DEVELOPMENTS IN NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE
AND THE PRACTICE OF WRITING IN
THE LATER NOVELS OF CLAUDE SIMON

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This study is divided into two parts. The first part deals with three novels written in the 1960's, the second part deals with the four novels written since then.

The first two chapters in Part 1 present an analysis of fundamental aspects of Simon's narrative technique, namely narrative perspective and narrative voice. Ambiguities in point of view and mode of 'énonciation' undermine the conventions of the realist text and announce the emergence of a single discourse, that of a writing-in-process. In the two other chapters in Part 1, Simon's practice of writing is analysed in terms of an association of textual elements through the dual mechanism of metaphor and metonymy. This practice, which guides the narration, determines the development of the fictional episodes of the text. Through this process, the linear narrative is transformed into a thematic and spatial stratification which re-establishes a hierarchy and coherence in the text through the production of a number of 'récits métaphoriques'.

The chapters in Part 2 trace the developments in narrative technique and the practice of writing in the novels of the 1970's. A refinement of the techniques of the earlier texts and a mechanisation of the process of metaphor/metonymy transform the narration into a rigorous, formal play of elements which compose the fictional episodes. The thematic and spatial strands are no longer regrouped to constitute a 'composition unitaire' (as in the texts of the 1960's). This disruption of narrative coherence liberates the 'signifiant' from its attachment to a 'sens univoque' and institutes a plurality of meaning. Hence, the more recent novels break completely with the classic, realist novel by transforming the text into a space of signifying activity.
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In this study I propose to examine the seven later novels of Claude Simon, from *La Route des Flandres* (1960) to *Leçon de Choses* (1975).

Simon's career as a novelist in fact began with the publication of *Le Tricheur* in 1945, followed by a further four novels prior to *La Route des Flandres*. While these earlier novels do themselves constitute an interesting development in the modern novel, it is with *La Route des Flandres* that Simon's most fascinating work begins. This novel marks a turning-point in Simon's work, boldly revealing a distinctive praxis (or, to borrow Stephen Heath's term, practice of writing) only suggested in the earlier novels. It is for this reason that my study concentrates on the seven later novels.

Simon's work from 1960 onwards falls into two distinct periods, *La Bataille de Pharsale* marking a transition between the two. The novels of the 1970's are a progression from those of the 1960's but reveal a distinctive shift in mode of construction and technique. I have therefore divided this study into two parts, the first dealing with the novels of the 1960's and the second dealing with Simon's transitional work (*La Bataille de Pharsale*) and the novels of the 1970's.

My analysis of these novels draws largely on recent French developments in textual poetics. Consistent with this approach, a considerable proportion of this study is devoted to close textual analysis which is concerned principally with aspects of Simon's narrative technique and his practice of writing. The former is examined in terms of perspective and voice, the
latter in terms of the formal play of metaphor and metonymy. Simon's novels will also be viewed in the wider context of developments in the modern novel. My analysis will trace the major stages in Simon's evolving practice of writing and examine his gradual shift towards a concern with the text as process of production.
PART 1

1. NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

1.1 DEVELOPMENTS IN THEORY

I propose to open this study with an examination of certain key elements of Simon's narrative technique in the novels of the 1960's. To this end, it is first of all necessary to define my approach to the question of narrative presentation. The student of narrative technique is initially beset by a wide range of definitions and schemas whose underlying presuppositions reveal the diverse and often conflicting ways in which the novel can be conceived. A brief survey of what I believe to be certain important developments in a theory of the narrative will help to situate my own approach to a discussion of Simon's novels.

We must return to Plato and Aristotle to discover an initial definition of how a narrative can be presented. In the Republic Plato suggests two fundamental modes of narration: the first, called diegesis, is where the poet speaks in his own name without trying to make the reader believe that someone else is speaking; the second, called mimesis, is where the poet attempts to create the illusion that it is not he who speaks but one of his characters.¹ In the Poetics Aristotle endorses this distinction but subsumes both modes under the general concept of mimesis.² For Aristotle the two modes are therefore merely different methods by which reality can be represented in literary form.

From the Greeks we receive the notion of writing as an imitation or representation of reality (mimesis) which is to dominate later conceptions of the novel.³ In The Craft of
Fiction, for example, Percy Lubbock revives the distinction between diegesis and mimesis with his own notions of telling and showing. Admittedly Lubbock's scheme is not self-consciously styled on Plato's original definition; it is rather a response to what he sees as the two major trends in narrative presentation since the time of Balzac, that is, the 'telling' of a story by a narrator outside the action (Balzac or Tolstoy, for example) and the 'showing' of a story by a narrator who adopts the point of view of one of the characters within the action (James, for example). The echoes of the Platonic formulation, however, can still be detected.

The extent to which Lubbock's critique is founded on the notion of the literary text as the representation of reality is demonstrated by the partisan nature of his comments on telling and showing. As a disciple of James, Lubbock extols the virtues of his technique of limited point of view (or 'dramatized' narrator) as a truer representation of reality: 'The art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be shown, to be so exhibited that it will tell itself.' For Lubbock, the realist effect lies in the extent to which the narrator is able to conceal evidence of his existence.

In the Anglo-Saxon world, Lubbock's model has been central to an understanding of narrative presentation. Wayne Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction, however, explicitly sets out to question Lubbock's plea to expunge the narrator from the narrative and let the story 'tell itself'. Booth asks whether it is at all feasible to remove all traces of 'telling' from the 'house of fiction':

We can go on and on, purging the work of every recognizably personal touch, every distinctive
literary allusion or colorful metaphor, every pattern of myth or symbol; they all implicitly evaluate. Any discerning reader can recognize that they are imposed by the author.

He concludes that 'though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear'. Hence, according to Booth mimesis in the novel is not possible since the narrative is always told, no matter how unobtrusive the teller appears to be. The Jamesian 'dramatized' narrator is not an absence of narrator but a particular position adopted by the narrator in the telling of his story, one device among many employed by an author to 'impose his fictional world upon the reader'.

Booth's intervention in the debate is important in terms of its challenge to the Greek tradition founded on the notion of mimesis. It is, however, from France that the most concerted challenge to this tradition has come. Gérard Genette returns to Plato's original formulation and, as in Booth's critique of Lubbock's 'showing' mode, concludes that mimesis is a fundamentally misleading concept since no narration can 'show' the story that it recounts:

Il ne peut que la raconter de façon détaillée, précise, 'vivante', et donner par là plus ou moins l'illusion de mimésis qui est la seule mimésis narrative, pour cette raison unique et suffisante que la narration, orale ou écrite, est un fait de langage, et que le langage signifie sans imiter.

Genette maintains that the perfect imitation is no longer an imitation at all but the thing itself: 'et finalement, la seule imitation, c'est l'imparfaite. Mimésis, c'est diégésis.' Mimésis, or 'showing', is not a direct representation of reality but a particular mode of narration which gives 'l'illusion de mimésis', while diegesis, or 'telling' is merely a different mode of narration.
If everything is diegesis, as Genette claims, a new vocabulary or poetics defining narrative presentation is clearly called for to replace the former terminology. As is well known, the last twenty years in France has seen a radical reappraisal of the mechanics of the narrative and the introduction of just such a poetics. Genette has been responsible for many of the major innovations in this field along with Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov, Jean Ricardou and others. In this initial survey I will not give detailed consideration to the whole body of concepts and theories of this nature which have emerged in recent years; these will instead be discussed, as appropriate, as this study progresses. However, certain aspects of this new poetics are indeed germane to the initial positioning of my discussion of Simon's novels.

A fundamental distinction is made by all the above critics between the 'fabula' (or story) and the 'sjuzet' (the manner of presentation of the story). Ricardou has re-defined these terms as the *fiction* and *narration* respectively: "La narration est la manière de conter, la fiction ce qui est raconté"; it is these terms that will be adopted here and used elsewhere in this study. According to this distinction a discussion of narrative technique clearly involves an analysis of the narration in relation to the fiction recounted. What are the modalities regulating this relationship? Todorov posits the categories of 'les aspects du récit, ou la manière dont l'histoire est perçue par le narrateur, et les modes du récit, qui dépendent du type de discours utilisé par le narrateur pour nous faire connaître l'histoire'. In Genette's terminology these become 'perspective' et 'voix' respectively: the former is determined by asking the question
'qui voit?' in the narrative and the latter by the question 'qui parle'?\textsuperscript{15}

An understanding of the narrative is hereby removed from the question of mimesis and situated firmly within a textual poetics. The distinction between perspective and voice (the terms that will be used hereafter) establishes a new model through which to conceive narrative presentation and, in so doing, clarifies the confusion of past models.\textsuperscript{16} Lubbock's model, for example, can now be read afresh. The very concept 'point of view' implies an attention to the question 'qui voit?', while Lubbock's own definition of point of view parallels Todorov's later definition of 'aspect' mentioned above: 'The whole intricate question of method, in the craft of fiction, I take to be governed by the question of point of view - the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story'.\textsuperscript{17} Lubbock's definition of the two modes of narration can therefore be useful if these are envisaged not as the two fundamental modes of narration governing the presentation of the narrative but as the two major modes governing narrative perspective. These two modes of perspective will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

My discussion of Simon's narrative technique will be cognizant of recent developments in a theory of the narrative and will make use of the distinction between perspective and voice. By separating these two aspects of narrative presentation we can, I believe, understand more clearly the complex play of the narration in Simon's texts. Use of this model also enables us to comment on the particular relationship between perspective and voice in these texts, a relationship which marks a radical break with traditional modes of narrative
presentation.

1.2 THE ANOMALIES OF PERSPECTIVE

The question that will now be posed is 'qui voit?' in *La Route des Flandres, Le Palace* and *Histoire*, that is, from whose point of view is the narration positioned in these novels? Let us consider the opening sentence of *La Route des Flandres* where one is aware of an ambiguity of narrative perspective which presents certain difficulties in giving a precise answer to the above question. The hero, who is in Flanders with his cavalry squadron in the winter of 1939-40, is addressed by his commander de Reixach:

Il tenait une lettre à la main, il leva les yeux me regarde puis de nouveau la lettre puis de nouveau moi, derrière lui je pouvais voir aller et venir passer les taches rouges acajou ocre des chevaux qu'on menait à l'abreuvoir, la boue était si profonde qu'on enfonçait dedans jusqu'aux chevilles mais je me rappelle que pendant la nuit il avait brusquement gelé et Wack entra dans la chambre en portant le café disant Les chiens ont mangé la boue, je n'avais jamais entendu l'expression, il me semblait voir les chiens, des sortes de créatures infernales mythiques leurs gueules bordées de rose leurs dents froides et blanches de loups mâchant la boue noire dans les ténèbres de la nuit, peut-être un souvenir, les chiens dévorants nettoyant faisant place nette: maintenant elle était grise et nous nous tordions les pieds en courant, en retard comme toujours pour l'appel du matin, manquant de nous fouler les chevilles dans les empreintes laissées par les sabots et devenues aussi dures que de la pierre, et au bout d'un moment il dit Votre mère m'a écrit. (p.9)

There is no doubt that as far as the opening sequence is concerned (at least until 'abreuvoir') the scene is presented through the eyes of the hero present at the scene. The succession of actions in time are as if witnessed by him - 'il tenait .... il leva .... puis .... puis ....' - coupled with which the scene unrolls explicitly within a visualizing consciousness - 'il leva les yeux me regarde .... je pouvais voir'. The reader's perception of the action is thus situated
The first sentence of the novel contains certain features of narrative perspective which are typical of Simon's technique.
in this period. Two perspectives are initially posited, the limited point of view of the hero in the past and the wider perspective of the narrator in the present. These two modes clearly correspond to Lubbock's 'showing' and 'telling' respectively and also to Jean Pouillon's model of 'visions' in the literary text. It should be mentioned - in relation to the notion of perspective in the narrative - that the theories of Todorov and Genette are indebted not only to Lubbock but also to Pouillon whose 'vision "avec"' and 'vision "par derrière"' correspond exactly to Lubbock's 'showing' and 'telling'. In order to avoid the confusion that a use of these terms might cause, I will adopt a model of focuses and call the former mode the focus of the hero and the latter the focus on him.

Thus, in La Route des Flandres both focuses are posited. At times the narrative is firmly and unequivocally positioned from one of these focuses. At other times a certain fluidity characterizes the movement from one to the other, leading to the creation of areas of text where it is impossible to say which focus guides our perception of events. The fluidity of perspective is brought about by sudden and almost imperceptible 'glissements' from one focus to another, from the focus of the hero to the focus on him by the narrator. 'Glissements' and condensations of focus disrupt the distinction between the two modes of perspective.

In La Route des Flandres the opening disjointed fragments of the text are characterized by this balance between focuses. Neither is ever stable or binding and each is ready at any moment to slip into the other. Even the major anomaly in the narration - the switch, in mid-sentence, from a first-person to third-person narration (see p. 27) - fails to upset this
balance. On the contrary, it enhances the confusion and ambiguity produced by an unstable perspective.

In the third-person narration the hero is now Georges whose point of view appears to orient exclusively the perspective of the narrative. This mode of narration therefore appears to resemble the Jamesian technique whereby the narrator narrates in the third-person from the limited point of view of one of the characters. Guiding the perspective is Georges's point of view - 'Georges le regardant', 'il le vit' (p. 28) 'il ne vit que de vagues taches', 'puis il vit la valise' (p. 29) - Georges's thoughts - 'Georges pensant', 'pensant .... pensant encore' (p. 28), 'Georges se demandant' (p. 29), and so on. However, subtle shifts outside this focus are noticeable. If, in the first-person narration, the movement from the focus of the hero to the focus on him is attributable to the infiltration of the field of memory of the narrator, in the third-person narration this movement is now indicative of an omniscient narrator. This narrator does not roam un-checked across his world in the manner of Balzac's narrators, for example; he is only visible at those moments when the focus shifts subtly outside that of Georges. The subtlety of the shift is apparent in an episode in which Georges is with his father just before leaving for the front:

mais ce soir-là, les journaux du matin encore étalés pêle-mêle sur la table d'osier par dessus la chemise .... la lumière du crépuscule d'été à travers lequel parvenait le halètement paisible du tracteur .... le bruit du moteur s'embellant, s'exaspérant quand il remontait la pente de la colline, rageur, dominant leurs voix, puis, parvenu en haut, se relâchant brusquement, s'effaçant presque tandis qu'il passait derrière le bouquet de bambous en tournant, redescendait la pente, tournait encore, longeait le bas de la colline, puis se précipitait, se ruait de nouveau, le moteur s'arc-boutant semblait-il à l'assaut de la pente, et Georges savait alors qu'il allait peu à peu le voir apparaître .... et son père, .... le regard perdu dans le vide derrière les lunettes inutiles où Georges pouvait voir
The beginning of this passage is situated firmly within the perspective of Georges who sees the papers, hears the tractor and so on. However, the phrase 'dominant leurs voix' suggests that Georges and his father are talking whilst this is going on, lending the impression that it is not the focus of Georges which provides the perspective of the narrative but that of a wider focus, a narrator who is distant from Georges and can encompass within his vision Georges, his father and the tractor at the same time. This is reinforced by the following sequence beginning 'tandis qu'il passait derrière le bouquet de bambous', where the width of focus clearly exceeds the limited point of view of Georges seated in the room. In the final part of the passage the perspective is fixed once again within the focus of Georges: 'Georges pouvait voir'.

The vertiginous sensation produced in this and other passages in La Route des Flandres derives not simply from the switches between the focuses but from the manner in which these are accomplished. Scenes in which the limited focus of the hero/Georges is made most explicit (often through expressions like 'je pouvais voir' or 'Georges pouvait voir') include details which cannot possibly be seen from within that limited focus. The ease and subtlety by which the narration slides in and out of focuses makes the passage from one focus to the other almost imperceptible. Yet the troubling effect each switch induces in our reading is unmistakeable.

Critics have said surprisingly little about this particular aspect of Simon's narrative technique. In fact, more often than not the issue has been elided altogether. In a recent analysis of Simon's technique, Doris Kadish suggests that
point of view is used 'to produce a sensible, predominantly visual unity based on the central character's spatial and temporal orientation.' However, visual unity is precisely what is undermined by a sliding and condensation of two distinct focuses. The failure to detect the presence of the focus on as well as the focus of the hero results in a misleading conclusion as to the effect of point of view in the text.

Most commonly, the problems of perspective have been confused with problems of voice. Indicative of this confusion is an early article on Simon's narrative technique by Brian Fitch. Having stated that *La Route des Flandres* is written 'du point de vue particulier de l'un des personnages', Fitch goes on to account for the shifts between the 'focus of' and the 'focus on' by relating them to the shifts from a first-person to third-person narration:

> Les premières pages du livre nous situent dans l'esprit de Georges. Puis le changement abrupt de 'je' à 'il' suggère qu'il y a, en fait, *deux* Georges, que Georges se voit lui-même de l'extérieur.

Although a convenient explanation in terms of psychological credibility in the text, this interpretation elides the real issues. We cannot account for the shifts in perspective by the shifts in voice since the movement between the two focuses occurs in the first-person narration and third-person narration alike. By failing to theorize the perspective and the voice as two distinct aspects of the narration, Fitch overlooks a major component of Simon's narrative technique, namely this troubling sliding of perspective.

However, Jean-Luc Seylaz's study of Simon's previous novel *L'Herbe* does suggest an understanding of the anomalies of perspective. Seylaz draws attention to the way in which
Louise - the central character in the novel - is seen from inside and outside. This point is taken up and expanded by Gérard Roubichou in his excellent study of L'Herbe. Roubichou remarks that although Louise is 'le foyer à partir duquel le texte est écrit .... elle est souvent prise à distance par la narration et vue de l'extérieur'. The manner in which Louise is seen from outside is not accomplished by means of a portrait painted by an omniscient narrator (in the way that Balzac's characters are described, for example) but through subtle shifts away from her point of view. Roubichou's comments can thus be equally applied to La Route des Flandres: the positioning of focus through the hero and the expansions of perspective which exceed his focus provide a key to a major aspect of the narration.

In fact, the technique used in L'Herbe is not only re-adopted in La Route des Flandres but also developed. A greater ambiguity in perspective is produced in the later text by means of a more complex process of sliding and condensation of focuses. One particular sequence is indicative of this activity. The subtle movement away from the focus of Georges to the focus on him is apparent once again when his point of view is penetrated by the wider perspective of the narrator surveying the scene in which Georges and his compatriots stand talking in the prison camp: 'leurs voix se détachant sur ou plutôt à travers la pluie grise .... simplement des soldats leurs voix lasses et monotones' (p.65). Included in the word 'leurs', Georges is here viewed from outside. The narration subsequently returns to the focus of Georges (p.67), then once more to a position of distance from him: 'Ils continuèrent à se disputer, leurs voix même pas hargneuses .... en quelque sorte impersonnelles, comme leurs uniformes
raides, conservant encore (c'était à peine l'automne celui qui avait suivi le dernier été de paix ....' (pp. 68-69). The opening of the parenthesis establishes an even greater distance from Georges's focus. Yet at the end of this paragraph (the parenthesis having been closed, the description of the soldiers' uniforms resumed) we find ourselves back within Georges's focus, not, however, where we left him talking with his friends but in a completely different spatio-temporal setting:


Having been captured, Georges is now in a train being transported to the prison camp and is thinking back to that period before his capture. It appears now as though the preceding narration is constituted by the thoughts of Georges as he lies in the wagon. In other words, all that we took to be a narration related through the focus of the narrator now, in retrospect, is revealed as the focus of Georges in the prison-train.

The narration thus shows itself capable of what might be termed a retrospective 'glissement' or retrospective condensation of focuses through a sudden precision of a new point of view. Each focus is not only not binding, liable at any moment to dissolve into another, but also never sure of being the single focus of the narration, liable to be doubled or incorporated into another.

These anomalies of perspective in *La Route des Flandres* also form an important aspect of the narration in *Le Palace*. The limited point of view is provided by the focus of
l'étudiant' who is in Barcelona as a volunteer in 1936 in support of the fight against fascism. It is his eye which guides the initial perceptions of a pigeon on a window-sill and subsequently moves around the room of a large hotel which has now become the office of the communists. The description is peculiar, however, for the reason that Dominique Lanceraux suggests:

(elle) prétend donner un aperçu de la chambre. En fait la description se trouve dévorée de longues digressions et parenthèses, dont il faut souligner l'étrange caractère puisqu'elles parlent surtout de ce qui a disparu et s'avère inobservable.

For example, the focus of 'l'étudiant' present in the room cannot be responsible for the following observation:

la pièce .... aux murs gris Trianon et nus où .... un rectangle légèrement plus clair indiquait la place qu'avait occupée une de ces gravures elles aussi style Trianon .... entièrement vidée de son mobilier (lit, fauteuils, rideaux, tapis) (p. 8)

The amount of information here concerning the past clearly exceeds the limitation of the focus of 'l'étudiant' and indicates, instead, the presence and thus focus of an omniscient narrator.

Once again the surprise is contained not in the fact that the narration should switch from the focus of 'l'étudiant' to the wider perspective of the narrator but that this switch should be accomplished in such a way as to be almost imperceptible. Similarly, the return to the initial focus of 'l'étudiant' occurs unannounced, giving the impression that the whole description has been related from his point of view. As in La Route des Flandres, the nature of perspective is characterized by the ability to move at will, subtly and effortlessly, in and out of different focuses.

The subsequent description of the hotel alternates between its past existence, as a luxury hotel for the rich, and its
present appropriation by the communists. This imbrication of two distinct periods in time is paralleled and accentuated by the similar imbrication of perspectives: that of the limited point of view of 'l'étudiant' who sees the tables, chairs and photographs in the room, smells 'la fétide odeur' of the table and hears the voice of his comrade 'l'Américain' (pp.10-13), and that of the wider focus of a narrator who knows the history of the hotel and can move outside the limited focus of 'l'étudiant'.

This wider perspective is soon made explicit: 'Puis il se vit .... c'était presque quinze ans plus tard et maintenant il était assis .... devant un bar' (p.16) The appearance of 'l'étudiant' at a later stage in his life thus introduces the field of memory. The older man looks back at his past self which appears to him 'comme dans le petit bout de la lorgnette' (p.20) The relationship 'l'étudiant' (1936)/man remembering ('quinze ans plus tard') resembles that in La Route des Flandres between hero/narrator ('je me rappelle'). In both texts perspective wanders between the restricted focus of the former and the wider focus of the latter. However, the introduction of the older man in Le Palace implies a third focal point, namely that of a narrator who is outside the focus of the hero at both stages in his life. Lanceraux's schema of temporal levels corresponds to the three major levels of perspective in the text: 'Soit la formule gigogne de la narration à trois temps: le vécu (1936 si l'on tient à dater)/le remémoré ("quinze ans plus tard")/l'écrit ("aujourd'hui")

The model of perspective revealed in the opening pages of Le Palace ('glissements'/condensations between focus of/focus on) is in no way altered by this new format. In those
passages concerning 'l'étudiant' in 1936, which occupy most of the book, the perspective continues to function as in the opening pages. The focus on him is, in this case, a condensation of the two points of memory and the moment of narration which, although important in terms of the merging of two points of view and two distinct positions in time, does not affect the general expansion and contraction of perspective. In those passages concerning 'le remémoré', the anomalies of perspective are the same: the focal points are now the focus of the man who remembers and the focus on him by the narrator.

In fact flash-forwards in the fiction from 'le vécu' to 'le remémoré' occur only twice in the text. In the first episode concerning the return of the older 'étudiant' to Barcelona, the perspective shifts gradually from his focus in the bar, reflecting on his former self - 'cette trace, cette salissure .... laissée derrière soi .... regardant le double microscopique et effaré de lui-même' (p.16) - and on the interior of the bar itself, to a position which, though never made explicit, is somehow no longer in the bar but as if free-floating, able to range around the square outside, describe the patterns formed by the pigeons, and encompass within its focus all eighty open windows of the bank (the building now standing, fifteen years later, on the site of the former hotel which has been destroyed by fire). As in the opening description of the hotel-room, the perspective slides gradually outside the bounds of its original point of view and subsequently back into it, making it appear as though the whole description has been related through the eyes of the man looking 'à travers la glace du bar' (p.19). The reader is therefore left with the unsettling impression
of a condensation of inner and outer views.

The other episode oscillates in the same way. The perspective is initially restricted to the focus of the man watching the activity on the square, especially the coming and going of the trams which cross the city. It subsequently veers away to become a focus on him, distanced from him and therefore able to comment on him from outside:

et lui sur son banc peut-être aussi comme un simple amas d'ossements: alors peut-être l'avait-on laissé là, oublié, se desséchant lentement puis ses chairs tombant peu à peu en poussière sans que personne s'en aperçût. (p.105)

The confusion of focuses in *Le Palace* is best typified by the 'récit de l'homme-fusil' in the second part of the book. As volunteers on their way to Barcelona, 'l'étudiant' and the Italian share the same train compartment; during the journey the latter relates the story of a political assassination he carried out in a restaurant. The Italian's description of the sequence of events immediately prior to and after the assassination is, for the most part, told through his eyes. This is an explicitly visual description since the Italian recalls a man in the process of paying his taxi outside the restaurant, his own entry through the revolving door, the position of the diners, the assassination itself, the exit through the revolving door and the same man still in the process of paying his taxi. However, the focus of the Italian alternates with that of 'l'étudiant' whose eye moves from his companion to the scene outside on the station platform. These focuses are, in turn, invaded by the wider perspective of the older man/narrator. The introduction of a number of different focal points thus allows the narration to slip in and out of each in a dizzy movement of contraction, expansion and condensation. Narrative perspective here
functions like a camera which continually zooms in to focus in detail on a particular object, then withdraws to take a wider view.

Michel Deguy has referred to this movement in *Le Palace*. In an article entitled 'Claude Simon et la Représentation', he compares the eye of the narration not to a camera but to an aeroplane which at times flies too close to the ground, at times so high that the ground is lost from sight. This eye is unable to fix the world in proper perspective to regain the balance that it has lost. It is either sucked into objects through fascination or separated from them by a screen of images and memories which take the form of representations of the world.

Deguy's comments on what he terms 'le grossissement et le recul' of the eye of narration provide an interesting description of the movement of perspective in the text, not least of all for their metaphorical explanation of the process in question. Yet Deguy equates the eye of the narration with a real, human eye; his comments are made within the context of a phenomenological interpretation of the anomalies of perspective. Before wholeheartedly approving Deguy's approach it is therefore necessary to ask first of all whether or not the eye of narration is indeed equal to a real eye. Such an equation is based on the assumption that the text can be seen as a representation of an individual consciousness, an assumption which my own approach challenges. The two eyes are not the same since one is a textual eye (and therefore artificial) while the other is a real eye active in the world. The anomalies of perspective in the text transgress certain conventions which traditionally operate in the narrative and therefore disrupt a conventional reading of the text; it is
from this position that my analysis is situated vis à vis the problems of perspective and that certain conclusions will be drawn.

In *Histoire* we find the same anomalies of perspective as in the two previous novels. The first sentence appears to be a return to the model presented in the opening of *La Route des Flandres*: the perspective slides between the two focal points of a past and present first-person narrator. Once again the focus is initially that of the hero in the past. It is his vision of the tree outside the ancestral home:

> je pouvais la voir .... les folioles ovales .... se détachant avec précision en avant des rameaux plus lointains de plus en plus faiblement éclairés (p.9)

his perception of its movement:

> on pouvait percevoir .... une mystérieuse et délicate rumeur invisible se propageant dans l'obscur fouillis des branches (p.9)

in short, his point of view which directs the narration. Once again the perspective subtly oversteps the limits of this point of view, hence introducing the wider field of memory of the narrator.

As in *Le Palace*, however, this field of memory is made explicit as the point of view of the narrator at a later stage in his life. In other words, what appeared to be the narrator's present is subsequently specified as another moment in his past, thus re-establishing 'la formule à trois temps' of the previous novel: 'le vécu' (various scenes)/'le remémoré' (one day in his life bound by the waking and sleeping moments)/'l'écrit'. The opening sequence in the second part of the book echoes the perceptions of the opening page (see p.38); this time, however, it is the older man whose point of view directs the perspective, the narration moving as subtly outside
his focus as previously it wandered outside that of his past self.

The familiar 'glissements' and condensations of focus occur throughout the text. At times the rapid cuts between sequences and the lack of precision of time or place make it impossible to situate the focus; at others the focus is suddenly made precise, producing a retrospective 'glissement' of perspective. On three occasions the focus of the hero merges with that of his Uncle Charles, producing an impossible condensation of person and time (see pp. 151, 291, 369).

The anomalies of perspective in all three novels of the 1960's follow a similar pattern. The number of focal positions varies from text to text but the sliding between these points is a common feature of them all. The temporal distinctions between various moments in the past and the present are distorted by the unstable relationship between the focus of the hero and the focus on him by the narrator: condensations of focus blur the distinction between past and present while the distance from the focus of the hero re-establishes a conventional structure of temporality. Thus the impression of a continual contraction and expansion of time in these novels is largely a product of the contractions and expansions of point of view.29

These texts derive their effects from a radical use of traditional modes of narration. The sliding of focuses transgresses the notion (put forward by Lubbock, for example) that the novelist can either narrate by means of one mode of perspective or the other, that is, by using the limited focus of one of the characters or by using the narrator's focus on the characters. Simon's narration appears to disrupt this dual
system by narrating by means of both at the same time. 'Glissements' between inner and outer points of view are accompanied by condensations of the two; perspective acts like a moebius strip producing an impossible relationship between the 'focus of' and the 'focus on'.

Simon's technique therefore challenges the polarity established by the two major modes of narration: it is neither a conventional use of an omniscient narrator nor that of a Jamesian 'dramatized' narrator but a 'mélange' of the two. Laure Hesbois's pertinent remark on L'Herbe can be equally applied to the novels of the 1960's:

On ne saurait nier que cette singulière technique narrative, qui permet de varier constamment le rapport de celui qui raconte à l'objet de son récit n'offre une solution originale au pseudo-dilemme de l'artiste conventionnellement sommé de choisir entre une impossible objectivité et une dangereuse subjectivité.

The originality of the solution to this 'pseudo-dilemme' is perhaps not entirely attributable to Simon but should surely be viewed as a development of Proust's technique in A la Recherche du Temps Perdu where the same relationship is established between the outer view of the narrator and the inner view of the hero. Genette's study of Proust's narrative technique shows that it contradicts 'une "loi de l'esprit" qui veut que l'on ne puisse être à la fois dedans et dehors'.

In Simon's novels, as in that of Proust, it is in the ambiguous relationship between the narrator and the hero that much of the interest of the narrative structure lies. A closer analysis of the ambiguities of this relationship leads to wider questions involving a discussion of perspective and its relationship to voice.
1.3 PERSPECTIVE AND VOICE

We have seen how, in each of the novels studied, the narrative is initially presented through the eyes of a character present at a particular scene. The visual aspect of these openings is made quite specific: in *La Route des Flandres* the focus is that of the hero during the war ('je pouvais voir'), in *Le Palace* that of 'l'étudiant' in the hotel-room, and in *Histoire* that of the hero in his bedroom ('je pouvais la voir'). The precisions of point of view in the opening scenes are by no means isolated examples of a delineation of perspective in these novels; phrases like 'je pouvais voir', 'j'ai pu le voir', 'il me semblait voir cela', 'pouvant voir' and so on occur regularly, often followed by colons as if to announce the introduction of a visual scene. Other phrases like 'et ceci:', 'et cela:', 'et encore' also appear frequently and are similar to those mentioned above in terms of their function as indicators of a succeeding visual scene.

The descriptions which then follow these announcements of point of view are often of a remarkable precision. The eye whose focus directs the narration lingers on what appear to be the most insignificant details, the design of a cigar-box, for example (*Le Palace*, pp. 134-138) or the stamp on a postcard (*Histoire*, p.34). Often passages of great length in the narration are constituted by such scrutinies. This is not merely an aspect of the so-called 'chosisme' that has been seen as a preoccupation of the nouveau roman' and, more specifically, of the earlier novels of Robbe-Grillet. In Simon's case, the prolonged descriptions involving attention to minute detail reveal other aspects of the narration.
One such scene occupies a large proportion of the third part of *Le Palace*, entitled 'Les Funérailles de Patrocle'. The opening precision of point of view situates the narrative perspective within the focus of 'l'étudiant' and his comrades who watch, from the balcony of the hotel, the funeral procession which passes by in the street below:

'Plus tard ils distinguerait: d'abord la clique, la musique en uniforme, puis un vide, puis les quatre chevaux caparaçonnés de noir et noirs eux-mêmes de robe, l'œil noir et humide injecté de pourpre, les longs cils noirs, saillant au milieu du rond bordé d'un galon d'argent ménagé dans la cagoule qui leur couvrait la tête, et le corbillard (ou plutôt, étant donné sa taille, sa hauteur: le catafalque) lui-même (pp.83-84)

As usual, the colon functions to introduce the visual scene. This unfolds progressively as the focus moves from one object to another ('d'abord .... puis .... puis .... et ....'), finally arriving at the hearse itself. It is indeed an eye which is meticulous in its attention to detail for even the eye-lashes of the horses are noticed.

However, other aspects of the description interrupt rather than enforce the visual presentation of the scene. Why, for example, is the colour black mentioned four times in the space of a few lines? Is it simply to provide a realistic effect (the scene depicted is, after all, a funeral procession) or is it rather the narrator's attempt to create a dark backcloth against which the purple and the silver will stand out? If it is the latter then we might say that the description is more concerned with a pictorial harmony of colour than with the camera-like depiction of the procession.

Why also are there two rectifications of expression ('la clique, la musique en uniforme', 'le corbillard (ou plutôt ....)')? On the one hand they reveal the narrator's concern
for a precision of statement, that is, a concern for his mode of expression through language; on the other hand the second terms introduced by the rectifications ('musique', 'catafalque') are evidently chosen because of their resemblance, through the hard 'k' sound, to the first terms ('clique', 'corbillard') This same play of 'signifiants' can also be detected in 'quatre .... caparaçonnés .... injecté .... cagoule .... qui .... couvrait', while the sibilance of 'cils .... saillant' and the play on words 'galon .... cagoule' provide further evidence of the narrator's attention to language.

The passage clearly functions on the two levels that I have located: it is presented as the limited focus of those present at the scene but also as a discourse 'telling' the scene and attentive to aspects of language. The introduction 'ils distinguerait:' suggests that the following description will show (in Lubbock's sense of the word) or reproduce the procession, but the particular signs of a voice suggest, on the contrary, that the scene is produced through a play with language.

The conflicting nature of this passage is indicative of a fundamental feature of the narration in Simon's novels of the 1960's; they seem to be both the vision of a particular character and the manifestation of the process of construction of the description. Let us return to La Route des Flandres to examine more closely one of the central episodes in the text in the light of comments made above. The hero visualizes the scene in which his squadron is ambushed and de Reixach is killed:

un moment j'ai pu le voir ainsi le bras levé brandissant cette arme inutile et dérisoire dans un geste héréditaire de statue équestre que lui avaient probablement transmis des générations de sabreurs, silhouette obscure
The scene is initially announced as a memory of the narrator ('j'ai pu le voir'), but the focus is clearly limited to that of the hero present at the scene: the abundance of present participles ('miroitant .... s'écroulant .... commençant .... s'inclinant .... disparaissant .... trainant') and the numerous deictics denoting a minimal progression in time ('un moment .... un instant .... puis .... d'abord .... puis .... toujours') all combine to give the impression that the action is unfolding within the present visualizing consciousness of the hero. Yet, at the same time, the description manifests signs of its own mode of construction by means of the following mechanisms: a) the comparison introduced by the word 'comme'. There are three comparisons in this short episode, each of which interrupts the depiction of the action in order to elaborate on the description. These comparisons are striking for two reasons: firstly, their number and frequency suggest that each statement is liable to an interruption by what Jean Ricardou has termed 'l'irruption du similaire'; secondly, the elements which are introduced by means of the comparison do not cease to play a further part in the narration, once having been mentioned, but are influential in directing the thematic development of the description. For example, the 'métal gris' and 'cavalier de plomb', which are introduced in the first two comparisons, form part of the theme of metal which traverses the whole
description. Clearly these comparisons are not strictly relevant to the scene in terms of its 'vraisemblance'; they are however, relevant to the formal composition of the description and, as such, are signs of a concern with textual construction which is altogether foreign to the notion of the reproduction of the scene.\textsuperscript{33}

b) Similarity and antithesis on the level of the 'signifié'. Similarities are not only introduced through the comparison; here and elsewhere in the text they are fundamental to the construction of the description. In our passage we can detect the balance of darkness and light ('silhouette .... obscure .... contrecoup .... décolorait .... gris/soleil .... miroitant'), appearing and disappearing ('j'ai pu le voir/disparaissant'), form and fragmentation ('statue équestre .... une seule et même matière .... métal/s'écroulant .... fondre .... s'inclinant'), and raising and crawling ('le bras haut levé/ un animal traînant son ventre par terre').

c) Similarity on the level of the 'signifiant'. The narration is once again attentive to the sounds of words:

\begin{verbatim}
brandissant .... miroitant .... instant ....
s'écroulant .... commençant .... s'inclinant ....
lentement .... flanc .... disparaissant .... traînant
geste .... équestre
nue .... tout .... tenu .... bout
chienne .... pleine .... traînant
\end{verbatim}

In addition to these obvious signs of the voice of the narration are the metaphorical connotations established in the passage (sexuality, for example).\textsuperscript{34} However, a sufficient number of instances of a discourse have been located to draw attention to the indubitable presence of a narrating voice.
The conflict between what is both a personal vision and a narration in the process of construction lends a peculiar quality to these novels which disturbs our reading since it causes an oscillation in the relationship between the narrator and the hero.

Gérard Roubichou has located this unstable balance between point of view and the narrating voice in *L'Herbe*. He comments: 'Singulier narrateur .... qui semble à la fois "faire un récit" et nous donner l'illusion de vivre directement les événements comme dans une conscience.'\(^{35}\) The technique established in *La Route des Flandres*, *Le Palace* and *Histoire* is thus clearly developed from the preceding novel; but it can also be seen, once again, as a development of the Proustian model. Genette refers to the peculiarity of the Proustian mode of narration whereby the narration is, for the most part, situated firmly within the focus of the hero though always exceeding the limits of his point of view through the long descriptions and comments of the narrating voice.\(^{36}\) The tension in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* is born from the relationship between a limited point of view (that of the hero) and the voice of the narrator, that is, between a combination, in the same narration, of the mimetic and diegetic modes. If mimesis, or showing, 'consiste à la fois à en dire le plus possible et ce plus, à le dire le moins possible'; and diegesis, or telling, is produced by this formula in reverse, then the Proustian narration reveals the 'coexistence paradoxale de la plus grande intensité mimétique et d'une présence du narrateur en principe contraire à toute mimésis romanesque'.\(^{38}\) In other words, the narration is situated at the extremes of mimesis and diegesis.
In this respect (and in others as we shall see), Simon's narrative technique resembles the Proustian model. The presence of signs of the narrating voice within the vision of a character is not, in itself, the peculiar feature of the narration. As I have pointed out, no narrative 'tells itself' (in the way that Lubbock hoped it would); consequently every narrative is told no matter how impersonal the narration appears to be.\(^3\) The field of vision of a particular focus is therefore also, inevitably, the narration of that field of vision. What is striking about Simon's mode of narration, as Roubichou has pointed out, is the way in which the field of vision and the narration of the field of vision are manifested at one and the same time; that is, the strict limitation of point of view and the enormous wealth of information (mimetic mode) coexists with the abundance of signs of a voice of narration (diegetic mode).

It is, in fact, not simply a question of a coexistence of the two modes; it is more a question of the manifestation of the work by which the vision is produced by the narration. I have shown how each vision is elaborated by a certain discourse which progresses through an attention to and play with language. Seen in this light, the initial positioning of the narrative from a particular focus ('je pouvais voir', 'il pouvait voir' and so on) is a pretext not for the 'showing' of a scene but for the elaboration or production of that scene through language. The overstepping of the bounds of what, in terms of 'vraisemblance', is strictly necessary for a 'showing' of the scene is due to the fact that the textual construction of the description becomes more important than fidelity to the conventions of 'vraisemblance'. It is also interesting to note that there is no real difference between
the phrase 'je pouvais voir' and the frequently recurring 'il me semblait voir cela'; in other words, the memory of a 'real' scene and the imagining of a scene are equivalent in that the descriptions which follow these precisions are manufactured in the same way as that analysed above.\textsuperscript{40}

Returning to the anomalies of perspective noted in the previous section, we can now situate these more clearly in the light of the relationship between focus and the narrating voice. The movement between the focus of the hero and the focus on him by the narrator can be reinterpreted as the tension established between a limited point of view and the voice of the narrator (as in Proust's novel). The continual presence of a discourse in the process of elaboration produces an excess of detail which, in turn, lends the impression of a sliding outside a focus and a confusion of perspectives.

This feature of Simon's narrative technique in the texts of the 1960's only becomes apparent if we make the initial distinction between perspective and voice. This distinction enables us to locate certain problems which have previously been elided and allows us to conclude that it is the nature of the inter-relationship between perspective and voice that is fundamental to an understanding of the mode of narration in these texts.
2. NARRATIVE VOICE

2.1 THE CRITICAL TRADITION

The question 'qui parle?' in the novel is, of course, fundamental to an analysis of the narrative. In order to give a satisfactory answer to the question it is first of all necessary to specify how one is to define this voice that speaks in the text. This is not without problems since numerous definitions have been put forward.

