

# STUDIES IN TWENTIETH CENTURY LITERATURE

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*Abstract.* Gide's *The Immoralist*, a short first-person novel written at the beginning of the century, has long been seen as an early example of the unreliable narrator. More recently, critical attention has focused on the tensions set up in the work between the carefully drawn formal structure of the narrative and the claim of Michel, the narrator, to tell his story in a direct and simple manner. Of more general interest, however, is the way Michel's narration provides insight into important developments that have taken place in the first-person novel itself in the twentieth century. Cast initially in a very traditional mold, Michel's story breaks down progressively as it moves from events of a more distant past to those much closer in time to his moment of narration. This breakdown of Michel's narrative seems to presage the movement in the first-person novel in France away from the relation of a story as traditionally conceived and towards the increasing importance accorded the present of narration itself. In that sense, *The Immoralist* is a key, pivotal work in the long line of short first-person works of fiction in France. (JTB)

Bradomín and the Ironies of Evil: A Reconsideration of <i>Sonata de primavera</i> . SUMNER M. GREENFIELD ... ..	23
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*Abstract.* Of the four novels that form Valle-Inclán's tetralogy of seasonal *Sonatas*, the most problematical and dissonant is the springtime segment, which is the third in the order of composition. Valle-Inclán uncharacteristically subordinates seasonal esthetics in favor of a peculiarly ironic manipulation of the theme of conflict between good and evil set in an Italian context redolent of the Renaissance and rife with religious fanaticism. The ingrained theatricality of the young Marqués de Bradomín leads him to affect the pose of a "devilish" don Juan in order to break down the defenses of a young would-be nun who seems destined for sainthood. His juvenile posturing, however, is subverted by his immaturity and lack of self-assurance. The reinforcement of his will is brought about by the intervention of an authentic surrogate of Satan who uses him as an unwitting pawn in a confrontation with the budding saint. Evil eventually conquers Good, but the irony of his having been used is inevitably lost on Bradomín, whose perception of the world is based on himself as legend rather than on

historical truth. The reaffirmation of the *Sonatas* as a triumph of the "poetic lie" is the primary way in which the *Primavera* sustains the unity of the tetralogy. (SMG)

Approaches to the Cataract: Butor's Niagara. ELINOR S. MILLER ... .. 33

*Abstract.* Michel Butor's *6810 000 litres d'eau par seconde* bears certain similarities to each of his earlier stereophonic works, but is much more than a reworking of established techniques. Generally thought to be difficult, as indicated by the title, which arouses interest without revealing the subject matter, the work has a complex and masterful structure. Against a background of gradually accelerated time, emphasized by appropriate sound effects, an Announcer leads a tour of Niagara Falls. Alphabetically identified characters play out predictable roles as newlyweds, second honeymooners, and the lonely ones. A Reader recites throughout Chateaubriand's classic description of the Falls, constantly recombining the original words in canon form. The initially forbidding typography with three type-faces and three margins creates the possibility of multiple readings. Each part is preceded by directions enabling the reader to alter the text, increasing the volume for some characters, drowning out others. Thus, theoretically, one could read any one of ten texts: "mobile readings," revealing each a different work. This mobility, with the typography, creates an "intellectual chord," not possible otherwise except in music. The subtly colored polyphonic mobile brilliantly serves to express Butor's view of the human condition, reflected in his stereophonic vision of the Falls. (ESM)

Robbe-Grillet's *métaphoricité fantôme*. THOMAS D. O'DONNELL. 55

*Abstract.* Alain Robbe-Grillet made his initial reputation among French writers not only through his controversial first novels, but also through a number of essays published collectively under the title of *Pour un Nouveau Roman*. In these essays, Robbe-Grillet pronounced an absolute condemnation of metaphor in the novel; this condemnation has since been prominently featured in theoretical arguments focusing on "zero-degree" writing. However, Robbe-Grillet has since written fictions which are hardly consistent with his earlier doctrine, and *Topologie d'une cité fantôme* appears, if anything, to embrace metaphor, and thus to point to a new direction in Robbe-Grillet's work, a direction closer to that of Simon and Ricardou. (TDO)

Fernando Arrabal's "Ars Amandi": The Theme of Love in Selected Plays. PETER L. PODOL ... .. 69

*Abstract.* The evolution in Arrabal's treatment of the theme of love reflects both the development and enrichment of his dramatic techniques and the resolution of his own deep-seated psychological

conflicts. Arrabal's theater utilizes his concept of dramatic ceremony to project his intense desire for personal, political and artistic liberation. Psychological and social forces combine to frustrate the fulfillment of love in his early theater (*Fando and Lis*, 1956) but ultimately love functions to obviate both internal and external constraints. Sexual union, which receives its most rapturous affirmation in Arrabal's plays written during the late 1960's (*The Law of Barabbas*, *Ars Amandi*, and *Erotic Bestiality*), reflects the reconciliation of dialectical forces present in man's psyche. Women come to serve as intermediaries between man and the world. And in the broadest sense, the dramatic structure of Arrabal's mature plays can be depicted as the movement from psychic fragmentation to psychic unity, effected by the force of love. (PLP)

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