REVIEWS

*M.R. MAYENOWA. *Poetyka teoretyczna. Zagadnienia języka.* Ossolineum 1974. Pp 464. zł 75

As many as three important books were published in 1974 on the theory of literary scholarship: J. Culler's *Structuralist Poetics*, R. Scholes's *Structuralism in Literature*, and M.R. Mayenowa's *Poetyka teoretyczna*. The above authors set themselves different tasks, and have put stress on distinct aspects of the material which is the subject of their interests and analysis. J. Culler confines himself to structuralism only and gives a detailed description of its linguistic foundations, its evolution, and recent attempts to modify it (see the chapter: 'Beyond Structuralism': *Tel Quel*). There is no doubt that the author of *Structuralist Poetics* is fascinated by this method of research; at the same time, however, he is fully aware of its limitations or shortcomings. By virtue of sound critical evaluation, his survey of the Jakobsonian theory of poetic language and Greimas's structural semantics belongs among the most penetrating chapters of the book. To my knowledge, it is the first time that one who adheres to the premises of structuralism challenges linguists on their own grounds and questions convincingly the validity of their claim that only linguistics can provide an 'objective' analysis of literature. R. Scholes, on the other hand, treats structuralism with an almost pious reverence. His attitude to this method can be only described as apologetic. As a matter of fact, it is not only a method, but an ideology or world outlook. As Scholes observes:

> In structuralism I have found a body of ideas and methods which has contributed powerfully to my own thinking about literature and life as well. If it is the function of man in this world to raise his consciousness of himself and his situation, then structuralism has much to teach us. And I have not hesitated to push the conclusions of structuralist thought beyond the confines of art and apply them to other aspects of the human situation. (p xi)

The message is clear. No wonder, then, that for R. Scholes all literature and art should be analyzed exclusively from a structuralist point of view and hence only this method seems to be valid. Reading the latter, one cannot help thinking that a good deal of Anglo-Saxon criticism goes through its own

'infantile sickness of leftism.' The long-lasting reign of ideological or impressionistic criticism in the United States and especially in England has contributed to the fact that its adversaries reject this criticism categorically and without reservations. They are inclined to accept structuralism as a kind of revelation.

Fortunately, the one-sided approach taken by R. Scholes should not be considered to be an indispensable attribute of formalistic criticism. The book by Mayenowa bears good witness to this fact. It does not mean that the author merely gives a more complete description of structuralism by including in her discussion *recent* parallel developments in eastern Europe which have been completely disregarded by J. Culler and R. Scholes (in their books, eg, the name of J. Lotman is not even mentioned). Mayenowa demonstrates an altogether different attitude to the understanding of formalistic methods of analysis. To be sure, *Poetyka teoretyczna* is not yet another book on structuralism. The main subject of her interest is art, or literature in particular, interpreted as a semiotic phenomenon. The point of departure and the point of arrival of Mayenowa's *Poetyka* is a 'general theory of signs, for which the term semiotics is commonly accepted' (p 121). Hence follows her postulate of limiting the application of linguistic analysis in literature, a postulate which constitutes, as it is known, the very foundation of 'structuralist activity.' Although not explicity stated, structuralism is subordinated in Mayenowa's poetics to the broader ends of semiotics. According to Mayenowa, there exist in literary texts meanings which are not necessarily expressed by linguistic units and therefore poetics ought to be a discipline broader than linguistics.

Consequently, Mayenowa looks for inspiration in the theoretical works of J. Mukařovsky and Ch. Morris (*The Three Primary Forms of Discourse*). Closest to Mayenowa's own theoretical stand seem to be the Prague school of structuralism and the Soviet theoretical achievements known to us from the works of M. Baxtin, J. Lotman, V.N. Toporov, and others. It is doubtful that these preferences have been adopted for ideological or tactical reasons. Mayenowa simply continues and develops the east European tradition of formalistic studies in which the semantic aspect of literary works has never ceased to play an important role. It is then understandable that we find in Mayenowa the following definition of a literary work of art and poetics: 'We treat a literary work of art as a specific organization of signs, and poetics, on the other hand, as a discipline which investigates methods of *meaning organization* [italics mine – E.M.] in a literary work of art and the systems of signs which function in it' (p 113). In my opinion, it is exactly the theory of signs which today opens the best possibilities for investigating together what in the past has been mechanically divided into 'content' and 'form.' I must say that those who cultivate a sort of 'pure' structuralism (that is based on linguistic premises only) will find themselves in the future on the margin of

the main stream of literary scholarship. The semiotic theory of signs offers the field of literary research much more than a structuralism based on linguistic devices only.

