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MAXIM SILVERMAN

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

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PREFACE

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 con-
ventions 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 develop-
ment 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 trans-
form 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.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

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[4] (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.'[5] 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.[6] 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 recognise
> that they are imposed by the author.[7]

He concludes that 'though the author can to some extent choose

his disguises, he can never choose to disappear'.[8] 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'.[9]

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 con-

certed 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.[10]

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 dié-

gésis.' [11] Mimesis, or 'showing', is not a direct representa-

tion 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).[12] 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';[13] 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'.[14] 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?'[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.[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'.[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 presenta-
tion 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[18], 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
> regarda 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 regarda .... je pouvais
voir'.   The reader's perception of the action is thus situated

from the limited point of view of the hero.

The next phrase commencing 'la boue était si profonde' shifts the perspective away from this particular moment of perception towards the wider field of memory of the narrator, introduced through 'je me rappelle'. It will be noticed that the 'je' obviously encompasses both the hero present at the scene and the narrator who is remembering this episode. As soon as the present tense is employed, denoting the field of memory, the 'je' is split between the past self and the present self, the perspective of the hero switching to become a perspective on him by the narrator.

This transition in perspective should not in itself cause any ambiguity. A first-person narrator who narrates from the point of view of his former self and his present self is a well-established narrative mode and would clearly imply switches from one perspective to another. However, confusion as to whose perspective guides the narrative is subsequently introduced through a sudden temporal switch in the fiction. It is not possible to say whether the 'créatures infernales' are imagined by the narrator or the hero pondering Wack's strange expression. The sequence until 'faisant place nette' is ambiguous in terms of perspective since both hero and narrator could be said to provide the point of view of the narrative: perspective is a condensation of the two focuses.

The point of view then reverts explicitly to that of the hero once again. The final phrase of the sentence resumes the same time sequence as the opening scene and brings us back to that very same series of perceptions of the hero as if they had never been interrupted.

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'.[19] 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 imper-
ceptible '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 distin-
ction 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 perspec-
tive 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'emballant, s'exaspérant quand il
> remontait la pente de la colline, rageur, dominant
> leurs voix, puis, parvenu en haut, se relâchant brusque-
> ment, 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

se refléter deux fois la minuscule silhouette ....
(pp. 33-34)

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.'[20] 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 mis-
leading conclusion as to the effect of point of view in the
text.

Most commonly, the problems of perspective have been con-
fused 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',[21]
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-meme de l'extérieur.[22]

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 narra-
tion 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.[23]   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'.[24]   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 impersonelles, 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 para-
graph (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:

> et quelques loques trop grandes flottant sur des
> squelettes (morts et vivants), et Georges maintenant
> étendu dans l'opaque et puante obscurité de wagon à
> bestiaux, pensant: 'Mais comment est-ce déjà? Une
> histoire d'os comptés, dénombrés .... pensant: 'Ouais.
> J'y suis ....' (P.70).

Having been captured, Georges is now in a train being trans-
ported 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 condensa-
tion 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.[25]

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 occupé 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")[26]

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[27] 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 perspec-
tive 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'[28]
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 artifi-
cial) 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.[30]

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'.[31]
In Simon's novels, as in that of Proust, it is in the ambig-
uous 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 post-
card (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 <u>Le Palace</u>, 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 distingueraient: 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'oeil 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 distingueraient:' 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 <u>produced</u> 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 <u>La Route des Flandres</u>
to examine more closely one of the central episodes in the
text in the light of comments made above. The hero visual-
izes 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 hérédi-
> taire de statue équestre que lui avaient probablement
> transmis des générations de sabreurs, silhouette obscure

> dans le contrejour qui le décolorait comme si son
> cheval et lui avaient été coulés tout ensemble dans
> une seule et même matière, un métal gris, le soleil
> miroitant un instant sur la lame nue puis le tout -
> homme cheval et sabre - s'écroulant d'une pièce sur
> le côté comme un cavalier de plomb commençant à fondre
> par les pieds et s'inclinant lentement d'abord puis
> de plus en plus vite sur le flanc, disparaissant le
> sabre toujours tenu à bout de bras derrière la carcasse
> de ce camion brûlé effondré là, indécent comme un
> animal une chienne pleine traînant son ventre par
> terre (pp. 12-13)

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 .... traînant') 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 inter-
rupts 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'[32]; 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 des-
cription and, as such, are signs of a concern with textual
construction which is altogether foreign to the notion of
the reproduction of the scene.[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
.... contrejour .... décolorait .... gris/soleil .... miroi-
tant'), appearing and disappearing ('j'ai pu le voir/dispara-
issant'), 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:

> brandissant .... miroitant .... instant ....
> s'écroulant .... commençant .... s'inclinant ....
> lentement .... flanc .... disparaissant .... traînant
> geste .... équestre
> nue .... tout .... tenu .... bout
> chienne .... pleine .... traînant

In addition to these obvious signs of the voice of the
narration are the metaphorical connotations established in
the passage (sexuality, for example).[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'[37] 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.[39] 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 manu-factured in the same way as that analysed above.[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'.[4]

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.[5] 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',[6] 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).[7]

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[8], 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 'énoncia-
tion' (the 'je' making the statement). Stephen Heath demon-
strates 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'[9]; 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?'[10]

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 con-
sideration of the possible modes of 'énonciation'. In Problèmes

<u>de Linguistique Générale</u>, 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.'[11] For example, the visit of Frédéric to the house of M. Dambreuse in Flaubert's <u>l'Education Sentimentale</u> appears to have no narrator:

> Un timbre sonna; 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.[12]

'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.[13]

Compare the spare narration of <u>l'Education Sentimentale</u> with the highly personalized narration of Sterne's <u>Tristram Shandy</u>:

> In the beginnings of the last chapter, I informed you
> exactly <u>when</u> I was born, - but I did not inform you
> <u>how</u>. 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 circum-
> stances relating to myself all at once.[14]

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 Benven-
iste'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 compara-
> ison, 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.[15]

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'énoncia-
> tion 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.[16]

The following analysis of voice in <u>La Route des Flandres,</u>
<u>Le Palace</u> and <u>Histoire</u> 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'

(i) 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,
> débouclant 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 graciles et élégantes,
> leurs casaques 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.'[17]

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 présentifié'.[18] 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.[19]

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'[20] - 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
> ne dormait pas, se tenait parfaitement immobile ....
> une femme à côté de lui .... et lui se rappelant: ....
> (pp.42-43)

The precision of 'énonciation' again has the effect of trans-
forming the preceding moment of narration into another episode
in the fiction[21] 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 'énon-
ciation' 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 con-
sideration the fact that each 'énonciation' is duplicated
since the narration switches between the first and third
person) can be represented as follows:

		First-person	Third-person
		Undefined	Undefined
		position of memory	position of narrator
1	Present		
2	1946	Hotel - room	
3	1940-41	Prison - camp	
4	1940	Prison - train	

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. Immed-
iately 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 con-
tinues 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 'énon-
ciation' 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 introduc-
ing 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 ....)'.[23]

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.[24]

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, second-
ly 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 impos-
sible 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 indeter-
minate 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 con-
sciousness' 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 'glisse-
ments' 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 narra-
tives 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 problem-
atic, 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'[25] 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 trans-
> portant les prisonniers de guerre, sur le champ de
> course ou sur le champ de bataille sont narrés

indifféremment aux première et troisième personnes.[26]

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'[27]: 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 intermédiares, une $1^{re} - 2^{e}$
> personne des modes intermédiares (participe présent
> à valeur de "simultanéité".)[28]

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;[29] in this respect, it suc-
cumbs 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'.[30] 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'.[31] 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 <u>La Route des Flandres</u>.
For example, Vivian Mercier's comment that everything in <u>La
Route des Flandres</u> 'revolves about the fixed point represen-
ted by the dead horse but is remembered by one man from a
fixed point in time'[32] 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 <u>about</u> him
from outside? Similar questions are also relevant to the
narration of <u>Le Palace</u>. 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.[33] 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 <u>La Route des Flandres</u> 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 précipi-
> tation sans lenteur non plus et pas nonchalamment
> 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:

uncertainties	- semblait-il; je suppose
rectifications	- toujours au pas .... simplement au pas; en train de finir ou plutôt de chercher à terminer; c'est-à-dire
repetitions	- 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 nonchalamment non plus
summaries	- au pas donc; le vrai casse-pipe en somme
comparisons	- comme un coupe-gorge; comme au tir forain

play on words	- plus tôt .... plutôt
thematic continuation of comparison	- un coupe-gorge .... le vrai casse-pipe
reflection on language	- il y a comme ça des expressions qui tombent à pic

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'[34]; 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 ....
>   11
> 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 intro-
duce 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 punctua-
tion 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 accord-
ing 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'[35]. 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'[36]: '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'habitais 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 .... Fias-
chianti .... fracas aussi dans Frascati' (Histoire, p.335-336).

