masque, sous lesquels on reconnaît la personne qui est masquée."[43]

Derrida establishes the importance of the veil as a means of access to truth, yet his principle of undecidability deals only with truth _qua_ presence. He abstains from identifying truth with absence, or from defining truth in its relation to the self. Fiction, if it is to be discernable as such, is bound to truth in a relation of visibility to presence. Fiction reveals itself as an imposter in its pretention to decidability; the impenetrability of its veil is a violation of verisimilitude. The merely visible aspires to become actually present.

In the tale of the Emperor's New Clothes, to pursue the Derridean analogy beyond its original confines, the clothes take on visible substance and assume the form of the emperor. But the latter is not the stuff of the veil, he is elsewhere. The location of the emperor is immaterial to the illusion, from which he remains absent. The viewer can penetrate the illusion _qua_ absence only in a disappointed expectation of presence. In the case of realism, that provided by the eyes of the little boy, the emperor happens to be present, but the real discovery is that the clothes are visibly absent. The strictures of verisimilitude permit another equally disappointing solution; one which explodes the equivalence of realism to verisimilitude.

The emperor's presence is superfluous, it might be removed. Another viewer could have expostulated, "There is no emperor!" But he would have discovered no more than the boy.

The fictional clothes are visible yet absent irrespective of what they do or do not contain. Verisimilitude in no way presupposes truth as a function of reality or fantasy. It may be deduced simply as a desire to look beyond the visible. Such vision depends upon the hypothesis that the visible is absent. It follows that the domain of the beyond exists topographically as other for the self-hood of the viewer, since it lies beyond the limit of illusion's mirror. Derrida's undecidable truth equates to self-consciousness, an awareness of the self as other through the illusory shape of communication.

As a stylisation of human behaviour literature represents the exercise of self-consciousness. The reader's response is limited by a factor, extraneous to his own horizon of expectation. A dialogue is opened between what the text offers as truth, and what part of that truth the reader wants to take. The fact that the emperor was naked is in itself unrelated to the fact that the little boy wanted to expose him. Pragmatic considerations of desire, which form the content of the following chapter, demand a reconciliation of the two areas for investigation, for the wishes of the little boy can only be determined when they are communicated and contextualised. The novel and more specifically

the novels of Claude Simon are also open to a separate
analysis as to the nature of their fiction. Consideration
of novelistic illusion establishes the mode of portrayal
particular to truth in the novel.

Ricardou has described a parallelism in the novel
between realism and the fantastic; each constitute an
illusory image which veils the material presence of the
words on the page. The nature of the illusion is in both
cases hallucinatory:

> La saveur particulière du fantastique vient de
> l'évidence de l'illusion: le lecteur goûte le
> corps hallucinatoire de ce qui n'a pas de corps.
> La saveur particulière de réalisme vient de la
> méconnaissance de l'illusion: le lecteur goûte
> le corps hallucinatoire de ce qui a un corps
> réel. (...) Tout fasciné par l'hallucination
> des actes et choses, le lecteur ne se rend plus
> compte qu'il tourne les pages d'un livre: à
> l'usurpation de la matière constituante correspond
> l'évaporation de la matière signifiante.[44]

A further category of illusion is created in the new
novel. It behaves in the same manner as those observed by
Ricardou. The particular flavour of the new novel comes
from the documentation of the illusion: the reader savours
the "corps hallucinatoire de ce qui a un corps hallucina-
toire." The text appears to signify nothing beyond the
material and activity of signification. The novel, to the
above extent, mimics theory, for disbelief is here indefin-
itely suspended within the illusion of language as decidable
truth. Pure theory is discourse at its most realistic, for
it pursues knowledge directly in a world of observable

facts. The illusion of reference is never called into question; the abstraction of the illusion is preferred to the iconoclastic practice of self-knowledge, which is personal and uncomfortable rather than reassuringly universal. The novel even at its most realistic, has expressed a concern involuntarily perhaps, but always explicitly, for a degree of artistic self-awareness. A quotation from André Gide, inaccurate only in that it is predictive rather than prescriptive, is presented in "Le facteur de la vérité" to illustrate the novel's independence from observables:

> Le roman prouvera qu'il peut peindre autre chose que la réalité - directement l'émotion et la pensée; il montrera jusqu'à quel point il peut être déduit, avant l'expérience des choses - jusqu'à quel point c'est-à-dire il peut être composé - c'est-à-dire oeuvre d'art. Il montrera qu'il peut être oeuvre d'art, composé de toutes pièces, d'un réalisme non des petits faits et contingents, mais supérieur.[45]

The narcissistic fascination in which illusion imbricates itself in the new novel calls into question Derrida's reading of truth; the illusion becomes an observable reality for itself. For the outside reader who reads language reading itself to itself, Derrida's position is reasserted. The novel's power of illusion is now only a representation of a particular language experiencing itself narrowly as undecidability. Interpolation of language as a veil between psyche and text will purview the wider truth of human behaviour in its more varied semiosis. The reader, if he is to break the spell of the fiction, must situate the illusion phenomenologically as a consciousness of itself as other,

but not become lost in this preliminary step and experience himself as other. But novelistic illusion is invariably more powerful than anticipated.

The superior realism lauded by André Gide has risked being atrophied into a set of received ideas because of a readerly readiness to appropriate undigested the similarities of a realistic text to one's own superior personal situation, passing glibly over the differences which might lead one out of narcissistic complacency. The new novel has revitalised readerly response on the one hand by abolishing the referential illusion. The little boy of The Emperor's New Clothes would be forced to read into his innocently shocked comment on the emperor's nudity an experience of his own fears and desires, were he viewing the parade through the eyes of the new novel. On the other hand readers of Claude Simon's novel frequently remain within the comfortably familiar fiction of language as a study in self-consciousness, where the novel behaves as theory. It is in the provision of this illusion as the path of least readerly resistance that Simon's latest novels have done themselves their greatest disservice.

NOTES

[1] Choderlos de Laclos, Les Liaisons dangereuses (Paris: Gallimard, Le Livre de Poche, 1952), p. 334.

[2] Roman/Cinéma, Vol. I of Robbe-Grillet: Analyse, Théorie, Proc. of a Colloque de Cerisy, 29 Jun.-8 Jul. 1975 (Paris: U.G.E., 10/18, 1976), p. 415.

[3] Roman/Cinéma, p. 415.

[4] Roman/Cinéma, p. 415.

[5] Roman/Cinéma, p. 414.

[6] Roland Barthes, Le Degré zéro de l'écriture (1953: rpt. Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 32.

[7] Henri Meschonnic, Pour la Poétique (1969: rpt. Paris: Gallimard, N.R.F., 1970), p. 145.

[8] Marine Maisani-Léonard, André Gide ou l'ironie de l'écriture (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1976), p. 9.

[9] Roman/Cinéma, p. 10

[10] Roman/Cinéma, p. 391. My brackets give the antecedent.

[11] Philippe Sollers, "Le Roman et l'expérience des limites," Tel Quel, no. 25 (1966), p. 31.

[12] Gerald Prince, "Le Texte du Nouveau Nouveau Roman: Pour une Mise au Point," paper delivered at the annual MLA Convention, New York, (1975), p. 4.

[13] Prince, p. 4.

[14] Problèmes généraux, Vol. I of Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui, Proc. of a Colloque de Cerisy, 20-30 Jul. 1971 (Paris: U.G.E., 10/18, 1972), p. 229, my brackets.

[15] Problèmes généraux, p. 29.

[16] Pratiques, Vol. II of Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui, p. 43.

[17] Edmond Husserl, Méditations Cartésiennes (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1969), p. 28.

[18] Husserl, p. 28.

[19] Michel Foucault, Les Mots et les choses (Paris: Gallimard, N.R.F., 1966), p. 62.

[20] Jonathan Culler, Structuralist Poetics (1975: rpt. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, Cornell Paperbacks, 1976), p. 189.

[21] Culler, p. 192, my brackets.

[22] Tzvetan Todorov, Introduction à la littérature fantastique (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p. 21.

[23] Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (1957: rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 132.

[24] Culler, p. 194.

[25] Roland Barthes, "L'effet de réel," Communications, 11 (1968), 87-8.

[26] Roland Barthes, Essais critiques (Paris: Seuil, 1964), p. 232, quoted in Culler, p. 194.

[27] Renato Barilli, "Neutralisation et différence," in Roman/Cinéma, p. 393.

[28] Barilli, p. 395.

[29] Barilli, p. 395.

[30] Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie, p. 344.

[31] Ricardou, Jean, Le Nouveau Roman (Paris: Seuil, 1973), p. 76.

[32] Ricardou, p. 75.

[33] Gérard Genette, "Vertige fixé" in Figures (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 89.

[34] Jacques Derrida, "Le facteur de la vérité," Poétique, 6, no. 21 (1975), p. 97.

[35] Derrida, p. 99.

[36] Derrida, p. 99.

[37] Derrida, p. 99.

[38] Derrida, p. 100.

[39] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, trans, Of Grammatology by Jacques Derrida (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1974), pp. lxiii-lxiv.

[40] Spivak, p. lxiv.

[41] Derrida, p. 99.

[42] Derrida, p. 98.

[43] Derrida, p. 97.

[44] Jean Ricardou, Nouveaux Problèmes du roman (Paris: Seuil, 1978), p. 186.

[45] André Gide, quoted by Derrida, p. 128.

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CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF THE AUTHORIAL INTERLOCUTOR

John Lyons introduces two criteria for a linguistic theory of semantics in Structural Semantics. These prerequisites also pertain for the generation of a set of conditions competent to permit the constitution of the authorial interlocutor in theory and its institution as a critical operation. The authorial interlocutor should respect a stipulation of operational and material adequacy. Operationally the interlocutor must provide a working model for the reading of Simon's novelistic production: "It must employ concepts that are operationally definable in terms of empirical techniques."[1] Materially the interlocutor should in its linguistic origins and literary orientation be subject to refinement at least partially within the usual acceptation of the term. Otherwise the critic "will leave himself open to criticism that he has indeed defined something, but not what he set out to define."[2] Conversely, the authorial interlocutor will be established by this principle as the correct nomenclature for that which has been defined.

A resolution of the demands imposed by the requirement

of material adequacy may be achieved by examination of the
authorial utterance at a selected location in the nexus of
critical debate on discourse analysis and enunciation in the
European tradition of post-Saussurian linguistics. Subse-
quently, questions relating to the nature of subjectivity in
discourse, and to the role of the utterance in this regard
will be extrapolated from linguistics, where they are cur-
rently under review, and integrated to the debate on liter-
ary criticism versus poetics, where the vexed issue of sub-
jectivity involves a reappraisal of interpretive tech-
niques.

Choice of the term interlocutor to describe the role
of the indwelling author has been made possible by Tzvetan
Todorov's use of the term in Dictionnaire encyclopédique
des sciences du langage to describe the constitutive ele-
ments of the enunciative process:

> Les premiers éléments constitutifs d'un procès
> d'énonciation sont: le locuteur, celui qui
> énonce; qui tous deux sont nommés, indifféremment,
> interlocuteurs.[3]

Todorov implicitly eliminates the figure of the narra-
tor from consideration as the source of utterance in the
novel; the latter is described as an imaginary locutor, one
presumably invented for the purposes of delegation:

> Le "narrateur" d'un texte n'est en effet rien
> d'autre qu'un locuteur imaginaire, reconstitué
> à partir des éléments verbaux qui s'y réfèrent.[4]

Todorov does not investigate the origin of novelistic

interlocution other than in terms of the relationship be-
tween the locutor and his allocutor, and characterises
interlocution as self or other directed. As regards the
isolation of a locutor assuming responsibility for the
novel, it may be said to emerge from the relationship of
an utterance to the assumption of responsibility for its
emission:

> La production linguistique peut être considérée:
> soit comme une suite de phrases, identifiée
> sans référence à telle apparition particulière
> de ces phrases (elles peuvent être dites, ou
> transcrites avec des écritures différentes,
> ou imprimées, etc.); soit comme un acte au cours
> duquel ces phrases s'actualisent, assumées
> par un locuteur particulier, dans des circon-
> stances spatiales et temporelles précises. Telle
> est l'opposition entre l'énoncé et la situation
> de discours, parfois appelée énonciation.[5]

The greatest difficulty in describing the locutor
may be said to reside in what is to be understood by the
assumption of the énoncé by the énonciation. The discursive
situation taken broadly constitutes the context for the
utterance, although Todorov prefers to reserve the term
context for the strictly linguistic environment of the
énoncé. The wider context of the utterance would entail a
global overview of all circumstances affecting the linguis-
tic production. When the literary text is read for what it
may reveal about itself rather than in terms of more or less
speculative extrinsic factors, account must be taken of the
manner in which the text purveys truth, and of the literary
and fictional nature of the insights thus gained.

The novels of Claude Simon popularise an early stage
of semiological exegesis in which the locutor's role appears
to be appropriated by the linguistic function of the utter-
ance. Jean Dubois in his article "Enoncé et énonciation"
describes the phenomenon with a double negation, the subject
of the enunciation is unable not to reduce himself to the
structure of the énoncé which he has emitted: "Le sujet est
dominé par la structure d'un texte qu'il ne peut pas ne pas
émettre ainsi. Des deux termes de l'opposition, l'énoncé
est valorisé: il est le reflet du procès d'énonciation dans
sa totalité."[6] Simon projects his work into methodology; as
the speaking subject migrates from his enunciation to the
énoncé, becoming an example of language: "Le texte devient
alors un jeu de transformations à partir d'une phrase type,
un ludisme absolu ou le sujet est identifié à la structure
elle-même."[7]

As a consequence, communication becomes intelligible
as a textual systematisation which may have little to do
with the inherent properties of the novel form. Where the
structuration of language is founded upon a binary opposi-
tion between presence and absence, inscription of the
énoncé may be taken, as Dubois remarks, to efface the énon-
ciation:

> Mais les propriétés que l'on reconnaît grâce à
> ces concepts ne sont pas inhérentes à l'objet
> étudié, qui n'entre qu'imparfaitement dans ces
> catégories, elles tiennent à la méthodologie
> utilisée.[8]

A short circuit has been produced in the logic of the
relationship between énoncé and énonciation, for each is now
assuming responsibility for the other, leaving the postulate
of an interlocutor in doubt. In order to clarify the posi-
tion occupied by the authorial interlocutor in Simon's
novels, a review of the notion of the énoncé will be under-
taken with the goal of locating its organisation within a
denotative order of intelligibility. The interlocutor may
then be seen to occupy the space of connotation subtending
the overt strategy of the narration.

With the advent of transphrastic theories of discourse
in the American tradition of distributional linguistics,
the énoncé acquired its most flexible description. In 1951
Zellig Harris defined utterance as, "any stretch of talk, by
one person, before and after which there is silence on the
part of that person."[9] More problems are raised than solved
in this rendition: the term utterance does not distinguish
effectively the énoncé from its enunciation; neither silence
nor the identity of the speaker is subjected to close scrun-
tiny, and the problem of relating synchronic to diachronic
temporality is impressionistically resolved; past, future
and present are not rigorously delineated. Harris was to
propose no more than a grammatical set of transformations
for the concatenation of sentences in a transphrastic utter-
ance.

In the wake of Harris' pioneering endeavour, French

theorists were to extend the opposition between énoncé
and enunciation beyond the limits of the sentence. The for-
malist tradition, with its bias towards generative grammar,
became separate from a branch of research into enunciation,
which has adopted the rubric of pragmatics. Together with
a new interest in socio-linguistics, these fields are seen
by Dominique Maingueneau to compose the major recent de-
partures from Saussurian thought in the European tradition.

Pragmatics owes its derivation to logical positivism,
which imposed a tripartite schema for linguistic activity.
Syntax provides the study of the linguistic relationship
between signs. Semantics relates to the logical connections
between sign and referent. Pragmatics, or enunciation,
deals with the enunciative conditions which pertain to the
linguistic items and their logical referents. Language is
neatly separated into the respective domains of the sen-
tence, proposition and énoncé.

A problem of defining the latter term stems from the
association of enunciation to pragmatics. Maingueneau
suggests that the hesitancy inevitable in imposing a work-
able definition of the énoncé lies in the indeterminacy of
the interaction between linguistics and related disciplines:

> Or la linguistique a évidemment tendance à
> rejeter dans sa "pragmatique" (l'énonciation)
> tous les facteurs qu'elle ne parvient ni à
> intégrer (psychologie, sociologie, contexte...)
> ni à rejeter. La tentation est grande de donner
> à l'énonciation le statut d'une pragmatique,
> sans remettre en cause la définition du
> syntaxique et du sémantique.[10]

The collision of the expanding boundaries of linguistics with extra-linguistic forms has led to the development of enunciation as an interim area destined to buttress existing areas of linguistic study and to appropriate neighbouring disciplines to form a pragmatics. Instead of providing a buffer zone, enunciation has communicated its indeterminate status to syntax and semantics, inviting a reappraisal of these categories.

In December 1977, Pierre Ouellet published an article on the positivist categories of language, "La scène énonciative," in which he argues that semantics should be redefined to enfold both syntax and pragmatics. In response to the atomistic procedures which have characterised the reassessment of linguistic boundaries, Ouellet proposes a global theory of semiogenesis, one which considers language not as a series of component parts, but as a function which traces the process of signification as a configuration of sentence, proposition and énoncé:

> Cette approche permet, au-delà de la proposition au-delà de la phrase, au-delà même de l'énoncé, de dresser les frontières d'une "situation énonciative" et de considérer tout discours comme un ensemble de situations énonciatives dont les frontières, strictes ou floues, ouvertes ou fermées, determinent des voisinages mais aussi des discontinuités - puisqu'il n'y a pas de situation énonciative constante dans le discours en langue naturelle, dont on peut définir le domaine comme un ensemble de bifurcations sur l'espace-temps d'une classe de situations énonciatives possibles.[11]

Ouellet's proposal is symptomatic of the disarray into

which traditional linguistic boundaries have been thrown by
the advent of transphrastic analysis and by the departure
from Saussurian practice. In the midst of a confusion as to
what might constitute a satisfactory theory of enunciation,
theoreticians such as Michel Pêcheux and Pierre Kuentz re-
ject the possibility of a return to the subject in dis-
course, Maingueneau describes their attitude as a refutation
of subjective freedom, of "l'autonomie du sujet, de la
'parole' libre."[12]

The reintroduction of an enunciative situation into
pragmatics is subject to the proviso that the speaking sub-
ject cannot himself originate meaning. Enunciation, whether
considered singly as the pragmatics of illocution or cor-
porately as the semantic value of sentence, proposition and
énoncé must maintain an independence from the intentionality
of the speaking subject. The distinction made by de
Saussure between meaning (langue) and usage (parole) was pre-
dicated upon the Humpty-Dumptyan illusion that man is the
master of meaning, that words can be moulded to convey the
intentions of the speaker: "'When I use a word,' Humpty
Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what
I choose it to mean - neither more or less.' (...) 'The
question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master -
that's all.'"[13] Relegation of the subject's intentions to
the status of irrelevance has served to focus attention on
the relative importance of socio-historic context to

meaning. De Saussure's category of _parole_ is abandoned;
enunciation denotes, not the intentions of the speaking
subject, but conditions of enunciation which may have a
bearing upon communication:

> En réalité il s'agit de savoir si le lien entre
> le sens des phrases d'un texte et ses conditions
> socio-historiques est quelque chose de secondaire
> ou constitutif de ce sens même, indépendamment
> de l'illusion que peut avoir le locuteur que
> la signification de son discours coincide avec
> ce qu'il "veut dire".[14]

As a model typical of the relationship between meaning
and socio-historic factors, Maingueneau selects that pro-
posed by P. Charaudeau in "Etudes de linguistique appliquée."
The enunciative situation serves to distinguish _énoncé_
from _discours_:

> Enoncé + situation de communication = Discours
>
> usage - consensus   spécificité
>
> sens   signification
>
> Autrement dit, le _sens_ d'un _énoncé_ est défini
> en dehors de tout cadre énonciatif, alors que
> sa _signification_ est référée aux _circonstances_
> _de communication_ qui en font un _discours_.[15]

Charaudeau's model is taken from pragmatics and is
founded upon a modification of Saussurian principles. His
theoretical position is crosscut by that of the French
school of discourse analysis, seen by Maingueneau to be
typified in the definition of L. Guespin:

> L'énoncé, c'est la suite des phrases émises entre
> deux blancs sémantiques, deux arrêts de la commun-
> ication; le discours, c'est l'énoncé considéré du
> point de vue du mécanisme discursif qui le condi-
> tionne. Ainsi un regard jeté sur un texte du

> point de vue de sa structuration en langue en
> fait un énoncé; une étude linguistique des con-
> ditions de production de ce texte en fera un dis-
> cours.16

Maingueneau proceeds to summarise the main features of
the theories of Guespin and Charaudeau in order to illus-
trate an ambiguity in the opposition énoncé / discours, that
of the relation of the conditions of production in the for-
mer's description to the circumstances of communication in
the latter's. Maingueneau views the ambiguity as an instru-
ment for delimiting the horizons of context in everyday ver-
sus specialised forms of communication.

While Maingueneau's synopsis of linguistic pragmatics
does outline a contextual distinction between énoncé and
discours, his summary does not bear directly upon the defin-
ition of the narrative énoncé envisaged in the present chap-
ter, one which will relate current reflection on literary
pragmatics to the reading of Simon's later works. Whereas a
contextual grammar of the énoncé can establish the enuncia-
tive situation of the linguistic subject, it does not ad-
dress the issue of the extra-linguistic subject of the enun-
ciation, the authorial voice of the text. The notion of
grammatical context may, however, be extrapolated from lin-
guistics and linked to other disciplines. The notion of
generic context is critical to a definition of the novel in
terms of a literary pragmatics, for it establishes the con-
ditions of possibility for such a definition.

In what Maingueneau terms as paralinguistic usage
of the _énoncé_ and _discours_, Michel Foucault seeks to re-
assess the boundaries of different modes of discourse, in-
cluding the novel form. Foucault refers to the difference
in enunciative function between novel and theory:

> Un énoncé a toujours des marges peuplées d'autres
> énoncés. Ces marges se distinguent de ce qu'on
> entend d'ordinaire par "contexte" - réel ou
> verbal - c'est-à-dire de l'ensemble des éléments
> de situation ou de langage qui motivent une
> formulation et en déterminent les sens. Et elles
> s'en distinguent dans la mesure même où elles
> le rendent possible; le rapport contextuel n'est
> pas le même entre une phrase et celles qui
> l'entourent si on a affaire à un roman ou à
> un traité de physique.[17]

The reader who seeks to define Claude Simon's works
as novels is not beset with many of the terminological ob-
stacles which customarily confront generic distinctions, but
he is forced to face the frontier of art with theory. For
theory, the authorial implication is negligible, whereas for
the novel it is capital. In literature the wilful violation
of factual accuracy is revealing of the speaker and evasive
of observables. In Simon's novels, where art parrots theory,
the message or authorial content represents the code or lin-
guistic content. The impenetrability of the theorist is
fused with the penetrability of the novelist, and the status
of Simon's discourse remains undecidable.

Structuralist readings usually treat Simon's work as a
pure representation of the linguistic encoding process,
since the transparency of the theoretical statement invokes

a collectivised reading public, with little possibility for
individual variance. In contradistinction to Barthes' cate-
gories of "le lisible" and "le scriptible" in literature,
introduced in S/Z,[18] Barthes elsewhere suggests that liter-
ature automatically supposes a degree of opacity or "writer-
liness", in that it is self-referential. Literature points
out its mask, by the formula larvatus prodeo. Barthes' term
"le scriptible"[19] is nonetheless provocative in that it con-
jures up a picture of the reader as writer. Investigation
of the relationship between reader and literary text yields
an analogy with writerly activity, in that the reader of
literature exercises a degree of interpretive choice.

Norman Holland focuses upon reading in Poems in Persons
as a transaction between reader and text, a form of holistic
inference in which the reader becomes individualised as a
constant factor projected upon the variability of the text:
"Particular insights and interpretations, too, proceed from
habitual patterns of ego choices."[20]

Holland modifies this position by stating that a
correct reading does not depend on the choice of the reader,
but on the range of possible readings made available by the
text: "Different readers can interpret the same text very
differently and still remain within the range of correct-
ness."[21] Holland is concerned to define the limits within
which the literary transaction, or reading process occurs.
His analysis provides the insight that a correct reading

will be incomplete, due to the limitations of habitual
choice. Applied to a structuralist reading of Claude
Simon's works, Holland's criterion furnishes the conclu-
sion that in order for such a reading to be correct,
Simon's text cannot be accorded the description of novel,
because the structuralist approach does not fulfill a
condition of incompleteness. But for the novel to be con-
sidered as theoretical discourse it would have to be infin-
itely perforable, fully transparent, permitting only a com-
plete reading and no critic of Simon insists consistently
upon this point. If Simon's works are to be understood as
novels, then they may be taken to reveal a condition of
"writerliness", opening the way to a consideration of liter-
ary pragmatics in his novels.

Consideration of Simon's works as primarily novelistic
is, however, a direction contrary to that of the prevailing
wind of Simonian criticism, and should, in the interests of
material adequacy, be approached through the latter direc-
tion.

In the most recent novels of Claude Simon the autonomy
of the code is taken as axiomatic. Ricardou says of La
Bataille de Pharsale that the work writes itself, "c'est à
partir de lui-même qu'il se compose;"[22] the text is accorded
generative properties in addition to its quality of inani-
mate object. More recently Klaus Hempfer, speaking from the
standpoint of novelistic criticism, has evinced surprise at

the flagrancy of modern critics' flouting of the hallowed
canons of critical practice:

> Indem der scripteur jedoch gleichzeitig als
> "fragment textuel" betrachtet wird, ergibt sich
> hier, wie beim traditionellen Biographismus,
> nur in entgegengesetzter Richtung, die für eine
> Texttheorie fatale Identifizierung zweier
> grundsätzlich verschiedener Kategorien, was u.a.
> zu der absurden Konsequenz führt, dass das "je
> textuel" zum "producteur du texte" wird, dass
> einen "être de papier", wie Barthes treffend
> den Erzähler bestimmt also 'productive'
> Eigenschaften zugeschrieben werden.[23]

Absurd as this consequence may be to Hempfer, it is
necessary if the message is considered as a theoretical
aspect of the code. The message must be interiorised,
assumed into the body of the text. From the moment that
a perfect consonance or transparency exists between the syn-
tactic and semantic levels of communication, where the
images and concepts signified by the text are a faithful re-
flection of the signifying process that endangers them, the
text appears to be depersonalised, leaving the medium as the
content. The signifier is taken to be the code and the sig-
nified the message.

Such is the distinction proposed by Lucien Dällenbach
in his study on mise en abyme: Le Récit spéculaire. He
distinguishes usage of the term "code" in criticism from
its linguistic acceptation by suggesting a necessary rela-
tionship between code and message in literature:

> En littérature, en effet, la relation code/
> message est spécifique en ce sens que le code
> apparait indissociable du message qui l'intègre,
> alors que, dans tout autre type de discours,

> il lui préexiste en tant que convention entre
> émetteur et récepteur, ou système de signaux
> permettant la transmission de l'information.
> Ainsi s'explique que la littérature ait pu
> être considérée tantôt comme un message sans
> code, tantôt comme un code sans message -
> et que dans l'acception où nous le prenons ici,
> code désigne la possibilité consentie au récit
> de définir ses signes par ses signes même et
> d'expliciter ainsi son mode d'opération.[24]

Dällenbach's position is representative of structura-
list theory in narratological studies. This opposition be-
tween message and code is broadly similar to those commonly
cited between fabula (story) and szujet (plot) in the
Russian formalist tradition, mythos and logos in Aristote-
lian poetics, showing or telling or mimesis and diegesis
in Platonic terms and elsewhere referred to as histoire
and discours (Todorov) or récit and narration (Barthes).
Seymour Chatman in Story and Discourse adopts this opposi-
tion for his title, and refines it further by reintroducing
the Saussurian and Hjelmslevian quadrapartition: expression
and content, form and substance. The different interpreta-
tions given to these terms and their interrelations have in
common the treatment of a work of art as a pragmatically
closed text. Shlomith Rimmon in "A comprehensive theory of
narrative" sketches a typology sensitive to the nuances of
nomenclature in the various semiotic models; his concern is
to situate Genette's seminal work on narratology, Figures
III, in the context of existing studies as a poetics rather
than a criticism.

> Criticism, he (Genette) says, is essentially
> and traditionally concerned with the dialogue
> between an individual text and a psyche, whether
> conscious or unconscious, individual or collec-
> tive, creative or receptive. This traditional
> concern is somewhat changed by Structuralism which
> insists on treating the work as a closed, accom-
> plished and absolute object, ignoring its dia-
> logue with any extra-textual psyche.[25]

The principle of closure is endemic in structuralism.

Jean Piaget's three criteria for structure, "wholeness,

transformation, and self-regulation"[26] accepts that a struc-

ture is "a system closed under transformation."[27] Accept-

ance of the novel as a structure of this sort is commonly

taken to necessitate an exclusion of the desires of the

interpreter.

In an implicit demurral, Wolfgang Iser, in The Implied

Reader, refers to the twentieth-century novel as one in

which the reader embarks upon a voyage of self-discovery;

"the reader is forced to discover the hitherto unconscious

expectations that underlie all his perceptions."[28] In La

Relation critique Jean Starobinski asks whether it is not

reasonable to hold that the self-reflexibility of interpre-

tation is the primary goal of interpretative discourse:

> N'est-il pas légitime que le discours interpré-
> tatif soit d'abord indicatif de soi, qu'il se
> pose lui-même, s'affirme selon son style, son
> ordre et sa possibilité et que l'objet étudié
> lui soit l'occasion de prouver ses propres
> pouvoirs, ses qualités spécifiques?[29]

Anthony Wilden performs a critique of structure in

System and Structure which seeks to account for the

interpretive gesture in terms of the different orders of
logic which govern digital and analog computation. In a
chapter entitled "The Structure as Law and Order" he eva-
luates Piaget's conception of structure as being analogous
to de Saussure's visualisation of the game of chess. De
Saussure holds that change or transition does not belong to
the equilibrium of states of affairs and that only the lat-
ter are of importance. Wilden points out that structures
are commonly taken to establish their own boundaries or
contours, rather than being seen as defined by their con-
text or background of mobility, in this case the desires of
the chess player:

> Thus, each player's move in chess are (sic)
> the momentary digitalizations which allow the
> game to pass from analog pattern to pattern.
> And since the moves do not belong to the
> patterns, they cannot be explained simply by
> reference to the patterns (the 'structures').
> They can only be explained by reference to
> the context of meaning in which the game is
> played, that is to say, by reference to the
> DESIRE or to the goals of the chess player.
> For it is the moves of the player, and not
> the state of the board, which define the boundary
> he crosses as he communicates each difference,
> each move, as a message to his opponent.[30]

Wilden believes that all communication involves both
digital and analog systems and hence that semiotics entails
each within the context of the other. Viewed from either
perspective, analog or digital, structure must involve both
a controlled and a random element. Language must at some
level admit the irreducible presence of a message couched

in terms of the desires of a subjectivity if Wilden's
principle is to be observed. The énoncé in narrative should
be defined both in terms of a transition and an equili-
brium, of flesh and of paper, irrespective of its status as
theory or literature.

Recent attempts to traverse the impasse into which
the speaking subject has been consigned in post-Saussurian
thought have been contingent upon a transgression of the
main tenet of the theory of enunciation: they have returned
to Saussurian categories of the speaking subject or to no
subject at all. Analysis of Gilles Deleuze's projection
of an enunciative situation in Logique du sens will under-
line the inadequacy of such procedures and indicate a poss-
ible alternative. Deleuze is concerned with the problem of
meaning in language rather than with the implications of his
work for linguistics; dissatisfied with the tripartite posi-
tivist model, he proposes a strategic fourth dimension, that
of meaning (sens). Deleuze invokes a set of criteria for
the sentence, proposition and énoncé based on the principle
of truth. The proposition (désignation) is either true or
false, depending upon the correct identification of an ob-
ject of reference. The énoncé (manifestation) is founded
upon the reliability of the speaker. The sentence (signifi-
cation) is founded upon a condition for truth: the words
must correspond to a coherent concept. Deleuze admits a
fourth category of language, that of meaning (sens). He

allows meaning to give evidence as a separate dimension
of linguistic representation since he cannot establish a
hierarchy of precedence within the tripartite system.

Deleuze cites the Saussurian opposition between pa-
role and langue to demonstrate the reversibility of privi-
lege to accrue to the domains of manifestation and signifi-
cation. Parole grants the exercise of meaning to the speak-
ing subject; langue to the spoken word. In discussing the
primacy of signification over designation Deleuze argues the
impossibility of a total independence of the former from the
latter. Logic proceeds by the derivation of conclusions
from premises. A premise must be taken to be true in order
for it to be valid as a condition for truth. A conclusion
can never absolutely detach itself from its premises, a
proof is always both a process of deduction and a resultant
conclusion. The accuracy of a designation does not rely
upon the tenability of a logic argument, since it already
serves to verify the premises. The designation only relies
upon the signification to demarcate the conditions of poss-
ibility for truth. An absurd statement does not permit the
postulation of truth; it is equally true and false. Solely
in the presence of absurdity does the signification manifest
an independence from designation.

In the absence of a clear attribution of meaning to any
one dimension of language, meaning (sens) is taken by
Deleuze to reflect an interactive level of intelligibility.

He explains meaning by reference to the Husserlian notion of expression, especially noematic perception, summarisina Husserl's pages on "Noesis and Noema" in Ideas. The marriage of semantics and phenomenology is achieved by Deleuze at the expense of suppressing the praqmatic cateaory of subjectivity. In expressing meaning as such, the intentionality of the subject disappears, only the smile of the Cheshire cat remains, devoid of interpretive context.

Pragmatics had as early as 1938, in Charles Morris' definition, focused upon a relationship between signs and their users: "Since most, if not all signs have as their interpreters living organisms, it is a sufficiently accurate characterisation of pragmatics to say that it deals with the biotic aspects of semiosis."[31] Morris' description has survived almost intact in more recent studies: Umberto Eco in A Theory of Semiotics modifies Morris' point of view by stating that the human addressee "is the methodoloqical (and not the empirical) guarantee of the existence of a signification, that is of a sign function established by a code."[32] It may be deduced from Eco's definition that a sign must have a quarantor if it is to be said to exist. The addressee or interpreter must receive the sign as a message. Moreover, the sender is necessarily a receiver if he is to guarantee the existence of a messaqe, in other words to perceive the message as such.

It is in the context of the speaker as interpreter

that Suzanne Cunningham has pursued a possible relation
between phenomenology and semiotics. Cunningham rejects
a consideration of semantics as reflecting a parallel be-
tween the structure of language and that of the world,
remarking the failures of Russell and Wittgenstein to con-
struct such an equivalence. She accepts a relation of prag-
matics and syntactics to Husserlian thought.

Cunningham pursues the distinction between hearer and
speaker in pragmatics from the perspective that only the
latter actually constitutes the text: "In language-use
consciousness is functioning in a constitutive capacity,
taking part in the genetic constitution of language itself
and bestowing meaning on its own experience as it objecti-
fies it."[33] The dual function of the speaker is taken by
Cunningham to permit a visualization of the text as a meet-
ing ground for speaker and hearer: "At stake, (...), is
simply the fact that language provides the common ground on
which the constitutive interpreter (Husserl's transcendental
subject) meets the interpretation of the 'other', the trans-
cendent."[34] The study of this common ground is syntactics,
a science of the transcendent sign divorced from the trans-
cendental subjectivity which guarantees the existence of
signification.

The area in which Cunningham's argument leaves the most
unspoken, lies in her subscription to the Saussurian cate-
gories of <u>langue</u> and <u>parole</u>. Her investigation of the

speaker's relation to pragmatics tends to obscure a possible differentiation between the activity of constitution and that of interpretation. In her discussion of syntactics the topic becomes more thoroughly confused, signs are described as fully transcendent, yet retaining their aspect as a transcendental field:

> A sign is a sign only insofar as it is constituted as such. Thus the signs themselves bear a necessary relation (at least at their commencement) to a constituting consciousness, i.e. to a transcendental subjectivity. However, linguistic signs can be given both shape and sound. This brings them immediately into the realm of the spatio-temporal, the transcendent."[35]

Signs are taken to function in subjective and objective dimensions as in Saussurian linguistics. The regression from Morris' model to that of de Saussure might have been avoided had Cunningham rigourously assigned the act of constitution and its constituent signs to the transcendent, and the interpreter with his interpretation to the transcendental field. Such a postulation would suppose that the speaker as constitutive interpreter, and not the signs themselves, is always transcendent and transcendental, both self and other. Support may be adduced for this position from Husserl's regionalisation of consciousness within intentional experience: "For it is easily seen that <u>not every real</u> <u>phase</u> of the concrete unity of an intentional experience has itself the <u>basic character of intentionality</u>, the property of being a 'consciousness of something'."[36]

A clear distinction between pragmatics and syntactics

may now be reimposed from a methodological perspective.
Syntactics retains its aspect as a science of transcendent
sign function established as a code. Pragmatics, the rela-
tion between signs and consciousness, studies the guarantee
or contract between interpreter and message.

Acknowledgement of the dual role of the author, part
interpretation, part inscription makes full allowance for
the representation of authorial consciousness within the
literary work. If pragmatics is a science of the relation-
ship of message to interpreter, then it englobes interpre-
tation on two levels. The first relates to the meta-dis-
course established between reader and text, the interpretive
activity of textual analysis. This dimension lies beyond
the text, it is the transaction performed by an extra-tex-
tual psyche. The second level is that of the textual au-
thor, a co-presence of the semiotic code and the indwelling
interpreter. The latter domain is the province of literary
pragmatics, which deals with the "dialogue between the indi-
vidual text and a psyche" as does criticism, but like poe-
tics, it ignores a "dialogue with any extra-textual psyche".

Simon appears determined to reduce the enunciative
content of his works to the logic of pure lucidity, a lack
of any interpretive behaviour. A pragmatic reading of the
énoncé in Simon's work implies a characterisation of desire
as absence. It is not sufficient to state that absence
functions as pure negation, this attitude would defeat the

purpose of a literary definition of the énoncé by
suppressing the category of interpreter.

Simon's works succeed in creating the illusion of ab-
sence by rendering the interpreter invisible. The pragma-
tic category of the literary author, the internalised con-
stitutive interpreter, disappears from Simon's novels
through the mise en abyme of the literal dimension by its
referential counterpart. The precise means by which the
disappearance is effected belongs to a discussion of the
conditions for operational adequacy which govern the pre-
sent definition of the authorial interlocutor as a textual
immanence. To postulate the eventuality of such a vanish-
ing act requires an explanation of the method by which the
novel form practices the illusion of trompe l'oeil.

The undecidability of Simonian praxis as novel or
theory may be resolved by reference to the expectations of
the reader rather than to the semantic aspect of novelistic
fiction. Siegfried J. Schmidt examines the respective
claims for fictivity versus fictionality of the novel form
in "A pragmatic interpretation of fictionality". He con-
cludes that the semantic or fictive value of a possible
world represented in literary form is not a decisive factor
in determining fictionality. A fictive statement is one
which is neither true nor false: it can potentially but not
actually be corroborated by observation. A fictional state-
ment involves pragmatic considerations of intentionality or

belief on the part of the constitutive interpreter, such

as wishful thinking and deliberate or non-deliberate error.

A novel can only be truly fictional if it is read as such,

if the reader anticipates authorial inexactitude. Schmidt

refers his reader to socially institutionalised convention

as the relevant criterion for the attribution for fiction-

ality to authorial intention. He quotes L. Gustafsson's

discussion of the pragmatic nature of novelistic fiction:

> One of the novel's most important qualities
> is not borne by it in itself as part of its
> inner structure, but as a relation between
> the reader and the historical condition of the
> text as a whole. To be a novel is a claim which
> the novel carries with its being represented
> as a novel from the beginning, and from the
> start it prescribes a certain attitude to the
> reader, different from that which the reader
> takes towards memories and other documentary
> texts.[37]

Gustafsson's argument is convincing but not conclusive,

for as in the statement "a rose is a rose is a rose", there

exists a constant refutation of change. Schmidt concludes

his article by a reference to the avant-garde and its desire

to break away from tradition. Frye holds that it is not

possible to abdicate from convention. The later works of

Claude Simon provide a testing ground for Frye's thesis,

for they are commonly taken to be both non-fictional and

novelistic.

Schmidt's category of fictionality is extrinsic to

the literary text. Only in a fictional environment can the

text be considered as fictive and also possess a truth

value. The text then achieves literary status:

> By 'fictive world' I mean: a fictive world W_T^L
> is a world or world system which a reader assigns
> to a text in the context of literary communica-
> tion, respecting the norm - provided by the fic-
> tionality principle - according to which the
> objects and states of affairs in any W_T^L have not
> actually been the case in EW (our normal world
> system of experience) at the time of text produc-
> tion and that the author did, respectively does,
> not assert them to actually be the case in his
> EW.[38]

As Schmidt himself indicates, his explanation does
not exhaust the debate on literarity. He surmises that the
reader can only decode the fictive world by a comparison
with his normal world. The case for fictivity in a non-
fictional environment is, therefore, more complex. Here
the fictive world has no literary status. Theoretical dis-
course purports to be objective or non-literary, but since
the fictivity of pure theory cannot be distinguished from
the real world by a principle of fictionality, the reader
is unable to assess the objectivity of the theoretical
world, and must accept the claim of theory to be fully
transparent.

Approached from a different perspective, that of
Wilden, which holds that all language conveys intentional-
ity, the distinction between literature and theory becomes
one of internal levels of intelligibility. Whereas a theo-
retical statement attempts to remain pure, or silent about
its intentions, even though it must connote them, literature
directly indicates its intentions to the reader, it

manifests its own intrinsic fictionality by denoting the
pragmatic dimension of the text. This approach improves
on that of Schmidt in that it concerns itself with the
dynamics of literary rather than readerly pragmatics, and
is sensitive to the self-definitional role of the text.

Assuming that Simon's works are to be read as novels,
the apparent absence of an internal pragmatic dimension,
a textual author, must be closely reviewed. It is the
apprehension of an immanent authorial voice which provides
a yardstick for fictivity in terms of fictionality. The
reader who approaches the novel in the expectation of en-
countering a fictional environment must come into contact
with a fictive world visibly created and sustained as such
within the text, otherwise he is left in the unenviable
position of reading an impossible novel, a novel which is
not. A novel in which his expectations are unfulfilled is
a form of theory in that it is characterised by a transpar-
ent, or invisible enunciative structure. The principle of
opacity or self-exposure in authorial intention is excluded
from the reader's appreciation of the text.

In order to make a distinction between fictionality
and novelistic fiction, it is more accurate to define the
former term in literary pragmatics as literariness. Once
Schmidt's category of fictionality is taken to be intrin-
sic to the text, it implies that the latter actually is both
fictive and literary. The text is no longer merely expected

to be such.

Teun A. van Dijk endorses this description of literariness in "Pragmatics and poetics". He offers an informal rule which reflects a criterion of authorial intention. The speaker intends to change the hearer's sense of reality by having him recognize this very intention in the text:

> The speaker wants, and by uttering a literary discourse intends, to change the evaluation set of the hearer with respect both to the represented events and objects and the structure of the discourse itself, and wants him to recognize (...) this intention.[39]

Narrative fiction refers to a specific dimension of literariness in which the self-exposure of the author is performed in a spirit of deceit. It is in order to practice deception upon the reader that the author reveals his literariness in the text. Application of this principle, which is that of verisimilitude, to Simon's works, raises the question as to whether his text preserves a neutral theoretical posture, or imitates this attitude by imposing the fiction that his work is not literary. In the latter case his work will yield evidence of fiction through the manifestation of neutralised literary levels foreign to theory. The text will thus prescribe itself as narrative fiction rather than theory, even if it does not correspond to traditional generic classifications; Simon's novels eschew such conventional descriptive characteristics as the presence of a coherent plot, well-drawn characters, and relevant settings. To ascertain the literariness of Simon's

works, the four conditions of enunciative transparency

proposed by H. Grice in "Logic and conversation" may be

applied in reverse. Van Dijk describes the violation of

Grice's principles in terms of their absence, the speaker

is overtly not accurate, not concise, not relevant or not

lucid:

> (1) the speaker very often says something which
> he knows to be false in the actual world
> (Quality);
> (2) the speaker often gives much more information
> than seems to be required for the interpre-
> tation of the text, e.g. a story (long novels
> with elaborate descriptions or digressions:
> paradigmatic cases: Tristram Shandy and A la
> recherche du temps perdu); or the speaker
> gives much too little information, e.g. in
> brief, semi-grammatical, semi-incoherent
> poems (Quantity);
> (3) the literary discourse as a whole is not
> (directly) related to the actual world of
> speaker or hearer in many cases, whereas
> parts of the discourse may, apparently, be
> totally unrelated with other parts (Relation);
> (4) the literary discourse, typically it seems,
> is often obscure, ambiguous, prolific,
> repetitive, etc. (Manner).[40]

The opacity of authorial intention which is manifested

by the fulfillment, partial or otherwise, of the above

conditions indicates the literariness of a text. The case

of the novel is somewhat more complex due to the admixture

of fiction. The reader of Simon's novels is led to perceive

his fictive environment as an absence of literariness. The

apparent lucidity, concision, accuracy and relevance of the

discourse assures its transparency or completeness.

As a consequence of this economy of narration, the

novel is imbued with the appearance of theory. The structural wholeness of the communication imparts an impersonal attitude to authorial intention. The speaker is a replica of all other theorists. The particular circumstance of the novel is transformed into an instance of all theoretical texts. François Laruelle's discussion of Derridean general text reveals the principle of interchangeability as a reduplication.

> Les simulacres textuels ne s'ajoutent pas au texte, mais fonctionnent comme la généralité textuelle immanente (...) le simulacre est l'hybris comme mesure qui vaut de toute valeur, le texte général avec lequel compose tout autre texte (Freud, Platon, Saussure, Heidegger), mais de telle sorte qu'à v être articulé il y soit ré-pété, ré-cité, dé-limité, clivé comme séries d'effets dans le texte général.[41]

The apparent lack of literary qualities in Simon's fiction renders an application of van Dijk's conditions more difficult, for the absence of literariness may be a fiction. The presence of theoretical discourse cannot simply be deduced from the absence of contrary indications. Discovery of the enunciative function to be either literary or not is contingent upon the structuration of the narrative énoncé. Imposition of a physical topography on the text necessitates the delineation of contours, boundaries which define the nature of the control exerted by the author over his text. Simon's later works are remarkable for the degree of auto-reflexivity displayed by the text. A description of the material qualities of the énoncé reveals the redundancy

with which a transparency of discourse is attained.

The narrative énoncé is a textual segment supplying a part or component of the whole novel. In accordance with the principle of self-prescription, each novel formulates the interrelation of its own constituent elements. Van Rossum-Guyon notes this propensity in La Bataille de Pharsale. "Chaque roman nouveau propose précisément des procédés nouveaux (ainsi, par exemple La Bataille de Parsale (...) par rapport aux textes précédents de Claude Simon (...))."[42] The work of Claude Simon has progressively intensified its focus on the encoding process of the énoncé. Every novel may be taken to reflect a different stage in the progression. A study of the exact configuration of the énoncé in Simon's work is best incorporated into the analysis of each particular novel, although a preliminary typological survey will delimit the semiotic habitat of the énoncé.

The finite limits of the énoncé are marked by points of disjunction along the itinerary of the signifier, semantic blanks which demarcate the moment of transition between two states of affairs. These states are generally series of sentences, although the latter term invokes a sense of diacritical markings which are of secondary importance. Simon himself has noted that punctuation is an editorial task that he performs with his editor after the completion of the novel. Nevertheless, most of the points of

disjunction in his text do occur at natural syntactic breaks. Disjunction can, however, function within the categories of the signifier, the signified, and between the two dimensions.

Barilli's article "Neutralisation et Différence" presents the major areas for segmentation, "écarts différentiels" in the new novel as intra-littéral, littéral, extra-linguistique.[43] These terms are not intended for methodological precision but for illustration. Hence, intra-littéral refers to the anagrammatic and paragrammatic permutations which occur in Sollers, Lois and H at the microstructural level of the signifier, that of lexeme and morpheme.

Littéral describes the Ricardolian theory of generators, mots clefs which progress through a series of lexical redistributions and transformations and serve as points of departure around which series of anecdotes may be constructed. Pharsale, according to Ricardou, is an anagram for the text in progress. His article rereads Simon's title as "La bataille de la phrase". Ricardou examines the relationship between signified and signifier, linking the referential dimension of the stories woven around Pharsale to the organising or plotting function of the literal dimension, La phrase. Extra-linguistique is exemplified by Robbe-Grillet's insistence upon the importance of transition between signifieds. Barilli contrasts Ricardou's article on

<u>Projet pour une révolution à New York</u>, "La Fiction flam-
boyante"[44] in which Ricardou analyses the generative power
of words such as <u>rouge</u> as it migrates to <u>orgue</u>, <u>rogue</u>,
<u>goure</u> in different narrative sequences, with Robbe-Grillet's
explicit preoccupation with images of blood, fire and revo-
lution containing the concept of redness, but independently
of the term <u>rouge</u>.

Barilli's comparison indicates that the <u>énoncé</u> is not
necessarily an isolated segment, but that paradigmatic
crosscutting and overlapping is permissible. A single
<u>énoncé</u> may be analysed on different, mutually redundant
levels, as evidenced by the discussion of the sign as <u>lit-
téral</u> and <u>extra-linguistique</u>.

The distribution of the points of disjunction which
limit the <u>énoncé</u> imparts an air of artificiality to the
development of the story line. The passage from <u>énoncé</u> to
<u>énoncé</u> is in general motivated by apparently random colli-
sion of forms or concepts rather than by psychology. The
<u>énoncés</u> seem to associate syntactically or semantically
rather than on a pragmatic plane. Similarities between
words or images appear more important than purposeful be-
haviour. The <u>énoncé</u> present an aggregate of fragments in
motley disorder, a modern version of the "tale told by an
idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."[45] The
story lines, each involving an exposition, development and
denouement, are deformed by the inconsistency of

disjunctive activity. Reconstitution of the narratives would involve plotting a graph of discontinuous fragments, arrested moments of development. Valéry's image of Zeno's arrow serves as an introductory quotation to La Bataille de Pharsale. The trajectory of the anecdotes is to be viewed as a succession of motionless moments, in which teleological momentum is absent, a flight of arrows suspended in mid-air viewed successively at various points in their journey. The itinerary of each arrow can only be inferred, it is not made explicit.

The temporal and spatial dislocation of the story line, analysed extensively by Ricardou in his article on disco-herence in Les Corps conducteurs and Triptyque, presupposes at least one form of continuity, that in the pages of the text in the Minuit editions is to be found a consistent pattern from left to right and from top to bottom of each page. This convention of reading, explored by Ricardou in his article on Flaubert, "De Natura Fictionis,"[46] again appears in his study of the endoxenic properties of Simon's work.[47] It is a perspective which confines him, perhaps in a spirit of analogy, to a principle of linearity; the énoncés succeed each other spatially in contiguous if not coherent fashion.

In contrast, Simon's latest work, Leçon de Choses, has been analysed from the perspective of contextual asso-ciation by François Jost in "Les Aventures du lecteur." His

method, which he describes as contextual telestructuration, supposes that a metaphorical association between points of disjunction may span an indefinite number of intervening énoncés. The connoted association guarantees contiguity of the two énoncés on a level of metaphor, one at which the intercalated énoncés are no longer present. His model is derived from an earlier article on telestructural metonymic association in "Les téléstructures dans l'oeuvre de Robbe-Grillet" where he views the énoncé as a plane rather than a line, a two-dimensional surface in which the sequence of énoncés viewed by the reader of the text appears continuous but is in reality a number of énoncés distributed across a surface. Here any two énoncés may be contiguous if their metonymic association is of a different denotative order from that which connects them to their adjacent fellow in the body of the text.

Simon's later works permit the simultaneous application of the models of Jost and Ricardou. The redundancy evident amongst the competing levels of the linguistic sign is here repeated as the otiose co-presence of different structures of enunciative transmission at a given level. The orderly consecution of the énoncés becomes entangled in a skein of superimposed frames, each permitting a correct but partial reading.

In this manner the text reveals itself both as literature and as fiction. The lack of enunciative concision

creates the possibility of readings which are mutually
irrelevant and incoherent as a combined structure. The
mutual irreducibility of the varied structurations of the
énoncé obeys a principle of pleonasm inherent in van Dijk's
final three conditions for literariness. Presence of the
literary mode in turn implies that a falsification of art
as theory has occurred, it supposes that van Dijk's first
condition is present as a principle of polarisation.

Simon's works may be apprehended as novels by the
application of simultaneous and incompatible readings. In-
terpretation of each novel as the proffering of a particular
instance of fiction requires a method for apprehending the
enunciative structure in pragmatic terms as the trajectory
of authorial desire.

Simon's novels present a coherent Wildenian structure
in that the neutralisation of literary levels is accompanied
by the suppression of the subjective impulse. Desire is
characterised as inconsistent or disjunctive: the underly-
ing attraction to harmony or conjunction present only as a
synthesis of disjunction. Inconsistency is maintained as
a series of encounters between irreconcilable urges.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari present their article
"La synthèse disjonctive" as not being a commentary on
Klossowski, a gesture symptomatic of schizoid personality,
the subject of the article. Their definition of schizo-
phrenic behaviour is analogous to the attitude of Simon's

textual author, who is inscribed in his works as a series
of discontinuous movements, related in their mutual contra-
diction:

> Dans le processus schizophréniaue, les objets
> partiels, oraanes du désir, s'accrochent sur
> le corps sans oraanes. Lui, l'improductif,
> l'inconsommable, va servir de surface pour
> l'enregistrement de tout le procès de la
> production désirante et de la distribution
> opérée dans ce procès, les oraanes-machines,
> soit détraqués, soit en bon état, vont s'in-
> scrire ici, se suspendre comme des porte-manteaux
> sur le corps sans organes, comme la cravate
> ou la ceinture sur le corps rond d'Humpty-
> Dumpty. Ils s'inscrivent comme autant de points
> de disjonction entre lesauels se tissent tout
> un réseau de synthèses.[48]

Neutralisation of desire is effected by a process which
mirrors the obfuscation of literary aualities in Simon's
later works. The migration between narrative voices, be-
tween spatio-temporal perspectives and points of view,
creates an illusion of disjunction. Their passage leaves
a residue of reduplicated interests and affective aestures,
indicated by obsessional returns to preferred words and
images. As in the mirror imaae, the categories of tautolo-
ay and polarisation are now reversed in significance.
Whereas the polarisina force of the _énoncé_ determines the
nature of the illusion perpetrated on the reader by the
topography of the text, the reduplicative power of the
énoncé alleaorises the confiauration of authorial desires
through the recurrence of certain thematic elements.

If Simon's wishes were those of a theorist condemned

to write novels, one would expect his images to dramatise

his concerns as schizophrenically disjunctive:

> Ce serait méconnaître cet ordre de pensée que
> de faire comme si le schizophrène substituait
> aux disjonctions de vaques synthèses d'identi-
> fication des contradictoires, comme le dernier
> des philosophes hégéliens. Il ne substitue pas
> des synthèses de contradictoires aux synthèses
> disjonctives, mais à l'usage exclusif et limi-
> tatif de la synthèse disjonctive, il substitue
> un usage affirmatif, il est et reste dans la
> disjonction.[49]

As a novelist uninterested in theory, Simon might be

considered to be performing a ritual act of exorcism to

relieve him from his compulsion to express. Expression of

this urge finds solace in the illusion that the self has

been disseminated and desire for the other fulfilled. René

Girard qualifies the articulation of desire as a remedy for

the death which desire implies: "The ultimate meaning of

desire is death but death is not the novel's ultimate mean-

ing. The demons like raving madmen throw themselves into

the sea and perish. But the patient is cured."[50]

Simon's theoretical stance as a novelist indicates

divided loyalties, a division which projects man as torn be-

tween the affirmation of curative and self-divisive alterna-

tives. The first offers him an opportunity to vent his

sense of lifelessness upon the words he employs. He relives

his desire for change by imprinting the macula of his

otherness upon the text. Desecration of the transcendent

sign releases vitality in a manner akin to Samuel Beckett's

visualisation of Purgatory:

> Hell is the static lifelessness of unrelieved
> viciousness. Paradise the static lifelessness
> of unrelieved immaculation. Purgatory a flood
> of movement and vitality released by the con-
> junction of these two elements.[51]

Beckett's view of modern art in "Three Dialogues" sheds a different light on the remedial liberation of activity from its confining flood-gates. The cure envisaged by Girard does not drive out the demons perforce, it has its corollary in continued suffering, as though occasioned by the withholding of extreme unction. The patient has not now been freed, but is condemned to live in a purgatorial environment. He exists as other for the self, obliged to express the rantings of his familiars in an environment to which he brings the total lack of resources of an outsider: "The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express."[52]

Purgatory is the locus of a vitalising conjunction of elements, a life-giving source; it may also sequester the sufferer in a living death, the claustration of the disjunctive synthesis, as both monk and beast. Images of creation and extinction, extreme meanings of desire, are frequent in Simon's works, matched in a counterpoint of acceptance and denial.

The shape of authorial desire is generated by the mediating function of the narrative énoncé, which connects

the twin systems of the text, topographical distribution
and interpretive motivation. The énoncé itself serves as a
synthesis of discontinuous agents, imparting the consonance
of constitutive interpretation to the separate components
of physical configuration and teleological intention. Some-
what audaciously, the task of the énoncé might be compared
to a labour of love, the idealised role of the rainbow
bridge summoned by the imagination of Margaret in Howards
End; a symbol of union between the prose and the passion of
human expression:

> Margaret greeted her lord with peculiar tenderness
> on the morrow. Mature as he was, she might yet
> be able to help him to the building of the rainbow
> bridge that should connect the prose in us with
> the passion. Without it we are meaningless frag-
> ments, half monks, half beasts, unconnected arches
> that have never joined into a man. With it love
> is born and alights on the highest curve, glowing
> against the gray, sober against the fire.[53]

In the spirit of Forster's introductory admonition to
the reader, "Only connect....", the method proposed for an
appreciation of the énoncé in Simon's later works is a com-
parative reading of the énoncé. The structural poles of the
énoncé, stasis and mobility, are interlinked by their depen-
dency on each other. Neither is self-sufficient, and so
each is connected to the other in that it contains the
other's virtual presence as an absence, a deficit of inte-
grity. Absence can furnish the utility of what is present,
as preached from the origins of philosophy in the doctrine
of Taoism. Lao-Tzu illustrates the cooperative potential

of presence and absence, indicating the hole in the wheel's
hub, the hollow encircled by the pot, the emptiness of
doors and windows; as in Wilden's analysis of the game of
chess, instrument and purpose unite as indispensable count-
erparts:

> Thirty spokes are united around the hub to make
> a wheel,
> > But it is on its non-being that the utility
> > of the carriage depends.
> Clay is molded to form a utensil,
> > But it is on its non-being that the utility
> > of the pot depends.
> Doors and windows are cut out to make a room,
> > But it is on its non-being that the utility
> > of the room depends.
> Therefore turn being into advantage, and turn
> non-being into utility.[54]

A more recent demonstration of the interaction between
presence and absence, the Eucharist, is described by Louis
Marin in _Les figures du discours_ in a manner which suggests
the discursive operation of the narrative _énoncé_. The
bread and the wine visibly represent the absent body and
blood of Christ, and are transubstantiated into the latter
by the act of consecration. No visible change occurs, but
the bread and the wine are taken to be present only in terms
of their absence. They are bread and wine _qua_ body and
blood, just as the text is present _qua_ passion:

> Car le pain et le vin, une fois consacrés,
> sont ici maintenant, pain et vin sans l'être:
> car le corps et le sang de Jésus absents sont
> cependant visiblement le pain et le vin sur
> l'autel.[55]

In the coming chapters the _énoncé_ will be analysed in
the narratives of four novels. Each will be considered as

a coherent semiotic structure in which versimilitude is
simultaneously present and absent as a movement of différ-
ance on both the material and the intentional planes,
dimensions which in turn interact as presence and absence.
Interpretation of the enunciative structure of novelistic
semiosis will divulqe a series of mosaics which represent
successive phases of purgatorial man beset with the con-
flictual yet comfortinq task of self-portrayal.

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CHAPTER III

A PURGATORIAL PARADOX

THE anatomy of purgatory which informs Beckett's essay
on Joyce, "Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce",[1] strips the term of
its strict Catholic meaning of a remission from damnation.
The temporal expiation of guilt through suffering is more
broadly readdressed as a structurally symmetrical confront-
ation between two inimical states, heaven and hell. The
"flood of movement and vitality"[2] occurring as they conjoin
proves unexpectedly eschatological in his later fiction and
drama: the reaction is entropic. Salvation and damnation
are imprinted upon the idea of purgatory as an Augustine's
Janus-faced thief. The first law of thermodynamics, con-
servation, is conditioned by the second, entropy; just as
the redemption of the first thif is complemented by the
condemnation of the second. "Do not despair; one of the
thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was
damned."[3]

Beckett states his interest as relating to the shape
of Augustine's ideas. It is the shape he has already noted
in the work of Joyce as creating the optical illusion of
paradox. The spherical appearance of Joycean purgatory
leaves the outcome of conflict between virtue and vice

in doubt, for although "the vicious circle of humanity is being achieved,"[4] it is by means of a bidirectional movement of flux. Unlike Dante's conical culminating purgatory, there is no apogee. Beckett's image does not so much convey a revolution which completes yet continues its circular track as it does the suggestion of a rotational confusion, rather like a wheel which, turning at certain speeds, appears to reverse its movement. The intimation of a contradictory motion does not impede the wheel's forward progress; it does satisfy the mind's need to interpret a continuous momentum which defies measurement by the senses alone. A discontinuous progression in a different plane is automatically applied as a yardstick of the wheel's behaviour, upon reflection the evidence is rejected as inappropriate, but the illusion remains.

The critical faculty must operate in a climate of dispassionateness if it is to manifest the impartiality requisite to abolish a self-deception. La Bataille de Pharsale finds a compelling leit-motiv in the fate of a Roman soldier condemned to purgatorial suffering. He must live with the feeling of his death in addition to undergoing a particularly violent death: a sword thrust so powerful that it passes through his mouth to emerge at the nape of his neck:

> non pas la mort qui est le châtiment
> réservé à tous mais après ton destin

> fatal le sentiment de ta mort il recut
> dans la bouche un si violent coup de.[5]

The intensity of pain so induced is hardly conducive to
a detached attitude, containing as it does a principle of
self-prolongation. Yet if art can and is to remain aloof
from such all-embracing sentiment, it behooves the artist
to adopt the quality of iconoclasm:

> le massacre aussi bien que l'amour est
> un prétexte à glorifier la forme dont la
> splendeur calme apparaît seulement à
> ceux qui ont pénétré l'indifférence de
> la nature devant le massacre et l'amour.
> (BP; p. 119)

The novel is a testing ground for the criterion of
indifferentism. It has become fashionable to separate the
prefix <u>pre</u> from the word text by a hyphen: pre-text, in
Simonian criticism, liberating the text proper from the
feelings which precede its composition. The alleviation
from suffering so obtained proceeds from a penetration of
love and death as masks cloaking nature's impassivity, or
conversely from a desire to see in form the false measure
of human emotions properly irreducible to analytical me-
thods. The first contingency offers actual relief, the
second an illusion of salvation. <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u>
sets the two at loggerheads.

John Sturrock has distinguished the work of Claude
Simon from the absurdist tradition by remarking a dis-
passionate tolerance of necessity in Simon's attitude in
contrast to the polemical endurance of deprivation:

> The moral equivalent therefore of Simon's
> prescribed acceptance of flux is
> indifferentism. (...) He is trying to
> establish a fundamental truth and, like
> Robbe-Grillet, he criticizes the philosophers
> of the absurd for erecting the absurd itself
> into an idol, and for positing a non-existent
> ideal order of things against which reality can
> be measured and found wanting.[6]

Sturrock begins his chapter with a reference to the

manliness of Simon's novels and communicates the notion

of a vigorous indifferentism on the part of the novelist,

one achieved as much by prescription as by acceptance. The

inertia of the latter's response is prompted by a teleolo-

gical drive, a doctrinaire abstention from moralistic con-

cerns. Sturrock's commentary, when applied to the work of

the novelist itself, indicates a tension in the achievement

of indifference not altogether dissimilar from the structure

of repression in the absurdist imagery of Beckett. Patterns

of convergence and divergence around a missing core or ful-

crum recur as representations of liberation through purpose-

ful confinement.

La Dernière Bande is remarkable in that one of the

interlocutors is a tape-recorder, staging itself as the

instrument of desire and reflecting the impulse of Krapp

in the expanding and contracting rotation of its spools.

The tapes themselves have no centre, they are restricted to

the precise mechanical motion of the machine with its ex-

truding knobs and switches, in order to free their secret.

The role played by the machine in deciphering meaning

is taken for granted by the audience, and unlike so many of the contraptions in Beckett's failing universe, the tape-recorder is surprisingly reliable.

The narrator of La Bataille de Pharsale takes issue with the automatic assumption of the decoding operation as a given and dramatises the failure of any a priori system to explicate the truth of secrecy. Meaning is not to be decanted from a sealed blue print but inhabits the parenthesis of art. It is approachable as a contradictory series of formal gestures poised in balletic counterpoint and irreducible to any unilateral scheme of rationalisation.

The narrator attempts to anatomise the substance of the novel's composition at "O". As the figurative core of the novel this section explains the coordination of the narrator's field of vision and the consequent appearance of his perceived world. "O" is the literary equivalent of the tape-recorder. A cybernetic comparison of the two reveals the human limitations of the narrator in encoding and decoding a message. The passage may be defined as a meta-textual interpretive act which falls considerably short of exhaustive explication. The attempt to supply a methodological tool gains a partly disfunctional instrument.

Like the novel itself, symbolised in the presence of the decaying Proustian intertexts and combine harvester, the critical apparatus is shown in the act of shrinking towards the vanishing point from whence it emerged. "O" is a

digressive analysis which attempts to deal with hopeless complexity. Unlike Alice's cat it is fated to achieve a self-cancelling expression despite no lack of substance. The opening line, "Repartir, reprendre à zéro," becomes the refrain which aborts an interpretive gesture uncertainly facing a plethora of conical perceptual domains and orders. The geometric enterprise resigns itself progressively to inadequacy, becoming content with an impressionistic rendition of the whole as a series of expansions and contractions around fixed points. The sole guiding principle is the Protean unpredictability of continuous self-deformation.

> Et si l'on tient également compte que
> dans l'exposé ci-dessus on a simplifié
> la figure en choisissant une seule coupe
> pratiquée selon un plan vertical et
> dans un moment donné (et que l'on
> pourrait concevoir quantité d'autres
> schémas, d'autres coupes, soit dans
> l'espace (horizontale ou obliques),
> soit encore dans le temps), on doit
> se figurer l'ensemble du système
> comme un mobile se déformant autour
> de quelques rares points fixes. (BP; p. 181)

The passage "0" at this point loses its explicative concision in polysemic confusion and discards any resemblance to its title; the writing becomes a reflection of the novel's self-deforming pattern. Throughout the passage the term "0" itself has migrated between characters as an identifying label, between geometrical figures as a spatial coordinate and between narratorial observation points in the further realms of time and of the atemporal or oneiric dimension. As the mise-en-abyme of its creator's thwarted

desire for a geometrically pure form "0"'s very composition
now assumes a defensive posture. It is prismatically dis-
torted to double as a mobile, deflectino the strictures
imposed by the self-analytical gesture. The imaqe of the
mobile sprinqs from the conceptual convolutions which pre-
cede it, and is reflected in the complexity of the syntax.
The description, by virtue of its intended clarity, attains
an impossibly vaoue condition, one opposite to the function
of the tape-recorder. The logic of "0"'s proposition is
hypothetical, whereas that of the tape-recorder is cateoor-
ical. Althouoh defective by the standards reauired of the
latter instrument, "0" is a hiohly effective and purposive
tract, one which refines the notion of indifferentism by
subjectino form to the rioour of an unexpected looic. Krapp
must process his memories sequentially throuqh a machine
which quarantees them as unassailably discrete from their
fellows by reason of their location upon the spool. No such
inviolability inheres in the composition of La Bataille de
Pharsale, where the rare fixed points are, as Simon else-
where concurs, no more than intersections (BP; p. 186).
They impart a multidirectional complexity to the events
recorded by conferrinq a principle of simultaneity upon the
decodinq process. The collision of two temporal orders,
synchronic and diachronic, permits the conjunction of two
manners of interpretation. A readino of nature's subordi-
nation to human drama, evidenced when followino the

syntagmatic ribbon of chronological order, is subjected to
a compositional harmonisation at the points of intersection.
The overlapping of sequences is paradigmatic of a departure
from the endless cycle of love and death. Here the work
of art seeks an atemporal symmetry framed by the exigencies
of linguistic interplay and guided by human intervention.
The solace to be derived from the narrative construction of
La Bataille de Pharsale is, ironically, both real and imagi-
nary for the artist as he departs from linear time, for the
act of giving abstract form to his suffering is guided by a
fresh evocation of feeling, now relived beyond the moment
of its death.

The admixture of illusion and reality characterising
the narrator's strategy for reviewing his past is made
explicit as paradox from the novel's inception. The inter-
penetration of form and feeling is revealed in its full com-
plexity in an introductory reference to Zeno. Paradox is to
be understood as an apparent and a flat contradiction in
terms in the above acceptation, it reveals and defers mean-
ing. The two terms, form and feeling, are each revealed as
containing a principle of the other, thereby deferring the
ascendancy of one over the other. It is the truth of para-
dox which is enlisted to administer to love and death as to
indifferentism the physic which will render them their true
colours. Feeling ceases to be a mere facade for form and
vice versa as they are conjoined into the divided self of

paradox.

Encapsulated in an excerpt from Valéry's Cimetière
Marin the celebrated paradoxes from Zeno, those of the
arrow's flight and Achilles and the tortoise are cited as
epigraphic principles for the first panel of the novel's
triptychous structure. A philosopher of the Eleatic school
and a disciple of Parmenides, Zeno sought to illustrate
the latter's doctrine of the incompatibility of continuity
with discontinuity. An infinitely divisible whole cannot
reasonably be measured as a finite total by calculating the
sum of its innumerable parts. Zeno translates the notion
of impossible addition into a rejection of the concept of
motion through time and space. The fate of Achilles is
never to succeed in overtaking the tortoise, the indefinite
reduction of the fractional distance separating the two
competitors is an asymptotic and in the final analysis tele-
ophobic reckoning. The arrow's flight carries to a reasoned
conclusion the refutation of movement along a continuum.
The arrow, at any given moment motionless in flight, cannot
strike its target since it must traverse an infinite number
of points in order to travel a finite distance. Zeno's
demonstrations are concluded in the language of paradox in
that they must initially bow to the self-evidence offered
to the senses, namely that Achilles does win, just as the
arrow does arrive at its destination. Only then can the
obvious be contested and reduced to a perfunctory category

of appearances. The harmonious co-presence of two irreducible orders of intelligibility, continuity and discontinuity, purveys language as a bracketing or principle of deferral. The ineluctable trajectory of the arrow is temporally dislocated by the logic of Zeno's argument.

In Valéry's poem the cycle of human experience occupies the parenthesis of its representation. Birth and extinction inhabit the perfidious assonance of conflict, and in their turn determine the genesis and exodus of the latter:

> Zénon! Cruel Zénon! Zénon d'Elée!
> M'as-tu percé de cette flèche ailée
> Qui vibre, vole, et qui ne vole pas!
> Le son m'enfante et la flèche me tue! (BP; p. 7)

The first person form is both a reference to the human subject, the poem's enunciative voice, and to its linguistic body the pronoun shifter, in this case also a synecdochic Doppelgänger for the work itself. The poem's divided self is born of the vibrating messenger of death, itself a resonant harbinger of the poem's demise. As a celebration of birth the pleasant symmetry of language assumes the death-dealing guise of the arrow. Yet the arrow does not seem to fly, which permits the poem's single astonished moment, a délai suggested by the tautological expansion "Zénon d'Elée", to bear lyrical witness to the unexpected and morbid vitality of the arrow stationary in flight. Even as the poem creates its own parenthetical space, it accommodates and mirrors the fate of the speaker.

The ensuing portrait of Achilles crystallises as a pictorial oxymoron the rapid progress of a stationary solar figure across the heavens. The poem is now fully ensconced within the third person hiatus of its paradox where events are experienced not as action but as shadowed images:

> Ah! le soleil... Quelle ombre de tortue
> Pour l'âme. Achille immobile à grands pas!
> (BP; p. 7)

The first paradox furnished by Valéry valorises each extreme of the poetic gesture in terms of its complement. The poem's linguistic shape cannot come to life without being implicated in the experience of mortality, the arrow is fecund only in its lethal consequence. Conversely the poem's imprisoned human subject, the narrative voice, cannot participate by direct intervention, it is free only to regard the death-like stylisation of its own statement mirrored in the arrested time of the image.

An insistence upon the necessary complementarity of art and life reveals the artist's dilemma. The pleonastic recourse to a second paradox, that of Achilles and the tortoise depicts the poem's measured gait as a shadow upon the soul. Zeno's arrow, like language occupies the domain of discontinuous structures; the vital elan of the poet's being is checked and held in the plodding grasp of the linguistic fragment. Even as the poet achieves Achillean immortality his progress is halted, his substance linguistically restructured. Symbolically the tortoise suggests

the mortality of the soul; it is the animal capable not only
of retracting its limbs but by its imperceptible motion of
simulating the stasis of inanimation, presenting a dark
side of the sun. Seen as the instrument of Thanatos, the
arrow,like the tortoise, brings about death by immobilisa-
tion. The logic of the arrow's flight has fatal consequen-
ces for the very notion of flight. As with Beckett's
marriage of heaven and hell, however, the shape of the
ideas engenders vitality. The artist's paradoxes are a
demonstration of the absence of vital signs, yet, like
Cupid's arrow, they are lodged in a fertile mould of con-
flictual proportion, generating the coupling of their parts.

The quotation from Valéry is unlike the extracts from
Proust and Heidegger which serve to introduce the second and
third portions of the novel respectively in that the exper-
ience of paradox is directly purgatorial. The suffering
induced by the poetic experience accompanies and threatens
to engulf the statement as the exclamation "Ah! le soleil.."
produces a hiatus in the series of exclamations.

The refrain "Je souffrais comme..." (BP; p. 59) per-
forms a similar function non nova sed nove in the first
panel of La Bataille de Pharsale, when the shape of inter-
secting images introduced by the narrator momentarily over-
whelm him. The phrase finds its contradiction in the inter-
ruptory assertion "je ne souffrais pas" (BP; p. 73). Nega-
tion of the theme of suffering is likewise phonetically

paralleled by a second refrain "je ne savais pas" (BP; p. 81) which returns to the narrator's painful astonishment at the horror of death. The implication is that he now knows what he did not before, but it is in turn countered by a return to the present tense, "je ne sais pas" (BP; p. 81). The experience is further associated by the adverb "comme" to the presence of jealousy. "Disant que la jalousie est comme..." (BP; p. 20)

Jealousy is structurally defined by the text as occupying a topographical location: "jalousie ou donc page de droite en haut" (BP; p. 90). The newspaper being read by the narrator defines the topology of the page in terms of the view partially obscured by the upper right hand corner of the page:

> Journal peut-être pour se dissimuler ou
> justifier déployé le bord supérieur des
> feuilles dessinant un angle obtus
> largement ouvert au ras duquel il peut
> voir la fenêtre et juste sur le côté
> de la page droite la porche de l'immeuble.
> (BP; p. 64)

The term "jalousie", perhaps in deference to the novel by Robbe-Grillet bearing that title, is to be read as a play on words. Jealousy is associated to the shuttered window behind which sits the narrator's uncle, himself the victim of a jealous passion, while the branches of the pomegranate play their shadows over the screened surface:

> leur ombre jouant sur ces volets toujours
> obstinément clos et lui derrière dans
> cette odeur sûre de moût d'alcool de

> choses en décomposition comme un
> cadavre jalousie page de droite vers
> le haut. (BP; p. 38)

Jealousy, etymologically related to zeal, is revealed as a
blind passion feeding upon suspicion in an obsessional pat-
tern of circular behaviour. It is fuelled by the obstacle
that it itself constitutes to the direction of its own
vision. Its two aspects, desire and blindness are manifest
in the play on words which differentiates the will to know
from the impenetrability of knowledge. The displacement of
desire back toward the self is morbid, even cadaverous, for
it is itself an entombed passion. The newspaper too func-
tions as a blind; by an accident of its unfolding the news-
paper appears as jealousy itself to the narrator, an identi-
fication so unexpected as to remain unsuspected to others.
Less accurately, the narrator appears to be reading the
newspaper while he is, in fact, surveying the windows of the
building opposite where he believes an infidelity is taking
place. Prevented by his mask from revealing his true acti-
vity and feelings, he is condemned to ostracism in self-
defeating torment. Desire is thwarted at every turn, sty-
listically by negation and truncated simile, physically by
the printed page and the inaccessible hotel room, to which
the modes of entry, visual and physical, are perceived as
hostile obstacles. Upon entering the hotel the narrator
will suffer injury, breaking a bone in his hand as he
strikes at the unyielding surface of the bedroom door.

The solipsism of the narrator's affective environment is frequently taken to more than mirror an onomastic propensity in language. The Roussellian thesis holds that human drama is but a pretext for the random spontaneity of word play. It has been adopted by the Cerisy line of criticism on Claude Simon's work. The intrusion of psychological determinism of the sort which makes of La Bataille de Pharsale a novel about jealousy is to be carefully avoided by critic and novelist alike according to such a tenet. Language becomes the locus of a schizophrenic disjunction from reality, its behaviour synthetized by a self-sufficient interplay of signs. The above-mentioned position offers the temptation of attributing deterministic powers to the sign itself in arbitrary fashion. It also deprives language of a dimension immanent to its utterance, that of the indwelling author. Human experience is reduced to a concatenation of signifiers and signifieds, the two-dimensional by-product of the use of language.

Jean Ricardou's work often privileges certain novelistic signs for no apparent reason. Ricardou submits that yellow is one of the signifiers which determines the nature of La Bataille de Pharsale: "le jaune est l'une des exigences à laquelle doit se soumettre La Bataille de Pharsale."[7] Yellow is, as Ricardou suggests, frequently associated with black in the novel and does play an extensive symbolic role relative to the pigeon and its connotation of

war. No less so does the opposition between red and green, entirely neglected by Ricardou, which serves as a leit-motiv throughout Simon's novels including La Bataille de Pharsale,linking in war-like struggle the signs of Eros and Thanatos. To interpret the novel's title as "La Bataille de la phrase", the heading of Ricardou's essay, is to create a precedent for unbridled ludicity. Randi Birn noted the possibility that Simon is playing a "farce sale"[8] on the reader. Discovery of the bottle of aperitif, "SAINT RAPHAEL" in the text of the novel may well yet lead to speculation about the anagram La Bataille de S Raphael with overtones of embattled painters and archangels. The parsimonious guarantee of synthesis offered by language qua arbitrariness is simply the ongoing interpretive prospect of polysemic contradiction, a principle recognised but not ob-served by Ricardou.

The play on the word "jalousie" indicates linguisti-cally the structuration of a behaviour to which the narra-tor is subject. Language is not ludicity but lucidity. The narrator is enmeshed in an automatic pattern of conduct. Not so the words he uses, which confer the principle of self-awareness, the quality of the literariness and the realm of the indwelling author upon the text.

The passion which compels the narrator is not directly susceptible of perception. It is for this reason inaccurate to speak of the narrator's actions as a deliberate mask.

What he appears to be doina, readina the newspaper, and
what he is actually doing, studying the window opposite,
are for him merged into one confused activity. Lanquaoe,
here the medium for self-portrayal, is the repository of
a self-consciousness irretrievable by the narrator. He is
unable to decode the depiction of his own anauish. In the
first part of the novel conjecture runs rife when the open-
ing pages are subsequently discussed in interior monoloaue:

> peut-être parce que le piaeon s'est trouvé
> dans cette phase du vol juste au moment où
> il s'est interposé entre le soleil et l'oeil.
> (BP; p. 41)

By resortina to the act of critical commentary the
narrator interposes a further hindrance to direct express-
ion. He attempts to recuperate verbal flux bv a reductive
nominalism, as if namina the piaeon will serve as a palli-
ative and a clue to aid him in the disentanolement of a
fevered jumble of impressions. J.A.E. Loubère expands a
comment by Deguy on Le Palace in the direction of the life-
lessness which awaits the protagonist, by whom she means
the narrator. He suffers from an inability to articulate
his own human drama which subtends his description:

> A profusion of objects recorded, the rapid
> succession of views provides a preliminary
> sense of constant motion, but, as Michel Deauy
> in his essay on The Palace (1962) observes,
> description in the shape of inventory is
> like "a desperate attempt to arasp at what
> is takino fliaht." In fliaht the lona parade
> of objects appears strangelv hieratic, repeti-
> tive, mechanical, hallucinatorv, and the novel's
> protaaonist struaales in vain to reanimate a

sequence of flat images and restore density to
the outlines of vanished forms.[9]

The narrator attempts to comprehend a delirious flight of
images by assuming the deductive role of the analyst. The
orderly world of commentary shows itself to be ill-adapted
to the text. His attempts at interpretation are consistent-
ly denotative and wooden, lacking the flexibility of imagin-
ative association requisite to plumb the wealth of connota-
tive resources in his writing. The narrator is fated to
experience his writing as a self-deforming mobile and to
respond to it as such.

Loubère speaks of Simon's attempt to capture sense
impressions within their temporal and circumstantial context
as a painterly project:

> Yet, whatever the means of capture, (by a prise de
> vue) there is a pause, a hiatus between the world
> of moving images and the act that registers them.
> This hiatus is the area that Simon (who was once
> a painter) persistently explores.[10]

Simon considers himself to be a peintre raté: David Carroll
considers Simon's novels akin to non-representational art.[11]
The narrator as critic conceals his failure to understand
his writing by seeing it in a non-representational aspect.
He promulgates his partial insight by attempting to write
the final section of the novel as an anti-representational
piece and further estranges himself from the self-reflective
quality of his writing within a self-deception of planome-
tric psychology.

Writing, like desire, is enfolded within a structural

complication. The novelist is screened from the object of his attention and interprets the object as the screen, "jalousie" instead of love, non-representation instead of representation. Randi Birn describes Simon's artistic project in an article, "Proust, Claude Simon and the Art of the Novel," without acknowledging the presence of an inversion of the object of and obstacle to writing. The first part of the work is viewed as a failure on the part of the narrator to write a Proustian novel:

> In part 1 Simon describes the futile attempt
> of the protagonist to obtain a harmonious
> vision of the world through restoration of
> images taken from a personal and historical
> past. The protagonist's failure parallels
> that of the narrator to write a novel based
> on the Proustian quest model.[12]

Birn interprets the appearance of the word Marcel written in pencil on a wall as the presence of Proust. The depredation of imitators has defaced the work of this literary predecessor. In the passage to which Birn refers, the word Marcel is already out of place; as a label it is curiously pristine. Its appearance, unlike the rest of the wall, does not betray an attempt at ruination. It seems to be a nominalist post-script which fantasizes control of the rest of the wall, the fresh wound which assimilates the memory of all scars:

> La peinture des murs était éraflée et
> rayée, comme couverte de cicatrices,
> quelquefois involontaires (...), d'autres
> fois volontaires, quoique sans motivations
> précises, à part un nom ("Marcel) griffonné

> au crayon, les mains qui avaient laissé
> là leurs traces paraissant le plus souvent
> s'être attachées à perfectionner les
> dépradations antérieures, comme, par exemple,
> agrandir un trou ou creuser avec soin des
> croisillons. (BP; p. 21)

Birn follows closely the reading invited by the narrator as critic, in which his failure to comprehend his writing becomes an attempt to break down the order of the traditional novel. Birn does not perceive her reading as pertaining only to the fantasy life of the narrator anxious to subordinate his creation to the confines of his own understanding:

> In part one of La Bataille de Pharsale the
> protagonist's and the narrator's attempts
> to create artistic wholeness through recovery
> of an historical and personal past are doomed
> to become unintegrated juxtapositions of images.[13]

Birn surmises that the narrator will only be able to create new designs when the name Marcel has been effaced. The evidence of the first part of the novel does not contest this point of view. The narrator is hemmed about by the inadequacy of his response. The first panel of the triptych ends in an inability to describe the latest object of his gaze. He is left ensconced in a twilight world, his curiosity exhausted as his line of vision is progressively emptied of noteworthy images: "Le couple ne présente rien de particulier" (BP; p. 98). At face value the end of the first phase of the triptych does obliterate the name of Marcel in a symbolic way, the new order of the second panel seems to dawn in a light of salvation. Ironically, Proust reappears as

the presiding epigraphic figure, holding forth hope that
the immaterial presence, thought, may subtend the relation
of the image to concrete reality:

> Il y avait peut-être sous ces signes quelque
> chose de tout autre que je devais tâcher de
> découvrir, une pensée qu'ils traduisaient
> à la façon de ces caractères hiéroglyphiques
> qu'on croirait représenter seulement des
> objets matériels. (BP; p. 99)

The implicit incongruity of an emergent Proustian
order justifies close examination of the narrator's preten-
sions. In order for the novel to retain its characteristic
of paradox, the narrator must conceal his alienation from
his own literary endeavour within a false sense of achieve-
ment. A counterpoint is to be maintained between the real
relief that writing brings and the illusion of relief that
apparent mastery of the writing process accords.

The narrator displays a determination to use the con-
tradictory structure of paradox itself as a manner of trans-
cending his condition. He renders the task of discrimina-
tion between his possible roles extremely delicate and crit-
cial to a reading of the novel as intrinsically paradoxical.
If he succeeds in reorganizing his environment as no more
than a flat contradiction in terms than he will have de-
signed purgatory as a form of liberation. It will expel him
from a self-cancelling bondage at the completion of its
cycle.

The mid-section of <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> prepares the

strategy of structural inversion. A cartoon in the news-paper attracts the narrator's attention by virtue of its triptychous composition. It provides a "mise en abyme" of the narrator's project: the inversion of rotational direction upon reaching the final panel:

> Les trois images côte à côte dans leur
> ordre de lecture (c'est à dire de gauche
> à droite (...) composant, peut-être à l'insu
> du dessinateur, une sorte de triptyque où
> l'on passerait de la première image à la
> troisième par une rotation (un rabattement)
> d'un demi-cercle, le centre étant exactement
> occupé par la bouche sanglante de la femme
> dont la vision est immédiatement encadrée
> à droite et à gauche par l'appareil mural dont
> la place du premier au troisième dessins
> s'est trouvée inversé, comme si l'image
> intermédiaire, (l'Eve perfide) se trouvait en
> somme à l'intérieur de l'appareil, comme si
> la voix n'était pas celle d'un être de chair
> mais celle-là même de la boîte metallique
> accrochée au mur. (BP; pp. 69-70)

The optical illusion of contradictory movement is in evidence in the reversal of the order of reading which appears normal only at first, "c'est à dire de gauche à droite." The image of bidirectional movement reflects the balance of the whole novel, which reverses movement at its midpoint to achieve complete reification of the narrative's vitality. The term of comparison "comme" is speculative, announcing the fiction of an automation to replace the flesh and blood of the perfidious Eve. The final panel of the novel will embody this principle in what might be described as a reversal of the powers of Pygmalion; the moment of infidelity is artistically resculpted as stone:

> O dit Chut! et s'immobilise. Les deux corps
> restent ainsi, comme changés en pierre. (BP; p.
> 216)

The repression of a chaotic welter of movement announces
the emergence of art as a calm sublimation of love and
death.

The canvas transforms the subject - jealousy - into
a transcendent harmony of colour:

> L'harmonie générale du tableau repose sur
> l'accord des verts sombres et du rose chaud,
> légèrement grisé, des corps nus. Au dos de
> la carte postale, dans la partie réservée à
> la correspondance en haut, le titre du
> tableau, après le nom du peintre en
> majuscules (LUCAS CRANACH d. Ä) est répété en
> trois langues: Die Fifersucht - Envv - La
> Jalousie." (BP; p. 228)

The intimation of statuesque death lies in the faint sug-
gestion of grey, a subtle deterioration of colour which
accompanies the interplay of red and green. The growing
repression of flesh tones has two distinct facets in its
composition. It is a manifestation of the lifelessness
which awaits the narrator, as J.A.E. Loubere suggests. It
also provides the optical illusion of regression, of
"rabattement", which will endow the narrator with a world
of sanctuary from the baneful vitality of the images which
have sapped the vigour of his own response. In the second
case the narrator suborns his critical powers to a false
interpretation of his environment, imparting an illusionary
appearance of immortality to the ineluctable process of
decay. David Carroll reflects the narrator's strategy quite

succinctly in his comments on an engraving of Barcelona in
the novel Histoire, the one immediately preceding La
Bataille de Pharsale. Carroll analyses the nature of re-
pression in both perception and history. Order is achieved
by an elimination of conflict. Sensory impressions are re-
cognised and political systems imposed by an elimination of
their perpetual or historical context, which is at odds
with the will to order. For a single structure to stand
forth from its background, the competing elements must be
repressed. Such an event is inherently contradictory. "The
impossibility of maintaining such an order is evident in the
act of repression itself."[14] In order to countermand re-
pression in history or in perceptual space, the direction of
the repression, synchronic for the sense of sight, diachron-
ic for the case of history, must be reversed:

> History must be read synchronically in order to
> undermine its assumed linearity, and space must
> be read diachronically in order to undermine its
> apparently closed nature.[15]

The engraving of Barcelona depicts struggle itself.
It is open in its frame of reference, permitting successive
generations of readers to view the course of history as
conflict. The text of the engraving manages to thwart re-
pression by depicting the formlessness of anarchy. The
Spanish Civil War of the twentieth century can be read into
the representation of nineteenth century Barcelona, time
has no linear value with which to create an orderly per-
spective on history.

The narrator of <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> bears witness
to the steady repression of conflictual space in his writing
but does so in such a way as to make it appear that he is
in fact in control, attaining disorder of a non-representa-
tional category. He can profit from the confusion in terms
to promote his ascendancy over time. The second panel of
the triptych paves the way for the narrator's penetration
into the timeless dimension of an art seeminoly free from
the baleful auspices of Zeno's arrow. The steady attrition
of the white noise of impressions continues from the
vertiqinous kaleidoscope of the opening pages into
"Bataille", the opening sequence of the second section. By
a subornation of the logic of his perception the narrator
will present silence as tumult, the inaudibility of undif-
ferentiated clamour:

> presque tous ont la bouche ouverte sans
> doute crient-ils aussi les uns de douleur
> les autres pour s'exciter au combat le
> tumulte est à ce point ou l'on n'entend
> plus rien. (BP; p. 122)

The sequence entitled "Bataille" is faithful to the
precept which figures in the introductory quotation from
Proust. It attempts to plumb the resources of a particular
image as a hieroqlyph in order to fathom the ideas invested
paradigmatically in material forms. The passage opens
blithely upon a neutral topic, the weather, "Il fait beau"
(BP; p. 101) mornina has emerged from night, cleansed
"comme (...) quand il a plu la veille" (BP; p. 101)

bringing with it no signs of impending overcast skies,
"avant que la chaleur ne l'embrume ou le plombe" (BP; p.
101). The experience of the previous day, the preceding
panel of the text, has apparently purged the image to its
most pleasant neutrality, "le ciel est d'un bleu léger,
lavé" (BP; p. 101). The way is prepared for the second
face of purgatory, the first phase of Augustine's parataxis,
in the form of a revitalising vertigo which will be more
fully developed in the final section of the second panel,
"O", as a mobile, a model for the flow of narratorial
consciousness: "le ciel semble pivoter imperceptiblement
autour d'un point fixe, situé à l'infini" (BP; p. 102). The
contradiction is achieved as a circle in which noise inten-
sifies to nothingness.

The following sections dwell upon images of death,
imbricating the subject of the work, Caesar's victory at
Pharsalus, into the effluvium of past memories redolent of
decay and of oblivion. The narrator's attempts to come to
terms with his past have undergone a change in nature. He
no longer seeks to locate the past in the topography of the
real world. The plains of Pharsalia are inscrutable, hold-
ing none of the funereal aspect of Caesar as the narrator
remembers him from childhood. The trip south from Farsala
bears little resemblance to schoolboy associations of Caesar
and death:

de ce pondérable et sévère personnage qui

> contemplait le champ de bataillle de Pharsale
> de ses yeux aux prunelles creusées dans le
> bronze, froid, ambitieux et concis, coulé
> dans ce métal dont la couleur funèbre
> évoquait en même temps pour moi l'odeur
> caractéristique de la peinture dont on enduit
> dans les collèges les pupitres des écoliers.
> (BP; p. 127)

The narrator now seeks accommodation of his quest for a meaningful reintegration of the past into the present in the realm of representation. In the section entitled "Voyage", the narrator pauses before the representation of blind Orion by Poussin. The giant is walking towards the rising sun's light. Poussin's concept of hollow space englobes the spectator, "entourant de toutes parts le spectateur même" (BP; p. 160), unlike the work of della Francesca or Ucello; the narrator is compelled to use the English term "movement into space" (BP; p. 160) to communicate the complexity of this response. Orion is disappearing, yet remains present and gigantic, thus avoiding the fate of the vanished Guerrier, "s'enfonçant le spectateur s'enfonçant en même temps gigantesque" (BP; p. 160). It is his very size which is symbolic of present hope. His head, rising above the trees, is bathed in the first rosy light of dawn while the countryside remains in darkness. In Orion the narrator has found an optimistic environment for the purgatorial experience of Achilles running without motion: "non plus spectacle (...) mais pour ainsi dire environnement l'espace parcouru immobile à grand (sic) pas"

(BP; p. 163). The narrator becomes increasingly interested in an open-ended representation framed only by the specta- tor's assimilation to it. In this respect he resembles the narrator of <u>Histoire</u>. The engraving of Barcelona in <u>Histoire</u> as discussed by David Carroll is open to history, it incorporates in its frame the possibility for interpre- tations conditioned by past and future events.

> The history of Spain can be read within the
> engraving of Barcelona precisely because its
> frame is not absolute and thus the space it
> constitutes is open to history, to the history
> (the traces of the past and future) already
> inscribed and to be inscribed within it.[16]

The narrator of <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> is faithful to a tradition of Simonian narrators in refusing a closed system of interpretation to his work. He implicitly echoes the decision of the novelist not to have reprinted his earliest work, an autobiography, <u>La Corde raide</u>. Memory proves an unreliable guide for the autobiographer and its unreliability contains none of the consolation that it does for Proust's Marcel. <u>Albertine disparue</u> contains the re- assurance that the failure of memory guarantees its non- interference in present reality: <u>Le Temps retrouvé</u> offers the corresponding panacea that the associative power of in- voluntary memory affirms the historical integrity of the personality. For Simon it is the fragmentation and the attendant confusion of memory which undermines its function as impartial recorder of events. Alastair Duncan, in a

brief communication, "A propos de la corde raide" notes
that the jumbled fragments which constitute Simon's past
are Proustian in appearance, but permit no organic synthe-
sis, "synthèse organique",[17] unlike the final pages of Le
Temps retrouvé.

The narrator of La Bataille de Pharsale experiences
nevertheless a nostalgia for a completeness or autonomy
of form. In the closed economy of an autarchic environ-
ment, that of calm splendour, "le splendeur calme" the past
can be recycled independently of the feeling of death which
has devolved from the surrogate Crastinus upon the narrator.
He has been implicated in the fate of Crastinus, for his
vicarious attachment to the centurion has fused with the
memories of his past sufferings and is a symbol for their
continuing presence. The final unit of the novel's second
section presents a system of intelligibility for the novel.
The narrator's position is a prevarication; the image of
a self-deforming mobile lends interpretive shape to a pro-
cess of misshaping. The narrator will seek form beyond the
province of suffering within the domain of a shape-shifting
indifferentism. "0" the figurative mid-point of the novel
has in fact undergone a lateral displacement to the end of
the second panel of the novel's triptych. The deformation
herein entailed motivates the novel towards its final
transition. The last panel of La Bataille de Pharsale is
based upon a principle of malfunction.

Prefaced by an explanatory citation from Heidegger,
the final panel of the triptych embodies the former's
assertion that damage appearing in a tool ensures the
visibility of the whole of the purpose for which the tool
is designed. The world thus announced is not something
never seen before; it has always been present but taken
for granted:

> Un outil apparaît endommagé, des matériaux
> apparaissent inadéquats ... C'est dans ce
> découvrement de l'inutilisable que soudain
> l'outil s'impose à l'attention... Le système
> de renvois où s'insèrent les outils ne s'éclaire
> pas comme un quelque chose qui n'aurait jamais
> été vu, mais comme un tout qui, d'avance et
> toujours, s'offrait au regard. Or, avec ce
> tout, c'est le monde qui s'annonce. (BP; p. 187)

It is perhaps unreasonable to assume that the reader
of Simon's novels will possess a fresh and clear understand-
ing of the passages in Being and Time to which he is re-
ferred. Accordingly a synopsis and appreciation of the
passage is appropriate. Heidegger borrows the Greek accept-
ation of a Thing as being a piece of equipment, a tool "that
which one has to do with in one's concernful dealings."[18]
He then discusses the ontological nature of the tool as be-
ing pragmatic in character. He redefines the tool as "some-
thing in order to....." (BT; p. 97). Heidegger avoids in
this way the ontological stumbling block of the Thing itself
in order to focus upon what is to be done with it as a tool.
Equipment is discovered in its quality of purpose or readi-
ness-to-hand before it can be apprehended as neutral or

present-at-hand. Heidegger turns from the moot point as
to whether one quality is in fact founded ontologically
upon the other, to focus upon an understanding of the world
in relation to the entities which it contains. He hypothe-
sises that equipment, "entities within the world" (BT; p.
101) accedes indirectly to worldhood by virtue of its de-
pendence upon the world. The Dasein of equipment is deter-
mined by the relation of the tool to the world. Dasein
is "ontically constituted by Being-in-the World" (BT; p.
102). Dasein possesses moreover an understanding of its
own Being, and thereby to some degree understands the world
to which its Being is associated. The world is thus illum-
inated "lit up" (BT; p. 102) by Dasein's concernful deal-
ings, its understanding of itself as equipment. The purpose
of equipment is, however, discoverable ontologically only when
it is not taken for granted. The tool must malfunction and
create a rift between itself and the context of its use. By
viewing the tool's intended function, not the properties of
the tool itself, one may indirectly discover it. Equipment
becomes conspicuous as a consequence of the discovery of its
unusability: "We discover its unusability, however, not by
looking at it and establishing its properties, but rather by
the circumspection of the dealings in which we use it. When
its unusability is thus discovered, equipment becomes con-
spicuous" (BT; p. 102). It is the dialogue between equip-
ment and the context for which it is intended which

illuminates the latter as a totality. The illumination of
the tool's context forms a horizon of possibility which
announces the world.

It will have been noted in the foregoing summary of the
thought contained in Simon's quotation that _Dasein_ arrogates
to itself the responsibility for understanding its proper
purpose, the quality of readiness-to-hand. The tool under-
stands itself in so far as there is a referral, a pointing
away from itself "Verweisung" (BT; p. 97) towards its func-
tion. In this regard an analogy may be drawn with what
Heidegger terms apophantic discourse. The prefix apo means
away, and -phantic letting something be seen. "Discursive
communication, in what it says (in ihrem Gesagten), makes
manifest what it is talking about, and thus makes it access-
ible to the other party" (BT; p. 56). Heidegger specifical-
ly refers to discourse which lets something be seen by
pointing it out. The novel corresponds well enough to this
description, according to Roland Barthes it points out its
own mask, _larvatus prodeo_. The quotation from Heidegger in
La Bataille de Pharsale is apophantic in a paradoxical way,
for it does not only point out what it seems to be pointing
out, it is in itself a damaged piece of equipment in its
present context, and so unexpectedly announces the world
of the novel when viewed from the aspect of its damage. The
quotation is supposed to be taken as ready-at-hand, to
mirror the situation of the epigraphic citations which

preface the first two parts of the novel. Upon closer

inspection it does not resemble its predecessors, for it

is fragmented, several pages of Being and Time are omitted

between the opening and closing statements. The omission

may be better understood in the context of a comparison of

Heideggerian Dasein to the painterly movement into space.

In his work Phenomenology and Literature Robert

Magliola explores the relationship of Hart Crane's poem

"Legend" to authentic Dasein. His description of Crane's

bridge bears a striking resemblance to the presence of blind

Orion in Poussin's paintings:

> Foregrounded against the sun, a symbol of
> temporality, the Bridge strides from past
> to future. Yet freedom stays the experience
> so the bridge rests in a poised present.
> These passages from Crane illustrate Dasein's
> authentic experience of time.[19]

Freedom is to be understood as a form of access to

the authentic present from the ecstatic states of past and

future. Magliola illustrates this point with a quote from

Binswanger on the "thrownness" or "being-in-advance of

itself of the Dasein."[20] It is a concept consonant in the

shape of its ideas with Beckett's understanding of purgatory

as a conjunction of two transcendent and repressive states.

Heidegger in the above interpretation is seen to be little

concerned with the paradoxical aspect of Dasein as movement,

considering that motion, either forward or backward in time,

poses a neurotic threat to the equilibrium of the present

as a form of _koinonia_ or consciousness.[21] The analysis is

somewhat tenuous in that Magliola is summarising Ludwig

Binswanger's psychoanalytic reading of Heidegger. Yet the

link between Heidegger and psychoanalysis is important to

Simon's novel, for the narrator's experience of paradox

as conflict directs him towards the moment of _Dasein_ as a

resolution of temporal neurosis through art. Magliola

selects a central quotation in _Sein and Zeit_ to reveal how

the present is generated by a futurality thrown back upon

itself as the past. Temporality becomes self-cancelling

in that the present exists as a moment for time, within

yet freed from the latter:

> Only an entity which, in its Being, is
> essentially _futural_ so that it is free for
> its death and can let itself be thrown
> back upon the factical "there" by shattering
> itself against death - that is to say, only
> an entity which, as futural, is equiprimordially
> in the process of _having-been_, can, by handing
> down to itself the _possibility_ it has inherited,
> take over its own thrownness and can be _in_
> _the moment of vision_ for "its time". Only
> authentic temporality which is at the same
> time finite, makes possible something like
> fate - that is to say, authentic historicality.
> (BT; p. 437)

Heidegger's analysis of time as a bidirectional flux

is concerned to recuperate a transcendance within the eddy

of time itself. Whereas Beckett analyses Joycean art as a

"flood of movement and vitality" caused by a conjunction

of perfect order and chaos, Simon's narrator attempts to

enter a hiatus within the eddy of purgatorial time. As the

disjunctive eye of the storm, the parenthesis of an art

which invites the movement of the spectator into its space
offers protection against entropic forces already at work in
the maelstrom. Heideggerian *Dasein* is especially appro-
priate to the narrator's purpose since it permits a solution
to the optical illusion of bilateral rotation.

It is interesting to note that Simon himself has spoken
of the composition of the last part of *La Bataille de Phar-*
sale as pictural. In an interview with Claud DuVerlie,
Simon relates how he organised the strands of the novel by
assigning a colour to each theme and character and experi-
mented visually with the charted order of their appearance.
He further stresses that the final panel includes some of
his best pages which were written solely for painterly
balance:

> I was sometimes obliged, therefore and this
> is very important, to develop certain themes
> for no other reason than that I was missing,
> here or there, a little or a lot of one
> color or another. Thus, as you can see,
> certain passages were written for "formal"
> reasons of balance or composition.[22]

Simon's revelation is, naturally enough, superfluous to the
evidence of the text. The last panel of the novel is
written entirely in the present tense. The narrator seeks
by this ploy to prevent the moribundity which earlier
menaced him. In the excerpt from Valéry the parenthesis of
art had enclosed a morbid design of unexpectedly fatal
dimensions.

An indication that art may be less than well suited to

the narrator's goal may be gleaned from the incompleteness
of the epigraph. The more complex relationship of the tool
to _Dasein_ is omitted in favour of a direct grasp of the
tool as revealing the world. The passages chosen by Simon
treat the presence of disfunctional tools, which betray a
condition of conspicuousness (Auffälligheit), obtrusiveness
(Aufdringlichkeit) or obstinacy (Aufsässigkeit) (BT; p.
104). Respectively they are either found to be inappro-
priate upon use, obviously inappropriate because the proper
tool is missing, or in need of repair. Heidegger proceeds
from this analysis toward a consideration of the tool miss-
ing in the second condition. He states that because the
world is lit up only when the tool is damaged, the ready-
to-hand tool itself loses its worldhood by becoming in-
appropriate, merely present-at-hand. More simply stated
the tool has lost its worldly quality of purpose, it does
not function, yet by the same token its intended function
or worldhood becomes illuminated. This irony, which pre-
vents the world from consisting circumspectively in readi-
ness-to-hand necessitates a focus upon the appropriate
tool, the one found to be missing. The tool is present be-
fore it is visible, "in the 'there' before anyone has ob-
served or ascertained it" (BT; p. 105). In this condition
the tool remains invisible and the world unannounced, per-
mitting a phenomenal relation between the two:

>   If it is to be possible for the ready-to-hand

> not to emerge from its inconspicuousness, the
> world must not announce itself. And it is in
> this that the Being-in-itself of entities
> which are ready-to-hand has its phenomenal
> structure constituted. (BT; p. 106)

The Heideggerian notion of Being-in-itself excludes the

possibility that the tool be sighted in circumspection,

a proviso upon which the artistic image depends. The tool

and its contact cannot offer itself to the gaze, the French

translation's equivalent for sighted in circumspection, for

it is visibly missing, disclosed for circumspection but

inaccessible to it. "It is itself inaccessible to circum-

spection, so far as circumspection is always directed to-

wards entities, but in each case it has already been dis-

closed for circumspection." (BT; p.105)

From the moment that the narrator attempts to turn the

novel back upon itself as a contradiction, his project is

undermined by the epigraphic content. The reutilisation of

Proust, a symbol of failure, implies the prospect of un-

success for the narrator's plan. The incomplete representa-

tion of Heidegger renders evident the fallacy upon which the

novelist's artistic project is based. Discourse apophanti-

cally reveals its own mask larvatus prodeo. The reader is

invited to study the novel's final section for what the

narrator does not say and to accept what is present as

incompatible with the world of the novel, which is phenomen-

ally inconspicuous, unobtrusive and non-obstinate.

In the novel the opposition between connotation and

denotation reflects the Heideggerian distinction between
disclosure and circumspection in that connotation is pre-
dicated discretely upon denotation as a meta-system of
signification. The narrator's tale has implications which
go beyond the material he presents as sighted in circum-
spection; it has other dimensions disclosed for the narra-
tor's circumspection but inaccessible to it. The narrator
remains blissfully unaware of his drift towards oblivion,
for he remains within the frame of denotative discourse.
He does not suspect the connotation of death which subtends
his fantasy. In Les Corps conducteurs the narrator will
progress towards an inkling of his sequestered condition.
The relationship of the narrators to the connotation of
their stance in La Bataille de Pharsale and in its success-
or constitutes a separate reading to be undertaken ubi infra
in the chapter which follows. Germane to the present line
of enquiry is a conclusion to the thesis that the narrator's
reorganisation of purgatorial form has at best the character
of illusion.

In the third panel of the triptych the narrator's story
adopts the form of a pictorial representation. The multiple
points of view and identities offered to the narrator by a
series of displacements in space and time are brought into
conjunction. Art becomes a focal point in which the various
points occupied successively by the story line may fuse as a
single canvas, drawing the spectator into its inner space.

At one level the narrator has created a harmonious refuge where his own tale is assimilated to the movement into painterly space. His condition is synchronised as a movement out of past futurality into the space of an eternal present. The space thus conceived is one which occupies the moment of flux itself. Two questions impose themselves upon the reader. The first relates to Heideggerian authenticity or belonging; whether the creation of a story in the image of Poussin's "Orion aveugle" can be an experience belonging to Dasein. Heidegger excludes the possibility that the context of the damaged tool, in this case the damage exists within the narrator's native language, French, which cannot translate "movement into space", can itself constitute Dasein. The story as it is told by the narrator is the context for the damage, as such it "has not become explicit as an ontological structure; but it has become explicit ontically for the circumspection which comes up against the damaging of the tool" (BT; p. 105). It is reasonable therefore to conclude with Magliola, that Simon's novel like Crane's poem, is an authentic experience of time for the Dasein of the tool. But in so far as the Dasein of the tool, novelistic discourse, understands itself, its apophantic function is to betray that understanding as mask.

In La Bataille de Pharsale the role of the narrator is to participate fully in the Dasein of the tale, he does

not share in its apophansis. The narrator of the fiction
is no novelist, for him the tale is plain unvarnished
autobiography. The narrator's tale is not really his own
in this regard, he is the function of the tale which corres-
ponds to its <u>Dasein</u>. The novelist proper invades the space
of his text as the finger of lucidity, the authorial inter-
locutor who points out the fiction apophantically. The
novel is straightforward in that the narrator is not con-
ceived as a second principle of apophansis. By comparison
with the narrator of <u>Les Corps conducteurs</u> he is naive and
unaware of his story's novelistic status. In narratological
terms there is a clear absence of similarity between the
authorial interlocutor and the narrator. At the moment when
the narrator abandons his role by delegating the beginning
of the novel to a third person, the novel ends: "O écrit:
Jaune et puis noir temps d'un battement de paupières et puis
jaune de nouveau" (BP; p. 271). Through the voice of the
narrator, the novel engages in a limited self-deception. The
novel turns away from the entropic significance of the pro-
gressive petrifaction of the image towards the panacea of
art as no more than the <u>koinonia</u> of <u>Dasein</u>, a narrative con-
sciousness that understands its tale as truth. The indwell-
ing author is happier not to envisage directly the temporal-
ity of purgatory, the transience of the novelistic world.
He preserves until the end the image of salvation, the illu-
sion of relief in the centre of his gaze. The novel ends in

preparation for its beginning: Jealousy and suffering finally become ramifications of the distribution of objects scattered on O's desk. In a manner reminiscent of Robbe Grillet's _Dans le labyrinthe_ the relationship between inanimate paraphernalia assumes responsibility for the novel's projected itinerary as the room becomes a metaphor for O's mind at the first moment of writing. The ploy becomes transparent as O assumes the recognisable shape of the narrator. At this moment the narrator shows the symptoms of the sickness which affects his successor in _Les Corps conducteurs_, his double presence is a prelude to schizophrenic disjunction. The beginning is substituted for the end, salvation disguises damnation, setting a term to the novel as the fiction of indifferentism attains its full-blown proportion. According to the narrator's belief the final line does not appear as a cyclical recommencement of the novel, just as Joyce's spherical purgatory does not imply the reduplication of a circular track. The novel has returned through a semicircle to its point of origin, achieving a structural symmetry between life and art. In this respect the novel appears simply as a self-contradiction to the narrator, whereas it in fact preserves its status as paradox, for its apparent beginning is really its conclusion. The narrator observes himself writing the novel at one remove from himself. He has achieved his desired aim. His freedom expels him from the world of the

novel which then collapses.

The narrator's abrogation of his proper activity spares him the fate of schizophrenic behaviour. The narrator's behaviour disguises the temporal dimension of purgatory as a progression from conservation through entropy to death. What begins in the novel as a flood of vitality ebbs to the point of disjunction, but the narrator spares himself the image of the "vicious circle of humanity being achieved" by relegating it to the periphery of his vision. His is a self-indulgence that his successor in Les Corps conducteurs will not comfortably repeat.

NOTES

[1] Samuel Beckett, "Dante..Bruno.Vico...Joyce," in OurExaqmination round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Proqress (Paris: Shakespeare and Co., 1929).

[2] Beckett, p. 22.

[3] Saint Augustine, quoted by Samuel Beckett, in David Hesla, The Shape of Chaos (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minneapolis Press, 1971), p. 215, from Alan Schneider, "Waitino for Beckett: A personal chronicle", Chelsea Review, II (1958).

[4] Beckett, "Dante..Bruno.Vico...Joyce," p. 22.

[5] Claude Simon, La Bataille de Pharsale (Paris: Minuit, 1969) p. 67. Subsequent references are included in the text so, (BP).

[6] John Sturrock, The French New Novel (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 73.

[7] Jean Ricardou, Pour une théorie du nouveau roman (Paris: Seuil, 1971), p. 129.

[8] Randi Birn, "Proust, Claude Simon, and the Art of the Novel," Papers on Language and Literature, 13, no. 2 (1977), p. 170.

[9] J.A.E. Loubère, "Views Through the Screen: In-site in Claude Simon," Yale French Studies 57 (1979), p. 38.

[10] Loubère, p. 38.

[11] David Carroll, "Diachrony and Synchrony in Histoire," <u>MLN</u> 92 (1977), p. 803.

[12] Birn, p. 171.

[13] Birn, p. 171.

[14] Carroll, p. 823.

[15] Carroll, p. 823.

[16] Carroll, p. 823.

[17] <u>Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie</u>, directed by Jean Ricardou (Paris: U.G.E. 10/18, 1975), p. 365.

[18] Martin Heidegger, <u>Being and Time</u>, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 96. Subsequent references appear in text so, (BT).

[19] Robert Magliola, Phenomenology and Literature (West Lafayette: Purdue Univ. Press, 1977), p. 60.

[20] Magliola, p. 59.

[21] Magliola, p. 59.

[22] Claude Simon, in Claud DuVerlie, "Interview with Claude Simon," <u>Sub-Stance</u>, 8 (1974) 11.

CHAPTER IV

THE DESIGN OF ENTROPY

The sometimes self-contradictory statements issued by
Claude Simon concerning his work reflect the ambivalent
attitude of a critic too discerning to reduce his own
novelistic practice to an overly rigorous interpretation
yet concerned nevertheless to do so. His preferred stance
is that of the literary artisan, whose ambition appears to
be confined to the pursuit of an elusive unity of form:

> C'est une unité formelle. Un livre doit se
> tenir comme une table sur quatre pieds. Je
> n'ai pas de préoccupations que celles d'un
> artisan qui fait un objet.[1]

Simon is quick to introduce a sophistication into
his project, one which depends upon a principle of elusion.
Experience resembles a sieve, fragmenting that part of
perception which passes through it, omitting the undigested
portion. While Simon does not employ this particular meta-
phor, it is apparent that his view of the literary work of
art begins with the memory, the filtered material of per-
ception. His task is the reconstitution of fragments into
the familiar paradox of an incomplete whole; one more than
the sum of its parts:

> Le monde extérieur vient s'inscrire en nous
> sous la forme de fragments. Nous sommes
> absolument incapables de saisir une continuité.
> (...) Les trous peuplent notre mémoire:
> c'est un manteau déchiré. (...) Les trous,
> il faut les laisser.[2]

The word "absolument" denotes the intrusion of wishful

thinking in the above quotation, for continuity is shown

to subsist on one level at least in the very notion of the

mantle as a whole. The "manteau tout déchiré" is an oxy-

moronic object, participating in the realms of the partial

and the total. Sensitive to the equivocal status of the

literary artefact, Simon nevertheless privileges its discon-

tinuous aspect in his critical persuasion. It is not until

Leçon de Choses that what is missing from his work will

assume importance equal to the fragments which are present,

and a unity reminiscent of that of the Taoists will be ad-

mitted. In the meantime Simon will pursue, in his novels

and in his interviews, an investigation of what is present

in his writing. He will examine the table, not the space

between the legs which is a condition for the table's pre-

sence. He confines his effort to challenge the traditional

nature of the novel form to the realm of denotation, even

though he is aware of the connotative aspect of his writing.

Simon's project undergoes no radical change before Leçon de

choses, but he would like to think it does, which leads him

to speak enthusiastically of breakthroughs, only subsequent-

ly to moderate his language.

Claude Simon has described Les Corps conducteurs as a

novelistic undertaking akin to the concluding section of La Bataille de Pharsale: "Avec la dernière partie de La Bataille de Pharsale et avec Les Corps conducteurs, c'est encore une autre rupture. J'espère être arrivé à quelque chose de plus propre....."[3] But on another occasion, Simon relates the last part of La Bataille de Pharsale to parts of earlier novels, Histoire and La Route des Flandres as examples of a purely formal activity of composition.[4] Les Corps conducteurs and its illustrated portion, published separately as Orion Aveugle are said to differ from the earlier works in that the whole of the two later works are concerned with a formal emphasis which appears only intermittently in previous novels. In retrospect Simon will classify Les Corps conducteurs with its predecessors as falling a prey to determinism of a psychological order.

Simon does not always refer to changes in his literary enterprise in terms of a break. In an interview with Claud DuVerlie, Simon will reject the idea of a break, softening the term to a turning point prefaced by a slow evolution.[5] Simon is concerned with the removal of scoria from his work. Etymologically a description of animal fecal matter, the word is used by Simon to refer to the convention of realism.[6] His production in this regard is marked by a gradual movement away from characterisation in the novel, punctuated by more energetic attempts to break free. Simon is anxious to remove the narrator from the dimension of character

altogether. The narrative voice must not become confused
with the identity of a protagonist. This preoccupation
has two unfortunate results. The first is complex for it
deals with the attitude of the narrative voice. The narra-
tor implicitly suggests that the novelist at work, is in
fact, none other than the narrator himself, an act of hybris
which again privileges the part over the whole and intro-
duces a level of fantasy. The floating point of view of the
narrative voice overlays and attempts to supplant the pre-
sence of the indwelling author. Secondly and ironically,
the narrative voice does not immediately succeed in abandon-
ing the identity of the protagonist. The consequences of
Simon's attempted suppression of the narrator as a character
stem from a disregard for the narratological status of the
narrative voice within the literary work. The narrative
voice may enjoy no fixed identity in that it may have no
single person as its referent, but it is always identifiable
by certain behavioural characteristics. Stated differently,
it will emerge from its background by virtue of its dealing
with an environment, its physical and attitudinal disposi-
tion towards a subject matter. The indwelling author, by
contrast, remains immanent to the backdrop as it is framed
by the narrator's attention, and may be discerned in the
tension between the latter and his surroundings as he seeks
to mould his context to the shape of his desire.

Les Corps conducteurs posits a narrative voice whose

behaviour is remarkably similar to that of a sick man
telling a story. It is a questing voice, making free with
the possible variations of its attribution, at times by use
of **style indirecte libre** it invades the consciousness of the
sick man; but it does not localise itself in time and space
with any permanence. There is no particular reason not to
associate the narrator with the sick man, to the chagrin of
Simon himself, but to the satisfaction of the tenets of
literary realism. Convention demands that the reader expect
a possible referent for the disembodied narrator. The novel
may be read as an attempt to give meaning to a world de-
formed by delirium simply by assigning a name to a voice.
The novel is more varied and fascinating when the above
reading is correlated to a broader sense of suffering.
Sickness as metaphor accedes to a universality of tone when
applied to the behaviour of a narrator never quite in full
control of his tale. The theme of conflict between man and
his environment is ageless and englobes the limited case of
actual malady in many possible interpretations. **Les Corps**
conducteurs is also the tale of nostalgia for past omnipo-
tence and of the web of self-deception spread by a narrator
anxious to regain the illusion of mastery but, ironically,
not by employing the obsolete methods of literary realism.

Claud DuVerlie touches upon the interpretive freedom
of the reader in his interview with Claude Simon for the
review **Sub-stance**. Simon likens the reader's task to his

own in that the reader will give preference deliberately and involuntarily to particular connotative links between words:

> Since each word I write has several connotations, and since each reader, like, myself, consciously or unconsciously gives greater importance to one of these connotations, you need only multiply each of these preferred connotations by the thousands in a novel to realize that I would be crazy not to expect each reader to see very different things in a text than I do.[7]

Simon is leaving open the possibility that his novels may not mean only what he thinks he wants them to mean. Certainly he never envisaged the narrator as the sick man, although that choice is in many ways logical. In fact he prefers not to think of the narrative voice as reflective of a state of mind but as a mirror for linguistic activity.

In a tale told by an idiot nothing is signified, so Macbeth informs us. The question arises as to whether an idiot is properly human, or is himself an equation for nothingness. In the first case the partial objects of discourse, the disjointed elements of the tale are to be attributed to the frame of a schizophrenically split mind. They are a flight of images, uncoordinated yet somehow the idiot's own. A second possibility is that the fragmentary discourse is alienated from the sense of its origin; it preempts the responsibility for its own utterance from the incompetence of a mind disfunctional for all pragmatic purposes. The idiot's behaviour is than mechanical not human, automatic rather than purposive. Characterized by

a temporal reversal, the second option isolates the tale from its author, the tale precedes any attribution to a meaningful telling.

The vexed relation of primordiality between language and the unconscious is exploited by Simon through his narrators, whose presence denotes an activity indistinguishable from that of a random factor in language. Les Corps conducteurs concludes with a transposition of the sick man into a blueprint.

It is in the domain of connotation that Simon's works have been little appreciated. As he himself admits, his words have several connotations. More than that, however, his manner of linking words, images and anecdotes have connotative possibilities. It is the latter quality which differentiates between his works and schizophrenic discourse.

A proviso should attend the readings to be undertaken of La Bataille de Pharsale and Les Corps conducteurs, namely that where it is possible to read these novels correctly as mirroring a recognisable set of preoccupations or frame of mind, such a reading cannot simply be set aside in favour of another. The pathetic fallacy permits the interpreter to seek freely the mirror of his soul in nature. The novel as representation confines the accurate reader to the horizons of a preallable system of interpretation as well of constitution; the world has already been

noematically presented as such. When connotation is present
in Simon's novels, it demands to be transcoded by the reader
as an ancillary but vital adjunct to denotation. Simply to
ignore it is to become enfolded by the narrator's overt
strategy and to miss his underlying purpose. The above
contingency serves to qualify Simon's own expropriation of
Michel Deguy's thesis that language precedes utterance.
Simon's contention obfuscates the role of the indwelling
author because it subscribes to a view of the narrative
voice as purely linguistic. Although Simon himself is too
flexible to be caught by his own definition, his position
does imply that while a narration has a beginning and an
end, it has no purposeful relation to them; they are necess-
arily as arbitrary as the linguistic activity that forged
them. There is no struggle to impose a will upon the
shaping of events and hence no tension in which to accommo-
date the figure of an indwelling author.

A post-script to earlier discussion on the cartoon
analysed in La Bataille de Pharsale is now appropriate in
order to underline the paradoxical relationship between
covert narratorial intention and the recalcitrance of the
narrator's environment. For the narrator's purpose the
triptych of the cartoon perfectly fits the compositional
symmetry of the novel as a mise en abyme. The choice of a
cartoon, however, has a suggestion of triviality which
undermines its symbolic seriousness as a paradigm for

interpretation.

The triptych first appears in Simon's work, Le Vent,
in the subtitle as a baroque altarpiece. The desacralisa-
tion of the ternary image in La Bataille de Pharsale
connotes a shift of value away from the religious subject
of the triptych although its ternary form continues to
dominate.[8]

The cartoon is enmeshed in a web of associations
which invite a comparison of the "bouche sanglante"[9] at the
centre of its hemisphere to a composition of Polidores da
Caravaggio in which the warrior receives a sword thrust
into his mouth: "Dans quelques instants le guerrier va
recevoir un coup de glaive qui entrera par sa bouche
ouverte. La pointe du glaive ressortira par la nuque"
(BP; p. 200). The associative power of the image is demon-
strated by its migration to different subjects. The narra-
tor feels that his heart will burst through his mouth as he
flees along a railroad track during the battle of the
Meuse. A female spectator, open-mouthed at the prospect
before her, forms part of the canvas entitled "Jalousie".
The associations of images brings about a collaboration in
which the themes of war, death and love appear to be in
collusion:

> elle suspendue sous son ventre gracile le
> buvant enfoncé dans la bouche un coup de
> glaive si violente que le point en ressortit
> par...
> chancelant la bouche ouverte proférant

> d'inconpréhensibles menaces le sabre qu'il
> faisait tournoyer au-dessus de sa tête
> étincelante. (BP; p. 75)

Eros and Thanatos conjoin in oxymoronic counterpoint.
"Dard dans la bouche, mort dans l'âme je ne savais pas"
(BP; p. 22), and lend an Oedipal configuration to the
structure of association. Crastinus, who spills the first
Roman blood is cursed to relive the feeling of his death
in expiation of his symbolic parricide:

> Lucain, Phars; VII, 470-473:
> Puissent les dieux te donner non pas la
> mort, qui est le châtiment réservé à tous,
> mais, après ton destin fatal, le sentiment
> de ta mort, Crastinus, toi, dont la main
> brandit la lance qui engagea le combat et
> la première teignit la Thessalie de sang
> roman! (BP; p. 235)

Crastinus, Caesar's representative, is he who attacks
the fatherland by his gesture against fellow Romans. In
return he will receive retribution from one of Pompey's
soldiers. Pompey thereby attacks his father-in-law,
Caesar. The open mouth of the cartoon figure has taken on
the configuration of the Oedipus myth. The death of
Crastinus is also woven into images of blindness and infi-
delity through the agency of the open mouth. The "bouche
rose ouverte où" (BP; p. 25) will later possess the open
and pink texture of the male member and of blindness:
"d'un teinte rose et percée au centre de son orifice, comme
un oeil aveugle" (BP; p. 212). Blindness will later be
associated explicitly to blood in Triptyque through the

bleeding eye of the dying rabbit. In <u>La Bataille de Phar-</u><u>sale</u>, the theme of blindness already prefigures the title of <u>Les Corps conducteurs</u> in its abridged, illustrated version <u>Orion Aveugle</u>. The face of the giant warrior in <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> is bloody (BP; p. 256), and blind: "ce Goliath ou plutôt cet Orion titubait en aveugle" (BP; p. 140).

The depiction of instability and mutilation which functions as a subversion of the novel's apparently harmonious narrative structure forms a grid of associations of which the bleeding mouth of the perfidious Eve is a focal point, just as the mid-point of the novel itself "0" will reveal itself to be a self-deforming mobile. The achievement of a calm splendour of form is itself possible only to those who penetrate nature's indifference, "ceux qui ont pénétré l'indifférence de la nature devant le massacre et l'amour" (BP; p. 119). The image of penetration becomes associated to the spectator drawn into the eye of the maelstrom of battle, "mais, maintenant au centre même de ce maelström" (BP; p. 116). He finds he has left the dead calm of aesthetic distance. In war the only stasis is one of perpetual motion "le cheval galopant sur place" (BP; p. 116). The calm splendour of artistic form is inseparable from the mortal paroxysm of war, "le tapage figé à ce niveau paroxysmique où il se détruit lui-même, immobilisé lui aussi dans le silence" (BP; p. 118). It is a convulsion

analogous to that experienced by the lovers as the act of
penetration is interrupted by the sound of steps in the
hallway. Orgasm is replaced by Medusan petrifaction.
"Les deux corps restent ainsi, comme changés en pierre,
dans la position exacte où ils se trouvaient quand elle
a entendu les pas, le membre raidi et luisant de l'homme
à moitié enfoncé en elle" (BP; p. 247). The couple will
be imaginatively transformed into weathered marble in
later descriptions, and the man will have withdrawn from
his partner. The moment of passage between life and art
is one of interpenetration, as love and death conjoin with
form. The narrator as artist professes to seek a splendid
calm, but dwells upon the act of coupling movement to sta-
sis, the consubstantial achievement of a <u>rite de passage</u>.
His marginal notation about the incurable stupidity of the
French is made when reading Elie Faure on the German
painters of the Renaissance. She criticises them for never
attaining an overall affect. Their universe is one of
fragments, an indefinite repetition of detail. The narra-
tor himself expresses a Germanic bent in his obsessive
preoccupation with the instant of transition to the detri-
ment of formal unity: "le détail masque toujours l'ensem-
ble, leur univers n'est pas continu, mais fait de frag-
ments juxtaposés. (...) O sort de sa poche un stylomine
et écrit dans la marge: Incurable bêtise française" (BP;
p. 238).

Love and death undermine the narrator's pictorial enterprise; they impart a sense of closure to the openness of a painterly text. The canvas of the German Renaissance artists had neither beginning nor end; they were deliberately incomplete. An unfinished quality was manifest in the structural discontinuity of the detail. The narrator cannot duplicate formal disunity at the thematic level of his work, for the consistency of his endeavour defies him. He constantly associates his task to the arrest of conflict.

Struggle predicts the cessation of both the life and the death instinct, labelled by DuVerlie as Eros and Thanatos. DuVerlie's article, "Eroticism in the Works of Claude Simon",[10] sets out to redefine Eros in the context of Simon's novels. DuVerlie begins by underlining two traditional aspects of eroticism: the principle of pleasure or sensuality, and the relationship of the self to the other. He next introduces a more recent thesis, the participation of the spiritual dimension in procreation. His carefully documented prefatory remarks prepare for the pairing of Eros with Thanatos. From the association of physical love to spirituality springs the life principle of Eros. DuVerlie's communication turns away from a popular comparison of Simon with Georges Bataille in the association of love and death. The state of lipidation, Bataille's term for the destruction of the person through the sexual act, is seen by DuVerlie as only part of a wider panorama of

love relationships in Simon's work. DuVerlie's article
concludes with a commentary upon eroticism in <u>La Bataille</u>
<u>de Pharsale</u>. The passage he selects is that which speaks
of form in the context of love and massacre.[11] The most
satisfying erotic experience is that of the artist as
voyeur struggling in desperation to transform the past
into a present and tangible reality. DuVerlie does not
pursue this insight into the language of frustration in the
direction of Eros' counterpart, Thanatos. The life instinct
is not simply transformed into the death wish as DuVerlie
at one point remarks, for death itself is a prey to what
DuVerlie terms "aesthetic sublimation".[12]

In this respect death is to be distinguished from
the feeling of death, "le sentiment de ta mort", a sensation
provoked by the interruption of massacre as well as of love.
Death is suspended; Genette's term <u>vertige fixé</u>[13] corres-
ponds as well to the narrator's apprehension of the reality
of massacre, "le tapage figé" as it does to the arrested
lovemaking of the couple. At this moment time is not in a
state of suspension, only death. There is a principle of
entropy at work in the interruption of loving and killing.
DuVerlie remarks of the act of love:

> In this perspective <u>interruptio</u> shows man
> finally cast out of eternal nature, and
> ultimately subjected to the "nonchalant
> and destructive work of time".[14]

Images of interruption produce a tension between the

narrator's express desire to escape into formal tranquility and his apparent preference for the instant of escaping rather than the accomplishment of the act. The narrator reveals a different order of intelligibility, that of the indwelling author, in his foregrounding against a backdrop of transition. The narrator's dilemma resembles that of Crastinus in so far as the indwelling author embodies the presence of the gods, "les dieux" (BP; p. 235). But he only indirectly controls the narrator's behaviour. The feeling of death is not experienced by the narrator directly, for he believes he can escape into the foreground of art. In point of fact the narrator's environment is controlled by a paradoxical conjunction of motion and stasis. Poussin's painting offers the narrator an escape into space, but the space of Orion Aveugle is also the conceit of Achilles running motionless; it is not a flat aesthetic calm, but an interruption.

Les Corps conducteurs, a novel which calls extensively upon the image of Orion, provides a clear example of the entropic function of purgatorial experience. The world of the indwelling author is one in which time works towards an ending of the moment of struggle, the flood of vitality released as purgatory is formed and the novel begins. The narrator, a part of that world, escapes into the domain of representation only at the moment of release, at the novel's close. Passage from the universe of love and death

into a formal calm implies the breakdown of the novel into two lifeless elements, the hell of love and death and the heaven of splendid form. Purgatory, and the novel, cannot survive the disjunction.

The propounding of a sense of closure in Simon's novels is adduced from the evidence of connotation, the meaning behind the narrator's pretence of indifferentism. It is not surprising that such a reading should be something of an heretical statement in the current climate of Ricardolian criticism. Deleuze and Guattari see in schizophrenia an affirmation of man's freedom from Oedipus. For Simon's indwelling author a liberty of the like is a hope to live for, not one that can be lived out. What the narrator experiences as eternal liberation in his movement into space the reader cannot wholly share. The latter must also participate in the feeling of death, a confinement to the Oedipal pattern and to the sense of an ending purveyed by the novel as a whole.

Robert J. Lifton in his recent work on depth psychology "The Life of the Self", notes that death and life, as discontinuous and continuous forms respectively, are images paradigmatic for an understanding of the human condition. In his observation on the symptoms of death anxiety he lists three characteristic aspects; these may be extrapolated as generally applicable to the level of the fragment in discourse:

> At every developmental level all conflicts
> exacerbate, and are exacerbated by, these
> three aspects of what later becomes death
> anxiety - that is, disintegration, stasis,
> or separation.[15]

Maintaining the perspective of death and life as a forma-

tive paradigm, Lifton turns to a discussion of schizo-

phrenia as a state of psychic numbing; his comments are a

well chosen portrayal of the schizophrenic propensities of

Simon's narrators:

> The schizophrenic experiences a pathetic
> illusion of omnipotence, a despairing mask
> of pseudo-immortality,because he is blocked
> in the most fundamental way from authentic
> connection or continuity.[16]

The transmission of life into art, in La Bataille

de Pharsale, is accompanied by the tell-tale schizophrenic

signs noted by Lifton, of desymbolisation, deformation and

a displaced desire for life without life. Françoise von

Rossum-Guyon, a close colleague of Jean Ricardou at Cerisy

notes the petrifaction of the image in the last section of

the novel as a process of immortalisation: "le couple

d'aujourd'hui rejoint l'infinité des couples de toujours".[17]

The narrator of La Bataille de Pharsale is fated to achieve

only pseudo-immortality, for as he begins the rewriting of

his novel he ends the work. For the narrator, as for the

schizoid mentality, an illusion of power conceals an ab-

sence of potential: "Life is counterfeit, inner death

predominant and biological death unacceptable".[18] The narra-

tor is blocked from the authentic experience of the

indwelling author who is at one with his work. The narrator cannot escape from his own condition as a fragment of the whole, and experiences the consequent anxiety of his position.

Orion and the man's sickness are both creations of a narrator obsessed with his own condition, blindly groping along a predetermined path in the illusion of self-determination. Orion's heliotropic progress is guided by a small figure on his shoulder, the dwarfish Cedalion, leading him towards the sun. Orion does not regain his sight in the novel, but will disappear into the morning rays, a reading at odds with mythological evidence. Cedalion, himself, is a symbol for initiation in Greek mythology. His relationship to Hephaestus, as either father or son, is that of an instructor for the artisan, the spirit of work in progress. Orion must delegate vision to Cedalion in a way similar to the narrator's relinquishment of control to the indwelling author, a fact which the narrator, like Simon himself, alludes to in a spirit of self-deception. Simon, quoting a friend, Raoul Dufy, attributes his creation to the freedom of artistic process, not to a lack of control over his unconscious intentions: "Il faut savoit abandonner le tableau qu'on a voulu faire au profit de celui qui se fait".[19]

The relation of the narrator to the indwelling author is akin to that of the conscious to the unconscious mind.

The narrator refuses to succumb to forces beyond his control even though he imaginatively foresees his ultimate disaggregation. Orion is described in Les Corps conducteurs as perceived in the act of vanishing as the morning assimilates his quest:

> Un de ses bras tendus en avant, tâtonnant dans le vide, Orion avance toujours en direction du soleil levant, guidé dans sa marche par la voix et les indications du petit personnage juché sur ses épaules musculeuses. Tout indique cependant qu'il n'atteindra jamais son but, puisque à mesure que le soleil s'élève, les étoiles qui dessinent le corps du géant pâlissent, s'effacent, et la fabuleuse silhouette immobile à grands pas s'estompera peu à peu jusqu'à disparaître dans le ciel d'aurore.[20]

The passage from present to future tense in the description of Orion transposes the reader from Poussin's artistic statement to the narrator's activity of interpretive prediction. Two images of Orion are superimposed. The first is taken from an early incident in Orion's life, in which Orion regains his sight by travelling towards the sun. The second relates to the death of Orion, at which time, according to popular mythology, he was transported to the heavens, where he assumed the shape of the constellation with which he is commonly identified. The narrator prefers to assume that Orion cannot reach the sun but must disappear with the early morning light. It would be more in keeping with the subject matter of the painting to render the sun's light as a metaphor for sight and, while admitting that Orion's astral figure will shortly fade, to recognise

in the latter process, the curious realisation of Orion's project, namely that of regaining his vision as the landscape is illuminated and obscurity reduced. The narrator maintains a simple dichotomy between dark and light in his impressionistic commentary, one which offers the temptation of claiming that his direct response to the painting is no less irrefutable than the dissenting evidence of mythology. The conflictual presence of both Cedalion and the stars framing the giant form endows the painting with an ambivalence of intention that is a feature of anomaly. That the narrator should choose to ignore the anachronistic ambiguity, and he does not make the choice explicitly, acts as a repression of goal oriented behaviour on the part of Orion, for everything indicates "Tout indique" that the fruition of the latter's quest is to be forestalled, just as his endeavour will be foreshortened. The narrator's reading of the painting is in this single respect unsophisticated, for the everything to which he refers can only be regarded as the entirety of his emotive reaction, rather than the analytical dilemma provoked by a disregard for chronology in the painting itself. There is no reason to suspect that the narrator is expressly concerned to misrepresent the complexity afforded by the canvas. More interestingly from the perspective of the present reading, the narrator can be seen to betray a compulsive suppression of the realisation of Orion's quest. To account for the narrator's reading

as a genuine error would not address the self-projection
which he implicitly manifests in his employment of the
term, everything. The ramifications of this apparently
innocent misreading appear immediately in the text as a ser-
ies of geometrical constructs which accelerate towards the
novel's end. The longitudinal cross-sections permit obser-
vation of a succession of identical rooms, an aircraft
fuselage and a human head in profile respectively. The
narrative voice is transposed once more into the body of the
sick man making his way along a corridor and into a room.
The description is marked by an admixture of feverish imme-
diacy and clinical self-detachment. The first cross-section
occurs at the initial moment before the fever recedes and is
couched in the language of hypothesis: it would permit
observation of the rooms, "permettrait de voir". The activ-
ity of the people in the rooms is related by resorting to
participial and infinitive forms of the verbs as a manner of
rendering the conditional mode more present and vital. The
fever and the narrative voice leave the sick man as he halts
in order to recover from his vertigo. As the narrator
shifts between identities and perspectives his voice retains
a consistency of concern with the prospect of an ending.
The narrator briefly envisages two scenes; the second con-
tained within the first. A young journalist offers his lips
to his companion and she, likewise a young journalist, res-
ponds. This short scene, played out in duple time, is

interrupted at its midpoint by a comparatively lengthy reprise of a woman drinking the last drops from a bowl and weeping. Attention is focused upon the disappearance of geometrically patterned light relections. The effect of the intercalated scenes upon the narration is to provoke a return to the predicament of the sick man as he loses his balance. In terms of the temporality of the narration but not of the progress of the man's illness, the brief respite has exacerbated the latter's condition, a logic at variance with the expected result of catching one's breath "en reprenant son souffle" (Cc; p. 223). Indeed, the man has been called to further efforts in the reader's absence since he is now discovered entering a room and collapsing. The absence of the disembodied narrator may be said to have aggravated the sick man's condition.

In corroboration of this interpretive stance, the narrative may be seen to proceed to two further cross-sections. The sick man has recovered from his attack of giddiness, but remains horizontal on all fours. Symbolically this position is at variance with the vertical posture he had previously assumed, and with the upright disposition of the walls; it is now the carpet which appears to have replaced the walls "à la verticale" (Cc; p. 225). The deterioration of the sick man had been prefigured in the scene detailing the coffee drinker by the interplay of light forms. The gradual decay of sharply defined

positions is first noticeable in the effect of shifting
between vertical perspectives. "Peu à peu le parallélo-
gramme de soleil se resserre entre ses côtés verticaux,
au point de ne plus former bientôt qu'une barre de plus en
plus étroite" (Cc; p. 224).

The reduction of perspective to a single plane permits
symbolic confusion between three and two dimensional forms,
between life and geometrical patterns. The planometric
surface of the cross-section is no longer distinguished
by the conditional mood from the present moment of the
narration. The cross-section of the fuselage displays,
"montre" (Cc; p. 225) the routine activity of passengers,
who, like dummies "comme des mannequins" (Cc; p. 225) are
absorbed in the motionless pursuits of contemplation or
slumber. They mirror the equilibrium to which the sick
man's environment will return: "peu à peu les formes
tournoyantes ralentissent leur mouvement, s'immobilisent
enfin" (Cc; p. 225). A further cross-section, that of a
head in profile, reveals, "permet de voir" (Cc; p. 226)
the principal organs of the head. The image is remarkable
in that it becomes virtually indistinguishable from living
matter; there is no simile to remind the reader of the
presence of lifeless forms, and the brain can be observed
to distend rhythmically to the pulse of the circulatory
system.

Upon closer examination a significant omission has

occurred, one justified in part by the sectioning of a profile: there is no reference to the organs of hearing. The second cross-section is correlated to the senses of the sick man, who has experienced a rush of blood to the head attendant upon a sudden fall and his feverish condition. The sick man is conscious of the blood beating in his ears as a hearing impairment. It acts as a filter, permitting the sound of the aircraft to be heard against a background of internal noise:

> Parvenant de très loin à travers le bruit
> assourdissant du sang dans ses oreilles, il
> peut entendre le grondement tenu d'un avion
> qui traverse le ciel au-dessus de la ville.
> (Cc; p. 225)

The cross-section contrasts with the presentation of the sick man's hearing; it normalises the function of the brain and the eye. A curious inversion has occurred: whereas the ear is accustomed to perceive noise diachronically, the visual image is synchronic in composition. In the case of the foregoing diptych, however, it is the sick man who hears simultaneously a medley of uninterrupted sounds and the eye which acts photographically recording a series of images; "la mince membrane de la rétine sur laquelle les images du monde viennent se plaquer, glisser, l'une prenant la place de l'autre" (Cc; p. 226). The curative value of the cross-section is brought into pre-eminence; it permits the normalcy of healthy function by an interpenetration of the living form with its representational corollary, the

flatness of the invalid's hearing is rounded out by its visual approximation.

A reading of art as a remedial process largely satisfies Girard's view of the novel as exorcism; but what of his admonition that the truth of desire is death, "La vérité du désir est la mort?"[21] The literary conceit of the eye draws attention to itself as a fiction of life, one which infuses the novel's anatomy with vitality. The life of the narrator has now ebbed to the point where he no longer detaches himself from the work of art but chooses to live through it. The devil's bargain of artistic representation is inversely proportioned, for art, attaining predominance, draws upon the life of its creator. The novel concludes with the attrition of the narrative voice to the threadbare level of the carpet, the conducting body becomes a lifeless skein of arterial connections. The narrator's situation results in his partaking of both salvation and damnation, he is both the patient and the demon of the text in Girardian terms. At the end however, he has no awareness of his plight. The weft and warp of the carpet are just another symbol of the blue print which promises immortality to the schizophrenic mind. Death appears only at the level of the indwelling author, the readerly interpretation of the narrator's condition.

A recent article by J.A.E. Loubère, "Views Through the Screen: In-Site in Claude Simon", suggests by its

post-colonic title that insight is gained <u>in situ</u>, embedded
within the organ of vision. She notes the precision, "the
clinical care",[22] with which the novelist examines the
conditions for perception in the passage which depicts the
final cross-section. Her article concludes that Simon
eschews any privileged viewpoint, seeking to apprehend the
autogenerative properties of space through his use of
setting, "his eye pierces what Faulkner calls the 'teeming
solidarity' of things, in all directions".[23] Loubère has
grasped on one level, the principle of self referential
production in Simon's discourse, a projection by association
of signifiers and signifieds. Even while admitting the
possibility of great complexity in the connective tissue of
Simon's language, recognition must be given to the narra-
tor's relation to his language. He generates linguistic
ludicity but his creation is indirectly controlled by his
own dependence upon the indwelling author. The narrator is
more than the stylisation of a particular aspect of a
behavioural pattern. It is not so much that there is no
privileged narrative viewpoint as Loubère suggests; every
moment is equally privileged over what is not said. Other-
wise the narrator's space would become formless, rather than
multiform as Loubère proposes. Accordingly the impersonal
surgical detachment with which the final cross-section is
apparently described accedes to a second interpretation
based upon language as a verbal semblance of human conduct.

What appears as robotic exactitude is also the clarity
which characterises the hallucinatory state of schizophren-
ia and the delirium of physical malady. The existence of
the narrative voice is caught up and enmeshed in the fevered
deformation of perception which concludes with a synaesthe-
tic inversion of normal function, the ear sees. It is
dramatic irony for Simon that the perception of the narrator
and the sick man appear identical rather than parallel at
this moment; it is a misreading justified by the convention
of realism.

The debris which litters the carpet in the final
passage evidences the devastation attendant upon clarity
pushed to its extreme utterance. The human detritus "che-
veux" is levelled down to the status of waste matter, "poil"
and "poussière" (Cc; p. 226). The microscopic traces are
amplified by the proximity of the narrator's gaze to reflect
the position he himself finally occupies, as the shreds of
his mortality cling to the skeletal frame of the carpet's
threads, "les raies parallèles et grises de la trame mise
à nu" (Cc; p. 226).

The feeling of death itself becomes the more convincing
when systematically adduced from the progress of the narra-
tion. The actual demise of the sick man is nowhere clearly
stated, yet it is on a note of finality that the narrative
voice is extinguished. Logically it has transferred percep-
tion to the realm of representation and in so doing must

record its own demise.

In attributing a causality to the notion of poetic closure in Les Corps conducteurs, a certain circularity in the linkage of cause and effect is to be noted. One event does not lead to another in any conventional sense, but, given the order of their appearance a growing concern may be detected on the part of the narrator to state that each of the seven anecdotes which compose the novel serve as a commentary on the futility of arbitrary progressions. The final pages reflect the narrator's anxiety in its most accelerated form as he recognises the inevitability of discontinuing each of the series. The exhaustion of the sick man does not simply entail an unpremeditated conclusion to each of the other series. Tom Bishop cites Simon himself in confirming that the exhaustion of the sick man brings about the end of an inexhaustible novel, but Bishop does not quote the text of Les Corps conducteurs itself:

> Et cependant, à la fin des Corps conducteurs,
> nous ne sommes pas parvenus à une "conclusion".
> Le voyage dans lequel Simon nous a entraînés
> ne peut avoir "d'autre terme que l'épuisement
> du voyageur" - ce voyageur qui, épuisé autant
> par l'été new yorkais que par son malaise,
> réussit enfin à regagner son hôtel pour
> s'écrouler enfin sur la moquette de sa chambre.
> La paysage du livre étant "inépuisable" le
> narrateur doit y apposer un point final à
> un moment arbitraire de sa narration.[24]

Signs of closure are evident in each of the series before the collapse of the sick man. The shrinking column of men in the jungle reaches the point of disunity. No one

looks back, the stragglers are left to fend for themselves, and each man is a straggler in relation to the man ahead of him:

> A chaque halte ils sont moins nombreux (...)
> Bientôt les espaces s'agrandissent de nouveau
> entre eux, mais, comme le chef, aucun ne tourne
> plus la tête pour regarder derrière lui.
> (Cc; p. 208)

The column is lost, the chief can understand neither the native porters nor his map. The column will not meander aimlessly for ever just because it has lost its destination, for the men are exhausted, "les marcheurs épuisés" (Cc; p. 212). The sequence cannot long continue. In other sequences dawn is a sign of closure, it frustrates Orion's quest and seems to infiltrate the room of the literature conference, heretofore hermetically sealed against external elements:

> Il semble qu'une lueur grise commence à
> filtrer entre le côté de l'une des fenêtres
> et le bord mal joint (peut-être dérangé par
> le frottement d'une chaise) du rideau de
> velours qui l'aveugle. (Cc; p. 222)

Dawn is the moment for a tropical bird of the Barbet family "le Barbu orange" (Cc; p. 215) to commence its display ritual in the mating season, "Dès l'aube, il fait de grands sauts sur place, déploie les ailes, étale sa queue en éventail" (Cc; p. 216). The light penetrating the room of the literature conference signals by association the lovemaking of the two journalists. Their activity diverts the narrator's patient attention to the lengthy perorations

of a moribund conference. The narrator appears unsure that
light is actually coming into the room. It is as though he
is half aware of imposing the change in environment that he
needs. It will provide him with a pretext to end the
sequence in an optimistic way. At the moment when the life
instinct of Eros appears, termination of the sequence
becomes the interruption of eroticism. In DuVerlie's terms,
a condition for aesthetic sublimation has occurred; it
heralds the transubstantiation of the sick man into blue
print. In a further sequence the aircraft reaches the
symbolic end of its flight. The reappearance of the air-
craft at the critical moment of the sick man's collapse is
hardly fortuitous, as it permits a thematic transition into
the blue print. The craft itself has no single destination;
implicit in its design is a plurality of journeys. It is
appropriate that it should become motionless in flight, the
noise of its engines coinciding with its inscription as a
cross-section. Like Orion, the arrested movement of the
aircraft prefigures the narrator's disappearance.

Horizontal progressions in themselves imply the entro-
pic process. In thermodynamics conservation and entropy
condition each other in a particular way. Energy cannot
disappear, but tends from the useful to the useless. The
admixture of opposite forms may produce an identity in
formal composition that precludes further activity. Where
the change occurs there is positive as opposed to zero

entropy. Whereas a mixture of hot and cold water produces luke-warm water, the product, when separated and recombined produces no change, it is still luke-warm. Similarly the conjunction of heaven and hell releases purgatory as a flood of vitality. Purgatory becomes inactive once the principles of heaven and hell achieve complete interpenetration. The dramatic change in human eyes occurs at the end of the process, when continuity of action finally yields exhausted to the discontinuity of inertia, a phenomenon known in thermodynamics as heat death. For this reason the perturbation of the narrator in Les Corps conducteurs is most in evidence at the end of the work. The narrator chooses images that mark the transition from upright to prostrate, life to death. The impassive exterior of the elevator shaft conveys an impression of zero entropy. There is no apparent upward movement and no hint of a destination. The horizontal display on the indicator panel betrays the elevator as a case of positive entropy. The light progresses towards the number at which it will stop:

> rien n'indique que la cabine de l'ascenseur
> aux portes fermées s'élève, sauf les chiffres
> disposés sur une ligne non pas verticale mais
> horizontale au-dessus des deux panneaux d'acier
> hermétiquement joints, comme ceux d'un coffre-
> fort, et qui s'allument et s'éteignent 2 3
> 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
> 21 22 23 l'un après l'autre. (Cc; p. 221)

The narrator's achievement will be to persuade himself of his continuing verticality as he assumes a horizontal posture. The sick man falls to floor only to see the carpet

become erect, "la moquette s'élève à la verticale" (Cc; p. 225). The parallelogram of light is compressed to a verticle line as the woman finished her coffee. The illusion of potency appears at the moment of the narrator's figurative castration. Les Corps conducteurs is the last of Simon's novels in which phallocentrism appears with logocentrism to conceal the novel's closure. The narrator of Triptyque will not, according to Sylvère Lotringer, seek refuge in the powers of eroticism or semiosis; the spell of the body and of writing will have been broken:

> On pourrait maintenent se demander si, selon
> la formule de Bataille, la coupure bande.
> L'opération de suture, qui érigerait le phallus
> en lieu de la béance et reformerait l'unité
> du texte en refermant la déchirure signifiante,
> est toutefois quasi-absente de Triptyque.[25]

The strategies of narration in La Bataille de Pharsale and Les Corps conducteurs are not markedly different in their manner of operation. The second novel, however, introduces a note of hesitancy, a narrator somewhat tentative to pursue his fiction but equally reluctant to confront it. He traverses three different cross-sections before identifying completely with the blue print. He is unsure of himself, not knowing whether light really does enter the conference room. His reading of Poussin's painting has lost the tome of optimism it had in La Bataille de Pharsale. His final words are less confident. Appearance no longer varnishes reality; the worn patterns of the carpet reveal the threads of the loom. The proximity of

his gaze enables him to view the carpet as worn out and
obsolete; the colours are dim and old fashioned, their
coordination antiquated:

> Les couleurs fades, passées, se fondent dans
> une harmonie vieillotte pour ouvrage de dames
> ou canevas. (Cc; p. 226)

The word "canevas" has a second meaning of an outline
for an artistic composition, a piece of music or a novel.
The carpet is an unflattering mirror for the narrator,
reflecting the archaic posture of the novel's architecture.
The work artfully abandoned to its own self-composition,
a pattern formed by the industry of interweaving narrative
strands, is unmasked by the fading of the images, the
conducting bodies. The grey uniformity of the underlying
structure is revealed, affording the narrator a glimpse of
the beginning and end of all novels and carpets. The
narrator sees himself for a brief final moment as the ene-
my, the architect of his demise, and with this gesture of
lucidity a turning point is reached.

NOTES

[1] Claude Simon, in Bettina Knapp, "Document: Interview avec Claude Simon," Kentucky Romance Quarterly, 16, no. 2 (1969), p. 179-190.

[2] Claude Simon, p. 183.

[3] Claude Simon, in Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui, 2, Pratiques (Paris: U.G.E. 10/18, 1972), p. 116.

[4] Claude Simon, in Claud DuVerlie, "Interview with Claude Simon," Sub-Stance, 8 (1974) 11.

[5] Claude Simon, "Interview with Claude Simon," p. 13.

[6] Claude Simon, Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui, p. 107.

[7] Claude Simon, "Interview with Claude Simon," p. 17.

[8] J.A.E. Loubère, "The Generative Function of Translation in the Novels of Claude Simon," paper delivered at the annual MLA convention, section 229 (Monday, Dec. 27, 1976) p. 17.

[9] Claude Simon, La Bataille de Pharsale (Paris: Minuit, 1969), p. 70. Subsequent references to this work appear in the text so, (BP).

[10] Claud DuVerlie, "Amor Interruptus: The Question of Eroticism, or, Eroticism in Question in the Works of Claude Simon," Sub-Stance, 8 (1974), 21-33.

11 DuVerlie, p. 31.

12 DuVerlie, p. 31.

13 Gérard Genette, Figures I (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 69.

14 DuVerlie, p. 30-31, quoting Claude Simon, La Route des Flandres (Paris: Seuil, 1960), p. 314, "L'incohérent, nonchalant impersonnel et destructeur travail du temps."

15 Robert Lifton, The Life of the Self (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), p. 39.

16 Lifton, p. 47.

17 François van Rossum Guyon,"Ut pictura poesis" Degrés I (1973), p. k10.

18 Lifton, p. 47.

19 Claude Simon, "Document: Interview avec Claude Simon," p. 189.

20 Claude Simon, Les Corps conducteurs (Paris: Minuit, 1971), p. 222. Subsequent references to this work appear in the text so, (Cc).

21 René Girard, Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1961) p. 289.

22 J.A.E. Loubère, "Views Through the Screen: In-site in Claude Simon," Yale French Studies, 57, (1979) p. 36.

23 Loubère, p. 46.

[24] Tom Bishop, "L'image de la création chez Claude Simon," in <u>Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui, 2, Pratiques</u>, p. 64-5.

[25] Sylvère Lotringer, "Cryptique" in <u>Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie</u> (Paris: U.G.E., 10/18, 1975), p. 336.

CHAPTER V

CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS

Desire has its truth in death, not so the novel according to Girard at the time of Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque. Discontinuance of desire and of the novel coincide at the end of Les Corps conducteurs, but the narrator does not recover, a state of affairs which indicates a conclusion less succinct and self-contained than Girard's ritual of exorcism, or even that of recycling in La Bataille de Pharsale. Les Corps conducteurs is incomplete in at least one sense, for it leaves unresolved the purgatorial torment which continues to afflict the authorial interlocutor of the work, as it afflicted the Roman centurion Crastinus. The final line of the novel, invoking the "trame mise à nu,"[1] permits no unambiguous reading of its sense, and from its privileged position in the text, heralds Triptyque as a drama of unveiling, disrobing, and even peeling of skin from bone.

The proximity of the narrator's gaze to the carpet at the conclusion of Les Corps conducteurs indicates a possible interpenetration of consciousness and its object, of figural and literal readings. Paul de Man, in his analysis

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of Yeat's "Among School Children" notes that the rhetorical
mode of an utterance can, when undecidable, permit the
copresence of incompatible senses:

> (...) two entirely coherent but entirely
> incompatible readings can be made to hinge
> on one line whose grammatical structure is
> devoid of ambiguity but whose rhetorical mode
> turns the mood as well as the mode of the
> entire poem upside down.[2]

At stake in Simon's line is not the rhetorical nature
of the statement as a question, "How can we know the dancer
from the dance?" Unlike Yeat's last line the uncertainty
proceeds from the phenomenological distortion which has
characterised the narrator's vision as it moves between
map and territory, from blue print and cross section to
lived reality. The reader remains unsure as to the distinc-
tion between discovery and failure; a truth laid bare is
also one worn out, devoid of further hermeneutical poten-
tial. Have narrator and carpet fulfilled their useful
function, satisfying the planned obsolescence of novel and
furnishing, or has the reader's mind been furnished with a
sense of urgency, with a desire to survive and be redeemed
from the naked mortality of the novel's ending?

Claude Simon, at least, seems to incline to the latter
view, invoking his sense of failure as a motivation to
continue writing, to conclude as it were each novel with
another:

> En parlant de l'impression d'échec qui
> accompagne l'achèvement d'une oeuvre,

> j'avais à l'esprit (je l'ai dit par ailleurs)
> que, chaque fois, on s'aperçoit qu'il y avait
> mieux à faire et que l'on a commis des erreurs.
> Par exemple, grâce à celles commises dans <u>Les
> Corps conducteurs</u>, j'ai écrit <u>Triptyque</u>.[3]

Simon's sense of failure is not due alone to the
errors he sees himself as having committed. He considers
<u>Triptyque</u> to be the best of which he is capable in his
chosen path, yet he remains curiously unsatisfied with this
later work:

> Ce qui ne signifie pas que je pense avoir
> écrit là le livre parfait. A preuve, c'est
> que j'ai recommencé à écrire, et que le roman
> auquel je travaille en ce moment est absolument
> différent.[4]

There would seem to be a recurrent component in Simon's
later works which engenders a sense of incompletion, each
novel resembling a skirmish in which tactical manoeuvres
do not succeed in gaining a strategic advantage. As if in
support of this contention, there reappears in <u>Triptyque</u>
a circadian rhythm which serves as a backdrop to the events
described. The action of the novel ceases as death or
drugged sleep overtake the protagonists at the end of their
waking day. The darkness which threatens the autotelic
concerns of inscription and actor alike, finally engulfs
the novel in a mechanical way, as consciousness retreats
into its daily eclipse.

Nonetheless a lesson has been gained from the conclu-
sion of <u>Les Corps conducteurs</u>. The feeling of death asso-
ciated to the moment of novelistic closure touches upon a

truth too unvarnished for the novel to sustain. _Triptyque_
provides a reaction which is to focus upon the drama of
coupling in human relationships and in writing. Eros is
privileged by the enfolding of human affairs within in-
scription, while writing undertakes a self-consciously
refractory pronouncement against the absolute aegis of
Thanatos. Death is to be seen as no more than an untimely
obstacle in the amorous yet deadly struggle for supremacy
between the two combattant forces of desire which consti-
tute the divided self of the text. Lethe, the truth which
encompasses desire, whether normatively teleological or
schizophrenically disjunctive, is destined to appear off
stage in _Triptyque_. The narrative voice, repository of a
moribund consciousness in _Les Corps conducteurs_, here
becomes fully disembodied. Its form is systematically
demonstrated as a point of view or perspective whose
commentary in no way intrudes upon the action, even if the
itinerary of the narrative signifier betrays a compulsive
need to purge and neutralise all traces of death.

The feeling of death which persists in _Triptyque_ does
not originate directly from the human subject, the narra-
tor, but is organised by the logic of the story. The actual
death by drowning which the reader understands to have
transpired is indirectly portrayed, whereas the term drown-
ing is scattered throughout the novel, affixing itself to
anything save an actual fatality. There is notwithstanding

a clear invitation to read a drowning into the oblique and
obfuscated references to an undescribed event, if not by
inference, then by association, as Sylvère Lotringer
suggests in the article "Cryptique":

> Certaines opérations laissent peu de place à
> la chance, c'est-à-dire à la chute, à l'inter-
> vention constituante, déliante-délirante, du
> sujet. Tout ce qui ressortit d'une certaine
> logique du récit reçoit assez aisément son
> sceau d'authenticité. Ainsi la prodigieuse
> dispersion sur l'ensemble du roman d'un signi-
> fiant unique (noyer) donne à lire la scène
> occultée de la noyade nocturne: "l'ombre des
> quatre noyers" (p. 8, 16, 93, 104, 143, 157,
> 180, 221), "son visage toujours noyé dans
> l'ombre" (p. 147), ses yeux aveugles de noyée"
> (p. 56), "le noyé en smoking" (p. 191), "tout
> est indifféremment noyé dans la nuit opaque"
> (p. 206), etc.[5]

Lotringer would seem to be suggesting that the
internal reduplication of the term drowning authenticates
the reading of the unnarrated scene as that of the drowning
of a small girl abandoned in favour of an amorous rendez-
vous. Ricardou has made similar theoretical statements.
In a novel where the story lines become scattered, mise-en-
abyme can provide a metaphorical unity:

> La mise en abyme tend à restreindre l'éparpille-
> ment des récits fragmentaires selon un groupe-
> ment de récits métaphoriques.[6]

The paradoxical function noted by Ricardou may be
taken to privilege the figural over the literal, and it is
apparent that such is the project of Triptyque, where death
by drowning is counterbalanced by other readings of noyer.
Ricardou in a later work, "Le Dispositif osiriaque",

understands the counterpoint as that of open ended con-
flict, where the term is applied equally to violence and
lovemaking, to principles of life and death, including
the spreading of the walnut trees over the water:

> Puisque le conflit doit rester ouvert, le texte
> procède à des attaques croisées: tandis que les
> noyers, arbres de vie, sont associés à l'eau
> mortelle, la noyade, signe de mort, est liée
> à l'acte de vie.[7]

A difficulty arises in Ricardou's argument from the
use of the word noyer in a metaphorical and onomastic way,
which would suggest less an affirmation than an evasion
of the literal sign of death. Similarly it might be
objected in Lotringer's reading that the drowning scene
is not so much authenticated as it is redistributed by the
text into areas of non-confrontation with the moment of
death.

How successful the attempt to neutralise the inscribed
traces of death has been may be judged from the reaction
of both critics, both of whom dwell upon the act of drown-
ing even while refusing the participation of the human
subject. Jacques Derrida in La Carte postale offers a
different glimpse of self-reflexive writing, remarking upon
the lack of self-sufficiency in the final chapter of
Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle; where the text serves
as a commentary upon its own procedures it loses indepen-
dency, limping to a poor conclusion. Moreover, in a pun on
the word "boite", Derrida suggests the idea of an

incompleteness in the framing process:

> Sa démarche est l'un de ses objets, d'où l'allure,
> et c'est pourquoi ça ne peut pas aller très bien
> ni marcher tout seul. Un de ses objets parmi
> d'autres mais aussi celui pour lequel il y a des
> objets avec lesquels faire des <u>trans-</u> et spéculer
> Cet objet parmi d'autres n'est <u>pas</u> n'importe
> lequel. Alors ça boite et ça ferme mal.[8]

What emerges from the relationship of the frame to
the framing in <u>Triptyque</u> is firstly the impossibility of
efficient packaging, Eros cannot fully contain Thanatos.
Secondly, there is a breakdown in the logistical play of
the text, as different utopian systems are attempted and
then discarded, only to allow time to intrude its destruc-
tive work upon a halting synchrony, one which can but pro-
vide a lame attempt to arrest diachronic flow. The text
reenters an anthropocentric universe and falls a prey to
the human condition.

The failure of Eros to secure pleasure free from
orgasm is reflected both thematically and formally within
the work. Sexual play is conditioned by voyeurism, it is
observed both in its activity and in its consequences. It
is even initiated by the vision of its absence, existing
in a dialogic environment with its thanatic corollary.

> Or, dans <u>Triptyque</u>, le cadavérique et le
> coïtal, maintes fois associés, se trouvent
> notamment pris dans la liaison successive la
> plus forte: celle de l'engendrement. C'est le
> cadavre du sanglier qui suscite le coït dans
> la grange. En effet, c'est face à lui que la
> servante et le chasseur se donnent imperceptible-
> ment rendez-vous: (...) Le cadavérique se trouve
> ainsi incorporé au coïtal. Mais, réciproquement,

> comme il convient, c'est l'accouplement dans
> la grange qui provoque le cadavre de la petite
> fille qui dès lors se noiera. Le coïtal se trouve
> ainsi incorporé au cadavérique. Davantage: cette
> première série se double d'une seconde, exactement
> conforme. C'est après avoir regardé le cadavre
> du sanglier que les deux garçons en viennent
> à voir le coït dans la grange, et c'est pour
> observer cet accouplement qu'ils abandonnent
> à leur tour la surveillance de la fillette que
> leur a confié la domestique (pages 56, 218, 177,
> 183).[9]

The possibility of a retrospective synthesis such as

that offered above by Ricardou is contingent upon a recuper-

ative process which overrides the temporality of the story

with its flash forwards and incessant switching between the

three anecdotes, of which the drowning incident is the

conclusion to but one. In Le Nouveau Roman Ricardou had

singled out Triptyque as bringing to a paroxysm the tech-

nique of suspended narration. Characteristically Ricardou

suggests that the narration of multiple simultaneous events,

carried to its extreme, serves not to heighten but to

reduce suspense, allowing the novel to become bogged down

in an internal temporal rhythm, emphasising its independence

from diurnal progressions:

> Par cette scripturale injection de temps dans
> le temps, toutes scènes, si brèves soient-elles,
> tendent respectivement, par leur action ré-
> ciproque, vers une durée inadmissible. Une fois
> encore, par un effet de littéralité, excédant
> toute réduction référentielle, c'est d'un parfait
> enlisement du récit qu'il s'agit.[10]

The interruptio of the text is no more effective in

preventing Ricardou from resynthetizing the narrative

signified, than is the coitus interruptus in the barn from engendering a fatal turn of events for the little girl. Eros, once observed, reveals as ineluctably as did the paradise of Eden that which lies beyond its own limits. The orgasmic collision which cessates erotic play and imparts knowledge of mortality is already imprinted within the relation of the voyeuristic observer to the erotic object. Observation is located in the beyond, where birth and death are not controlled by the pleasure principle. It is by looking beyond itself that the text packages ineffi- ciently, for it engages the coïtal and the cadaverous in a relation of reciprocral engendering, rather than containing the latter within the former.

DuVerlie reinforces the position that eroticism is related to knowledge of the world, and specifically to the death instinct. He quotes John Fletcher on the homici- dal transformation of Eros into Thanatos and later states that the erotic is an instrument for knowing:

> (...) Eros, the life instinct, turns into Thanatos, the death instinct, or as John Fletcher points out, how Eros leads to the perpetration of a "homicidal act" (p. 140).[11]

> It is rather curious to note that all in all Simon's very particular brand of eroticism aims at retaining from the beginning the most univer- sal function or (sic) eroticism, which is to be an instrument for knowing the world, a way of apprehending reality (cf. RF, 221). (D; p. 30)

The drowning of the little girl can scarcely be termed a homicidal act, although in another sequence, that of the

urban site, the "visage de noyé"[12] of the young bridegroom
is stained with blood from the beating he has received,
"maculé de taches sombres qui s'étirent sous les narines et
le menton" (T; p. 119). If the drowning is not explicitly
homicidal, then neither can the aims of Simon's eroticism
be said to reveal themselves as directed overtly towards
knowledge. DuVerlie sees knowledge and the "great life
urge" (D; p. 30) subsuming coitus, and the interruptus
as ironically foreshadowing man's "ultimate expulsion from
the world" (D; p. 31), by the introduction of a principle
of disjunction. To separate the two halves of the term
coitus interruptus is to introject a further interpretation,
namely that eroticism is not necessarily linked to interrup-
tion in Simon's work, whereas DuVerlie earlier unambiguously
states the contrary, that the act of love is nearly always
either interrupted by the partners themselves or by an
outside agency, protagonist or narrator. The misunderstand-
ing is less trivial than it appears, for it may be that the
goal of Simon's narrators' eroticism is precisely a disjunc-
tion from reality, one that is paradoxically defeated by
interruptio, which reasserts the primary and universal
function of eroticism. Interruptio would appear to behave
as DuVerlie suggests, "interruptio, halting the vital flow,
comes as a brutal cut-off" (D; p. 30), but in fact it does
not immure the couple in a garden of pleasure without
consequences, it does, as earlier suggested, engage them

in a dialectical relationship with that which lies beyond
and limits pleasure and which turns out to be the natural
order, the vital flow of death and regeneration. DuVerlie
is led by his reading to confuse the "great life urge" with
"eternal nature" (D; p. 30-1), and to separate both from
time's destructive potential. Pleasure, however, aims
toward the eternal, and orgasm towards life and death. The
distinction is crucial for an analysis of different types
of play within the text of Triptyque.

Dalton Krauss, in a paper entitled "Beyond the text
of pleasure: Projet pour une révolution à New-York,"
follows the categories of texte de plaisir and texte de
jouissance established by Roland Barthes in Le Plaisir du
texte. Pleasure is described as the traditional mode of
reading, in which transcendent meaning is distilled from
the text. Orgasm is described as the piecemeal, irrecuper-
able and intransitive condition of the modern text: "Dis-
continuity, disintegration, rupture, coupure, these are some
of the characteristic attributes of jouissance."[13] Orgasm
then becomes pleasure in pieces: "Textes de jouissance. Le
plaisir en pièces la langue en pièces; la culture en
pièces."[14] It is subversive to Barthes' reading of the new
novel, but not to his system of categorisation, to suggest
that Triptyque observes the distinction between pleasure and
orgasm, but in so doing breaks down utopian structure; it
becomes accessible as a novel which, if not to be read in a

traditional way, reflects at the very least concerns of a traditional kind, those to do with the nature of love and death. Pleasure in Triptyque represents the desire to escape into closed ineffable systems of meaning through different kinds of play, the erotic included. In each case the integrity of the system's structure fails, and breaks down into its constituent parts.

The ternary structure of Triptyque has provided a celebrated example of separable interdependency in the three story lines. Each anecdote is distinguishable from its fellows, but imprisoned within their context by its appearance within the frame of the other story lines in the form of a graphic representation: book, film, jigsaw, post-card or poster. The structure is not, as might appear, closed upon itself. As Simon himself reveals, a diptych would have served equally as well:

> Mais au départ, j'avaisseulement en tête
> deux séries (celle de la campagne et celle
> de la banlieue industrielle).
> Là-dessus, à l'automne de 1971, a eu
> lieu à Paris la grande rétrospective de
> Francis Bacon dont non seulement la peinture
> m'a fortement impressionné, mais dont certaines
> oeuvres avaient pour titre Triptyque, titre
> et principe que j'ai trouvés en eux-mêmes
> tellement excitants que j'ai décidé d'adjoindre
> à mes deux premières séries une troisième,
> celle de la station balnéaire, inspirée d'ailleurs
> elle-même par des toiles de Bacon.[15]

The third sequence, that of the seaside resort, is remarkable in that it alone contains references to charac-ters who are drawn from Simon's affective past and who

reappear periodically throughout his work. The ternary
form of the novel is open ended and obeys dictates beyond
those of a purely formal harmony. Throughout the novel
extrinsic factors intrude upon closed systems. The young
schoolboy in the country creates an impossibly confused
solution to a problem of geometry, whereupon a fly appears
and traces a further itinerary upon the figure, ironically
underlining the random element which has prevented the
closed symmetry of the correct answer. Just as the geome-
trical figure is complicated by the fly's contribution,
the design proceeds "sans raison apparente" (T; p. 87).

The fly is further associated metonymically to the
clown, whose performance in the circus ring provides an
atmosphere of bathos and comic relief against which the
seriousness of the drowning, the disastrous marriage and
adolescent drug dealing are to be measured and found want-
ing. The clown, like the fly, is "à peu près au centre"
(T; p. 87) not only of his ring but of the events of the
novel. The futility of the clown's behaviour mimics that
of the fly in allegorising the breakdown of meaningful
communication and final solutions.

Of the various puzzles which populate Triptyque and
might be said to reflect or command the unfolding of the
narrative, Lotringer selects three for consideration in his
article "Cryptique" as representative of the play of the
narration. Of the three Lotringer discards two as spurious,

the film fragments and the jigsaw puzzle, and selects the
juxtapositions of the film and circus posters as a minia-
turisation of a Derridean system of play within the text.
Problems are raised by privileging one mise en abyme over
its fellows in Lotringer's analysis. The objection might
run thus: Lotringer locates a seminal model in the mise en
abyme constituted by the posters and describes with its
help a hierarchisation of the sequence of the disastrous
wedding over the other two sub-narratives. The wedding
series does not provide a centre, but an absence thereof for
the novel, for it can find no mise en abyme to represent
itself and only itself. Unlike the puzzle which reflects
the countryside scenes, and the film fragments which are
arranged into the seaside sequence, the posters always
interact in tandem, never presenting the wedding in the
urban site by itself. But if the wedding panel of the
triptych results from the wedding of the other two panels
in the posters, does this not confer upon the posters a
hermeneutic function which Lotringer denies to the mise en
abyme by definition?

> Le volet nuptial résulte des noces des deux
> autres battants, ou encore: chacun d'eux en
> propose l'amorce et la réplique.[16]

> La seule clôture qui intervienne, à proprement
> parler, dans le livre, c'est donc celle de la
> représentation. De la représentation représentée.
> Le puzzle ne représentait que la feinte d'une
> présence, la simulation d'un secret.[17]

Just as the disastrous wedding is an absence of centre

so the jigsaw puzzle is essentially absent, "la feinte
d'une présence". The jigsaw puzzle is taken at this moment
in Lotringer's argument to be paradigmatic of the mise en
abyme, conveniently overlooking the specialised transcen-
dental role of the posters. It is perhaps ironic that a
critique of Lotringer's Derridean reading should be
marshalled to demonstrate another of Derrida's precepts,
"ca boite et ça ferme mal". In Lotringer's complex reading
of Triptyque, mise en abyme, which Lotringer takes to be any
kind of internal reduplication, provides a texte de plaisir,
a transcendental recuperation which is shown to be counter-
feit and in its exposure to reinforce the overall strategy
of Triptyque as that of a texte de jouissance:

> Mise en abyme fidèle d'une histoire particulière,
> le classement (du dispositif filmique) propose
> un modèle d'intégration logique tout aussi con-
> traire à la prolifération textuelle que l'est le
> mode téléologique du puzzle.[18]

It is unfortunate that Lotringer should proceed by
creating a texte de plaisir from the posters which is not
taken to be counterfeit. The Derridean system of play which
he outlines is derived from a non-Derridean reduplication,
for the posters represent but do not function as a model of
absence, they are not misleading but are central. The
implications of such a reading of the posters are catas-
trophic for they identify the Derridean superstructure of
Triptyque as a utopist fantasy of pleasure, and quite the
reverse of what Lotringer had intended.

Lotringer's position that <u>mise en abyme</u> constitutes a "feinte de la présence" may now be granted, with the understanding that his reading is no less counterfeit. A text incapable of sustaining its own fantasies, basing them in contradiction is one traumatised by the desire for closed systems yet unable to complete them. DuVerlie provides a penetrating insight into the <u>interruptio</u> which permeates the workings of the text of <u>Triptyque</u> when he isolates anxiety neurosis as an accompaniment to <u>coitus</u> <u>interruptus</u>:

> Psychoanalysts have never stopped bringing to our attention the danger of practices such as <u>coitus interruptus</u>, which is generally accompanied by an anxiety neurosis. (D; p. 31)

The anxiety at work in Simon's novels has earlier been identified as death anxiety, leading to schizophrenic disjunction. The final pages of Triptyque reenter time as the synchronic representation afforded by the jigsaw puzzle in its completed form is swept away by the Englishman Brown. He presides anthropocentrically over his creation, which awaits his final gesture. The puzzle, like the spectators in the cinema, is in a state of diachronic suspense, "pressentant l'imminence de la fin". The exodus of the cinemagoers, hard upon the destruction of the puzzle, leaves the streets empty of all save the wedding vehicle, whose deserted condition marks the interruption of marital eroticism as surely as the deserted streets signify the

conclusion of the waking day.

> On entend claquer les portières de quelques
> voitures qui démarrent l'une après l'autre.
> Finalement une seule, dont les poignées sont
> décorées de noeuds de tulle détrempés par la
> pluie, reste contre le trottoir opposé, un peu
> plus haut que le cinéma dont les lumières ex-
> térieures s'éteignent tandis que les ouvreuses
> tirent les grilles et que les derniers spectateurs
> s'éloignent par petits groupes, les cols des
> manteaux relevés, courbant le dos contre le vent,
> sur les trottoirs bientôt déserts. (T; p. 225)

The spectators appear disconcerted on leaving the

cinema, "comme des gens qui se réveillent d'un lourd

sommeil." As they make their way off they become momentar-

ily subjected to the work of the wind, as though they

briefly encounter the hostile forces of the waking world.

Mention of the wind at this point in the text refers the

reader intertextually to that other work of Simon which

deals with the ternary form of the triptych, Le Vent,

subtitled Tentative de restitution d'un retable baroque.

Le Vent concludes with the notion of a wind condemned to

the eternal suffering of immortality:

> Bientôt il soufflerait de nouveau en tempête
> sur la plaine, finissant d'arracher les dernières
> feuilles rouges des vignes, achevant de dépouiller
> les arbres courbés sous lui, force déchaînée,
> sans but, condamnée à s'épuiser sans fin, sans
> espoir de fin, gémissant la nuit en une longue
> plainte, comme si elle se lamentait, enviait
> aux hommes endormis, aux créatures passagères
> et périssables leur possibilité d'oubli, de paix:
> le privilège de mourir.[19]

The wind brings death by stripping leaves from the

trees, a purveyor of that which is denied to it. The

spectators protect themselves from such a wind in Triptyque,

from the waking interval between two periods of sleep
as they hurry, one assumes from the lateness of the hour,
home to bed. The action of the wind is mirrored by that of
the old woman, symbolically representing Anubis, the eater
of the dead, as she plucks the unseeing eye from the rabbit
prior to skinning it:

> la vieille à tête de chien arrache d'un geste
> rapide du poignet l'un des yeux du lapin.
> (T; p. 30)

> Elle jette alors dans l'herbe le couteau
> ensanglanté et entreprend de dépouiller le
> lapin de sa peau en le retournant, un peu
> comme on retire une chaussette. (T; p. 38)

The skinned rabbit in the country sequence resembles
the actress in the seaside episode. Together they mark a
transition from the "mise à nu" of Les Corps conducteurs:

> Ils se dirigent vers une table d'opération
> sur laquelle est allongée une jeune femme nue.
> (Cc; p. 8)

> La moitié du corps du lapin est maintenant à
> nu. Les muscles roses des cuisses, des fesses
> et du ventre apparaissent comme sur une planche
> d'anatomie. (T; p. 38)

> le corps écartelé, trop rose par endroits,
> plus que nu lui aussi, vulnérable, comme le
> corps d'un animal écorché. (T; p. 50)

Triptyque is less concerned with the cross-sectional
possibilities of anatomy and concentrates upon the process
of stripping away protective layers. The actress, as Simon
remarks, has, "une sensibilité d'écorché."[20] Her irritability
is controlled by a drug dependency which allows a thanatoid
oblivion as she drifts into comatose sleep, her eyes staring

vacantly. The spectators who leave their cinematic sleep
likewise have their frail protection against the buffeting
of the wind, donning their coats for the trip between the
cinema and other shelter. The circadian rhythms of everyday
life present a threat in their diurnal phase, where wakeful-
ness causes the feeling of death to impinge. Death repre-
sents no more than definitive sleep; the wind of conscious-
ness brings with it the unceasing torment that is identified
with the fate of Crastinus in La Bataille de Pharsale.

The progression from the hollow self-deception prac-
tised by the narrator of Les Corps conducteurs to the pre-
occupation with laying bare in Triptyque is suggestive of a
qualitative change in the purgatorial process. The inter-
penetration of literary veiling and unveiling is now less
than ineluctable. Utopian systems are readily assumed by
the text, but more willingly discarded, permitting a play,
in the sense of a less than perfect fit, between one solu-
tion and the next. The figure of an authorial interlocutor
is outlined by the interstitial space, and a dialogue estab-
lished between utopian practice and the anxiety which sub-
tends it. The dramatisation of the wind allegorises the
unspoken discourse of the interlocutor as an urgent questing
force. The wind is left on stage at the close of the
novel, lending a sense of incompletion to the story-
telling as the dancer seeks to separate himself from the
dance. The narrator begins to participate in the increased

self-consciousness of the novel by taking into account the relative, localised nature of his own concerns. The novel begins to focus upon a sense of dissatisfaction, which can only be glimpsed by the narrator as that which is missing from, and therefore paradoxically threatening to his own designs. The narrator cannot shut out the watcher of his fictional dance, nor the efforts of the onlooker, the inter-locutor, to dissociate himself from the choreography for which he is responsible, and in which he also dances as narrator. For in Yeat's final line the dancer and the dance appear as one, making it desperately easy for the commentator to be swept along. The ease provides a sense of well-being born of vicarious participation, but a sense of desperation at being powerless to do otherwise. The illusion of the dance is in this last respect akin to the dizzying whirlpool which engulfs Ulysses and his ship as the island of Purgatory hoves into view in Dante's Inferno. Ulysses is no penitent and has no right to the gift of redemption. Similarly the interlocutor must distance him-self from his fiction, or be denied the fully redemptive truth of the novel:

> Noi ci allegrammo, e tosto tornò in pianto;
> chè della nova terra un turbo nacque, e
> percosse del legno il primo canto. Tre
> volte il fè girar con tutte l'acque: alla
> quarta levar la poppa in suso e la prora ire
> in guì, com'altrui piacque, infin che'l mar
> fu sopra noi richiuso.[21]

The image of drowning which invades Triptyque

threatens not only the deserted child, but writing itself.
The fiction which metes out death will in turn surrender to
the ink that is night, finding its own truth in death, as
the opaque waters close over the description. Darkness
brings a metaphorical saturation of the creative process.

> Il n'y a plus ni bois, ni hameau, ni champs,
> ni prés: tout est indifféremment noyé dans la
> nuit opaque. (...) La terre, le monde entier
> semblent engloutis sous une couche d'encre
> épaisse, palpable. (T; p. 206, my brackets)

At the end of the novel completion of the jigsaw
puzzle reaffirms the fate of the textual description. The
jigsaw assumes the dimensions of the riverside scene,
obturating the lacquered blackness which had delineated the
incomplete areas of the puzzle:

> L'homme à la stature puissante mais alourdie
> place de sa main droite la dernière petite
> pièce, et le dernier îlot de laque noire
> disparaît, obturé par une partie de la chevelure
> de l'un des garçons. (T; p. 223)

Brown's final gesture will be to sweep the pieces
away, destroying the symmetrically inverse proportion of
the puzzle to the table-top. The Englishman's compulsive
reaction to the ending of the puzzle is destructive only
of the localised solution to his impatience with waiting.
The puzzle is no ultimate arbiter of Brown's difficulties
with the actress, and forms part of a wider conflict, as
yet unresolved. The puzzle is scattered on the floor,
restoring the table-top to a uniform blackness that bears
no trace of the recent superimposition, just as day is

obliterated by night. The green of the puzzle against the
red of the carpet reintroduces the colour juxtaposition
symbolic of erotic or warlike struggle throughout Simon's
work. The puzzle no longer exists as such, for it has lost
its frame and none of its disseminated pieces bears any
complete image. It now belongs to a wider network of
interrelationships:

> Leurs découpures méandreuses ont été calculées
> de façon qu'aucune d'entre elles, prises isolé-
> ment, n'offre l'image entière d'un personnage,
> d'un animal, d'un visage même. A part de très
> rares exceptions (l'ocre de la robe des vaches,
> le gris des pierres du pont, le brun violacé
> des toits) leur ensemble présente toute la gamme
> variée des verts (émeraude, vert bronze, vert
> pomme, jade, perse, olive) et elles forment
> comme un archipel de petites îles creusées de
> baies, de golfes, hérissées de caps, sur le fond
> rouge de la moquette. (T; p. 223)

The interplay between regional and general concerns
represented in the puzzle mirrors in microcosm the ending
of the novel, where the self-obliteration of the fiction
refers the reader to a pervasive feeling of concern as yet
unstated.

The circadian machinery of a principle extrinsic to
the novel guarantees an end of sorts. Brown's action
restores darkness to the space occupied by the puzzle. It
is the perfunctory and mechanical intervention of a deus ex
machina which announces the same phenomenon of intervention
on the global scale of the novel. The abruptness of the
novel's conclusion conditions the paradoxical relation of

despair to presumption in the purgatorial experience of the
interlocutor. His fiction is damned but he has not been
saved, and it is beginning to appear as though he is obey-
ing a confessional obsession which is distinct from the
purging experience of the true penitent. The conclusion is
forced rather than naturally entropic, a drugged sleep
artificially induced, as in the case of the actress and that
of the bridegroom.

The distinction made possible between redemptive and
contrived closure derives from the space of play in the
novel, invading the street as an area of tension as yet
inarticulate and deserted. The authorial interlocutor's
condition has deteriorated to the point where he must do
violence to the text, forcing it to make his absence maxi-
mally visible as a wind of night tugging at the characters.
His sense of organic incompletion and alienation paves the
way for Leçon de choses, a text which deems itself remark-
able not for what it portrays, but for what it leaves out:

> Il n'a pas non plus été fait mention des bruits
> ou du silence, ni des odeurs (poudre, sang, rat
> crevé, ou simplement cette senteur subtile,
> moribonde et rance de la poussière) qui règnent
> ou sont perceptibles dans le local, etc., etc.[22]

The beginning of Leçon de chosss presents striking
affinities with the puzzle's final disposition on the
carpet in Triptyque, the decaying room is marked by the
interplay of shades of red and green, "des tons ocre-vert
et rougeâtres (vermillon passé)" (Lc; p. 10), and by a

pattern of plaster islands, "l'archipel crayeux des morceaux
de plâtre se répartit en îlots d'inégales grandeurs" (Lc;
p. 10).

It would appear that Simon's project in <u>Leçon de
choses</u> is not as different as he would have it from that
of <u>Triptyque</u>. In order to comprehend the change in the
authorial interlocutor which has occurred in <u>Triptyque</u> and
reaches its fullest dramatisation in <u>Leçon de choses</u> a
further investigation of the universe of paradox is pro-
posed. The interlocutor becomes threatened by his perver-
sion of the purgatorial process, as his death anxiety
causes him to revolt against the prospect of entropy.

NOTES

[1] Claude Simon, *Les Corps conducteurs* (Paris: Minuit, 1971), p. 226. Subsequent references to this work appear in the text so, (Cc).

[2] Josué Harrari, ed., *Textual Strategies* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1979), p. 131.

[3] Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie, Proc. of the *Colloque de Cerisy*, 1-8 Jul. 1974 (Paris: U.G.E., 10/18, 1975), p. 424.

[4] *Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie*, p. 424.

[5] Sylvère Lotringer, "Cryptique", in *Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie*, p. 325.

[6] Jean Ricardou, *Le Nouveau Roman* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), p. 75.

[7] Jean Ricardou, "Le Dispositif osiriaque", *Etudes littéraires*, 9, no. 1 (1976), 78.

[8] Jacques Derrida, *La Carte postale* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), p. 418.

[9] Jean Ricardou, "Le Dispositif osiriaque", p. 76.

[10] Jean Ricardou, *Le Nouveau Roman*, p. 135.

[11] Claud DuVerlie, "Amor Interruptus: The Question of Eroticism, or, Eroticism in Question in the Works of Claude Simon," *Sub-Stance*, 8 (1974), 28. Subsequent references to this work appear in the text so, (D).

[12] Claude Simon, Triptyque (Paris: Minuit, 1973), p. 191. Subsequent references to this work appear in the text so, (T).

[13] Dalton Krauss, "Beyond the Text of Pleasure: Projet pour une révolution à New York." paper delivered at the annual MLA convention, seminar Robbe-Grillet (1975), p. 3.

[14] Roland Barthes, Le Plaisir du texte (Paris: Seuil, 1973) p. 83. Quoted in Krauss p. 3.

[15] Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie, p. 425.

[16] Sylvère Lotringer, p. 320.

[17] Sylvère Lotringer, p. 332.

[18] Sylvère Lotringer, p. 317.

[19] Claude Simon, Le Vent (Paris: Minuit, 1957), p. 241.

[20] Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie, p. 425.

[21] Dante Alighieri, Inferno (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) p. 327.

[22] Claude Simon, Leçon de choses (Paris: Minuit, 1975) p. 11. Subsequent references to this work appear in the text so, (Lc).

CHAPTER VI

SHORT-CIRCUITRY

The logic of closure which operates in works prior
to Triptyque becomes disfunctional in the latter novel.
That Triptyque is not a closed text in the sense of its
predecessors should not be taken to mean that it has in
some way defied the tradition of the novel, but simply
that the reader is left without the comfortable illusion
of self-sufficiency that lies in the framing of answers
rather than questions. The fragmentation of utopias of
language is suggestive of a failure on the part of the
interlocutor to integrate his predicament into a properly
purgatorial environment. Leçon de choses will mark the
end of a period of adventurism on the part of the authorial
interlocutor, or at least such is the hypothesis of the
present reading, for with the conclusion of Leçon de choses
an impasse is reached in the postulation of an 'aventure
d'une écriture' to supersede the 'écriture d'une aven-
ture'.[1]

Certain textual strategies are by definition self-de-
feating, according to Julia Kristeva in her article, "Le
texte clos". Into this category fall concepts that deal
with arbitrariness in writing:

> Il est évident que les concepts d'"arbitraire"
> et de "littéralité" ne peuvent être pensés que
> dans une idéologie de valorisation de l'oeuvre
> (phonétique, discursive) au détriment de
> l'écriture (de la productivité textuelle), autre-
> ment dit, dans un texte (culturel) clos.2

La Bataille de Pharsale provides a classic example of

the bad faith which seeks to convert closure into open-

endedness; it introduces an example of writing at its con-

clusion: "O. écrit: jaune et puis noir temps d'un batte-

ment de paupières et puis jaune de nouveau."3 The re-

petition of the novel's opening line seeks to create a cir-

cularity which circumvents finality:

> L'intervention de l'instance de l'écriture dans
> le texte est souvent l'excuse que l'auteur se
> donne pour justifier la fin arbitraire de son
> récit.4

The doubling of the narrator is a comfortable excuse

in La Bataille de Pharsale, for the fiction is not threat-

ened by its inner contradiction and can present a front of

arbitrary writing. Arbitrariness often masks a structural

completeness which underlies the compositional arrest of

the novel. Les Corps conducteurs terminates with an inter-

penetration of narrator and thread bare carpet according

to a principle of conduction which transposes life and

text. The ending of the novel has been taken at face value

by critics such as Bishop as a convenient place to stop an

ongoing series. Kristeva argues that even an apparently

defective ending underlines the structural wholeness of a

novel, a reading that penetrates behind the facade of writ-

ing by taking it as evidence of closure:

> L'achèvement explicite peut souvent manquer au
> texte romanesque, ou être ambigu, ou sous-en-
> tendu. Cet inachèvement ne souligne pas moins
> la finition structurale du texte.5

Triptyque observes a more complex pattern of narra-
tive development than its predecessors, for it ends upon
an intimation of self-negation. Leçon de choses in turn
will centre upon a rhetoric of self-contestation and can-
cellation, dramtising arbitrariness by a display of its
own short-circuitry. A typology of textual behaviour
organised in Kristeva's Pour une sémiologie des para-
grammes, outlines a category of writing which broadly
corresponds to the practice of Leçon de choses:

> La pratique sémiotique de l'écriture. Nous
> l'appellerons dialogique ou paragrammatique.
> Ici le signe est éliminé par la séquence
> paragrammatique corrélative qui est double
> et zéro. On pourrait représenter cette
> séquence comme un tétralemme: chaque signe a
> un dénotatum; chaque signe n'a pas de dénotatum;
> chaque signe a et n'a pas de dénotatum; il n'est
> pas vrai que chaque signe a et n'a pas de déno-
> tatum. (...) L'écriture qui a l'audace de
> suivre le trajet complet de ce mouvement dialogique
> que nous venons de représenter par le tétralémme,
> donc d'être une description et une négation
> successive du texte qui se fait dans le texte qui
> s'écrit, (...)6

At its opening Leçon de choses presents the denotatum
of a room made visible by a light bulb. The possibility of
a second light source, as yet only hypothesised, casts into
doubt the initial denotatum, since the second, more power-
ful light would present the room in another aspect. The
first term of the tetralemma flickers against the prospect
of its negation as that which has not been described is

presented in order to demonstrate the provisional nature
of the preceding description. The narrative sign is con-
tested in its semblance of wholeness, reflecting the third
term of the tetralemma:

> La description (la composition) peut se continuer
> (ou être complétée) à peu près indéfiniment selon
> la minutie apportée à son exécution, l'entraîne-
> ment des métaphores proposées, l'addition
> d'autres objets visibles dans leur entier ou fra-
> gmentés par l'usure, le temps, un choc (soit en-
> core qu'ils n'apparaissent qu'en partie dans le
> cadre du tableau), sans compter les diverses
> hypothèses que peut susciter le spectacle. Ainsi
> il n'a pas été dit si (peut-être par une porte
> ouverte sur un corridor ou une autre pièce) une
> seconde ampoule plus forte n'éclaire pas la
> scène.7

The second and fourth terms of the tetralemma are en-
sconced in the novel's last chapter, "Courts-circuits",
where the light of "une seconde ampoule, plus forte" ne-
gates the denotatum of the room as first described by in-
troducing supplementary, more forceful considerations. If
the final chapter vindicates the previous contradiction of
the first term of the tetralemma, then it also negates the
third. The alternative light source assumes responsiblity
for the denotatum of the room, quelling doubt as to whether
there is or is not a denotatum. The tetralemmatic struc-
ture introduces moreover the figure of the double, as the
second light supplants the first, and in so doing creates
a short circuit. The tetralemma is returned to its first
term, but the denotatum of the room is no longer identical.
The novel closes upon a note of warning against lighting
hazards.

> Pour y voir plus clair l'une des femmes tourne
> le commutateur qu'elle referme précipitamment
> lorsqu'elle lit sur le panneau de la porte
> l'avertissement tracé par le contremaître à
> l'aide d'un fragment de plâtre, mettant en
> garde contre les risques de court-circuit.
> (Lc; p.182).

The narration of Leçon de Choses comes full circle with the intention of discountenancing any readings based on a hierarchisation of world over word, and of word over word. The first category, realism, is rejected in a by now familiar manner of description. The events which are narrated within the novel appear to derive from texts contained within it, of which the traditional "LEÇONS DE CHOSES" (Lc; p.23) is the most striking example. The well-known French primer of the world about us replicates the events of the novel, pluralising, categorising and reducing them to easily assimilable chunks of information suitable for schoolchildren. The reader is referred to textual sources and not to the real world in his attempt to decipher the novel. A second type of decoding is likewise eschewed by the novel, that of assigning generative powers to any specific section of the novel. The language of "Générique" is short-circuited by that of "Courts-circuits"; the reader's attempt to discern a linear development is frustrated as the novel exposes the illusion that certain words, phrases and passages generate others. François Jost, in his article, "Les Aventures du lecteur", goes beyond Barthes' "effet de réel" to demonstrate an "effet de production"[8] in Simon's novels. A system of

generators is put into place, but is not allowed to per-
sist. Unlike the realistic objects analysed by Barthes,
the narrative signifiers are not left in place but are
exploded as myth, allowing competing systems of signifi-
cation to vie for supremacy. The tetralemma would seem
to achieve a text governed by arbitrary and self-defeat-
ing systems, a utopia of language founded upon regenera-
tive self-cancellation. But the novel, while exposing
different strategies of reading as fraudulent, cannot re-
sist proposing its own key in the final lines, as one of
the woman reads and reacts to the written warning couched
in a medium extracted from the room itself, a door panel
and a piece of plaster. It is a text which stabilises in
monologue its dialogic environment.

Writing which takes itself for its own example is
both allegorical and displaced, for it recuperates trans-
cendent meaning by virtue of a self-interruptory process.
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her article "Thoughts on
the Principle of Allegory", notes the inclusion of
allegoric passages in the fragment, "Propriétés des
rectangles", which was later to be fleshed out into Les
Corps conducteurs. Her observation, although couched in
a futile generalisation about the novel tradition is pene-
trating in that it sees through the purportedly anti-
allegorical effects of Simon's writing:

> In the good old days men read allegory with the
> help of a system of signification that they re-
> ceived from outside. In the "Propriétés" the

terms for decoding the allegoric passages is (sic) provided by the movement of the style itself.9

Spivak refines her insight further in the direction of identifying a subjective principle in the discourse of allegory. The style may in turn become a referent for paradigmatic self-reflection, which arrests the forward progress of the narration:

> Whether he (Claude Simon) likes it or not, writing such as this, because it is impossible without the presence of an extremely active creative mind behind it, may lead to an allegory of the creative process, a naming of the abyss of subjectivity, as much as committed subjectivist writing like Rilke's might.10

"Générique", the introductory section to Leçon de choses was originally submitted as a short piece ordered by Maeght, and employed the technique of allegory in a manner analogous to that noted by Spivak in "Propriétés". The description is truncated by the prospect of its own interminability.

> La description (la composition) peut se continuer (ou être complétée) à peu près indéfiniment. (Lc; p.10)

"Générique" was, of course, later incorporated and expanded, hence the opening sections, "Générique" and "Expansion", into Leçon de choses. Allegory ceased to function here as a definitive displacement of the narrative into the abyss of subjectivity and became merely interruptory. The same cannot be said of the cautionary reference to short circuits which concludes the novel and forms a corollary to "Générique". The admonition which allegorises

the subversive conduct(ion) of the last section comes
too late, it not only displaces the narrative from the
horizontal to the verticality of the subjective, it has
the last word in another sense; it decodes a posteriori
the tetralemmatic itinerary of the novel for the reader.
In a largely unsatisfactory way the final sentence illus-
trates the tetralemmatic principle of the novel, charac-
terised by Kristeva as, "une voie (une trajectoire com-
plète) zéro (qui se nie),"[11] a description which will now
fit the short circuit imperfectly. An allegory which
contains, as Spivak indicates, its own terms for self-
decoding, carries with it a superstructure, "the sentence
becomes a metasemantic sign for which the referent is the
style itself."[12] A metasystem of intelligibility reintro-
duces the problematic of the relationship of the frame to
the framed encountered in the previous chapter. An explan-
tion of the novel's operation cannot be completely inte-
grated to the workings of the tetralemma; it belongs to the
domain of commentary, being a rudimentary blueprint or
"Leçon de choses". As such it is both extrinsic to the
novel and part of it. The framing of the novel's short
circuitry may be said to be unsatisfactory because of the
implications of risk involved. The short circuit is not
generally understood as a stable configuration, as might
ordinarily be argued for the tetralemma, which migrates
from its originary contradiction into considerations of
truth, "il n'est pas vrai que (...)". The base of the

tetralemma, its first two terms, always remains intact,
a short circuit commonly threatens the integrity of the
entire system, leaving no trace of the complete trajectory,
"trajectoire complète" of the original circuitry.

It is the spectre of self-destruction rather than
mere negation which is conjured by the final line of the
novel. The lights are turned off by one of the women but
not because the two lights are in competition, which is
the sense intended by the narrator. The title of the final
section "Courts circuits" refers not to the risk of fire,
but to the neutralisation of what has been said by what has
remained unstated, the intrusion of a second more powerful
source of light upon the events narrated. The framing of
the novel's workings by the mason's writing refers ex-
plicitly to the danger of an electrical fire. The decoding
of allegory inscribes the novel within a frame of com-
bustion. The utopic concept of perfect self-containment
and sufficiency provided by the tetralemma is threatened by
a principle of auto-ignition, one which will close the no-
vel and consume the narrator.

Certain details of the myth of the phoenix, or its
prototype the bennu present striking affinities to the
allegory of the creative process in Simon's novels, and to
his reading of Poussin's "Orion aveugle". The heliotropic
progress of Orion, referred to in an earlier chapter, finds
its extreme utterance in the fate of the phoenix, which in
the <u>Book of the Dead</u> appears as a symbol of the rising sun

itself, and in the Physiologus is regenerated by first
burning to ashes upon the altar of the temple at Helio-
polis. Leçon de choses is evocative of such a dramatic
example of spontaneous immolation at dusk by virtue of
the extreme violence done to itself. Textual utopia is
converted by its allegorical frame into the closure of a
self-consuming artefact. The sense of incompletion sti-
mulated by the prospect of a novel ending despite itself
paves the way for a future novel. A sequel to the pre-
vious sequel will perpetuate the quest motif.

Leçon de choses carries to its uttermost articula-
tion the paradoxical confinement of the narrator in a
text which will always escape his own efforts to contain
it. For if a text is both logocentric and anthropocentric
then the narrator of Simon's novels seeks to weave a utopic
fiction of language from a material ill suited to his task,
the order of the body is not designed for immobilisation.
Irene Tschinka in a communication more prose poem than
criticism, and at times self-parodic in its undecidability,
does encapsulate quite neatly the fate of writing in
Triptyque. It is a condition created by a narrator intent
upon parricide, but unequipped for the task of suppressing
the contextual figure which has spawned him. The narrator
chases more and more furiously in pursuit of horizons which
will forever elude him:

> Ce qui marque l'ordre du corps dont il est à la
> fois le texte, la texture, et le prétexte,
> l'excédent, n'est en effet que le déplacement

> d'une problématique archaïque, à savoir
> celle de la limite: le corps étant par
> rapport à la "chose" ce qui disposerait
> d'une limite mobile, échappant par là à
> toute entreprise totalisatrice de délimita-
> tion. Même lorsque l'écriture semble avoir
> fait le tour du corps, il y a toujours du
> corps qui reste, du corps conducteur, de l'or
> liquide pour revenir sur du corps, pour
> assurer la remise en marche de la machine
> après son emballement.13

The figure of an authorial interlocutor construed qua limit has been touched upon in the introduction of the present work. Leçon de choses presents a second and related feature of the paradoxical condition of a narrative fiction, namely the fall of the narrator. As the novel approaches final entropy or heat death, the narrator is revealed to be engaged upon a frenetic even paroxysmic activity as his tired fiction is eventually exhausted. Leçon de choses ends upon the vital tones of conflagration, at odds with the extinction of the light by one of the women. The sentence is convoluted so that the order of events, first reading the notice, second turning out the light, is reversed, valorising the element of risk remarked hitherto. The inversion may be contrasted with the sentence which completes the preceding section, "La Charge de Reichshoffen": "Tout est complètement noir" (Lc; p.173).

Total obscurity guarantees the blurring of distinction between the narrator's self and the environment that he can never quite control. It is an oblivion which permits temporary respite. The interlocution which results from the exchange between narrator and context is muted, en sourdine,

to supply a short-lived illusion of redemption which interrupts periods of textual suffering. Schopenhauer used music rather than literature to arrive at a similar understanding:

> Now the nature of man consists in this, that his will strives, is satisfied and strives anew, and so on for ever. Indeed his happiness and well-being consist simply in the quick transition from wish to satisfaction, and from satisfaction to a new wish. For the absence of satisfaction is suffering, the empty longing for a new wish, languor, ennui.14

Leçon de choses attempts to prepare a formula for satisfaction, an alchemy of the word which will transform day into night and suffering into oblivion. The narrator, unable to control his fiction, will attempt to manipulate his own destiny, striving to end the novel before it can complete its entire itinerary of allotted woe. Despair yields to anticipation as the narrator abdicates from his proper rôle and invests desire in his double, an underground figure who substitutes a demonic conclusion for the narrator's failing angelic condition as the inhabitant of a textual paradise primed for his fall.

The potential for voyeuristic imitation had previously appeared in Triptyque. One of the two boys spying upon the couple in the barn engages upon an onanistic reduplication of their activity:

> Le main de l'un des garçons enfouie jusqu'au poignet sous la ceinture de sa culotte, allant et venant rapidement.15

The violence of Simon's writing is evidenced, as

Raymond Jean has remarked, by his indiscretion and pre-
cision in the description of erotic scenes:

> On se demande parfois quel regard de voyeur
> pourrait arriver à voir les choses écrites
> avec autant de violente indiscrétion et de
> violente précision.16

In turning against the balance of <u>Leçon de choses</u>,
"Courts circuits" dramatises a textual voyeurism both
imitative and violent. "Générique" is open to a mimetic
rewriting by a second narrator, for it contains the de-
formed shadow of an onlooker whose presence might be sur-
mised from the hypothesis of a second light source:

> Ce qui expliquerait la présence d'ombres
> portées très opaques (presque noires) qui
> s'allongent sur le carrelage à partir des
> objets visibles (décrits) ou invisibles - et
> peut-être aussi celle, échassière et distendue,
> d'un personnage qui se tient debout dans
> l'encadrement de la porte. (Lc; p.11)

A violent attack will be launched on this figure in
"Expansion", as an enemy shell explodes behind a soldier
entering the room:

> Un soldat se précipite dans la pièce par la
> porte ouverte et au moment où l'obus éclate
> il se trouve debout dans l'encadrement de
> celle-ci, les deux bras levés, les deux pieds
> à quelques centimètres du sol, comme suspendu
> en l'air. Un instant, la lueur de l'explosion
> (ou celle du soleil qui décline) (...).(Lc; p.24)

The second figure, unlike the soldier who represents
him, gains in force as he is elevated to the rôle of ad-
versary. The mention of the setting sun prefigures the
dramatic change which will occur in the narrator. The
transformative powers of evening, announced by a reference

to Monet's _Effet du Soir_, are brought to a culmination
by the _mise en abyme_ of the narrator in the description
of a crepuscular figure depicted upon a soot-encrusted
fireback:

> Indifférente et futile dans le parc obscur
> et ratissé, la jeune femme noircie par les
> flammes semble suspendue immobile, sans
> toucher terre, effleurant le sol de son ample
> jupe aérienne, estompée par les couches de
> suie, comme l'habitante ignifugée et paradoxale
> d'un monde souterrain, charbonneux et fleuri.
> (Lc; p.110)

The doubling of the image serves to transform flames
into flowers, although the young woman by the same token
becomes a creature of the underground. The narrator of
"Courts circuits" is not averse to the risk of fire, pre-
ferring it to day, but his activity is that of the under-
ground creature, for he inhabits the realm of hallucinatory
clarity and paradox. He does violence to the linear pro-
gress of the narration, undermining it with phantasms of
the unspoken. As the young woman turns out the light, the
novel's world appears "charbonneux et fleuri", darkly illu-
minated by the chance of a short circuit.

The young woman is represented in a picture of spring,
but the title is incomplete, its centre illegible, "d'un
côté les lettres F,R et Ü, puis L,I,N et G." Despite the
violence done to the illustration by the fire, the scene
holds out a message of hope, explicitly allegorical for the
narrator viewing the engraving:

Au milieu des gravats, l'aérienne jardinière à

> la robe de suie, sa serpette, son bouquet, la
> balustrade, le géométrique bassin d'eau noire,
> l'oiseau noir, le baldaquin de nuages noirs,
> semblent constituer quelque optimiste et para-
> doxale allégorie apparaissant au coeur de l'hiver
> à la tremblante lueur des flammes comme une pro-
> messe d'espoir. (Lc; p.162)

The translation of such a begrimed figure into a fig-
ure of hope is a clear invitation to read into the
narrator's perception an exchange of black for white. Such
speculation is shortly confirmed as the couple making adul-
terous love achieve orgasm, and the narrator's voyeuristic
eye has penetrated into the tunnel of the vagina, visuali-
sing ejaculation of black semen:

> Tandis qu'à l'intérieur de la chaire obscure
> le long membre raidi se tend encore, lâchant
> de longues giclées de sperme noir. (Lc; p.163)

A note of violence is again apparent in that the male
has failed to observe the woman's express demand that he be
careful to practice interruptus. The violence is allegori-
cally significant as a rage directed at the narrator's own
perception of the world as real. Orgasm is crepuscular
and so hallucinatory, permitting, like the anger of the
'pourvoyeur', a visual exchange of day and night, reality
and unreality:

> Dans le silence de la pièce qui s'assombrit
> peu à peu, elle (la voix du pourvoyeur) semble,
> avec les répétitions monotones des mêmes jurons,
> sa rage impuissante, ses brefs éclats, comme
> quelque chose de crépusculaire, d'irréel.
> (Lc; p. 54, my brackets)

The work of René Girard and Gregory Bateson has help-
ed to organise categories and developmental stages within

the frame of mimetic desire. Girard, in a chapter from
La Violence et le sacré entitled "Du Désir mimétique au
double monstrueux", identifies violence as the product of
rivalry in desire. Rivalry is no accident, but is induced
by mimesis, "Le sujet désire l'objet parce que le rival
lui-même le désire."[17] Imitation generates conflict be-
cause the object of desire is singular, whereas the sub-
ject is double, conflict under such conditions is ineluct-
able: "Deux désirs qui convergent sur le même objet se font
mutuellement obstacle. Toute mimesis portant sur le désir
débouche automatiquement le conflit".[18] An unresolved con-
flict, Girard hypothesises, leads to the appearance of a
monstrous double:

> Sous le terme de double monstrueux, nous
> rangeons tous les phénomènes d'hallucination
> provoqués par la réciprocité méconnue, au
> paroxysme de la crise. Le double monstrueux
> surgit là où se trouvaient dans les étapes
> précédentes un "Autre" et un "Moi" toujours
> séparés par la différence oscillante.19

Desire divided against itself sets up an oscillation
between triumph and defeat, divinity and nothingness, it
is therefore attracted to and seeks to embody the violence
of victory. Girard speaks of the situation as reflecting
the impasse of what Bateson has christened the double bind.
The narrator of Simon's novel finds himself in such a pre-
dicament, for he desires to recreate himself as a sub-
terranean, paradoxical creature of hope. To do so he must
confront the obstacle of his waking self in order to wrest
control of his destiny from the dimension of real

perception and invest it in the demonic realm of the
oneiric. The attainment of such a desire is impossible,
for it runs counter to the postulate of his own non-
imaginary presence. The narrator cannot fully relieve
himself of the intimations of failure which attend his
project. The voice of the 'pourvoyeur' is ominous, por-
tending disaster:

> Comme si, avec le chant sporadique de l'oiseau
> au-dehors, elle rendait plus sensible encore
> le silence, la pénombre où s'épaissit entre les
> quatre murs et sous le plafond déchiqueté cette
> tenace puanteur particulière aux désastres, d'une
> consistance pour ainsi dire palpable, grise.
> (Lc; p.55)

The narrator remains frozen in the dialogic exchange
between himself and his interlocutorial context, and cannot
free himself from this dependency, for he is not the final
author of his destiny. The dynamics of his self-delusion
are inscribed within a pattern of failure, that which
mirrors the sense of failure subtending his condition. It
is the feeling of death which afflicts the authorial inter-
locutor that must ultimately frame the paradox by which the
narrator seeks to transcend his situation, and convert it
into a double-bind.

Paradox is not by definition restricted to two poles
alone. Gregory Bateson in his collection of essays and
lectures, Steps to an Ecology of Mind, redefines paradox as
a ternary structure couched within a binary opposition: a
double bind. In the Zen Buddhist paradigm cited by Bateson
the threat of a beating has three terms of choice and two

agents. Unlike Hobson's choice, not only are the two
choices bad ones, a third alternative, that of a refusal
to choose, has equally unfortunate consequences. The
pupil will be beaten whether he identifies his master's
stick as real or unreal, but also if he remains silent.
The obvious solution, that of a meta-communication, accord-
ing to Wilden, is to ignore the master's injunction and to
apply the principle of choice to an exchange of rôles. The
master is he who wields the stick, therefore expropriation
of the instrument will ensure release from the double bind.

An application of this logic to literature may be made
in the shape of a reference to the writer who masters his
past by means of autobiography. The threat of a past exis-
tence may be overcome by becoming one with the former self,
thereby authorising a passage into the future. The past
self can only observe the present author as a possible
future projection, thus liberating the latter from his
fatalistic sense of confinement. The true conquest of fate
can only be achieved where the author feels free to opt
out of the system which directs him. The behaviour of
Orestes in Sartre's Les Mouches, in hurriedly rejecting the
message of destiny contrasts with Sartre's more tempered
autobiographical gesture in Les Mots, where he reassesses
the doctrine of progress:

> "J'avais fourré le progrès continu des bourgeois
> dans mon âme et j'en faisais un moteur à ex-
> plosion; j'abaissai le passé devant le présent
> et celui-ci devant l'avenir, je transformai un
> évolutionnisme tranquille en un catatrophisme

> révolutionnaire et discontinu. (...) il suffit
> d'un instant, par exemple, pour que L'Oreste
> des Mouches accomplisse sa conversion. Parbleu:
> c'est que je les (les personnages) fais à mon
> image."20

Sartre's revolt lies in his acceptance of a gradualist process of change. It reflects a movement away from the trap of a revolutionary path, one condemned to pass through the same points repeatedly. His awareness of repetitive patterns, a consciousness more recently acquired, "plus récemment acquise",[21] is also the writing of his autobiography, an activity which helps dissipate his earlier convictions about the necessity for rapid change.

Autobiography has its counterparts in confession, just as the solution to the double bind is matched to the notion of impasse. Lawrence Porter, writing on the confessional versus autobiographical novel in two selected works of André Gide, identifies the former as regressive and circular:

> But the artist-narrator in autobiograpy por-
> trays himself completing one work and moving
> on, or abandoning a futile project to embark
> on a more promising one. The narrator's crea-
> tions become his children and go on to lead
> independent lives of their own. In contrast,
> the self-absorbed compulsive ritual of the con-
> fessional apologetics continually re-enacts the
> same few moments from the past. It ultimately
> represents an appeal to the audience to replace
> the narrator's lost or rejected parents. Auto-
> biographical awareness resolves itself as
> achievement; confessional unawareness, as re-
> gression.22

The confessional novelist is typically self-absorbed rather than other-directed, for him his condition has no

release, only the brief respite of a reprieve. In a deterministic environment the novelist does not feel free to reject the system of which he is a part; his autoreflexive impulse takes on the compulsive, ritualistic complexion of the supplicant seeking absolution from his present condition. He does not become one with his past, but attempts to relive the past with a view to expurgation. He seeks a freedom in the confessional equation which neutralises past suffering, but is haunted by the ephemerality of liberty thus gained. He remains unaware that his regression makes of his past a futurality, for he can only continue to retrospect. His present task is rendered more imposing and frenetic by the impasse: he has with each passing moment less time in which to review his panoply of past failures. Unlike the autobiographer, the confessionalist has no future prospect, but can only dwell with increasing intensity upon the imminence of his own end. The writer does not escape the double bind proposed by the Zen master, but entrenches his own position by a refusal to answer. This choice offers no ultimate salvation.

The novelist as pupil is aware, however, that a response is never immediate, and that he can occupy the pause which separates the question from the answers available to him. In order to invade this space effectively, he must recycle time. The speed of each cycle of regression must accelerate as the time remaining diminishes,

if a sense of balance is to be maintained. Each successive
revolution of past moments must be accomplished more quick-
ly so that the cycle elapsed does not subtract from the
cycles remaining. The increase in speed can be measured in
literary terms by the progressive breakdown in the con-
fessional posture. The delay in dealing with the past
effectively augments the sense of urgency and becomes in-
creasingly disjunctive, automatic and schizoid as it sets
up an opposition between anxiety and procrastination which
moves towards the delirium of the perfect machine. The
silence of the pupil concerning his intentions is never a
definitive reply, for it defies the limits of the double
bind, describing an asymptotic curve which directs the sub-
ject towards the truth of madness, where time becomes in-
finitely small and speed infinitely great.

The narrative design of Leçon de choses incorporates
a regressive cycle, "Courts-circuits" which leads the
narrator into a system of delirium through a doubling of
the self. The divided consciousness of the narrator re-
duplicates in microcosm the master disciple configuration
which exists between interlocutor and narrator. In contra-
distinction to the narrator's selves, the interlocutor
proper is never dramatised and thus can never exchange
positions with the narrator, who must remain subordinate to
the forces which lend him shape and definition. In order
to combat the malevolent demonic figure of the interlocutor
the narrator can only internalise the adversary that stands

between himself and full control of his fiction. By
driving the narrator to the point of delirium the inter-
locutor incarnates an aspect of himself as anti-christ in
the rôle of the double; in the ensuing conflict within the
narrator the novel is imbued with the comforting illusion
of hope, a power which delivers the world of the novel
from its drift toward perdition, but at the expense of the
narrator's sanity. The confessional posture of the au-
thorial interlocutor is maintained only by the demolition
of the core of the narrative, its fictionalising agent.

Delirium is never far from the surface of the narra-
tor's perception in Leçon de choses. The language of the
narrative voice, although disembodied, is less than im-
passive, it is imprinted with a logic which Colette Gaudin
labels as pulsive, reflecting the unconscious drives of the
narrator.

> C'est donc finalement vers une logique
> pulsionnelle que guide ce langage fausse-
> ment impassible.23

Girard outlines a logic of mimetic rather than libid-
inal desire in "Système du délire" which is consistent with
the reading of the double bind proposed above and reflec-
tive of the condition of the narrator at the moment when
he alchemically transmutes the novel into an oneiric inver-
sion of perceived reality. Girard proposes a reciprocity
of mimetic activity based upon the rivalry between model
and disciple. The frustration of the disciple desire leads
it to enter a reactive phase, which Girard will later take

to be responsible for all real manifestations of desire:

> Le conflit des désirs résulte automatiquement
> de leur caractère mimétique. C'est ce mécanisme
> forcément, qui détermine les caractères de ce
> que Nietzsche appelle ressentiment. Le re-du
> ressentiment, c'est le ressac du désir qui se
> heurte à l'obstacle du désir mortel; forcément
> contrarié par le modèle, le désir disciple
> reflue vers sa source pour l'empoisonner.24

The final pages of "La Charge de Reichshoffen", the

penultimate section of Leçon de choses contain a reprise

of the motif of the seeing ear, which appeared as a re-

frain in La Bataille de Pharsale, "oreille qui peut

voir".25 The eye not the ear becomes the organ of vision

in its new context, and will transcend the suffering which

poisoned ear/sight in the earlier work. The toxins of

Mithridate have yielded to the quintessential elixirs

of Paracelsus as night transmutes into day and pain into

hope. The metronomic winking of a lighthouse produces the

mechanical hallucination of a pathway of light across the

water at the exact moment of nightfall. The route to the

stars offers an alternative to the murky reptilian depths

and undertow of the darkened sea:

> Soudain, au fond de l'horizon où le ciel ne se
> sépare plus maintenant de la mer, scintille sur
> la gauche la brève lueur d'un phare qui dis-
> paraît aussitôt, reparaît, s'éteint pendant
> quelques secondes reparaît deux fois coup sur
> coup, démasquée et occultée tour à tour selon
> un rhythme codé avec une régularité de métronome
> comme si l'oeil - pas l'oreille: l'oeil - pouvait
> percevoir quelque part à travers le bruit
> paisible et régulier du ressac l'implacable
> grignotement des roues dentées, des engrenages,
> de l'échappement fractionnant le temps en menus
> intervalles comptabilisés, comme si quelque

> signal venu d'étoiles, d'astres lointains
> gravitant à des millions d'années-lumière
> les avait tout à coup mis en mouvement pour
> marquer l'instant, la seconde précise de la
> séparation du jour et de la nuit, déclenchant
> en même temps l'apparition soudaine d'un fugitif
> chemin de reflets sur l'étendue ténébreuse qui
> ne se distingue plus de la plage que par une
> incessante mouvance, confusément perçue, de
> noires et statiques ondulations comme celles
> d'une chevelure liquide reptilienne et visqueuse.
> (Lc; p.171)

The uneasy admixture of peace and implacability does not bode well for the new vision of the eye. Blind throughout Simon's later works, the eye now enters into a redemptive activity, but the mechanistic aspect of the sight now regained bears considerable resemblance not only to the 'ressac' of the sea, but that of Nietzschean ressentiment described by Girard. Redemption and death combine in paradoxical counterpoint as the voyeur is given back the capacity to see. The narrative voice becomes increasingly optimistic against a backdrop of monstrous darkness and blindness, he is redeemed even as everything around him connotes a horizon of damnation. At the end of "La Charge de Reichshoffen", sight appears as aberrant as blindness; the giant motionless form of the voyeuristic cow which has been a silent witness to the couple's love-making, is illuminated by the flame of a match, and one of its two eyes takes on the extreme lightness of an albino colouring:

> Il peut voir son oeil fardé de noir, l'autre
> bordé de rose pâle et sa frange de cils soyeux
> et décolorés comme ceux d'un albinos. (Lc; p.173)

The match will burn the man's fingers and be dropped, emphasising the interlocution with darkness against which the doubling of the eye occurs. The split in the narrative voice is prefigured in the opposition between the cow's eyes, and in the relationship of the cow to death; a dead cow appears as the upended counterpart to the hulking immobility of the cow which looms over the couple: "la vache morte dresse vers le ciel ses quatre pattes raides comme des piquets." (Lc; p.141). Just as the doubling of the voice contains but is distinct from the relation between interlocutor and narrator, so the dark silhouette of the cow before it is illuminated by a flame stands out from its nocturnal surroundings, "ses cornes noires et horizontales se découpant, opaques sur le ciel d'un noir différent." (Lc; p.155). The differentiation between shades of gloom allows the cow to take statuesque shape and implicitly thereby to take on a macabre impression of life as night is doubled, creating phantoms of itself which are copresent with living forms. The immobility of the cow, both in life and death, is taken up in the immobility of the trapped soldiers as a symbol not only of death, but of a phantasmal perpetuation of mortality:

> Le tireur semble composer avec le chargeur assis
> à côté sur une caisse un de ces groupes
> grossièrement moulés sur nature dans le plâtre
> liquide et qui, dans les musées ou sur les
> monuments aux morts, sont figés dans une
> térrifiante immobilité, comme non seulement
> la négation du mouvement et de la vie mais une
> perpétuation macabre, fantomatique, de
> l'instantané et du périssable. (Lc; p.152)

The fate of the narrator, allegorised in the images
of the cow and soldiers, is to be possessed by a demonic
other conjured from the forms adopted by a horizon of
night and death. The narrator of "Courts circuits" is to
enjoy what Girard terms a critical period of delirium,
but without the attendant experience of destruction and
death evoked by Girard. The narrator does violence to
his own narration at the last, and in his self-overpower-
ing enjoys the delusion of omnipotence:

> Avec la violence réciproque, on entre dans une
> phase critique, celle qui débouche sur le délire
> et la folie, bien sûr, et aussi sur la destruc-
> tion et sur la mort.26

The truth of novelistic desire, as Girard reminds us
at the conclusion of "Mensonge romantique et vérité
romanesque" is not death but redemption, but in Leçon de
choses the latter illusion is achieved at the expense of
the narrator's psychic breakdown into the madness of the
double. Girard deploys the example of Dostoïevsky to
illustrate the operation of delirium as obeying a logic of
doubling:

> Implicitement au moins, Dostoïevsky structure
> et explique le délire en fonction des doubles.
> C'est le délire lui-même qui tient à faire des
> doubles une fantasmagorie sans importance. Les
> deux partenaires vivent trop passionnément
> l'exaltation, c'est-à-dire la dépossession, pour
> s'attacher au schéma d'ensemble, pour constater
> qu'ils occupent tour à tour les mêmes positions
> dans un même système de rapports.27

The narrator lacks awareness of the total scheme in
which he plays a part and so cannot comprehend the rhetoric

NOTES

[1] Françoise von Rossum-Guyon, "Le Nouveau Roman comme critique du roman'" in Nouveau Roman: Hier, aujourd'hui, 1, Problèmes généraux (Paris: U.G.E. 10/18, 1972), p.229.

[2] Julia Kristeva, "Le Texte clos," Langages, 12, (1968) p.125.

[3] Claude Simon, La Bataille de Pharsale (Paris: Minuit, 1969), p.271.

[4] Kristeva, p.124.

[5] Kristeva, p.121.

[6] Julia Kristeva, "Pour une sémiologie des para-grammes," Tel Quel 29 (1967), pp.67-8. My brackets.

[7] Claude Simon, Leçon de choses (Paris: Minuit, 1975), pp.10-11. Subsequent references appear in the text so, (Lc).

[8] François Jost, "Les Aventures du lecteur," Poétique 8 no.29 (1977), p.88.

[9] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Thoughts on the Principle of Allegory," Genre 5 (1972), p.348.

[10] Spivak, p.346.

[11] Kristeva, "Pour une sémiologie des paragrammes," p.68.

[12] Spivak, p.346.

[13] Irene Tschinka, "La Fabrique du corps ou la corrida du hors-corps," in Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie (Paris:

U.G.E. 10/18, 1975) p.396.

[14] Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Idea Bk 3, Section 52, in Schopenhauer: Selections ed. DeWitt H. Parker (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1928), p.180.

[15] Claude Simon, Triptyque (Paris: Minuit, 1973), p.90.

[16] Raymond Jean, in Claude Simon: Analyse, Théorie, p.261.

[17] René Girard, La Violence et le sacré (Paris: Grasset, 1972), p.204.

[18] Girard, p.205.

[19] Girard, p.229.

[20] Jean Paul Sartre, Les Mots (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p.198.

[21] Sartre, p.201.

[22] Laurence M. Porter, "Autobiography versus Confessional Novel: Gide's L'Immoraliste and Si Le Grain ne meurt," Symposium 30 (1976), p.156.

[23] Colette Gaudin, "Niveaux de lisibilité dans Leçon de choses de Claude Simon," Romanic Review 68 (1977), p.184.

[24] René Girard, "Système du délire," Critique 28 (1972), p.965.

[25] Simon, La Bataille de Pharsale, p.58.

[26] Girard, "Système du délire," p.967.

[27] Girard, "Système du délire," p.968.

CONCLUSION

The later novels of Claude Simon present a world of
signs in which and by which the narrator discovers the
world. Simon explores his manner of writing in "Les
Sentiers de la création", a preface to <u>Orion Aveugle</u>, by
extolling the virtue of words, which assemble in the
manner of <u>bricolage</u>, objects and events otherwise fated
to remain heterogeneous. Writing, through the powers
of attraction exercised by the linguistic sign, permits
the agglomeration of words and images in a free inter-
play of signifiers and signifieds:

> Chaque mot en suscite (ou en commande) plusieurs
> autres, non seulement par la force des images
> qu'il attire à lui comme un aimant, mais parfois
> aussi par sa seule morphologie, de simples
> assonances qui de même que les nécessités
> formelles de la syntaxe, du rythme et de la
> composition, se révèlent souvent aussi fécondes
> que ses multiples significations.1

Simon defines the novel as a fiction in which charac-
ters are involved in an action, but the action is that of
the flow of signs, which constitutes a more trustworthy
guide to the world than the psycho-drama of novelistic
realism:

> Roman qui cependant ne racontera pas l'histoire
> exemplaire de quelque héros ou héroine, mais
> cette toute autre histoire qui est l'aventure
> singulière du narrateur qui ne cesse de chercher,

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> découvrant à tâtons le monde dans et par
> l'écriture.2

A singular adventure indeed, for a narrator who
succeeds only in scrambling a narrative so completely as
to obliterate the image of perfection he pursues, like
the artist Frenhofer in Balzac's <u>Le Chef d'oeuvre</u>
<u>inconnu</u>. The narrator cannot match his own resources to
those of writing, and the novel progresses not to an end,
but to his end, as Simon somewhat contradictorily points
out:

> Aussi ne peut-il avoir d'autre terme que
> l'épuisement du voyageur explorant ce
> paysage inépuisable.3

The exhaustion of the narrator leads ultimately to
the prospect of his being consumed in flames, as was
Frenhofer, for the narrator cannot tolerate the display
of his own impotence in <u>Leçon de choses</u>. Simon in an
interview with DuVerlie, "The Crossing of the Image",
uses the image of signs as a metaphor for blindness:

> The complete title of this painting is, "Blind
> Orion Searching for the Rising Sun". That
> seemed to symbolise my own work: the writer
> advancing blindly in his language, groping
> in the midst of a forest of signs toward
> something he will never attain.4

It is, as Simon indicates, a common experience for
artists to create something very different from their
original project, but Simon's words illustrate Girard's
analysis of the pathological development of mimetic desire
in which the presence of a competing desire is taken to in-
dicate that a true object of desire is hidden behind the

obstacle of rivalry:

> Le désir finit par constater la métamorphose
> toujours répétée du modèle en obstacle. Au
> lieu de tirer les conclusions qui s'imposent,
> au lieu de reconnaître le caractère mécanique
> de la rivalité qu'on lui oppose, il choisit la
> seconde solution, celle qui va lui permettre de
> survivre au savoir de lui-même qu'il est en
> train d'acquérir. Il décide de voir dans cet
> obstacle, qui surgit de façon répétée sous ses
> pas, la preuve que le désirable est vraiment là.
> Il choisit le chemin barré, la route interdite,
> comme devant mener à cela qu'il cherche. Alors
> se dressent, derrière chaque obstacle, cette
> totalité fermée, ce jardin clos, cette haute
> forteresse que décrivent si fréquemment les
> métaphores du désir.5

Simon is led to select the path least likely to

succeed in assuaging his autobiographical needs, for only in

this way can he erase the feeling of failure experienced at

his first traditional work, the autobiography La Corde

raide. The thicket of signs which impedes his progress to-

ward the sun allows him the prospect of unattainable bliss.

Rather than confront his unsuccess, it becomes necessary

to him as part of the mechanism of surviving the threat of

self-knowledge.

Simon's commentaries upon his novels reveal a death

anxiety similar to that which permeates authorial inter-

locution in his novels. The narrator of Leçon de choses

cannot maintain an insular utopia of self-reflexive writing

because he short-circuits his narrative. The doubling of

the narrator represents a compulsive intrusion of the inter-

locutor into the Edenic level of the fiction, he is unable

to observe his customary aphasia, for his discomfort has

reached unendurable levels. Omnipotence is in practice identical to castration, Girard suggests, "La toute-puissance de la production désirante ne se distingue pas, dans la pratique, d'une castration radicale."[6] To pursue the biblical analogy offered in the introduction, the logical corollary to Adam's fall is the birth of Christ, for without recruitment on earth God presides over a de-populated heaven.
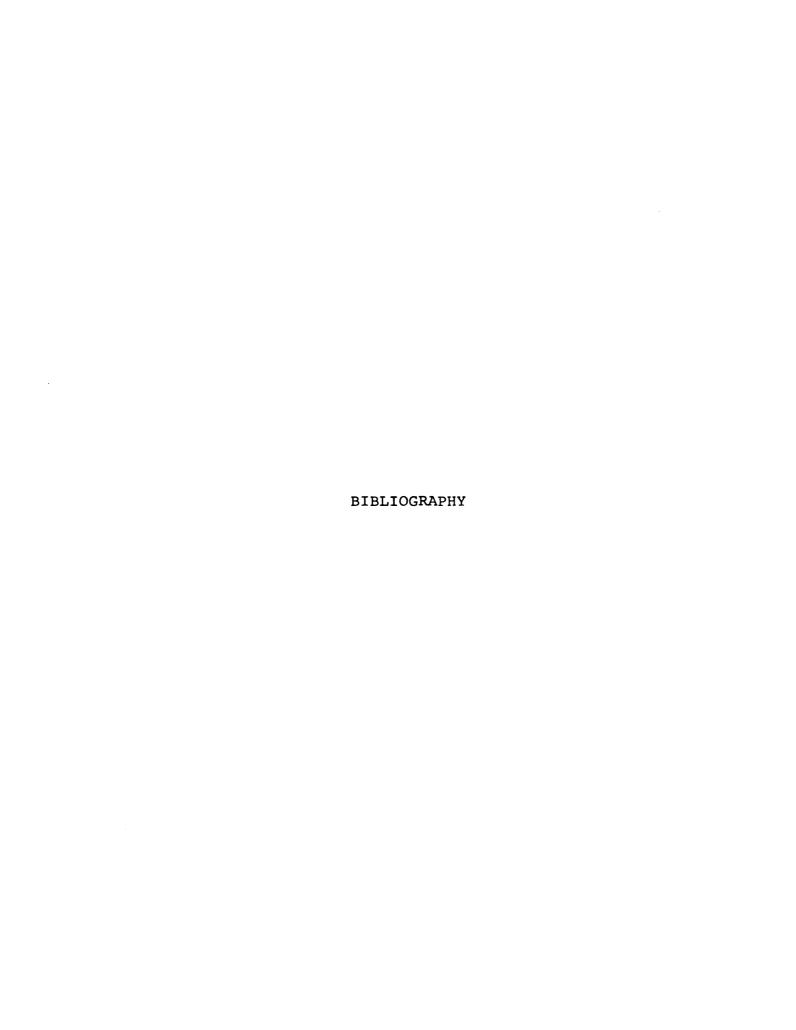
The authorial interlocutor of Simon's later novels is one who has allowed self-knowledge to become the pre-serve of linguistic consciousness. Ostracised from the fictional world he has created, he has no means by which to pursue his own initiation into the self, but must ob-serve from elsewhere the metaphor of desire purveyed by a utopia of language. His omnipotence is barren and human; unlike the God of the Old Testament he must exist with the uncomfortable prickings of a repressed knowledge of mortal-ity and of having fallen from grace. The irruption of the authorial interlocutor into the foreground of Leçon de choses proves satanic for the narrator's fiction, and the Faustian message of hope is couched in the flames of de-lirium. For the interlocutor, his dramatisation in the form of the narrator's double signifies a penetration into the realm of self-consciousness and the potential for a less repressed and more balanced treatment of anthropo-morphic concerns.

With the conclusion of Leçon de choses the drives of

the human subject surface into the logocentric design of the text, presaging an interlocution less concerned to distinguish itself from its subject by chiaoscuro effects of contrast and more at pains to create an harmonious integration of the resources of representation and reality. _Leçon de choses_ offers an end to the history of the play of language traced by the itinerary of Simon's later works, and sets the stage for a return to the language of Simon's personal and genealogical history.

NOTES

[1] Claude Simon, <u>Orion Aveugle</u> (Geneva: Skira, 1970), pp.6-7.

[2] Simon, p.10.

[3] Simon, p.9.

[4] Claude Simon in "The Crossing of the Image," an interview with Claud DuVerlie, <u>Diacritics</u> 7, no.4 (1977), p.52.

[5] René Girard, "Système du délire," <u>Critique</u> 28 (1972), p.967.

[6] Girard, p.967.

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