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INTELLECTUALIZED, HERMETIC REALITY IN THE FICTION  
OF CLAUDE MAURIAC: REFINEMENT OF  
SUBSTANCE AND TECHNIQUE

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1969

INTELLECTUALIZED, HERMETIC REALITY IN THE FICTION  
OF CLAUDE MAURIAC: REFINEMENT OF  
SUBSTANCE AND TECHNIQUE

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CHAPTER I

PERSPECTIVE ON THE NOVEL

It seems a paradox that the novel, the most recent and flexible of literary forms, has so often been pronounced dead or dying. This frequent tendency of writers and critics to question the survival of the novel is directly related to an apparent need to define, to delimit the novel as a literary genre, and an attempt to define or prescribe what a novel is easily leads to polemics which reflect the various preoccupations, philosophical and aesthetic, of the critic or writer concerned with such a definition or prescription. This persistent question of the nature of the novel is particularly important to any study directed upon avowedly experimental fiction, for it would surely be myopic and arbitrary to accept the claims and achievement of any group of experimental writers without first attempting to establish a sensible

perspective concerning the literary genre (or artistic form) under consideration. The first aim of this study is to arrive at a perspective which will hopefully suggest the nature, or more exactly, the natures of the novel, and secondly, to study the novels of Claude Mauriac as representative of the hermetic, intellectual tendency in prose fiction of this century.

The serious novelist has consistently attempted to reveal his personal vision of the world, to present his concept of reality, and ultimately to arrive at his version of truth. Certainly this generalization suggests that the novelist, concerned with reality and truth, has traditionally fulfilled the role of moralist or philosopher. Artistically, the novelist is subject to few if any rigid structural rules: he has had great freedom with which to create the people and events of his work. The novel, proposing to study or present life, has been concerned with people: it is this concern which indicates both the concrete and abstract material of the novel. Human activity and physical environment provide the essence of the novel, for it is man's ability to reflect upon his world, upon his condition, and perhaps to reach a meaningful reconciliation of his physical environment, his own nature and his life which reveal the novelist's vision, reality or truth. If human experience is accepted as the stuff of

literature, it follows that the novelist, free to present and interpret experience, may express his novel in an unlimited number of ways.

The more obvious material of the novelist, language itself, permits an opportunity for artistic uniqueness and individuality. The novelist must communicate the experiences and concepts which he has chosen or selected to present: the manner in which communication is made, the written expression of language, allows the novelist his role as artist. The particular fashion in which a novelist expresses and constructs his work -- his style -- may provoke a consideration of innumerable aspects of aesthetics and intellect. As Susanne Langer observes, however, the so-called literary values ("word-music, wealth of imagery, sensuousness, emotional intensity, economy, story interest, 'obliquity,' irony, depth of thought, realism, dramatic characterization, power") are no more than "devices for making the true elements that constitute the poetic illusion."<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious from these initial observations, that the novelist has traditionally been concerned with the quality and consequences of human experience; he has

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<sup>1</sup>Susanne Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 282.



given value and importance to the human act. It is hardly questionable that such novelists as Cervantes, Sterne, Fielding, Balzac, Thackeray, Joyce and Proust were concerned with the human condition, with individuals and their behavior. Even though Joyce and Proust added or developed brilliant psychological and technical dimensions in the novel, both novelists sought to express the nature of man, of human experience in a recognizable physical environment. This point is emphasized here simply because many important novelists of this century, including the French "new novelists," have abdicated this role. Graham Greene pointedly comments upon this tendency in the evolution of fiction:

For with the death of James the religious sense was lost to the English novel, and with the religious sense went the sense of the importance of the human act. It was as if the world of fiction had lost a dimension: the characters of such distinguished writers as Mrs. Virginia Woolf and Mr. E. M. Forster wandered like cardboard symbols through a world that was paper-thin....<sup>2</sup>

Of course this observation reflects a value judgment, but Greene's contention that the English neoimpressionist novelists were not concerned primarily with the human act as important is highly significant. R. M. Albérès finds

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<sup>2</sup>Graham Greene, "François Mauriac," The Lost Childhood and Other Essays (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), p. 69.

the origins of the French new novel in the subtleties of the Impressionist works of Forster and Woolf, among others, in which the novelist's expression is limited to the nuances and shades of psychological reality.<sup>3</sup>

In our attempt to bring the nature of the novel into perspective, the problem of the novelist's role, his artistic function is a very important one. Probably there would be little argument that the novelist must be didactic, or even moral in the sense that he be edifying. However, the refusal of the English impressionists and more radically of the French new novelists to interpret or at least to present human behavior as significant has aroused a storm of criticism which argues that these novelists are reprehensible because they ignore or reject the importance of the human act. The tendency in the contemporary novel to delve into layers of individual personality, or to reflect a world of perceived objects, this perception alone forming the novel itself, has been questioned or denounced by such critics and writers as Henri Peyre and Graham Greene. Peyre feels that, "The few positive gains scored by the best of the new novelists may well not be sufficient (they are not in our

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<sup>3</sup>R. M. Albérès, "Aux Sources du nouveau roman: L'impressionnisme anglais," La Revue de Paris, LXIX (mai, 1962), 75.

opinion) to compensate for what, in their determined asceticism or amaigrissement, as it has been styled, they abandon."<sup>4</sup> In his condemnation of the impressionists, Greene is even more pointed: "The novelist . . . , took refuge in the subjective novel. It was as if he thought that by mining into layers of personality hitherto untouched he could unearth the secret of importance; but in these mining operations he lost yet another dimension."<sup>5</sup> It is significant, of course, that the opinion represented by these passages deals with the content or subject matter of the novel. The technical or stylistic developments of the impressionists and of the new novelists are not criticized in themselves: it is rather the end, the very purpose of these writers which is questioned.

Susanne Langer has perhaps best explained the contemporary novelist's preoccupation with personality, with the inner self:

Our interest in personality is what makes our world different and most of its problems relatively new . . . . Unfamiliar feelings make us afraid of ourselves and each other; their elusive presence haunts our minds, and challenges the artistic imagination to realize them in perceptible forms.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Henri Peyre, French Novelists of Today (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 361.

<sup>5</sup>Greene, The Lost Childhood, p. 69.

<sup>6</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, pp. 286-287.

Langer continues by describing the novel:

The novel is an answer to that challenge. It creates a virtual experience of relatively large scope; its form is elastic, and allows of practically limitless complication or simplification, because its structural resources are immensely varied and rich. It may employ swift, factual narrative, or the most indirect half-statements, glowing descriptions, or no descriptions at all; it may be the history of a single soul, or even a gathering of the living and the dead (as in Sartre's Les jeux sont faits). It is a recent genre, still evolving, still seizing on everything that is characteristic of the "modern" scene to supply its thematic material, to motivate and develop its illusion of life.

Yet it is fiction, poesis, and its import is formulated feeling, not sociological or psychological theory.<sup>7</sup>

As an earlier citation has shown, Langer's concern is with the poetic illusion. In this passage the essential words are "virtual experience," "illusion of life" and "formulated feeling" -- all terms which relate to the novelist who transforms experience through his creative imagination to express an artistic illusion. It is this very position which the French new novelists seem to repudiate. We are left, then, with the question: Does the world of objects and perceptions of Robbe-Grillet, or of the banal "sub-conversations" of Sarraute, or of the analytical artistic consciousness of Claude Mauriac constitute a work of art, an artistic illusion of experience? These novelists would claim that their work expresses a more

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 287.

authentic reality than any poetic illusion because they photograph or record objectively, concerning themselves with expressing the precision of an object or the exactness of a thought. We shall consider more carefully the claims and intentions of the French new novelists after our perspective upon the tendency in contemporary fiction which has led up to them is more complete.