A real confusion is born from the traditional notion that the narrative emanates from the person of the author. In this conception the author is taken to be the source and donor of a narrative which is received by a donatory, the reader. How many critical works have mistaken the narrator of Le Père Goriot for Honoré de Balzac, for example, or (perhaps more common still) Marcel in A la Recherche du Temps Perdu for Marcel Proust? Roland Barthes has pointed out the error of this elision of narrator and author: 'qui parle (dans le récit) n'est pas qui écrit (dans la vie)'\(^1\). This sentiment is also expressed by Genette in comments on the narration of Le Père Goriot:

> le narrateur du Père Goriot n’"est" pas Balzac même s’il exprime ça ou là les opinions de celui-ci, car ce narrateur-auteur est quelqu'un qui "connaît" la pension Vauquer et ses pensionnaires, alors que Balzac, lui, ne fait que les imaginer: et en ce sens, bien sûr, la situation narrative d’un récit de fiction ne se ramène jamais à sa situation d’écriture.\(^2\)

The conception that the text is the direct expression of the author ('l'expression d'un je qui lui est extérieur\(^3\), as Barthes says) is founded on the premise that language is merely a vehicle for the transmission of ideas, a notion that developments in linguistics (from the time of Saussure) have challenged and shown to be misguided. A definition of the
speaker of the narrative must recognize the distinction between the 'real' author and the 'artificial' narrator and also take into consideration the fact that 'le langage signifie sans imiter'.

If we reject the notion that the speaking voice comes from an author outside the narrative, we must consequently turn our attention to the narrative itself to seek the signs of the narrating voice. Once again we find a certain amount of confusion surrounding the concept of the narrator. The narrator is traditionally envisaged as a person endowed with the same qualities and traits of character as real people in the world: the narrators of George Eliot and Jane Austen are ironic, the narrators of Dickens and Zola are socially aware, the narrators of Tolstoy have a breadth of vision, and so on. In effect, this concept of the narrator is no different to the concept of the author as the source of the text; the text is again envisaged as a vehicle through which a person expresses metaphysical and psychological truths and represents his or her view of the world.

Booth attempts to avoid the faults of the above approaches by looking at the whole problem of narration from a different perspective. He evaluates the distances established in the text between the 'implied author' (that is, the organizer of the narrative in its totality) and the reader. These distances are regulated according to the type of 'voice' used, the four most important of which are the dramatized narrator (as in the novels of James or Hemingway) and the non-dramatized narrator (as in the novels of Fielding, Balzac or Stendhal), the reliable narrator and the unreliable narrator. For example, the ambiguities of novels like Camus's La Chute or James's Turn of the Screw result from the unreliability of the narrators,
where the reader cannot trust the narrator's word; commentaries by an omniscient narrator allow the author to give facts, resume information, underline the importance of certain events, control suspense, generalize and reinforce or contradict the reader's norms and expectations; the silences of the dramatized narrator allow the 'implied author' to control the sympathy of the reader by reinforcing his sense of identification (as in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*) or allow him to control the degree of confusion or clarity in the narrative.

Booth's model of voices is an interesting attempt to theorize the question of narration but is not without problems of its own. By displacing the question from 'who speaks?' to asking how the 'implied author' 'imposes his fictional world upon the reader', Booth recognizes the importance of the reader in the 'art of fiction' (although the model he constructs is rather mechanistic in the way it accounts for the reader's response to the narrative).

However, the term 'implied author' merely confuses the whole issue. This 'implied author' often looks suspiciously like the real author endowed with a set of values which he then imparts to the reader by way of a particular voice to produce a particular effect. This model suggests that the voice merely mediates between the two positions of 'implied author' and reader, giving shape to the original intention of the 'implied author'. Although Booth is attentive to the actual techniques themselves within the narrative, there is still a sense here of the narrative as an expression of an outside intention (whether that of real author or 'implied author').

The rejection of this notion is the starting-point for those theorists who have developed a semiology of literary discourse.
The question of voice is located within the text, or rather is viewed as a product of the text. Although (as I suggested in the previous chapter) a large body of theory has emerged in the last twenty years, certain fundamental concepts are generally accepted concerning who speaks in the narrative. Firstly, there is the recognition that voice is composed of two distinct planes which are termed the 'énoncé' and the 'énonciation': the first is what is uttered, the second is the act of uttering. For example, in the sentence 'Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure', the time of the 'énoncé' (some time in the past) is evidently not the same time as the moment of 'énonciation' (the time at which this statement is uttered). Similarly, the subject of the 'énoncé' (the 'je' in the statement) is not the same as the subject of the 'énonciation' (the 'je' making the statement). Stephen Heath demonstrates this disjunction between the 'sujet de l'énoncé' and the 'sujet de l'énonciation': 'In the utterance 'I am lying'... it is evident that the subject of the proposition is not one with the subject of the enunciation of the proposition - the 'I' cannot lie on both planes at once', and Jacques Lacan suggests the same disjunction in riddle-form: 'le sujet dont je parle quand je parle est-il le même que celui qui parle?'

Voice does not reside in the 'énoncé' or the 'énonciation' but is constituted by the relations between the two planes. Analysis of voice must therefore take into consideration the way in which the possibilities of 'énonciation' are regulated by certain linguistic features built into the structure of the 'énoncé', amongst which verb tenses, personal pronouns and other deictics are of fundamental importance.

A further major distinction springs precisely from a consideration of the possible modes of 'énonciation'. In Problèmes
de Linguistique Générale, Emile Benveniste describes two fundamental types of 'énonciation': the first he calls 'histoire', the second 'discours'. 'Histoire' is defined as follows: 'Il s'agit de la présentation des faits survenus à un certain moment du temps, sans aucune intervention du locuteur dans le récit.' For example, the visit of Frédéric to the house of M. Dambreuse in Flaubert's L'Education Sentimentale appears to have no narrator:

Un timbre sonnait, un valet parut, et introduisit Frédéric dans une petite pièce, où l'on distinguait deux coffres-forts, avec des casiers remplis de cartons. M. Dambreuse écrivait au milieu, sur un bureau à cylindre. Il parcourut la lettre du père Rogue, ouvrit avec son canif la toile qui enfermait les papers, et les examina.'

'Discours', on the other hand, is a narration in which there are an abundance of signs of the narrator:

Il faut entendre discours dans sa plus large extension: toute énonciation supposant un locuteur et un auditeur, et chez le premier l'intuition d'influencer l'autre en quelque manière. C'est d'abord la diversité des discours oraux de toute nature et de tout niveau."

Compare the spare narration of L'Education Sentimentale with the highly personalized narration of Sterne's Tristram Shandy:

In the beginnings of the last chapter, I informed you exactly when I was born, - but I did not inform you how. No; that particular was reserved entirely for a chapter by itself; - besides, Sir, as you and I are in a manner perfect strangers to each other, it would not have been proper to have let you into too many circum­stances relating to myself all at once.

In simple terms, the distinction is between a narration in which the narrator is either 'absent' from or present in what he narrates, each of these modes of 'énonciation' manifested by a particular tense system.

Certain familiar echoes of Plato's distinction between diegesis and mimesis can be found in Benveniste's model. However, the 'histoire/discours' distinction both rejoins
Plato's model and places it on a new footing in that Benveniste's formulations are specifically concerned with the ways in which a language system structures the possibilities of 'énonciation'. The voice of the narrative is thus seen not as the expression of the author (as in Plato's diegesis), the 'human' narrator nor, indeed, of a character from within the narrative, but as a specific conjunction or arrangement of certain features of language.

The concept of 'histoire' nevertheless presents a problem in that it once again posits the notion of an absence of narrator from the narrative, a notion which I criticized in the previous chapter. Genette maintains that 'histoire' can never exist in its rigorous form:

La moindre observation générale, le moindre adjectif un peu plus que descriptif, la plus discrète comparaison, le plus modeste "peut-être", la plus inoffensive des articulations logiques introduisent dans sa trame un type de parole qui lui est étranger et comme réfractaire.

It is therefore advisable to envisage 'histoire' as a mode of narration in which the signs of 'énonciation' are less obvious, the narrator more unobtrusive than in the mode of 'discours'. Seen in this way, the model 'histoire/discours' can be a useful conceptual guide to the problem of modes of narration providing the parameters for the possibilities of 'énonciation'. Todorov recognizes these two modes in just such a way:

Toute parole est, on le sait, à la fois un énoncé et une énonciation. En tant qu'énoncé, elle se rapporte au sujet de l'énoncé et reste donc objective. En tant qu'énonciation, elle se rapporte au sujet de l'énonciation et garde un aspect subjectif car elle représente dans chaque cas un acte accompli par ce sujet. Toute phrase présente ces deux aspects mais à des degrés différents.

The following analysis of voice in La Route des Flandres, Le Palace and Histoire will make use of these concepts. I
will therefore be considering the relations between 'énoncé' and 'énonciation' in the attempt to determine who speaks in these texts.

2.2 THE SITUATION OF 'ÉNONCIATION'

(1) Temporal Relations

The problem of defining voice is the problem of situating the moment and source of the 'énonciation'. It is therefore necessary to consider the temporal relations between 'énoncé' and 'énonciation'. We have already seen that the moment of 'énonciation' in La Route des Flandres is initially specified as the present of memory ('je me rappelle'). In the opening pages of the novel no further information is given concerning the time or place of this 'énonciation'; a first-person narrator narrates from an undefined position certain events from his past.

In the succeeding narration the episodes recounted intermingle in the memory of the narrator and temporal indicators situating these past events are infrequent. Nevertheless, a temporal chronology of the fictional episodes can soon be pieced together including: the marriage of de Reixach and his young wife Corinne between 1936 - 1940 and a horse-race in the spring or summer of one of those years; an interminable ride through Flanders by the hero and his squadron in winter or spring 1940; the ambush of the squadron and the death of de Reixach in spring 1940.

Although the moment of memory/'énonciation' is not specified, it is clearly some time after these episodes recounted. Thus a temporal distinction is established between the moment of 'énonciation' and the time of the 'énoncés'. The traditional narration in the past maintains a clear temporal distinction
between these two planes. It is not necessary to know the
exact times of either level to be aware of the temporal
distance between them, although most narratives in the past
make the temporal distinction fairly explicit. Of course
the narrator can narrate events in the past and in the present
by switching between a past tense and present tense narration;
or the narration can be in a past which progresses towards
the present moment of 'énonciation' (*Robinson Crusoe* or *A
la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, for example). Neither of these
techniques actually confuses the distinction between the time
of the 'énoncé' and the moment of 'énonciation'. On the
contrary, they serve to reinforce the temporal distinction,
the former through a contrast of tense-system (past/present),
the latter by suggesting a chronology of discrete moments
through which the narrative progresses.

In *La Route des Flandres* the past tense narration shows
marked divergences from any traditional model due to the fact
that it appears to be a present tense narration as well.
Alongside the verbs in the past tense are a number of features
which denote a narration in the present tense:

a) an over-abundance of present participles:

décrochant les deux étrivières en descendant de cheval,
déboulant la sous-gorge .... et alors enlevant toute
la bride d'un seul coup, trempant le tout dans l'abreu­
voir (p.11)

se tournant légèrement sur sa selle .... se contentant
nous montrant ce visage .... attendant simplement ....
repartant poussant son cheval .... le^se remettant ....
en marche (p.15)

Passages like these - where no past tense verb appears for long
periods - are common in the narration.

b) past participles used adjectivally:

délivré donc libéré relevé pour ainsi dire .... quelques
autres cavaliers démontés perdus par-ci par-là (p.16)
c) a proliferation of descriptive detail which tends to detemporalize the action:

se détachant sur le vert inimitable des opulents maronniers, presque noir, les jockeys passant dans le tintement de la cloche pour se rendre au départ, haut perchés, simiesques, sur les bêtes gracieuses et élégantes, leurs casques multicolores se suivant dans les pastilles de soleil, comme ceci: Jaune, bretelles et toque bleues - le fond vert noir des maronniers - Noire, croix de Saint-André bleue et toque blanche - le mur vert noir des maronniers. (pp.22-23)


d) temporal indicators denoting a present action:

puis .... puis .... maintenant .... au bout d'un moment (p.9)

un moment .... un instant .... puis .... d'abord .... puis .... toujours (pp.12-13)

It is true that all these features appear in traditional past-tense narrations, though in moderation; in Simon's texts it is their excess which gives the impression of a present tense narration. At certain times the moment of 'énonciation' is therefore equivalent to the time of the 'énoncé'; the hero merges with the narrator narrating his experiences in the present, the narration itself taking on the appearance of a present 'stream of consciousness'. For example, the second account of the ambush of the squadron and the death of de Reixach later in the text appears to be related by the hero present at the scene (see pp.156-159); so too does the hero's sexual encounter with Corinne one night after the war:

lappant son chose rose mais non pas rose rien que le noir dans les ténèbres touffues me léchant le visage mais en tout cas mes mains ma langue pouvant la toucher la connaître m'assurer, mes mains aveugles rassurées la touchant partout courant sur elle son dos son ventre avec un bruit de soie rencontrant cette touffe brous-sailleuse poussant comme étrangère parasite sur sa nudité lisse (p.257)

Two tense systems are thus apparent in La Route des Flandres both employed to relate the same body of 'énoncés'; in other words, the episodes recounted are narrated by means of both a
past and present tense narration. The 'emboîtement' of these two modes of narration produces an ambiguous and fluid relationship between the 'énonciation' and the 'énoncé': they appear to be, at one and the same time, condensed on the same temporal plane and distinct in time. As Seylaz points out: 'la distance temporelle entre l'événement et la narration n'est pas fixe.'

This confusion of temporal relations between narration and event ('énonciation' and 'énoncé') is a fundamental feature of all three texts of the 1960's. Le Palace and Histoire are both written in a past/present tense, a mode of narration that Lanceraux has called a 'passé présentiifié'. The Italian's account of the assassination in Le Palace appears to be spoken by the Italian himself present at the scene and by the third-person narrator distanced from the character and the event (see especially pp.54-63); the interview between the hero and the bank-manager in Histoire is similarly spoken by the hero as narrator (in the present) and by the narrator distanced from the hero (in the past) (see especially pp. 70-75). Examples are numerous since the relationship between the moment of 'énonciation' and the time of the event is always fluid.

The fluidity in temporal relations between narration and event, narrator and hero helps to clarify further the disturbing 'glissements' between the focus of the hero and the focus on him by the narrator. The present tense narration is important in forming the limited focus of the character present at the scene while the past tense narration provides the distance between narrator and character which forms the wider focus of the narrator. The peculiar balance in Simon's texts between the 'subjective' and 'objective' modes of narration,
pointed out by Hesbois, is also commented on by Seylaz who remarks on the importance of the present participle in the production of this effect:

le participe présent est le temps intermédiaire entre le passé narratif et le présent de la vision, le temps hybride par excellence qui "détemporalise" le récit et dont l'emploi massif permet à l'auteur de nous maintenir sans cesse à la frontière de la narration en apparence objective et de la vision intérieure.°

We can also see this fluid relationship between past and present as an unsettling combination of the modes of 'histoire' and 'discours'. The world of 'histoire' — which Barthes describes as a world of established, free-floating facts in the past divorced from any 'énonciation' — is penetrated by the present 'discours' of a hero/narrator relating his own experiences. Of course, no narration is either exclusively one mode or the other; yet the particular combination of the two in Simon's texts is such that they disrupt a conventional relationship between the two moments of 'énoncé' and 'énonciation'. The problem of situating the moment and source of 'énonciation' is thus insoluble in these texts since the relationship between these two moments is never fixed.

(ii) Levels of 'Énonciation'

It has been noted that the opening 'énonciation' in La Route des Flandres is that of the first-person narrator who narrates from an indeterminate present. The time and place of this present are soon made explicit: "'Ouais! ....' fit Blum (maintenant nous étions couchés dans le noir ....)") (p.20) What appeared from the start to be an indeterminate position of memory/'énonciation' is now shown to be part of an exchange between the hero and his friend Blum in the prison train some time after the ambush. This clarification of the moment of 'énonciation' has the effect of transforming that
moment into an episode in the fiction and positing a second 'énonciation' (since the original 'énonciation' cannot be both in the wagon and narrating in the past tense).

Is the prison train the position from which the opening words 'je me rappelle' are spoken? Ironically, the precision noted above makes it ambiguous as to where and when this statement is uttered since it allows two possible levels of 'énonciation', that of the hero in the train and that of the narrator at a later stage in time. There are now two positions of memory/'énonciation', either of which might be responsible for the preceding narration.

The same technique, by which the moment of 'énonciation' is suddenly made explicit, soon occurs again. The voice of Georges is introduced by means of this precision; (the narration has meanwhile slipped from the first-person to the third-person). Georges is lying in a hotel-bed with de Reixach's widow Corinne and recalling his experiences from the war:

les innombrables noirs et lugubres chevaux hochant
balançant tristement leurs têtes, se succédant défilant
sans fin dans le crépitement monotone des sabots (il
dormait pas, se tenant parfaitement immobile ....
une femme à côté de lui .... et lui se rappelant: ....
(pp.42-43)

The precision of 'énonciation' again has the effect of transforming the preceding moment of narration into another episode in the fiction while positing a new 'énonciation', that of the impersonal third-person narrator. As we saw in the previous example, the precision of the moment of 'énonciation' makes it ambiguous as to whose voice is responsible for the preceding narration.

These precisions set up a number of levels of 'énonciation' in the narration. This number is not limitless; the narration
is not continually interrupted by the precision of a new position of 'énonciation', so propelling the moment of narration into a never-ending regression towards the (mythical) present of writing. In fact, only one more level of 'énonciation' is added to those mentioned above: the voice of Georges in the prison-camp (summer 1940 - autumn 1941).22 Hence a schema of the levels of 'énonciation' including the (approximate) time of their delivery (and taking into consideration the fact that each 'énonciation' is duplicated since the narration switches between the first and third person) can be represented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First-person</th>
<th>Third-person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Undefined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>position of memory</td>
<td>position of narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Hotel - room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>Prison - camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Prison - train</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each precision of 'énonciation' makes the preceding narration ambiguous. Furthermore, the narration following the precisions is no less ambiguous due to what can be termed abandonments of a level of 'énonciation', according to which different levels of 'énonciation' merge into one another or into an indeterminate area between several levels. Immediately prior to the first precision in La Route des Flandres is a description of the scene at the horse-race before the war. The precision itself introduces the episode in the prison train four years later and the introduction of the second level of 'énonciation'. The prison train episode continues only briefly before the narration switches back to the episode of the horse-race. Confusion is caused here not so much by the fact that the second 'énonciation' resumes the same description as the first 'énonciation' (if indeed it was the first 'énonciation'), but that it should use virtually
the same 'énoncés':

'Enonciation' 1

Et il me semblait y être voir cela: des ombrages verts .... (p.19)

Precision introducing 'Enonciation' 2

"Ouais! ...." fit Blum (maintenant nous étions couchés dans le noir ....) (p.20)

'Enonciation' 2

il me semblait voir cela: se détachant sur le vert inimitable des opulents maronniers (p.22)

The resemblance between the first and second descriptions (pp. 19 and 22) suggests that the latter is the same 'énonciation' as the former; the fact that a new level of 'énonciation' has been posited by the precision appears to have been totally ignored. In fact, the precision in voice seems to have had no effect whatsoever either on what is being narrated or the manner and style of 'énonciation'.

It is this point which is the most striking feature of the switches in narration between first and third person. The first switch occurs at a moment in the narrative where the first person narrator is describing a dead horse by the side of the road in Flanders:

ce qui avait été un cheval (c'est-à-dire ce qu'on savait, ce qu'on pouvait reconnaître, identifier comme ayant été un cheval) n'était plus à présent qu'un vague tas de membres, de corne, de cuir et de poils collés, aux trois quarts recouvert de boue - Georges se demandant sans exactement se le demander...constatant seulement que .... le cheval ou plutôt ce qui avait été un cheval était presque entièrement recouvert .... d'une boue liquide et gris-beige (pp.26-27)

Despite the switch from first to third-person (thus introducing a new level of 'énonciation'), the narration continues to relate the same fictional episode and follow the same line of thought, even to the extent of using the same 'énoncés'. The level of 'énonciation' has changed but the mode of
narration continues as if no change has taken place.

Like the precisions of the moment of 'énonciation', the abandonments of a particular 'énonciation' are a characteristic feature of the narration (see also pp.48, 54, 70). The narration will continually drift away from an 'énonciation' which has been posited, or ignore the fact that a new level of 'énonciation' has been introduced at all; invariably the narration appears to be in an indeterminate area in which the voice could emanate from any one of three or four positions. The precisions of 'énonciation' (like the precisions of a specific focus) are not binding but function as temporary points from which to position the narration; they are no sooner mentioned than forgotten. Lanceraux has commented on these strange tricks of narration which 'attirent tel passage dans une énonciation .... l'abandonnent dans l'indéterminé .... ou le font basculer sur une autre .... provoquent des chevauchements (passages mixtes ....)'.

The different levels of 'énonciation' are in fact indistinguishable since each relates, repeats or reworks elements mentioned elsewhere. Resemblance and repetition of 'énoncés' cut across the different moments of 'énonciation': what Georges relates to Blum in the prison-train will then be related again in the camp and again in the hotel-room so that there is often no way of distinguishing from which of these levels the narration comes. Here the confusion in voice stems from the fact that the same 'énoncés' are related from various positions in time and space; a continuity in what is narrated is coupled with a discontinuity in the situation of the 'énonciation'. Bernard Pingaud was one of the first critics to observe this aspect of the narration:
il est impossible de déterminer à quel moment le récit se situe par rapport aux faits .... Ce récit .... n'est pas vraiment situé. Il n'a pas un foyer, mais plusieurs, et semble amalgamer aux moins trois discours différents: un qui serait tenu pendant l'exode, un autre qui daterait de la captivité, un troisième qui se déroulerait après la guerre. 

My schema of levels of 'énonciation' shows that there are in fact more than three different 'discours'. Pingaud does not take into consideration the fact that each of these 'discours' is duplicated by appearing in both a first and third-person narration. However, this does not invalidate Pingaud's remarks on the way in which the technique sets up an unstable relationship between 'énoncé' and 'énonciation'. The shifting 'discours' of La Route des Flandres join with the ambiguous temporal relations between narration and event to confuse the position of the narrator. 

The confusion of levels of 'énonciation' is a general feature of the novels of the 1960's for we find the same ambiguities in Le Palace and Histoire as in La Route des Flandres. In Le Palace the introduction of the man who returns to Barcelona 'quinze ans plus tard' (p.16) has the same effect as the first precision in the earlier text: it introduces a second 'énonciation' (that of an impersonal narrator) and renders problematic the moment of 'énonciation' of the opening narration. The text is subsequently narrated either by the man who remembers his past during the Civil War or by the impersonal narrator or, more correctly, by a condensation of these two 'discours'. There is, in effect, no difference between the 'énonciation' of the former (that is, the position of memory) and the voice of the narrator since they are both characterized by the same mode of 'discours'. Only those parts of the text which concern the return of the man to the city can be said, with any assurance, to be narrated by the imper-
sonal narrator. Indeed even this is made problematic, firstly due to the fact that these sequences are narrated in exactly the same way as those concerning 'l'étudiant' in 1936, secondly because much of the description resembles that of the earlier episode (the eternal presence of the pigeons in the city and the trams which cross the square, for example). The similarity in narration and description makes it almost impossible to distinguish between the two temporal levels. The second appearance of the man who returns is virtually obscured by the way in which the narration slips (in mid-sentence and with no change in the manner of discourse) from an indeterminate enunciative position (a condensation of 'le remémoré' and the impersonal narration) to the instance of the narrator (p. 98); similarly, the moment at which that indeterminate voice resumes its narration of events of 1936 is impossible to place (see p. 105).

In Histoire a similar schema of levels of 'énonciation' is established: the hero/narrator who returns to his ancestral house is equivalent to the man who returns to Barcelona in Le Palace in that his memory of past events is a second level of 'énonciation' distinct from, yet often condensed with, that of the present of the narrator. The confusion in the situation of the voice is heightened by a proliferation of resemblances between the events which constitute the hero's day in and around the ancestral house and the diverse episodes of his past. Coupled with this is a fragmented narration which offers blocks of description with little or no indication of time or situation of the 'énoncé' and thus no means of situating the moment of 'énonciation':

parmi les débris qui brûlaient encore
femmes échevelées courant en tous sens
cherchant leurs enfants déchirant leurs
seins sous la robe couleur de
fruits de pêches vert rose rouge velouté
vert de nouveau rouges se dégradant
dans le jaune et leurs pointes pâles
exsangues aussi, son nom même
pas encore gravé sur une dalle (p.120)

The narration of *Histoire* is closer to a 'stream of consciousness' technique than the other texts in that the distinctions between the levels of 'énonciation' become less clear. Elements from diverse moments in time are absorbed within what appears to be the continuity of a single discourse. The path from *La Route des Flandres* to *Histoire* is thus characterized by a progressive 'presentification' of a past structure and a movement towards a conjoining of the moment(s) of memory with the narrator's present of narration.

The sliding of the situation of voice in all three texts clearly parallels the anomalies of perspective. The 'glissements' between levels of 'énonciation' and the condensations of different 'discours' challenge the notion that one cannot narrate from two temporal positions with two voices at the same time, just as the sliding of focuses disrupts the inner/outer distinction. In this respect, Simon's narration marks an interesting development in modernist technique. It is not merely a question of the familiar technique of a narrative (or even a series of narratives) within a narrative, as for example in James's *Turn of the Screw*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* or Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*. In these novels the question 'qui parle?' is not thrown into doubt by the narratives of the governess, Marlowe and Édouard respectively; in other words, a hierarchy composed of an outer and inner narration (or main and secondary narrative) is clearly maintained and does not confuse the issue of voice at any time. However, in Simon's narration the confusion of temporal
relations between 'énonciation' and 'énoncé' and between the levels of 'énonciation' disturbs this hierarchy by rendering ambiguous the relations between narration and event. The situation of 'énonciation' is fluid in Simon's novels of the 1960's; consequently, these texts challenge our ability to locate the narrator.

(iii) Concepts of Voice

If the location of the source of the narration in *La Route des Flandres*, *Le Palace* and *Histoire* is highly problematic, how then is it possible to talk about the narrator of these texts? Whose voice is this that delivers these long, digressive monologues?

As with the problem of perspective, the fundamental issues have often been elided in critical works on Simon's narration. Fitch's argument is again indicative of a certain tendency to gloss over the troubling aspects of the narration. Analysing the switches between the first and third-person narrations in *La Route des Flandres*, he points out that the narrative cannot be 'une histoire dans une histoire dont les passages à la première personne, avec lesquels débute et se termine le roman, fourniraient le cadre' since the first-person narration itself is often introduced in quotation marks within the third-person narration. This interpretation is also discounted by the fact that there is no difference between the two types of narration; each narrates the same events using the same type of discourse. Thus the changes in person do not correspond to changes in the fiction:

*l'alternance entre les deux modes de narration ne correspond manifestement pas aux transitions entre les différentes époques du passé où l'action a lieu; les épisodes qui se passent dans le wagon du train transportant les prisonniers de guerre, sur le champ de course ou sur le champ de bataille sont narrés*
This is certainly an important insight into a fundamental ambiguity of the narration. However, Fitch goes on to explain the ambiguity in terms of a psychological interpretation necessary, he maintains, 'pour les besoins de la vraisemblance': the first-person narration represents Georges's inner view while the third-person narration is his reflection on himself from outside in the form of memories. Fitch therefore contradicts his original point concerning the dual nature of voice by suggesting that there is, after all, only one voice, which is that of Georges. Ironically, however, it is precisely 'la vraisemblance' (to which Fitch appeals in support of his theory) that is disturbed by the continuity of a single discourse which traverses two distinct levels of énonciation. Fitch's original point is indeed valid and should in fact forestall the conclusion that Georges is the sole narrator in the text.

Merleau-Ponty has also commented on the confusing switches between a first and third-person narration in La Route des Flandres: he detects, in Simon's mode of narration and that of Michel Butor, an affinity with his concept of the 'self':

Le langage de Claude Simon, Butor (le participe présent, les phrases interrompues, le vocatif de La Modification) signifie un certain rapport à soi.
On ne lit plus Je ou il.
Il naît des personnes intermédiaires, une 1re - 2e personne des modes intermédiaires (participe présent à valeur de "simultanéité").

Merleau-Ponty's interpretation is clearly situated within a phenomenological reading of the text: the switches between 'je' and 'il' establish an intermediary reality which disrupts the classic duality of subject and object. Like Deguy's reading of the eye of the narration in Le Palace, this type
of interpretation views the text as a direct representation of man’s existence in the world; in this respect, it succumbs to the mimetic illusion and consequently fails to help us decipher the nature of the voice in the text.

More commonly, Simon's narration (like that of Proust) has been interpreted as the expression of 'la structure fondamentale de la mémoire'. The use of the concept of memory is perhaps a convenient way of accounting for the confusion of events in time since the past can be seen as ever-present within what Seylaz calls 'l'éternel présent du souvenir'. Yet the encapsulation of the narration within a single, organic entity like 'memory' elides the fundamental ambiguities suggested by the different levels of 'énonciation'; this is like Fitch's interpretation of La Route des Flandres. For example, Vivian Mercier's comment that everything in La Route des Flandres 'revolves about the fixed point represented by the dead horse but is remembered by one man from a fixed point in time' ignores the unstable relations between 'énonciation' and 'énoncé' in this text. If we consider Mercier's statement, we are led to wonder whose memory this is. Is it that of the first-person narrator? If so how do we account for the narration in the third-person? Is it that of Georges? If so how do we account for the fact that an impersonal narrator distanced from Georges narrates about him from outside? Similar questions are also relevant to the narration of Le Palace. The narration here cannot be simply the memory of the man who returns to Barcelona since part of the narration is constituted by a voice which speaks about him from a position that is evidently not his own. To maintain that the source of 'énonciation' is that of a memory
is to ignore the fact that there are various different levels of 'énonciation' in these texts.

However, it is not difficult to see how this mistake can be made. I have already shown how the levels of 'énonciation' become confused and condensed due to the fact that they are all characterized by the same 'discours': the 'discours' of the impersonal narrator in *La Route des Flandres* is no different to the memories of Georges or of the first-person narrator; the 'discours' of the impersonal narrator in *Le Palace* is exactly the same as the memory/‘énonciation’ of the man who returns to Barcelona; the 'discours' of the narrator and the hero who remembers his past in *Histoire* are evidently one and the same narration. The same 'énoncés' are uttered by the different narrators and the same manner of 'énonciation' is used to utter them. Indeed, were it not for those troubling precisions of a new moment of 'énonciation' the reader would be unaware of any change in voice.

The fact is that no sooner is a new 'discours' specified than it is swallowed up in the single, continuous current of narration. This should not lead us to conclude that everything is subsumed within the voice of a single narrator or 'l'éternel présent du souvenir' but within the eternal present of the discourse of a narration in the process of elaboration. Or if the concept of memory is indeed to be maintained it must be re-defined, for it is no longer the classic, psychological mechanism for the reconstitution of the past but a present discourse which constitutes a text. A closer look at these memories and their relationship to the narration illustrates the transformation of the concept of memory in Simon's novels of the 1960's and reveals the real voice of these texts.
2.3 'UN DISCOURS TÂTONNANT'

In the previous chapter I showed how each vision in the text is in fact a narration functioning through a play with language. Certain features of a 'discours' in Simon's novels are therefore already well-known. Let us turn to another passage from La Route des Flandres to look at other signs of this 'discours' and obtain a clearer idea of the particular voice which traverses the text. Here the first-person narrator remembers the fateful ride through Flanders and tries to understand de Reixach's reasons for (apparently) leading his squadron into an obvious ambush:

puis dès que nous fûmes en selle repartant poussant son cheval d'une imperceptible pression des jambes, le cheval se remettant semblait-il en marche de lui-même et toujours au pas naturellement sans précipitation sans lenteur non plus et pas nonchalament non plus: simplement au pas. Je suppose qu'il n'aurait pas pris le trot pour tout l'or du monde, qu'il n'aurait pas donné un coup d'éperon pas donné sa place pour un boulet de canon c'est le cas de le dire il y a comme ça des expressions qui tombent à pic: au pas donc, cela devait faire aussi partie de ce qu'il avait commencé quatre ans plus tôt et avait décidé, était en train de finir ou plutôt de chercher à terminer avançant tranquillement, impassible .... sur cette route qui était quelque chose comme un coupe-gorge, c'est-à-dire pas la guerre mais le meurtre .... les types tranquillement installés comme au tir forain derrière une haie ou un buisson et prenant tout leur temps pour vous ajuster, le vrai casse-pipe en somme (pp.15-16)

These are some of the features of the 'discours' at work in the passage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uncertainties</th>
<th>Rectifications</th>
<th>Repetitions</th>
<th>Summaries</th>
<th>Comparisons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>semblait-il; je suppose</td>
<td>toujours au pas .... simplement au pas; en train de finir ou plutôt de chercher à terminer; c'est-à-dire</td>
<td>au pas .... simplement au pas .... au pas donc; il n'aurait pas pris .... il n'aurait pas donné .... pas donné; sans lenteur non plus et pas nonchalament non plus</td>
<td>au pas donc; le vrai casse-pipe en somme</td>
<td>comme un coupe-gorge; comme au tir forain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here is a voice which tries to reason, branches off through digressions, recapitulates, is attentive to the thematic development of its own discourse and attentive to the sounds of words, a discourse which is thus elaborated slowly and uncertainly by means of linguistic prompts and circuitous routes. It is a writing which draws attention, as Lanceraux notes, 'non point sur la scène donc, mais le mouvement par lequel elle s'énonce', in other words, a voice is shown quite clearly in the process of articulation. Hence a proliferation (here and elsewhere) of those features of 'énonciation' which allow the 'discours' to progress 'à tâtons': peut-être, donc, il me semble, sans doute, je suppose, pour ainsi dire, je ne le crois pas je pense, j'imagine.

The disruption of conventional punctuation contributes to the enunciative aspect of the writing and the elaboration of a discourse. The infrequency of commas, for example, releases the writing from the constraints of a traditional form of expression and allows it, instead, to take on the form of a wandering, unbroken monologue. The long sentences also suggest the absence of breaks in 'énonciation', and the apparent digressions of long tracts of text within parentheses (and in parentheses within parentheses) are in fact not digressions at all (or at least no more so than the narration not in parentheses) but the continuation of the same 'discours'.

Even chapters fail to disrupt the continuity of the 'énonciation'. This is evident in Le Palace where the
discourse traverses the announcement of each new chapter, the last words of one chapter repeated at the beginning of the next as if no announcement has been made at all:

au milieu d'une cérémonie qui elle-même ressemblait à une mascarade, de sorte, dit-il ....

Récit de l'homme-fusil .... d'une cérémonie qui elle-même ressemblait à une mascarade, de sorte, dit-il, que, sans son accoutrement de Mardi Gras (pp.37-38)

Similarly, the frequent absence of quotation marks to introduce direct speech has the effect of absorbing all voices in the narrative into the continuous, uninterrupted flow of the discourse.

Simon's narration contains a fragmented system of punctuation which becomes progressively more haphazard between La Route des Flandres and Histoire. Like the precisions of perspective and voice, punctuation is arbitrary and does not regulate or contain the course of the 'discours'; the same 'énonciation' continues through the remnants of a conventional format.

As we have seen, the discourse is in fact directed according to an attention to facets of language. Pingaud notes that switches from one scene to another can be effected by 'un mot, comme en musique un simple accord suffit à marquer la modulation'. Jean Ricardou, especially, has indicated the way in which certain words operate a transition or 'aiguillage' in the narration; for example, the switch in La Route des Flandres from the death of de Reixach to a consideration of Corinne is operated by means of what Ricardou terms a 'métaphore structurelle': 'toute la lumière et la gloire sur l'acier virginal .... Seulement, vierge, il y a belle lurette qu'elle ne l'était plus' (p.13) At times
associations of sound and meaning produce composite blocks of words: 'moule poulpe pulpe vulve' (La Route des Flandres, p.41) or hybrid constructions which Lucien Dällenbach has called a 'chevauchement' of words: \(^37\) 'et peut-être non pas tant par amour que par force ou si l'on préfère par la force de l'amour ou si l'on préfère forcé par l'amour' (La Route des Flandres, p.12); 'j'avais l'habitude je veux dire j'habitaïs l'attitude je veux dire j'habitudais' (La Route des Flandres, p.311). At other times, the discourse abandons its continual rectifications and recapitulations and its attempt to reason and classify in order to indulge in complex puns: 'Bénissez-moi mon Père parce que j'ai beaucoup péché mais pas Pénis et moi compère garce que j'ai beaucoup léchée' (Histoire, p.45); 'Frascati .... frasques dans Frascati pas tellement différent de fiasque et Chianti un son .... Fiaschianti .... fracas aussi dans Frascati' (Histoire, p.335-336).

Simon's narration is the scene of a discourse which progresses through an exploration of language. Seen in this perspective, the conventional nature of memory is challenged and transformed; as I have suggested, it is no longer the mechanism for the reproduction of past events but the present discourse of a narration in the process of producing those events. Under these conditions we might well pose the question that Hesbois asks in connection with L'Herbe: 'Comment distinguer .... la part du souvenir et celle de l'imagination'. \(^38\) There is, indeed, no distinction between the two (that is, between the 'real' and the 'fictional') since they are both subject to the demands of the writing. Deguy had already commented on this equivalence in Le Palace: 'la différence entre perception au présent et image souvenir est estompée dans la vie-rêvée; les "pouvant s'imaginer", les "pouvant
voir" et les "pouvoir revoir" sont sur le même plan. So, for example, the life of the ancestor 'imagined' by Georges and Blum (see La Route des Flandres, pp.80-88 and 188-200) is narrated in exactly the same manner as Georges's 'real' experiences in the war; similarly, there is no distinction in mode of narration in Histoire between the narrator's description of his Uncle Charles as a young man ('imagined') and episodes from his own past life ('real') (see especially pp.266-300). Whether real, imagined or reported via a witness at the scene (the horse-race in La Route des Flandres told via de Reixach's jockey Iglésia (pp.144-180), the political assassination in Le Palace told via the Italian (pp.38-81)), all scenes merge into a common narration.

Seylaz describes this narration as a 'récit en gestation' and observes that 'le narrateur est vraiment ici un romancier en action, grace auquel cette histoire prend forme pour nous'. Seylaz thus recognizes early on the real nature of the voice in Simon's texts: the 'discours' is, in effect, the 'discours' of the writer in the process of writing. Unfortunately he goes on to explain this phenomenon as a representation of the structure of memory, thus in a sense neutralizing his initial remarks by subsuming them within the framework of a psychological interpretation of the text. It is left to later commentators to draw the more interesting conclusions from Seylaz's initial remarks. Lanceraux, for example, has pointed out the peculiar nature of memory in La Route des Flandres: 'La dynamique du langage concurrence, plus exactement dirige le fonctionnement de la mémoire. On pourra définir en ce sens La Route des Flandres comme la métamorphose d'une mémoire en récit'; Stephen Heath has also commented on the equivalence of memory and the process of writing: 'The
space of memory or .... of writing composing itself in a ceaseless spiral round a handful of elements.'

Herein lies a major feature of the narration in Simon's novels of the 1960's: a representation of the past (in the form of a conventional structure of memory) is transformed into a present discourse which is that of a process of writing. In this sense these texts reveal the transformation of the 'histoire' mode into a 'discours' whose present is the moment of writing. The voice that speaks here is not that of a character or personalized narrator. I have shown how the same 'discours' characterizes the first and third-person narration alike and, indeed, encompasses all the voices and levels of 'énonciation' which are posited: the speaker is constantly changing but the speech remains the same. The question 'qui parle?' cannot be answered and it is precisely the fact that we are prevented from giving a simple answer to this question that leads us to conclude that it is the text itself that speaks. According to Genette, the modern tendency is to 'résorber le récit dans le discours présent de l'écrivain en train d'écrire'; in other words, to draw together the moment of 'énonciation' and the instant of writing. Simon's novels of the 1960's are therefore striving towards the presentation of a writing-in-process, an activity that Michel Foucault has called 'le discours lié à l'acte d'écrire, contemporain de son déroulement et enfermé en lui.'

In my analysis of Simon's narrative technique in the novels of the 1960's I have demonstrated how a 'discours'/narration is rendered visible. I have also suggested that the fictional episodes are shown to be produced and developed according to the peripeteias of this narration. Ricardou observes that, in
all texts, 'la narration gouverne entièrement la fiction',\textsuperscript{46} a fact which it is essential to bear in mind in any analysis of the narrative. This fact tends to be obscured in the classic realist text which, in aiming at clarity of representation, occults the mode of narration, whereas the 'nouveau roman' deliberately draws attention to its own act of narration to highlight the artifice of the text. Simon's novels are distinctive because of the way in which they reveal both faces of the narrative, that is the narration and the fiction. As Roubichou has commented (with reference to \textit{L'Herbe}) the text 'se caractérise par un double aspect: manifestation du travail de la narration et constitution d'une fiction';\textsuperscript{47} in other words, the text is constituted by a narration in the process of producing a fiction. This willingness to accentuate the two aspects of the narration, observed by Roubichou, is characteristic of \textit{La Route des Flandres}, \textit{Le Palace} and \textit{Histoire}. The particular manner in which the fictions are produced by the work of the narration in these novels is governed by certain fundamental devices. These fundamentals of the narration will be examined in the following two chapters.
3. FUNDAMENTALS OF NARRATION

3.1 METAPHOR AND METONYMY

In his paper 'La Fiction Mot à Mot', delivered at the conference on the 'Nouveau Roman' at Cerisy in 1971, Simon expresses many of the views on his practice of writing that he has consistently expressed over the years. On a fundamental level, he regards his novels as the adventure of a narrator in the process of exploring language. He explains that it is not by chance that one word triggers off another since all words are held together within the complex network of signification that is language: 'ce prodigieux pouvoir qu'ont les mots de rapprocher et de confronter ce qui, sans eux, resterait épars'. The narration is thus developed by means of pursuing certain of the associations opened up by words. Simon cites Michel Deguy who describes the poetic function as the effort 'à redoubler, réactiver délibérément, expressément, faire parler à nouveau les figures selon lesquelles la langue parle'.

For Simon, as for Deguy, these 'figures' can be reduced to the single trope of metaphor. The associations between words - or 'transports' as Simon calls them - are metaphorical in character because language itself is fundamentally metaphorical. Simon refers to the Proustian episode of the 'madeleine' to explain the nature of the 'transports' in his own texts:

la saveur d'une madeleine (c'est-à-dire la qualité d'une certaine sensation - inséparable ... de la saveur du mot madeleine : sa matière, sa morphologie molle, détrempée (ma .... eleine) dans laquelle s'enfonce, dure, la dent du d), transporte Proust, à travers le temps et l'espace, d'un lieu dans un autre.
Simon's assertion that all language is metaphorical is, of course, a controversial point. I do not propose to enumerate all the various arguments surrounding the question of metaphor, but will draw attention to Jonathan Culler's observation that there are essentially two ways of thinking about metaphor which he calls the 'via philosophica' and the 'via rhetorica':

Whereas the former makes metaphor a necessary and pervasive feature of all language, which, with its verbal detours, gestures obliquely towards a world of objects, the latter makes it a special use of language which can be isolated and studied against the background of a non-metaphorical use of language.

Simon's view corresponds to Culler's 'via philosophica'. The main failing of this view is that the term 'metaphor' is used in such a general fashion that it becomes virtually meaningless: it is simply a synonym for 'language'. Proponents of the 'via rhetorica' maintain that metaphor must be defined in a more restricted way if it is to maintain a specific meaning and should therefore be viewed as one rhetorical figure among many rather than the only figure of speech. For example, Genette has drawn attention to what he considers the unfortunate tendency to reduce all tropes to the single figure of metaphor and argues for an end to the 'reign' of metaphor and the resurrection of other figures of speech.5

Are the 'transports' which underlie Simon's narration fundamentally metaphorical in character as Simon suggests? The answer would seem to depend on one's definition of metaphor and, more generally, one's view of language. Let us look at specific instances of these 'transports' to situate the discussion more clearly. In the previous chapter I mentioned the 'aiguillage' in La Route des Flandres from the war to Corinna through a play on the word 'virginal' (p.13). There are many similar examples of a transition from one fictional
episode to another through a point of similarity: the word 'encre', applied metaphorically to the long dark night-ride prior to the death of de Reixach ('cette même nuit, cette même encre' (p.33)), produces a transition in the narration to a description of Georges's father whose scraps of writing, hidden in an old shirt, give the garment the appearance of an 'organe supplémentaire .... de prothèse omnipotente fonctionnant à l'encre et à la pâte de bois' (p.33); the switch back from this episode to the night-ride is accomplished through the similarity between the 'piétinement' of the father's voice in the autumn night and the 'ruissellement' of the rain in Flanders (pp.37-38); the darkness and silence of the barn in which Georges is lying after the night-ride, the erotic images conjured up by the girl who has shown the riders to their place of rest and the smell of the barn, subsequently produce an 'aiguillage' to Georges's night of passion with Corinne in the hotel-room (pp.41-42). This episode then gives way to the scene in the prison-train, the points of association between the two episodes being 'l'étouffante obscurité' and the weight on Georges's chest (p.97).

Each transition from one scene to another is operated through the perception of similarity (or similarities), in the same way that the taste of the 'madeleine' allows the association of two distinct spatio-temporal episodes in A la Recherche du Temps Perdu. These are evidently examples of an association through metaphor. Yet, on closer consideration, the technique appears more complex.

Ricardou's analysis of these transitions points up certain distinctive features of the metaphorical associations of episodes. I mentioned in the previous chapter that Ricardou introduces the term 'métaphore structurelle' to explain these
switches in the text; this is to distinguish Simon's technique from the traditional or 'expressive' use of metaphor. As we know, all metaphor draws together two disparate terms, A and B, through a common element. According to this process, A is always already present in the text, while B is always drawn from outside. For example, in the sentence 'He is a lion', 'he' (or A) is already present, the lion (or B) is drawn from outside to describe him. In Ricardou's words, 'la métaphore est toujours en quelque façon un exotisme assemblant un ici (le comparé) à un ailleurs (le comparant).'^ In the 'expressive' metaphor, 'le comparant' (B) is subordinated to the 'comparé' (A): it is no sooner mentioned than forgotten, its purpose not to trouble the linearity of the narration but, in Aristotle's phrase, to be 'the seasoning of the meat'. In 'la métaphore structurelle', on the other hand, 'le comparant' is taken literally: instead of disappearing, it gives rise to a new sequence of contiguous elements. Ricardou explains the process in the following way:

le triptyque comparé, point commun, comparant y subit une radicale métamorphose, en ceci que la comparaison s'abolit au profit du passage. L'ailleurs n'est plus ce fantôme léger translucide, qui voltigeait un instant autour de l'ici pour le définir avec élégance; il se propose immédiatement, lui-même comme un autre ici: l'expression le cède au voyage.

Ricardou thus uses the term 'métaphore structurelle' because the metaphor is of structural significance in the text since it determines a switch in the direction of the narration. These transitions by means of the perception of similarity fragment the linear development of the narration, causing a series of switches from one fictional episode to another. Linearity is therefore constantly threatened by the possibility of an introduction of a new sequence of contiguous elements triggered off by the initial association through similarity.
However, it is precisely here, in the notion of 'voyage', that Ricardou's metaphor can be re-identified as metonymy. In the examples of transitions cited above, the 'point commun' between two sequences certainly suggests a metaphorical association but the introduction (or re-introduction) of a different group of contiguously-related elements indicates that metonymy also plays a part in the process. The examples can therefore be represented in the following way:

(i) p.13

(ii) p.33

(iii) p.97
My initial analysis of this aspect of Simon's narration re-defines Simon's own assertion that the narration develops by means of metaphorical associations and also re-formulates Ricardou's 'métaphore structurelle'. This re-definition proposes a bi-polar mechanism underlying the work of the narration: metaphorical associations (that is, associations through similarity) work hand in hand with metonymic associations (that is, associations through contiguity). This formulation rejoins Genette's analysis of the way in which involuntary memory functions as a device in the narration in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. Genette challenges the conventional view that the episode of the 'madeleine' in Proust's novel is entirely metaphorical in character, showing instead the part played by metonymy in the resurrection of the past:

Si la "gouttelette" initiale de la mémoire involontaire est bien de l'ordre de la métaphore, l' "édifice du souvenir" est entièrement métonymique. Et, soit dit en passant, il y a tout autant de "miracle" dans la seconde forme d'association que dans la première et il faut un étrange parti pris "analogiste" pour que l'on se soit tant émerveillé sur l'une et si peu sur l'autre. Tordons donc un peu le bâton dans l'autre sens: le vrai miracle proustien, ce n'est pas qu'une madeleine trempée dans du thé ait le même goût qu'une autre madeleine trempée dans du thé, et en réveille le souvenir; c'est plutôt que cette seconde madeleine ressuscite avec elle une chambre, une maison, une ville entière, et que ce lieu ancien puisse, l'espace d'une seconde, "ébranler la solidité" du lieu actuel, forcer ses portes et faire vaciller ses meubles. Or, il se trouve que c'est ce miracle-là .... qui fonde, disons mieux, qui *constitue* l'"immense édifice" du récit proustien.

The recognition of the twofold character of language (metaphor and metonymy) is exemplified by Roman Jakobson and has been adopted by Roland Barthes, David Lodge and others. From Jakobson's original discovery of the two aspects of language there has developed the tendency to expand metaphor and metonymy into the two large principles of literary functioning and then to classify genres accordingly. Thus
drama, montage, dream symbolism, surrealism and romantic poetry are all metaphorical, film close-up, dream condensation and displacement, cubism and realist literature are metonymic.

The problem with this tendency is twofold. Firstly it has led to a confusion of classification. For example, Jakobson regards Freud's concepts of condensation and displacement in dream as metonymic whereas Jacques Lacan equates the former with metaphor and the latter with metonymy. Secondly, it has tended to be dualistic (metaphorical or metonymic) and far too general. For example, Jakobson's contention that poetry is fundamentally metaphorical and prose metonymic is overly reductive and tells us little about the two genres. Lodge takes Jakobson's classifications one step further when he suggests that 'at its highest level of generality at which we can apply the metaphor/metonymy distinction, literature itself is metaphoric and non-literature metonymic.' This view is as general in its own way as the views expressed by Simon and Deguy on the nature of language and does not help us understand the particular aspects of a specific piece of writing.

While proposing the notion that metaphor and metonymy are fundamental to the functioning of Simon's narration, I hope to avoid the reductions and generalisations that have recently characterized a use of these terms. I will also not maintain such a strict delineation between the two figures. Much of the confusion that has arisen from a use of the metaphor/metonymy distinction springs from the fact that the criteria for defining the two terms are not exclusive and often intersect. It is quite possible, and indeed common, for a word to be both a metaphor and a metonymy. For example, the word 'encre' in La Route des Flandres is a metaphor in terms of
its application to the long, dark night-ride in Flanders but a metonymy in terms of its association with Georges's father. It has been suggested by the 'groupe de Liège' that all metaphor is really a double synecdoche\textsuperscript{14} which, although perhaps reductive in another sense, points up the fact that all these figures are closely related.

The brief analysis of transitions in \textit{La Route des Flandres} will serve as an introduction to my approach to the question of the functioning of the narration. As I have shown, metaphor and metonymy work together to produce a sliding from one scene to another, 'la métonymie dans la métaphore'.\textsuperscript{15} This is indicative of the way in which the narration is subject to a ceaseless process of resemblance and contiguity of elements. I will now discuss this process in more detail and show how it functions to develop the fictional episodes of the text.

3.2. WORK OF THE NARRATION/ELABORATION OF THE FICTION

In 'La Fiction Mot à Mot' Simon explains that the narrator's exploration of language, which characterizes his novels, is not an indiscriminate pursuit of verbal associations. He makes a clear distinction between his own writing, which is structured, and the surrealists' 'écriture automatique' which is a haphazard journey through language since it 'n'aboutit qu'à une suite sans fin de parenthèses qui s'ouvrent les unes après les autres sans jamais se refermer.'\textsuperscript{16} According to Simon the surrealists' experiments are not the stuff of which novels are made since there is, inherent in the very principle of 'écriture automatique', a negation of the conscious forces of organisation and construction fundamental to the novel-form.
As I have suggested, the organisation of the narration in Simon's novels is produced by the process of metaphor/metonymy, that is, the recognition of the similarity and contiguity of textual elements. This process constitutes the particular practice of writing characteristic of the texts of the 1960's. A close examination of a single scene reveals the fundamental nature of this process.

The first description of the hotel-room in *La Route des Flandres* is indicative of the functioning of the narration. The darkness and the silence are the initial points of 'aiguillage' which operate the transition from the scene in the barn during the war to the night of passion after the war. However, these are not the only similarities between the two scenes. The ensuing development of the sequence in the hotel-room is also structured according to similarities with previous episodes, as is shown by a close reading of the text to this point. The following schema illustrates the way in which the description of the hotel-room is, in fact, an 'assemblage' of elements already mentioned elsewhere in the text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel-room scene: Georges and Corinne after the war (pp.42-43)</th>
<th>Elements from other episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>il ne dormait pas</td>
<td>il fut tout à fait réveillé (p.32), se réveillant tout à fait (p.38);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se tenait parfaitement immobile</td>
<td>ne pas pouvoir bouger un bras ou une jambe (p.20), personnages immobiles (p.30), se tenir le plus droit possible (p.30), immobilisés pour toujours (p.31);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et non pas une grange à présent, non pas la lourde et poussiéreuse senteur du foin desséché</td>
<td>crasse poussiéreuse (p.18), pou-droitement de poussière dorée (p.20), et la-bas c'était seule-ment l'odeur (p.28), un déhanchement plus sec (p.32), l'odeur âcre des bêtes, du foin (p.38);</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
de l'été aboli
mais cette impalpable, nostalgique et tenace exhalaison du temps lui-même, des années mortes,
et lui flottant dans les ténèbres
écoutant le silence, la nuit
la paix, l'imperceptible respiration
d'une femme à côté de lui,
et au bout d'un moment il distingua le second rectangle
dessiné par la glace d'armoire
reflétant l'obscur lumière de la fenêtre
l'armoire éternellement vide
des chambres d'hôtel avec, pendus à l'intérieur, deux ou trois cintres nus,

crépuscule d'été (p.33), l'été pourissant (p.37);
impalpable poudroyement (p.26), une odeur âcre, acide, s'en exhalant (p.41), le temps n'existe pas (p.20), le cheminement même du temps (p.30), le temps lui-même (p.31), la nuit des temps (p.37);
les ténèbres de la nuit (p.9), l'obscurité les ténèbres (p.20), cette sorte de vase marron dans laquelle j'étais pour ainsi dire englué (p.26), l'espèce de vase sombre dans laquelle il lui semblait se mouvoir (p.30), invisible dans le noir (p.30), les ténèbres froides (p.31), résonnant dans les ténèbres (p.33), les ténèbres froides (p.37), tout armé des ténèbres (p.36);
une sorte de silence (p.30), la sensation d'un silence différent (p.32), rien n'est pire que le silence (p.35), le silence refluant alors (p.36);
le bruit des respirations (p.20), l'imperceptible grésillement (p.30);
on pas une femme mais l'idée même, le symbole de toute femme (p.41)
il ne pouvait plus distinguer (p.36), on ne distinguait plus rien (p.37);
armure se confondant (p.31), se tenir, glacé raide (p.30), un faible tintement de verre (p.32), la surface bombée des verres (p.34), une impalpable et craquelante couche de glace (p.39), silhouette obscure (p.12), l'éblouissante et opaque lumière (p.17), comme si la lumière elle-même était sale (p.18), noirs et blancs (p.29); Georges pouvait voir se refléter deux fois (p.34), la pénombre (p.34), le crépuscule (p.36);
les mains vides (p.17), une chose normale de vider tranquillement (p.22), vidant (p.22), le regard perdu dans le vide (p.34), un fauteuil vide (p.37), mots inutiles et vides (p.37);
bras délicats et nus (p.19);
l'armoire elle-même (avec son fronton triangulaire encadré de deux pommes de pin
faite de ce bois d'un jaune pisseux aux veinules rougeâtres

que l'on n'emploie semble-t-il que pour ces sortes de meubles destinés à ne jamais rien renfermer sinon leur vide poussiéreux, poussiéreux cercueil des fantômes reflétés de milliers de corps nus, furieux et moites
de milliers d'étreintes
emmagasinées confondues dans les glauches profondeurs de la glace
inaltérable, virginale et froide -
et lui se rappelant aux trois quarts recouvert (p.26), sous un pommier (p.14), chassant le corps vers le pommeau (p.32), le pommeau (p.33), pommiers (p.40), leurs deux paquetages (p.41);
les taches rouges acajou ocre (p.9), rose, jaune (p.19), les murs de brique rouge .... le groom en jambières de cuir jaunes (p.21), manches cerclées jaune et rouge (p.23), jaune .... toque rouge (p.23), une de ces feuilles jaunes ou roses (p.24);

bas-côtés poussiéreux (p.26), les fantômes de cavaliers (p.30), des milliards d'années (p.31), jambes nus (p.22); cette épaisse moiteur cette puanteur s'exhalant des corps emmêlés (p.20), demi-nu .... jambes nus, pieds nus malgré le froid (p.39); milliers de chevaux (p.30), milliers d'insectes (p.31); se confondant (p.31); les épaisseurs transparentes et glauques (p.31); le lent glacier (p.32); la boue gelée (p.11), l'acier virginale (p.13), vierge (p.13); cherchant à me rappeler (p.20), je me rappelle (p.9)

The abundance of similarities between the hotel-room scene and previous episodes is clearly beyond the bounds of mere coincidence. The scene is constructed by means of a combination of elements mentioned elsewhere in the text and, in this sense, we can agree with Heath's comment on the nature of Simon's mode of narration:

It has been seen how the text offers a certain number of basic elements or discursive points and that these elements are in a metaphorical relation with each other and that it is this relation that the text relates. The main area of the metonymy of the text lies here .... The writing is composed in the combination in a horizontal chain of the metaphorical or paradigmatic elements.
However, although Heath's general observations are an accurate description of the functioning of the narration, his use of the term 'metonymy' is rather misleading. Heath follows Jakobson's conflation of the processes of combination, contexture and metonymy and hence uses metonymy in its widest possible sense, that is, as the 'combination in a horizontal chain' of certain elements. In this sense, any sentence or sequence of words can be described as metonymic, which is an overly-general definition of the term. Let us therefore distinguish between the combination of elements within the context of the hotel-room (which is a general definition of the process at work in the above description) and the metonymic relationships which are an integral part of this process.

The metonymy of the text is to be found in the way in which elements which are contiguously related are re-introduced into the text because of this relationship. For example, the elements concerned with darkness, time, smell, silence and immobility - which form an important part of the description of the hotel-room - have previously been juxtaposed in connection with the scene in the prison-train (see p.20). The mention of one recalls the others because they are held together through their metonymic links. In other words, the connections established between elements by means of their contact are not forgotten but re-awakened each time an element is mentioned. The sliding of meaning from one element to another through contact is a fundamental aspect of the narration and one which is entirely metonymic in character.

Simon himself draws attention to the fact that all elements are present even if they are not in the foreground of the text:
I have pointed out that Simon sees this network of associations binding together the text as metaphorical. Yet the nature of the association might be metaphorical or metonymic depending on whether the relationship between the elements is founded on similarity or contiguity - or both (as is most common) in which case an element will be part of a metaphorical chain and a metonymic chain.

Considering the hotel-room in toto, we are bound to agree that it is in a metaphorical relationship with the scene in the prison-train, the night-ride in Flanders and the night in the barn due to the number of resemblances between these scenes. For example, the act of copulation refers metaphorically to the ceaseless 'chevauchement' in Flanders and, later, to the horse-race before the war, the darkness and silence recall diverse scenes from the war, the 'fantômes reflétés' in the mirror of the wardrobe recall the riders in Flanders and so on. Yet metonymic relationships are also responsible for the effect described by Simon above. For example, certain colours which appear in diverse contexts are displaced from one element to another and therefore unite (in a metonymic chain) the disparate objects with which they are contiguously related. The red and yellow of the empty wardrobe in the hotel-room have already been seen in connection with the horses during the war, the horses at the horse-race, Iglesia's jockey outfit and Corinne's dress and therefore recall these diverse objects/characters. The colours (and, indeed, many of the other elements which constitute
the description of the hotel-room) are capable of establishing metonymic chains in the text in the above manner and fundamental in producing the metaphorical relationships between scenes (since their numerous appearances in diverse contexts produce a resemblance of scenes). Once again we can see the importance of metonymy in the construction of the metaphor; 'la métonymie dans la métaphore' to repeat Genette's pertinent description of the process in question.

Lucien Dällenbach has drawn attention to the similarity between the 'amalgame composite' in La Route des Flandres (of which the hotel-room scene is a perfect example) and the process of condensation in the composition of the dream as defined by Freud. The analogy is indeed striking. Freud's explanation of the way in which a composite image is constructed in the dream by a condensation of diverse meanings (producing an overdetermination of meaning) is entirely applicable to the functioning of Simon's narration. However, Lacan's collapse of condensation into metaphor (to which Dällenbach refers) is (as I have mentioned) an erroneous conflation of terms which distorts Freud's original description of condensation. With reference to Simon's narration, a condensation of meaning within a single space is produced by a mixture of metaphor and metonymy (as described above).

Heath also points out the similarities between Simon's narration and the constitution of the dream in terms of the way in which meaning is continually being transferred, displaced and condensed. Lacan's assertion that language is fundamental to the constitution of the dream-text has opened the way to the type of analogy made by Heath. Plays on words, metaphorical and metonymic associations, these are the features
of language exploited in dreams which account for their
density of meaning; they are also the mechanisms exploited
in Simon's exploration of language.

Passages of a more condensed nature than the description
of the hotel-room illustrate more clearly the play of lan-
guage which operates in the narration of La Route des Flandres.
For example, George's contemplation of the young girl who has
shown the weary riders to their place of rest functions
according to a ceaseless sliding and condensation of meaning:

non pas une femme mais l'idée même, le symbole de toute
femme, c'est à dire .... sommairement façonnés dans la
tendre argile deux cuisses un ventre deux seins la
ronde colonne du cou et au creux des replis comme au
centre de ces statues primitives et précises cette
bouche herbue cette chose au nom de bête, de terme
d'histoire naturelle - moule poulpe pulpe vulve -
faissant penser à ces organismes marins et carnivores
aveugles mais pourvus de lèvres, de cils: l'orifice
de cette matrice le creuset originel qu'il lui semblait
voir dans les entrailles du monde, semblable à ces
moules dans lesquels enfant il avait à estamper soldats
et cavaliers, rien qu'un peu de pâte pressée du pouce,
l'innombrable engeance sortie toute armée et casquée
selon la légende (pp.41-42)

The narration journeys from one motif to another (each
composed of a sequence of contiguous elements) through a number
of shared elements:

woman - cuisse, ventre, seins, cou, bouche herbue, moule
marine organisms - bouche herbue, moule, bête, poulpe,
carnivores aveugles, orifice
gaping hole - orifice, creuset originel, moule
war - moule, soldats, cavaliers

The word 'moule' is evidently the fulcrum here since, within
it, a number of meanings are condensed: on the level of the
'signifié', the female sexual organs, a mussel, a matrix and
a mold; on the level of the 'signifiant', 'naturelle',
poulpe', 'pulpe', 'vulve', 'cils', 'originel'.

However, numerous similarities on the level of the 'signifié'
and 'signifiant' direct the gradual transformation and development of Georges's contemplation. The passage is a play of language in which associations established between words are not forgotten but constantly re-worked to produce an intricate network of meanings. The shaping of the clay to form the image of woman is recalled by the mould from which the soldiers are produced, thus establishing another link between 'woman' and 'soldier' (in addition to which is the possible pun on the word 'colonne' which refers explicitly to the woman's neck and implicitly to a body of soldiers); the alliteration of 'peu de pâte pressée de pouce' echoes that of 'poulpe pulpe' which embodies a further link between the soldiers and the marine organisms; the chain of paradigmatically-related elements 'creux-centre-bouche-orifice' cuts across all sequences, and so on.

The construction of this passage and that of the hotel-room is indicative of the functioning of the narration in all three texts of the 1960's. The play of language guides the development of the narration and, consequently, directs the production of the fictional episodes. In the hotel-room scene, the play of light and shade, the silence, the emptiness, the colours of the wardrobe, even the two pine-cones on the façade of the wardrobe are produced not by the writer's attempt to adhere to the 'vraisemblable' but by means of a particular textual practice. I will now examine this practice in more detail through an analysis of a passage from Le Palace.

3.3. THE WOMAN AT THE WINDOW

The following passage is taken from the end of the fourth section of Le Palace entitled 'Dans la Nuit'. During a sleepless night, 'l'étudiant' approaches his bedroom window to
investigate the whereabouts of a series of noises from outside and sees the sudden appearance of a light in what he takes to be the American's room: 25

et quand il regarda de nouveau, la voyant alors, juste une fraction de seconde: nue, le bras levé pour tirer complètement le rideau déjà aux trois quarts fermé, ne laissant plus à ce moment sur la gauche de la fenêtre qu'une étroite bande, de sorte qu'elle, ou plutôt le corps nu (il n'eut pas le temps de distinguer le visage) n'était pas entièrement visible, étroitement encadré entre les deux verticales et même en partie masqué par le côté gauche du rectangle de la fenêtre qui partageait exactement en deux la cuisse droite dans le sens de la hauteur, passait au haut de l'aine, puis sur le bord du ventre et un peu sur la gauche de la pointe du sein droit (un disque assez large, brun) toute cette partie du corps absolument à l'aplomb, dans la dernière phase du pas qui l'avait porté jusqu'à la fenêtre, la cuisse gauche encore un peu à la traîne, en arrière et légèrement écartée, ce qui faisait que l'intervalle entre les deux cuisses dessinait un mince fer de lance dont la pointe supportait le sombre et broussailleux triangle du pubis (les deux pointes opposées), comme si à partir d'en bas et étayé par les deux verticales (le côté gauche de l'embrasure et le bord du rideau) s'élevait une sorte de construction, d'architecture, un de ces baroques échafaudages d'objets disparates superposés (une canne, un entonnoir, un plateau, un pot de fleurs avec la plante et toutes ses feuilles, deux ballons) qui semblaient tenir sans pesanteur sur le doigt de l'équilibriste: le fer de lance, le pubis noir et évasé, et au-dessus, supporté par le côté horizontal du triangle de poils, le croissant de chair bombée et blanche qui sert d'entablement au nombril comme un fruit solitaire, une simple cerise dans un compotier, et à partir du nombril ce léger sillon d'ombre, un axe branchu, allant s'estompant à mesure qu'il monte et, de part et d'autre, deux lourdes boules symétriques, le corps éclairé de côté, divisé en deux zones mouvantes d'ombre et de lumière, l'ombre marron clair condensée presque tout entière à gauche, dans un vaste à-plat délimité sur le corps par une ligne sinueuse et floue au-delà de laquelle semblaient détachés dans la partie éclairée comme des fragments, des îles flottantes (sur la partie droite du sein, l'aine, une moitié de la cuisse gauche) tandis que des taches plus sombres et nettes, bitumeuses, marquaient le pubis, le nombril, les bouts des seins et l'aisselle touffue dévoilée par le bras levé (pp.142-144)

Removed from its context, this passage appears to be little more than a detailed description of a naked woman in the process of closing a curtain. Generally speaking, it manifests a fairly literal use of language. Apart from the metaphor
'fer de lance' which refers to the space in between the woman's legs, and three comparisons - the first comparing the shapes of the woman's body to diverse objects balanced on the finger of an 'équilibriste', the second comparing her navel to a fruit, the third comparing other parts of her body to 'des îles flottantes' - the description progresses in a linear fashion, that is, through the contiguity of the elements described. The writing is apparently guided by a synecdochic rather than metaphoric use of language since the movement of the description is from part to whole of the scene and from whole to part.

On one level this reading is perfectly correct. Yet the writing does not function on the one level alone. In the same way that the hotel-room episode in La Route des Flandres is produced by means of an 'assemblage' of diverse textual elements, so this description is constructed in the same way through the work of metaphor/metonymy. The passage refers back to the complex network of associations already established in the text. An analysis of these associations reveals that the passage is not simply a detailed description of a woman at a window (as a first reading might suggest) but a demonstration of the work of the narration/writing in its construction of the fiction. My examination retraces certain of the associations established in the narration which are connected 'en filigrane .... derrière celui qui est immédiatement lisible' (as Simon says) and whose interweaving is productive of the passage.

(a) 'ne laissant plus à ce moment .... qui partageait exactement en deux la cuisse droite'

Images which appear within strictly delineated frames abound in Simon's texts. In La Route des Flandres there is
the painting of de Reixach's ancestor, in *Histoire* the numerous post-cards and photographs. In *Le Palace* posters, emblems on a cigar box, flags, paintings and newspaper headlines set up the motif of framed images, a motif to which our passage manifestly belongs by nature of its attention to the delineation of the frame.

The actual framing of the image is important in *Le Palace*. For example, a poster pinned to a wall in the office of 'le palace' represents 'un buste d'homme, nu, coupé un peu au-dessous du nombril par le bord inférieur du rectangle' (p.99). The revolutionary in the poster resembles the woman in the window in that he, too, is naked and that it is only his bust that is visible (from just below the navel upwards): the lower part of the warrior is cut off by a slogan - 'l'affiche ne portant d'autre légende sur une bande blanche en bas du rectangle, au-dessous du ventre creux, que le mot VENCEREMOS' (p.99) - while the lower part of the body of the woman is cut off by the bottom of the window-frame.

The resemblance between the warrior and the woman in the window can be traced back to the initial description of the office in 'le palace' in which a link is established between the themes of revolution and eroticism. The revolutionary posters and photographs adorning the walls of the office (one of which is the VENCEREMOS poster) have replaced the erotic pictures which hung there before the Civil War when the building was a luxury hotel:

un rectangle légèrement plus clair indiquait la place qu'avait occupée une de ces gravures elles aussi style Trianon et dont le titre traditionnellement en français (l'Escarpolette ou la Chemise Enlevée) figure au bas dans un cartouche entouré de guirlandes de roses (les mêmes - les mêmes fleurs, la même couleur - qui s'enroulent autour des cordons de la balançoire ou teinte le bouton d'un sein) (p.8)
The link between the eroticism of the past and the revolution of the present (suggested here by the substitution of images) is therefore recalled in our passage by its resemblance to these previous images.

The woman in the window also recalls other descriptions of characters within frames, in all of which the position of the framing and the point at which the body is cut is significant: Spaniards lean over their balconies to see the funeral procession for the murdered Santiago, 'la même grappe blanche .... de bustes agglutinés penchés en avant' (p.86); the American is pictured on the balcony outside the office, 'le corps légèrement arqué, l'appui de la balustrade lui arrivant à peine en haut des cuisses' (p.88); there is the image of a bus-conductor, 'le buste .... apparaissant à la fenêtre avant' (p.100) and the torn picture of Christ 'traversée (il n'en restait que la moitié supérieure) par la déchirure sinuose qui dessinait .... une découpurr en dents de scie' (p.107). As the underlined words clearly show, it is only the top half of the body which is visible in these images, the whole having been cut in two at a strategic point by the lower horizontal line of the frame.

Through the very persistence of the motif, the 'coupure' suggests the disappearance of the sexual organs and introduces, implicitly, the theme of castration. A reference to castration is made immediately prior to the description of the VENCEREMOS poster, during the hero's reflection on Spanish men: 'comme des hommes qui cacheraient quelque blessure invisible, secrète, que l'on aurait amputés de quelque chose d'essentiel, dont aucun homme ne peut supporter d'être privé: "Comme des eunuques" pensa-t-il; puis il pensa: "Je sais:
'Les armes' are clearly a substitute for the phallus, just as the VENCEREMOS poster (symbolizing the Revolution) has taken the place formerly occupied by the erotic paintings: in other words, sexuality has been replaced or killed by the revolution.

The theme of castration through the revolution is reinforced by other references to the weapon as phallus-substitute: the American is seen 'fourrant le revolver dans la ceinture de son pantalon' (p.13) in a description which prefigures the passage of the woman in the window ('rebout onnant son veston sur son nombril, s'approchant de la fenêtre' (p.13); the Italian is habitually seated with 'le fusil .... placé .... entre ses jambes écartées' (p.81); a further description of the VENCEREMOS poster shows the warrior holding not a rifle but a 'glaive brandi' and compares him to 'un de ces héros exemplaires, .... les chairs mystérieuses et lisses des jeunes gens qui vont mourir, avec leurs pendantes et glabres virilités, leurs ventres minces et leurs longues cuisses nues' (p.103); and at the end of the text the death of the Italian significantly takes place in a toilet. The very term 'homme-fusil' (used in reference to the Italian) reinforces - through its hybrid composition - the connection between masculinity and the weapon.

The intertwining themes of eroticism, castration and the revolution can all be located in our passage by means of the metaphorical chain of framed images which traverses the text. The woman's gesture as she grasps the curtain ('le bras levé') also recalls the description of the warrior in the poster - 'les bras levés .... l'une des mains, la droite, brandissant un fusil' (p.99) - while the use of the word 'encastré'
recalls (through a play on words) the theme of castration.

(b) 'la cuisse gauche .... le sombre et broussailleux triangle du pubis (les deux points opposées)'

The shape of the spear-head between the woman's legs is therefore another link in the chain of phallus-substitutes and, consequently, reinforces the theme of castration through the revolution. It is significant that the sexual act (described on numerous occasions in Simon's other texts) is never mentioned explicitly in Le Palace. This can be explained by the fact that the phallus is replaced by the weapon.

The shapes used here to describe the woman's body resemble those in a previous description of the statue of an explorer in Barcelona. The juxtaposition of the shape of the column of the statue and that formed by the pigeons which circle round it ("la colonne elle-même constituant pour ainsi dire l'axe de l'infatigable et frémissante ronde, du permanent tourbillon d'ailes suspendu dans l'air moite, dessinant comme un invisible cône renversée, la pointe en bas ....") (p.71) is clearly a metaphorical reference to the male and female sexual organs. The relationship between the woman and the statue is tightened by other resemblances on the level of the 'signifié': 'sauvages aux corps nus et admirables (les femmes aux cheveux liés en touffes, aux seins jumeaux .... aux pubis glabres et bombés de statues)', 'des arquebuses, des lances et des épées dégainées du groupe de soldats'. (p.69)

The explorer himself is described as deflowering virgin lands and subjecting foreign peoples to the rule of the gun, thus establishing a cross-connection of the themes of sexual conquest and military conquest. The connection between sexuality and power is important in the descriptions of 'le palace' since the hotel was formerly a type of 'bordel de
luxe' (p.11) for its rich residents (see pp.8-15). The overthrow of the old order (symbolized by the requisition of the hotel by the communists) not only involves a political upheaval but also a substitution of the former appurtenances of that order (prostitution for the ruling class, the flamboyant and baroque style of life) with a new set of imperatives (the rule of the gun).

One of the fascinating features of Simon's novels of the 1960's is the way in which the different layers of temporality are superimposed one on top of the other so that the elements of each combine and interweave to produce a sort of collage which can itself be considered baroque in terms of its convolutions and intricate patterning. For example, the contrasting features of the two time sequences mentioned above (before and during the revolution) are fused in a third time sequence when the hero returns to Barcelona fifteen years later. The description of the bar in which he sits (trying to recall the past) is a collage of the ornate style of the pre-revolution and the military style of the revolution: 'comme si le bar, le restaurant tout entier avec ses cuivres, ses chromes étincelants, sa décoration pompéienne de femmes glycines et demi-nues en faïence vernissée et incomestible avait été conçu sur le modèle d'un tank ou d'un bateau de guerre' (p.17); the waiter is compared to 'un soldat à l'exercice' (p.17) and the other customer in the bar is a prostitute (see p.19).

In another description which is similarly constructed by an imbrication of diverse elements, the Italian's rifle (metaphor for the phallus) leaves a stain on a chair in the office of 'le palace': 'rien que le fusil tout seul, la tache sur le suave et somptueux tissu râpé jusqu'à la trame .... par
les douces et vénalesfesses de générations de putains offrant leur chair poudrée parmi les dorures épiscopales et les soies brochées'. (p.83) This description (and those above) indicate the way in which the development of the narration by means of an 'assemblage' of previous elements produces a dense network of associations. Here we see a collage composed of elements connected specifically with the baroque past, the erotic and the revolution.

(c) 'le croissant de chair bombée et blanche qui sert d'entablement au nombril comme un fruit solitaire, une simple cerise dans un compotier'

The comparison between the navel and a fruit recalls an earlier description of food exposed in the bar, 'déposée là .... une fois pour toutes, comme ces provisions apportées dans les tombeaux pour la nourriture des morts' (p.17). The associations between the woman's navel, a fruit and death consequently link up with the powerful image near the beginning of the text in which the American compares a map of the city to

une grille d'égout .... et si on la soulevait on trouverait par-dessous le cadavre d'un enfant mort-né enveloppé dans de vieux journaux .... pleins de titres aguichants. C'est ça qui pue tellement .... rien qu'une charogne, un foetus à trop grosse tête langé dans du papier imprimé, rien qu'un petit macrocéphale décédé avant terme parce que les docteurs n'étaient pas du même avis et jeté aux égouts dans un linceul de mots .... une puante momie enveloppé et étranglée par le cordon ombilical de kilomètres de phrases enthousiastes. (pp.12-13)

Hence the 'fruit solitaire' of the nude woman's navel refers obliquely to the rotting foetus which stands as a metaphor for the aborted revolution, strangled by its own umbilical cord. In the American's metaphorical description of the revolution, the umbilical cord is constituted by a string of words which suggests that the stillborn child (the stillborn revolution)
has ultimately been strangled by language. The broken chains attached to the hands of the young warrior in the poster 'fouettant l'air comme des serpents' (p.99) also refer metaphorically to the premature cutting of the cord. The VENCEREMOS slogan which adorns the poster thus takes on an insidious culpability in the aborted revolution since the word itself is responsible for the premature breaking of the chains.

This network of associations also traverses the description of the funeral procession which is the central episode of the text. The ceremony itself is a metaphor for the stillborn revolution, while the words in the newspapers and those on the banners held by the mourners - described as 'ces paroles s'échappant en lignes serpentine' (p.86) - are again implicated in the 'strangulation' of the revolution. The American tightens the knot between the themes of assassination and language through a play on words: "J'ai appris à assaisonner en toutes les langues! J'ai appris à asesinado en un tas de langues! Ah ah ah...." (p.96).

(d) 'comme si .... sur le doigt de l'équilibriste'
(e) 'à partir du nombril .... l'aisselle touffue dévoilée par le bras levé'

The two remaining parts of the description are predominantly concerned with the shapes and shades which constitute the woman's body. The comparison of the body (framed within 'les deux verticales') with a baroque construction establishes two levels of metaphorical association. Firstly, this 'architecture' recalls the baroque hotel itself - 'la fastueuse débauche de corniches, de volutes et de vagues petrifiées' (p.11), 'aux murs gris Trianon' (p.8) - which formerly contained 'deux chaises de salle à manger de ce faux style Renaissance allemand, à haut dossier de bois noir et sculpté présentant en
leur sommet une sorte d'écusson ovale légèrement bombé encadré de volutes imitant des feuilles de parchemin retroussés' (p.11), 'ces gravures style Trianon' (p.8) and so on.

On another level, the construction ('un de ces baroques échafaudages d'objets disparates superposés') is evidently a metaphorical representation of the mode of production of the whole description. I mentioned previously the way in which the combination and superimposition of diverse elements which constitute the work of the narration resemble the figurations of the baroque style. In this sense, the narration is the production of a fictional scene (the woman's body at the window) and a self-reflecting dramatisation of the manner in which this is achieved. Hence, the body of the woman can be read as the material body of the text since its construction is, fundamentally, the material process of the inter-relation and superimposition of verbal signs which constitutes the text.

Other descriptions can be read in a similar way: the fictional objects described dissolve into a textual space constituted by the work of the narration. For example, the hero's consideration of a cigar-box prior to his view of the woman at the window is a close scrutiny of its intricate designs and words which are, in effect, an 'assemblage' of previous textual elements. This description contains many of the elements that are subsequently to be incorporated in the description of the woman: the design includes the emblem 'FLOR DE TABACO' (p.134), 'des angelots joufflus et ailés dont le bas du corps se terminait en feuilles d'acanthe' (p.136), 'une bande horizontale où était représenté le soleil se levant sur une mer au milieu de deux îles .... entre
lesquels était dessinée une clef *flottant* sur les ... flots' (p.136) and so on.30

The ambiguity of these descriptions - referring on the one hand to fictional objects in the text and, on the other, to the dramatisation of the practice of writing which constitutes those fictional objects - can be applied more generally to the title of the novel. Roubichou has drawn attention to the double meanings of Simon's titles ('Nous pensons que la richesse des titres simoniens réside ... dans leur ambiguité'31) which refer both to the fictional and narrational levels of the narrative. Hence, 'le palace' refers both to the baroque hotel, whose transformations in time constitute the body of the fiction, and to the text, whose baroque construction constitutes the body of the narration.

The woman at the window is not only an example of but also a metaphor for the construction of the text (an architecture of signs). Consequently, we can also detect in the passage a metaphorical sign of the writing, that is, an oblique reference to the production of this architecture through the practice of writing, personified here by the 'équilibriste'. If it is, as Sykes has suggested, 'la découverte de l'objet scriptural qui est en passe de devenir capitale'32 (and numerous statements by Simon himself will verify this33), then the theme of materialisation as if by magic which runs through *Le Palace* (and to which the 'équilibriste' clearly belongs) is a constant metaphorical reference to the apparition of the text as text.

The first lines of the novel introduce the theme through the appearance of a pigeon on the balcony:

Et à ce moment, dans un brusque froissement d'air aussitôt figé (de sorte qu'il fut là - les ailes déjà
repliées, parfaitement immobile – sans qu'ils l'aient vu arriver, comme s'il avait non pas volé jusqu'au balcon mais était subitement apparu, matérialisé par la baguette d'un prestidigitateur) (p.7).

Another pigeon is later described in a similar way: 'et cette fois il parut se matérialiser à partir de l'air lui-même, violemment, bruyamment froissé ou plutôt fouetté, brassé, agité, comme par quelque opération magique' (p.168). The link between the 'opération magique' and the appearance of the pigeon gives the bird the metaphorical status of the process of production. Significantly, pigeons open and close the text and are forever to be seen swirling in groups above the city or strutting along the streets. The mention of the 'équilibriste' in our passage thus introduces the motif of the pigeon (through the metonymic links already established between these elements) and, consequently, the metaphorical sign of the material production of the text.

In fact, the pigeon is 'present' in the description of the woman at the window through other links as well. Pigeons invariably form a curtain in the sky: 'ils s'envolèrent brusquement, comme une nuée de plumes, l'air au-dessus de la place tout entier pointillé pendant quelques instants par un palpitant et neigeux rideau parcouru de remous' (p.18), 'comme un rideau mouvant' (p.19) and so on. The first description of the woman (several pages before our passage) provides an unmistakable reminder of the swirling curtain of pigeons:

"mais le rideau de la fenêtre d'en face était toujours tiré .... le sinuex contour du bras levé, du sein, de la hanche et de la cuisse ondulant, s'étirant, se dis-tendant sur l'étoffe brusquement tirée, fouettant l'air.... le bas du rideau renvoyé alors sur la droite par un mouvement de balancement .... puis le rideau revenant sur la gauche (p.118)."

The pigeons at the beginning and end of the text which settle on the balcony outside the office appear, like the
woman, in the frame of a window for a fraction of a second. Furthermore, the phrase 'voile d'ailes' which describes the pigeons is re-worked in reverse order of 'signifiants' in the final phrase of the description of the woman: 'voile d'ailes'/aisselle .... dévoilée'.