In the seven chapters of *Poetyka teoretyczna* the author discusses such problems as the origins and evolution of poetics, the basic notions of semiotics, the place of linguistics in literary scholarship, the concept of text structure, modern concepts of style and their usefulness in semiotic research; the final chapter is devoted to the definition of prose and poetry as distinct forms of artistic discourse. The author promises a second volume of *Poetyka* and we may assume that it will be as instructive and interesting as the first.

The main asset of Mayenowa's book lies in her attempt to preserve the achievements and concepts of traditional poetics and to adjust them to the needs of modern literary analysis. As particularly interesting and praiseworthy, I consider the analysis of these problems to be important, if not crucial, not only from the point of view of poetics as a scholarly discipline, but also from the point of view of literature itself. This brings to mind the question of metaphor. The metaphor has become the prime characteristic of twentieth-century literature. Its understanding is almost tantamount to the understanding of the sense and importance of many literary texts. In this case, semiotics can render invaluable services. Mayenowa understands this very well, and it is no wonder she devotes thirty pages of her book to metaphor. Nor should we overlook the didactic value of Mayenowa's work. University students of literature will find extremely useful explanations of some literary terms in it. These explanations are sometimes combined with a comparative juxtaposition of terms from various languages: English, German, French, and Polish, and as such, it has broader value than to be merely didactic. Even more surprising is the fact that in a book of such quality no index of technical terms is included.

Not all of Mayenowa's arguments are convincing. A case in point is her discussion of the artistic function of quotation marks. She maintains that quotation marks distance a speaker from certain utterances thereby achieving an effect of irony. There are, however, instances in which such marked off expressions (or words) can be viewed simply as synonyms or symbols without ironic conotations. Also the question of parallelism in literature, in my opinion, is discussed too lightly. Some reservations may arise while reading the second chapter of the book, especially where the role of G. Vico is discussed. In any case, the repeatedly stated assertion that the works of the Italian author were a turning point in the evolution of poetics seems to be slightly overstated. Such critical comments, however, do not detract from the general concept of *Poetyka teoretyczna*, and refer only to some of its details.

While reading Mayenowa's book, one is often prompted to ask the question (which can be asked, for instance, about other studies of this type as well) whether, indeed, contemporary theoretical approaches in literary scholarship are as new and revelatory as authors claim them to be? If we postulate, for example, the understanding of a literary work of art through a more complex investigation of art in general, is this not a new variant of the old *Geistesgeschichte*? These doubts, however, are first of all relevant in relation to the contemporary methodology of literary investigation in general, and as such they cannot determine the value of all textbook *poetics*. In this case, different criteria have to be applied. There already exist two excellent examples as to how a poetics ought to be written, in B. Tomaševskij's *Teoria literatury* and in Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature*. *Poetyka teoretyczna* by M.R. Mayenowa in many respects matches these two books. It fulfills two prerequisite conditions for a good poetics: it provides us with exhaustive information about the contemporary level of development in the field of literary scholarship, and it gives the necessary means to undertake concrete and up-to-date literary analysis.

Poetyka teoretyczna appears as the first volume in the new series called Vademecum Polonisty which is to be published under the editorship of J. Sławiński. Other publications of both Polish and foreign authors are to follow. It has been already stated on a few occasions that thanks to such scholars as M. Głowiński and J. Sławiński, Warsaw is about to become one of the most significant centres of literary studies in Europe. The above-mentioned series initiated by M.R. Mayenowa's book *Poetyka teoretyczna* seems to confirm these opinions. (EDWARD MOŻEJKO, THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)

*Joan M. Ferrante. *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature*. New York and London: Columbia University Press 1975. Pp 166. $9.00

The significant words in the title of this essay are 'image' and 'woman.' Programmatically opposed to 'Lady,' not to speak of '*dompna*,' '*donna*,' and '*Maria-Frouwe*,' the announced intent of this examination of mediaeval literature is to trace the rise of the woman as a human being in the male artistic consciousness of the middle ages. The function of 'image' I shall return to.