It has already been pointed out that the new novel is, to some extent, related to the English impressionist novel. The quality of this relationship is strikingly suggested by Wayne C. Booth and Ralph Freedman in unrelated critical studies of fiction. Booth, in his exhaustive The Rhetoric of Fiction, observes that Robbe-Grillet's La Jalousie is ". . . less closely related to the traditional forms of fiction than to lyric poetry."<sup>8</sup> Booth further contends that:

We can endure unmediated, mindless sensation or emotion for as long as a hundred-and-fifty short pages. But it is no accident that Jealousy is very short. The effect of such a novel is of an extended dramatic monologue, an intense expression of one quality of mind and soul, deliberately not judged, deliberately left unplaced, isolated from the rest of experience.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961), p. 63.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

It is not Booth's intention, however, to follow up his observation that Robbe-Grillet's short novels are closely related to lyrical poems. In fact, much later in his work, Booth appears to reject Robbe-Grillet's achievement, for while discussing Le Voyeur, he concedes the work's technical excellence but asks, ". . . is there no limit to what we will praise, provided it is done with skill?"<sup>10</sup> Once again we are thrown back to the questions already posited in this study: What is the nature of the novel? What is the novelist's role? Booth, while first pointing out the poetic quality of Robbe-Grillet's work, later challenges this author's validity, admitting that "To pass a moral judgment without somehow providing an answer to prevailing neutralist theories is probably futile."<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless Booth ranks with those who feel, or believe, that art and morality are or should be related.

Ralph Freedman limits his critical concern to what he has labeled the lyrical novel. In his study of Hesse, Gide, and Woolf, Freedman develops the theory which Booth applies to Robbe-Grillet, that prose fiction may be closely and intentionally related to lyric poetry. According to Freedman:

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 384.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 385.

The lyrical novel, by contrast, [with the traditional novel] seeks to combine man and world in a strangely inward, yet aesthetically objective form. This is not to say that lyrical writers are uninterested in the question of human conduct that concern all fiction, but they view these questions in a different light. Their stages are not those on which men usually perform in the novel, but independent designs in which the awareness of men's experience is merged with its objects. Rather than finding its Gestalt in the imitation of an action, the lyrical novel absorbs action altogether and refashions it as a pattern of imagery. Its tradition is neither didactic nor dogmatic, although features of both may be used, but poetic in the narrow sense of lyrical.<sup>12</sup>

Freedman sees the relationship between the lyrical novels he examines and the more recent French new novel. Discussing Robbe-Grillet, he says:

In Le Voyeur, he uses precisely the epistemological situation favored by the lyrical novelists, but instead of deforming the image aesthetically, he turns the method in on itself. Outward appearances are not illuminated by apprehension; rather, a distinct world of objects gradually reveals a character, a situation, an act.<sup>13</sup>

If we accept these observations of Booth and Freedman, we must agree that there is a distinct tendency in the contemporary novel which attempts to refine the novel, to abstract from it the qualities of dramatic action, narrative, and human experience. The impressionist novel

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<sup>12</sup>Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Herman Hesse, Andre Gide, and Virginia Woolf (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 2.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 280.

assumed that the subjective apprehensions of experience or perception constituted the subject matter of the novel. The French new novel, in its many variations, claims that the novel must capture the reality of objects, the surface of things, or of banal sub-conversations, or of simultaneous thoughts, conversation and tacit communication. In other words, the impressionist or new novelist rejects not only most of the techniques, but also the role, the function of the philosophical, moral and to a certain extent the artistic point of view. The new novelist not only refuses to interpret experience; he contends that the novel is incapable of presenting an illusion of life. As a result, Robbe-Grillet and Sarraute claim that it is naive and dishonest to consider the novelist as either philosopher or psychologist.

Northrop Frye's invaluable Anatomy of Criticism probably offers the most intelligent and coherent attempt to establish guide-lines for a critical approach to prose fiction. Frye sees that much of the confusion and debate which surround the classification of prose fiction arises from imprecise or misguided conceptions of this form, particularly of the novel. In other words, he argues, the novel is only one form of fiction, and Frye convincingly demonstrates that there are four fairly distinct branches or categories of prose fiction: the



novel, the romance, the confession, and the Menippean satire or anatomy. It is the frequent mixture of these strains in a single work which has led to much irrelevant criticism because the critic did not recognize the type of prose fiction that he was criticizing. For example, "If Scott has any claims to be a romancer, it is not good criticism to deal only with his defects as a novelist."<sup>14</sup>

A brief examination of Frye's four categories will reveal several characteristics and tendencies which shed much light on our perspective of the novel: this examination will also show that our concern with the hermetic tendency in the contemporary novel, especially in the French new novel as represented by Claude Mauriac, is directly related, not to the novel and the romance, but to the confession and anatomy. These two forms of fiction, as Frye has shown, express intellectualized content and are introverted and extroverted respectively. The novel, according to Frye, deals ". . . with personality, with characters wearing their personae or social masks." And further, "The novelist shows his exuber-

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<sup>14</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 305. (First published by the Princeton University Press in 1957.)

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

ance either by an exhaustive analysis of human relationships, as in Henry James, or of social phenomena, as in Tolstoy."<sup>16</sup> The romancer, however,

...does not attempt to create "real people" so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes. It is in the romance that we find Jung's libido, anima and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine and villain respectively. That is why the romance so often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks, and why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fringes.<sup>17</sup>

The autobiography or confession is a third form of prose fiction since its impetus is creative, therefore fictional. and this form frequently merges with the novel as Frye has shown. He goes on to suggest that,

"The stream of consciousness" technique permits of a much more concentrated fusion of the two forms, [than the dramatic confession] but even here the characteristics peculiar to the confession form show up clearly. Nearly always some theoretical and intellectual interest in religion, politics, or art plays a leading role in the confession.... But this interest in ideas and theoretical statements is alien to the genius of the novel proper, where the technical problem is to dissolve all theory into personal relationships.... The novel tends to be extroverted and personal; its chief interest is in human character as it manifests itself in society. ... The confession is also introverted [like the romance] but intellectualized in content. Our next step is evidently to discover a fourth form of fiction which is extroverted and intellectual.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 304.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 307-308.

This form, Frye finds, is the Menippean satire, represented by such writers as Swift, Voltaire, and Peacock. This form

....deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes. Pedants, bigots, cranks, parvenus, virtuosos, enthusiasts, rapacious and incompetent professional men of all kinds, are handled in terms of their occupational approach to life as distinct from their social behavior. The Menippean satire thus resembles the confession in its ability to handle abstract ideas and theories, and differs from the novel in its characterization which is stylized rather than naturalistic, and presents people as mouthpieces of the ideas they represent.<sup>19</sup>

Frye further points out that the satire as a form may be moral or fantastic, represented by the Utopia, or the Alice books for example.<sup>20</sup> Another tendency of the satire is toward a display of erudition, an encyclopaedic presentation of knowledge, as in Macrobius' Saturnalia, ". . . where people sit at a banquet and pour out a vast mass of erudition on every subject that might conceivably come up in conversation."<sup>21</sup> Claude Mauriac's Le Dîner en ville has a striking affinity with this form of fiction, since, as in Burton's title it ". . . means a dissection or analysis, and expresses very accurately the intellectualized approach of his form."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 309.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

Frye's criticism, we believe, has made an invaluable contribution to our perspective on the novel. His discussion of the different forms of prose fiction suggests that much of the controversy surrounding the nature of the novel is needless and ill informed. It has been the critical tendency to evaluate most prose fiction in terms of the novel, and it becomes very clear that such an orientation simply does not take into account the particular aims of much prose fiction. It is now reasonable to argue that the ascetic, hermetic or intellectual tendency in many novelists of this century (especially the English impressionists and the French new novelists) is in fact much more closely related to the forms of confession and anatomy than to the novel or the romance. It will be our major objective to show that the "novels" of Claude Mauriac are, in almost every respect, representative of these types of prose fiction.