Hence we can make the following parallel: the uncovering ('dévoilée') of the curtain of birds through the act of writing reveals (or rather produces in an instant, like a magician) the memory of the hotel, the city, the past, the text which is Le Palace; similarly, the uncovering of the curtain by the raised arm (that of the writer?) reveals (also in an instant) the body of a woman which is itself a metaphor for the body of the text. The fact that the body is 'divisé en deux zones mouvantes d'ombre et de lumière' is a further metaphorical reminder of the material appearance of the text (the printed word on paper) by which the body itself is produced. The description of the woman at the window can therefore be seen as a miniature of the whole text: it is both the production of a fiction and a self-reflecting articulation of its own mode of production.

This analysis of the mode of production of a passage from Le Palace highlights the particular work of the narration which functions according to the process of an exploration of language through metaphor and metonymy. This process is fundamental to Simon's practice of writing in the texts of the 1960's in that it guides the development of the narration and the production of the fictional episodes. The voice that speaks in these texts can therefore be reinterpreted as a discourse structured according to a specific play of language. I will now examine the fundamentals of narration from a wider
perspective in order to consider more generally the manner in which this play of language shapes the narrative organisation of *La Route des Flandres, Le Palace* and *Histoire*. 
4.1 THEMATIC ORGANISATION

In an analysis of Bataille's *Histoire de l'oeil*, Roland Barthes points out certain features fundamental to the constitution of Bataille's erotic writing. Barthes locates two principal chains of metaphorically-related elements which traverse the text: the eye is linked to the egg, the bowl of milk and the bull's testicles (which figure in the erotic games played by the narrator and Simone) through the whiteness and roundness of each of these objects; tears and urine are two of the elements in the other motif of liquidity. The constant reappearance of these elements (and others which form part of the same motifs) results in the construction of a strongly thematic narrative which Barthes acknowledges as an important aspect of Bataille's text.

Yet Barthes is not primarily concerned with the motifs as such but the interaction between the motifs. The syntagma conventionally associated with one chain of elements are crossed with the other chain to produce an interchange between the two chains. This interchange is more profound than that produced in the expressions 'l'oeil pleure' or 'l'oeuf cassé s'écoule', which are commonly-accepted phrases and hence do not disrupt conventional parlance. The type of interchange that Barthes discovers in Bataille's narrative is that which produces the transformation of the expressions 'casser un oeuf' and 'crever un oeil' into 'casser un oeil' and 'crever un oeuf'; in this 'crossing' of syntagma, a disruption of conventional parlance is caused through the distinctness of the two terms habitually related contiguously to the eye and the egg (putting out' and 'breaking' respectively). Barthes
explains the process in the following way: 'Puisque la technique poétique consiste ici à défaitre les contiguïtés usuelles d'objets pour y substituer des rencontres nouvelles, limitées cependant par la persistance d'un seul thème à l'intérieur de chaque métaphore, il se produit une sorte de contagion générale des qualités et des actes'. He states that this transfer of meaning from one chain of metaphorically-related elements to another is essentially metonymic and thus concludes 'on reconnaîtra sans doute que l'érotisme de Bataille est essentiellement métonymique.'

It is not difficult to see the parallels between Bataille's technique (illuminated by Barthes) and the particular practice of writing that I have analysed in Simon's novels: both Bataille's text and those of Simon are constituted by a metonymic interchange of elements attached to diverse metaphorical chains to produce new associations (and hence a cross-connection of motifs). Simon does not disrupt well-known expressions (for example, 'casser un œuf', 'crever un oeil') in the same way as Bataille, yet the fundamental technique of the two writers is clearly similar.

Barthes's analysis of Bataille's novella not only allows us to make a parallel between the two writers; it also provides a framework for a discussion of the general organisation of Simon's texts. On the one hand, it gives an insight into a particular practice of thematic interweaving, on the other it describes the principal features in the constitution of an erotic discourse. I will consider these two aspects of the process of metaphor/metonymy in La Route des Flandres.

One of the most prominent motifs established in La Route des Flandres is that of the horse. The first twenty pages of the
text, in which scenes from the war intermingle with scenes from the horse-race before the war, contain a whole vocabulary of equine terminology which includes:

- trottant, bridons, chevauchant, étrivières, sous-gorge, l'écurie, aciers, astiquage, cavalier, cavalerie, éperon, en selle, au pas, statue équestre, le trot, bottes, cravache, les robes des chevaux, les cuirs fauves, chevalin, juments, concours hippiques, groom, jockeys, courses, bêtes graciles, bretelles et toques, pouliches, hanche, galoper, brassard, alezane, casaque, queue, sabots.

A second powerful motif established in these opening pages is that of disintegration which is constituted by:

- la boue, la pluie, s'écroulant, commençant à fondre, disparaissant, débâcle, désastre, décomposition, se dépliauter, se désagréger, s'en aller en morceaux en eau en rien, corrodait, se détachant, se décomposant, la rupture, se séparant, se rétractant, se disjoignant.

The interweaving of elements from these two motifs produces an important sequence during the war in which the cavalry squadron pass a dead horse, 'déjà à moitié absorbé semblait-il par la terre, comme si celle-ci avait déjà surnoisemment commencé à reprendre possession de ce qui était issu d'elle, n'avait vécu que par sa permission .... et était destiné à y retourner, s'y dissoudre de nouveau' (P.27). The convergence of the two motifs in this description highlights the return of the animal to the mineral world and consequently sets up a preoccupation with the organic which is to be of fundamental significance later in the text.

It is not only the horse that is implicated in this process of disintegration. The motif of metallic substances - already a prominent motif in the text through references to 'armes d'acier, le bruit des sabots sur la boue gelée, étrivières, la bride, sabre, un métal gris, la lame, cavalier de plomb, camion brûlé, l'acier, une voiture brûlée, fauteuils de fer' - is also connected with the above motifs in a sequence in which
the cavalry squadron on the long night-ride through Flanders ('animal et armure se confondant') appears to Georges to be in the process of disintegration, 'menaçant à chaque instant de s'en aller en morceaux' (p.31).

The horse itself is an element in a different paradigm, that of creatures, which is established through references to chiens, créatures infernales mythiques, loups, un animal une chienne pleine, bêtes et humains, poissons, des reptiles, simiesques, oiseaux de proie, reptiles, poulpe, mante religieuse, insectes, crustacés, sauterelles, mammouths.

The motif of the horse is also interwoven with the theme of sexuality: at the horse-race, society ladies 'avec leurs longs bras délicats et nus, .... un peu chevalin (non, pas des juments: des chevaux) fumant et parlant chasse ou concours hippiques comme des hommes' (p.19) become confused with the horses; Iglesia's position on his mount unmistakeably mimics the sexual act - 'les genoux remontés, accroupi sur cette alezane dorée à la démarche majestueuse, opulente, aux hanches opulentes' (p.24) - this description itself intercut by the explicitly erotic description of Corinne, 'comme si elle avait pris une de ces soyeuses lingeries et la lui avait jetée dessus, encore tiède, encore imprégnée de l'odeur de son corps .... sa vaporeuse et indécente robe rouge oscillant, se balançant au-dessus de ses jambes' (pp.23-25); the interminable 'chevauchement' of the night ride prefigures the night of passion in the hotel-room after the war, and so on.

Here we approach the thematic centre of the text. Ricardou remarks on the way in which the play of elements assemble to form 'des faisceaux érotiques'. To this one might add the observation that the erotic discourse is constituted by means of an interchange of those themes mentioned above (and others
which I have not mentioned). In other words, a transference of meaning is established in the text between the chains of paradigmatically-related elements producing a network of associations which is ultimately incorporated within an erotic perspective. A passage analysed in the previous chapter - in which Georges contemplates the milk-white body of the girl who has shown the exhausted riders to a barn - is indicative of this convergence of themes to form an erotic discourse. I drew attention to the way in which sea creatures and soldiers, the animal, the mineral and the vegetal combined according to their emergence from and disintegration into 'cette bouche herbue .... l'orifice de cette matrice le creuset originel'. The girl's body is an architecture which incorporates the major thematic strands of the text and can therefore be compared to the body of the woman at the window in Le Palace in terms of its mode of construction.

The striking feature of Simon's erotic discourse is its preoccupation with the organic. The disintegration of the animal and mineral worlds into the organic and the incorporation of these motifs within the erotic perspective introduces a vocabulary which we might term that of eroticised viscera. Georges's contemplation of the body of the young girl prefigures the further transmutations of matter into the organic which culminate in the more detailed erotic descriptions of the last part of the text.

The first appearance of the dead horse occurs at a point where Georges himself is (like the horse) as if sucked into a glutinous substance, 'cette sorte de vase marron' (p.26). The second description of the horse, which opens the second part of the text, elaborates on the association between the horse
and the man in terms of their mutual return to 'la terre originelle' ('de l'animal au minéral') and is again constituted by a vocabulary of the organic and visceral and the concept of the 'hole' from which all springs and to which all returns:

laissant voir l'intérieur béant, caverneux, de ce qui n'avait été qu'une simple forme entourant du vide .... il ne subsistait plus (comme les carapaces de ces bêtes vidées de leur chair ou ces objets rongés de l'intérieur par les termites) qu'une fragile et mince enveloppe de boue séchée, pas plus épaisse qu'une couche de peinture ni plus ni moins vide, ni plus ni moins insconsitante que ces bulles venant crever à la surface de la vase avec un bruit malpropre, laissant s'échapper, comme montée d'insondables et viscérales profondeurs, une faible exhalaison de pourriture. (p.106-107)

At the centre of the text is the metaphorical representation of 'le creuset originel' in the form of the 'anéantissement de l'escadron' and de Reixach's defeat in the horse-race, while the final stages of the second part of the text revert to the transmutation of animal matter. Now it is no longer the horse which is in the process of rejoining the mineral world but Georges, who is lying in a ditch after the ambush, 'son corps tout entier aplati, comme s'il s'efforçait de disparaître entre les lèvres du fossé, se fondre, se glisser, se faufiler tout entier par cette étroite fissure pour réintégrer la paisible matière (matrice) originelle' (p.244).

In the third part of the text this articulation of themes is transposed explicitly onto Georges's desperate exploration of the body of Corinne. Raymond Jean remarks on the presence here of 'un réseau connotatif, associatif, et métaphorique très ramifié et d'une singulière abondance, qui tend à rendre sensible, à inscrire littéralement dans le texte cette réalité organique des choses du sexe, en la nourissant d'images et de formes empruntées surtout au monde végétal et animal'. The density of meaning in these passages is produced through the
extraordinary condensation of the diverse thematic strands mentioned above, as the following extracts show:

couché là-bas dans l'herbe odorante du fossé dans ce sillon de la terre respirant humant sa noire et âcre senteur d'humus lappant son chose rose .... décovrant son corps immense et ténébreux, comme sous une chèvre nourricière .... je buvais sans fin sentant cette tige sortie de moi cet arbre poussant ramifiant ses racines à l'intérieur de mon ventre .... elle avait un goût de coquillage salé .... moule humide .... je boufferais les pissenlits par la racine bouffant là elle pisse suant nos corps emperlés exhalant cette âcre et forte odeur de racine, de mandragore, j'avais lu que les naufragés les ermites se nourrissaient de racines de glands et à un moment elle le prit d'abord entre ses lèvres puis tout entier dans sa bouche comme un enfant goulu c'était comme si nous nous buvions l'un l'autre .... (pp.256-259)/

The 'contagion générale des qualités' that Barthes locates in Bataille's narrative is equally noticeable in the writing here. The transfer of meaning to constitute a complex erotic discourse can be reinterpreted as the pursuit of desire, this pursuit to be understood as a journey through language. Raymond Jean has noted the relationship in La Route des Flandres between the course of desire and the journey of the writing: 'Le monde du sexe, par les dynamismes même qu'il met en jeu, est le terrain privilégié où se réalise cette rencontre du désir et de l'écriture, où le tissu organique et le tissu textuel se recouvrent (se confondent) le plus intimement.'

In Simon's text the course of desire/journey of the writing is characterized by a centripetal movement in which disparate fragments are connected, assembled and ultimately subsumed within the erotic discourse. The body, or more specifically 'le creuset originel', is the point at which opposites merge (animal, vegetal and mineral/creation and disintegration/life and death, and so on). Thematic organisation in the text
therefore ultimately tends towards a unity; this is indicative of the interweaving of themes in the novels of the 1960's and is of fundamental importance in the global organisation of these narratives.

4.2 SPATIAL ORGANISATION

There is a second major effect of the practice of writing: the continual switching through resemblance from one spatio-temporal context to another disrupts the linear progression of the narrative to establish an alignment of different scenes. As I have noted, each scene is like an individual collage composed of an 'assemblage' of diverse textual elements (the description of the hotel-room in La Route des Flandres, the woman at the window in Le Palace). On a higher level of integration, each scene is a syntagm in a chain of scenes which compose the fictional episodes. According to this process, the text is de-temporalised (in that it does not follow a chronology of sequences) and transformed into a spatial composition: the fictional episodes are produced by a combination of scenes (a montage effect) to compose a whole 'tableau'. Hence we can detect not only a tendency towards a thematisation but also a spatialisation of the text.

The intercutting of spatial fragments means that the text is the scene of the progressive and parallel development of a limited number of fictional episodes which 'expand' spatially through the addition of each new spatial syntagm. The work of metaphor/metonymy also means that these episodes become mirror-images of each other. If we consider the development of fictional episodes in La Route des Flandres we will see
how these features of the narration are significant in the organisation of the narrative.

We can ultimately locate five major fictional episodes in the text:

1. 1789: the life and death of de Reixach's ancestor.
2. 1935-1939: de Reixach, Corinne and the horse-race.
3. Spring 1940: the ride, ambush and its aftermath on 'la route des Flandres'.
4. 1940-1941: prisoners in the train and subsequently in the prison-camp.
5. 1946: the night spent by Georges and Corinne in the hotel-room.

In the first part of the novel the switching between scenes is frequent, transforming the text into an alignment of disordered fragments. The following plot of the appearance of spatial fragments in the narration (denoted by the letters A, B, C, etc.) and their situation within the fictional chronology (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) shows the number of switches and, correspondingly, the number of spatial fragments which constitute the first part of the text (which consists of ninety-two pages):
The graph shows that the progressive development of each episode is not even. For example, fragments from the episode in the hotel-room appear infrequently and at no great length; consequently, the episode is scarcely developed at all. On the other hand, the episode on 'la route' occupies by far the greater proportion of the first part of the text; twelve fragments in all and more than half the total number of pages. This imbalance in the development of episodes establishes a hierarchy of episodes: events on 'la route' constitute the main 'récit' and the other episodes become secondary 'récits'.

The separation of scenes belonging to the same fictional episode means that the development of the fiction is achieved through a combination of the scattered parts, which are not necessarily in chronological order. For example, the chronology in the narration of scenes which constitute the episode on 'la route' does not coincide with their fictional chronology: A is the scene in which de Reixach hands the hero a letter (winter 1939-40); E, H, J, L and V describe the long ride before the ambush; N and T are specifically concerned with the night before and the morning of the ambush; C is the description of the ambush itself (spring 1940); Y, Aa and Ee relate the immediate aftermath of the ambush.

The fact that each of these scenes is an individual 'assemblage' of textual elements not only detemporalizes the narrative but also has the effect of immobilizing the action so that the whole episode is a combination of static scenes: the letter scene and the ambush both contain a minimal progression in time; the ride appears not to progress at all
('le régiment tout entier semblait progresser sans avancer')
caught within the formlessness of a time 'sans commencement
ni fin ni repère' (p.30); the night in the barn and the
following morning are descriptions of sexuality; and, in the
final. sequences dealing with the aftermath of the ambush, the
frenzied flight of Georges and the wounded Iglesia is
immobilized, leaving them finally 'arrêtés, juchés sur leurs
échelons de chevaux au beau milieu de la route' (p.101). The
proliferation of description and the minimal development of
the action inverts a conventional balance between these two
aspects of the narration and produces the spatialisation of
the text.13

The same process functions to produce the secondary
'récits', whose static parts similarly combine to form a
whole 'tableau'. I have suggested that the nature of the
process of metaphor/metonymy causes the episodes to become
mirror-images of each other. The method of the narration
thus constitutes the perfect mechanism for the production
of the 'mise en abyme'. Gide's original coining of the phrase
to signify an internal reflection of the main subject of the
work (mirrors in the paintings of Memling, Quentin Metsys
and Velasquez's 'Las Meninas'14; the play within the play in
Hamlet, the reading to Roderick in Poe's The Fall of the House
of Usher and so on15) has recently been recalled and the
mechanism has received further theoretical elaboration, with
particular reference to the 'Nouveau Roman'.16 For example,
Ricardou suggests that this internal reflection ('le récit
dans le récit') has a dual function in the modern text: on
the one hand 'la mise en abyme tend à briser l'unité métonymi-
que du récit selon une stratification de récits métaphoriques'17
In other words, the 'mise en abyme' disrupts the linear narrative and proposes a new order of 'récits métaphoriques'. This stratification of the narrative is particularly evident in La Route des Flandres where a major interest lies not only in the production of a number of mutually resembling fictions but also in the way in which the resemblances allow a convergence and condensation of fictions. A consideration of the organisation of episodes in Parts ll and lll of the text shows how this condensation unites the disparate 'spaces' of the text.

In Part ll of La Route des Flandres the episodes are developed in the following way:

There are only seventeen spatial fragments in Part ll (which occupies 147 pages) compared to thirty-one in Part l (ninety-two pages). The cross-cutting from one scene to
another has become less frequent and each scene is more fully developed. The episode which relates events on 'la route' is again the dominant 'récit', although fragments concerning the captivity are also prominent. Though less frequent, the other episodes progress considerably in terms of their fictional development: the shadowy episodes in Part 1 (especially the hotel-room and the ancestor) are further developed in Part II, the story of the ancestor largely completed. The episodes concerning the horse-race, the ambush and the captivity (2, 3 and 4 respectively) all progress chronologically: fragments of the first of these lead on from the disparate scenes in Part 1 to the long description of the horse-race itself; scenes of the captivity relate the life of Georges, Blum and Iglésia in the prison-camp (that is, the aftermath of the scenes in Part 1 concerning the transportation to the camp); the majority of scenes which relate events on 'la route' (A, L, Q) concern the aftermath of the ambush, surrounding F (placed at the centre of the text) which is a more detailed description of the ambush itself.19

In Part III of the text, the balance between episodes is transformed to reveal an altered hierarchy:
The graph shows that the transitions from one scene to another have increased: there are sixteen fragments in only fifty-nine pages. It is also noticeable that three of the five episodes (1, 2 and 4) occupy a negligible position in the final stages of the text: the episodes of the ancestor, the horse-race and the captivity are confirmed as secondary 'récits' by their subordinate position in the text as a whole. Yet the episode concerning the sexual encounter between Georges and Corinne in the hotel-room has clearly emerged from being a secondary 'récit' to parallel events on 'la route' as a second main 'récit'. Furthermore, the fact that the climax to episodes 1, 2 and 3 appears in Part II (the suicide of the ancestor, the horse-race and the ambush respectively) while the climax to episode 5 (the night of passion) appears in Part III signifies a shift in the hierarchical stratification of episodes to produce a convergence towards the erotic setting (the hotel-room).
In his analysis of 'mise en abyme' in Simon's novels, Dallenbach draws attention to what he terms 'l'art du chevauchement' in *La Route des Flandres*\(^{20}\): instead of simply mirroring itself from within, the narrative is the scene of an amalgamation in composite form of its 'récits métaphoriques'. For example, de Reixach's ancestor becomes confused with de Reixach himself (see especially p.58) so that the 'stories' relating to the two characters, separated in time by 150 years, are condensed to form a single, composite image. As Dallenbach points out, this process recalls Freud's description of condensation in dreams by which diverse layers of meaning are superimposed, like a set of transparencies, to constitute a single image. In the previous chapter I referred to this analogy between the constitution of the dream-text and the mode of narration in Simon's texts in terms of the construction of each fictional scene. The above comments on the wider organisation of these scenes suggest that, on a higher level of integration, the same process of condensation occurs between the fictional episodes to produce a dominant image which is both composed of the diverse fictional episodes and refers back to the chain of disparate scenes which are 'present' behind the dominant image. The erotic setting achieves this dominance by supplanting the previous scenes and, consequently, subsuming them within its own context.

Hence, the thematic and spatial organisation of the narrative is characterized by a condensation of motifs and scenes within the dominant setting of the hotel-room. The disparate pieces in a fragmented text converge and combine to produce a
stability and coherence in the fiction. Dällenbach observes that the process of 'chevauchement' ultimately produces a 'macro-métaphore' which unifies the text. This reassembling of fragments in terms of a coherent thematic and spatial narrative structure in *La Route des Flandres* is indicative of the effects of Simon's practice of writing in the novels of the 1960's. An examination of the thematic and spatial organisation in *Histoire* illustrates the similarities in narrative structuring between the three novels of this period.

4.3 UNIFICATION OF THE TEXT

The same practice of metaphor/metonymy that constitutes the narration in *La Route des Flandres* and *Le Palace* operates in *Histoire*; but this later novel also represents a progression from the preceding texts in that the network of associations is denser, the play with language more far-reaching, the fragmentation of the linear narrative more marked. Ludovic Janvier has commented on the 'foudroyante discontinuité' of the narration and the vast patterning of words which constitutes the text:

> Le récit apparaît alors comme un mobile parcourant, dans une incessante révolution, les mêmes points, dans ce temps circulaire, ou plutôt en spirale .... que marque, lancinant, toujours actuel, le participe présent de l'invention narratrice .... Il est évident que ce ne sont pas d'abord les images, mais les mots, qui s'appellent, c'est le langage en corps et en système qui constitue le "fil" tenant et proposant l'ensemble.

Within the verbal labyrinth, which allows the narration to switch from one scene to another in bewildering fashion, the major episode, which relates the hero's day in and around his ancestral home, remains fragmentary. The disparate scenes from his past which crowd in upon and are often indistinguish-
able from his present, suggest a correspondence between the fragments of this day and events from the past and an explanation of the former through the latter. But the scattered pieces remain enigmatic and our reading, together with the narrator's quest, is thus prompted by the desire to reconstitute the associations which allow a unification of the fragments to form a coherent fictional structure.

Dülllenbach once again offers an insight into the way in which this coherence is achieved in the narrative. Adopting Ricardou's theory of 'mise en abyme' in the modern novel, and especially the notion that the 'mise en abyme' unifies what is disparate, he suggests that the secondary fictional episode mirrors what is absent in the main episode and hence provides the missing coherence to the narrative. Histoire therefore illustrates the new function of 'mise en abyme':

Sa vocation, dès lors, n'est plus de scinder ou de fragmenter une unité narrative homogène; elle consiste tout au contraire, à rassembler des morceaux diégé- tiquement épars, à les mettre en perspective les uns par rapport aux autres et à constituer le thème majeur d'une fiction qui, sans elle fût demeurée non axée sémantiquement.

The following analysis of Histoire expands on Dülllenbach's schematic description of the narrative organisation by showing how this coherent fiction is constructed progressively in the text (parallel to and mirroring the main episode of the narrator's day) through a combination of diverse thematic strands and their integration within certain spatial scenes.

Firstly, let us consider some of the prominent themes in the text, which are established through the recurrence of a number of paradigmatically-related elements, and the inter-
change between these chains. The post-cards which the hero/narrator finds in his mother's chest-of-drawers generate the numerous descriptions of exotic lands which traverse the text and recall the man who sent them - the hero's father - who, like a modern Ulysses, has explored 'la vaste terre le monde fabuleux bigarré inépuisable' (p.23). In a metaphorical sense, the absent father's journey round the world is linked with the narrator's own exploration of memory, imagination and language. The description of the friends of the narrator's grandmother, who are likened to the shadows of 'les lointains conquérants wisigoths' (p.11), provides a link between the theme of exploration and those of conquest and appropriation. This is made explicit in the reference to the expropriation of foreign lands by the English colonists (p.23) and the description of the post-cards as 'fragments, écailles arrachées à la surface de la vaste terre' (p.19).

The repeated references to consumption (which can be seen as appropriation by ingestion) are closely allied to the above themes. For example, the bank visited by the hero during the course of the day (Part 3, pp.68-98) is compared to a money-eating monster (p.71) and is subsequently connected with the theme of conquest through the juxtaposition of 'des empereurs, des conquistadors et des financiers' (p.84) on the bank-notes which pass 'd'un bureau à l'autre dans un froissement continu, insidieux et obsédant de mastication' (p.71). Since it is described as a 'consumer', the bank is also linked with the old ladies – those phantom-like friends of the narrator's grandmother, 'leurs lèvres bleuâtres où restait accroché un peu de sucre pâtissier poudreux et parfois le furtif passage
d'une langue entr'aperçue' (p.13) - and also with the theme of religion through the act of communion ('cette langue .... se tendait encore pour recevoir comme un bonbon la pastille blanche' (p.14)) and through the comparison of a priest with '(des) hommes-sandwiches' (p.15).

On numerous occasions characters are depicted in the act of ingestion: a Spaniard eats a sandwich (p.208) as does the hero in the evening (pp.320-357); in a photograph, an artist's model has just soaked her biscuit in her tea 'le biscuit à mi-chemin entre la tasse et sa bouche' (p.283); the hero has a midday meal in a restaurant; the hero's uncle Charles is furious at his daughter Corinne for having taken some pills (p.393)\textsuperscript{25} and so on. The same theme provides the constant point of reference for whole sections of the text: Part 4 (pp.136-170) and Part 5 (pp.170-203) are situated in the restaurant where the hero eats his midday meal, Part 9 (pp.320-357) is situated in the bar where he eats a sandwich, the scene in the photograph depicting the artist's atelier revolves around the ritual of the cup of tea (Part 8, pp.266-283), while the scene in which the hero visits his cousin has as its pivotal point the drinking of wine (Part 10, pp.284-321).

The themes of conquest, communion and ingestion converge in the description of the sexual act. Soldiers are depicted deflowering a virgin, the physical conquest (coupled with the theme of war) and religious communion merging explicitly in the phrase 'agenouillé devant elle entre ses cuisses comme pour faire ma prière' (p.343). The blood which is shed in this act (see p.340) also recalls those other appearances
of blood in which religion and death are intricately interwoven: Christ's blood-stains on the cross (p.15); a childhood fall, about which the narrator's mother remarks 'qu'un ami de la famille était mort en trois jours du tétanos pour s'être tout simplement piqué dans son jardin (p.15); Corinne's fall - 'la traînée sinuose de sang descendant en serpent-ant' (p.154). (The combination of fall/garden/'serpentant' in these examples clearly recalls the Fall of Man.)

As in La Route des Flandres, the vagina (the final link in a metaphorical chain which includes the mouth and the wounds mentioned above) operates as a metaphorical representation of 'le creuset originel', the point from which all springs and to which all returns, that is, the mark of an absence. On the one hand, it is the origin of the themes of loss, separation and death which are established through numerous references to absence and death:

the ancestral house - 'la vaste maison délabrée, avec .... cette violente odeur de moisi de cave ou plutôt de caveau comme si quelque cadavre de quelque bête morte quelque rat coincé sous une lame de parquet où derrière une plinthe n'en finissait plus de pourrir exhalant ces âcres relents de plâtre effrité de tristesse et de chair momifiée' (p.10) - is marked by the absence of its former occupants: it is now peopled by the phantoms of the past in the form of the old ladies, 'les débiles fantômes bâillonnés par le temps la mort' (p.10);
the father is remembered as an absence;
the narrator is taught Latin as a young boy, a dead language;
a headline from the morning paper recurs throughout the text - occasionally split up into parts (pp. 115, 140, 231, 392),
occasionally split up into individual letters (pp.197, 359), once appearing upside down (p.337) — and reads 'ELLE SE JETTE D'UN QUATRIÈME ÉTAGE PAR LA FENÊTRE';

History is depicted as a massive accumulation of dead matter (pp.105-106);

the narrator and Uncle Charles attempt to patch up a hole in the wall (p.78);

the old ladies are 'semblables à des sortes de crustacés, de sombres homards bleu-noir vidés de leurs intérieurs et dont subsistaient seules les carapaces' (p.87), an image which is itself a link in a chain of similar images of hollow shells (see pp.294, 341, 359, 384).

On the other hand, the vagina is linked with images of creation and is therefore the point at which the theme of production finds its source. The sudden appearance of a substance (the blood) from the sexual act is reminiscent of the appearance of the pigeon in Le Palace, with its metaphorical reference to the act of writing and the production of the text, and also recalls similar instances of creation in Histoire: the turning on of a tap is likened to Moses's miraculous production of water from the rock (p.43), Uncle Charles's alcohol lamp distils the air in his study to produce a distinctive smell (p.48), a blacksmith forges his metal (p.206), a woman and child appear 'comme s'ils avaient surgi de l'asphalte des murs du néant' (p.196), a waiter appears 'comme s'il était sorti d'un monde irréel inexistant pour se matérialiser tout à coup' (p.347), and so on.

The interchange of elements which belong to different paradigmatic chains produces a network of associations which
ultimately converge around 'le creuset originel'. This is the point of combination of the opposite themes of life and death, creation and disintegration, communion and separation, appropriation and loss, materialisation and absence; it is the head of the metonymic chain of elements which traverses the text. In fictional terms, it is both the beginning and the end of the narrator's journey of exploration through his life, the answer to his oft-repeated questions 'Mais exactement, exactement' (pp.78, 87), 'Mais comment' (p.172), 'Mais quoi encore? Quoi encore? Encore? Encore? Encore?' (p.283). This unification of opposites (source and destination) is emphasized in the last lines of the novel which show the narrator, at the end of his day and of his journey, back in his mother's womb waiting to be born:

la femme penchant son mystérieux buste de chair blanche enveloppé de dentelles ce sein qui déjà peut-être me portait dans son ténébreux tabernacle sorte de têtard gélatineux lové sur lui-même avec ses deux énormes yeux sa tête de ver à soie sa bouche sans dents son front cartilagineux d'insecte, moi?... (p.402)

The convergence of opposites can also be located in the descriptions of words themselves. Words are both the source of production - branching out in different directions, like the tree outside the hero's window (p.9) or like a fan (pp.30, 194, 208, 219, 250, 274, 288, 376), composing and recomposing themselves to form 'une sorte de figure de danse' (p.35) - and the frozen remnants of reality, like Latin, like the tomb-stones on which they are inscribed, like 'ces coupes, ces peignes, ces aiguilles, ces bracelets de bronze ou de cuivre verdis, un peu rongés, mais aux contours précis, ciselés, que l'on peut voir dans les vitrines de ces musées' (p.109). As in A la Recherche du Temps Perdu, the name both
points towards the ineffable 'reality' of the person or thing it designates and obscures that 'reality'. Names trigger off associations, like the names of the old ladies 'aux consonances rêches médiévales - Amalrik, Willum, Gouarbia' which stimulate 'les images de barons germaniques de hallebardes de cités italiennes de gardénias' (p.11), or the name Frascati, 'pendant longtemps rien qu'un nom un mot vaguement fabuleux' (p.335), or the name of the soldier, Champenois (see pp.333-336); yet, at the same time, they 'fix' the world and (in a Romantic sense) destroy original experience. Hence, language has the same double significance as the sexual act: it is the source of production (an initiation into the world, 'l'apprentissage par la lecture' (p.109)) and also marks the separation from the world and the loss of purity.

From the above examination of the major themes in Histoire, it is evident that many are the same as those we encountered in La Route des Flandres and Le Palace. The interaction and convergence of the diverse metaphorical chains in Histoire also recall the thematic organisation in the earlier texts. However, in contradistinction to La Route des Flandres, where the regrouping of themes under the general 'umbrella' of the erotic discourse and within the hotel-room episode establishes a dominant 'space' into which all other scenes are condensed, Histoire proposes a different narrative organisation. I have suggested that the main episode is fragmented and can only be viewed as a coherent fiction in relation to a secondary episode. This secondary episode, which I will term the Uncle Charles story, is the one in which the major thematic strands are
assembled. Through a resemblance between the main 'récit' and secondary 'récit' (and the condensation of the two episodes) the latter becomes a 'mise en abyme' which allows the recomposition of the fragments which constitute the former. Firstly, I will examine several of the enigmatic fragments that are given in the text concerning the narrator's life and subsequently show how the scattered scenes which constitute the Uncle Charles story ultimately combine to provide a single unified anecdote which centralizes the fragmented text.

The narrator's day - whose waking and sleeping moments constitute the opening and closing of the text, 'un cercle qui revient à son point de départ (le narrateur étendu sur son lit)' is fragmented by the numerous intrusions of past and imagined scenes. However, the fragments of this day can be reassembled to form the following chronology: the waking of the narrator in the ancestral house, the discovery of the post-cards and the photograph, a visit to the bank in connection with the narrator's re-occupation (or selling?) of the house, a midday snack, an afternoon meeting at the house with his cousin Corinne to sell some of the furniture, a visit to the house of Corinne's brother on the coast and the return drive, an evening snack in a bar and a chance meeting with an old school friend, the return to the house to sleep.

This chronology is necessarily schematic. In particular, it fails to incorporate the constant sense of an absence in the life of the narrator to which numerous scattered and
enigmatic fragments appear to point. The major signposts directing our pursuit of what Barthes has termed the hermeneutic code are provided by the fragments from the narrator's marriage to Hélène and the troubling, recurring newspaper headline (noted previously).

In the scenes concerning the narrator and Hélène, what has taken place between the couple is not mentioned and the fragments presented therefore remain enigmatic. In the first sequence - 'et alors seulement elle et moi' (p.39) - it would appear that Hélène is about to depart on a train. The second sequence - 'seuls maintenant elle et moi' (p.109) - takes place in a museum in Greece where the couple are on their honeymoon. The themes of separation and death are prominent in the descriptions of this scene: 'emmurés désespérés chacun devant une vitrine différente à chacune des extrémités de la salle' (p.109), 'cette espèce de tragique mélancolie cette chose sombre noire qui était déjà en elle comme un noyau de mort cachée comme un poison un poignard sous le léger tissu de sa robe' (p.110). Another fragment from the scene in the museum shows the narrator's unsuccessful attempt at a reconciliation (p.116), while a return to the same scene emphasizes the distance separating the couple (p.122). The enigmatic nature of these fragments is not resolved until the mirror image (the Uncle Charles story) has filled in the missing parts in the development of the fiction.

The newspaper headline is an obsessive motif underlying the narrator's day. Through its very persistence, it too suggests a certain significance in terms of the main fictional
development of the text but one which is never explicitly stated. In the same way that the headline is itself fragmented and can only be read in its entirety through a combination of its parts, so the central fiction of the text is fragmented and must be assembled to produce a coherent whole. If we combine the headline (which not only incorporates the theme of death but also that of the Fall) with the scenes between the narrator and Hélène (which emphasize the themes of separation and death), it is possible to read either the suicide of Hélène or, at least, a metaphorical reference to her departure. However, we must again look to the Uncle Charles story for a fuller understanding of these scattered fragments.

The nature of the development of the Uncle Charles story should be emphasized in order to make it clear how a unified fiction is ultimately produced from the fragmented parts offered in the text. The same process that I analysed in La Route des Flandres operates in Histoire: scenes are constructed through an 'assemblage' of textual elements (the work of metaphor/metonymy) and, on a higher level of integration, are combined with other scenes to form a chain of spatial syntagms which compose a whole episode. Hence, the Uncle Charles story is not a complete 'récit' in itself which is inserted in its entirety at some point in the text; it is constituted by a number of scenes (separated in the text) in each of which the major themes converge to form a collage or spatial architecture of diverse textual elements.

The first reference to the narrator's uncle Charles hints at his infatuation with young women (which is to be of significance later on): 'parce que si dire toquée d'une femme
encore jeune, comme je l'avais parfois entendu faire par oncle Charles, impliquait mépris ou apitoiement, son accouplement avec le mot vieille lui conférait au contraire dans mon esprit une sorte de majesté et de mystère' (p.13). This initial hint of an association between Charles and young women is developed (again enigmatically) when the hero meets an old friend of Charles. The friend repeatedly refers to Charles as 'Ce pauvre Charles', mentions a death and a funeral, '"Tout de même s'enterrer comme ça ....", disant: "A la fin il ne sortait presque plus, lui qui avait été si .... Je veux dire avant la mort de .... Je veux dire: lui qui n'aimait que la ville"' (p.53), and finally suggests a liaison between Charles and a girl, 'disant Ce pauvre Charles: avec les femmes il était d'une naïveté! .... Cette fille, elle le trompait avec tout le monde' (p.68). In this exchange, the hero's attempted joke reveals that the death in question is that of Charles's wife. Charles's sexual inclinations are also emphasized, while a resemblance is implied between the hero and his uncle through the loss of their wives:

me rappelant maintenant comme Corinne était jolie .... disant Oui c'est une tradition de famille chez nous Je veux dire le veuvage.30 Une de ces maladies de femmes vous savez Congénitale comme on dit Oui Transmissible aux hommes du clan par voie utérine .... Oncle Charles compris naturellement Dans la mesure où il participait apparemment plutôt du féminin que du masculin. (p.69)

These fragments are the scattered indices of a fiction which is in the process of construction. A play on the word 'veuf' will incorporate the notion of murder into the collage surrounding Charles: 'les lèvres prononçant VF continuant à faire fff comme un bruit d'air froissé déchiré par le passage rapide étincelant et meurtrier d'une lame' (p.82). This association
is complemented when the hero's image of Charles merges with the figure of an artist in a painting who appears to be holding 'au bout de son bras à demi replié non pas un inoffensif porte-fusain mais quelque instrument scientifique et froidement cruel du genre bistouri ou scalpel' (p.86).

The connection between Charles and the hero and the resemblance of their respective 'stories' of loss is made more explicit when fragments from the museum sequence intercut and combine with fragments from two sequences concerning Charles. In the first, the hero, returning from the bank, imagines being accosted once again by the old friend and having to suffer the old man's incessant chatter about Charles: 'les infortunes vous me comprenez d'oncle Charles condamné vous me comprenez à perdre toutes les femmes c'est-à-dire à les perdre vous me comprenez dans les deux sens du mot actif et passif et à se perdre lui-même vous me comprenez' (p.114). The second sequence is an image of Charles at his wife's grave (p.120). The first appearance of the newspaper headline amongst these fragments serves to add an extra element to the collage of separation, death, sexuality and artistic creation which is being composed around Charles.

An extended dialogue between Charles and the young hero (see pp.145-203) subsequently emphasizes the closeness of their relationship. Charles was evidently the replacement for the absent father. Latin tutor to the hero and himself a poet (see p.221), he gave his nephew his first insights into the worlds of history, art and language. He was both the guide for the hero into the ways of the world and, correspondingly, the serpent who poisoned the hero's innocence. In the
enclosed space of Charles's study, many of the episodes and themes of the text are assembled to produce a superimposition of scenes separated in time: a painting of Barcelona recalls the narrator's experience there during the Civil War, the Latin sentences recall the inscriptions on the tomb-stones in the graveyard, piles of bank-notes in a drawer recall the scene in the bank, the book 'The Golden Ass' which Charles takes from the narrator recalls the theme of sexuality, and so on. Finally, this superimposition of textual elements embraces the two characters themselves who become condensed and merge in what Ellenbach calls 'l'identification du narrateur à son double':

"c'était comme si je dialoguais avec quelque fantôme ou peut-être avec mon propre fantôme .... et non pas deux voix alternant mais peut-être une seule" (p.151). The condensation of Charles and the narrator is reminiscent of the merging of de Reixach and his ancestor in *La Route des Flandres* and, similarly, produces (through resemblance) a composite amalgam of two distinct 'stories'.

This scene prefigures the description of the photograph which acts as the central image in the recomposition of the fragmented text. Discovered by the narrator amongst the post-cards, this photograph shows Charles as a young man in an artist's atelier. The image of Charles is not one that is familiar to the narrator. Instead of the characteristic romantic air and worldly-wise appearance, this is the face of a young, innocent-looking man: 'la seule différence qu'entre le visage familier et celui-ci ce serait à peu près la même chose qu'entre un champ défoncé et le même champ avant le passage de la charrue' (p.267). He is 'comme un adolescent attardé, gauche et pour ainsi dire virginal' (p.271).
The description of the photograph deals firstly with the respective positions of the characters in the atelier, including the Dutch artist Van Velden, the artist's wife and Charles himself, and the diverse objects in the room. As the description animates the photograph, the attention of Charles, and that of the narrator, becomes fixed more intently on the nude model, the two distinct focuses of Charles and the narrator merging again to become one. The narrator no longer talks of Charles in the atelier (in a third-person narration) but himself (in a first-person narration) — 'je me rappelle que la partie de son ventre dans l'ombre était d'un vert délicat' (p. 291) - which reveals the mutual infatuation of uncle and nephew with the model.

The third-person narration re-emerges (in other words, it is Charles who is once again in the atelier and not the narrator); yet he is no longer to be found in the seat where he was originally positioned when the picture was taken but is now behind the easel, having usurped the position of the artist himself (p. 296). In a switch back to the first-person narration, the model addresses the narrator as if it is he who is the artist (p. 300). The whole scene finally becomes blurred and disappears (p. 301). It should also be noted that, during this time, Van Velden is in the process of setting up and taking the photograph which the narrator is examining.

The description of the photograph is a complex metaphor for the moment of artistic production, its complexity deriving from the convergence and condensation of the major thematic chains which I mentioned previously. In this moment (the metaphorical loss of Charles's virginity), the themes of
sexual desire, appropriation and communion merge with those of separation and the discovery of an absence. This is a miniature mirror-image within the narrative which groups together the major elements scattered in the main body of the text and thus reflects the central image which is missing.

The condensation of the narrator and Charles allows a reading which equates their obsession with the model. This is the missing reason for the loss of their respective wives. The scene of separation at the station between the narrator and Hélène (which reappears shortly after the description of the photograph - see p.322) can now be explained in terms of the narrator's infatuation with a model. This is made explicit when Hélène questions her husband about his mistress: "Quel âge a-t-elle? .... elle est tellement jolie?" (pp.373-374). In this scene, the narrator merges with Charles for the third and last time (see p.369). As the fragments of the diverse episodes crowd in upon each other in quick succession at the end of the text (see especially pp.367-392), the themes of separation and death predominate within the space of the narrator's darkened bedroom.