Professor Ferrante's study is a mediaevalist's contribution to contemporary revisions of female roles in literature and elsewhere. It takes its point of departure from, and seeks to be a contribution to, the kinds of perspectives articulated in her colleague Carolyn G. Heilbrun's book, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1973), whose argument

turns upon the necessity to recognize 'the importance of the "feminine" principle, not as other, but as necessary to wholeness' (p 21). Notwithstanding the fact that the hypothesis of the feminine principle seems to be the discovery of Otto Weininger, and of very recent origin (see L. Appignanesi, *Femininity and the Creative Imagination* [London: Vision Press 1973] 5), Heilbrun proposes a pattern of analysis that extends from the Greeks through the Judaeo-Christian tradition to modern fiction. Ferrante has restricted herself to an examination of the problem as displayed in some of the Romance literatures of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, placed against the double context of the exegetical and allegorical traditions.

The distinction, if not opposition, that the author draws between exegesis and allegory may appear to be oversimplified: 'In the former, we have established texts and stories from which a meaning must be derived; in the latter, we have a meaning for which a story must be constructed' (p 38). To accept this assertion, no matter how cleverly turned, we must assume that exegetes did not practice allegorical methods which, without citing Beryl Smalley, seems to confuse the issue by trying to make it clearer than it is. Although it might have been more prudent to have adopted some distinction such as 'allegory of expression' and 'allegory of interpretation' (*cf.* J. Pépin, *Dante et la tradition de l'allégorie* [Montréal and Paris: Inst. d'Études médiévales and Vrin 1970] 12), the intent is to examine a method of analysis (exegesis) and a mode of fiction (allegory) in order to posit two differing views of woman. It is important, however, to observe the difference, for there are in fact critics who use the terms interchangeably in such a way as to unify an unquestionably heterogeneous development. Ferrante is thus able to indicate that exegesis tends to denigrate women (as a figure for the Fall) or, in a limited positive light, to emphasize her role in salvation (p 30). The notion of woman as elaborated by allegorical fiction not only abstracts her as virtue and vice, but also furnishes an image of 'the union of opposites as the basic principle of human life; the need for the female as well as the male in the order of things; the identification of the female with good qualities, with the higher parts of human nature' (p 64).

The full demonstration of the possibilities inherent in the woman as allegory is left for the lyric and especially the romance of the twelfth century. For the lyric poet (it should be noted that only Old Provençal is treated), the woman possesses an ambiguous function: 'She is an ideal being the poet adores, but she is also a real woman whom the poet wishes to possess, because his love is both sexual desire that seeks fulfillment in bed and mental yearning that finds its satisfaction in contemplating the image it has formed' (p 67). The assumption, however, that the poet is a lover in an ordinary sense is curious and deserves closer examination. (It is, in fact, an aspect of the problematics of 'image' and will be discussed later.) The importance of

Ferrante's discussion of romance resides in the development of the other woman which, it would appear, is at once a dichotomization of the woman's ambiguous role in lyric, and also a forerunner of Dante's use of Beatrice and the other lady, the *donna gentile*. Although in a number of romances the hero's conflict with respect to his lady and 'other' lady may signify a crisis of identity, its resolution in favour of the hero's first love, through the assistance of the second, represents not only a new tendency in the fictional use of woman, but also a new departure in the criticism of the problem. It would be otiose to point out how much attention has been devoted to the lady as image of exalted love, and how little to the lady as friend. One of the difficulties with argument, which is probably a function of the brevity of the book, is that the woman's friendly role, limited to one of reason, leads to allegorical readings. Thus the triple relationship in Chrétien's *Le Chevalier au lion* is seen as one in which 'Yvain can only be restored to harmony in his passions (symbolized by the reconciliation with Laudine) through the offices of Lunette, his reason' (p 84). But the suggestion has its value, particularly as the conflict is resolved in Dante for whom Beatrice finally becomes the beloved lady as well as the wise friend (p 135).