Simon's narration is the scene of a discourse which pro-
gresses 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 distin-
guer .... 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 "pouvant revoir" sont sur le même plan.'[39]   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'[40]
and observes that 'le narrateur est vraiment ici un romancier
en action, grace auquel cette histoire prend forme pour
nous'.[41]   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.   Unfor-
tunately he goes on to explain this phenomenon as a representa-
tion 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 exacte-
ment dirige le fonctionnement de la mémoire.   On pourra
définir en ce sens La Route des Flandres comme la métamorphose
d'une mémoire en récit'[42];   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.'[43]

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'[44]; 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'.[45]

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',[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 L'Herbe) the text 'se caractérise par un double aspect: manifestation du travail de la narration et constitution d'une fiction';[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 La Route des Flandres, Le Palace and 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'.[1] 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'.[2]

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.[3]

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.[4]

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 Corinne 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 fonction-
nant 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).'[6] 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'.[7] 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.[8]

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.[9]

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   Episode 1   Episode 2

DE REIXACH   CORINNE

metonymically   virginal   metonymically
related to   vierge   related to

metaphor

(ii) p.33   Episode 1   Episode 2

NIGHT-RIDE   GEORGES'S FATHER

metonymically   metonymically
related to   encre   related to

metaphor

(iii) p.97   Episode 1   Episode 2

HOTEL-ROOM   PRISON-TRAIN

                  darkness/
metonymically   metonymically
related to   weight   related to
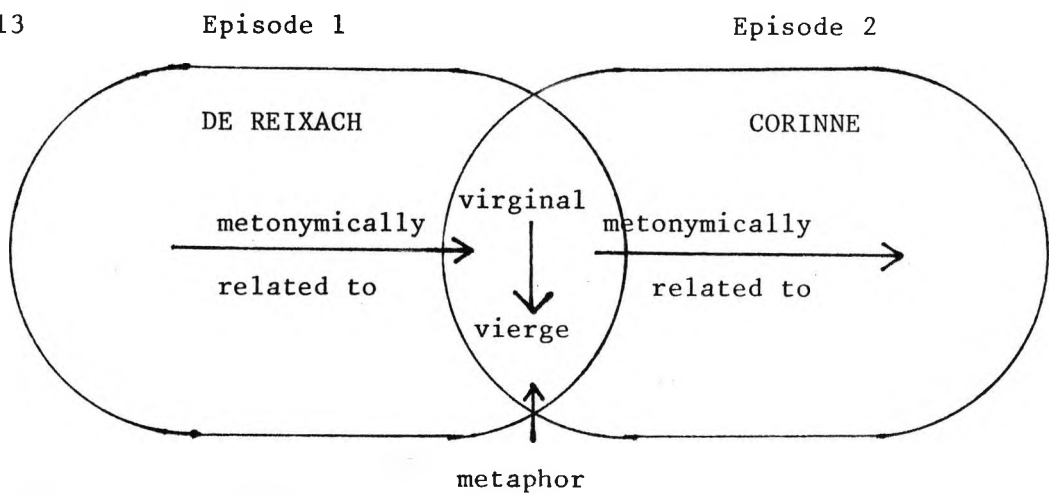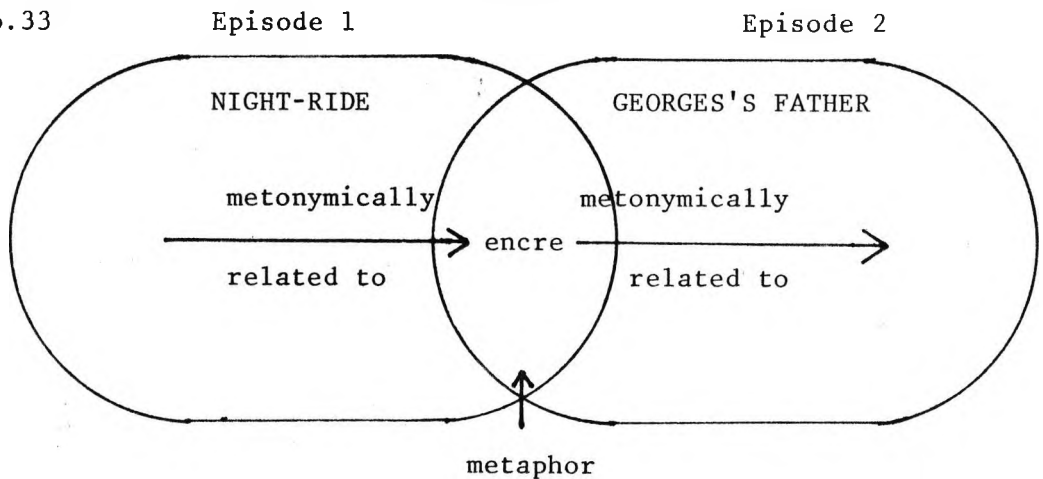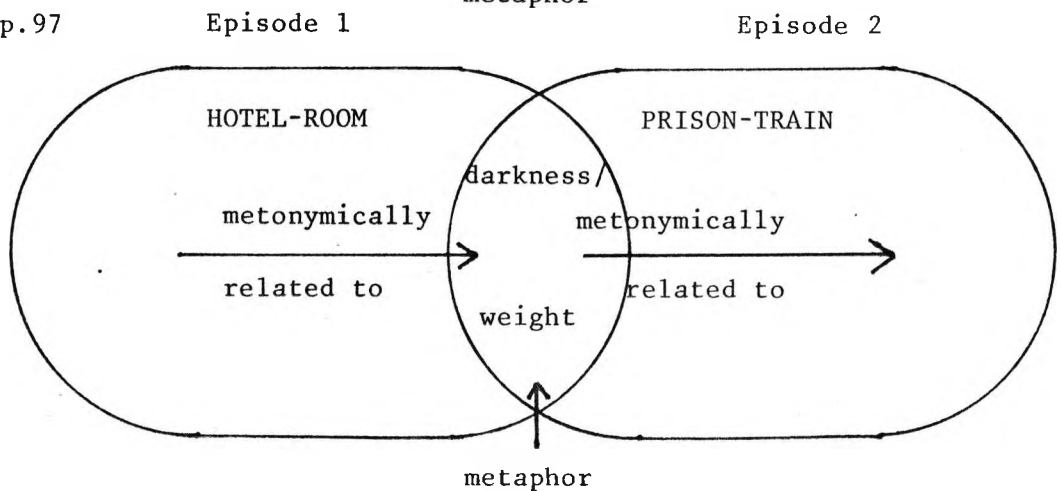
metaphor

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 assoc-
iations (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 con-
ventional 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.[10]

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.[11]
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.[12] 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.'[13] 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 inter-
sect. 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 meta-
phor is really a double synecdoche[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 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, meta-
phor and metonymy work together to produce a sliding from one
scene to another, 'la métonymie dans la métaphore'.[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.'[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:

Hotel-room scene: Georges and Corinne after the war (pp.42-43)	Elements from other episodes
il ne dormait pas	il fut tout à fait réveillé (p.32), se réveillant tout à fait (p.38);
se tenait parfaitement immobile	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);
et non pas une grange à présent, non pas la lourde et poussiéreuse senteur du foin desséché	crasse poussiéreuse (p.18), poudroiement de poussière dorée (p.20), et la-bàs c'était seulement l'odeur (p.28), un déhanchement plus sec (p.32), l'odeur âcre des bêtes, du foin (p.38);

de l'été aboli	crépuscule d'été (p.33), l'été pourrissant (p.37);
mais cette impalpable, nostalgique et tenace exhalaison du temps lui-même, des années mortes,	impalpable poudroiement (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);
et lui flottant dans les ténèbres	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.38);
écoutant le silence, la nuit	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);
la paix, l'imperceptible respiration	le bruit des respirations (p.20), l'imperceptible grésillement (p.30);
d'une femme à côté de lui,	non pas une femme mais l'idée même, le symbole de toute femme (p.41)
et au bout d'un moment il distingua le second rectangle	il ne pouvait plus distinguer (p.36), on ne distinguait plus rien (p.37);
dessiné par la glace d'armoire	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);
reflétant l'obscure lumière de la fenêtre	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);
l'armoire éternellement vide	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);
des chambres d'hôtel avec, pendus à l'intérieur, deux ou trois cintres nus,	bras délicats et nus (p.19);

l'armoire elle-même (avec son fronton triangulaire encadré de deux pommes de pin	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);
faite de ce bois d'un jaune pisseux aux veinules rouge-âtres	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);
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 cerceuil des fantômes reflétés de milliers de corps nus, furieux et moites	bas-côtés poussiéreux (p.26), les fantomes 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 nues, pieds nus malgré le froid (p.39;
de milliers d'étreintes	milliers de chevaux (p.30), milliers d'insectes (p.31);
emmagasinées confondues dans les glauques profondeurs de la glace	se confondant (p.31); les épaisseurs transparentes et glauques (p.31); le lent glacier (p.32);
inaltérable, virginale et froide -	la boue gelée (p.11), l'acier virginale (p.13), vierge (p.13);
et lui se rappelant	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.[17]