The thematic and spatial organisation of the narrative in Histoire follows the basic pattern we encountered in La Route des Flandres, that is, the construction of a unified fiction through the convergence of metaphorical chains and diverse 'tableaux'. However, the peculiar function of 'mise en abyme' in the production of this unity is more like the narrative structure of Robbe-Grillet's Le Voyeur. Ricardou has shown how Le Voyeur is a 'récit lacunaire' whose 'micro-histoire' mirrors the fragment of the main 'récit' that has previously
been hidden. Ricardou's conclusion as to the function of 'mise en abyme' in Robbe-Grillet's text is entirely applicable to *Histoire* as well: 'Dans une histoire qui se veut incomplète, la mise en abyme peut voir sa contestation se préciser en un pouvoir révélant.' The ability of the secondary 'récit' in *Histoire* to reveal (or rather, compose through 'assemblage') the unity which is absent in the main 'récit' therefore has the effect of re-stabilizing the narrative. This reconstituted unity is of fundamental significance in a consideration of the radical nature of Simon's texts of the 1960's.

4.4 NARRATIVE COHERENCE

Ricardou has described Simon's practice of writing as a process of 'fragmentation' and 'articulation' of elements. These two aspects of the narration cause a re-structuring of a traditional narrative development: they disrupt the linear narrative and rearrange the text according to a grouping of metaphorically and metonymically-related elements within different spatial contexts. As we have seen, the fragmentation of linearity and the play with language clearly present a challenge to the realist novel; yet the thematic and spatial reorganisation of the text re-establishes a hierarchy of episodes and a fictional coherence which tends to confirm the very aspects of the novel that are being challenged. This contradiction lies at the heart of Simon's practice during this period.

Let us consider more closely these contradictory consequences of the practice of writing. The continual switches through
similarly from one scene to another are responsible for the fragmentation of the linear narrative. The division of the text into a mosaic of disparate parts stimulates our desire for unity, and, hence, our ability to combine the disordered fragments. In this sense, *La Route des Flandres*, *Le Palace* and *Histoire* are each a quest, for the narrator and the reader: they are both engaged in the same process of following associations and attempting to reintegrate the disparate elements of the text. The fragmented text presents a challenge to our conventional understanding of the construction and resolution of the narrative and forces the reader to participate in this construction and resolution.

The fragmentation of a conventional (expressive or instrumental) use of language presents the major challenge to the realist text. I have shown how the narration is constituted by an exploration of language to establish an intricate network of verbal associations. Ricardou has described the use of language in *La Route des Flandres* in the following way:

> le langage de la Route des Flandres évite d'être cet ustensile par l'usage duquel un sens univoque se communique. Tandis que tout un roman traditionnel se plaît à fragmenter le discours en spécialités (descriptions, dialogues, analyse etc.) le langage, ici désarticulé, libère les mots de leur servage à l'égard d'un sens institué. Les mots deviennent des centres d'irradiation sémantiques qui, sous la croûte de leur sens immédiat, tendent à recomposer entre eux, de proche en proche, les relais d'un langage sous-jacent, libre et mobile, où jouent toute manière de sens seconds.

Ricardou discovers, in Simon's narration, a liberation of the 'signifiant' from its 'sens institué' and the creation of what he calls a 'polyphonie sémantique'.

Conversely we have seen how the fragmented narrative is re-stabilized according to a hierarchy of themes and spaces.
The ultimate reconstitution of a unified fiction both restores coherence in the narrative (thus terminating the game of combining disparate parts) and reduces the plurality of meaning to a 'sens univoque' (thus terminating the game with language). In this sense, Ricardou's comments on the use of language in *La Route des Flandres* (cited above) tend to over-emphasize the radical nature of the writing. In fact, a more recent remark seems far more appropriate here, in which Ricardou points out how the unity of the text works against the open-ended play of language:

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cette unité contredit, en sa hiérarchie immobile, le mouvement de production, en ce qu'elle tend à s'offrir, rétrospectivement, comme la reproduction d'une prétendue unité antécédente dont il aurait suffi d'une part, selon un très savant puzzle réussi, de recoller les morceaux, d'autre part, selon une très subtile arborescence accomplie, de réunir les embranchements.57
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In other words, the unity of the fiction obscures the work of the narration that has produced the fiction. Although the 'double aspect' of the narrative (narration/fiction) is manifested in a striking way in these novels (as I suggested in Chapter 2), the final coherence of the fiction must be seen as an occultation of the material process of production of the text.38

Simon's novels of the 1960's fall between two stools: they present an unmistakeable challenge to the realist text while, at the same time, failing to break with a 'composition unitaire' which lies at the heart of realism. They are at a stage of transition between Barthes's 'texte lisible' and 'texte scriptible', that is, between the classic realist text whose meaning is fixed and closed ('une structure de signifiés') and the modern text which manifests a plurality of meaning ('une
galaxie de signifiants'). In the second part of my study I will examine the novels written since Histoire with a view to determining the developments arising from this stage of transition.
5. DEVELOPMENT OF PERSPECTIVE AND VOICE

Simon has described his development as a writer as 'une lente évolution par tâtonnements': each text modifies and transforms the technique of the previous novel so that a gradual (and logical) progression characterizes the developing practice of writing. Each novel must be considered in the context of this evolution, that is, in terms of what Ricardou has called 'l'intertextualité restreinte'.

This gradual evolution has not been without its shifts in direction. For example, the texts written in the 1960's - which constitute what Roubichou calls Simon's 'période centrale' - are characterized by a particular practice of writing which is different to that of the earlier works such as Le Vent and Le Sacre du Printemps. La Bataille de Pharsale marks another turning-point within the evolution of Simon's practice. This novel is the point of transition between the 'période centrale' and the most recent period which comprises Les Corps Conducteurs, Triptyque and Leçon de Choses. Like the novels of the 1960's, these texts can be considered as a totality: they reveal a similar mode of narration and a common practice of writing. Thus the division of my analysis into Parts 1 and 2 at the point between Histoire and La Bataille de Pharsale is not an arbitrary distinction but is dictated by the major transformation in technique between the 'période centrale' and the novels written during the 1970's.

More correctly, the transformation in technique occurs within La Bataille de Pharsale itself. The first of its
three parts bears many resemblances to Histoire and can therefore be seen as a continuation of the techniques and practice that I have already analysed. The third part introduces a new mode of narration and a major development in practice. La Bataille de Pharsale therefore acts as the fulcrum between the two periods of Simon's evolution since 1960.

In this chapter I will discuss the transition between these two periods in terms of the development in narrative technique (perspective/voice) and analyse the new mode of narration in the more recent texts. The transition will be viewed as both a logical progression (in the context of techniques explored in the 'période centrale') and a major development in Simon's practice of writing.

5.1. THE ZERO POINT OF NARRATION

(i) The Voice of the Writing

My analysis of narrative voice in La Route des Flandres, Le Palace and Histoire demonstrated the way in which these novels challenge traditional notions of the narrator. Two major conclusions were drawn from this analysis: firstly, the confusion of temporal relations between the 'énonciation' and the 'énoncé' and the confusion of levels of 'énonciation' disrupts a hierarchy of voices and undermines a psychological interpretation of the narration; secondly, the progression of a single 'discours' (attentive to the play of language) which traverses all levels of 'énonciation' signifies the emergence of the real voice of the text, that is, a narration/writing in-process.

Viewed in the context of these developments in narration, the first part of La Bataille de Pharsale can be seen as both a continuation and culmination of the techniques of the
'période centrale'. It manifests the same balance between a past and present-tense narration (a 'passé présentifié') and the same switches between a first and third-person narration which are apparent in La Route des Flandres. A 'mélange' of modes of 'énonciation' continues the pattern established in Histoire: staccato utterances, which are no more than phrases and which make no reference to the speaking subject (see, for example, the opening paragraphs of the text) are juxtaposed with the longer, digressive sentences of the previous texts, which contain the same abundance of brackets, rectifications and uncertainties that characterizes the 'discours tâtonnant'.

A more conventional type of 'énonciation' may also be observed. Neither staccato-like nor long and digressive, it is characterized by sentences of a traditional length (though there is often a lack of punctuation). Much of the narration concerning the narrator's journey to the battlefield at Pharsalus is of this variety. In these passages the first-person narration is no different to an impersonal third-person narration (see, for example, pp.31-38); in others the third-person narration is really a first-person disguised, like the third-person narration of Le Palace. The transitions between an 'absence' and presence of a narrator which do not correspond to the third and first-person narrations respectively, establish a complex imbrication of the modes of 'histoire' and 'discours'. This narration thus pushes to its limits the play with diverse modes of 'énonciation' and undermines any attempt at establishing a coherent speaking voice.

The haphazard use of punctuation contributes to the confusion of 'énonciation'. There seems to be no logical reason why capital letters should appear in certain passages and not in others; nor why full-stops, absent in particular episodes
(for example, pp.31-32), should be included in later sequences from the same episodes (see pp.41, 55); nor why commas should be used in a conventional manner at certain times (pp.14, 16) but not at all at others; nor why some paragraphs should be of great length whilst others should be short, sometimes consisting of only one phrase. The disruption of a conventional punctuation clearly contributes to the general fragmentation of a conventional discourse.

The narration is further unsettled by the inclusion of fragments from other texts which appear in typefaces of various forms - italics, capitals, Greek characters. This is not the first time that such fragments have appeared in a Simon text; they recall the manuscript in La Route des Flandres (p.55) and the newspaper headlines in Le Palace and Histoire. However, in the novels of the 1960's they make only brief and irregular appearances whereas in La Bataille de Pharsale similar fragments (newspaper headlines (pp.64-69, 72) and Greek lettering (pp. 32, 37, 56)) are joined by passages of varying lengths introduced at fairly regular intervals. Amongst the latter we detect the following: fragments from Proust's A la Recherche du Temps Perdu, or, more accurately, the repetition of two particular fragments commencing 'je souffrais comme' and 'je ne savais pas encore' (see pp. 22, 31, 34, 75, 80, 81, 82, 85); fragments from Caesar and Plutarch on the subject of the battle at Pharsalus; a passage from The Golden Ass by Apuleius (pp.92-93).

These passages unsettle the narration in the same way that the utterance of the same 'énoncé' by different levels of 'énonciation' unsettles the relationship between 'énonciation' and 'énoncé' in the texts of the 1960's. For example, the phrase 'je souffrais comme', which first appears in roman
type (p. 20) and would therefore seem to be the 'énonciation' of the first-person narrator, re-appears in italics (p. 22) denoting the fact that it belongs to an 'outside' text (that of Proust, in fact). The same phrase subsequently appears in roman type (pp. 25, 44) and italics (p. 75). Similarly, the recurrent phrase 'je ne savais pas encore', written in roman type (pp. 22, 31, 34), reappears in italics (pp. 80, 81), while the descriptions of the battle, written in italics, also appear in roman type in other parts of the text. The dividing line between the instances of 'énonciation' thus becomes obscured as each 'discours' is incorporated into the common current of narration.

Part 11 of *La Bataille de Pharsale*, entitled 'Lexique', differs from Part 1 in that it is divided into seven headed sections. Yet, despite this altered format, the same ambiguities of voice can still be detected. Two features of the narration are particularly worthy of note: firstly, in the sections entitled 'Bataille' and 'Voyage' there are many fragments from 'outside' texts (shown in italics), whereas in the other five sections there are none; secondly, the sections are structured in a formal way according to the alphabetical order of their titles (except the seventh section, 'O', which is the attainment of the zero point of narration to be developed in Part 111) and according to the alternation of first and third-person narrations and past and present tenses. The seven sections of Part 11 are therefore structured in the following way:

'Bataille' (pp. 101-122) - nearly all third-person narration with a few pages of first-person narration at the end of the section. The whole section is in the present tense.

'César' (pp. 122-127) - first person and past-tense narration.
'Conversation' (pp. 128-135) - third-person and present-tense narration.

'Guerrier' (pp. 135-147) - first-person and past-tense narration.

'Machine' (pp. 147-153) - third-person and present-tense narration.

'Voyage' (pp. 153-181) - first-person and past-tense narration.

'O' (pp. 181-186) - third-person and present-tense narration.

Viewed in its entirety, 'Lexique' groups together, in a formal pattern of alternating sequences, the different modes of 'énonciation' presented in Part 1. In this respect it is a bridge between the first and third parts of the text, that is, between the disordered mixture of 'énonciations' in Part 1 and the single, disciplined and monovalent 'énonciation' of Part III.

Part III of La Bataille de Pharsale thus reveals a new mode of narration and one which is to be maintained in the three novels which succeed this text (although in Leçon de Choses there is a slight variation of technique). On one level it is a return to a conventional format: sentences of average length, narrated continuously and uniformly by a third-person narrator using a continuous and uniform present tense, and the reinstatement of a conventional punctuation. However, the conventional format does not obscure the novelty of the technique. Part III, 'Chronologie des Événements', opens in the following way and continues in the same vein until the final page of the text:

De l'autre côté de la vitre, des prés, des bois, des collines, dérivent lentement. La vue est parfois obstruée ou déchiquetée par le passage rapide de talus ou d'arbres qui bordent la voie. La tête de l'un des
Espagnols, penché en avant, se découpe sur le fond lumineux et changeant de la campagne emporté dans un mouvement horizontal. Le profil à contre-jour est d'un dessin aigu, le nez en bec d'aigle. Les cheveux sont cosmétiqués et lissés en arrière. (p.189)

This is evidently an impersonal, uniform and monovalent narration, reminiscent of the narration in Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* which Simon admires so much. Each episode which appears in the first two parts of the text is presented in the same impersonal manner in the third part, whether it is concerned with an old combine-harvester in Greece or the confusion of a battle during the Second World War, a train journey in Italy or a couple making love in a hotel-room. The text is transformed into a flat surface in which all fictional elements are equivalent.

Once again we must ask the familiar question 'Qui parle?'. The voice is clearly that of a third-person narrator who (apparently) erases all traces of his existence. It is therefore a narration in which the 'histoire' mode is pushed to an extreme, a narration which, quite simply, 'tells itself'. In this sense it is in vivid contrast to the narration in the previous texts in which, for the most part, an abundance of signs of the voice of the narrator pushed the narration to the extreme of 'discours'. Not only has the first person been abandoned; also missing are those recurrent traces of a 'discours' which characterized the first and third person narration alike: 'peut-être', 'donc', 'c'est-à-dire', 'il semble', the questioning, uncertain and confused voice, the long, rambling and digressive 'énonciation' of the 'discours tâtonnant'.

However, the transformation in mode of narration is no more than a logical development in technique if one bears in mind the writer's effort in the previous texts to banish from the
text the 'human', psychological voice of a particular narrator narrating from a particular moment in time and allow the narration to 'tell itself'. It is precisely the movement towards a zero point of narration that characterizes the narration of the novels of the 1960's. Of course, the notion of a narration 'telling itself' must not be confused with Lubbock's concept of the novel as a transparent window looking onto the 'real' world, unfettered by the interruptions, directions and digressions of a narrator. On the contrary, Simon's 'tell itself' is a narration in which the voice of the writing becomes the only real voice of the text: a writing which is guided by the exploration of language. The novel is no longer 'l'écriture d'une aventure' but, in Ricardou's telling phrase, 'l'aventure d'une écriture'.

Irreducible to the voice of any person, the narration can now be said to speak unequivocally (and uni-vocally) with its own voice. For (we know it well enough by now) there is most certainly a voice, a narrator, an 'énonciation'; there could be no text without them. Simon's achievement (and this is what distinguishes Simon's narrator from the 19th-century omniscient narrator) is to harness the narrating voice completely to the exigencies of the writing itself so that the terms narrator/'énonciation'/writing become synonymous with each other. In this sense, the impersonal present-tense narration is the culmination of the techniques of the 'période centrale': the complete incorporation of the 'histoire' mode into the present discourse of a narrator in the process of writing a text.

This new mode of narration will finally remove the concept of memory from the vocabulary of Simon criticism. In Chapter 2 I demonstrated the way in which a conventional concept of
memory is challenged in the texts of the 1960's: the 'presentified' memory, first revealed in La Route des Flandres, does not reproduce past events but produces them in the present by means of the 'discours tâtonnant' of the narration, this latter itself subject to the play of metaphor/metonymy. The removal of the last vestiges of a distinction between past and present finally abolishes a concept of memory in favour of the continuous present of the discourse of the writing. Simon himself theorizes the transition to the new mode of narration in terms which draw attention to the integration of the narrator's present of narrating and the writer's own present of writing: 'Quant à la dernière partie de Pharsale (autre tournant) elle résulte de ce que j'avais enfin compris que l'on n'écris -ou ne dit - jamais que ce qui se passe au présent de l'écriture.'

The development from Part 1 to Part III of La Bataille de Pharsale demonstrates the final collapse of the hierarchy of the text into a flat and uniform surface. The stratification of temporality and voice (challenged during Simon's 'période centrale') cedes to a non-stratified 'space' occupied by the play of language. If the mode of narration in the novels of the 1960's is a convoluted, baroque 'énonciation', then the narration of the 1970's can be seen as a new classicism. Simon takes up an architectural analogy to describe the transition:

Pourquoi suis-je passé des phrases longues aux phrases courtes? .... l'une (je dis: l'une) des raisons a certainement été le choc que j'ai ressenti, il y a dix ans, en découvrant New York: la saisissante beauté, les saisissantes cadences .... de cet ensemble architectural de hautes verticales, ces cassures, ces plans nets: le contraire des courbes, des tourbillons et des volutes arborescentes du baroque. Et pourtant, je vous assure que c'est une architecture qui a aussi son lyrisme.

Simon's discussion of the new narration in terms of visual
structure is reminiscent of Proust's comparison of his monumental novel to the design of a cathedral. Yet the choice here of the words 'cadences' and 'lyrisme' also reveals Simon's attention to the musicality of the text. In a statement which is more an echo of Flaubert than Proust, Simon goes on to say 'il est impossible d'écrire si on n'est pas dans un certain tempo .... On est souvent amené, uniquement par les nécessités (je dirais même: les exigences) musicales de la phrase, à rejeter un mot que l'on croyait juste.'

Part III of La Bataille de Pharsale therefore introduces both a new architecture and a new rhythm of writing. In Les Corps Conducteurs and Triptyque the absence of paragraphs (which are still present in La Bataille de Pharsale) transforms the text into a single block of writing, an uninterrupted play of language or 'assemblage verbal'. In Leçon de Choses the format is slightly altered since the impersonal narration is interrupted twice: the 'discours' of the soldier/mason in the sections entitled 'Divertissement I' and 'Divertissement II' is a highly personal narration whose deformation of language marks both a violent intrusion into the flat, impersonal narration of the rest of the text and a 'divertissement' from it.

In my analysis of the texts of the 1970's I will be concentrating on the dominant mode of narration mentioned above, that is, the continuous, formalised voice of a writing in process. It is necessary to consider the part played by perspective in this new narration, for the particular relationship between the eye and the voice of narration is a fundamental feature of the texts since La Bataille de Pharsale.
(ii) The Eye of the Narration

In my discussion of narrative perspective in the novels of the 1960's I drew attention to the 'glissements' between the limited focus of the hero and the wider focus of the narrator and demonstrated the way in which both of these focuses are produced by a particular practice of writing. In *La Bataille de Pharsale* we can see how perspective and voice become fully integrated within the formalised narration. A consideration of the episode of the jealous lover in Part I of the text indicates the process of integration which culminates in Part III.

This episode is narrated from three different focal points: the first is positioned at a café from which the métro nearby and the fifth-floor window of a hotel are visible, the second is positioned outside the door of the hotel-room itself and the third is positioned inside the room where a couple are making love.

The switches from one to the other of these focuses are particularly unsettling due to the fact that none of the focuses is the point of view of any one character but is occupied by a variety of characters. The interchange of characters who adopt the three focal points includes the following switches: the third person 'il' who is standing outside the door of the room (inside which his mistress is making love to another man (pp. 21, 23)) becomes the first person 'je' (pp. 25, 57); the unspecified perspective at the café in the opening pages is specified as the focus of the first person ('Je regardais les bulles argentées monter dans le verre' (p.26)) and subsequently becomes that of the third person ('Lui assis en face de la bouche du métro' (p. 39)); the first person, formerly outside the door (p.25),
becomes the person inside the room making love and listening to the footsteps outside (p.38); the focus at the café reverts to that of an unspecified observer (pp. 44-46) and then switches back to the third person ('il peut voir la fenêtre' (p.64)); the first person outside the door changes to the third person (evidently Uncle Charles - 'Me demandant cherchant à l'imager lui avec sa cravate son gilet .... devant cette porte épiant écoutant le silence de l'autre côté' (p.63)) and then switches back to the first person (this sequence makes it clear that the café scene is the immediate aftermath of the scene inside/outside the hotel-room since the first person leaves the building and sits down outside, thus replacing the third person who was the last figure to occupy that focus (see pp.71-72)); the first person making love to his mistress becomes the third person (evidently the artist Van Velden from *Histoire*), and so on.

The episode of the jealous lover(s) is thus composed of a triple focus, each point of which is occupied by an alternation of first and third persons. In other words, perspective is not structured according to a psychological 'vraisemblable' but according to a triangular format, each of the points of which is a formal position from which the narration can be situated. Not only is each vision constructed by means of the formal play of the narration but each position of point of view is also regulated by a purely formal consideration.

The ternary structure in *La Bataille de Pharsale* is reminiscent of the triangular composition of *La Route des Flandres* and is also of fundamental importance in *Triptyque* and *Leçon de Choses*. In *La Bataille de Pharsale* an abundance of triangles sets up a powerful motif in the text: 'un triangle entouré de rayons d'or' (p.10), the trinity (p.10),
the V of 'veston' and A of 'pantalon' depicted in ideogram form (p.21), the inverted V between legs and the triangle of the upper part of the A (pp.24, 194, 195, 207, 255), spearheads and cross-bows, the inverted V and triangular characters in Greek words (pp.37, 39, 56, 246, 249), the triangle of the pubis, 'une sorte de triptyque' constituted by the three images of a cartoon strip (pp.65-70), the triangle in the quotation from Proust used as 'exergue' to Part 11, and so on.

The triangular structure of the perspective and the proliferation of triangles in the fictional episodes implies a complex relationship between the formal composition of the narration and the production of elements in the fiction. The triangular perspective both generates and is complemented by the triangles in the fiction in a dialectic in which narration and fiction interact and guide each other's development. In the section entitled '0' in 'Lexique' this intertwining of narration and fiction is apparent in the way the triangular perspective is considered by the narrator in terms of a geometric composition. The fiction is here concerned with a discussion of the structure of the narration: this is not a 'mise en abyme' of a fictional episode (as is usually the case) but an internal reflection of the narration:

Soit alors O, la position occupée par l'oeil de l'observateur (0,) et d'ou part une droite invisible O0' rejoignant l'oeil à l'objet sur lequel est fixé le regard, une infinité d'autres droites partant du même point entourant O0', leur ensemble engendrant un cône qui constitue le champ de vision de O. debout sur le côté d'une place plantée d'arbres et où s'ouvre une bouche de métro, le cône figuré (selon une coupe verticale) par l'angle T0F, T correspondant au bord du trottoir devant un immeuble situé sur le côté opposé de la place, la lettre F à l'une des fenêtres du premier étage de cet immeuble (pp.181-182)

In Part III of the text the first and third-person hero, Uncle Charles and Corinne are all condensed within the single
position of the impersonal figure 0. This signifies the attainment of an impersonal focus which corresponds to the impersonal voice, that is, the attainment of a zero point of narration. Now all the numerous expressions used to invoke a vision - 'la vue est ....' (p.189), 'il regarde' (p.193), '0. regarde' (p.193), '0. voit' (pp.211, 222, 223), 'on peut voir' (pp.195, 196, 199, 209, 254), 'on voit' (pp.195, 198, 199, 200, 202, 211), 'on distingue' (pp. 195, 196), 'on peut lire' (p.246) and so on - are all equivalent since the positioning of focus is merely a formal point from which the play of language can be situated: the vision is completely determined by the voice of the formalised practice of writing.

As Colette Gaudin says of Leçon de Choses, 'il ne s'agit pas d'un langage qui dit un regard, mais plutôt d'un langage qui suscite un regard, le dirige et le conduit'.

In the texts of the 1970's we do not find the same ambiguity in the relationship between the focus of the hero and the voice of the narrator as was noted in the novels of the 'période centrale' due to the transition to a flat, impersonal narration. The creation of an impersonal eye directed by the work of the narration signifies the culmination of the convergence of perspective and voice. In the texts which succeed La Bataille de Pharsale we can describe the narration as the voice of a mobile, camera-eye: the eye is the focus of the voice while the voice itself is directed by a play of language. I will therefore consider the way in which the eye and voice of narration work together in these texts in order to highlight the functioning of the impersonal narration and the formalised manner in which it produces the fictional episodes.
5.2. EYE, VOICE AND THE PRODUCTION OF THE FICTION

(i) Les Corps Conducteurs: the formal geometry of the text

In the opening sentence of Les Corps Conducteurs, an impersonal eye focusses on models' legs in a shop window. These are described in the following way: 'le pied en haut, la cuisse sectionnée à l'aine reposant sur le plancher, le genou légèrement fléchi.' (p.7) This image is compared first to a dancer in the process of raising her leg, then to a girl putting on a stocking.

In geometrical terms, the legs are composed of a vertical line (the thigh) and a horizontal line (the rest of the leg from the knee to the foot). This detail is significant since the initial shapes recognized by the impersonal eye are subsequently influential in directing the point of view adopted by the narration and, similarly, in generating a series of allied shapes in the fiction. The narration and fiction are again bound by a formal constraint, as an examination of the immediate development of the text reveals.

The next description includes the image of a naked woman lying on an operating table (a horizontal line) and a sick man dropping his trousers in a doctor's surgery (a vertical line). A first precision of point of view then introduces the vision of the sick man in a street in New York:

Au bout de la rue il peut voir l'avenue qu'elle croise, .... et au-delà la marquise de l'hôtel. Il y a environ une centaine de mètres jusqu'au croisement avec l'avenue et, après celle-ci, encore une quarantaine de mètres jusqu'à la porte de l'hôtel. Les feuilles clairsemées des arbres, d'un vert tirant sur l'ocre ou même rouille, cartonneuses et maladives, s'agitent légèrement devant le fond grisâtre du building qui s'élève au coin de la rue et de l'avenue en lignes verticales et parallèles, comme des orgues. Dans l'ouverture de l'étroite tranchée que forment les hautes façades on peut voir le ciel blanc. A travers l'épaisse brume de chaleur l'extrémité de la tranchée se distingue à peine. (pp.8-9)
This description is clearly guided according to the construction of a number of horizontal and vertical lines. As in La Bataille de Pharsale, there is no difference between the personal focus, 'il peut voir' (which introduces the horizontal vision along the street) and the impersonal focus 'on peut voir' (which describes the vertical line of the sky-scrapers); they are equivalent in that both are the focal points used in the elaboration of a formal geometry which is in the process of construction. The description can be represented schematically in the following way:

Figure 1

Following this sequence, a transition switches the narration to the focus of an impersonal eye scanning the diagram of a cross-section of the human torso ('on peut voir des organes' (p.9)). The description of the body resembles the view of the street according to a similarity of 'signifiés' (the T shape formed by 'un fin tuyau qui se divise en une fourche' (p.10) resembles the cross in Figure 1 above) and 'signifiants' ('orgues/organes', 'vert, ocre, rouille/rouge-âtres, verte, jaune').

A switch back to the sick man in the street shows him seated on a hydrant which is itself formed by the familiar
shapes noted in the previous descriptions: 'La bouche d'incendie est constituée par un fort tuyau de fonte, peint en rouge, qui monte d'abord verticalement puis se recourbe vers l'avant en même temps qu'il se divise en deux branches horizontales .... Les deux branches divergentes sont suffisamment rapprochées pour former une sorte de siège sur lequel il s'assied.' (p.11) Positioned from the focus of the sick man, the subsequent narration follows the activity of two negroes in the process of unloading cardboard boxes from a lorry which one of the men takes into the shop containing the models' legs. A series of glances are exchanged between the sick man and the negro as the latter crosses to and fro between the lorry and the shop: 'Tandis qu'il suit l'un d'eux des yeux il s'aperçoit que celui-ci le regarde/son regard se tourne de nouveau vers lui/le blanc de ses yeux apparaît .... dirigée une nouvelle fois vers la bouche d'eau' (p.12). The negro then lowers his eyes, marking a break from the sequence of horizontal looks to a vertical look and consequently signalling a switch in the focus of the sick man from the negro to the base of the sky-scraper nearby. Still directing the narration, his eye follows the straight line of the building up towards the sky and down again to a point 'exactement à hauteur de son œil' (pp.13-14) where the letter 0 of the word DIOS in the slogan DIOS ES AMOR is written on the building. Above the slogan, painted in the same white paint, is a cross.

Like the previous sequence in the street, the description of the sick man on the hydrant is composed of a formal network of horizontal and vertical lines which draw together, through the crossing of these lines, diverse textual elements. For example, the letter 0 and the cross form the point of 'croisement' between the horizontal look of the sick man and the
vertical line of the skyscraper; the sick man is himself seated on the point of 'croisement' of the vertical tube and horizontal forks of the hydrant; the sick man is also the point of 'croisement' between the eyes of the black man and the white letter 0 and cross on the wall and so on. This composition can also be represented schematically in the following way:

Figure 11

From a consideration of Figures 1 and 11 we can understand more clearly the way in which the narration works in a formal fashion to develop the fictional episode of the sick man in the street. Each of these compositions is an 'assemblage verbal': they are constituted by the combination of diverse textual elements. In this respect they are a development of the practice of the 1960's, albeit a more refined and formal practice (which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter). Two points are particularly noteworthy in connection with these 'assemblages'. The first is a re-stating of conclusions drawn in preceding chapters in this study: each
scene is a reworking or rearrangement of previous elements. For example, the view along the street (Figure 1) is produced from the different shapes mentioned in the opening description of the models' legs; the hydrant sequence (Figure 11) is then constituted by a rearrangement of elements in Figure 1 and will subsequently generate other descriptions and so on. In terms of the construction of Figure 11, the following similarities can be detected between Figures 1 and 11: the horizontal and vertical lines and the shape of the cross; the leaves (cartonneuses et maladives') in Figure 1 transformed into the 'boîtes de carton' and the 'homme malade' in Figure 11; the comparison of the building with 'une orgue' in Figure 1 echoed (implicitly) by the mal functioning organ of the sick man in Figure 11; the notions of seeing ('on peut voir') and not seeing ('l'extrémité se distingue à peine') in Figure 1 transformed into the play of white (the colour of the paint of the 0 and the crucifix) and black (the negro) in Figure 11.

The second point of interest concerns the way in which the elements are connected to form each fictional scene. I have mentioned the fact that these 'assemblages' are like geometric formations composed of a series of lines and shapes. I have also demonstrated the way in which this network of lines is not only constituted by the shapes described in the fiction (the horizontals and verticals of the street, the avenue, the skyscrapers, the cross, the hydrant and so on) but also by the diverse looks of the eye of narration (up, down and across). This relationship between narration and fiction resembles that produced in La Bataille de Pharsale through the triangular composition. Yet, in Les Corps Conducteurs, we can see more clearly how the mobile, impersonal eye is used to establish the associations between elements and thus constitute the
'assemblage verbal' mentioned above. The 'look' is indeed the means by which disparate elements are drawn together to produce the fictional sequences; it is here - in the manner in which the eye is used to constitute the intricate series of verbal associations - that a fundamental aspect of the narration is to be found.

The two scenes discussed above indicate the way in which the lines of focus are an integral part of the construction of the 'assemblages'. For example, in the first scene (Figure 1) the convergence of a number of elements takes place at the point of intersection between the road and avenue, that is, at the 'croisement' between the horizontal look along the street ('il peut voir') and the vertical look up towards the sky ('on peut voir'). Since the text opens with the journey of the sick man towards the hotel and ends when he finally reaches his destination, the 'croisement' between man and hotel (source and destination) is clearly a significant point in the trajectory of the man and the text: it forms a cluster or nucleus of elements which will generate successive fictional sequences. In the second scene (Figure 11) the sick man seated on the hydrant is himself at the point of 'croisement' between a number of elements and it is precisely his diverse looks which draw these elements together to form the fictional composition.

A brief look at the ensuing sequences shows the importance in the construction of narration and fiction alike of the vertical and horizontal lines and the way the text develops through a rearrangement of elements already mentioned. In a new episode a conquistador - surrounded by natives bent over ('le genou à terre'), their heads facing down towards the ground - holds up a crucifix towards the sky (p.14). The sick
man still watches the negro who is now also bent over - 'le buste horizontal' (p.15) - trying to tread down the empty cardboard boxes in the gutter underneath the lorry. (Significantly, there are decorations of a woman's leg - 'une petite jambe de femme .... à demi fléchie, le pied vers le haut' - on his cap and dungarees). In another new episode, the focal point is positioned in an aeroplane looking down vertically at the 'ombre cruciforme (qui) se déplace rapidement sur une surface pelucheuse' (p.15). The geometry here is formed by the cross of the shadow on the ground, the cross of the plane itself, the vertical lines connecting the plane to its shadow and the horizontal lines of the plane and its shadow produced by the plane's progression through space. The vertical perspective from the aeroplane switches to a horizontal view of the course of a river meandering through a jungle (p.16). The cigarette in the sick man's mouth (horizontal object) is 'agité de faibles mouvements de bas en haut' (p.16) (vertical movement). A little boy pulling a toy rabbit attached to a piece of string walks past the sick man on the hydrant. The boy's horizontal progression produces the vertical movement of the rabbit's arms as it beats on a drum (p.17). On his way to the shop with another box, the negro steps over the string which connects the rabbit to the boy's hand (p.20) (thus forming another cross), and so on.

Successive fictional episodes are subsequently developed according to this ceaseless rearrangement of elements. I will mention one further sequence here which illustrates my comments on the function of perspective in the text and its relationship with the 'discours' of the writing. The sequence concerns Poussin's painting of the blind giant Orion walking towards the rising sun (see pp.70, 74, 77-79). The name 'Orion' is
itself produced by a juxtaposition of textual elements: it is an anagram of 'O' and 'noir' which are connected by means of the sick man's successive looks at the negro and the letter 0 on the wall (see Figure 11). Since the letter 0 is written in white paint, the contiguity of 0 and 'noir' signifies that Orion is a combination of white and black. The antitheses white/black, seeing/not seeing are perfectly captured in the major theme of the painting which depicts the blind giant in search of the light.

Other elements from the opening scenes are also to be found in the Orion episode: 'il semble s'agir de brumes matinales' (p.70); 'le géant se trouve partie intégrante du magma de terre, de feuillages, d'eau et de ciel qui l'entoure' (p.77); 'la jambe droite portée en avant' (p.77); 'les nuages .... imitent les circonvolutions intestinales et cartonneuses' (p.78), and so on. The episode is thus a rearrangement of associations established in the narration.

However, the description is particularly instructive in terms of the narrator's comments on the nature of the painting. We are informed that the painting is striking because of the way it appears to highlight its two-dimensionality, its surface rather than its depth: 'Orion ne s'avance pas debout sur un chemin, son corps dans un axe vertical au plan de celui-ci .... Le paysage perd toute dimension perpendiculaire à la toile .... La curieuse disposition des nuages vient encore confirmer au visiteur du musée qu'il ne contemple pas un spectacle à trois dimensions' (pp.77-78). The figure of Orion appears to be part of the décor of the countryside and the sky: he does not progress along the path but seems to disintegrate into a mosaic of colour and form in harmony with those other colours and forms which constitute the scene.
around him.

The fragmentation of Orion has a variety of metaphorical meanings but its particular significance in terms of the above comments on the nature of the painting is clearly as a 'lesson in modernism' for the spectator of the painting: the disintegration of the illusion of three dimensions into the flat space of colour and form. Of course, the lesson not only concerns the imaginary spectator in the museum but also the reader of *Les Corps Conducteurs* who, like the spectator, contemplates the transformation of the illusion of time, action and three-dimensionality into the space of description. Like Poussin's painting, the Orion episode in the text is a composition of formal elements. The flat surface of the painting refers metaphorically to the flat surface of the text we are reading; this latter is traversed by a network of associations constituted not, of course, by visual signs but linguistic signs.

The horizontal and vertical lines of perspective in the text are therefore the imaginary lines connecting diverse textual elements within the space of writing. The looks up, down and across do not constitute a three-dimensional space: they are part of the formal interplay of words within the general construction of the (two-dimensional) composition of the text. Thus the comment concerning perspective and depth in the Poussin painting is also relevant to the text we are reading:

*Quoique les règles de la perspective soient apparemment observées pour suggérer au spectateur la sensation de profondeur, le peintre s'est contradictoirement attaché à multiplier les artifices qui ont pour résultat de détruire cet effet, de façon que le géant se trouve partie intégrante du magma de terre, de feuillages, d'eau et ciel qui l'entoure. (p.77)*

Like the spectator of the painting, the reader of *Les Corps*
Conducteurs finds himself enmeshed not within the illusion of a three-dimensional space but within the network of associations which is constituted by the space of writing.

(ii) Triptyque: The geography of the text

In Triptyque the positioning of the focus and the constitution of the look operates like a game which functions according to specific rules stated in the opening pages of the text. These rules take the form of precisions as to the nature of perspective in a country scene: 'De la grange on peut voir le clocher. Du pied de la cascade on peut aussi voir le clocher mais pas la grange. Du haut de la cascade on peut voir à la fois le clocher et le toit de la grange.' (p.9)

In the title of the novel we can read an announcement of the 'tri-optique' which is made explicit in these precisions. But the specifications as to what can and cannot be seen is significant in terms of the regulation of perspective and the development of the country episode.

According to the definition of perspective, the top of the waterfall is clearly the privileged position: from this vantage-point both the bell-tower and the barn are visible. In fact, the eye of the narration is first positioned from here: 'Couché dans le pré en haut de la cascade, on voit les graminées et les ombelles' (p.9). A further distinction is made concerning this focus: one can either look at the flowers close by or at 'le clocher' in the distance:

En fait on ne peut pas regarder à la fois les ombelles et celui-ci. Si l'on fixe les ombelles, le clocher, dans le lointain, apparaît comme un rectangle flou et gris, étiré en hauteur, surmonté d'un triangle violacé, flou lui aussi .... Si l'on fixe le clocher, les tiges et les fleurs des ombelles se muent à leur tour en formes floues oscillant doucement, dessinant des triangles aigus dont les côtés imprécis se croisent et se disjoignent tour à tour. (pp. 9-10)
Oddly enough, the narration now switches from the focal point 'en haut de la cascade' and does not return to this position. What, then, is the significance of the above distinction? Since the narration subsequently alternates between the other two focal points ('la grange', 'au pied de la cascade'), we might read it as a prescription for the ensuing development of the text: it is not possible to achieve an all-embracing view of the countryside from an elevated position since one's vision is divided into a dual focus.

A further precision relating to the choice of focus 'en haut de la cascade' is consistent with this reading and is also significant in terms of the subsequent inter-cutting of the other two points of view. The roof of 'le clocher' is described as 'violacée' whilst 'les ombelles' are covered with 'un fin duvet blanc' which shrouds them in 'un halo lumineux .... un brouillard neigeux' (p.9). Since it is not possible to focus clearly on 'les ombelles' and 'le clocher' at the same time, we can deduce that either the dark object ('le clocher') is in focus (in which case the white is not) or, conversely, the white objects ('les ombelles') are in focus, (in which case the dark is not).

As regards the other two positions of perspective, the initial definitions are again significant in terms of the subsequent narration. One cannot see the barn from the foot of the waterfall, which implies that neither can one see the foot of the waterfall from the barn. Taken in connection with the above precisions of focus 'en haut de la cascade', this definition lends itself to the following reading: what is 'clear' in one episode will be 'dark' in the other and vice-versa. The two sequences ('la grange', 'au pied de la cascade')
will therefore progress according to this functioning of opposites: 'on peut voir/on ne peut pas voir', light/dark.

This formal organisation of sequences corresponds to a feature of the later texts which François Jost terms the 'structuration' of the description: the development of each sequence is both structured by the preceding composition and structures the succeeding composition. My own analysis subscribes to Jost's basic premise whilst expanding his argument to demonstrate how this 'structuration' is dependent on the rules of perspective outlined above. An examination of the two sequences reveals that it is precisely this formal organisation (composition through antithesis) which determines their subtle and complex interaction and development. The following schema traces the principal 'étapes' in the development of each sequence.

1. La Grange

(a) quelques déchirures s'ouvrent dans la couche des affiches superposées. L'une d'elles .... semble avoir été agrandie à dessein. (pp. 10-11)

(b) Il faut un moment pour que l'œil collé à la fente que l'on a agrandie se fasse à la demi-obscurité qui règne dans la grange et distingue les objets. (p.11)

(c) A l'intérieur de la grange, dans la pénombre, l'œil d'abord aveugle commence peu à peu à distinguer des formes

2. Au Pied de la Cascade

(a) Au pied de la cascade s'est creusé un bassin dont on ne voit pas le fond .... à peu près circulaire .... A mesure que la profondeur augmente l'eau verdit d'abord, puis devient d'un bleu de lessive .... presque noir au centre du bassin. (p.11)

(b) Après le bassin au pied de la cascade le cours de la rivière .... contourne le village avant de revenir parallèlement au mur de l'église et passer sous le pont. Les têtes et les bustes des deux garçons penchés à plat ventre sur le parapet se reflètent sur la surface calme du canal .... A l'intérieur des deux silhouettes on peut voir le fond de la rivière, les cailloux .... et un cercle de tonneau rouillé. (p.13)

(c) (Sur) le fond de la rivière .... (il y a un) broc, une casserole émaillée bleue percée d'un trou au pourtour noir .... Il faut un long moment pour distinguer
mouvantes, l'éclat d'une chair blanche tranchant sur du noir. Les deux côtés rapprochés de la fente limitent ..., le champ de vision. (p.14)

(d) Lorsque le bassin de l'homme recule, on entre­voit pendant une fraction de seconde son membre lui­sant et cylindrique sortant à demi de l'épaisse toison noire entre les cuisses repliées, presque bleues, comme du lait, et phosphor­escentes dans la pénombre jaunâtre de la grange. (p.15)

(e) L'épaisse toison noire où le membre luisant continue son va-et-vient contraste avec la blancheur lisse des fesses et des cuisses. La base du membre raidi et musculeux disparaît dans un buisson de poils aux reflets roux. (p.16)

(d) Se déplacant rapidement en oblique dans le lit de la rivière une seconde truite sort de sous le pont, hésite, revient sur la gauche ..., repart d'un mouvement vif et s'immobilise finalement. (p.17)

(e) La truite file comme une flèche et disparaît en amont dans la zone qu'occulte le reflet aveuglant du ciel. (p.18)

A comparison of the two sequences shows how the fragments of each are structured according to the 'rules' noted in the triple perspective:

(see Page 150A)

In 2(b) one can see the bottom of the river because of the darkness (provided by 'les silhouettes'). The circle ('de tonneau') is visible within the form of 'les silhouettes'.