The thirteenth century stands in chiastic relation to the order of exegetic and allegorical traditions as they combine with the twelfth century. Woman is at once held forth as a vice by Jean de Meun and made an angel by the *stilnovisti*. Clearly opposed to the developing notions of harmony and integration evident in twelfth-century literature, women have become 'too dangerous to get involved with because men are too weak to withstand them, so the only safe life is one of chastity and abstinence' (p 117). Hence, Dante's achievement, that consists in realizing the ideal of the twelfth century, is not only remarkable when one considers his immediate tradition, but also provides a dramatic conclusion to the argument as a whole.

The merit of this study is, as I have tried to suggest, the clarity of its design and the neatness of its distinctions. It is for precisely this reason that it should be approached with caution; for, to use Todorov's categories, its particular combination of projection and commentary provides a focus which, nevertheless, demands scrutiny both from the point of view of scope and method. Although Ferrante is conscious of the book's limitations with respect to the literature examined, the lack of material mentioned – German lyric and romance – not to speak of other literatures, gives a tendentious and perhaps impressionistic view of the problem. German lyric and romance unquestionably 'champion the idea of mutual love' (p 14),[1] but, to speak only of two major poets, Walter von der Vogelweide and Heinrich von Morungen, their inclusion would have marred the form of the argument as these are poets whose mature work is of the early thirteenth century. Furthermore, within the argument as well, one might ask why *Aucassin et*

Nicolette is treated as a romance of the twelfth century; or why two others (to restrict examples) of the thirteenth, *La Chastelaine de Vergi* and the *Lai de l'ombre*, are omitted. Both selection and organization give an impression of a forced argument, for, even among literatures employed, a larger view would have enunciated the striking complexities of the problem. Women as friends, counsellors, and lovers play remarkable roles in *Flamenca*, and the two *castía-gilos* of Raimon Vidal de Bresalú and Arnaut de Carcassès, all of the thirteenth century and none mentioned. The omission of some sort of Arabic presence, even by way of contrast, such as is discussed at length in J.-C. Vadot's *L'Esprit courtois en orient* (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve de Larose 1968), gives the Judaeo-Christian tradition somewhat more importance than it deserves, especially in respect to the high middle ages. Although Professor Ferrante deliberately omits Provençal women who wrote lyric poetry, some mention might have been made of Hadewijch, the very complex and important Dutch poet of the thirteenth century, whose notion of love develops at once within the Victorine and Provençal traditions and anticipates, from a woman's point of view, the kind of integration that is dramatized in Dante. Finally, one would seek, leaving aside the anti-feminist tradition which is treated by implication with Jean de Meun, some statement on those lyric forms that employ a female narrator – the poetry of the Iberian peninsula, as well as the *chansons de la mal mariée* – and that dramatize choral arrangements of young men and girls, such as those in the *Carmina Burana*.

When one considers simply the literature employed, problems arise here as well, and these are in the treatment of lyric, romance, and Dante. In the first case, it is difficult to accept the generalization that 'The woman, for the most part, represents the right love, the impulse that makes the man act nobly and inspired him to write poetry that, will, ideally, move others to follow his example' (p 73). Such an assertion would hardly explain Peire Vidal's madness (feigned or not) or Bernart de Ventadorn's renunciation on occasion, and perhaps for good, of song (see F. Goldin, *The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1967], in particular his discussion of 'Can vei la lauzeta mover'). The discussion of romance is more problematic, and in particular the argument made for *Erec et Enide*. Ferrante provides the following paraphrase of the romance's conclusion:

> At the Joie de la Cort, Erec will understand Enide's thoughts without her speaking. His reunion with Enide signals his own perfection, which enables him to accept his proper role within society, first in the fellowship of Guivret and the Arthurian court, and then in his own land. (p 81)

Chrétien's text gives a somewhat different impression; for, following upon

the Joie de la Cort, Erec and the narrator either ignore Enide or mention her as an afterthought. He is announced at court by a messenger who remarks merely: 'I am the messenger of Erec and Guivret le Petit.' (*Erec et Enide*, ed. M. Roques, *CFMA* 6378–9). Later, recounting his adventures, no mention is made of Enide so as to indicate that her thoughts were understood (6416–38). Finally, the episode concludes by stating that all three remained for a time at court, and Enide assumes her place according to the narrator following the other two (6452–3). The analysis made of Dante and Beatrice is useful, but suggests, nevertheless, that Dante's relationship with men in no way compared so favourably as that with women. In fact, the male role is so minimized in the *Commedia* as to force one to question how one had seen it so clearly before:

> In Hell, to be female is bad; it indicates weakness and insufficient moral strength. In Purgatory, it is a desirable counterbalance to bad male traits; and in Paradise, it indicates simply that there is no essential distinction of sex in eternity – man can be spoken of as female, woman as male, all are saved. What Dante is concerned with is the essence of humanity which, like the essence of divinity, is both male and female. (pp 141–2)

In as much as anyone in Hell must be 'bad,' the only good of man is his interchangeability with woman, such that to be male is not significant. I shall not venture to say whether it matters if the divine is androgynous; but to so overlook the role of Vergil blandly skirts the issue. Leaving aside the implications of Robert Graves's lecture on Vergil, Ferrante's denigration of the other poet not only overlooks the role of poetry in the poem but also seems to rely on one of Heilbrun's comments made in the book already mentioned:

> Vergil (whose *Aeneid* is the very model of a work set in a wholly paternalistic, patriarchal universe) is unable to lead Dante to heaven, whether because he is a pagan, because he lacks faith, because having only reason he lacks love, or because being wholly "masculine" he is insufficiently capable of experiencing the "feminine" principle, is not a distinction of great importance.[2] (p 22)

But these are mere tirades. If one is not moved by Vergil's absence at the moment Dante sees Beatrice and seeks his companion to whom he had given himself for his salvation (*Purg.* 30, 51), then one's sense of love has limits indeed. Without Vergil, and certainly without Statius, there would be no understanding of Beatrice's role; and while Dante the poet may have instinctively turned to women for comfort and sympathy in love (p 131), the pilgrim walks very well with Vergil for most of the poem, and finally moves

through the fire of love with three other men – all poets, and all of whom saw the world available to love. Finally, to conclude with Dante carries with it the same overtones as the final chapter of Maurice Valency's *In Praise of Love*, which is only slightly more tempered, and that is that the aspirations of the middle ages, whether in love or women, had reached their apogée, and no one as mediaeval as Chaucer and the later French poets, such as Christine de Pisan, is suggested at all. One could continue; it should be observed, however, that a very sharp focus tends to distort.

I have dealt somewhat heavily with the scope of this book because essays such as Professor Ferrante's are not to be dismissed easily, nor readily accepted simply because new perspectives are developed. Important studies will emerge from new disciplines, but they take time. Furthermore, it is in the interest of such studies to provoke, and not merely to find acceptance. But if the range of the book is close, can this be said to sharpen its method? I find that the major difficulty for me is to discover a logical relation between the major parts of the argument, namely, exegesis and allegory on the one hand, and the twelfth and thirteenth centuries on the other. As I have remarked, the relation is chiastic: it is characterized by juxtaposition. Although the conclusion of the chapter on allegory suggests a diachronic anticipation of human beings emerging from personified abstractions, there is, so far as I know, no historical evidence to sustain this. Even recent changes suggested for the dating of Chrétien's romances do not alter the fact that he and Alanus de Insulis are contemporaries and, therefore, are not, in more than one sense, deeply affected by a modern desire to see history unfold toward the 'human' (if indeed it is). One would seek, then, a relation of a more synchronic character, but this is not elaborated. The parts of the argument are thematic and no consideration is made of the differences in style that theologians, allegorists, and poets employ. I note this, for while one might not imagine St Thomas as an ironist, one cannot read Chrétien without being constantly aware of it. Hence, an allegorical reading of *Erec et Enide* may yield attitudes toward the woman that realize possibilities inherent in the *Anticlaudianus*, but similar attitudes do not signify the same thing. Perhaps this explains why all of Chrétien's 'secular' romances are examined except *Cligés*, whose heroine – like others caught between two men – 'represents a destructive passion' (p 92), but is not mentioned because of the marvelously ambiguous nature of her presentation.