As Mr. Frye shows, many critics have falsely attempted to see all prose fiction in terms of the novel form. Most writers and critics would agree that the novelist may freely use the stream of consciousness technique, obscure allusions, enigmatic symbols, even nonsense words. What critics have often failed to see is the close relationship between the use of such techniques and the various forms of prose fiction. In other words, a mixture of characteristics of the novel, the

confession, the romance and the anatomy is obviously a mixture of forms, not a failure to meet the standards of one form.

This argument leads directly to a consideration of the vague, but important term "anti-novel" so frequently applied to the works of Robbe-Grillet, Sarraute, Beckett, Claude Mauriac and other so-called new or anti-novelists. The argument of such writers as Sartre and Sarraute, that the anti-novel rejects the assumptions and point of view of the traditional novelist, seems naive and somewhat pretentious. What these writers ignore is that they have actually chosen a different form of prose fiction for their artistic expression. From our perspective, such works as Sartre's La Nausée or Sarraute's Portrait d'un inconnu are not anti-romans; they are different forms of fiction, closely related to both the confession and to the satire. The objectives and the achievement of these works are quite different from those of the true novelist, whose very nature leads him to examine personal relationships, people in society. Even Henri Peyre chooses to ignore such differences in the forms of prose fiction when he argues that certain authors (he includes Claude Mauriac in this group) lack the novelist's temperament.<sup>23</sup> This observation attempts

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<sup>23</sup>Henri Peyre, French Novelists of Today, p. 426.

to apply the criteria of the novel form to prose fiction which, in inspiration and accomplishment, is not novelistic.

Finally, before examining more closely the nature of Claude Mauriac's prose fiction and his relationship to the French new novel, a value judgment, avowedly arbitrary and vulnerable, seems in order. We believe that the writer of prose fiction, or any artist, must transform his subject matter through his creative imagination. Those very metaphors which most quickly come to mind concerning the works of Robbe-Grillet or Sarraute or Claude Mauriac -- the novelist as tape recorder, the novelist as camera -- suggest the limitation of their art. These writers, we believe, objectify isolated bits and fragments of the world, claiming this to be Reality. Such a view, we believe, is false: it does not take into account the complexity and subtlety of the world it claims to present. Aldous Huxley says this much better: ". . . the consciousness of events which we have immediately, through our senses and intuitions and feelings, is incomparably subtler than any idea we can subsequently form of that immediate consciousness."<sup>24</sup> We believe that the hermetic tendency in prose fiction

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<sup>24</sup>Aldous Huxley, "Vulgarity in Literature," Collected Essays (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 109.

which has culminated in the French new novel, by refining and limiting the material of the novel to an expression of levels of consciousness or to the precise description of objects in the physical world, has ignored the complexity and richness of human experience, limiting its achievement to a negligible, often insignificant concern with a partial reality or a mere fraction of the Truth.

## CHAPTER II

### CLAUDE MAURIAC AND THE NEW NOVELISTS

As we have seen, the true novelist is concerned with human behavior, with man in society. This concern is not necessarily an intellectual one; whereas, the concern with phenomenological reality and with technical advances in prose fiction, common to all of the new novelists, is indeed intellectual. We are dealing, then, with a diverse group of writers whose preoccupations are closely related to the forms of the confession and the anatomy. This intellectual concern with reality and technique is common to a tradition in the contemporary novel which includes Forster and Woolf, Moravia and Sartre, and finally the French new novelists. Professor R. W. B. Lewis suggests the distinction between the traditional novelist and the hermetic tradition when he states, "James was congenitally interested in the question of living. Moravia has been obsessed with a more radical mystery -- the mystery of existence itself, the



fundamental enigma that, I venture to say, has been the chief concern of Moravia's literary generation."<sup>1</sup>

This concern in contemporary fiction with "the mystery of existence itself" is obviously philosophical in nature, and represents an intellectualization in the content of prose fiction which is not the essential concern of the novel form. Indeed, the contemporary novel in France has manifested an abiding intellectual concern with philosophical questions of reality and truth. This concern, when expressed overtly in the novel, constitutes a prose fiction resembling the essay (or confession) and can no longer be considered in the tradition of the novel. For example, Camus' L'Etranger is not so difficult to judge artistically if we see that it is a mixture of the novel and the confession. Elements of both forms are present throughout the work, for, while revealing the behavior, the experiences of man in society, Camus is also demonstrating a philosophical attitude through Meursault. The artistic balance of this merging of forms is broken, however, when Meursault expresses his almost apocalyptical insight into the meaning of life at the novel's end. To put it another way, Camus intrudes openly

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<sup>1</sup>R. W. B. Lewis, The Picaresque Saint: Representative Figures in Contemporary Fiction (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1959), p. 47.

into his work to express in overt, essay form what had previously been artistically demonstrated. This observation (certainly a simple, frequent one) nevertheless demonstrates the artistic dangers inherent in prose fiction which attempts to merge different forms.

Sartre's La Nausée, and more recently the French new novels do not even attempt this mixture of forms, for they largely eschew the novel form altogether. The phenomenological idea of the intrusion of objects on consciousness constitutes much of the confession, La Nausée. Samuel Beckett seems to project an attitude of comic philosophical absurdity, with, in L'Innommable, a protagonistic consciousness which is forced by its very nature to attempt to define itself (an impossibility), and which seems to exist in a vacuum of irony. This tendency toward intellectualized content in prose fiction marks both the method (dissection, analysis) and the attitude (intellectual, ironic, self-conscious) of the confession and the anatomy.

The latest development of French prose fiction, the so-called nouveau roman, is largely an attempt to present reality without recourse to the traditional techniques of the novel. As Susan Sontag points out:

All these writers -- and they differ greatly from each other in intention and achievement -- have this in common: they reject the idea of the "novel" whose task is to tell a story and delineate characters

according to the conventions of 19th century realism, and all they abjure is summed up in the notion of "psychology." Whether they try to transcend psychology by Heidegger's phenomenology (a powerful influence) or undercut it by behavioristic, external description, the results are at least negatively similar, and constitute the first body of work on the form of the novel which gives promise of telling us something useful about the new forms which fiction may take.<sup>2</sup>

Sontag suggests, but does not clearly identify the conclusion that we have already proposed, that in effect, these works are not a new form of fiction, but are rather self-conscious refinements of forms separate from that of the novel. It is for this reason that much of the critical writings of Robbe-Grillet and Sarraute about the new novel seem petulant and unpleasantly dogmatic. They insist upon identifying their experimental efforts with an effort to renovate the novel, failing to see that their anti-novels are rather not novels, but experimentally refined works related to a different tradition or strain of prose fiction.

Certainly there are as many different techniques and purposes found in the new novels as there are novelists, but there is a common desire among the group to innovate stylistic devices and to capture a new kind of "objective" reality. The chief exponents of the new kind

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<sup>2</sup>Susan Sontag, "Nathalie Sarraute and the Novel," Against Interpretation (New York: Dell Publishing Company, A Delta Book, 1966), p. 104.

of fiction, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute, Michel Butor and Claude Mauriac deny the adequacy of the traditional novel to portray meaningful reality in modern society. As Patricia J. Jaeger points out, "Coming immediately after the period of the greatest influence of Existentialism, their works seem to represent a reaction, a declaration of the inadequacy of their literary predecessors, both the existentialists and those of earlier periods such as Balzac, Proust and Kafka."<sup>3</sup> Jaeger further suggests that the rejection of existentialism by these novelists

...stems...from their rather exclusive preoccupation with the mind at the expense of action. Their characters seldom do anything of importance; their characters' deeds tend to mask rather than reveal. Man, for these authors is not the sum total of all his actions, but the sum total of all his amorphous thoughts, daydreams, obsessions and perceptions.<sup>4</sup>

This picture of man describes precisely the content of Claude Mauriac's novels: it should be emphasized here that such a description of man is not that of the true novelist. Man's amorphous thoughts, daydreams, obsessions and perceptions may indeed be found in the novel, but an exclusive presentation of such a picture is much

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<sup>3</sup>Patricia J. Jaeger, "Three Authors in Search of an Elusive Reality: Butor, Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet," Critique, VI, No. 3 (1963), 65.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

closer to the form of autobiography or confession, and, as has already been suggested, will be marked by an intellectualization of the content of the work.