In 1(c) one cannot see clearly in the barn because of the darkness. The 'silhouettes'
In 2(a) vision becomes progressively more obscure until total darkness at the centre of the circular 'bassin'.

In 1(b) vision becomes progressively less obscure as the eye begins slowly to distinguish objects through the circle ('la fente').
are visible within the form of the circle ('la fente').

In 2(c) the trout goes into 'le broc' next to which is the blue pan with the black hole.

In 1(d) the phallus comes out of a black hole between blue thighs.  

In 1(e) the base of the phallus disappears. The phallus is continually moving in and out.

In 2(d) the second trout appears from beneath the bridge and finally becomes immobile.

In 2(e) the sequence is terminated when the trout moves into a zone in which the opposites light/dark are synthesized within the oxymoron 'le reflet aveuglant'.

The 'structuration' of the narration and development of the fiction is thus regulated by a formal play of balance and antithesis of 'signifiants'. As we have seen, this activity is prescribed in the opening definition of the triple perspective which therefore functions as the rules of the game of arrangement of textual elements. Simon does not use the initial geography of the country scene to represent the context of the action which subsequently takes place but as a topography for the construction of the text.

(iii) Leçon de Choses: Absence and Presence

In Leçon de Choses the décor of a country scene is once again important in the process of 'structuration' of the description and direction of the vision. I will limit the following discussion to a brief analysis of the opening pages of the second section of the text entitled 'Expansion'.

Having perused the picture of a tempest at sea, the eye of the narration leads us from the wall, on which the picture is pinned, through the adjacent window which looks out on a country scene. The eye focusses on 'un petit bois à la corne duquel débouche un chemin' (pp.15-16) and follows the path
towards a village. Before it disappears, the path crosses a stream 'dont par endroits on voit luire la surface au milieu des prés' (p.16). In the same setting, three women and a young girl in old-fashioned clothes can be seen crossing an orchard.

A transition introduces a new sequence in which a group of soldiers in a ruined house is surrounded by an invisible enemy. In this second sequence, the country scene outside the house is evidently the same as that in which the women and child cross the orchard: we note the presence of 'la corne du petit bois', 'le chemin', 'le pont' and 'le ponceau'. The impersonal eye is also positioned from within the frame of the window, that is, at the place where a gun is now trained upon the invisible enemy. However, there are differences between the two sequences. As in Triptyque, the 'structure­tion' of the narration is determined according to an imbrica­tion of the two sequences: each complements the other accord­ing to the play of 'on peut voir'/'on ne peut pas voir'.

Despite interruptions, the military sequence develops in the following way:

(i) Lorsque le tireur écarter la tête et cesse de fixer la mire à travers l'œilleton de visée, il peut voir le calendrier des Postes suspendu sur le mur. (p.17)

(ii) les bords du chemin et le chemin lui-même sont par­semés d'objets, de débris éparpillés, comme les épaves abandonnées par quelque rivière en décrue .... En regardant plus attentivement, on reconnaît des objets familiers .... des baluchons, des linges. (p.17)

(iii) Entouré sur le calendrier par les colonnes de noms de saints ou de martyrs, le groupe insouciant des pro­meneuses continue à dévaler le coteau. (p.18)

(iv) La ligne imaginaire qui passe par l'œilleton et la mire aboutit à la corne du petit bois (p.19)

(v) une main pousse l'épaule du tireur qui quitte son poste .... Le nouveau venu essaie...de diriger le canon de l'arme sur le ponceau où sont entassés et
enchêvêtres un tombereau renversé, une herse de fer, une moissonneuse et quelques autres instruments aratoires pesants. (p.21)

(vi) Le gradé .... choisit un (livre) qu'il place sous la béquille. Il fait alors tourner plusieurs fois le manchon, corrigeant la hausse, abaissant ou élevant la crosse, de sorte que la ligne de mire est dirigée tantôt sur la corne du bois, tantôt sur le ponceau, après quoi il descend de la table sur laquelle se couche de nouveau le tireur. (p.22)

(vii) Après le départ du gradé, le tireur inoccupé attire à lui l'un des livres restés éparpillés sur la table .... Le livre a pour titre LEÇONS DE CHOSES. (pp.22-23)

The countryside in this sequence is similar to that described in the sequence of the walk. Yet the differences between the two sequences are significant in that they are produced through antithesis. For example, the most notable absences in the military scene are 'le verger à l'abandon' and the women and child wearing 'des robes claires'. Visible instead are the men in the house and the gun '(qui) se détache en noir' (p.17). Apart from the obvious antithesis of women/men and white/black, there is a further play between the motifs of the fresh, the unspoilt and life (in the walkers episode) and those of the used and death (in the military episode). 'Le verger à l'abandon', with its 'arbres fruitiers', implicitly signifies the Garden of Eden (on the level of the 'signifié') and the notion of virginity (on the level of the 'signifiant' : 'verger/vierge'). On the other hand, the gun in the military episode clearly introduces the theme of death, while the abandoned objects mentioned in (ii) above are signs of the old and the used. Indeed, these objects themselves strewn across the path (amongst which are 'des baluchons, des linges') constitute the antithesis of the clean, white dresses worn by the women and child. As they are compared to 'les épaves abandonnées par quelque rivière en décrue', they can be
interpreted as the inverted reflection of the women and child in the stream which is mentioned in the walkers episode.

The development of the two episodes functions according to a play and transformation of 'vocables' from one to the other. A further consideration of the development of the military episode illustrates the precise nature of this imbrication. Taking (i) in connection with (iv), we can deduce that 'le tireur' has been looking through the sight of the gun at 'la corne du petit bois' (that is, the source of the path and the position of the invisible enemy). Taking (i) in connection with (iii), we see that he turns away to look at a picture of the walkers on the wall. This is not merely an example of the device, often used by Simon, of the representation of one fiction within another (see Chapter 7); it is also significant in terms of the imbrication of the two fictions. What 'le tireur' cannot see outside, he can see inside in the form of a representation. There is a sense here in which the women become equated with the enemy in that both are conceived as an absence in the décor of the military sequence: what is invisible (the absence) is made visible through representation.

In (v) and (vi) the attempted realignment of the sight of the gun causes a movement in focus between the wood and the culvert, that is, between the poles of source (of the path) and destination (of the path, of the old implements). The focus of the gun thus follows the same path as the eye of narration in the walkers episode, from 'la corne du bois' to 'le ruisseau'/'ponceau'. This time, however, there are no walkers outside but the presence inside of a book, used as support for the movement between the two points. The journey of the walkers is thus substituted by the book which signifies, once again, an absence being filled by a fictional representation.
In (vii) the attention of 'le tireur' wanders away for the second time from the gun-sight focussed on the scene outside. This time, however, he does not turn to the picture on the calendar but to the book lying next to him on the table, that is, to the substitute for the walkers. The connections between absence and representation (mentioned above) allow us to interpret this switch in focus both as the presence of one fictional episode within another and as a metaphorical reference to the reader's own activity of reading, considered here as the substitution of an absence with the world of fiction.

The interaction between the military and walkers episodes thus resembles the relationship between the sequences of 'la grange' and 'le pied de la cascade' in Triptyque. Each of the objects on which the camera-eye of narration focusses is directed according to the complex process of 'structuration' which guides the narration in general. The slow 'pans' across the countryside (in both episodes), the changing directions of the gaze of 'le tireur', the shifts in focus of the gun-sight are all constituted by the formal play governing the inter-relationship of sequences, that is, the exchange and transformation of 'signifiants' from one sequence to the other. This process is indicative of the intricate organisation of the three fictional episodes in Leçon de Choses.

The above analyses of the development of perspective and voice in the texts since La Bataille de Pharsale outline a noticeable movement towards a strictly formalised practice of writing. Voice becomes impersonal, no longer attributable to discrete characters but transformed into the voice of the
narration itself. The baroque stratification of temporality is similarly collapsed into a flat, uniform, non-stratified space occupied by the present discourse of the writing. The 'eye' of the narration is now determined by the impersonal voice that speaks, with the result that perspective is guided by purely formal considerations. Each object on which the eye focusses is an element in the *formal play* which governs the work of the narration. The 'look' draws together the disparate elements, produces a network of associations within the description and produces the fiction through the formal interplay of 'vocables'. My analyses have demonstrated how the fictional development of episodes is dependent on this interplay. Thus, in the new, formalised, impersonal narration of the later texts, eye and voice are completely integrated and function in such a way as to subject the development of each fictional episode to the formal play of the narration.
6.1 WRITING AS FORMAL NECESSITY

In the previous chapter I discussed the more recent transformation of Simon's technique and demonstrated the way in which perspective and voice are fully directed by the formal practice of the writing. Simon's comments on his recent work stress the formal rigour which guides the elaboration of the text. He talks of the formal necessities of the narration and contrasts this practice of writing with what he considers the purely arbitrary logic of the traditional novel:

Si la seule règle qui préside à cette succession des éléments, c'est seulement cette nécessité "vériste" .... de suivre dans le temps des horloges le déroulement d'une action (un personnage se trouve par exemple dans sa chambre, puis descend l'escalier, puis entame une discussion avec sa concierge, puis sort dans la rue, puis rencontre un autre personnage, etc.) l'écriture, alors, ne narre finalement rien du tout puisque, nous le savons, cette chambre, ce premier personnage qui n'ont pas d'existence "réelle" (on prétendra peut-être qu'ils sont "copiés d'après nature" ....), n'ont alors même pas d'existence formelle.

If these comments on the arbitrary nature of the realist novel are controversial (since it can be argued that all narratives, viewed from a semiological perspective, are composed of a formal system of signs\(^2\)), they nevertheless reveal a concern with formal composition which is totally alien to the realist writer. Simon expresses the desire to construct a text in which each element is necessary, in which each element is a link in the purely formal logic of the narration.

Simon often compares his formal compositions with those of the visual artist since the overall construction of the text and the integration of its diverse parts is regulated by the artist's concern with a formal balance and juxtaposition of elements.\(^3\) He is also fond of invoking the analogy with
mathematics: his formal practice of writing is like the practice in mathematics of the 'intersection' and 'réunion' of a certain number of 'ensembles' 'dont divers éléments offrent des qualités communes.' In these different ways he attempts to describe his writing as a rigorous mechanism for the elaboration of the narration. It is this rigour and systematization of a practice discovered and developed during the 1960's which characterizes the mode of narration in *Les Corps Conducteurs, Triptyque* and *Leçon de Choses*: the production of the text through a writing functioning according to the 'rules' of formal necessity. I have already analysed certain aspects of this formal system at work in these novels. The present chapter develops this discussion and examines in more detail the complex network of metaphorical and metonymic associations which constitute the text.

6.2 GENERATION THROUGH DESCRIPTION

If the text is produced according to a purely formal logic, what motivates its initial choice of direction? How is the arbitrary to be abolished? In his remarkable analysis of *La Bataille de Pharsale*, Ricardou demonstrates how the Valéry poem, used as 'exergue' to Part 1 of the novel, is no mere embellishment of the text but actually generates the ensuing elements in the text. In other words, the narration is initially motivated by the writer's consideration, on the level of the 'signifié' and 'signifiant', of the words which constitute the poem. Simon adopts Lacan's description of words as 'noeuds de signification'; the narration is therefore an exploration of the network of meanings opened up by the initial grouping of 'vocables'. In Ricardou's terminology, these words are the generators of the text.
The novels which succeed *La Bataille de Pharsale* are not prefaced by an 'exergue'. More recently, Simon's answer to the problem of how to motivate the text has been to explore the paths opened up by the initial description; that is, to make the description the generator of the succeeding elements in the same way that the Valéry poem fulfils that rôle in *La Bataille de Pharsale*. If we accept Philippe Hamon's analysis of the means by which the 'lecteur moyen' habitually recognizes and identifies a description, Simon's use of description can be seen as a radical transformation of its traditional rôle. According to Hamon, for the reader 'la description:

- Forme un tout autonome, une sorte de "bloc sémantique".
- Est plus ou moins en "hors-d'oeuvre" au récit.
- S'insère librement dans le récit.
- Est dépourvue de signes ou de marques spécifiques.
- N'est l'objet d'aucune contrainte a priori.'

Most commonly, 'une description .... "tranche" sur le récit, le récit "s'arrête", le décor "passe au premier plan"'.

Simon's use of description as the means by which the narration is initially generated (and developed) is therefore an inversion of the conventional distinction between description and action; description is no longer an embellishment of or an interruption in the narrative but its very means of propulsion.

Simon recognizes his debt to Proust for this mode of textual production through description. He regards *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* as 'un monument où la description .... est non plus "statique" mais dynamique, où c'est elle qui travaille à plein tandis que l'action .... se trouve repoussée à l'arrière-plan'. The technique can be termed a 'description
in action" since, by propelling the narration and generating the fictional episodes, description adopts the rôle formerly played by action as the dynamic force in the narrative.

Simon's comments on the construction of his more recent texts draw attention to the use of this technique:

ce que j'ai tenté .... c'est de pousser encore le processus amorcé par Proust et de faire de la description (autrefois ornement-parasite, même, aux yeux de certains) le moteur même, ou si vous préférez le générateur de l'action, de sorte que la fiction ainsi produite en devienne, dans une certaine mesure, justifiée (ou plutôt motivée) et perde en même temps son caractère arbitraire et impérialiste puisque, montrant elle-même ses sources, son mécanisme générateur, elle se dénonce sans cesse comme fiction au fur et à mesure de sa production. *

The motivation of the text through description is a means of revealing the material process of production of the text. The motivation, generation and production of the narrative fictions are all features of the narration in the texts prior to La Bataille de Pharsale which are now in the forefront of the formalized practice of the 1970's. An examination of the opening descriptions of Les Corps Conducteurs and Leçon de Choses shows how these function not as 'hors d'oeuvre' to the narrative but as generators of the text.

(i) Language as Conductor

Let us return to the opening two sentences of Les Corps Conducteurs to look more closely at the description of models' legs in the shop-window:

Dans la vitrine une dizaine de jambes de femmes identiques sont alignées, le pied en haut, la cuisse sectionnée à l'aïne reposant sur le plancher, le genou légèrement fléchi, comme si on les avait empruntées à un de ces bataillons de danseuses, dans le moment où elles lèvent la jambe avec ensemble, et exposées là, telles quelles, ou encore, monotones et multipliées, à l'un de ces dessins de publicité représentant une jolie fille en combinaison en train d'enfiler un bas, assise sur un pouf ou le rebord d'un lit défait, le buste renversé en arrière, la jambe sur laquelle elle achève
As I have suggested, the initial scenario is not the context or introduction for the subsequent fiction but functions as the means of its production. Here the description of the legs is a 'groupe de mots engendrants', the veritable 'corps conducteurs' of the text which will lead us, in the words of Sylvère Lotringer, across 'ce tissu de métaphores et synonymes (signifiés), calembour et anagrammes (signifiants) dont la prolifération réglée fonde désormais la matérialité du langage "romanesque". The following analysis traces certain paths in this network of meanings which lead out from the description above.

(a) jambes/alignées: In a discussion of Les Corps Conducteurs at the conference at Cérisy, Jean-Claude Raillon argued that les objets qui semblent générer le texte sont aussi bien générés par le texte .... il y a deux bases de production littérale désignant la littéralité même de l'écriture: à la fois le jambage et la ligne .... ces deux signifiants vont servir de base aux transformations.

According to Raillon's subtle precision, the words 'jambes' and 'alignées' are thus themselves generated from a consideration of the purely material aspect of the activity of writing. They will, in turn, generate other fictional elements in the text: 'alignées' produces the 'lignes' which (as I have shown) constitute the 'geometry' of the fiction; the shape of the 'jambes' produces a metaphorical chain comprising the negro (stepping over the string), Orion (stepping out on the path), the natives (kneeling in front of the conquistador with the cross) and others.

(b) jambes/pied/cuisse/aine/genou/buste/pattes/langue/moule:
The numerous parts of the body mentioned in the first two sentences generate the important motif of the body. In the next five pages alone the motif is considerably developed through - main, visage, dents, seins, paume, doigts, ventre, torse, chairs, diaphragme, pubis, la paroi abdominale, organes, tuyau, lobes, chevilles, tête, pénis, cou-de-pied, mâchoires, muscles, tempes, peau, cheveux, cou, dos, poitrines, yeux, pupille, joue, bouche, paupières. As in the description of the woman at the window in *Le Palace*, 'le corps' is both the human body and, in a metaphorical sense, the body of the text. In other words, the parts of the human body are the words which conduct the narration - through association - from element to element.

The fragmentation of the body (introduced through 'la cuisse sectionnée à l'aïne') is also a major theme in the text embracing: the cross-sections of the human torso, a skyscraper and an aeroplane; the malfunctioning body of the sick man progressing painfully towards his hotel; the disintegration of Orion; discord amongst a body of delegates at a conference of writers in South America caused by the interruption of a young revolutionary and, in the same episode, the sick man's fragmentary comprehension of the speeches in Spanish; the fragmentation of a body of soldiers in a South American jungle. In terms of the relationship between the body and language, the parts (organs/words) are continually fragmenting and reassembling to form new 'ensembles' according to the process of 'intersection' and 'réunion' of words.

(c) bataillons de danseuses: Through a process that Jost terms 'dé-métaphorisation', the word 'bataillon', used metaphorically in the above phrase, will later be taken literally to generate the episode of the 'bataillon' of soldiers lost
and exhausted in the jungle.

(d) monotones et multipliées: This phrase generates the theme of proliferation which can also be detected in the opening pages through 'dizaine', 'douzaine', 'entassée', 'accumulation', 'masse'. The phrase 'la monotone errance de lilliputiennes multitudes' (p.37) is clearly produced through a re-working of these opening 'vocables'.

(e) combinaison: The negroes are 'revêtus de combinaisons .... occupés à décharger un camion au bord du trottoir' (p.11). In another sense, lights blink incessantly, forming and reforming 'des suites de combinaisons variées, mais limitées' (p.83). This latter sense of the word 'combinaison' refers metaphorically to the work of the narration which progresses according to a combination of diverse elements.

(f) combinaison/appareil: After a telephone conversation between the sick man and his mistress, we read the following description: 'Le tuyau métallique et annelé qui relie l'appareil au combiné se balance encore' (p.60). In a return to this sequence, the telephone is described as 'un corps' which is constructed through an 'assemblage' of 'vocables' to be found in the opening sentences:

Le tuyau métallique et annelé qui relie le combiné au corps de l'appareil décrit une boucle immobile. Le corps de l'appareil consiste en une boîte faite d'une matière plastique .... Il suffit d'introduire une pièce dans une fente (pp.79-80)

(g) enfiler: Through a process that Lotringer has termed 'ce lent déploiement signifiant' - by means of which a 'signifiant' is gradually transformed during the course of the narration - 'enfiler' will generate 'enfilade' (p.9), 'filet' (pp.16, 57, 112), 'fil' (pp.29, 41, 46), 'ficelle' (pp. 29, 67), 'se faufilent' (p.36), 's'effilocher' (pp.41-42), 'effilée' (p,108) and so on. The 'threads' of the text are
precisely these 'signifants' whose gradual transformation is
fundamental in the development of the narration. 20

(h) sur .... le rebord d'un lit défait: This phrase recurs
in the description of the lovers: 'sur le lit défait les
deux corps nus étendus ont maintenant retrouvé les couleurs
de la chair dans la lumière: ocrée, rosée ou laiteuse' (p.67).

(i) le bas haut levé: Through a play on words on 'bas'
(stocking/low) the antithesis low/high is produced which, as
we know, operates to direct the eye of the narration.

(j) un petit chat ou un petit chien: In a passage taken from
an encyclopedia, the definition of a serval is juxtaposed with
certain star constellations: 'Serval: grand chat sauvage au
pelage fauve .... Les étoiles aux noms de dieux ou d'animaux
fabuleux: .... la Vierge, l'hydre, le Chien, Orion' (p.55).
The 'chat' and 'chien' also generate the motif of animals,
which will include the rabbit, serpent, birds and heraldic
beasts.

(k) poil frisé/langue rose/moulées: This 'assemblage' generates
the description of the female body - 'entre les cuisses
blanches entrouvertes, le pubis bombé, à peine ombré par les
poils soyeux, s'ouvre en une ligne rose pâle' (p.69) - and
the act of cunnilingus - 'Perdue dans l'obscurc immensité,
la pointe de la langue cherche au fond de la toison la saillie
du clitoris' (p.57). It is also important to note the rela-
tionship between language and sexuality which is introduced
here through the dual meaning of the word 'langue'; the
exploration of 'le corps' (of the woman/of the text) is
through 'la langue' (the tongue/language). 21

Another important feature of the opening sentences concerns
the balance and structure of the description rather than the
actual words used. Three alternatives are introduced by the
word 'ou': 'bataillons de danseuses .... ou .... une jeune
fille .... en train d'enfiler un bas', 'un pouf ou le rebord
d'un lit défait', 'un petit chat ou un petit chien'. On a
structural level, these alternatives operate as what Ricardou
terms 'coupures' within a sequence: they disrupt the linear-
ity of the text by dividing the sequence into individual
segments. On the level of generation, this structural
feature is equally capable of influencing the fiction as
those 'vocables' analysed above. After all, is not the
perspective of the narration (equally a structural charac-
teristic of the text) also productive in terms of its
relationship with the fiction? Hence, the coupling of two
terms is surely significant in view of the inordinate number
of couples which are subsequently mentioned in the text: deux
branches horizontales (p.11), deux nègres (p.11), deux
gigantesques nègresses (pp.22, 71), deux palmiers (p.34),
deux animaux hérauldiques (p.34), deux pans froissés de la
chemise (p.46), deux mains .... deux index (p.47), ses deux
souliers (p.48), par couples (p.55), les deux corps emmêlés
(p.56), deux groupes d'étoiles .... dessinant deux triangles
(p.57), les deux corps nus (p.67), deux torses .... deux
cœurs (p.68), les deux souffles (p.69), deux autres per-
sonnages (p.74), deux anémones (p.99), un couple royal
(p.99), deux personnes debout .... sur une des deux voies
(p.106), un couple âgé .... deux jeunes mariés (p.110), le
couple d'amants (p.131) and so on.

In addition to the abundance of couples on the level of
the 'signifié', there is a proliferation of words generated
solely through the gradual transformation of the 'signifiant'
'couple'. From 'couple' to 'coupole' (p.56) and the two bodies 'accouplées' (p.57) is a short step, but we can also trace the 'déploiement signifiant' through 'coup', 'cou', 'couvert', 'couvercle', 'couche', 'couché', 'accouché', 'coulées', 'couleurs', 'accolées', 'col', 'colonne' and so on. The gradual modification of a single 'signifiant' is a fascinating aspect of the play with language in the text.

The radical transformation of the traditional function of description can now be viewed in its proper perspective. Description does not provide the context for and embellishment of the action, remaining peripheral to the main development of the narrative (indeed, immobilising the narrative through its 'static' quality) but is, instead, productive in that it is the very motor mechanism of the text. The development of the narration and the construction of the fictions are thus guided by the writer's exploration of language generated through description.

(ii) Leçon de Mots

The title of the opening section of Leçon de Choses - 'Générique' - explicitly announces the generative function of the initial description. Furthermore, this section refines the technique of Les Corps Conducteurs: 'Générique' not only contains - within its description of a room in a dilapidated house - the elements which will generate the three fictional episodes of the text but actually comments on the way in which this process functions:

La description (la composition) peut se continuer (ou être complétée) à peu près indéfiniment selon la minutie apportée à son exécution, l'entraînement des métaphores proposées, l'addition d'autres objets visibles dans leur entier ou fragmentés par l'usure, le temps, un choc .... sans compter les diverses hypothèses que peut susciter le spectacle. Ainsi il n'a pas été dit si .... une
Here, the narrator gives a clear indication of the manner in which the narration will develop: the fictions to be recounted will not only be generated through the description of objects already mentioned but also through objects which have not been mentioned ('Ainsi il n'a pas été dit ....')

Two of the three fictions which subsequently appear in 'Expansion' can easily be located in the initial description of the room in 'Générale'. The walk, whose 'décor' will subsequently be the cliffs, is produced through 'des métaphores proposées' in the description of the crumbling wall and flaking wall-paper: 'Au-dessous du minuscule et immobile déferlement de vagues végétales qui se poursuivent sans fin sur le galon de papier fané, l'archipel crayeux des morceaux de plâtre se répartit en îlots d'inégales grandeurs comme les pans détachés d'une falaise et qui se fracassent à son pied.' (p.10). The second episode - the two masons in the process of demolishing a room (the same room?) - is evidently generated by means of one of the 'diverses hypothèses que peut susciter le spectacle'.

The explanation of the third fictional episode - the soldiers trapped in a dilapidated house by an invisible enemy - is not so straightforward. The setting is a repetition of the room in 'Générale'. But why the soldiers? What motivates the production of a military episode rather than any other? Jost poses these questions in his analysis of Leçon de Choses. In a section entitled 'Motivation des structures narratives?', he asks rhetorically 'quels sont les moyens qu'a le scripteur de neutraliser l'arbitraire du récit?' Referring to the 'double mode de constitution' mentioned in the opening pages ('métaphore
et l'intervention progressive d'objets "invisibles", c'est à
dire non encore décrits\(^{25}\), he maintains that it is only
later in the text - in 'Expansion' - that the motivation of
the military episode becomes apparent, for the masons are
described as '(a)rmés de truelles' (p.24). He interprets
the method of motivation in the following way: 'd'une part, la
scène du "Générique" est reprise et complétée par l'adjonction
d'objets non encore décrits, d'autre part c'est une nouvelle
fois la métaphore qui est l'instrument de la description
("armés").\(^{26}\)

One can see the logic of Jost's argument: the method of
generation prescribed in 'Générique' accounts for the indirect
motivation of the military episode, that is, through an object
not yet mentioned. Yet this interpretation raises more prob­
lems than it solves. The expression 'armés de truelles' (p.24)
appears after the first mention of the military episode (p.17).
If we are to accept Jost's interpretation, we must therefore
accept the notion that the military episode is pre-structured,
that is, already known before its supposed generator. This
would surely be contrary to the notion of production of the
fictional episodes. It is more likely (and certainly more in
keeping with the notion of production) that the expression
'armés de truelles' is itself generated by the military episode
rather than vice-versa since the word 'arme' has already
appeared several times in connection with the soldiers (see
pp. 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24), the final occasion immediately
prior to its inclusion in the mason episode. Furthermore,
Jost's version of the motivation of the military episode runs
counter to Simon's own explanation given in a recent interview:

\[
\text{je suis simplement parti de la description d'une pièce en ruine dans une maison que je possède dans le Midi,}
\]
description que j'avais faite pour une commande de Maeght. Ces deux pages ..., se terminent de la façon suivante: "La description (la composition) peut se continuer ..., les diverses hypothèses que peut susciter le spectacle".

Alors, ma foi, une fois envoyé ce texte à Maeght, je me suis dit: "Mais puisque tu as écrit ça: fais-le! ... Concrétise-le! ..." Et cela a donné les trois fictions dont nous avons parlé: les soldats, les promeneurs, les maçons.27

Simon affirms the fact that the motivation of all three fictional episodes lies in 'Générique'. The self-reflecting method of generation presented in this opening sequence must therefore be understood in a way compatible with this consideration. The final two sentences of 'Générique' are clearly of importance in this respect owing to the following contradiction: what has not been mentioned by the narrator is immediately mentioned (albeit in the form of a hypothesis):

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, 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. 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. (p.11).

In other words, by the very fact of mentioning what has not been mentioned, (by making the hypothesis concrete in language), the second light-bulb, the shadows, smells and sounds are now all equally capable of generating the subsequent fictions as those objects already described. The military episode is produced through a consideration of both what has and what has not been said (as Jost points out) but what has not been said is, in effect, no different to what has been said by virtue of itself being mentioned.

What we are told is there in the dilapidated room of 'Générique' is the following: 'Du plafond pend une ampoule
de faible puissance (on peut sans être aveuglé en fixer le filament) vissée sur une douille de cuivre ternie' (p.10).

The opening description of the military episode is clearly generated through a resemblance of 'signifiés' and 'signifiants': 'Lorsque le tireur écarte la tête et cesse de fixer la mire à travers l'oeilleton de visée ....', 'A l'extrémité du canon de l'arme est vissé un cône percé de trous' (p.17).

Connecting the two descriptions are the common motif of seeing/not seeing, the common 'vocables' 'fixer' and 'vissé(e)', the play on words 'vissée/visée' and the double meaning of 'douille' (holder of a light-bulb/case of a cartridge).

What we are told might be there in the room are the shadows on the floor, one of which could be cast by the gun manned by 'le tireur'. Invisible (i.e. not described) in 'Générique', the gun is described in the following way in 'Expansion': 'L'arme se détache en noir sur le fond lumineux du paysage' (p.17), that is, produced from the play with light and shade of the shadows on the floor of the room in 'Générique'. The elongated shadow which appears to be cast by the figure in the doorway might instead (or also) be that of the gun: the word 'échassière' - signifying the shadow's 'long-legged' appearance - is perfectly applicable to the shape of the gun-support as it is later described in "Expansion": 'Un peu en arrière le tube de poussée des gaz est enserré par une bague d'acier où viennent se réunir les deux jambes du bipied en V renversé' (pp.17-18).

The gun is therefore constructed from what is and what might be in the room, that is, from what has been and what has not been said. Yet, as I have suggested, there is no real difference between what is definitely in the room and
what is a hypothesis since all objects in 'Générique' (whether real or hypothetical) are ultimately articulated in language. 'Générique' is not the representation of a real room, hence there is no fixed number of objects in the room which the narrator will describe. In fact, the narrator has informed us that 'la description (la composition) peut se continuer .... à peu près indéfiniment' and has furnished us with the conventions or rules by which this process can be achieved: not according to the supposed 'reality' of the room but 'selon .... l'entraînement des métaphores proposées' etc. 'Générique' is precisely what the title suggests it is: a group of words which will generate the text.

In effect, 'Générique' enunciates in a double fashion the 'leçon de choses' by which the text will be produced since it acts as a mechanism for generating the narration (through 'métaphores proposées' etc.) while, at the same time, drawing attention to this mechanism through an articulation of its own mode of procedure. Leçon de Choses is therefore both a novel and a manual containing the mode of construction of a novel (i.e. itself). Like the titles of other novels by Simon, Leçon de Choses has a double meaning since it refers to the 'double aspect' of the text, the fiction and the narration which produces it.

Any attempt to read 'Générique' as a representation of a 'real' room is undermined by the knowledge that the description of the room could continue indefinitely and that objects which might be there are as real as objects which are there, not in terms of their pretensions to 'vraisemblance' but in terms of their ability to generate further elements in the text. With this in mind, it is interesting to return to the description
of the gun in 'Expansion' ('L'arme se détache en noir sur le fond lumineux du paysage') for we discover that it is not the gun which produces the shadow on the floor of the room but, on the contrary, the shadow (the play with light and shade) which produces the gun. The 'hypothetical' shadow generates an object hitherto invisible (i.e. not yet described) in a manner contradictory to our knowledge of the real world but in accordance with the 'leçon de choses' prescribed in 'Générique'.

A closer consideration of the play with light and shade illustrates the generation of other elements in the military episode. If the original description of the light bulb in 'Générique' can only provide the initial sparks to the military episode (by playing on the words 'fixer', 'vissée', 'douille') but can not provide sufficient light to clarify the whole scene, this can be attributed to the fact that the light bulb is of 'faible puissance'. However, when the ('hypothetical') second light-bulb is introduced into the description - 'il n'a pas été dit si .... une seconde ampoule plus forte n'éclaire pas la scène, ce qui expliquerait la présence d'ombres ....' - it metaphorically 'sheds more light' (i.e. allows the generation of more elements) onto the military episode in the following way: through producing the shadows which in turn produce the legs of the gun; through illuminating the 'carrelage' and the (hypothetical) person in the doorway which produce, respectively, the 'concert de caquetages' heard outside the house (p.19) and the soldier who is 'debout dans l'encadrement de (la porte)' (p.24) at the moment a bomb explodes; through the 'vocables' 'deuxe ampoule' which, through a play on words, produce the 'deux
poules mortes' that the soldier brings into the room (p.19).

'Générique' is a more complex version of the opening description in Les Corps Conducteurs. It is both a description which will generate the text as a whole (through the transformation of initial elements) and a self-reflecting dramatisation of that process. By informing us that the description of the room could continue indefinitely - according to 'l'entraînement des métaphores proposées' and so on - the narrator not only undermines the mimetic illusion but also suggests that the objects which subsequently appear in the room derive their visible presence in the text from their linguistic relations with objects already described (that is, words already mentioned). The potential number of additional objects in the room is infinite because what is seen is generated by what has been said (and not from what is there 'in reality'). This specific relationship established between words and objects makes it clear that objects in the text are not concrete objects (that is, equivalent to their referents in the world) but themselves no more than words generated by other words. In which case, we might re-name the 'leçon de choses' as a 'leçon de mots'.

6.3 THE MECHANISATION OF THE NARRATION

(1) Transition and Structuration

In the novels of the 1970's the opening descriptions initiate the verbal game that will constitute the text. This game will consist of the transformation and modification of elements to produce new 'ensembles' according to the juxtaposition and 'enchaînement' of 'vocables'. The practice that I located in the texts of the 1960's - the process of metaphor/metonymy - is therefore fundamental to the construction of
these texts; but, in keeping with the general formalisation of technique in these novels, it has been transformed into a rigorous machine for the construction of the text. In other words, the modification of metaphorically and metonymically-related elements to produce diverse chains is more rigidly controlled (no element is arbitrarily introduced) and establishes a far more complex network of associations than in the earlier texts. Furthermore, these texts demonstrate, to a far greater extent, the activity of writing as a continuous process of signifying practice.

Ricardou's analysis of the mechanised narration reveals an important aspect of the format of Simon's later texts. He draws attention to the systematic fragmentation of linearity through similarity which causes continual transitions from one spatio-temporal fragment to another. These transitions are no longer haphazard, nor is their frequency unpredictable as was the case before; they now follow a regular pattern. The systematic cutting from one sequence to another not only establishes an imbrication of fictional episodes but also the uniform development of episodes. The text is divided into blocks of description and therefore resembles a mosaic in the process of construction.

A passage from Triptyque gives an insight into the systematised nature of the process of transition. A scene from the country episode (the couple making love in the barn) switches to a scene from the town episode (a couple making love in an alley), which in turn switches back to a different scene from the country episode (an old woman about to kill a rabbit/a boy working on a mathematical problem in his room). Dividing lines (my own) denote the points of 'aiguillage' from one
fragment to another:

La fille couchée dans le foin accompagne de coups de reins le va-et-vient rythmé des fesses de l'homme dont on voit chaque fois briller le membre luisant qui disparaît ensuite jusqu'aux couilles entre les poils touffus, noirs et brillants, bouclés comme de l'astra-kan. / Le couple se tient dans une zone de pénombre à l'écart du cône lumineux que projette à l'entrée de l'étroit passage entre les murs de briques un réflecteur fixé au sommet d'un poteau métallique aux poutrelles entrecroisées .... Parfois, sous une poussée plus forte de son compagnon l'arrière de son crâne heurte les briques rugueuses du mur .... Sous le genou gainé de soie et toujours haut levé la jambe se balance au rythme des poussées de l'homme. / Le corps du lapin oscille au rythme de la marche de la vieille femme qui se dirige d'un pas saccadé vers l'un des pruniers à la fourche basse. Par moments la brise incline la branche d'un arbre invisible qui pousse près du mur et les ombres entremêlées des feuilles balaient sur le coin supérieur droit de la feuille du cahier le triangle de soleil. (pp. 25-26)

The major similarity here between the first two sequences (which consequently produces the transition from one to the other) is clearly the theme of sex. However, a close reading reveals a number of other similarities between the two sequences:

On the level of the 'signifié':
- movement of the couples (va-et-vient/se balance au rythme des poussées)
- light and shade (briller, luisant, noir, brillants/ pénombre, lumineux, réflecteur).

On the level of the 'signifiant':
- common 'vocables' (rythmé/rythme)
- play on words (coups/couple)

The third sequence develops certain of these resemblances and also establishes a new set of similarities with the second sequence:

On the level of the 'signifié':
- movement (oscille, pas saccadé, incline)
- light and shade (ombres, soleil)
- triangle (cône/triangle)
- top (sommet/supérieur)
- intermingling (entrecroisées/entremêlées).

On the level of the 'signifiant':
- common 'vocables' (rythme/rythme, mur/mur)
- play on words (poussée/pousse, the woman and her 'compagnon' to the scene in the 'campagne' (implicit)).

This intercutting of fictional episodes and development of each through the gradual transformation of elements is indicative of the formal organisation of the text. It also demonstrates the reciprocal transference of meaning which is achieved through the construction of metaphoric chains passing through diverse juxtaposed sequences. As Stephen Bann says of Les Corps Conducteurs in connection with the conductivity of language from sequence to sequence:

The continuity of Les Corps Conducteurs is .... an index of the common intensity of descriptive language, even though what is described arises from different levels of sense. The tendency of the different levels to interpenetrate while remaining conceptually distinct is a measure of their conductivity.

However, Ricardou's theoretical 'grille' fails fully to explain Simon's practice of writing in the later texts. On the one hand it fails to determine the direction of the narration (which, we should remember, is not arbitrary but also dictated by formal constraints); on the other hand, it does not adequately account for the construction of each spatial sequence. Simon has suggested that sequences 'ne se réduisent pas seulement à une simple contiguïté par associations mais sont l'effet de "renvois" d'un élément du texte à un autre parfois très éloignés' and it is precisely this wider structuring of the text that Ricardou's theory fails to take into consideration.

Jost's notion of 'structuration' (to which I referred in the previous chapter) attempts to account for the wider aspects of the organisation of the description which Ricardou's theory overlooks. He introduces the concepts of 'description structurée' and 'description structurante': the former refers to
the manner in which each description is structured according to its relationship with the text as a whole (and not merely according to its contiguous relationship with the preceding description), the latter to the manner in which each description is itself fundamental in the organisation of other parts of the text. My analyses in the previous chapter show how this process functions. For example, in Triptyque the initial development of the country scene (and especially the interaction of the sequences in the barn and at the river) is directed according to the 'rules' governing the triple perspective, while in Leçon de Choses the imbrication of the sequences concerning the soldiers and the walkers is dependent on a formal play of absence/presence.

The theories of Ricardou and Jost are both important in a definition of Simon's later practice of writing. Ricardou provides an understanding of the systematic practice of intersection through similarity, while Jost presents a consideration of the more general formal organisation of the text. Using the two theories of transition and structuration we can situate more clearly the mechanised process of metaphor/metonymy in the later texts. The reassembling of paradigmatic elements in terms of new 'ensembles' is a complex affair which is directed by the writer's consideration of descriptions near and far in the text. This consideration involves the juxtaposition of elements through preceding contact in the text and the 'enchaînement' of 'signifiants' through their contiguous and metaphorical links, all of which ultimately produces a dense network of associations and excess of meaning which transform these texts into a genuine space of signifying practice.
(ii) Internal Transformation of a Fiction

I have consistently stressed the fact that one of the major fascinations of reading Simon's most recent novels is to witness the production and development of fictional episodes through the complex play of elements in the narration. In Part 1 I analysed the way in which this dual process (work of the narration/construction of the fiction) operates in the texts of the 1960's. The difference between the earlier and later texts lies in the way in which the systematised technique of the novels after La Bataille de Pharsale encompasses each and every element that figures in the composition of the text. In other words, the most insignificant aspect of a description (the colour of flowers on a hillside, the shape of a bell-tower) is immediately necessary in terms of the overall textual design. In the traditional novel, these are the minutiae of the description which, as I have suggested, often have no bearing on the development of the action in the narrative. It is therefore possible to 'skip' these troublesome interruptions in the development of the action without actually missing any of the relevant information concerning the action. Simon cites the case of such illustrious readers as André Breton and Henri de Montherlant who confessed that they could either see no reason for certain descriptions in certain novels or would 'skip' ('sauter') such descriptions in order to get on with the story. It must be admitted that such readers of Les Corps Conducteurs, Triptyque and Leçon de Choses would find that they had 'skipped' the whole text since it is precisely these descriptions whose continual transformation constitutes the very substance of the text.

Let us consider more closely the function of certain of the
'insignificant' objects which figure in the early descriptions of the country episode in Triptyque. It will be seen that these elements are not at all insignificant; they reappear later in the text and their recurrence at a particular juncture of the text is by no means fortuitous but guided by the formal 'structuration' of the text. We will see clearly the manner in which the country episode is developed according to the transformation of the initial descriptions in which these objects appear.