The larger issue that this essay raises, then, is the woman indeed as *image*. As I have already noted, Ferrante's troubadour is a man who suffers at once from sexual desire and mental yearning for the image formed by that desire. Later we are told that 'the lady exists in the poet's mind and not in the world around him' (p 69), but that 'the goal of love is, in one sense, the same for [the lauzenger] and for the poet – that is, sexual union' (p 72; see also p 123).

This is an assumption that reminds one of René Nelli's belief about the *asag* to which Davenson (Marrou) merely replied, 'Qu'est-ce qu'il en sait?' To think, as Moshé Lazar does, that because a troubadour used topoi which articulated sexual desire they must be interpreted literally is a nuisance. It does not stand up, furthermore, under any semiological scrutiny. The lady, like love, does not appear to be anything other than a pre-text for the elaboration of this kind of poetry, and to assume that its significance is more available to modern, rather than mediaeval, notions of psychology makes analysis of poets after Bernart de Ventadorn somewhat thin. In any case, a line should be drawn between 'woman' as a referential 'image' and as a 'signe "pris" ... dans un ensemble registral qui lui communique sa particulière manière d'être' (P. Zumthor, *Langue et techniques poétiques à l'époque romane* (XIe à XIIIe siècles), [Paris: Klincksieck 1963] 195). Otherwise, the Jungian implications of the androgynous argument – to which, in any case, one can readily assent – are not clearly manifest in the works examined: without a correspondence of systems (or codes), analogies are attractive without necessarily being persuasive. One might ask whether such correspondences can be drawn without blurring the point behind the extrapolation of a theme; but if one blurs aspects of literary history in order to sharpen a theme, the reader may become suspicious. Some bases have been established, such as Yannich Resch's study of woman in Colette, *Corps féminin, corps textuel* (Paris: Klincksieck 1973), whose title indicates the approach.

The burden of my remarks is not exactly as it might appear. Professor Ferrante's essay has many admirable qualities: much of the scholarship is original (the appendix is particularly useful) the topic explored is necessary as well as timely – at least for students of mediaeval literature – and the clarity of her insights is often superlative. She is unquestionably an informed and intelligent mediaevalist; the book as a whole, however, suffers from not endeavouring to rise fully to the complexities of the problem. Often, in fact, I would have wished more elaboration when none was to be had, and more recognition of the complexity of the problem, which the argument's clear design obfuscates. (E.D. BLODGETT, THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)

1 The 'feminine' aspect of the problem as well as the notion of fulfillment with respect to the divine image is discussed by P. Kesting, *Maria-Frouwe*, Medium Aevum 5 (Munich: Fink Verlag 1965). The second part provides a useful balance to the somewhat extreme position Ferrante takes on the relation of scriptural exegesis and courtly literature. M.S. Visser raises an aspect of this kind of transcendent love as it affects Provençal poetry in her study, *De Figuur van de Vrouw in de Troubadourslyrik* (S'Gravenhage: Excelsior 1950) 106–10.

2 Despite Heilbrun's brief remarks on Vergil later in the book (pp 51–2), is it not a distinction of great importance that Vergil treated the catastrophe with Dido in such a way as to cast a

tragic pall over the rest of the epic and, hence, over the founding of the city? Needless to say, Vergil might have avoided what is indeed the crucial issue, just as Dostoevsky could have weakened the dialectical character of his major works, but to have so reminded Rome of her loss in the loss of what Dido represents is a mark of Vergil's courage and critical attitude toward the destructive character of empires.

*JACQUES VIENS. *'La Terre' de Zola et 'Trente arpents' de Ringuet*. Sherbrooke: Editions Cosmos 1970. Pp 146. $5.00

Il n'est pas facile de comparer deux œuvres littéraires. L'auteur de *'La Terre' de Zola et 'Trente arpents' de Ringuet* a bien senti les pièges qui le guettaient dès l'abord mais n'a pu faire autrement que de tomber dans l'un d'eux, en toute connaissance de cause peut-être. Dans son vif et légitime désir d'imposer sa thèse, à savoir que les deux romans mettent en lumière le double thème de la possession et de la dépossession de la terre, Jacques Viens accentue les ressemblances et atténue les différences, avec beaucoup de sincérité et de conviction, d'ailleurs. Le plus grave reproche que l'on pourrait adresser à l'auteur, c'est l'absence de nuances, les jugements hâtifs, catégoriques et définitifs. L'auteur a voulu faire montre d'une grande assurance, il a négligé les adoucissements indispensables en critique littéraire. Cela se comprendrait sans doute dans un court article-synthèse, mais s'accepte plus difficilement dans un livre de 130 pages.