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[18] 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 juxta-
posed 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:

> Tous les éléments du texte .... sont toujours présents.
> Même s'ils ne sont pas au premier plan, ils continuent
> d'être là, courant en filigrane sous, ou derrière,
> celui qui est immédiatement lisible, ce dernier, par
> ses composantes, contribuant lui-même à rappeler sans
> cesse les autres à la mémoire.[19]

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 metaphor-
ically 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 connec-
tion with the horses during the war, the horses at the horse-
race, Iglésia's jockey outfit and Corinne's dress and there-
fore 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 establish-
ing 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.[20] The analogy is indeed striking. Freud's
explanation of the way in which a composite image is con-
structed in the dream by a condensation of diverse meanings
(producing an overdetermination of meaning)[21] is entirely
applicable to the functioning of Simon's narration. However,
Lacan's collapse of condensation into metaphor (to which
Dällenbach refers)[22] 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 con-
densation 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, dis-
placed and condensed.[23] Lacan's assertion that language is
fundamental to the constitution of the dream-text[24] 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 -
> faisant 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 develop-
ment 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 develop-
ment 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 sleep-
less 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 encastré
> 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 légère-
> ment 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 semblent 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 pro-

cess 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 <u>Histoire</u> the numerous post-cards and photographs. In <u>Le Palace</u> 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 <u>Le Palace</u>. 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[26] 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 fenetre avant' (p.100) and the torn picture of Christ 'traversée (il n'en restait que la moitié supérieure) par la déchirure sinueuse qui dessinait .... une découpure 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": il y avait aussi une affiche ....' (p.99).[27]

'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)[28]; 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 (des-
cribed on numerous occasions in Simon's other texts) is never
mentioned explicitly in <u>Le Palace</u>. 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 <u>cône renversée, la pointe en bas</u> ....' (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 <u>aux corps nus</u> et admirables (les femmes aux cheveux
liés <u>en touffes, aux seins jumeaux</u> .... aux <u>pubis</u> glabres et
<u>bombés</u> de statues)', 'des arquebuses, des <u>lances</u> 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 flam-
boyant and baroque style of life) with a new set of impera-
tives (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 con-
volutions and intricate patterning. For example, the contrast-
ing 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 (meta-
phor 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 vénales fesses 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'entable-
ment 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
> décedé 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.[29]
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 meta-
phorically 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 serpentines' (p.86) - are again impli-
cated 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 predominant-
ly 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 'architec-
ture' recalls the baroque hotel itself - 'la fastueuse débauche
de corniches, de volutes et de vagues petrifiés' (p.11), 'aux
murs gris Trianon' (p.8) - which formerly contained 'deux
chaises de salle à manger de ce faux style Renaissance alle-
mand, 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 ambi-
guité'[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 refer-
ence to the production of this architecture through the prac-
tice 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 this[33]),
then the theme of materialisation as if by magic which runs
through <u>Le Palace</u> (and to which the 'équilibriste' clearly
belongs) is a constant metaphorical reference to the apparition
of the text <u>as text</u>.

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

unmistakeable reminder of the swirling curtain of pigeons:

> mais le rideau de la fenêtre d'en face était toujours
> tiré .... le sinueux 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 lan-
guage through metaphor and metonymy. This process is funda-
mental 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 organisa-
tion of <u>La Route des Flandres</u>, <u>Le Palace</u> and <u>Histoire</u>.

4   THEME, SPACE AND NARRATIVE ORGANISATION

4.1   THEMATIC ORGANISATION

In an analysis of Bataille's <u>Histoire de l'oeil</u>, Roland
Barthes points out certain features fundamental to the con-
stitution of Bataille's erotic writing.[1] 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 tech-
nique poétique consiste ici à défaire les contiguités 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'.[2] 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.'[3]

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 meton-
ymic 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 oeuf', '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 pro-
vides 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
>dépiauter, 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 sournoisement
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 brûlé, 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 réligeuse, 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; Iglésia'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 assembles to form 'des faisceaux érotiques'.[4] 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 com-
pared 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 incorpora-
tion 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 pre-
figures 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
> inconsistante 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'[5] 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'.[6] 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 .... découvrant
> 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 où 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)[7]

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.'[8]

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,[9] 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[10]: 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.[11]

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.[12]

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):
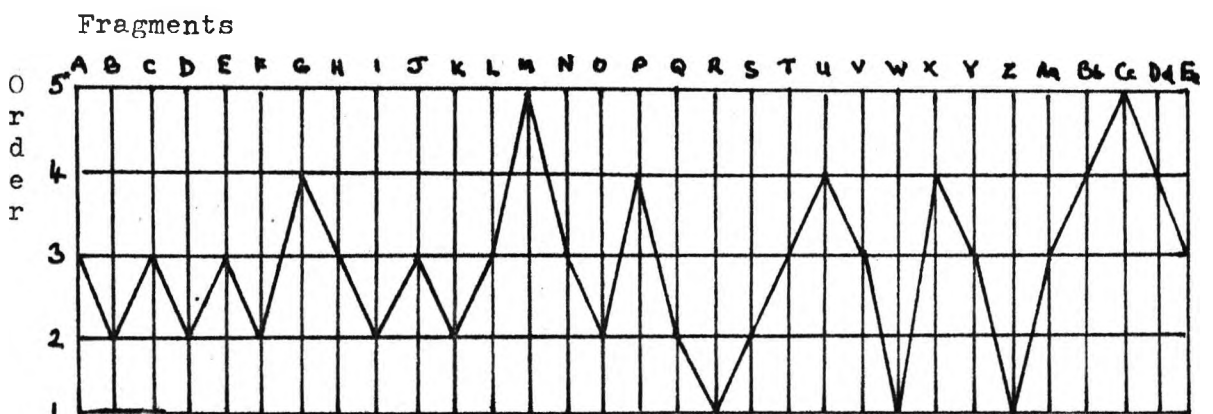
The graph shows that the progressive development of each episode is not even. For example, fragments from the episode in the hotel-room appear infrequently and at no great length; consequently, the episode is scarcely developed at all. On the other hand, the episode on 'la route' occupies by far the 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 Iglésia is
immobilized, leaving them finally 'arrêtés, juchés sur leurs
échalas 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 on[15]) 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]

on the other hand 'la mise en abyme tend à restreindre
l'éparpillement des récits fragmentaires selon un groupement
de récits métaphoriques'.[18] In other words, the 'mise en
abyme' disrupts the linear narrative and proposes a new order
of 'récits métaphoriques'. **This** stratification of the narra-
tive is particularly evident in <u>La Route des Flandres</u> 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 <u>La Route des Flandres</u> the episodes are
developed in the following way:
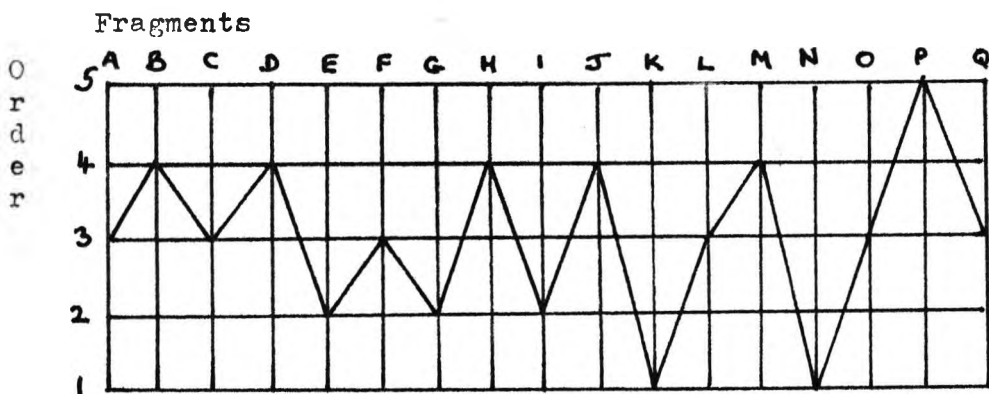
There are only seventeen spatial fragments in Part ll
(which occupies 147 pages) compared to thirty-one in Part 1
(ninety-two pages). The cross-cutting from one scene to

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 11, 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 concern-
ing 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 111 of the text, the balance between episodes is
transformed to reveal an altered hierarchy:
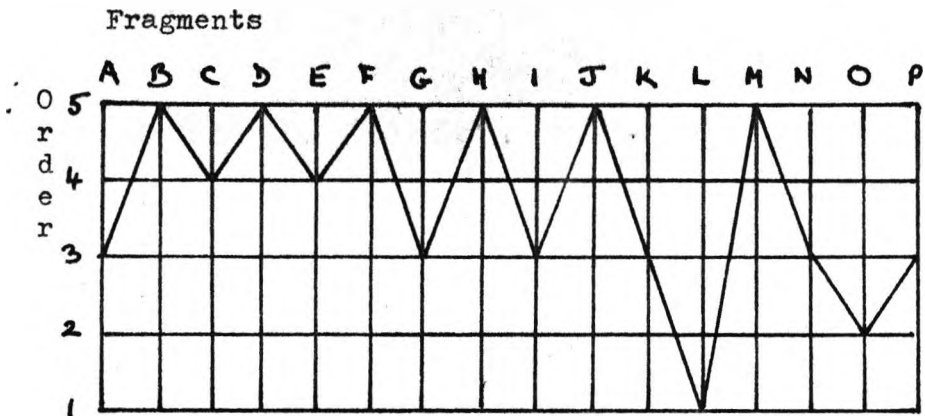
Fragments

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 11
(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 111 signifies a shift in the hier-
archical 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,
Dällenbach draws attention to what he terms 'l'art du chevau-
chement' in <u>La Route des Flandres</u>[20]: instead of simply
mirroring itself from within, the narrative is the scene of
an amalgamation in composite form of its 'récits métaphori-
ques'. 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 Dällenbach 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 <u>between</u> 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 supp-
lanting the previous scenes and, consequently, subsuming them
within its own context.

Hence, the thematic and spatial organisation of the narra-
tive 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'[21] which unifies the text. This reassemb-
ling 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 pro-
gression 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.[22]

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.

Dällenbach 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.[23]

The following analysis of Histoire expands on Dällenbach'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 meta-phorical sense, the absent father's journey round the world is linked with the narrator's own exploration of memory, imagination and language.[24] 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 ce 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 <u>communion</u> ('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)[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 inter-
woven: Christ's blood-stains on the cross (p.15); a child-
hood 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 sinueuse de sang descendant en serpent-
ant'[26] (p.154). (The combination of fall/garden/'serpentant'
in these examples clearly recalls the Fall of Man.)

As in <u>La Route des Flandres</u>, the vagina (the final link
in a metaphorical chain which includes the mouth and the
wounds mentioned above) operates as a metaphorical representa-
tion 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 <u>loss</u>, <u>separation</u> and <u>death</u> 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 meta-
phorical 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 exacte-
ment, 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'_∧^(p.11)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[27] 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'appren-
tissage 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 consti-tute 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)'[28] - 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 hermen-
eutic code[29] 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 déses-
pérés 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 unsuccess-
ful 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 separa-
tion 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 construc-
ted 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 architec-
ture 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 surround-
ing 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 inoffen-sif 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 resem-blance 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, correspond-ingly, 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 Dällenbach calls 'l'identification du narrateur à son double'[31]: 'c'était comme si je dialoguais avec quelque fantôme ou peut-être avec monpropre 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[32], 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 <u>Histoire</u> as well: 'Dans une histoire qui se veut incomplète, la mise en abyme peut voir sa contestation se préciser
en un pouvoir révélant.'[33] The ability of the secondary
'récit' in <u>Histoire</u> 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.[34]
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

similarity 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 actively 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.[35]

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'.[36]

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:

> 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.[37]

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 mani-fested 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'[39]). 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.

PART 2

5. DEVELOPMENT OF PERSPECTIVE AND VOICE

Simon has described his development as a writer as 'une lente évolution par tâtonnements'[1]: 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'.[2]

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'[3] - 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.[4] 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 <u>Histoire</u> 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. <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> 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 <u>La Route des Flandres</u>, <u>Le Palace</u> and <u>Histoire</u> 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 <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> 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 <u>La Route des Flandres</u>. A 'mélange' of
modes of 'énonciation' continues the pattern established in
<u>Histoire</u>: 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 <u>Le Palace</u>. The transitions
between an 'absence' and presence of a narrator which do not
correspond to the third and first-person narrations respective-
ly, 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 con-
fusion 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 <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u>, entitled 'Lexique',
differs from Part 1 in that it is divided into seven headed
sections. Yet, despite this altered format, the same ambigui-
ties 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 111.

Part 111 of <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> thus reveals a new mode of narration and one which is to be maintained in the three novels which succeed this text (although in <u>Leçon de Choses</u> 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 111, '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.[5] 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 there-

fore 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 <u>voice of the writing</u> 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'.[6] 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 'pre-sentified' memory, first revealed in <u>La Route des Flandres</u>, 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 <u>Pharsale</u> (autre tournant) elle résulte de ce que j'avais enfin compris que l'on n'écrit -ou ne dit - jamais que ce qui se passe au présent de l'écriture.'[7]

The development from Part 1 to Part 111 of <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> 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 trans-ition:

> Pourquoi suis-je passé des phrases longues aux phrases courtes? .... l'une (je dis: <u>l'une</u>) 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 archi-tectural 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.[8]

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.'[9]

Part lll 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'.[10] 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 l' and 'Divertissement ll' 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) <u>The Eye of the Narration</u>

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 <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> 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 1
of the text indicates the process of integration which cul-
minates in Part 111.

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 <u>Histoire</u>), 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 alterna-
tion 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 <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> is
reminiscent of the triangular composition of <u>La Route des
Flandres</u> and is also of fundamental importance in <u>Triptyque</u>
and <u>Leçon de Choses</u>. In <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> 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), spear-
heads 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 pro-
liferation 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 0. la position occupée par l'oeil de
> l'observateur (0.) et d'où part une droite invisible
> OO' rejoignant l'oeil à l'objet sur lequel est fixé
> le regard, une infinité d'autres droites partant du
> même point entourant OO', leur ensemble engendrant un
> cône qui constitue le champ de vision de 0. debout sur
> le côté d'une place plantée d'arbres et où s'ouvre une
> bouche de métro, le cône figuré (selon une coupe ver-
> ticale) par l'angle TÔF, 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 111 of the text the first and third-person hero,
Uncle Charles and Corinne are all condensed within the single

position of the impersonal figure O. 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), 'O. regarde' (p.193), 'O. 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'.[11]

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

on peut voir
l'hotel
l'avenue qu'elle croise
il peut voir la rue
l'homme malade
le building....
en lignes verticales
et paralleles
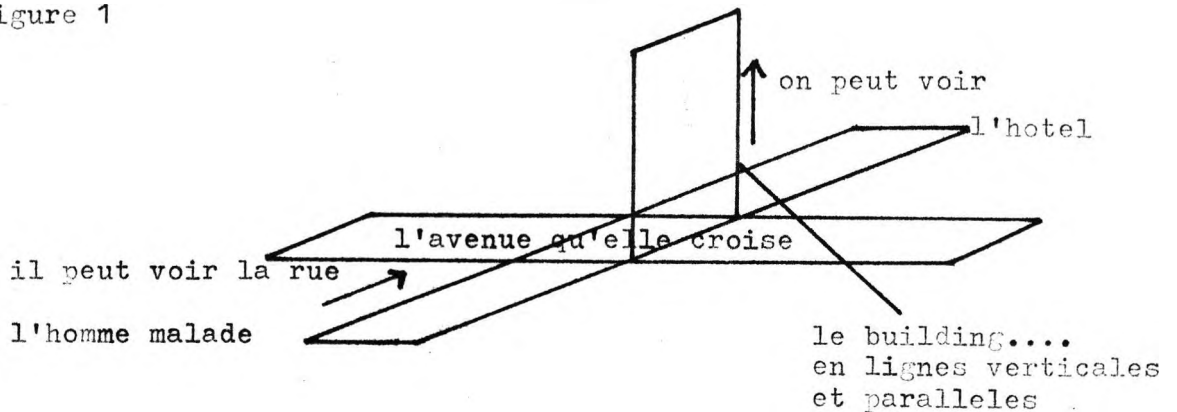
Following this sequence, a transition switches the narration to the focus of an impersonal eye scanning the diagram of a cross-section of the human torso ('on peut voir des organes' (p.9)). The description of the body resembles the view of the street according to a similarity of 'signifiés' (the T shape 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').
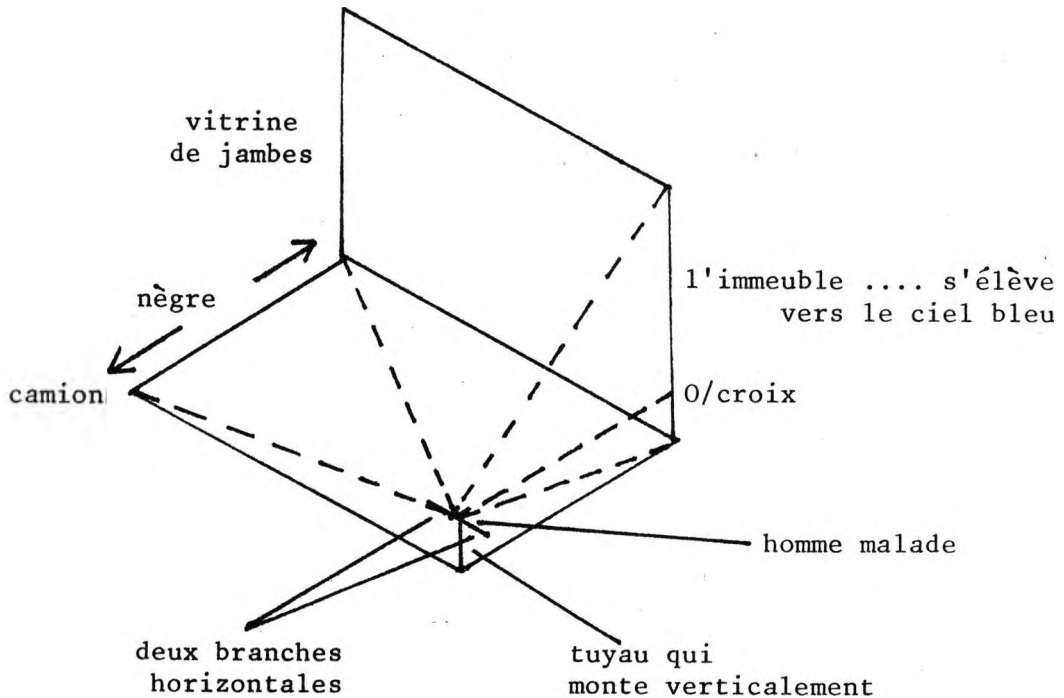
A switch back to the sick man in the street shows him seated on a hydrant which is itself formed by the familiar

shapes noted in the previous descriptions: 'La bouche d'incen-
die 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 rap-
prochées pour former une sorte de siège sur lequel il s'assied.'
(p.11) · Positioned from the focus of the sick man, the subse-
quent 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'aper-
çoit 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 hori-
zontal 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
oeil' (pp.13-14) where the letter O 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 O and the cross form the point of 'croise-
ment' 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 O and cross on the wall and so on. This composition can also be represented schematically in the following way:

Figure 11

vitrine de jambes

nègre

l'immeuble .... s'élève vers le ciel bleu

camion

O/croix

homme malade

deux branches horizontales

tuyau qui monte verticalement

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 O 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 'croise-
ment' 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. (Signi-
ficantly, 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 rapide-
ment 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 'agitée 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
O on the wall (see Figure 11).[12] Since the letter O is writ-
ten in white paint, the contiguity of O and 'noir' signifies
that Orion is a combination of white and black. The anti-
theses 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.[13]

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 [14] 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 de ciel qui l'entoure. (p.77)

Like the spectator of the painting, the reader of Les Corps

<u>Conducteurs</u> 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) <u>Triptyque: The geography of the text</u>

In <u>Triptyque</u> 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'[15] 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 dis-
> joignent 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.[16] 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 develop-
ment 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 des-
sein. (pp. 10-11)

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

(c) A l'intérieur de la
grange, dans la pénombre,
l'oeil d'abord aveugle
commence peu à peu à dis-
tinguer 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 paral-
lèlement 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)

la truite .... Encore n'est-
elle visible que dans la zone
délimitée par le parapet du
pont et les contours des deux
silhouettes .... La truite ....
se glisse dans l'ouverture du
broc couché sur le flanc.
(pp 14-15)

(d) Lorsque le bassin de
l'homme recule, on entre-
voit pendant une fraction
de seconde son membre lui-
sant et cylindrique sortant
à demi de l'épaisse toison
noire entre les cuisses
repliées, presque bleues,
comme du lait, et phosphor-
escentes 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:

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'

INSERT

In 2(a) vision becomes progressively <u>more</u>
<u>obscure</u> until total darkness at the centre
of the <u>circular</u> 'bassin'.

In 1(b) vision becomes progressively <u>less</u>
<u>obscure</u> as the eye begins slowly to
distinguish objects through the <u>circle</u>
('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.[17]

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 'structura-
tion' of the narration is determined according to an imbrica-
tion of the two sequences: each complements the other accord-
ing 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 écarte la tête et cesse de fixer
       la mire à travers l'oeilleton 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 par-
       semés 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 pro-
       meneuses continue à dévaler le coteau. (p.18)

(iv)   La ligne imaginaire qui passe par l'oeilleton 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

enchevêtrés un tombereau renversé, une herse de fer, une moissoneuse 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 representa-
tion.

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 DESCRIPTION IN ACTION

6.1 WRITING AS FORMAL NECESSITY

In the previous chapter I discussed the more recent trans-
formation 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.[1]

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 com-
posed 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.'[4] In these different ways he attempts to describe his writing as a rigorous mechanism for the elaboration of the narration.[5] 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[6]: 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.[7] 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'[8]; 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 <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> 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 <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u>.[9] 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.'[10]

Most commonly, 'une description .... "tranche" sur le récit, le récit "s'arrête", le décor "passe au premier plan"'.[11] 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 <u>A la Recherche du Temps Perdu</u> 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'.[12] 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 descrip-
> tion (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, justi-
> fiée (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.[13]

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 iden-
> tiques sont alignées, le pied en haut, la cuisse
> sectionnée à l'aine 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

> de tirer le bas haut levée, un petit chat ou un petit
> chien au poil frisé dressé joyeusement sur ses pattes
> de derrière, aboyant, sortant une langue rose. Les
> jambes sont faites d'une matière plastique, transparente,
> de couleur ocrée, moulées d'une pièce, faisant penser à
> quelque appareil de prothèse légère. (p.7)

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 véritable 'corps conduc-
teurs' of the text which will lead us, in the words of Sylvère
Lotringer, across 'ce tissu de métaphores et synonymes
(signifiés), calembours et anagrammes (signifiants) dont la
prolifération réglée fonde désormais la matérialité du langage
"romanesque".[14] 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 <u>Les Corps Conducteurs</u>
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 produc-
> tion littérale désignant la littéralité même de l'écri-
> ture: à la fois le <u>jambage</u> et la <u>ligne</u> .... ces deux
> signifiants vont servir de base aux transformations.[15]

According to Raillon's subtle precision, the words 'jambes'
and 'alignées' are thus themselves generated from a considera-
tion 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'aine') 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',[16] the word 'bataillon', used meta- phorically 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'.[17] 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, form-
ing 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 pro-
gresses 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) [18]

(g) enfiler: Through a process that Lotringer has termed 'ce
lent déploiement signifiant'[19] - by means of which a 'signi-
fiant' 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 'signifiants' 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'obscure 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 relationship 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 linearity of the text by dividing the sequence into individual segments.[22] 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 characteristic 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 négresses (pp.22, 71), deux palmiers (p.34), deux animaux héraldiques (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 coeurs (p.68), les deux souffles (p.69), deux autres personnages (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'[23] 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 embellish-
ment of the action, remaining peripheral to the main develop-
ment 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

seconde ampoule plus forte n'éclaire pas le scène ....
(pp.10-11)

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 'Générique'. The walk, whose 'décor' will
subsequently be the cliffs, is produced through 'des méta-
phores proposées' in the description of the crumbling wall
and flaking wall-paper: 'Au-dessous du minuscule et immobile
déferlement de <u>vagues</u> végétales qui se poursuivent sans fin
sur le galon de papier fané, <u>l'archipel crayeux</u> des morceaux
de plâtre se répartit en <u>îlots</u> d'inégales grandeurs comme les
pans détachés d'une <u>falaise</u> 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 'Générique'. But why the soldiers? What motivates the
production of a military episode rather than any other? Jost
poses these questions in his analysis of <u>Leçon de Choses</u>. 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?'[24] 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 problems than it solves. The expression 'armés de truelles' (p.24) appears <u>after</u> 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:

> 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 ca: 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 consid-
eration. The final two sentences of 'Générique' are clearly
of importance in this respect owing to the following contra-
diction: 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 expli-
> querait 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 per-
> sonnage 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 pro-
duced 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 terni' (p.10).
The opening description of the military episode is clearly
generated through a resemblance of 'signifiés' and 'signi-
fiants': '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).[28]

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'.[29]

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 illumina-
ting the 'carrelage' and the (hypothetical) person in the
doorway which produce, respectively, the 'concert de caque-
tages' 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' 'seconde
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 <u>Les Corps Conducteurs</u>. 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 <u>linguistic</u> relations with objects already described (that is, words already mentioned). The potential number of additional objects in the room is infinite because what is <u>seen</u> is generated by what has been <u>said</u> (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

(i) 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;[30] but, in keeping with the general formalisa-
tion 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 demon-
strate, to a far greater extent, the activity of writing as a
continuous process of signifying practice.

Ricardou's analysis of the mechanised narration[31] 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 systema-
tised 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 rugueses 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)).[32]

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.[33]

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 associa-
tions mais sont l'effet de "renvois" d'un élément du texte à
un autre parfois très éloignés'[34] 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 struc-
turée' 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 descrip-
tion 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 inter-
action of the sequences in the barn and at the river) is
directed according to the 'rules' governing the triple per-
spective, 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 inter-
section through similarity, while Jost presents a considera-
tion 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 tech-
nique 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 minutae 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 trouble-
some 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.[35] 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 transforma-
tion 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 <u>Triptyque</u>. 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 <u>similarity</u> with certain 'signifiés' from the barn sequence (for example, trout/phallus, 'le cercle de tonneau'/vagina) and through <u>contiguity</u> 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 con-
> serves. 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 houseaux 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 bouillonne au pied du petit barrage	→	l'un des chaudrons d'eau bouillante
La longue mousse verte est doux, velouté	→	Sa poitrine velue et noire
Poils sombres aux reflets roux	→	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 mêches effilées
L'un des garçons pousse l'autre du coude	→	L'un des garçons .... pousse l'autre du coude
broc couché sur le flanc	→	le corps du sanglier couché .... sur le flanc
Son ventre clair	→	Sous son ventre
Deux silhouettes	→	La silhouette qui s'éloigne
l'eau verdit d'abord .... devient d'un bleu de lessive .... presque noir au centre du bassin	→	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 caul-
drons 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)[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'[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 rectangu-laire, 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 des-cription 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 descrip-tions 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': des-
criptions 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) <u>Imbrication of Fictions through Formal Structuration</u>

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 <u>productive</u> 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 la (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).

Leçon de Choses - pp.23-33

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

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 womens' 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.

similarities

paper/
left
hand

contiguity

contiguity

illustration

cavalier

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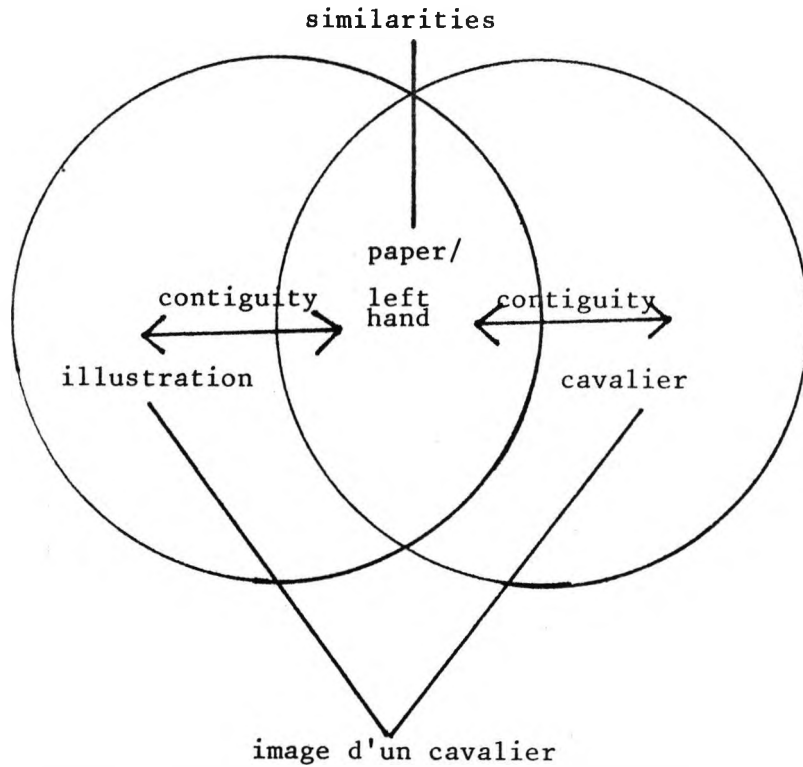
This is a perfect example of the way in which the mechanised process of metaphor/metonymy functions to produce the fictional elements.

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 serpentines, 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'oeil 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

boîte de cigares en <u>bois</u> .... Les petits <u>yeux</u> à la <u>cornée</u>

<u>noire</u> et à <u>l'iris</u> métallique forment une chaîne ininterrompue.'
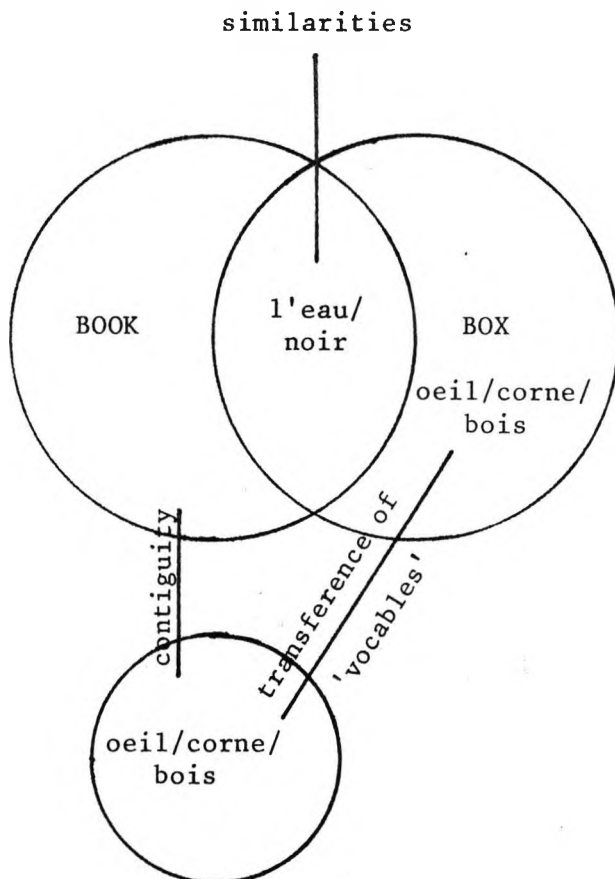
In H the younger mason tears off the old paper on the walls,

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 <u>journal</u> roulé en

<u>flûte</u>. Tout en marchant et sans cesser de répéter Ecoutez

Ecoutez-moi, <u>il scande ses paroles en frappant</u> 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 accom-

panied 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 motiva-
tion 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 womens' <u>hats</u> are 'ornés de fleurs ou de
<u>fruits artificiels</u>.'

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 explana-
tion 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 <u>farm</u> that the lovers
meet and along the <u>cliffs</u> that the walkers continue their
return journey.[40]

It is necessary to examine carefully the previous connec-
tions 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 <u>Triptyque</u> 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 <u>Leçon de Choses</u> 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 NARRATIVE 'DISCOHÉRENCE'

7.1 DISRUPTION OF A HIERARCHY

This chapter will deal with the wider aspects of narrative construction in the novels since <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u>; 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 <u>production</u> of that narrative through the work of the narration: instead, it restores the traditional notion of the novel as the expression or <u>reproduction</u> 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 <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> (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 <u>expression</u> and a
writing of <u>production</u> which is at the heart of the divide -
of epistemological proportions - between realism and post-
modernism.

<u>Les Corps Conducteurs</u> sets the pattern of narrative develop-
ment for all three texts after <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u>: 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 <u>Les Corps Conducteurs</u>, a number of episodes are con-
structed 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 (atten-
ded 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[1]; 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.[2]

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 <u>Les
> Corps Conducteurs</u>) 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 <u>Les Corps Conducteurs</u> en disant: un homme
> malade marche dans une rue et se souvient ....[3]

The inter-relationships of the narrative episodes (or
'ensembles' as Simon calls them) in <u>Triptyque</u> do not function
according to simple mirror images. Dällenbach has noted that
a new balance of mirroring of episodes is established in this
text:[4] 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 <u>Triptyque</u>.

<u>Triptyque</u> 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'.[5] 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 bride-
groom 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 <u>Triptyque</u> 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.'[6] In other words, each episode is both contained in the other two, in the form of representations, and is 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).[7]

This process of reciprocal 'ingestion' of fictions[8], 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 <u>domine doublement</u>: 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"

(en ce que l'affiche apparaît tardivement). A la fin,
cette hiérarchie subit une parfaite inversion: la
campagne est <u>doublement dominée</u> par la "cité balnéaire"
(puisqu'elle n'y est que l'image d'un puzzle) elle-même
subordonnée à la "banlieue urbaine" (puisqu'elle n'y
est qu'une image cinématographique). Dès lors, toute
tentative de construire une unité globale et dominatrice
se heurte au fonctionnement du texte.[9]

<u>Triptyque</u> undermines the notion of a hierarchy by a construc-
tion 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.[10] What characterizes
<u>Triptyque</u> 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 trans-
formation of the stratification of 'spaces' which is never
resolved.

Another feature of <u>Triptyque</u>, 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 differ-
ent 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 adver-
tising 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 reveal-
ed 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 auprès 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,
> pourvue 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 camaïeu 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'[11]; 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'[12].

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, <u>Triptyque</u> 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 <u>Triptyque</u> 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 charac-
ter 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 assocations 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'[13] 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 inter-
twining 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 night-
time 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 accor-
dance 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 emer-
gence 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 farm-house 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 unlike-lihood 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.'[14] 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',[15] 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 funda-
mental 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 <u>process of construction</u> 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 <u>narration</u> 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.[16] 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'.[17]

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 re-
constitution 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. Dällenbach'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 <u>un produit
fini</u> quand il eût fallu montrer, <u>en acte</u>, un travail
imprévisible et interminable?[16]

With <u>Triptyque</u> and <u>Leçon de Choses</u> Simon gives us his

answer. As we have seen, fictional development is not aban-

doned in these texts; characters, themes and actions are

all to be found in the development of a number of fictional

episodes. 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

> sollicite l'<u>imaginaire</u> du lecteur, c'est-à-dire sa
> fonction intégrative, captatrice, spéculaire. Elle
> l'invite à saturer 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 seyré de sa sanction ultime,
> divorcé de sa destination.[19]

By refusing a 'sens ultime', <u>Triptyque</u> and <u>Leçon de Choses</u>

refuse to reinforce the reader's desire for order and con-

sequently 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'.[20] <u>Les Corps Conducteurs</u>,

in particular, lends itself to an analogy with the Osiris

myth since the text deals with the fragmentation and arti-

culation of parts of the body[21]; but the real significance

of the reference is, of course, to be understood in its
metaphorical sense in terms of the fragmentation and articu-
lation 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 contra-
dictoire'.[22] 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.[23]

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"',[24] 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 under-
standing 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 transcendental' 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 trans-
cendental') 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 question-
ed,[26] that is, with the recognition that 'tout signifié est
aussi en position de signifiant'.[27] It is this recognition
which transforms our whole perspective: 'L'absence de
signifié transcendental étend à l'infini le champ et le jeu
de la signification.'[28]

The attempt to uncover the process of production of
meanings rather than meanings in themselves parallels Marx's
study of commodity fetishism.[29] 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 que sur l'échange de sens.'[30] 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 <u>Triptyque</u> and <u>Leçon de Choses</u>
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 référ-
entielle') 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: <u>à l'usurpation de la matière con-
> stituante correspond l'évaporation de la matière
> signifiante</u>.[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 <u>objet d'échange</u> entre un destinateur et un
destinataire'.[34]

In opposition to the realist novel, <u>Triptyque</u> and <u>Leçon de</u>

Choses are the scenes of production of meaning. I have
shown how both texts are composed of a sliding and transform-
ation 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 con-
vergence of meaning; the text is maintained as a plurality
of signification 'without centre or point of arrest'.[35] The
'objet d'échange' is therefore transformed into 'un processus
de production de sens'[36] in which both writer and reader 'are
confounded in the process of the text'.[37]

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 over-
abundance 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 trangression continuelle de la logique.'[38]
For Derrida, too, the continual transgression of logic through
a play of 'signifiants' is of fundamental importance: the
challenge presented to the 'signifié transcendental' 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 con-
ventional 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'[39]
- constitutes a break with our cultural and psychological
heritage; as such, as Barthes has declared,[40] 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.[41]

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 drama-
tization 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 <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u>. 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, <u>Triptyque</u> and <u>Leçon de Choses</u> 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'oeuvre, c'est sa recherche, le mouvement qui y conduit, c'est l'approche de ce qui rend l'oeuvre possible.'[1] 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[2]). Simon himself has consistently stressed 'le caractère tout à fait artisanal et empirique'[3] of his work. In employing Levi-Strauss's term 'bricolage' to describe the manner in which his texts are produced[4] and in his insistence that he should be considered as 'un homme traversé par le travail'[5] 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.'.[6]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Chapter 1. Narrative Perspective

1. See Plato, Book 10, pp.314-325.

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 representa-
    tion 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 pro-
    priety, 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.'

7. Booth, pp.18-19.

8. ibid., p.20.

9. ibid., Preface. Booth offers a different typology for defining possible modes of narration which I consider in Chapter 2.

10. Genette (1972), p.185.

11. Genette (1969), p.56.

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).

13. Ricardou (1967), p.11.

14. Todorov (1966), pp.138-139.

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 <u>Le Palace</u> (Union Générale D'Éditions'.) Page references will be given following each quotation.

19. In <u>Temps et Roman</u> Pouillon defines the two modes of narrative presentation in the following way: in the 'vision "avec"' 'c'est toujours <u>à partir</u> (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).

20. Kadish, p.78.

21. Fitch, p.206.

22. <u>ibid</u>., 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.

23. Seylaz, p.231.

24. Roubichou (1976), pp.70-71.

25. Lanceraux (1974), p.4.

26. ibid., p.6.

27. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

28. Deguy (1962).

29. The disruption of a conventional temporal structure is also due to anomalies in voice (see Chapter 2).

30. Hesbois, p.152.

31. Genette (1972), p.223.

32. Ricardou, '"Claude Simon", Textuellement' in Claude Simon: Colloque de Cerisy, pp.7-19 (p.16).

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'Éducation 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.

35. Roubichou (1976), p.70.

36. See Genette (1972), p.224.

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

1. Barthes (1966), p.20.

2. Genette (1972), p.226.

3. Barthes (1966), p.19.

4. Genette (1972), p.185.

5. See Booth.

6. Booth, Preface.

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.

8. Proust   Du Côté de Chez Swann   in Proust (1954), p.9.

9. Heath, translator's note in Barthes (1977), p.8.

10. Lacan, as cited in Barthes (1966), p.20.

11. Benveniste, p.239.

12. Flaubert, p.55.

13. Benveniste, pp.241-242.

14. Sterne, p.41.

15. Genette (1969), p.67.

16. Todorov (1966), p.145.

17. Seylaz, p.226.

18. Lanceraux (1973), p.236.

19. Seylaz, p.240.

20. See Barthes (1972), pp.25-28.

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 uni-
forme' (pp.290-291).

23. Lanceraux (1973), p.242.

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.

25. Fitch, p.210.

26. ibid., p.210.

27. ibid., p.211.

28. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Cinq Notes sur Claude Simon' in
Entretiens, sur Claude Simon, pp.41-46 (p.43).

29. See also Ludovic Janvier's essay on Simon in which he
states 'Claude Simon veut nous rendre présente l'épais-
seur 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'.

'Vertige et Parole dans l'oeuvre de Claude Simon' in
Janvier (1964), pp.89-110 (p.89).

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).

34. Lanceraux (1973), p.235.

35. Pingaud, p.1029.

36. Ricardou, 'Un Ordre dans la Débâcle' in Ricardou (1967),
pp. 44-55 (p.48). Ricardou's 'métaphore structurelle'
is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

37. Dällenbach, 'Mise en Abyme et Redoublement Spéculaire
Chez Claude Simon' in Claude Simon: Colloque de Cerisy,
pp.151-171 (p.160).

38. Hesbois, p.157.

39. Deguy, p.1018. See also Pingaud, p.1029, Seylaz, p.237
and Lanceraux (1973), p.237 who make similar comments.

40. Seylaz, p.226.

41. ibid., p.227.

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

43. Heath (1972), p.157-158.

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.

45. As cited in Genette (1969), p.68.

46.   Ricardou (1967), p.83.

47.   Roubichou (1976), p.119.

Chapter 3.   Fundamentals of Narration

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

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.

4. Culler (1974), p.219.

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.

7. Cited in Hawkes, p.9.

8. Ricardou (1967), p.136.

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.

10. Genette (1972), pp.57-58.

11. See 'Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances' in Jakobson (1971) pp.67-96, Barthes (1964) (a) and Lodge (1977).

12. See Jakobson, p.81 and Lacan, p.269.

13. Lodge, p.109.

14. Groupe de Liège, p.106-111.

15. Genette (1972), p.42.

16. 'La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.84.

17. Heath (1972), p.177.

18. Jakobson, pp.74-75.

19. 'La Fiction Mot à Mot', p.89.

20. Dällenbach, 'Mise en Abyme', pp.158-159.

21. See Freud, pp.383-414.

22. Dällenbach states: 'puisque c'est d'activité métaphor-
     ique 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.

23. Heath (1972), pp.168-178.

24. See 'L'Instance de la Lettre dans l'Inconscient ou la
     Raison Depuis Freud' in Lacan (1966), pp.249-289.

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 illus-
     trative of the play of language instituted in the narra-
     tion.

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'énorme et noir revolver qu'il portait glissé dans la ceinture, directement contre sa chemise, faisait à 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.

31. Roubichou (1976), p.57 (Note 13).

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. <u>ibid.</u>, p.244.

3. <u>ibid.</u>, p.244.

4. Ricardou (1967), p.51.

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, agon-
   isant 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'.

6. 'Les Signes de l'Éros' in <u>Entretiens</u>, pp. 121-129 (p.122).

7. These few pages in <u>La Route des Flandres</u> 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
   <u>Entretiens</u>, 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 defini-
     tion of the procedure in question. According to Bruce
     Morisette, however, Gide's comparison is inexact since,

in heraldry, the 'blason' in miniature is never the same
of the major design (Morisette (1971), p.125).

16. See especially the important contributions by Ricardou
('L'Histoire dans l'Histoire' in Ricardou (1967), pp.
171-190 and 'Le Récit Abymé' in Ricardou (1973), pp.
47-75) and Dällenbach (1977).

17. Ricardou (1973), p.73.

18. ibid., p.75.

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

20. 'Mise en Abyme', pp.158-161.

21. ibid., p.170.

22. Janvier (1967).

23. 'Mise en Abyme', p.161.

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.

29. See Barthes (1970), p.26.

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).

31. 'Mise en Abyme', p.162.

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.

33. Ricardou (1967), p.182 .

34. '"Claude Simon", Textuellement', pp.13-16.

35. Ricardou (1967), p.52.

36. ibid., p.53.

37. '"Claude Simon", Textuellement', p.19. Dällenbach also reaches a similar conclusion ('Mise en Abyme', pp. 169-170).

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

39. Barthes (1970), p.12.

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.11.

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 régi 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.

5. See Simon's interview with Madeleine Chapsal in Chapsal (1973), p.287. Simon also refers to Robbe-Grillet's present-tense narration in an interview with Bettina Knapp (see Knapp (1970), p.184).

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

7. 'Réponses de Claude Simon à Quelques Questions Écrites de Ludovic Janvier', p.17.

8. Simon in Poirson (1977), p.40.

9. ibid., p.39.

10. Sykes (1979), p.146.

11. Gaudin, p.184.

12. The production of the name Orion from distinct textual
    elements first occurs in <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> (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
    O 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 <u>Entretiens,</u> pp.104-112),
    Ricardou demonstrates how the name of the hotel 'Gabbia
    D'Oro' in <u>La Bataille de Pharsale</u> 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 <u>Orion Aveugle</u>).
    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 allé-
    gorie 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 <u>Orion Aveugle</u>.

14. For example, as a star-constellation Orion will disinte-
grate 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, 'englué 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).

15. Lotringer, 'Cryptique', in <u>Colloque de Cerisy</u>, pp.313-
333 (p.326).

16. See Jost (1974).

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 pourtant, si l'on peut dire, qu'un épiphé-
> nomène 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.
> Barthes (1966), p.22.

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' (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 <u>Colloque de Cerisy</u>, 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 <u>Études Littéraires</u>, 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 rigoreuse', in 'Réponses à Quelques Questions Écrites', p.18.

7. 'La Bataille de la Phrase', p.125.

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.

10. Hamon, p.465.

11. <u>ibid</u>., p.462.

12. In Poirson, p.35.

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

14. 'Le Nouveau Roman: Révolution Romanesque?' in Ricardou (Ed.), (1972) (b), pp.327-348 (p.340).

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

16. In an analysis of <u>Leçon de Choses</u>, Jost defines the process in the following way: 'un vocable utilisé métaphorique-ment 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 prolifera-
tion in <u>Les Corps Conducteurs</u> 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 <u>légèrement</u> engagé dans <u>la fente</u>'
(p.69) (my underlining). See also p.117.

19. Lotringer uses this term in connection with the varia-
tions of the 'signifiant' 'mousse' in <u>Triptyque</u>. 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).

22. See '"Claude Simon", Textuellement', p.14.

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.

24. Jost (1977), p.79.

25. <u>ibid</u>., p.79.

26. <u>ibid</u>., p.80.

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 <u>ses jambes écartées à demi repliées</u> 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 <u>Le Palace</u>.

29. As in the description of the woman at the window in <u>Le
Palace</u>, 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 <u>langues</u> pendantes
du papier décollé ....' (my underlining) - can be seen
in the same way. Colette Gaudin remarks on the double
meaning of these 'vocables': 'Déja 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 <u>Colloque de Cerisy</u>, 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).

33. Bann (1971), p.19.

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 Raskol-
    nikov, 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 tem-
    porality 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.

37. Martin Heidegger, cited in the 'exergue' to Part lll of
     La Bataille de Pharsale, p.187.

38. See Jost (1977), p.81.

39. _ibid_., 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'

1. See Ricardou (1973), p.66.

2. See Freud, pp.383-413.

3. 'Claude Simon, à la question', p.424.

4. 'Mise en Abyme', pp.162-168.

5. Sykes (1979), p. 174.

6. Dällenbach (1977), p.195.

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'; 'libéra-tions' occur when an image or other representation becomes a 'récit'. See Ricardou (1973), pp.112-117.

9. In the discussion following '"Claude Simon", Textuelle-ment', pp.20-38 (p.24-25).

10. In fact, it is a debatable point as to whether one should or should not keep the term 'mise en abyme' when discus-sing 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, advo-
cated abandoning the term due to its traditional con-
notations 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 inappro-
priate 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.

14. Sykes (1979), p.183.

15. ibid., p.182.

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

17. Dällenbach, 'Mise en Abyme', p.169.

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: 'Toute cette imagerie du corps
morcelé semble avoir des extensions que je ne saurais
examiner ici mais il suffit peut-être de noter les plan-
ches anatomiques qui représentent des torses 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.

23. Sollers (1968), p.404.

24. See Dällenbach (1977), p.192 and Ricardou (1973), p.138.

25. Derrida (1972), p.33.

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.

27. Derrida (1972), p.30.

28. Derrida (1967), p.411.

29. See Marx, pp.77-87.

30. Kristeva, p.299.

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.

35. Heath (1972), p.227.

36. Kristeva, p.298.

37. Heath (1972), p.224.

38. In the discussion following 'Cryptique', p.345.

39. Barthes (1973), p.25.

40. ibid.

41. For further discussion of the text in relation to a theory of the 'subject', see Coward and Ellis.

Conclusion

1. Blanchot (1959), p.242.

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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