In the previous chapter I showed how the description of the river/basin/fountain generates, in reverse order, the description of a couple making love in the barn. We saw that it is not only the obvious metaphorical relationship between the movement of the phallus and the appearance and disappearance of the trout that links the two sequences but also an intricate exchange of 'signifiants'. Hence, the objects in the river ('le broc, une casserole, le cercle de tonneau' etc.) are closely associated with the sexual act: through similarity with certain 'signifiés' from the barn sequence (for example, trout/phallus, 'le cercle de tonneau'/vagina) and through contiguity with those 'signifiants' which appear in both sequences (for example, 'broc, casserole (bleu, noir)/(bleu, noir), toison, cuisses'). In addition to the chain of metaphorically-related elements (for example, 'oeil, fente, trou, centre du bassin, cercle de tonneau') are interwoven other chains constituted by the 'enchaînement' of contiguous and similar elements. A network of associations is therefore constructed through the process of metaphor/metonymy in these opening descriptions of the river and the sexual act.

Other objects which I have not previously mentioned also
'tapissent le fond de la rivière' (p.14) and therefore form part of this dense network of associations:

des poteries cassées, des morceaux de tuiles (qui) se mêlent aux pierres .... Certains de ces débris jetés du haut du pont sont là depuis si longtemps que la même couche de mousse ocre et impalpable qui recouvre les cailloux les recouvre aussi. (p.14-15).

The river-bed is indeed littered with an assortment of objects:

D'autres objets jetés du pont .... apparaissent ça et là: un brodequin d'homme au cuir plissé et racorni, à l'empeigne béante, un chaudron, des boîtes de conserves. Des branches mortes sont restées accrochées, emmêlées .... dénudées et blanchies. (p.16)

We might wonder why such an odd collection of objects on the river-bed should be described with such precision, or even why these particular objects should be mentioned rather than any others. The appearance of the 'cercle de tonneau' is not difficult to understand in view of its metaphorical relationship with the vagina; the 'brodequin, chaudron, boîtes de conserves' are less easily explicable in terms of the formal composition of the text.

Indeed, it is not immediately apparent what function these elements have in the text. We must wait until near the end of the first part of the text for their reappearance. The scene in question is the original meeting of the couple (a hunter and a maid) who make love in the barn. They are two of the onlookers amongst 'un cercle de personnages' around 'le corps du sanglier couché dans le cour de l'une des maisons du village' which has just been caught and brought into the village. In the description of the scene the following elements are mentioned:

Un feu de bûches est allumé à même le sol sous les ventres noircis de deux chaudrons où la surface de l'eau commence à fumer .... Les chasseurs portent de lourds brodequins. Deux d'entre eux ont les tibias protégés par des houreaux de cuir .... Sur l'empeigne et la cheville .... (p.54)
A simple explanation for the appearance of the strange collection of objects on the river-bed is that they have been thrown into the water after this village gathering. Of course, this is a hypothesis which has no basis in fact and can not be proved. At all events, it would seem likely (in terms of a realistic explanation of the correspondence of objects) that the gathering around the boar precedes the appearance of the objects in the river in the chronology of the fiction, (since even the pieces of wood in the river are 'blanchies', a detail which is perfectly in accordance with the notion that they have been burnt underneath the 'chaudrons'). If this is evident (for it would surely be too much of a coincidence if the objects in the water just happened to be the same as those at the gathering) we might then wonder why the gathering around the dead boar does not precede the description of objects in the river in terms of the chronology of the narration. Clearly the fiction in the country episode is narrated in reverse order: it starts with a description of the countryside and moves back through the scene in the barn to the original meeting of the couple. Why should this be so if it is anything other than an arbitrary decision on the part of the author? Simon's comments on the formal necessity guiding the narration might reasonably lead us to seek a more formalistic explanation.

The function of the river in the generation of the fiction is important here. As I have shown, the river generates the description of the sexual act in reverse order of 'signifiants'. This is fairly logical if one remembers that a river reflects what is outside and, as we know, all reflections show objects the other way round. The key to the logic underlying the
construction of the scene in the barn might therefore be the key to the logic underlying other aspects of the fictional construction. Could it not be that the assortment of objects in the river (used, old and rotting) will be seen again on land in quite the opposite context (being used, new) due to the fact that the river is generating elements in reverse? This could also be the reason why the result of the meeting between the hunter and the maid (the scene in the barn) comes before the meeting itself, that is, why the chronology of the fiction is in reverse order to that of the narration.

A comparison of the opening description of the river and the meeting of the hunter and maid reveals a more detailed network of associations between the two sequences, assuring us of the intricate relationship between descriptions separated textually by about forty pages:

River (pp. 14-17) Meeting (pp. 54-56)

L'eau qui bouillonlle au pied du petit barrage
La longue mousse verte est doux, velouté
Poils sombres aux reflets roux

+ l'un des chaudrons d'eau bouillante
+ Sa poitrine velue et noire
+ une blessure à l'épaule a coulé
  un sang encore très rouge près de la plaie .... mêlée à la boue
  et à la sueur séchée qui collent les poils en mèches effilées
L'un des garçons pousse l'autre du coude
broc couché sur le flanc

Son ventre clair
Deux silhouettes l'eau verdit d'abord ....
   devient d'un bleu de lessive
   .... presque noir au centre
du bassin

+ l'autre du coude
+ L'un des garçons .... pousse
+ le corps du sanglier couché .... sur le flanc
+ Sous son ventre
+ La silhouette qui s'éloigne
+ pantalon de toile bleue ....
   veste .... de toile bleue, palie
   .... par .... les lessives. Sa
   chemise .... ouverte sur sa
   poitrine velue et noire.

The 'structuration' of the description of the meeting is dependent on the initial description of the river, not in terms of a simple assembly of elements but in terms of the formal rule of antithesis which guides the generative activity
of the river sequence. Several examples verify this: the water in the fountain is freezing cold/the water in the cauldrons is boiling hot; there is one cauldron on the river-bed/there are two cauldrons used to boil the water which will be poured over the boar; 'les deux silhouettes' of the two boys are visible on the surface of the river/the maid leaving the gathering is described as 'la silhouette qui s'éloigne'; the two boys have not yet caught any fish (or are in the process of fishing) at the time they lean over the bridge to look at the trout/at the time they join the gathering it is clear they have finished their fishing (see p. 56)\textsuperscript{36}, and so on.

In discussing the 'structuration' of the description of the meeting, it is important to emphasize the formalised process of metaphor/metonymy. The 'enchaînement' of elements in the river and barn sequences at the beginning of the text (let us say, for example, the connection through contiguity of the 'chaudron' and the couple) determines their contiguous re-appearance in the description of the meeting. It is this feature of the formalised transformation of descriptions which is fundamental in terms of the development of the fiction. Those objects on the river-bed - apparently useless, both in terms of their function as objects and their function as elements of the textual composition - are 'brought to life', so to speak, through 'le système de renvois\textsuperscript{37}' in which they figure. The connections established in each description are not forgotten but, on the contrary, are re-awakened and re-introduced thanks to the power of metonymy to hold together diverse textual elements. The meeting is thus constructed by means of a transformation of 'signifiants' connected in the opening descriptions.
No mention has yet been made of those other objects in the water - 'les pierres, la mousse, les boîtes de conserves'. These reappear shortly after the meeting of the hunter and the maid in a description of the village cemetery:

> Beaucoup de ces tombes sont à l'abandon .... des pots, parfois même de simples boîtes cylindriques, sont .... disposés à leur pied. Sur les flancs des boîtes dorés par la rouille on peut quelquefois lire encore les noms de marques de conserves .... l'herbe folle envahit la plus grande partie de l'enclos qu'entoure un mur bas aux pierres recouvertes de plaques de mousse d'un vert presque noir. (p.69)

The fact that these objects are contiguously connected here with the cemetery can be explained in the same way that other objects originally in the water subsequently figure in the description of the meeting. For the objects in the water are not only associated in those opening descriptions with the sexual union but also with death: the pieces of wood lying next to the cauldron and the boot are 'des branches mortes', the fountain is 'constitué par une auge de pierre rectangulaire, comme un sarcophage' (p.16), the ripples of the water in the fountain 'vont s'élargissant et s'affaiblissant peu à peu à partir du point où tombe le jet' (p.16) (which generates, through a play on words, the 'tombes' of the cemetery) and in the water of the fountain are 'les reflets des feuilles des noyers' (p.16) which generates, again through a play on words, the drowning of the little girl in the charge of the maid at the end of the text.

In other words, one has to refer back to the opening description of the river, to its strange collection of objects and to the associations established in this description to understand the construction of the descriptions of the meeting and the cemetery some forty pages later. These latter descriptions are generated from the writer's consideration of the
paths opened up (in language) by the earlier descriptions, his consideration of possible associations born from metaphors used and of the contact established between diverse elements. The description of the river is like a magma of words which will be transformed into an anecdote through the writer's activity of exploring, through his practice of writing, the material of language.

The cross-connections of the sexual coupling and death are already latent in this magma. The appearance forty pages later of the descriptions of the meeting and the cemetery is therefore a logical re-working of those initial connections, logical, that is, in terms of the formal considerations which underpin the construction of the fictional episodes. The distance in terms of pages separating the first appearance of the objects on the river-bed and their subsequent appearance in the text confirms Jost's notion of 'structuration': descriptions are constructed according to a global, textual organisation as well as through transitions between contiguous sequences. This procedure by which the objects on the river-bed are scattered over the text is a paradigm for the formal construction of the fictional episodes in Simon's most recent texts.

(iii) Imbrication of Fictions through Formal Structuration

The previous analysis illustrates the development of a single fiction but does not take into account the complex imbrication of the three fictions. In fact, the narration progresses through a constant transformation and modification of elements from one sequence to another, establishing an intricate network of associations between the fictions. This process is a continually productive process, in terms of the
direction of the narration and in terms of the construction of the fiction. An analysis of an extract from 'Expansion' in Leçon de Choses highlights the productive process of the narration in its development of the three fictions.

In the following résumé of the extract in question, the three fictions - soldiers, masons, walkers - are represented by the numbers 1, 2, 3, respectively, while the two sub-fictions are represented as 1a (extracts from the book 'Leçons de Choses' which 'le tireur' is reading) and 3a (the evening encounter between the man and young woman on the walk).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragment</th>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>'Le tireur' looks at the cover of the book. (p.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Description of the womens' hats. (p.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1a</td>
<td>'Le tireur' opens the book to Fig.20. He flicks backwards to Fig.12. (p.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Explosion (p.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Younger mason is knocking out the plaster (p.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Man and young woman are lagging behind the others. (p.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aftermath of explosion. (p.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Masons tearing off strips of wallpaper. (p.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Soldiers watching enemy troop movements in the distance. (p.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Young woman hurries off nervously to catch up with her companions. (p.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Officer complains about the light. 'Le tireur' eats from a jar of fruit syrup. (p.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Picnic and discussion as to which way to return. (p.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Fig. 13 (p.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3a</td>
<td>Young woman at her child's bed. (p.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>'Le tireur' takes a cigar from a box. (p.32)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Firstly, we can see how the inter-cutting of episodes has become a systematic procedure (by comparison with La Route des Flandres, for example): there are fifteen fragments in the space of ten pages, each of roughly the same length. This is indicative of the systematization of the process of transition
in the text as a whole (except for the two 'divertissements' which are uninterrupted monologues of ten pages each).

Secondly, it is clear that transitions from one fragment to another are operated according to the perception of similarity/antithesis:

A → B - flowers and fruit decorate the cover of the book/flowers and fruit decorate the women's hats
C → D - masons putting on plaster/explosion removes plaster
D → E - explosion removes plaster/younger mason removes plaster
F → G - young woman tells man to be quiet/silence after the explosion
G → H - fall of plaster/fall of stone
I → J - soldiers hold their breath/man breathes rapidly
K → L - 'le tireur' eats fruit syrup/the walkers eat their picnic
M → N - workers putting up paper in bedroom/young woman in her daughter's bedroom.

However, I suggested previously that the concept of transition is not sufficient in itself to explain either the construction of each fragment or the direction of each fictional episode. Concentrating on these two aspects of fictional development, I will give several examples of how the formalised process of metaphor/metonymy functions to structure the text.

In C 'le tireur' flicks through the book with his left hand 'et tombe sur une .... illustration'. In J the man making advances to the young woman holds a newspaper in his left hand which he taps against his leg 'comme un cavalier de sa badine'. In O the decoration on the cigar-box includes 'une image où l'on peut voir de petits personnages (un cavalier, quelques passants)'. The appearance of the 'cavalier' in the 'image' is by no means an arbitrary detail: the two distinct elements
are drawn together through the common elements (left hand, paper) to which both have previously been contiguously connected.

This is a perfect example of the way in which the mechanised process of metaphor/metonymy functions to produce the fictional elements.

The box of cigars in 0 is related to the book in A through the resemblance of their decorations:

the book - 'Le tout est encadré d'un filet noir qui dessine aux quatre angles des bandes serpentinées, comme des rubans, des reflets ondulant dans l'eau.'

the box - 'Couvercle décoré sur un pourtour d'un galon noir où s'entrelacent deux lignes dorées et onduleuses comme une succession de vagues.'

In C the eye of 'le tireur' flicks from the book to the scene outside: 'Tout en jetant de fréquents coups d'œil en direction de la corne du bois, le tireur ouvre le livre orné d'illustrations.' Due to the connection through similarity of the book and the box, these other elements (contiguously related to the book) are also transferred on to the box: 'Il en sorte une
In H the younger mason tears off the old paper on the walls, dislodges the stones and mortar of the wall with repeated blows and, at the same time, 'il chantonne distraitement les paroles .... d'une chanson'. In J the description of the man on the walk is a transformation of the 'vocables' paper, blows, words, rhythm: 'Sa main gauche serre un journal roulé en flûte. Tout en marchant et sans cesser de répéter Ecoutez Ecoutez-moi, il scande ses paroles en frappant du mince cylindre le côté de sa jambe.'

In D the 'sifflement' of the shell precedes the 'lueur de l'explosion'. In E the noise of the masons' tools is accompanied by an occasional spark produced by 'le choc de la masse
sur la tête écrasée de l'outil'. Hence, in both the military and mason episodes the contiguity of a sight and sound is established. In F the young woman, not wanting her companions to see the man whispering in her ear, says to him, 'Taisez-vous vous êtes fou?' This desire not to be seen and for silence causes the following switch in K: 'Un nouveau venu pénètre dans la pièce et demande d'une voix autoritaire et furieuse si vous n'êtes pas fous ou quoi de laisser cette lumière allumée. L'ampoule s'éteint. Plus aucun gargouillis ne provient du lit où est étendu le blessé.'

In K the military episode develops in the following way: 'De sa main droite le tireur atteint un bocal de fruits au sirop posé à côté de l'arme. Enlevant son casque et appuyé sur un coude, il porte le bocal à ses lèvres.' This is the first mention in the text of the 'bocal de fruits au sirop'. Where does it come from and why does it appear at this juncture? We must retrace our steps to discover the motivation of this development. In A the decoration of the book cover includes 'une tige .... porteuse d'une fleur aux pétales refermés .... un peu comme les côtes bombées d'un minuscule melon ou d'une minuscule citrouille'. In C 'le tireur' flicks through the book with one hand while holding on to the gun with the other. In I we read 'Le tireur a cessé de s'intéresser aux illustrations du livre.' The relationship 'livre-fruit' in A makes it logical that, having put down the book, 'le tireur' should then pick up the 'bocal de fruits'; this substitution is produced through a transformation of a previous contiguity of elements. Instead of holding the book and the gun, 'le tireur' is now holding the jar next to the gun. The inclusion of 'le casque' in this description can also
be traced back to an earlier juxtaposition of elements: in B the ribbons on the women's hats are 'ornés de fleurs ou de fruits artificiels.'

N is the first fragment of the sub-fiction 3a and as such interrupts the linear progression of the walkers episode. Since this is the only interruption of a linear chronological development in any of the three episodes it is pertinent to seek the textual motivation for this change in direction. Jost has rightly drawn attention to the preceding fragment (L) in which the walkers 'discutent entre elles sur le chemin que l'on suivra au retour en se demandant si on prendra par la ferme ou par la falaise' (p.31)\(^{38}\). He suggests that the walkers' discussion of choice of direction operates as a factor in determining the direction of the narration since it is precisely at this point in the narration that the sub-fiction 3a commences. This is certainly a reasonable explanation for the appearance, at this juncture of the text, of the sub-fiction 3a and reinforces the idea that the text is as much the fiction of a narration as the narration of a fiction. However, Jost's suggestion neither explains how the walkers eventually make their choice of route nor which choice they make. Furthermore, Jost's statement that, in the sub-fiction 3a, the woman leaves her child's bedroom 'pour rejoindre l'homme sur la falaise'\(^{39}\) is a mis-reading which is likely to confuse the whole issue concerning the two ways - 'ferme' and 'falaise'; it is, in fact, by the farm that the lovers meet and along the cliffs that the walkers continue their return journey.\(^{40}\)

It is necessary to examine carefully the previous connections established in the text to explain how this choice of
routes is determined. In fact, we must step outside the ten-page extract and return to 'Générique' to discover the initial motivation. In 'Générique' the description of pieces of plaster which have become detached from the wall in the dilapidated house and lie scattered on the floor includes a number of metaphors concerning cliffs and the sea ('vagues', 'archipel', 'crayeux', 'îlots', 'falaise'). On the smooth, top face of several of these pieces 'adhère quelquefois encore un lambeau de feuillage jauni, une fleur' (p.10). The little girl on the walk through the fields will subsequently hold a bouquet of flowers amongst which are 'pissenlits' (yellow) (p.23). Thus, if the uneven side of the pieces of detached wall in 'Générique' is connected with the cliffs, the flat side with the paper is associated with the countryside. Here is the origin of the two paths discussed subsequently by the walkers. Yet it remains to be seen what motivates the decision to take the cliff walk for the return journey and the country path for the lovers' evening rendez-vous.

In fragment C 'le tireur' opens the book haphazardly at Fig. 20 which contains the inscription 'Roches à découvert sur le bord de la mer'. He then flicks through the book 'à l'envers et tombe sur une autre illustration: Fig.12. Ouvriers étendant le plâtre sur le plafond et sur les murs' (p.24). This sequence is clearly structured according to the description in 'Générique': by turning backwards from the image of the cliffs (i.e. the jagged face of the pieces of detached wall), 'le tireur' falls upon its opposite, the smooth surface of a new wall in preparation for the new paper.

Structured by a preceding description, this sequence then
structures succeeding descriptions. In M (which immediately follows the walkers' discussion as to which path to take) Fig. 13 bears the inscription 'Ouvriers collant du papier sur les murs d'une chambre'. Fig. 13 therefore completes the process of wall-construction mentioned in Fig. 12 by describing the final stage in the process, that is, the hanging of the paper ('Ce papier protège le plâtre'). In terms of the connections previously established, this means that the cliffs (old, upturned pieces of plaster) are concealed by the countryside (the other side of these pieces – the smooth surface of the paper). Thus Fig. 13 acts as the deciding factor determining the following sequence N: the covering of the plaster (cliffs) by the paper (countryside) signals that the situation of the woman's evening rendez-vous will be by the farm in the country, which leaves the other path (that of the cliffs) for the walkers' return journey. Fig. 13 can thus be interpreted as the deciding factor in the choice of paths if it is seen in the context of those other connections previously established in the text.

Reading Leçon de Choses – as with Les Corps Conducteurs and Triptyque – is an activity of pursuing the diverse associations established in the text. The reader is therefore engaged in the production of fictional episodes, his rôle transformed from that of a passive recipient of a coherent body of 'signifiés' into an active engagement with the flux of 'signifiants' in pursuit of coherence. My analyses of the novels since La Bataille de Pharsale trace the path of a reading of these texts; consequently they have been caught up in the formal interplay and transformation of initial descriptions (the mechanised process of metaphor/metonymy) which
characterizes the progression of the narration.

I have demonstrated how description is no longer the embellishment of the action but the generating and propelling force underlying the progression of the narration. Objects described (for example, those on the river-bed or those which adorn a book cover) are not so much tied to a specific 'signifié' but are points at which a number of meanings converge and from which a network of associations diverge. Each object (that is, each word) is a 'signifiant' whose 'signifié' is not fixed since meaning is always sliding along the metaphorical and metonymic chains established in the practice of writing. For example, if the cauldron in Triptyque is first depicted as a useless object at the bottom of a river, its connections and subsequent transformation make it an integral link in the chains which traverse the text. Similarly, if the book in Leçon de Choses is merely an object amongst many that are scattered in the room, it is (like them) caught up in a network of associations in language by which meaning is continually displaced and transferred. The process of connection and transformation of an initial grouping of objects/words thus denies them their instrumentality/expressivity and makes them the points of 'intersection' and 'réunion' of a plurality of meanings. Whether this signifying practice is stabilized according to the convergence of themes and spaces to produce, ultimately, a narrative coherence will be discussed in the following chapter; for the present let us acknowledge the achievement of Simon's most recent novels in transforming the text into a space occupied by a complex play of language.
7.1 DISRUPTION OF A HIERARCHY

This chapter will deal with the wider aspects of narrative construction in the novels since La Bataille de Pharsale; that is, the unity, or otherwise, of the narrative as a whole and the questions of coherence which arise from these considerations. It will be remembered that the novels of the 1960's tend towards a thematic and spatial unity: the practice of metaphor/metonymy produces a grouping of 'récits métaphoriques' (one of which tends to predominate) and, in so doing, unifies a fragmented text. This re-alignment of the text according to a series of mutually resembling 'spaces' and the production of a 'macro-métaphore' restores stability and coherence to the text. I suggested in Chapter 4 that the coherence of the narrative worked against the notion of the production of that narrative through the work of the narration: instead, it restores the traditional notion of the novel as the expression or reproduction of reality. The question that we must now ask is whether the contradictions between production and reproduction, plurality of meaning and unity of meaning are - in contradistinction to the novels of the 1960's - resolved in favour of the former terms in the novels of the 1970's. In other words, does the passage to a non-stratified narration after La Bataille de Pharsale (the formalised eye and voice of the narration) signify the construction of a non-hierarchised text? Or is there still a convergence of meaning through the dominance of a single (or certain) themes and that of a single fictional episode? These are fundamental questions to consider since they touch
upon the distinction between a writing of expression and a writing of production which is at the heart of the divide — of epistemological proportions — between realism and post-modernism.

Les Corps Conducteurs sets the pattern of narrative development for all three texts after La Bataille de Pharsale: a systematic practice of transition divides the text into segments corresponding to diverse spatio-temporal sequences. A number of episodes are thus developed parallel to each other, each segment structured by those which precede it and structuring those which succeed it. The text is a mosaic of fragments, each of which is a further syntagm in the development of one of the fictional episodes.

In Les Corps Conducteurs, a number of episodes are constructed in this way. One particular episode clearly dominates: that of the journey of the sick man along a street in New York towards his hotel. This episode opens the text (the shop window in the street) and closes it (having finally reached his destination the sick man collapses on the carpet of his hotel-room). In between, diverse scenes (appearing at regular intervals) constitute the different stages of the journey: other shop windows, the successive views along the street with the hotel sign at the far end, a drink in a bar, a brief rest on a bench in a square. In comparison, other episodes are less developed — in number of fragments and number of pages. They include a plane journey taken by the sick man (from North to South America), a congress of writers in South America (attended by the sick man) discussing politics and the novel, the journey through a forest by a group of soldiers, the painting 'Orion Aveugle', the description of various birds, butterflies
and star constellations from an encyclopedia, a couple making love.

The presence of the sick man in the most significant episodes clearly prompts a reading which associates these episodes in terms of a unified, central fiction. Furthermore, the mechanism of metaphor/metonymy establishes a resemblance of themes between episodes and, consequently, the construction of a number of 'récits métaphoriques': each episode becomes a mirror of the journey of the sick man. Ricardou's discovery of a 'mise en abyme' in the episode of the soldiers' journey through the jungle seems rather an arbitrary choice; Orion's journey towards the rising sun performs the same function, as indeed do other secondary 'récits'. Freud's description, in The Interpretation of Dreams, of the dreamer's construction of a single image through the superposition (condensation) of a number of mutually resembling images again provides an excellent analogy with the process of unification of episodes in Simon's text.

In Les Corps Conducteurs a plurality of meaning is forestalled by the ultimate condensation of meaning within a single 'space': narrative coherence is achieved at the expense of an open-ended play of language. Hence, the flat and impersonal narration does not automatically destroy the hierarchy of the text; in other words, the abolition of a hierarchy of voices and perspectives does not necessarily produce a non-hierarchised text.

Recognition and consideration of the fact that Les Corps Conducteurs ultimately succumbs to a narrative unity not unlike the previous texts prompted Simon to undertake Triptyque with the express desire to transform the 'composition unitaire'.
He explains the motives for his fresh project:

J'avais le projet de faire un roman où les rapports entre les différentes "séries" (ou "ensembles") ne relèveraient pas d'un quelconque enchaînement ou déterminisme d'ordre psychologique, ou encore de similitudes de situations ou de thèmes (comme celui de l'errance sans aboutissement qui dominait Les Corps Conducteurs) et où encore il n'y aurait pas de personnages, de temps ou de lieux apparemment privilégiés, ce qui avait permis à certains critiques de résumer Les Corps Conducteurs en disant: un homme malade marche dans une rue et se souvient ....

The inter-relationships of the narrative episodes (or 'ensembles' as Simon calls them) in Triptyque do not function according to simple mirror images. Dällenbach has noted that a new balance of mirroring of episodes is established in this text: rather than affirm the predominance of one single, fictional episode, this balance works to maintain a continual series of contradictions between episodes, thus blocking the constitution of a 'composition unitaire'. Herein lies the fascination, and modernity, of Triptyque.

Triptyque is divided into three parts - the 'trois volets' of the triptych - but, unlike the conventional triptych, as Sykes remarks 'les deux volets extérieurs .... ne se rabattent pas .... sur le panneau central; le mouvement du texte n'est pas .... centripète'. Neither does each 'volet' correspond to the three fictions: the accidental drowning of a young girl in a country setting, the infidelity of a young bridegroom in a town and diverse incidents concerning a woman (Corinne?) and her lover at a coastal resort. In fact, each 'volet' contains a complex amalgam of fictions in which a hierarchy is continually forestalled. Dällenbach suggests the principal means by which this is accomplished: 'Au niveau des macro-structures, tout l'intérêt de Triptyque tient en effet à l'équilibrage qu'il réalise entre trois séries.
dont chacune exerce sa suprématie sur les deux autres en les contenant sous forme de représentations. In other words, each episode is both contained in the other two, in the form of representations, and the container of the other two. For example, the opening passage is an image of the coastal resort (represented in the form of a post-card) lying on a table in the country kitchen (p.7); this hierarchy is inverted at the end of the text when the image of the country scene is represented on the jigsaw-puzzle being composed by the man in the marine hotel (p.220).

This process of reciprocal 'ingestion' of fictions, according to which the two settings are both inner and outer, is typical of the spatial configurations of the text. The same activity can be detected in the other relations between the three fictions. The urban scene is initially represented in the form of a poster stuck on the side of the country barn (p.21): later, the sexual encounter between the maid and the hunter in the barn is the subject of a film being shown in the town (p.195). The urban scene, which at one stage contains within it a representation of the coastal resort (p.137), itself becomes an image on the cover of a book being read by the woman in the marine hotel (p.216).

Furthermore, each of the three 'volets' contains the supremacy of a different 'space' so that the hierarchy of the first part suffers a complete reversal in the third part. Ricardou has remarked on this inversion of the hierarchical organisation of fictional episodes:

Au début, la campagne domine doublement: elle contient la "cité balnéaire" (simple carte postale) et la "banlieue urbaine" (simple affiche murale); il faut noter en outre la prépondérance de la "cité balnéaire" (en ce qu'elle ouvre le livre) sur la "banlieue urbaine"
Triptyque undermines the notion of a hierarchy by a construction founded on the continual circulation of inner and outer, of main 'récit' and 'mise en abyme' so that it is no longer even possible to talk in these terms. What characterizes Triptyque and distinguishes it from the preceding novels is not a movement of unification of 'spaces' and the dominance of a single 'space' but, on the contrary, a continual transformation of the stratification of 'spaces' which is never resolved.

Another feature of Triptyque, which is closely allied to the circulation of inner and outer 'récits', pre-empts the construction of a hierarchy of fictions. The three episodes - town, country, marine - are forever the subject of a different mode of representation and each exposure of the means of production introduces another 'space', irreducible to any of the previous 'spaces' posited. So the episode concerning the coastal resort, which is first seen represented as a post-card, is subsequently to be the subject of a piece of film negative (p.29), a film shown on a screen (pp.33-34), a poster advertising a film (p.64), a film being made in a studio (pp.80-81) and so on. A proliferation of representations (none of which is any more 'real' than any other) splits the narrative into a plurality of 'spaces'. Indeed, this plurality is often revealed as an impossible imbrication of 'spaces': two modes of representation are juxtaposed in a single description (film studio/painting (p.81)), or even three modes of representation,
as in the following description of the scene in the marine hotel which is, successively, the subject of a painting, the subject of a film being made in a studio and the subject of the film itself being shown in a cinema:

Assis ou plutôt enfoncé dans un fauteuil d'un petit guéridon, l'homme au complet sombre .... tient d'une main le combiné à hauteur de son oreille droite .... Il semble que l'artiste s'y soit repris à plusieurs fois avant de se satisfaire de l'état final de son travail, ayant peint d'abord le visage tourné vers la droite .... Sortant une jambe de sous le drap et l'étirant, la femme atteint de son orteil la porte, poup'vue d'une glace, de l'armoire située près du lit et la fait pivoter sur ses gonds .... Dans son mouvement tournant, la glace a reflété pendant une fraction de seconde la pénombre du studio où dans un camale brun est apparue la forme noire de la caméra de prises de vues aux yeux multiples .... L'appareil de projection vétuste fait soudain entendre un cliquetis anormal tandis que, sur l'écran, le visage collé au combiné passe par saccades d'une position à l'autre.

(pp. 127-129)

The technique used here is a re-working of one used in La Route des Flandres: the continuity of 'énoncés' through a discontinuity of modes of representation is reminiscent of the continuity of 'énoncés' through a discontinuity of levels of 'énonciation' in the earlier text. As in La Route des Flandres, the technique disrupts the illusion of mimesis and reinforces a purely textual continuity. In an analysis of the function of these 'mises en spectacle' (that is, scenes described in terms of paintings, dramas, films, etc.), Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon concludes that there is, in effect, no difference between these scenes and those which deal (supposedly) with 'reality'"; they are all equivalent in terms of their rôle in the 'mise en texte'. The traditional distinction between the 'spectacle' and the 'real' is abolished just as the distinction between memory, imagination and the 'real' was seen to vanish: all scenes are, in the words of Rossum-Guyon, 'rien d'autre que la forme et la couleur des
mots, le travail du texte.

In a variety of ways, Simon manages to transform the relationships between the narrative episodes to forestall the development of a hierarchy of 'spaces' and a unification of the narrative. By means of these devices, Triptyque therefore maintains a plurality of 'spaces'. This lack of spatial unification is accompanied by a lack of thematic correspondence between the fictional episodes. In the previous chapter, I analysed - on a 'micro' level - the interaction of segments belonging to different episodes according to an exchange of 'vocables'. As we saw, this exchange does not result in a simple process of mirroring since it is part of a complex game which functions according to formal rules established in the narration. Antithesis and the play of presence/absence are integral factors in the regulation of narrative development. These are features which become of fundamental importance in the later texts where the balance between episodes is a more complex affair than in the texts of the 1960's. The interaction on the 'micro' level produces - on a 'macro' level - a series of thematic contradictions between the three fictions in Triptyque which are never resolved. For example, the scenes of copulation in the first part, which link the country and town episodes, are absent from the marine episode which commences with the aftermath of copulation. In the final part of the text, the absence of copulation between the bride and the unfaithful groom in the town episode balances its absence in the marine episode yet does not provide a schema which accommodates the country episode. Three deaths occur in the country episode - those of the rabbit, the boar and the young girl - yet there are no
deaths in the other two episodes. Furthermore, no one character appears in all three episodes, so that it is impossible to find a common link to unite the fictions.

This lack of thematic correspondence can be extended to encompass all thematic relations between the three episodes. Yet, as we know, the three fictions are developed according to an imbrication of segments, each one of which is produced through preceding segments and contributes to the production of succeeding segments. The complex patterning of the process of metaphor/metonymy and the numerous chains established by this process produces a network of associations and similarities between the three episodes. In Triptyque, this process is organised in such a way that each of the three fictions is intricately connected with the other two yet never mirrors them on the level of their major themes. The achievement of Triptyque is to establish a continual process of production of fictions by the work of the narration without ever allowing the text to 'congeal' into a stratification of 'récits métaphoriques'.

The narration therefore incites in the reader the desire to construct a unity - by fitting together the disparate pieces - but deliberately blocks the reader's attainment of that unity. Instead, we are left with a complex network of associations and no totalising structure into which they fit. Hence, the scene in the marine hotel at the end of the text which depicts a man composing a jigsaw-puzzle is not only, as Lotringer suggests, 'une métaphore de la constitution d'une fiction' but also a metaphor for the process of reading instigated by the text. I will return to this question later in this chapter. For the present let us consider the
spatial and thematic organisation in *Leçon de Choses*.

Like *Triptyque*, *Leçon de Choses* consists of an intertwining of three consecutive fictional episodes - walkers, soldiers, masons. As I have pointed out, sub-fictions are developed in the first two of these episodes: paralleling the journey of the walkers along the cliffs is the nighttime sexual encounter between the man and the young woman, while extracts from the book 'Leçon de Choses', which 'le tireur' is reading, parallel the narration of the soldiers' experience in the old farmhouse. The fact that the masons episode does not have a sub-fiction can be seen as one of the inconsistencies which characterize the general narrative organisation of the text. For *Leçon de Choses* resembles *Triptyque* in terms of the relationships established between its three episodes. Once again the attempt to relate the three fictions through spatial and thematic correspondences is forestalled by a series of contradictions.

The chronology of two of the three episodes is in accordance with the linear development of the narration: in the military episode the 'soleil qui décline' at the beginning of the text (p.24) has vanished completely at the end, giving way to a 'paysage nocturne' (p.165), while in the masons episode the narration follows the course of the masons' day - work, break, lunch, continuation of work and departure from the house at the end of the text at the approach of dusk ('le jour continue à décroître' (p.158)). In contrast, the chronology of the walkers episode is disrupted by the emergence and progression of the rendez-vous arranged for the evening by the man and woman during the course of the walk. The walk and the rendez-vous will continue to progress chrono-
logically side by side: in the former — during the afternoon along the cliffs — the group end up at a (the?) dilapidated house which is now lit only 'confusément' by 'la lumière du crépuscule' (p.182), while the latter progresses from the woman's furtive departure from her house (and her sleeping child), through the successive stages of the sexual act and, finally, to her flight from her lover once their passion has been consummated.

A similar lack of chronology characterizes the sub-fiction concerning the book. It starts with a description of the title and front cover (p.23) and ends with the final chapter entitled 'Résumés' (p.114). In between, however, chapters of the book appear in jumbled order — 14 (p.48), 1 (p.87), 8 (p.103) — while the numbered illustrations are equally haphazard — 20 (p.23), 12 (p.24), 13 (p.31), 120 (p.75), 111 (p.95), 145 (p.96), 111 (p.99), 5 (p.103).

If the temporality of the fictional episodes contains both chronological consistencies and inconsistencies, the spatial settings are equally confused. The soldiers and the masons are always depicted in the house but the lovers are evidently in two places at the same time. They meet and proceed to make love outside (near the house), yet at one stage it is clear that they are in the house ('L'odeur forte de la jeune femme se répand dans la pièce' (p.160)). Despite this discontinuity in space, the continuity of their respective positions and actions remains uninterrupted. On the final page of the text, when the walkers have come upon the house, the man whispers to the woman 'c'est promis ce soir ici?' (p.182). Although this is in contradiction to the place where they do in fact meet, it corresponds to the sequence in which they are making
love in the room, thus producing an ambiguous duplication of the whole anecdote.

It is similarly impossible to find a way of integrating the temporal and spatial relations between the three episodes (that is, the interfictional relations as opposed to the intra-fictional relations mentioned above), despite the fact that numerous indications are given in the text of their mutual compatibility. For example, a dilapidated farmhouse figures in all three episodes. In addition, the countryside around it is apparently the same in the three episodes. The fact that the masons leave the house at dusk while the soldiers are first seen as the sun goes down suggests that the soldiers come to inhabit the house after the departure of the masons. However, the arrival of the walkers at the house at the end of their walk presents insurmountable problems as regards the temporal relations between the episodes. The walkers arrive at dusk, that is, at the time when the masons would be leaving or the soldiers already installed. Even the hypothesis that there might be a time lag between the departure of the masons and the arrival of the soldiers proves unworkable due to the indications given early on in the text as to the era in which the walkers episode takes place: 'Trois femmes .... portent des robes claires, d'un style démodé, très serrées à la taille, aux manches à gigot' (p.16). It is evident that the two other episodes take place much later than the period suggested here by the walkers' clothes. We might also mention the unlikelihood of the walkers being able to cross countryside which, in the military episode, is inhabited by enemy troops (a feature which would similarly affect the relationship between
the military and the masons episodes).

A further suggestion of compatibility of episodes is established through the two monologues, 'Divertissement 1' and 'Divertissement 11'. I suggested in Chapter 5 that although the first is that of the 'pourvoyeur' and the second that of the older mason, they are evidently the same voice, typified by 'la déformation violente et argotique du langage dans les deux cas.' The resemblances in voice (on the level of the 'énonciation' and the 'énoncé') thus suggest a 'rapprochement' of the two fictions, allowing the hypothesis, put forward by Sykes, that 'le maçon .... est peut-être un ancien soldat', or even that he is the 'pour-voyeur' at a later stage in life. Indeed, this can only be a hypothesis since no indications are given as to its 'truth'. Furthermore there is no such voice running through the walkers episode and therefore no means of developing this correspondence to encompass all three fictions.

The fact that the book 'Leçon de Choses' concerns the method of house-construction provides another connection between the military and masons episodes (albeit a connection through antithesis since the masons are in the process of demolishing a house). Here again there is no way in which this correspondence can be extended to the third episode and thus allow the integration of all three fictions within a totalising framework.

Adding to the impossibility of this task is the technique, acquired from Triptyque, of a mutual 'emboîtement' of episodes in the form of representations: the first description of the walkers crossing a field is a picture on a calendar in the military episode (p.15); also in the military episode is
another picture, 'Claude Monet - Effet du Soir', depicting cliffs and sea (the setting of the walk) (p.54); in the house that the walkers enter at the end are the same two pictures, the one representing the walkers crossing a field now no longer figured on the calendar but having changed places with Monet's 'Effet du Soir' (p.179); the young mason scrutinizes a different picture of cliffs and sea entitled 'Les Tas de Pois (Finistère)' (p.170); the older mason talks about a war documentary on the television (p.119), and so on.

In terms of the organisation of the narrative, Leçon de Choses continues the format of Triptyque: the network of associations which traverse the three fictional episodes is structured in such a way that the episodes are always distinct on the level of theme and space. Although the three texts after La Bataille de Pharsale are all written in the same spare style and by means of the same systematic practice of writing, they are not all alike in terms of the global organisation of episodes. Les Corps Conducteurs still exhibits the same centripetal movement that characterized the texts of the 1960's; Triptyque and Leçon de Choses mark a break with the 'composition unitaire'. It is therefore with Triptyque that Simon discovers a format which one can consider genuinely problematic in that it never submits to a 'sens ultime', that is, to a 'clôture' of meaning. The significance of this development must be considered closely.

7.2 THE TEXT AS SIGNIFYING PRACTICE

The question of narrative unity and coherence is fundamental to our understanding of the nature of writing, reading and the text. An important aspect (if not the most
important aspect) of modernism in the twentieth century in all the arts has been the effort to reveal the process of construction of the work; that is, to transform the work from an object to be consumed into a process of production. In terms of the novel, the fictional development and resolution of the text has presented the greatest obstacle to the effective accomplishment of this transformation since fictional coherence is an occultation of the material work of the narration which produces that fiction.

Despite their break with certain traditional narrative techniques and their radical play with language, the early 'nouveaux romans' were still susceptible to a reading which 'naturalised' the text by positing a coherent anecdote. Simon's novels of the 1960's certainly fall into this category through their tendency towards a convergence and unification of fictional elements. Faced with the same problems in his own genre, Jean-Luc Godard abandoned narrative films altogether; in this way he could draw attention more effectively to the heterogeneous activity of film-making itself. For novelists who wished to break once and for all with the notion of the text as an expression or representation of reality and introduce the experience of the text as a practice of writing/reading, the solution was not so straightforward. Novelists did not have the same choice as the film-maker (who could turn to documentary, which is precisely the course taken by Godard). A novel without a fiction had certainly not emerged from the early experiments of the 'nouveaux romanciers' in the 1950's and 1960's. Looking at these novels in retrospect we can see that despite the fragmentation of plot and of the character's 'stable personality', despite the
disturbance of linear time and the mirroring of the main récit from within through 'mise en abyme', despite all the disruptions of realism, these texts did not constitute an irrevocable challenge to the dominance of the coherent narrative. Consequently, they had not severed all links with 'le terrain de l'expression-représentation'.

This does not mean that the first flush of the 'nouveau roman' was a failure. My comments do not imply a value-judgement but merely attempt to point up the problems that still persisted after novels like Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie*, Butor's *La Modification*, Simon's *La Route des Flandres* and others of that period. Simon's position is exemplary in terms of a recognition and resolution of these problems. Having perfected a particular 'practice of writing' in the 1960's, he became aware of the consequences of this practice in terms of the general organisation of the narrative: a tendency towards a 'composition unitaire' through the reconstitution of a fragmented narrative, which militated against the text as 'une écriture' in process. The need for a further change in format now became essential in order to invert the balance between the 'text as product' and the 'text as process of production' which was still weighted in favour of the former. The question of how to accomplish this change came to the fore. Dählenbach's comments on the nature of this problem for the novelist with respect to 'mise en abyme' can be extended to encompass wider aspects of narrative organisation:

Comment empêcher la focalisation qu'elles impliquent de viser un sens ultime et de stabiliser le texte au lieu de le dynamiser? Comment éviter .... que les mises en abyme de la narration, auxquelles tel romancier parvenait parfois grâce au texte définitif, ne masquent
l'aventure de l'écriture et ne désignent un produit fini quand il eût fallu montrer, en acte, un travail imprévisible et interminable?!

With Triptyque and Leçon de Choses Simon gives us his answer. As we have seen, fictional development is not abandoned in these texts; characters, themes and actions are all to be found in the development of a number of fictional épisodes. However, the organisation of the narrative is such that it is truly impossible to integrate the diverse pieces which are presented in the text. The 'composition unitaire' is breached beyond repair. The text stimulates the reader's desire for coherence yet, unlike previous texts, refuses him the gratification of satisfying this desire. Lotringer sums this up well when he says that the text

solicite l'imaginaire du lecteur, c'est-à-dire sa fonction intégrative, captatrice, spéculaire. Elle l'invite à saturaîer les manques, à suturer les coupures. A recouvrir d'un voile de vraisemblance un fantasme d'ordre.

Plus les éléments fictionnels sont hétérogènes entre eux, plus l'effort intégrateur doit s'afficher comme tel. Le désir de complétude apparaît ainsi d'autant mieux qu'il est sevré de sa sanction ultime, divorcé de sa destination.!

By refusing a 'sens ultime', Triptyque and Leçon de Choses refuse to reinforce the reader's desire for order and consequently keep open the process of 'suture'. Lotringer's term is particularly appropriate to this process which governs the writing and reading alike: an articulation of diverse elements within the space of writing/reading.

Ricardou has referred to this format in Simon's later texts as 'le dispositif osiriaque'. Les Corps Conducteurs, in particular, lends itself to an analogy with the Osiris myth since the text deals with the fragmentation and articulation of parts of the body; but the real significance
of the reference is, of course, to be understood in its metaphorical sense in terms of the fragmentation and articulation of the parts of the body of the text. With reference to *Triptyque*, Ricardou makes it clear that the fact that this process does not culminate in the constitution of a 'composition unitaire' but a 'dis-corps' ('corps multiple') does not mean that coherence is supplanted by incoherence. This is an important clarification for the text is far from being an arbitrary jumble of words. The progression of the narration is perfectly coherent in terms of the formal logic which guides it; yet the play of the narration does not result in a coherent whole. Ricardou supplements the opposition coherence/incoherence with the term 'discohérence' which is neither one nor the other but a 'cohérence contradictoire'. Philippe Sollers has formulated a similar idea in a different way. His comment on the writing of other great 'moderns' (Lautréamont, Mallarmé, Roussel, Joyce, Artaud, Bataille) is surely applicable too to Simon's recent work:

> Or ce travail n'est pas "non-sens" mais sens suspendu, interrogé, contesté, différé, repris, annulé, relancé par un fonctionnement qui n'avance pas vers un "sens" ponctuel mais trace la scène des transformations signifiantes changeant le mode de lecture rhétorique et parlant en espace multiple, actif, infini.  

The absence of a narrative resolution in *Triptyque* and *Leçon de Choses* allows us to situate these texts firmly within the modern realm of 'discohérence' or 'sens suspendu'. We can join with Dällenbach and Ricardou in announcing the birth of a 'nouveau "nouveau roman"', the construction of a text which is, in Barthes' words, 'une galaxie de signifiants'. In terms of Simon's development, the formalised signifying practice and the narrative 'discohérence' of *Triptyque* marks
a final break with the novel as a form of representation and expression.

What is the significance of this break? This is a question whose answer opens on to a wide area of discussion, much of which extends beyond the limits that I wish to maintain for this present study. I will mention only general aspects of the discussion which are particularly relevant to an understanding of the achievement of *Triptyque* and *Leçon de Choses*.

In a very reductive sense, the argument concerns what can be called the occultation of the 'signifiant' in western thought; in other words, the acceptance of concepts as fixed and immutable 'signifiés' detached from any consideration of the process of production of those 'signifiés'. Jacques Derrida has called this autonomous, free-floating 'signifié' the 'signifié transcendantal' and explains the way in which its construction implies an effacement of the 'signifiant': 'Non seulement le signifiant et le signifié semblent s'unir, mais, dans cette confusion, le signifiant semble s'effacer ou devenir transparent pour laisser le concept se présenter lui-même, comme ce qu'il est, ne renvoyant à rien d'autre qu'à sa présence.'25 This idealism has been challenged by semiological analysis over the past twenty years, which has engaged in a materialist consideration of the process of production of meaning. The object of study is no longer considered as an object in its own right ('signifié transcendantal') but as constituted by a play of differences between 'signifiants'. This materialist approach embraces the notion of the movement and modification of 'signifiants' and the rejection of a centre, fixity, fullness or presence outside or transcending this movement. Derrida suggests
that the epistemological 'rupture' in the modern period occurs precisely at that point where the notion of a meaning transcendent to the play of signifying practice is questioned, that is, with the recognition that 'tout signifié est aussi en position de signifiant'. It is this recognition which transforms our whole perspective: 'L'absence de signifié transcendentale étend à l'infini le champ et le jeu de la signification.'

The attempt to uncover the process of production of meanings rather than meanings in themselves parallels Marx's study of commodity fetishism. Marx refuses the notion that exchange is the primary process in economic life, since this implies that men enter into relations with one another (and with society as a whole) through the mediation of the commodities exchanged (which appear to have an existence independent of man). Thus a relation between persons appears as a relation between things. In contrast, Marx insists that the process of production is fundamental, that men must first enter into social relations with one another in order to produce the commodities later to be exchanged. Commodities do not have an innate value or an existence prior to man's intervention: they are products of the material process of production carried out by man.

The decipherment of the process of production which has been occulted (or mystified) is therefore fundamental to the materialist projects of both Marx and modern critics such as Derrida, Barthes, Sollers and Kristeva. As Julia Kristeva remarks, (situating the text in a Marxist perspective), it is a question of putting the accent on 'la production du sens plutôt sur l'échange de sens.' Jean-Claude Raillon's
studies of Simon's later texts \(^{31}\) analyse the signifying practice established in the narration from within a Marxist perspective of production and transformation of matter, while my own analyses have concentrated on the material work of the narration (the play of 'signifiants') in the production of the fictions (the body of 'signifiés').

The radical achievement of *Triptyque* and *Leçon de Choses* becomes clearer when seen in terms of the distinction outlined above between process of production and product.\(^{32}\) The realist text is a repetition of the conventions by which a society represents its own reality and as such enforces, without questioning, that reality as given. Effacing itself as a 'writing' ('écriture'), it effaces the part played by language in the formation of reality and hence it effaces itself as a material practice. Ricardou explains clearly how the illusion of reality in the text ('l'illusion référentielle') produces an occultation of the 'signifiant':

> tout appuyé sur les procédures de la représentation, le réalisme artistique relève de l'activité idéaliste .... Donner au lecteur l'impression d'un contact avec les choses et actions mêmes, c'est en même temps lui faire oublier qu'il est en contact avec un texte. 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 constitutante correspond l'évaporation de la matière signifiante.\(^{33}\)

The realist text offers itself as a product to be consumed, as a body of (apparently) given, free-floating 'signifiés' which pass between writer and reader and constitute a shared and understood knowledge of the world. In Kristeva's words, it is 'comme un objet d'échange entre un destinateur et un destinataire'.\(^{34}\)

In opposition to the realist novel, *Triptyque* and *Leçon de
Choses are the scenes of production of meaning. I have shown how both texts are composed of a sliding and transformation of 'signifiants', of a displacement and condensation of meaning through the complex play of metaphor and metonymy. I have also shown how this play is not foreclosed by a convergence of meaning; the text is maintained as a plurality of signification 'without centre or point of arrest'. The 'objet d'échange' is therefore transformed into 'un processus de production de sens' in which both writer and reader 'are confounded in the process of the text'.

These texts transgress sense by producing a plenitude of meaning. They can be compared to the poetry of Mallarmé or the dense prose of Joyce's Finnegans Wake in that an overabundance of meanings denies the expressivity of the text and transforms it into a space occupied by a continual sliding of 'signifiants'. The text transgresses in the way that Bataille understands a writing of transgression, that is, as a profanation of an established logic and order. Lotringer regards this transgression as the ultimate aim of the writing: 'Mettre en question la loi, le symbolique, la logique, c'est produire un inceste, une transgression. Cette transgression m'apparaît l'objet, le but de la pratique textuelle, cette disruption, cette transgression continuelle de la logique.'

For Derrida, too, the continual transgression of logic through a play of 'signifiants' is of fundamental importance: the challenge presented to the 'signifié transcendent' by 'le jeu de la signification' is a challenge to the whole fabric of western thought, founded on logocentrism, on desire for an original 'presence' and hypostasis.
The practice of writing of *Triptyque* and *Leçon de Choses* - located in that modern enclave of a writing of signifying activity - is therefore important in terms of its final break with an idealist concept of the novel. Writer and reader are held within the process of production of meaning constituted by the text, that is, within 'le jeu de la signification'. I have demonstrated the nature of this game with words which enmeshes the writer and the reader within a tissue of an infinite number of connections from which there is no escape. Meaning is never fixed but continually elsewhere, or rather nowhere, since it is always in the act of being produced. We will not find in these texts a confirmation of our conventional view of the world but a transgression of the very fabric by which that view is produced since the texts manifest a 'deconstruction' of language. This radical subversion of language - upsetting 'une pratique confortable de la lecture' - constitutes a break with our cultural and psychological heritage; as such, as Barthes has declared, it fragments our ordered world and, in that moment, introduces the experience of 'jouissance', which is to be understood as the disintegration of the consistency of the ego. A text of 'practice', like *Triptyque* or *Leçon de Choses*, is therefore a space in which the 'subject' is always in formation, never formed, always dispersed within the perpetual sliding of signification.

If it is possible to talk of Simon's most recent texts as examples of what Barthes terms 'un texte scriptible', it is necessary to ask what is particular to Simon's practice of writing that distinguishes his texts from other texts of a similar nature. I believe the answer lies in the way Simon's
texts manifest a perfect correspondence between the activity of the writing (the narration) and the constitution of a fiction. I have commented on the way in which this 'double aspect' is a fundamental feature of the novels of the 1960's. The fictional homogeneity of these texts ultimately tends to obscure the work of the narration which has produced the fictions. However, the narrative 'discohérence' of Triptyque and Leçon de Choses means that the process of production is never obscured by fictional coherence. Furthermore (and this is what is truly fascinating for the reader of these texts) the fictions themselves are, in effect, the dramatization of that process of production. For example, the maths problem, the film posters and the jigsaw-puzzle in Triptyque all fictionalize the formal play of the narration; so too do the chapters from the book in Leçon de Choses. They are not only 'mises en abyme' of the narration (that is, 'assemblages' of preceding relationships established in the narration) but themselves contribute to the subsequent structuring of fiction and narration alike. In other words, the texts are a dramatization of the scene of signifying activity by which fictions can be produced. Each fiction is none other than the fiction of a narration or, to be more precise, the fiction of a narration in the process of constituting a fiction.
CONCLUSION

In this study of the later novels of Claude Simon I have traced the progressive development and transformation of a particular practice of writing. In the texts of the 1960's realist conventions (perspective and voice) and the linear narrative are undermined. Instead, the narration functions according to the play of metaphor and metonymy. The associations thus established restratify the text according to a hierarchy of theme and space. This results in a 'composition unitaire', elements converging to constitute a 'macro-métaphore'.

This process becomes more formalised and rigorous in the texts subsequent to La Bataille de Pharsale. The systematisation of the practice of metaphor/metonymy which governs the narration leads to a more complex interweaving of metaphorical and metonymic chains. In contrast to the texts of the 1960's, Triptyque and Leçon de Choses display a thematic and spatial organisation whose contradictions militate against the resolution of the text into a unified, coherent corpus. As a result of this narrative 'discohérence', the play of signification established in the narration no longer converges into a 'sens univoque' but instead allows for a plurality of meanings through the liberation of the 'signifiant'. This later practice of writing transforms the novel from a fixed body of 'signifiés' into a space of signifying activity. Hence, the later texts are characterized by the continual process of production of meaning.

The recent developments in the theory of the novel discussed in the previous chapter have stressed that the importance
of the work of the novelist lies in the foregrounding of this very process of production of the text. As Maurice Blanchot remarks, 'ce qui attire l’écrivain, ce qui ébranle l’artiste, ce n’est pas directement l’œuvre, c’est sa recherche, le mouvement qui y conduit, c’est l’approche de ce qui rend l’œuvre possible.' Thus Simon’s work can now be considered as an activity constituted by the material engagement with language. As such it presents a challenge to the popular notion of the author as the creator and donor of a pre-formed body of ideas (the 'human person' on whom, according to Barthes, the image of literature is traditionally centred). Simon himself has consistently stressed 'le caractère tout à fait artisanal et empirique' of his work. In employing Levi-Strauss’s term 'bricolage' to describe the manner in which his texts are produced and in his insistence that he should be considered as 'un homme traversé par le travail' he highlights the importance of the material process of production of his texts.

This study has not focussed solely on the writer or the novels in themselves but on a writer in the process of producing texts. In this specific practice of writing lies the true fascination of Simon’s work and its relevance to modern developments in the novel. My examination of the evolution of this practice of writing has been constituted by a series of explorations within the space of language just as, for Simon, each novel is 'l’aventure singulière du narrateur qui ne cesse de chercher, découvrant à tâtons le monde dans et par l’écriture.'
Chapter 1. Narrative Perspective

2. See Aristotle, p. 18.
3. In his book *Mimesis* Erich Auerbach states that the original starting point of his investigation into the interpretation of reality through literary representation or 'imitation' was Plato's discussion in *The Republic*. See Auerbach, p. 554.
4. James reveals his preference for this technique in the prefaces to several of his novels. For example, he explains in the preface to *The Ambassadors* how Strether provides the single focus directing our vision of the unfolding narrative: 'every question of form and pressure, I easily remember, paled in the light of the major propriety, recognized as soon as really weighed; that of employing but one centre and keeping it all within my hero's compass .... Strether's sense of .... things, and Strether's only, should avail me for showing them; I should know but through his more or less groping knowledge of them.' James, pp. 20-21.
5. Lubbock, p. 62
6. See, for example, Norman Friedman's article 'Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept' whose complex typology is based exclusively on Lubbock's concept of point of view. For an excellent survey of these and other approaches to the question of point of view, see Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon's 'Point de Vue ou Perspective Narrative.'
8. ibid., p.20.
9. ibid., Preface. Booth offers a different typology for defining possible modes of narration which I consider in Chapter 2.
12. These terms were used by the Russian Formalists whose radical reappraisal of literature and criticism in the 1920's was largely influential in stimulating the new French formalism of the 1960's. See especially Todorov's collection of fundamental texts in Théorie de la Littérature. For discussion of the work of the Russian Formalists, see especially Fredric Jameson's The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism. (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1972) and Tony Bennett's Formalism and Marxism (New Accents, Methuen, 1979).
15. Genette (1972), p.203. In their analyses of the narrative both Todorov (1966) and Genette (1972) posit a third category which concerns the temporal relations between the narration and the fiction. In this present study, I will not consider questions of temporality separately but in relation to a discussion of perspective and voice.
16. In a brief review of certain theorists of the narrative, Genette claims that a confusion is born precisely from the lack of distinction between perspective and voice. See Genette (1972), pp. 203-206.
17. Lubbock, p.251.
18. All quotations from the seven novels discussed in this study refer to the editions of the 'Editions de Minuit' except for Le Palace (Union Générale D'Éditions'). Page references will be given following each quotation.
19. In Temps et Roman Pouillon defines the two modes of narrative presentation in the following way: in the 'vision "avec"' 'c'est toujours à partir (du personnage central) que nous voyons les autres. C'est "avec" lui que nous voyons les autres protagonistes, c'est "avec" lui que nous vivons les événements racontés'. (p.74); in the 'vision "par derrière"' 'au lieu de se placer à l'intérieur d'un personnage, l'auteur (essaie) de se décaler de lui, non pas pour le voir du dehors, pour voir ses gestes et simplement entendre ses paroles, mais pour considérer de façon objective et directe sa vie psychique' (p.85). Genette subsequently renames these two modes the 'focalisation interne' and 'focalisation zéro' respectively (see Genette (1972), p.206).
22. ibid., pp. 210-211. Loubère suggests an identical explanation of the switches in focus and voice: 'It is noteworthy that there are occasional shifts from the first to the third person in the text, as if Georges were seeing himself from the outside.' Loubère, p.36. See also Fletcher (1975), p.72.
26. ibid., p.6.
27. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.
29. The disruption of a conventional temporal structure is also due to anomalies in voice (see Chapter 2).
33. As regards the appearance of a comparison in what one took to be the vision of a character, it is interesting to note Genette's comments on this phenomenon in Flaubert's L'Education Sentimentale. Genette detects, in this intrusion in 'le cours du récit', a sign of the presence of the writer himself. (See 'Silences de Flaubert' in Figures 1 (pp.223-243), p.230).
34. Metaphorical associations will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.
37. ibid., p.187.
38. ibid., p.224.
39. Once again Genette's examination of Flaubert's novels is highly illuminating. By locating certain phrases which indicate the clear presence of the writer, Genette destroys the myth concerning the impersonality of these novels (see 'Silences de Flaubert').
40. This circulation of reality, memory and imagination will be examined in more detail in Chapter 2.
Chapter 2. Narrative Voice

5. See Booth.
7. Booth also fails to distinguish between the real reader and the fictional reader, a distinction which parallels that between the author and the narrator in terms of the difference between the human person and the fictional person constructed within the narrative. For further discussion of this point see Barthes (1966), p.10 and Greimas, p.177.
11. Benveniste, p.239.
21. Certain temporal indicators which appear later in the text suggest that the episode in the hotel-room takes place in the summer of 1946: 'l'entendant prononcer six
ans après et presque mot pour mot les paroles qu'il avait lui-même dites .... et maintenant c'était l'été non le premier mais le deuxième après que tout avait pris fin' (p.232).

22. Although the exact time of this episode is never made explicit, certain temporal indicators suggest these dates. For example: 'tout l'été ils le passèrent .... puis au début de l'automne, ils furent envoyés dans une ferme .... travaillant pendant les mois d'hiver' (pp.183-184); 'c'était alors de nouveau l'automne mais en un an nous avions appris à nous dépouiller .... de cet uniforme' (pp.290-291).


24. Pingaud, p.1030. Seylaz makes a similar observation: 'le moment de la narration, qui logiquement doit se situer après la nuit passée avec Corinne, semble souvent se confondre avec celle-ci; les souvenirs de narration se distinguant mal de ce qui semble être la narration de souvenirs, le lecteur est privé de tout repère utilisable.' Seylaz, p.235.


27. ibid., p.211.


29. See also Ludovic Janvier's essay on Simon in which he states 'Claude Simon veut nous rendre présente l'épaisseur du monde telle qu'elle est vécue, sentie et .... il s'attache à dire, à mimer au plus près par le langage la réalité physique de notre présence à l'En dehors'. 

30. Seylaz, p.235. See also, for example, Janvier (1964), p.89 and Fletcher (1975), pp.63-69.

31. Seylaz, p.236.

32. Mercier, p.268.

33. Hesbois comments on the same phenomenon in L'Herbe (Hesbois, p.152).


35. Pingaud, p.1029.


41. ibid., p.227.

42. Lanceraux (1973), pp.237-238.


44. Genette (1969), p.68. Barthes comments on the same tendency: 'une partie de la littérature contemporaine n'est plus descriptive, mais transitive, s'efforçant d'accomplir dans la parole un présent si pur que tout le discours s'identifie à l'acte qui le délivre'. Barthes (1966), p.21.

Chapter 3. Fundamentals of Narration

1. This comment originally appears in Simon's 'avant-propos' to Orion Aveugle.

2. Deguy as cited in Simon 'La Fiction Mot à Mot' in Ricardou (Ed.), (1972) (a), pp.73-97 (p.82).

3. 'La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.80.


5. See 'La Rhétorique Restreinte' in Genette (1972), pp.21-40.

6. Ricardou (1967), p.134. The 'comparé' and 'comparant' are equivalent to the more familiar terms, introduced by I.A.Richards, of the 'tenor' and 'vehicle' respectively. See Richards, p.99.


9. In "Claude Simon", Textuellement', Ricardou demonstrates how the perception of similarity produces a fragmentation of the linear narrative in Simon's novels. In fact, the technique can also be located in other texts. See Ricardou's analysis of Poe and Robbe-Grillet in Ricardou (1967) pp.136-143.


16. 'La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.84.
18. Jakobson, pp.74-75.
19. 'La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.89.
22. Dällenbach states: 'puisque c'est d'activité métaphorique qu'il s'agit n'aurions-nous pas avantage, par l'éventuel détour de Lacan, à nous référer à Freud et à ce qu'il nous dit de la condensation?' 'Mise en Abyme', p.158.
25. The American's room is, in fact, on another floor. 'L'étudiant' only realizes his mistake the next day. The noises he hears during the night are those caused by the arrest, removal (and assassination?) of the American.
26. It is interesting to note the play on the word 'cartouche' which refers here to the scroll-like ornament in which the title of the painting is situated but whose other meanings – as a cartridge for a gun and as a carton (of cigarettes, cigars, etc.) – are also exploited in the text. This type of condensation of meanings, in which the revolution, eroticism and a baroque design (the 'cartouche' itself) reside in a single word, is illustrative of the play of language instituted in the narration.
27. See also p.75: 'leurs molles chairs et leur cireuse graisse d'eunuques'.
28. See also p.114: 'son ventre tellement plat que l'enorme et noir revolver qu'il portait glisse dans la ceinture, directement contre sa chemise, faisait a peine saillie'.

29. In an article which attempts to unravel certain associations established in the text, Jean-Pierre Vidal mentions the connections between the umbilical cord, the theme of castration and the metaphorical substitution of the phallus by the weapon. Vidal concentrates particularly on the interconnections (largely through plays on words) of elements connected with ingestion, excretion and the visceral and traces the transformations of the 'signifiant' 'colon' during the course of the text. See Vidal, 'Le Palace. Palais des Mirages Intestins ou l'Auberge Espagnole' in Études Littéraires (on Claude Simon), pp.189-214.

30. Stuart Sykes has referred to the way in which the hero's contemplation of the cigar-box involves a regrouping of diverse elements separated in time. However, Sykes chooses to read this as a metaphor for the fluid nature of consciousness rather than as an example of the textual process to which I refer. See Sykes (1973), p.340.


32. 'La Matérialisation dans Le Palace' in Colloque de Cerisy, pp.382-387 (p.386).

33. For example: 'C'est seulement en écrivant que quelque chose se produit' ('Avant-propos' to Orion Aveugle); 'Et pour ce qui me concerne, si je compare ce "ferment" qu'étaient mes "intentions premières" avec ce qui finalement, grâce à cet ensemble de contraintes, s'est produit.
au cours de mon travail, je suis de plus en plus à même de constater à quel point ce produit élaboré mot à mot va finalement bien au-delà de mes intentions.'

('La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.97).
Chapter 4. Theme Space and Narrative Organisation

1. 'La Métaphore de l'Oeil' in Barthes (1964) (b), pp.238-245.

2. ibid., p.244.

3. ibid., p.244.


5. Sexuality has, from the very beginning, been explicitly associated with this sequence through the coupling 'L'acier virginal'. This unites the sword held by the dying de Reixach (metaphor for the phallus), with Corinne who has deceived him sexually ('seulement, vierge, il y avait belle lurette qu'elle ne l'était plus' (p.13)). This passage heralds, at the beginning of the text, the end point of the journey of desire, 'le lieu le centre l'autel .... ce suave et tendre et vertigineux et broussailleux et secret repli de la chair .... Ouais: crucifié, agonisant sur l'autel la bouche l'antre de ....' (p.13). It also produces the episode in the 'hôtel' through a play on the word 'autel'.


7. These few pages in La Route des Flandres have already received detailed comment and analysis. For an inventory of animal, vegetal and nutritional vocabulary see Jean, op.cit. For a more general analysis see Heath (1972), pp.175-177 and Loubère, pp.96-98.

8. Jean, op.cit., p.122

9. As regards the interconnection of life, death and sexuality, John Fletcher has compared Simon with Georges Bataille (See 'Erotisme et Création ou la Mort en Sursis' in Entretiens, pp.131-140).
10. For an elaboration of this argument see Sykes (1979), pp.62-63.

11. Ricardou draws attention to these two features of Simon's texts in "Claude Simon", Textuellement'.

12. In a sense, five is an arbitrary number. I have divided the war sequences into two episodes - the ambush and the captivity - since there seems to be a clear division between the two in terms of their fictional progression. There are other fragments in the text which do not exactly correspond to any of the five episodes, notably the references to Georges's relationship with his mother, Sabine, and his father (see, for example, pp.33-37, 52-58). However, these fragments are not sufficiently developed to constitute a fictional episode and for this reason I have not included them in my schema.

13. Genette notes that in Proust's novel 'la totalité du texte narratif .... peut se définir comme scène' as opposed to the traditional alternation of 'scène' and 'sommaire' (Genette (1972), p.141). In other words, there is very little contraction of fictional temporality in terms of a 'résumé'. Simon's narration can be viewed in the same way. The relationship between description and action will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

14. For a discussion of the function of 'mise en abyme' in 'Las Meninas' see Foucault, pp.19-31.

15. See Gide, p.41. In fact, Gide looks to heraldry and the design containing one coat of arms depicted within another ('un blason dans un blason') for the most precise definition of the procedure in question. According to Bruce Morissette, however, Gide's comparison is inexact since,
in heraldry, the 'blason' in miniature is never the same of the major design (Morissette (1971), p.125).


18. ibid., p.75.
19. Simon has drawn a schematic representation of the structure of La Route des Flandres highlighting its symmetrical organisation ('La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.93).

21. ibid., p.170.
24. Sykes notes the relation between the narrator's quest and the Ulysses myth and compares Simon's treatment of it to that of Joyce (Sykes (1979), p.106).

25. In La Route des Flandres Georges is related to de Reixach and therefore, through marriage, to Corinne. In Histoire Corinne is the narrator's cousin.

26. There are further references to this fall: 'au bout d'un moment seulement le sang commença à perler très rouge' (p.368); 'un moment après seulement le sang perla' (p.382).

27. The theme of becoming 'figé' is interwoven with that of production. Blood immediately hardens into a scab (pp.154, 350), the tear in grandmother's eye appears to solidify (p.27), the photograph of a First World War battlefield appears to freeze the scene of devastation
(p.105), the post-cards fix the scenes from around the world and so on.

28. Simon, 'La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.94.


30. We know from La Route des Flandres that Corinne's husband, de Reixach, was killed in the war. In Histoire she is Charles's daughter, hence the mention of widowhood refers both to Charles and Corinne (and perhaps to the narrator).


32. The model herself is caught by the camera having just soaked her biscuit in her tea, the biscuit mid-way between her cup and her mouth. This image clearly recalls the 'madeleine' episode in A la Recherche du Temps Perdu and similarly refers metaphorically to the moment of creation.


36. ibid., p.53.


38. This point will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Chapter 5. Development of Perspective and Voice.

1. 'Réponses de Claude Simon à Quelques Questions écrites de Ludovic Janvier' in Entretiens, pp.15-29 (p.17).

2. 'Claude Simon ne sera donc pas considéré comme un auteur, mais comme un écrivain produisant des textes par rapport aux textes qu'il a signés, c'est-à-dire comme un scripteur pris dans des problèmes d'intertextualité restreinte.' Ricardou, '"Claude Simon", Textuellement', p.ll.

3. 'la "période centrale" de la production simonienne (L'Herbe, La Route des Flandres, Le Palace, Histoire) ... je considère comme une totalité et comme un univers romanesque global régis par d'analogues lois d'écriture et de production.' Roubichou, 'Aspects de la Phrase Simonienne' in Colloque de Cerisy, pp.191-209 (p.191).

4. Simon's other major publication in this period, Orion Aveugle (1970), is not a novel and will therefore not be taken into consideration here. The text of Orion Aveugle is taken up in its entirety (and developed) in Les Corps Conducteurs. For a comparison of Orion Aveugle and Les Corps Conducteurs see Duverlie and Gilbert.


6. Ricardou as cited in 'La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.84.

7. 'Réponses à Quelques Questions écrites de Ludovic Janvier', p.17.


12. The production of the name Orion from distinct textual elements first occurs in *La Bataille de Pharsale* (p.154). Ricardou draws attention to this in his excellent essay 'La Bataille de la Phrase' (in Ricardou (1971), pp.118-158): 'Il est facile de voir que la même soustraction de 0 au début d' "Orion" révèle une parfaite anacyclique de "noir", cet inverse de la lumière.' (p.150). The choice of names is not an arbitrary practice in Simon's texts; names are produced through the play of language in the same way as other textual elements. They are not part of what Barthes has termed 'l'effet du réel'; they are, instead, the effect of a particular practice of writing. In 'L'Essence et les Sens' (in *Entretiens*, pp.104-112), Ricardou demonstrates how the name of the hotel 'Gabbia D'Oro' in *La Bataille de Pharsale* is produced by means of a conjunction of diverse elements in the text (see pp.106-107).

13. 'Orion Aveugle' has also become a favourite metaphor of Simon's for the activity of writing; (hence the choice of Poussin's painting for his own work *Orion Aveugle*). He often remarks on the similarity between the journey of Orion and that of the writer: 'il y a quelque chose d'assez troublant dans ce merveilleux tableau de Poussin, 'Orion Aveugle', où l'on pourrait voir comme une allégorie de l'écrivain avançant à tâtons dans la fôret des signes vers .... eh bien, justement: vers le soleil levant (c'est le titre entier du tableau). Or, Orion est une constellation, et quand le soleil sera levé, il sera, lui, effacé. Le livre fini, le but (la lumière du soleil) atteint, celui que j'étais en le commençant.
est effacé .... Est-ce que ce n'est pas merveilleux?
In Poirson, pp.41-42. See also, for example, the 'avant-propos' to Orion Aveugle.

14. For example, as a star-constellation Orion will disintegrate with the rising sun (see p.222) while as a 'mise en abyme' of the main episode, Orion's disintegration refers metaphorically to that of the sick man in the street who is, similarly, 'engluí dans une espèce de pâte tiède et visqueuse dont il ne parvient pas à se détacher, faite indistinctement de pierres, de briques et de vapeur d'eau' (p.77).


17. Jost remarks on a different inversion: the colours describing the 'bassin' 'au pied de la cascade' are inverted when describing the same word used in its anatomic sense in 'la grange'. See Jost (1974), p.1033.
Chapter 6. Description in Action

1. 'Réponses à Quelques Questions Écrites', p.16.

2. Simon makes similar comments on the realist novel in his paper 'La Fiction Mot à Mot' (see especially pp.75-78). In the discussion which followed this paper, Sylvère Lotringer raised the point that the realist novel does in fact have its own logic (see Ricardou (Ed.), (1972) (a), p.102). A fundamental difference between realism and modernism is, of course, not that one is formless and the other is pure form; it is, instead, that the realist novel tends to obscure or 'naturalize' its narrational devices (whether consciously or unconsciously) whereas the modernist novel deliberately sets out to reveal them. Barthes maintains that the reluctance to declare the codes of a 'narrative situation' is a deep-rooted characteristic of bourgeois society:

On peut dire .... que tout récit est tributaire d'une "situation de récit", ensemble des protocoles selon lesquels le récit est consommé .... Pour le courant, notre société escamote aussi soigneusement que possible le codage de la situation de récit: on ne compte plus les procédés de narration qui tentent de naturaliser le récit qui va suivre, en feignant de lui donner pour cause une occasion naturelle, et, si l'on peut dire, de le "désinaugurer": .... La répugnance à afficher ses codes marque la société bourgeoise et la culture de masse qui en est issue: à l'une et à l'autre, il faut des signes qui n'aient pas l'air des signes. Ceci n'est poutant, si l'on peut dire, qu'un épiphénomène structural: si familier, si négligent que soit aujourd'hui le fait d'ouvrir un roman, un journal ou un poste de télévision, rien ne peut empêcher que cet acte modeste n'installe en nous, d'un seul coup et dans son entier, le code narratif dont nous allons avoir besoin.

3. In the majority of his interviews Simon refers to the analogy with painting: see, for example, Simon (1959), Knapp (p.190), Joguet, 'Réponses à Quelques Questions Écrites', p.16.
Écrites' (pp.25-26). Indeed, he has described himself as 'un peintre raté' (in Knapp, p.180).

4. 'La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.95. See also 'Réponses à Quelques Questions Écrites', p.29 and 'Claude Simon, à la question' in Colloque de Cerisy, pp.403-431, (p.414).

5. Ricardou has analysed the mechanisation of Simon's practice of writing in the later texts in 'Le Dispositif Osiriaque' (in Études Littéraires, pp.9-80).

6. On the development of his writing Simon has commented 'il me semble .... que la continuité de mon écriture se fait de plus en plus rigoureuse', in 'Réponses à Quelques Questions Écrites', p.18.


8. Cited in 'La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.73.

9. For this purpose the content of the description is relatively unimportant since, as Simon has pointed out, 'on peut aller à tout en commençant par la description d'un crayon'. Simon (1967) (a), p.4.


11. ibid., p.462.

12. In Poirson, p.35.

13. ibid., p.35. For other remarks on the nature of description see also 'Claude Simon, à la question', pp.409-411.


15. 'La Loi de Conduction' in Colloque de Cerisy, pp.275-313 (pp.306-307).

16. In an analysis of Leçon de Choses, Jost defines the process in the following way: 'un vocable utilisé métaphoriquement retrouve avec l'avancée du texte, son acception la plus courante.' Jost (1977), p.82.
17. For a more detailed analysis of the theme of proliferation in *Les Corps Conducteurs* see Ricardou, "Claude Simon", *Textuellement*, p.15.

18. The relationship between 'les jambes' ('moulées d'une pièce') and the telephone ('une pièce dans une fente') is largely founded on the sexual connotations of each description. Significantly, the episode of the two lovers follows the description of the telephone; in this sequence the man's hand is between the woman's thighs, 'le majeur légèrement engagé dans la fente' (p.69) (my underlining). See also p.117.

19. Lotringer uses this term in connection with the variations of the 'signifiant' 'mousse' in *Triptyque*. See 'Cryptique', p.326.

20. We should also note the antithesis 'enfiler un bas' (p.7)/'baisser son pantalon' (p.8).

21. The connection between language and sexuality is taken up again in the description of the old king watching 'le page' (page boy/page of book) making love (p.133).


23. For an analysis of the play on the word 'colonne', see the section 'Jeux de Colonne' in Lotringer, 'Le Nouveau Roman: Révolution Romanesque?', pp.344-345.


25. *ibid.*, p.79.


27. In Poirson, pp.35-36.

28. The connection between the gun and the soldiers is made more explicit when one of the men enters the room holding
some chickens: 'Achevant de traverser la pièce, il s'assied sur le sol, le dos au mur, et déposant les poules entre ses jambes écartées à demi repliées il entreprend de les plumer' (pp.19-20) (my underlining). The link man-gun is reminiscent of the composite term 'l'homme-fusil' describing the Italian in Le Palace.

29. As in the description of the woman at the window in Le Palace, the play with light and shade is a metaphorical presentation of the activity of writing, that is, the material existence of the printed word on the page. The opening sentence of the text - 'Les langues pendants du papier décollé ....}' (my underlining) - can be seen in the same way. Colette Gaudin remarks on the double meaning of these 'vocables': 'Déjà se marquent les machinations du langage et de l'inconscient dans les deux manières dont un discours peut se poursuivre, et surtout dont on peut parler d'autre chose: en exploitant la condensation des sens dans un même vocable ou en faisant glisser l'attention au gré de la construction de la phrase'. Gaudin, p.191.

30. Raymond Jean has remarked on the importance of the process of metaphor/metonymy in Simon's most recent texts. See 'Praxis Simonienne' in Colloque de Cerisy, pp.248-256.

31. See 'Le Dispositif Osiriaque'.

32. Amongst other plays of 'signifiants' that operate between the two sequences is the transformation of the 'lapin' in the country episode into 'le pan souillé du manteau' in the town episode (p.49).


34. 'Claude Simon, à la question', p.426.
35. 'on connaît des exemples d'illustres lecteurs, comme André Breton ou Montherlant se rejoignant là curieusement pour déclarer l'un qu'il ne comprend pas l'intérêt que peut présenter la description de la chambre de Raskolnikov, l'autre que lorsqu'il arrive dans un roman à une description il saute la page.' 'Claude Simon, à la question', pp. 408-409.

36. This last example of the construction in reverse is especially instructive in terms of the dominance of the narration over the development of the fiction. The intercutting at the beginning of the text between the two boys looking into the river and the couple making love in the barn gives the impression that these events are taking place at the same time. (Although the temporality of neither is actually made explicit, the continual present-tense narration makes no temporal distinction between the two scenes.) The temporal correspondence of the meeting of the hunter and the maid and the return from fishing of the two boys shows this impression to be false. (Subsequently, the two boys, having noticed the wink and the smile exchanged between the hunter and the maid, secretly follow the couple to the barn to watch them through the slit in the posters on the barn wall.) The point is that the aftermath of fishing is formally called for at this juncture because it is the opposite of the original scene, just as the meeting of the couple is called for as the opposite to the scene in the barn. In other words, the temporality of the fiction is dependent on the rule of opposites established in the narration. If various aspects of the
fictional chronology appear strange - even impossible - in terms of a linear temporality, they are nevertheless perfectly explicable in terms of the formal logic of the narration.

38. See Jost (1977), p.81.
40. For verification of this, see pp. 50 and 52. Making her way to the evening rendez-vous, the young woman 'sort du bois .... peut sentir .... le parfum tiède des foins' and sees the man's silhouette against the barrier near the farm-house; in the afternoon, during the walker's return journey, 'la robe claire de la petite fille court sur le chemin en haut de la falaise qui s'abaisse dans une déclivité, précédant les deux ombrelles'.
Chapter 7.Narrative 'Discohérence'

2. See Freud, pp.383-413.
3. 'Claude Simon, à la question', p.424.
7. The country scene is also represented in the form of a painting in the same hotel room (see p.42).
8. Ricardou has theorized this common mechanism in the "Nouveau Roman" in terms of 'captures' and 'libérations'. 'Captures' occur when a 'real' scene becomes an image or other representation within the 'récit'; 'libérations' occur when an image or other representation becomes a 'récit'. See Ricardou (1973), pp.112-117.
10. In fact, it is a debatable point as to whether one should or should not keep the term 'mise en abyme' when discussing a text like Triptyque which disrupts a hierarchical organisation of 'récits'. In the discussion which followed Lucien Dällenbach's paper on 'mise en abyme' at Cerisy, Ricardou and Dällenbach both agreed that the term should be maintained until another could be found to replace it. Ricardou argued that, rather than abandon a theoretical concept the moment a certain practice of writing shows divergences from the theory, it is necessary - in an interim period before a new theory is devised - to transform the concept in order to accommodate the new practice. By expanding the concept in this way, one is
contesting the 'impérialisme de l'ancienne notion' (p.175). Jean-Claude Raillon, on the other hand, advocated abandoning the term due to its traditional connotations of depth and hierarchy. For my own part, I support Raillon's objection to the term. The notion of 'mise en abyme' - which implies a stratification of the text into 'outer' and 'inner' 'récits' - seems inappropriate when applied to a text which undermines these distinctions by means of a de-centred structure.

11. See 'La Mise en Spectacle Chez Claude Simon' in Colloque de Cerisy, pp.88-106.

12. In the discussion following 'La Mise en Spectacle Chez Claude Simon', p.114.

13. 'Cryptique', p.316.


15. ibid., p.182.

16. See, for example, Morisette (1963).


18. ibid., p.170.

19. 'Cryptique', p.316.

20. See 'Le Dispositif Osiriaque'.

21. In fact the analogy between Les Corps Conducteurs and the Osiris myth had already been made - before Ricardou - by John Gilbert in an article on Orion Aveugle and Les Corps Conducteurs: 'Tout cet imagerie du corps morcelé semble avoir des extensions que je ne saurais examiner ici mais il suffit peut-être de noter les planches anatomiques qui représentent des torse humains dont les organes sont exposés à la vue, ainsi que le tableau dû à Dubuffet qui présente le corps de l'homme comme une
espèce de puzzle composé de pièces détachables. Y aurait-il lieu de faire des rapprochements avec le mythe d'Osiris? Gilbert, p.124 (Note 10).

22. 'Le Dispositif Osiriaque', p.66.
26. 'Il faudrait sans doute citer la critique nietzschéene de la métaphysique, des concepts d'être et de vérité auxquels sont substituées les concepts de jeu, d'interprétation et de signe (de signe sans vérité présente); la critique freudienne de la présence à soi, de la proximité ou de la propriété à soi; et plus radicalement, la destruction heideggerienne de la métaphysique, de l'onto-théologie, de la détermination de l'être comme présence'. Derrida (1967), p.412.
29. See Marx, pp.77-87.
31. See 'La Loi de Conduction', op.cit., and 'Propositions d'une Théorie de la Fiction' in Études Littéraires, pp. 81-123.
32. For a discussion of the 'Nouveau Roman' in the context of modern approaches to the text, see Heath (1972).
33. 'Le Dispositif Osiriaque', p.17.
34. Kristeva, p.298.
38. In the discussion following 'Cryptique', p.345.
40. ibid.
41. For further discussion of the text in relation to a theory of the 'subject', see Coward and Ellis.
Conclusion


2. 'The Death of the Author' in Barthes (1977), pp.142-148 (p.143).

3. 'La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.96. See also, for example, Chapsal, p.291 and Poirson, p.33.

4. 'La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.96, the 'avant-propos' to Orion Aveugle and Poirson, p.33.

5. Poirson, p.33.

6. 'Avant-propos' to Orion Aveugle.
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