À première vue, le plan paraît systématique: vision du monde, création romanesque; mais une lecture attentive révèle des recoupements, donc des répétitions, des redites inévitables. Là résidait sans doute le danger d'une construction commode qui, toutefois, sépare la théorie romanesque du roman. On pourrait regretter, d'autre part, que les méthodes de la nouvelle critique aient été si peu exploitées malgré la promesse de l'auteur de s'en inspirer. Néanmoins, sa démarche nous semble acceptable et les prémisses bien posées, bien qu'il eût pu développer davantage la théorie du milieu, la crise agricole en France, les problèmes économiques et politiques du Québec et les témoignages de l'époque. Tout cela est beaucoup trop rapide et mériterait un approfondissement qui servirait la thèse que l'auteur soutient.

Dans le premier chapitre, la définition du roman de la terre nous paraît faible et particulièrement discutable. Puis l'auteur ramène très strictement l'intrigue des deux romans à un double sentiment de possession et de dépossession et tente ainsi de réduire le milieu paysan de la même façon, en refusant d'en voir une peinture qui, en dépit de ce qu'il dit, est sensiblement développée dans l'un et l'autre roman, eu égard aux nécessités de l'affabulation. Il en est de même pour les traits physiques des personnages, dans le deuxième chapitre. L'auteur manifeste une évidente mauvaise volonté à ne pas reconnaître que Zola et Ringuet leur ont accordé l'importance qu'ils

méritaient. Bien qu'elles ne constituent pas des études psychologiques fouillées, les descriptions des personnages concordent généralement bien avec les traits de leurs caractères.

Toutefois, l'étude thématique du *chaud*, du *froid*, du *visqueux* et de *l'humide* nous présente une approche intéressante, parente de la nouvelle critique. C'est d'ailleurs là l'effort le plus sérieux que fait l'auteur pour s'en rapprocher. Les nombreuses références aux textes seraient cependant plus probantes si le plan était plus serré et l'ensemble plus cohérent. En outre, les différences ne sont pas assez marquées entre Eucharist et Buteau. Il faut, de plus, déplorer la citation 'brûlant de signer l'acte' pour signifier la chaleur! Comme tour de force...

Le chapitre III, portant sur l'élaboration de l'œuvre, nous semble le mieux réussi, malgré sa brièveté. Le critique a eu recours à la meilleure des documentations. Pourtant, on s'explique mal qu'il ne parle pas des *Paysans* de Ladislas Reymont. Dans le dernier chapitre, si l'auteur traite avec autorité de l'architecture de l'œuvre (chronologie interne, composition et intrigue), il oublie un élément fondamental: le rythme du temps. N'est-ce pas là un aspect 'inoubliable' de la vie paysanne? Viens souligne la durée, le 'déséquilibre' entre les parties de *Trente arpents*, le bien 'meilleur équilibre' de *La Terre*. Au nom de quoi cet équilibre est-il meilleur, sur quel critère s'appuie-t-il? Enfin, la partie relative à la 'palette sensorielle' des deux auteurs, malgré sa densité et son aspect trop énumératif, nous semble très bonne, mais, comme telle, elle se rattache plus ou moins à l''architecture de l'œuvre.'

Somme toute, cette étude, malgré un certain nombre de passages aux qualités indéniables, malgré une assez bonne documentation et un souci évident de solidité et de sérieux, dénote en contrepartie des inégalités flagrantes, des faiblesses et des lacunes déplorables. Le lecteur reste sur son appétit. Une étude comparée approfondie et complète reste à écrire sur *La Terre* et *Trente arpents*. Jacques Viens en possède plusieurs éléments. Son mérite aura été d'ouvrir la voie et de montrer le chemin à d'autres critiques et chercheurs, qui ne devront pas négliger de montrer les filiations qui existent entre l'œuvre française et l'œuvre québécoise, tout en soulignant les caractéristiques québécoises originales de *Trente arpents*. (GILLES DORION, UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL)