Reviews

Hemmings, F. W. J. *Theatre and State in France, 1760-1905*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. xiii + 285 p.

Charles VI put a stop to the proliferation of French theatres as early as 1402, but it was Louis XIV who united two rival Paris playhouses to found the government-subsidised Comédie-Française in October, 1690, thereby initiating the relationship between the theatre and the French state which is the subject of this book. France's greatest Bourbon understood that celebrated dramatic art conferred prestige upon its patron and believed that it should be concentrated in a limited number of specific theatres for best effect; as a result he granted exclusive monopolies not only to the Comédie-Française (on tragedy and comedy), but also to the Académie Royale de Musique (or Opera, on any musical spectacle) and the Comédie-Italienne (on comedies by those authors who preferred to write for it: as would Marivaux, rather later). This concentration, of course, also facilitated control by the state, ever aware of the theatre's popularity and its ability to provide an ideal arena for the expression of dissent; this control was nonetheless undermined by the wilfulness of the artists themselves, the indolence of the nobles appointed to oversee them, the rise of the commercial theatre, and the tide of French history, which finally swept away Bourbons and Gentlemen of the Bedchamber alike. The law passed by the National Assembly in January, 1791, opened an entirely new chapter by abolishing censorship and restrictive licences on new theatres; but censorship was soon re-introduced by the Convention, in 1794, and confirmed by Napoleon, who revived the monarchical system and actually annulled the freedoms granted in 1791: the state theatres were re-established in 1804 on conditions that led one critic to suggest that it was before the Revolution, not after it, that the Comédiens were living in a republic. It was left to Napoleon III in 1864 once again to abolish the theatrical licensing system and the copyright still exercised by state theatres on plays traditionally considered part of their repertoire. Dramatic censorship itself was ended only in 1905 after the Chamber of Deputies (in the Third Republic) had the salaries of the censors struck from the national budget.

As these remarks suggest, the author develops his discussion on lines that are essentially chronological, even in those chapters of related interest which are introduced to complement the central thesis describing the modalities of state control: there is an examination, for instance, of the curbs (Napoleon) put on the commercial sector, of the conditions in provincial playhouses (censorship was initially applied to those in Paris alone), and the serious competition the theatre faced from other forms of entertainment toward the end of the nineteenth century. As well as a formidable acquaintance with primary and secondary sources, this study reveals a clear understanding of the complexities of French social and political history. The discussion, which in other hands might have proven less engaging, is constantly enhanced by a masterly use of anecdotes which clarify as well as entertain. Careful cross-references and discreet repetition will make it possible for specialists to consult specific chapters independently of the rest, all the more easily as the book begins with a chronology, and an introduction which could well serve as a summary of what follows; to conclude there are an exhaustive bibliography, a judicious guide to further reading (in four languages) and a detailed index. While the author's translations from the French might very occasionally be improved (pp. 39, 47, 104, 146), the main text is gracefully written in clear, idiomatic British English. Cambridge University Press have happily maintained their usual production standards

with clear fonts, an attractive dust jacket and remarkably few typographical errors. The absolute exception is page 267, where care should be taken to add the capital "g"s before the paperback edition is released. For this study should have the broadest appeal: Professor Hemmings has addressed a central aspect of the history of French theatre, and has done so extraordinarily well.

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Crouzet, Michel. Le rouge et le noir *: essai sur le romanesque stendhalien.* Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1995. 172 p.

Crouzet's latest book on Stendhal focuses exclusively on the *Le rouge et le noir*. It is an exploration of the novel's main themes and formal problems, and it includes references to a vast body of work on Stendhal and his text. Crouzet's study is composed of a series of critical vignettes or sketches which explore different aspects of the novel. As such, it is a useful critical description which will prove to be informative to students of Stendhal's novel (according to the back cover, the book is designated for the, presumably French, public). It will be less useful to Stendhal specialists, however, since is does not produce a reading or offer a comprehensive interpretation of the text.

The themes and issues explored are the relationship between the novel and the Berthet affair on which it is based; the enigmatic title of the novel and its ambivalent hero; the question of the novel's place within both the realist and romantic traditions; and the novel's theme of education. The section on Julien—by far the longest—provides a thorough discussion of the ambiguous nature of this Stendhalian hero who is both sincere and false, ambitious and idealistic. Here Crouzet also gives a short but fascinating description of changing attitudes toward the character of Julien, but again without synthesizing the material presented or elucidating for his readers his own critical stance. The last section—on *Le rouge et le noir* as a novel of education—also provides the reader with insights and observations without arguing for any final understanding of the hero and his trajectory. Crouzet makes an interesting argument by suggesting that Julien's death is his most courageous and sincere moment, but, since he does not show how this paradoxical conclusion operates in the text, the reader is left wondering how death can be anything but an ambiguous conclusion to a novel of education.

The desire for greater clarification and synthesis of many crucial issues pertaining to *Le rouge et le noir* is to some extent a measure of Crouzet's success in involving his reader in the intriguing complexities of the novel. However, since this study provides no close readings and no in-depth theoretical discussions, a serious reader of Stendhal would have to turn elsewhere for a more complete and detailed consideration of the wide range of topics Crouzet raises.

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Sand, George. *Narcisse*. Texte établi, présenté et annoté avec le relevé des variantes par Raymond Rheault. Sainte-Foy : Presses de l'Université Laval ; Paris : Klincksieck, 1994. 426 p.

L'intérêt du livre de Rheault réside dans une étude approfondie des sources de l'œuvre aussi bien que dans la recherche minutieuse du texte de George Sand.

L'introduction, précédée d'une liste d'abbréviations et de sigles clairement expliqués, se divise en deux parties. La première (pp. 3-23) explique les circonstances de la composition de *Narcisse* et sa publication en feuilleton. Rheault montre la déception de George Sand causée par la lenteur et les délais de publication qui finalement la persuadent que ce genre convient mal à son roman qui présente trop peu « d'accidents et de surprises [...] pour que le lecteur s'amuse au déchiquetage de l'attente » (p. 19).

La deuxième partie de l'introduction (pp. 24-45) présente un compte rendu de *Narcisse* et une analyse les personnages, dont Raymond Rheault donne les modèles probables sur lesquels la romancière se serait basée. Rheault relève surtout l'importance des personnages secondaires dans l'œuvre de George Sand. Il compare l'écriture romanesque de George Sand à son écriture dramatique et en illustre les techniques. Rheault conclut que *Narcisse* est un roman d'analyse et d'atmosphère, dont la structure et la thématique présentent un intérêt mineur. Ce qui fait l'intérêt du roman, selon lui, serait l'idéalisme apparent de George Sand qui est « sensible et attentive aux personnes chez qui prime la bonté » (p. 44).

Cette introduction demande un grand effort de concentration, car elle est chargée d'une multitude de notes (211), fort intéressantes d'ailleurs, qui montrent l'étendue des recherches effectuées dans les bibliothèques locales aussi bien qu'à la Bibliothèque Nationale, dans la presse locale, dans les registres de l'État civil, dans les délibérations du conseil municipal, etc.

L'introduction de Rheault est suivie d'une courte introduction de George Sand et de *Narcisse* (pp. 47-314). Le texte est annoté minutieusement : 560 notes dont seulement un petit nombre se réfère à des variantes, la grande majorité servant à expliquer, préciser, illustrer ou analyser le texte. Rheault puise souvent dans *L'histoire de ma vie* de George Sand, dans sa correspondance, son agenda, aussi bien que dans le récit des randonnées que Rheault a faites lui-même dans Nohant et le Bas-Berry. Il est évident que Rheault s'est immergé dans l'atmosphère du pays de Narcisse, et qu'il a une grande connaissance de tout ce qui se rapporte à George Sand, à son univers, à ses personnages (cf. note 37). Il explique les noms propres (cf. notes 14, 47), commente le tabagisme (cf. note 20), explique l'éclairage à gaz (cf. note 32) et analyse l'usage du vocabulaire et la syntaxe (cf. notes 30, 69, 90, 91). Ses notes, parfois longues de plus d'une page, donnent des précisions historiques (cf. notes 76, 309), les usages contemporains (cf. note 82) et éclaircissent beaucoup de détails. Dépourvu de ces notes, le lecteur de la fin du XX^{e} siècle ne pourrait pas savourer complètement la lecture de ce roman, car souvent elles sont du plus grand intérêt.

Narcisse est suivi d'une note sur l'établissement du texte et d'une explication de la graphie et de la ponctuation (pp. 317-20), de variantes (pp. 323-35), d'une liste de fautes d'impression de l'édition de *La Presse* et de l'édition Hachette (pp. 339-45), et de trois appendices qui incluent la génèse de *Narcisse* et les modèles vivants de ses personnages, avec leurs extraits de naissance, de mariage et de décès ; viennent ensuite les critiques de Claude Rouet (*L'Écho de l'Inde* 4 février 1859) et de Charles Monselet (*Le Figaro* 26 avril 1859).

Le texte est complété par des jugements de *L'année littéraire et dramatique* et du *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle* de Larousse, et par une bibliographie qui inclut, entre autres, les sources manuscrites et les lexiques spéciaux.

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Minahen, Charles D., ed. *Figuring Things: Char, Ponge, and Poetry in the Twentieth Century*. Nicholasville, KY: French Forum, 1994.

This book collects essays on two poets brought together by generation, geographical background, and artistic itineraries that crossed Surrealism then left. It dispels doubts about the arbitrariness of the comparison between Char and Ponge, despite essays which stand on their own as studies of the individual poets, and do not necessarily deal with the question of "figuring things." Four comparative articles bring out well similarities between Char and Ponge—the discovery of the marvellous in the banal; a universe of opposites; the primacy of the conscious—as well as differences—Char's possession and transfiguration of the thing, as opposed to Ponge's subjectivisation of the thing, marking out its otherness. The remaining essays vary in interest. Peter Broome and Michael Bishop make rather obvious points about Char's mysticism: the dissolving of transcendence into immanence; the emphasis on imperfection, movement and the unity of opposites. Michael Riffaterre applies his old critical apparatus to Ponge: the poet does not describe things directly, but instead transforms linguistic givens into texts that develop the given's sememes into sentences—the object reflects on the subject. Two essays stand out in this collection. Bertrand Marchal shows brilliantly how Char uses the myth of Hypnos as a form of poetic resistance to Nazi barbarism. Sydney Lévy makes clever use of Mandelbrot's fractal geometry to show how Ponge tries to unite order and disorder, language and the complex object, "flamme et flèche."

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Bosquet, Alain. *God's Torment*. Trans. Edward Roditi. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994. 71 p.

Bosquet's poetry has been translated into English by a number of notable literary figures, not least among them Samuel Beckett, Lawrence Durrell, Wallace Fowlie and Octavio Paz. This most recent translation of *Tourment de Dieu* by Roditi, poet, critic, memorialist and friend of the author, is a splendid example of one individual's capacity to seize, linguistically and poetically, another's thought and modes of expression. Roditi has carefully set French and English texts on opposite pages thus enabling the reader to roam at will between them and to perceive interlingual resonances and unexpected images arising from various phono-stylistic features of the French language. (Compare, for example, the first line of the following English and French texts: "The apple and the poem, / Says God [...]" and "La pomme et le poème, / dit Dieu [...]." In the latter verse a phonetic assimilation brings the two words into an ontological unity that is not present in English.) Perhaps the most felicitous aspect of Roditi's translation may be attributed to his total bilingualism and biculturalism (he was born in Paris of an American father and a British mother), a competence that allows him to enter the semantic and affective domains of both

languages and produce a poetic text in English that could stand convincingly on its own.

God's Torment may be classified among Bosquet's metaphysical poems, but such an epithet would be too ponderous a term to describe what is more of a light-hearted, non-linear and often humorous enquiry into the nature of the existence of God: God as entity? God as phenomenon? God as (a/the) word? Certainly, the latter interrogation captures much of the poet's attention and aligns him unequivocally with the self-conscious adventurers of the contemporary scene, but there is a welcome lack of anguish and self-centeredness in his work, a kind of ease of being in the face of God's ostensible absence from the world. Bosquet sets the tone, and to a certain degree the form of this collection in a short foreword: "I am an atheist. God does tempt me, though I don't know whether He does so in my flesh, my spirit or my language [...]. But if I know my limits, my poems do not. They feed upon God as they might upon a plane tree or a stork. I'm an atheist hassled by belief." Bosquet's rhetorical strategy in constructing these texts is to have God explain himself to man in a series of anaphora reminiscent of biblical pronoucements of the type "And God said, Let there be light [...]," only Bosquet situates them in an existential present moment by transforming them to "Dieu dit [...] / God says [...]" and thus engaging God in a simultaneous dialogue with himself (questioning his creation, his powers, his knowledge) and with an ever-doubting mankind that, in the absence of the Divine, has set itself up as *le poète-prophète-dieu*. There is a playful irony in these texts that aims at uncovering man's arrogance and verbal cleverness: "Greater God, says God, / deliver me from man!" and, "God says: 'You still have thirty days / to convince the crowds / of my eternity.' 'It's useless,' replies the poet, 'I am the god who replaces you; / I've even written a satire / to explain why / you can no longer be divine.'" The interplay between God's actions in the world and man's interpretation/condemnation of them appears throughout most of *God's Torment*, but what is delightfullly refreshing in these texts is the fact that Bosquet has made God the narrative centre of consciousness and in so doing has demythified the word *GOD* by portraying the divine in the simplest, often the most banal and ubiquitously innocent and benignly naive terms. God is what is, all that is, then, now and evermore. Why? Because God says so!

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Onimus, Jean. *Pour lire Le Clézio*. Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1994. 211 p.

Dans la série « Écrivains » des PUF, Onimus nous livre une véritable carte pour déchiffrer l'œuvre de Le Clézio, même si, explorant des « terres vierges », il prend bien soin de noter qu'il n'offre que des suggestions, des pistes, et ne veut pas emprisonner cette œuvre foisonnante et en devenir dans « le moule rigide d'une thèse universitaire »! Son étude englobe toute la production depuis *Le procès-verbal* (1963) jusqu'à *Pawana* (1992) ; elle omet cependant *Mydriase* (1973), *Les prophéties du Chilam Balam* (1976), *Les années Cannes : 40 ans de festival* (1987), et se présente comme un tryptique : « l'homme », « la vision du monde », « l'écrivain ».

Après quelques brèves indications de l'homme tel qu'il se laisse entrevoir dans ses écrits, Onimus esquisse un portrait fondé sur la caractérologie. Il classe Le Clézio parmi les non actifs surémotifs et perçoit les ramifications d'un tel tempérament dans l'œuvre : appétit de fusion avec la nature, éloignement des hommes, recherche de

« l'extase matérielle » accompagnée d'un sensualisme total (vive présence des sens, ouverture aiguisée aux éléments : lumière, eau, vent).

Le deuxième chapitre, « la vision du monde », de loin le plus long de l'étude, établit, bien que *Mondo* ou *Désert* marque un tournant dans l'œuvre de Le Clézio, une analyse synchronique des thèmes. Cette vision du monde est duelle. Sous « la face d'ombre » Onimus regroupe des termes tels que l'abstraction, la mécanique, l'ordre, la ville, la foule, l'électricité, les choses, un monde de marchands, un monde fatigant, cruel, à la limite de l'explosion, et fait converger vers eux tout un faisceau de descriptions lecléziennes qui condamnent la destruction des harmonies, les traditions intellectuelles, le conformisme de la pensée, une rationalisation asservissante, un univers de techno-structure superficiel, dur, destructeur de la nature, où l'argent est roi et créateur de besoins non fondés. Un ensemble d'apocalypse se dessine où perce la nostalgie de temps heureux, d'une vie simple, non soumise aux dictats du capitalisme et d'une course effrenée à l'énergie, sorte de retour au paradis perdu, où la communication se fait au-delà des mots, leitmotiv de Le Clézio et « face de lumière », inséparable de la « face d'ombre ». Cette face lumineuse privilégie l'intériorisation de la conscience, la totalité de l'être au monde, la fusion avec le végétal ou l'animal. Elle favorise l'errance, les espaces sacrés (mer, montagne, désert, icebergs) et glorifie l'enfant, le sauvage, le marginal.

« L'écrivain », qui selon Onimus s'apparente bien souvent plus au conteur qu'au romancier, après avoir tenté des années durant de donner une fonction ontologique à l'écriture en « re-présentant » le monde, en chassant les mots inutiles ou découvrant des métaphores pénétrantes, a quelque peu abandonné cette recherche parce qu'elle aboutissait à une impasse, et glisse davantage vers « la convergence pénétrante d'un silence attentif ».

Si Onimus analyse l'œuvre de Le Clézio avec une sympathie évidente, il n'en jette pas moins un regard critique sur ce qu'elle recèle de simplifications, contradictions, excès ou partis pris. La prédilection pour l'extase matérielle se double d'inertie, de régression, de nihilisme. Retrouver la nature donne expression à l'onirisme, mais c'est un onirisme un peu court qui fait sentir, palper, qui est donc plus proche des sensations que des sentiments. De même les personnages sont souvent symboliques, sans épaisseur, sans qualités personnelles ; l'acte d'amour se réduit à une sensation portée à l'extrême. Le désir d'absolu de Le Clézio lui fait idéaliser les bidonvilles, les villages guatémaltèques, et le porte vers l'inhumain ou l'absurde. L'expression est parfois entachée de coquetterie pédante ou se transforme en ce qu'Onimus nomme « style excessif ».

Pour lire Le Clézio est une étude extrêmement bien écrite et documentée, à l'analyse pénétrante, qui donne envie de découvrir ou de redécouvrir Le Clézio, écrivain riche de contradictions, postmoderne à plus d'un égard. (On regrettera seulement les erreurs typographiques ou les oublis de mots aux pages 109, 116, 141, 153, 199.)

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Felman, Shoshana. *What Does A Woman Want? Reading and Sexual Difference.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1993. 178 p.

"What does a woman want?" is the question Felman chooses to answer in a genuinely feminine and feminist approach to autobiography. Felman seeks to harmonize three perspectives: literary theory, autobiography, and literature. She

attempts to demonstrate that the three domains, in spite of an apparent contradiction among them, are perfectly complementary within the genre of feminine autobiography. Felman also claims that to read autobiographically is a much more complex exercise than to undertake a conventional reading because up until now no woman has actually had an autobiography, but rather only a story which in turn is not even a real story. The latter can only be achieved through a reading bond, that is, through the story of the Other (woman) appropriated as one's own story.

Felman's main proposition could be formulated as "a path to indirectly engender and access our own missing story bringing together literature, theory and autobiography through the act of reading but reading at the same time our sexual difference and our long lost autobiography." From the outset Felman declares that her work examines the power and violence that the difference between the sexes reveals. She argues that it is difficult to establish the difference between man and woman because the root of the matter seems to be tied up in the notion of sexual difference itself. This difference has not been resolved by authors such as Adrienne Rich and Virginia Woolf, for instance, and it even remained inaccessible to Freud himself.

Felman attempts to solve the problematic question, "What does a woman want?" by proposing a careful re-reading (by a female reader) of various autobiographical texts by female writers and of three texts by male writers who dramatize in their own way a masculine encounter with femininity as difference. Felman illustrates her theory with readings of Balzac's *Adieu* and *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*, a semi-confessional and semi-analytical text from Freud's second chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and diverse autobiographical writings by Simone de Beauvoir, Woolf and Vita Sackville-West. In spite of apparent differences in form and content, these texts contain a common denominator according to Felman, namely, a "feminine resistance in the text."

Setting up her own position, Felman quotes Fetterly who declares that the "exorcism of such a male mind" should begin outside literature where it would be possible to adopt a posture as a "resistant reader." However, Felman recognizes the dangers of "resisting the text" just for the sake of clinging to our own ideologies and preconceptions. Instead, she proposes that female readers search for their own resistance from inside the text, from their own textual and accidental transgression of male prescriptions and suppositions. In the five chapters that follow, Felman develops new strategies to re-invent feminine reading. Thus, in chapter two she applies a "deconstructive" practice to Balzac's *Adieu* in order to examine the relationship between woman and insanity, and to explore the role that dementia plays in devaluing femininity. In chapter three, she tackles the "enigma of femininity" in *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*. Here Felman opposes the relationship between social classes and social roles and concludes that the polarity man/woman within this context tends to view women as a metaphor of men. Sexuality works in this text as a sign of rhetorical convention in which women function as signifiers and men as the signified. This rhetorical hierarchization of the opposition between the sexes is such that female difference turns out to be suppressed or voided. In chapter four, Felman penetrates the arid field of Freudian psychoanalysis by means of an in-depth study of chapter two of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In her re-reading of Freud's analysis of the dream episode, and based on extensive documentation by experts on the psychoanalytic work of Monique Schneider, Betty Friedan, Sarah Kofman, Erik Erikson and Jacques Lacan, Felman surveys in the text all the elements that will help to support her theory. In a journey that starts with the precepts of psychoanalysis and continues with the question Freud himself asks ("What does a woman want?"), Felman demonstrates that this dream in particular is the starting point of the theory on which psychoanalysis stands, and that the genius of the Freudian dream is to have

discovered that feminine resistance is a resistance to the interpretation by others of the condition of womanhood. Felman concludes by stating that in every attempt to theorize and interpret this "condition" there is a "disconnection," and that for Freud, femininity as a questioning of femininity remains unknown and unsolved.

Felman's last chapter brings to light a new question: with whom do you believe your lot is cast? In this final part Felman cites autobiographical texts by Woolf, Beauvoir, Rich and others in order to support her claim that in each chapter of her book she has revised many issues. Felman firmly believes that dreams are undoubtedly a pathway to the subconscious and that in some way they can tell us a different story from the one we believe to be our own autobiography. She conjectures that the autobiographies of the writers she has analyzed reveal a "resistance" to autobiography.

It would be unfair to end this review without pointing out at least two of Felman's indisputable merits: she does not remain in a theoretical sphere wandering among abstractions and speculations; instead, she illustrates extensively the propositions of her introduction employing carefully chosen texts. From this plausible characteristic of Felman's work devolves the sensible choice of texts to be analyzed which demonstrate her original theory about the missing story that would allow women to write their autobiography in a context hitherto reserved for men. The way Felman screens the text and leads us through the re-reading she proposes is masterful. Her profound analysis and brilliant methodology represent a valuable contribution to studies in feminine and feminist literature from a new perspective.

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