With this distinction in focus, the hermetic or intellectualized tendency of such contemporary fiction is relatively easy to see. The use of stream of consciousness in Joyce and Proust marks a technical extension whose very nature tends to be related to the essay or autobiography because the stream of consciousness relates the private world of thoughts or perception. As Frye has pointed out, the nature of the confession is introverted and intellectual, usually dealing with "some theoretical and intellectual interest in religion, politics, or art. . . ." <sup>5</sup> However, Joyce and Proust did not limit their works to the confession form, and since much of Ulysses and A la recherche du temps perdu, for example, deals with man acting in a social context, these works are in part representative of the novel form. The tendency toward exclusion of the novel form from fiction is much more pronounced in Virginia Woolf whose Mrs. Dalloway, for example, demonstrates the confession form in which the objective world exists only as apprehended by Mrs. Dalloway.

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<sup>5</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 308.

R. M. Albérès observes that, in the fiction of Kafka and Joyce, ". . . le but et la matière du récit ne résident plus dans ce que l'on raconte mais dans une réalité que sa complexité, sa profondeur, son épaisseur soustraient aux possibilités de récit et d'analyse."<sup>6</sup> Albérès has unwittingly pointed out what we have been attempting to show systematically -- that the complexity, profundity and thickness of Joyce, for example, depends upon a balanced mixture (as Frye states) of different forms -- novel, confession, romance and anatomy. By contrast, the new novelists extract from their own work the forms of novel and romance, and present fiction which is based primarily upon the forms of confession and anatomy. Logically this movement dramatically limits the scope of new novel fiction to an intellectualized concentration upon the nature of reality, and leads to solipsistic, highly specialized expressions of thoughts and ideas. This is especially true in the case of Claude Mauriac who admits throughout his novels (in the mind of his writer-protagonist) that his works are more like essays than novels. However, although Mauriac sees the connection between his fiction and the autobiography, he simplifies the

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<sup>6</sup>R. M. Albérès, "Aux Sources du nouveau roman: l'impressionisme anglais," La Revue de Paris, Vol. 69 (mai, 1962), p. 77.

question of origin alarmingly, for he contends, ". . . tout ce que l'on appelle le nouveau roman. . . sort de Joyce," who, with Proust, strongly influenced him.<sup>7</sup> This claim needs considerable modification. Joyce and Proust broadened the scope of the novel by remarkable use of the new technical and dramatic devices -- the stream of consciousness in Joyce, the involuntary memory in Proust, to name two broad areas of achievement. Mauriac and certain other new novelists (Butor, Simon) have obviously been influenced not so much by the scope and achievement of Joyce and Proust as by their technical innovations, which is to say a very limited part of their artistic creation. Mauriac ignores the broad pattern and rhythm of different prose forms in both Joyce and Proust, and consequently limits his own fiction to a technical concern with the stream of consciousness and to a very technical, theoretical preoccupation with the nature of reality.

It was not until 1957 that Claude Mauriac's first novel, Toutes les femmes sont fatales appeared. Judged as an interesting tour de force, this novel was followed by Le Dîner en ville, La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, L'Aggrandissement, and L'Oubli. All these

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<sup>7</sup>Claude Mauriac, quoted by Denise Bourdet in "Claude Mauriac," La Revue de Paris, Vol. 69 (janvier, 1962), p. 147.

novels except the last one revolve around Bertrand Carnéjoux, whose career and preoccupations as an experimental novelist are presented in each work. In L'Oubli Bertrand's name has been changed to Nicolas. The quality and form of Mauriac's fiction are characteristic of many of the tendencies of the new novel, and the self-conscious, introverted preoccupations in his works firmly relate them to the autobiographical confession, or essay form of prose fiction.

We have established in a general way that the new novel is the culmination of an hermetic, intellectually oriented tendency in contemporary fiction. Before we examine Claude Mauriac's works as highly representative of this tradition let us isolate the essential claims and characteristics of this group of writers. Robbe-Grillet's novels theoretically originate from his assumption that ". . . le monde n'est ni signifiant ni absurde. It est tout simplement."<sup>8</sup> This point of departure leads to Robbe-Grillet's extensive presentation of objects in his novels, of what is visually perceived. Nathalie Sarraute focuses sharply on conversation or dialogue in her novels, explaining that words, ". . . jeu d'actions et de réactions

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<sup>8</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Une voie pour le roman futur," La Nouvelle nouvelle revue française, VIII (juillet, 1956), 80.



qu'elles permettent, elles constituent pour le romancier le plus précieux des instruments."<sup>9</sup> Michel Butor is more concerned with the subtleties of human thought and perception, and Claude Mauriac is primarily concerned with depicting a reality consisting of simultaneous thoughts, spoken words and tacit communication. He says: "Literature as pure entertainment doesn't interest them."<sup>10</sup>

The obvious question arises: what serious writer has been exclusively concerned with pure entertainment?

Mauriac continues to explain that the new novel

...attempts to account for simultaneous reality -- elusive as it is certain, of things, thoughts, perceptions and imagination entering on an equal footing into the creation of the inner vision which draws both upon life and desire (or fear). All of us are possessed by the same vain hope of being able to understand the universe such as it appears to be, and to master, not the whole of it -- that unfortunately is out of the question, but at least whatever aspects come under our command with the greatest possible exactitude.... Our search -- and herein lies perhaps whatever novelty it may hold -- brings us closer to the artist than to the traditional writer. We try to convey a vision -- both inner and outer -- which resembles no other. The apparent subjects of our books are only of secondary importance. In literature as in painting, the anecdote has little value. We are no longer telling a story

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<sup>9</sup>Nathalie Sarraute, "Conversations et soud-conversations," La Nouvelle nouvelle revue française, VII (janvier, 1956), 55.

<sup>10</sup>Claude Mauriac, "The New Novel in France," New York Times Book Review, June 19, 1960, p. 4.

but depicting a world, our own world. If at times our work becomes too abstract it is because in attempting to express as exactly as possible what reality means to us we must reproduce the distortions and the different forms that appear to us. Hence the importance of technique in our novel-like essays.<sup>11</sup>

There are apparent contradictions in this rather pretentious passage and it is reassuring to find that Mauriac occasionally cautions his reader not to take him too seriously in the novels. Interestingly, Mauriac appears to believe that his new novels deal with the abstract, the philosophical, for he claims to "understand the universe," and to reveal what reality means to him. This process is said to represent a unique vision. In practice, however, Mauriac's attempt is limited to the literal depicting not of what reality means, but of how it may be captured through an arbitrary decision to call reality the sum total of simultaneous thoughts, conversations, and tacit glances.

Laurent LeSage observes several important characteristics of the new novel: "Their goal is to describe only -- objectively, scientifically, as completely as possible."<sup>12</sup> Further, they support ". . . the abandon-

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Laurent LeSage, The French New Novel: An Introduction and a Sampler (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), p. 11.

ment of the notion of an integral and fixed personality,"<sup>13</sup> certainly not a new idea in the treatment of character in fiction. LeSage concludes that "The point-of-view technique seems to them more honest and more true to life. Interior monologue, conversation, or stream of consciousness replace the long expository paragraphs . . . . the writer and reader are now inside the story, not outside."<sup>14</sup> Consequently LeSage points out that ". . . the new novelist does not himself know what the ending is going to be. He must invent as he proceeds."<sup>15</sup> Jean Bloch-Michel emphasizes this aspect of the new novel:

...il est l'aventure même du roman qui se fait, c'est-à-dire, pour l'auteur, du roman qui s'écrit, et, pour le lecteur, du roman qui se lit. En conséquence de ces diverses interdictions, l'art romanesque deviendrait donc, un art du regard, la description attentive, mais limitée, de ce que je vois, étant bien entendu, qu'il m'est interdit d'interpréter, au nom de la psychologie, fût-elle réduite au behaviourisme, les mouvements ou les paroles de ceux que je regarde.<sup>16</sup>

Further, Bloch-Michel claims, "Restent le refus du personnage, de la psychologie, l'importance donnée aux

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>16</sup>Jean Bloch-Michel, Le présent de l'indicatif: essai sur le nouveau roman (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), pp. 16-17.

objets et le règne de l'inauthentique. Ce sont là les vraies nouveautés introduites par cette école. . ."<sup>17</sup> Pierre de Boisdeffre concludes that, "Avec l'Antithéâtre et la poésie informelle, le 'Nouveau Roman' participe à l'élaboration d'une littérature portée à un haut degré d'abstraction et qui n'offre plus guère de prise à la sensibilité humaine du lecteur."<sup>18</sup>

Once again we are brought back to the hermetic, intellectual quality of this new fiction which, we contend, is not in the tradition, indeed not in the nature of the novel. Claude Mauriac, who recognizes that his novels are more like essays, fails to follow this observation to its obvious conclusion -- that the introverted, intellectual form through which the new novels are expressed are not novels but essays, or anatomies. Mauriac's works reveal characteristics of both forms.

The bulk of this study is concerned with the nature, the quality of reality in Mauriac's novels. These works do not present a vision in the philosophical sense of an interpretation of life, although they are occasionally brilliant and usually skillful. They depict an intellectualized world wherein brilliance, irony, and intelligence

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>18</sup>Pierre de Bisdeffre, Ou va le roman? (Paris: del Duca, 1962), p. 294.

play the important roles. These qualities are characteristic not of the novel or romance, but of the confession and anatomy forms of prose fiction. Our study deals with those aspects of Mauriac's novels which contribute, directly or indirectly to their hermetic, intellectual nature. It is logical to argue then, that Mauriac is not a novelist at all, but an introverted essayist and literary theorist who has disguised his form, sometimes loosely, sometimes more densely under the title of novels. When Mauriac presents his protagonist's thoughts, he uses the stream of consciousness of the introverted confession. When he presents erudite conversations, his form is closer to the encyclopaedic anatomy.

### CHAPTER III

#### MAURIAC'S BERTRAND CARNÉJOUX:

#### THE WRITER-PROTAGONIST

The subject matter of all of Mauriac's works is intellectually interesting. In Toutes les femmes sont fatales the reader is confronted with the egocentric mind of Bertrand Carnéjoux. The novel is a recording of his thoughts which reveal obsessions with sex, time, the nature of reality, and with the difficulties of capturing this reality in his own novels. The novel, divided into four sections, reveals Carnéjoux's thoughts at ages thirty-three, thirty-eight, forty-two, and twenty-five. Le Dîner en ville expands the picture of reality to include all the simultaneous thoughts and tacit communication which comprise an urbane dinner party. Carnéjoux is the host. In La Marquise sortit à cinq heures Mauriac attempts to capture the words, thoughts and glances which make up the reality of one hour at the historical Carrefour de Buci. Carnéjoux observes the busy intersection from his apartment window.

L'Agrandissement enlarges upon two minutes isolated from the hour's reality of La Marquise sortit à cinq heures. By limiting the duration of simultaneous reality to two minutes, Mauriac intends to exhaust the possibility of recording all the words, thoughts and glances which exist at a given moment. The result, however, is a two-hundred page recording of Carnéjoux's thoughts, most of which are concerned with experimental novels (Toutes le femmes sont fatales, Le Dîner en ville, La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, for example). The last novel, L'Oubli, deals with Nicolas, also an experimental novelist, who attempts to remember the identity of a woman he meets by chance at a sophisticated party.

It is the presence of Bertrand Carnéjoux (Nicolas in L'Oubli) in all of Mauriac's fiction which gives a certain structural unity to the works. The consciousness of this protagonist-novelist in each novel indicates the hermetic, autobiographical quality of the works, while it provides an intellectual, theorizing focal point for those works in which the consciousness of other characters is introduced to provide an amplification of Mauriac's concept of simultaneous reality. Carnéjoux's mind, presented consistently through the stream of consciousness technique, reveals the sensory perceptions as well as his more reflective and complex thoughts concerning

his life and his problems as a writer of fiction. Carnéjoux's fictional dimension is so intentionally thin that Mauriac's intellectual presence is constantly felt in the "novels." These works are entirely built upon the autobiographical or confessional form of fiction, presenting an introspective consciousness constantly in search of reality. The obsessive preoccupation of this consciousness -- the theory and nature of its own profession (fiction-writing) indicates the specialized nature of the intellectualized content of Mauriac's work. Carnéjoux's reflections upon his own writing in the novels is, of course, an example of the essay, the short form corresponding to the more lengthy confession. For example, Carnéjoux contemplates his own novel in Toutes les femmes sont fatales:

Je voudrais ce livre d'une lecture d'autant moins facile que son sujet serait plus attirant, pour ne pas dire plus excitant. La composition serait rigoureuse sous des apparences relâchées. Minutieux agencements. Equilibres subtils. Symétries cachées. Coexistence de l'explicable (que j'éclairerais en temps voulu) et de ce qui ne serait jamais élucidé par le narrateur dans la mesure où il n'en aurait lui-même pas la clef.<sup>1</sup>

Again in Le Dîner en ville we read:

...le vrai roman comme le vrai cinéma de l'avenir, par l'entremise mais au delà des intrigues qui

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<sup>1</sup>Claude Mauriac, Toutes les femmes sont fatales (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1957), p. 218.



leur serviront de support, nous découvriront la vraie vie, celle qu'on ne voit pas à l'oeil nu et que nous révèle, par exemple, le grossissement de l'alcool ....<sup>2</sup>

Mauriac's own intellectual concerns are also revealed in the characters Gilles Bellecroix, a screen writer in Le Dîner en ville and Desprez, an historian in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures. Both characters, like Carnéjoux are obsessed with their intellectual preoccupations and Mauriac's presentation of their consciousness reveals still more essays on the nature of reality, of art and history. Built around his own intellectual mind, Mauriac's novels reflect, in the strictest sense, the world of the autobiographer and essayist.

Mauriac is not the first contemporary writer of fiction to introduce a writer into his work. The contrast between Carnéjoux's function in Mauriac's fiction and that of Philip Quarles in Huxley's Point Counter Point and Edouard in Gide's Les Faux-Monnayeurs strikingly demonstrates Mauriac's introspective, hermetic achievement through his use of the writer-protagonist. Huxley's Point Counter Point, often called a novel of ideas, nonetheless presents a variety of characters who not only think intellectually, but who act, intuit and feel. As a

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<sup>2</sup>Claude Mauriac, Le Dîner en ville (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1959), p. 69.

result, Quarles, in the context of other more vibrant, extroverted characters, is revealed all the more clearly to be what his role suggests -- an introverted, intellectual novelist. The point is clear: he is only one character on a stage filled with a complex, diverse set of characters. Technically, too, Huxley reserves a distance from his writer-character not present in Mauriac's stream of consciousness presentation of Carnéjoux. Quarles' Notebook does function as a direct essay on the novel in Point Counter Point, yet it is only one form in this panoramic novel. There is also a candor in Quarles' essays which preserves an ironic attitude not always present in Carnéjoux's theorizing. For example, Huxley has Quarles write:

The musicalization of fiction. Not in the symbolist way, by subordinating sense to sound (Pleuvent les bleus baisers des astres taciturnes. Mere glossolalia.) But on a large scale, in the construction. Meditate on Beethoven. The changes of moods, the abrupt transitions. (....) More interesting still, the modulations, not merely from one key to another, but from mood to mood.<sup>3</sup>

Then we read:

Put a novelist into the novel. He justifies aesthetic generalizations, which may be interesting -- at least to me. He also justifies experiment. Specimens of

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<sup>3</sup>Aldous Huxley, Point Counter Point (New York: The Literary Guild of America, Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1928), p. 293.

his work may illustrate other possible or impossible ways of telling a story.<sup>4</sup>

Quarles seems to describe Huxley's novel fairly accurately when he writes of the novel of ideas:

Novel of ideas. The character of each personage must be implied, as far as possible, in the ideas of which he is the mouthpiece. In so far as theories are rationalizations of sentiments, instincts, dispositions of souls, this is feasible. The chief defect of the novel of ideas is that you must write about people who have ideas to express -- which excludes all but about .01 per cent of the human race. Hence the real, the congenital novelists don't write such books. But then, I never pretended to be a congenital novelist.<sup>5</sup>

This theorizing about the novel belongs to the essay form, of course, and closely resembles some of Carnéjoux's reflections. Huxley's work, however, is primarily composed of the novel and anatomy forms of fiction. The anatomy form is, in fact, represented by those conversations which reveal Point Counter Point as a novel of ideas akin to the work discussed by Quarles in his essay on the novel. Another important difference between Carnéjoux and Quarles is that Carnéjoux reflects essentially the entire scope of Mauriac's world -- by definition limiting that world to an introverted, theoretical one. Quarles is but one of several characters of ideas in Huxley's work and his concepts of life and art are ultimately dis-

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 294-295.

claimed by the author who has Mark Rampion, another artist and intellectual (based on D. H. Lawrence) say:

I know your paradises. But the point for the moment is truth. This non-human truth that the scientists are trying to get at with their intellects -- it's utterly irrelevant to ordinary human living. Our truth, the relevant human truth, is something you discover by living -- living completely with the whole man....And the non-human truth isn't merely irrelevant; it's dangerous. It distracts people's attention from the important human truth. It makes them falsify their experience in order that lived reality may fit in with abstract theory.<sup>6</sup>

And finally Rampion declares:

You've admitted promiscuous fornication, that's all. But not love. Not the natural contact and flow, not the renunciation of mental self-consciousness, not the abandonment to instinct. No, no. You stick to your conscious will. Everything must be expressé-ment voulu all the time. And the connections must be purely mental. And life must be lived, not as though it were life in a world of living people, but as though it were solitary recollection and fancy and meditation. An endless masturbation, like Proust's horrible great book.<sup>7</sup>

Rampion's denunciation of Quarles' self-conscious intellectuality may be applied to Mauriac's Carnéjoux with the obvious results. The hermetic nature of Mauriac's fiction appears sterile and bloodless in comparison. This sterility, nurtured by intellectual self-consciousness finds still another parallel in Quarles and Carnéjoux. Both men fail to achieve satisfactory, natural relationships

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 399.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 400.

with the other characters in the works. Quarles' intellectual friendships only sharpen the sense of isolation and introversion which result in the failure of Quarles' married life. Carnéjoux's quest for pleasure is revealed in innumerable intellectualized reflections on the nature of love, on his inability to overcome his obsessive meditations about experience which immediately undermine the importance of human experience, making every personal contact another subject of detached reflection.

Gide's novelist-protagonist in Les Faux-Monnayeurs, Edouard, is in some ways closer to the role played by Carnéjoux. He, like Carnéjoux, is the central figure of the novel. Yet his reflections upon the novel, like those of Quarles, are largely limited to a note book, or to an occasional conversation. Once again, Edouard's essays upon the novel describe and discuss some of the qualities of the novel in which they appear. These essays, however, are more frequent and longer than those of Quarles, and Edouard's concern with experimental fiction is much closer to that of Carnéjoux:

Dépouiller le roman de tous les éléments qui n'appartiennent pas spécifiquement au roman. De même que la photographie, naguère, débarassa la peinture du souci de certaines exactitudes, le phonographe nettoiera sans doute demain le roman de ses dialogues rapportés, dont le réaliste souvent se fait gloire. Les événements extérieurs, les accidents, les traumatismes, appartiennent au

cinéma; il sied que le roman les lui laisse. Même la description des personnages ne me paraît point appartenir au genre. Oui vraiment, il ne me paraît pas que le roman pur (et en art, comme partout, la pureté seule m'importe) ait à s'en occuper.<sup>8</sup>

Further in the novel Edouard explains his experimental theory of the novel: "Ce que je veux, c'est présenter d'une part la réalité, présenter d'autre part cet effort pour la styliser. . .," and then, "Pour obtenir cet effet, suivez-moi, j'invente un personnage de romancier que je pose en figure centrale; et le sujet du livre, si vous voulez, c'est précisément la lutte entre ce qui lui offre la réalité et ce que, lui, prétend en faire."<sup>9</sup>

Edouard's affinity with Carnéjoux in his intellectual preoccupation with the nature of reality and the possibilities of introverted fiction to capture this reality is striking. In fact, Gide seems to foreshadow the new novelists' concern with "pure" fiction, especially as practiced by Sarraute, and to some extent by Mauriac. Gide's Edouard, like Mauriac's Carnéjoux is hardly distinguishable from the author himself, unlike Huxley's Quarles who functions as only one (and not the prevailing one) of several intellectual view-points. Edouard's function, nonetheless, is not totally introverted and in-

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<sup>8</sup>André Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs (Paris: Gallimard, 1925), p. 93.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

tellectual as is that of Carnéjoux. Gide's protagonist-novelist, in relationship to the other characters of Les Faux-Monnayeurs, feels and acts independently of his self-conscious, introverted preoccupations with reality and art. In other words, Gide's novel merges the essay form (Edouard's Journal) and the anatomy (several intellectual conversations) with the true novel form dealing with human relationships. Edouard's intellectuality, moreover, does not prevent a satisfactory emotional resolution, consummated by the love he and Bernard are able to share.

This comparison of Carnéjoux with two related predecessors clearly emphasized the totally hermetic nature of Mauriac's fiction. Mauriac has, in effect, eliminated the forms which permit both Point Counter Point and Les Faux-Monnayeurs to be an artistic balance of different forms, dominated by the novel form concerned directly with personal relationships, with man in society. Mauriac's complete reliance upon the stream of consciousness technique indicates the confession nature of his work, and his autobiographical protagonist's introversion makes him a constant prisoner of the intellectualized content of his thoughts. Even Carnéjoux's seemingly immediate perceptions of his physical environment are soon transformed into material for his intellectual conscious-

ness to contemplate. This transformation constantly uncovers the protagonist's detachment from his world, and frequently from himself. His mind appears to be condemned, not only to reflect upon his experience, but upon itself, intensifying considerably the introverted nature of the works.

This intellectual detachment is, of course, related to the attitude of irony, inherent to the intellectual position. Carnéjoux's mind has a stimulating intellectual quality because its ironic attitude releaves the self-consciousness. If Carnéjoux took himself and his thoughts too seriously, he would be an unbearable, pretentious and monotonous character. His ironic attitude, not only toward his experience, but toward himself and his attempts to explore Reality suggest a human quality which arises from his realization that his attempts to define his experience are futile, even pointless. This dimension of Carnéjoux's character evokes a sense of alienation, of separation from experience and self: this intellectually implicates the reader's sympathy for Carnéjoux's sterile but tragic quest. Carnéjoux's quest, however, is such a consistently theorizing, intellectual one -- for the nature of reality, for the means of capturing this reality in his own works -- that the sympathy he stimulates is as detached, intellectual, and finally, sterile as Carnéjoux's own mind.



It is ironic in itself that, aside from his obsession with experimental fiction, Carnéjoux's most abiding preoccupation is with physical love. His mind relentlessly considers the nature of his physical relationships. It is perfectly logical that Carnéjoux's thoughts never deal with the details of sexual activity, or the subtle, complex nature of love in which feelings and emotions are shared, or at least form the basis of a personal relationship. The subtitle of the fourth section of Toutes les femmes sont fatales, is "La solitude du plaisir": this title seems to represent perfectly Carnéjoux's concern with physical experience. He has limited himself rigidly to a two-dimensional concept of the human being -- the intellectual and the physical. Carnéjoux's body, like his mind, is insatiable. He may be considered the archetypal satyromaniac with, not a conscience to plague him, but an incurably introverted intellect. The paradox in the title "La Solitude du plaisir" is apparent. Carnéjoux must seek physical pleasure with women, yet this effort feeds upon itself in the sense that the physical experience itself does not provide pleasure; rather it provides the basis for an interminable, self-conscious analysis, a persistent reflection upon that physical experience. Once more the reality of the physical experience is denied, for it is permitted a reality only as the basis for intellectual surgery. Both Susan Sontag and Huxley's Rampion

have seen the appropriate metaphor: masturbation. As we have seen, Rampion uses the term to describe Proust's introversion, and the sterility of intellectual reality. Sontag's description is more colorful: masturbation of the universe, she observes (in a more graphic phrase), ". . . is perhaps what all philosophy, all abstract thought is about: an intense, and not very sociable pleasure, which has to be repeated again and again."<sup>10</sup> The solitude, intensity and obsession included in this description appropriately reveal the nature of Mauriac's Bertrand Carnéjoux.

Mauriac's Carnéjoux reveals the intensely intellectual, introverted nature of the essay and confession forms in all of Mauriac's novels. Their hermetic nature is revealed by a series of increasingly abstract movements which may be traced as follows: first Carnéjoux is a physical man, yet the importance of his physical being is eliminated by his intellect; second, Carnéjoux is a writer, but his concern is not with people, or society, or even with writing in a broad sense. He is, rather, obsessed with his own concept of reality and the difficulties of capturing this reality in fiction. And finally, Carnéjoux is not obsessed purely with his problems as an

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<sup>10</sup>Susan Sontag, "Sartre's Saint Genet," Against Interpretation (New York: Dell Publishing Company, A Delta Book, 1966), p. 99.

experimental writer, for he withdraws yet another step to reflect upon his own reflections as a novelist, only to conclude that his effort is probably futile. This movement from the concrete to the abstract reveals Mauriac's movement away from the novel form to the refined areas of purely intellectual obsession. Carnéjoux is not monstrous only because he can smile at himself; he is aware of the absence of flesh and blood in his reflection, even in his feelings. It is to his credit that he could no doubt appreciate Huxley's exasperated observation that the fashion in literature, as in feminine virtue, undergoes a periodic refinement ad absurdum:

Moments come when too conspicuous a show of vigor, too frank an interest in common things are signs of literary vulgarity. To be really lady-like, the Muses, like their mortal sisters, must be anemic and constipated. On the more sensitive writers of certain epochs circumstances impose an artistic wasting away, a literary consumption. This distressing fatality is at once transformed into a virtue, which it becomes a duty for all to cultivate.<sup>11</sup>

Even Huxley had probably not foreseen the lengths to which the new novelists would go. It must be remembered, however, that in spite of their claims, in spite of Mauriac's concern with the novel, these writers, and especially Mauriac, are well outside the tradition of the novel form.

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<sup>11</sup>Aldous Huxley, "Vulgarity in Literature," Collected Essays (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 104.

Mauriac's (Carnéjoux's) value and his vulnerability lie not in his weaknesses as a novelist so much as in his limitations as an essayist, in his lack of dimension as a person. Indeed the confession or essay is a form in which content is intellectualized, as we have seen. Even so, human qualities have traditionally contributed to the interest, the fullness of form in the essay. Mauriac's Carnéjoux, as will be seen, is most interesting when his consciousness is only one in a broader, more complex reality of various characters in Le Dîner en ville and La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, Mauriac's most artistic, and least introverted works.

## CHAPTER IV

### TOUTES LES FEMMES SONT FATALES

In Claude Mauriac's first novel, Toutes les femmes sont fatales (1957), the consciousness of Bertrand Carnéjoux, a journalist and would-be writer of "new novels," provides all of the material for this totally stream of consciousness work. Whereas in Mauriac's later novels we find a variety of interior monologues and conversation, Toutes les femmes sont fatales is a relentless presentation of the reflections of Bertrand Carnéjoux. Only rarely does conversation intrude upon the labyrinthine thought train of the protagonist's mind. It is apparent in this first work, however, that Mauriac's concept of "simultaneous reality" is not yet fully developed. All of the more recent novels are structured upon a very highly compressed picture of reality. Externally, both time and space are precisely limited, especially in Le Dîner en ville, La Marquise sortit à cinq heures and L'Agrandissement. Mauriac's attempt to capture a specific reality composed of simul-

taneous thoughts, conversations and tacit communication has led him to prescribe an exact time and place which is carefully limited to a short sequence of chronological time in one narrowly compressed physical (spatial) setting. This concept of reality is not applied to the structure of Toutes les femmes sont fatales, although each of the work's four parts suggests such a concept. In this novel each of the four sections represents a marked change in chronological time as well as in space. Carnéjoux's perceptions and reflections reveal the protagonist at age thirty-three in Rio, thirty-eight in Paris, forty-two in New York and finally twenty-five in Paris again. The subtitle of each section suggests its theme, which is in each case, an artistic and intellectual preoccupation about the same subject: physical love. These subtitles indicate clearly Mauriac's intellectual concern with the nature of physical experience which, in turn, becomes the intellectualized stream of consciousness of Bertrand Carnéjoux's mind. In different parts of the work, at different periods in his life, the protagonist reflects upon "les incertitudes du désir," "le sérieux de la séduction," "les vérités de l'amour," and "la solitude du plaisir." These subjects of intellectualized introspection lead to the allegedly metaphysical notion that "Toutes les femmes sont fatales,"

the title of the work, and in the work itself, the title of a popular song which Carnéjoux hears and thinks about in the novel's first three parts. The function of popular song lyrics as a leitmotif which helps structure and integrate Carnéjoux's thoughts with the work's themes is similar to that of "Some of these days/ You'll miss me honey!" for Sartre's Antoine Roquentin in La Nausée.

Carnéjoux, the intellectual new novelist, is aware of the role his song title plays in the work: "Encore ce même air à la mode. Mon livre aurait ressemblé à cette rengaine: revenant toujours, sous des formes à peine différentes, sur les mêmes thèmes."<sup>1</sup>

For Carnéjoux these "mêmes thèmes" amount to an endless, introverted reflection upon meaning and reality. Although Carnéjoux reflects upon several aspects of the human condition -- memory, loneliness, beauty, meaning and meaninglessness, death -- he is primarily concerned with the meaning and importance of physical, sexual experience. However, in Carnéjoux's own terms, this preoccupation with sex is not sexual but intellectual and, according to him, even metaphysical. This apparent paradox is the result of Carnéjoux's philosophical view that man is unable to escape his aloneness, that nothingness and soli-

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<sup>1</sup>Claude Mauriac, Toutes les femmes sont fatales (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1957), p. 115.

tude, foreshadowing inevitable death, lead to an obsession with matter, with the sexual act through which Carnéjoux attempts to assert his fleeting immortality. Carnéjoux's vision of life is presented movingly as he remembers its revelation to him at age nineteen:

La vie, la vie m'étouffait de bonheur et d'angoisse. Soudain, alors que j'admirais le clocher de Saint-Germain-des-Prés dans sa beauté et son impassibilité de pierre, je compris que j'étais un garçon comme les autres qui cesserait lui aussi d'être jeune pour vieillir et mourir sans que le monde en soit appauvri les mêmes jeunes gens se relayant indéfiniment pour découvrir le bonheur et le malheur d'être.... Ainsi ai-je compris à dix-neuf ans que rien ne me distinguait des garçons de ma génération et de mon milieu, mes idées les plus chères n'étant pas plus à moi que ma façon de m'habiller.<sup>2</sup>

Carnéjoux's realization of nothingness, of existential absurdity in the face of time and death, is of course, reminiscent of Meursault's vision:

Du fond de mon avenir, pendant toute cette vie absurde que j'avais menée, un souffle obscur remontait vers moi à travers des années qui n'étaient pas encore venues et ce souffle égalisait sur son passage tout ce qu'on me proposait alors dans les années pas plus réelles que je vivais.<sup>3</sup>

But Carnéjoux's vision or Truth comes to him not at the end but at the beginning of his life. Throughout Toutes les femmes sont fatales, the protagonist's intellect sees his experience, indeed all physical experience, in

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 176-177.



relation to the philosophical view of nothingness, of meaninglessness ordained by death. He reflects, "Je sais que je ne suis rien et c'est pour l'oublier que je fais l'amour. Ecrire ma Stérologie sans plus attendre."<sup>4</sup> This escape from mortality and nothingness is nonetheless a trap, as Carnéjoux ironically realizes: "Ma présente angoisse est d'être sans angoisse. Ou plus exactement, d'aller sans anxiété au plaisir."<sup>5</sup> And then, "Incapable de désir, je ne peux renoncer au désir."<sup>6</sup> Carnéjoux's impasse is obvious: he seeks release and momentary forgetfulness in sexual experience, but such a release feeds upon itself and desire, or rather the momentary meaning of desire dies, leaving Carnéjoux alone to face his aloneness and death, even while he must seek another sexual experience. It should now be apparent that Carnéjoux's sexual obsession, like his obsessive intellectual analysis of his sexual obsession is, as described by our earlier metaphor, self-eroticism. This condition is the obvious trap of an intellectual Don Juan. In the most elementary Freudian terms, Carnéjoux annihilates himself and life (intellectually meaningless to him)

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

through sex. He becomes addicted to endless sexual encounters not because he likes women, but because he can not conceive of liking himself or life.

Toutes les femmes sont fatales and L'Agrandissement are more consistently related to the confession or autobiographical form of fiction than Mauriac's other works. Since the first novel is limited in scope to Carnéjoux's consciousness, the entire work may be seen as an Autobiography in the strictest sense. The author, through his protagonist, reveals his personality and intellectual obsessions uninterrupted by the novelistic dimensions of character and action. The illusion of subjectivity, so important to the stream of consciousness in the works of Virginia Woolf, has given way to a consistently intellectualized view of experience, intended to be a precise recording of every perception and reflection registered by Carnéjoux's consciousness. This, Mauriac contends, is objective reality.

As we have seen, Mauriac's novel intends to be and is thoroughly an exercise of the mind, a conscious attempt to treat experience as predominantly secondary to the intellect which considers and evaluates that experience. The subject matter and technique of the novel are intellectual or intellectualized in several important ways. Carnéjoux is an intellectual as opposed to a man of feeling

or action. Further, he is a creative intellectual in the sense that he, too, writes and reflects about the problems of writing new novels. Technically, the internal analysis (closely related to the interior monologue) attempts to record with detachment what the mind thinks of experience. The imagery in Toutes les femmes sont fatales, frequently used to capture immediate or remembered perceived experience, is sharp and photographic. The structure of the novel also reflects Mauriac's concern with an intellectual, abstract subject -- the nature of time -- and permits the author to explore the relationships of the present and past, interweaving the two.

Although Carnéjoux's preoccupation with writing an experimental novel in Toutes les femmes sont fatales is not so marked as in the later novels, his reflections upon novel writing offer important clues to Mauriac's intentions. As Alice Mayhew points out, this presentation of a writer-consciousness permits Mauriac to be ". . . triply present in his own books -- twice as a man named Bertrand Carnéjoux, who is both the object of his observations and the subject who makes them and once as Mauriac himself who intrudes into his own novels to discuss them and himself."<sup>7</sup> This observation simply under-

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<sup>7</sup>Alice Mayhew, "All Things at Once," Commonweal, September 25, 1964, p. 20.

scores the autobiographical, aesthetically oriented nature of the work. Henri Hell concludes that Mauriac should have been satisfied with writing an essay about novels rather than a novel in which an essay about novels is important.<sup>8</sup> This conclusion, however, is arbitrary, and ignores Mauriac's basic intention, for it is the complete intellectual presence of a writer-protagonist which we must accept in this fiction, and quite understandably, a writer's thoughts will consider the nature of creativity, the possibility of experimentation, even while these thoughts compose a part of the novel as it is presented. The important point is that Mauriac has produced a self-conscious hybrid form of fiction in which his protagonist's confession and essays are more important than the traditional aspects of the novel. Mauriac has Carnéjoux reflect upon the difficulties and pitfalls in writing a novel such as Carnéjoux wishes to write (and which the reader is holding). Carnéjoux, contemplating his novel, thinks:

Vrai jeu de patience pour lecteurs attentifs. Telle une grille de mots croisés, mon livre pourrait être commencé n'importe où, lu et relu dans tous les sens.

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<sup>8</sup>Henri Hell, "Michel Butor: L'emploi du temps; Claude Mauriac: Toutes les femmes sont fatales," La Table Ronde (mars, 1957), p. 211.

Essai plus que roman. Essai romanesque, peut-être, genre à créer.<sup>9</sup>

This passage demonstrates well Mauriac's concern with his own aesthetic preoccupations, but beyond that the theorizing of a mind (a writer's) becomes part of the reality of the novel, forming an integral part of it as an intellectual essay. Mauriac apparently does not see, however, that his experimentation is really not new in fiction. As we have repeatedly seen, there is a long and important tradition in fiction which attempts to integrate the more intellectualized essay or autobiography into the novel form of fiction. Mauriac is not unaware of the dangers inherent in creative literature which is a result of the intellect and its concern with an abstraction -- Reality. Intellectually he realizes all the short-comings of this fiction. He admits his monotony, his sterility, thus cleverly implicating the reader even more closely in his own intellectual preoccupations. As we have pointed out, however, this implication itself is intellectual, and relies heavily upon the intellectual curiosity of a reader who is also concerned with similar abstractions. Near the end of the work, Carnéjoux (Mauriac) points out exactly those risks he has taken in his intellectual attempt to capture reality:

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<sup>9</sup>Claude Mauriac, Toutes les femmes sont fatales, pp. 218-219.

Je crains néanmoins que ce ne soit un livre sans âme. Tout autant que la paresse c'est peut-être le vrai motif des nouveaux délais que je ne cesse de me donner. Monotonie propre à ce genre d'obsession, pauvreté de ces fausses richesses, mensonges permanents sous des vérités de surface. La rigueur même du constat peut aggraver l'erreur. Plus je serai honnête dans l'enregistrement de ce que j'éprouve. Moins peut-être mes notations rendront compte des vérités de l'amour. Les Vérités de l'amour, autre titre possible. Ou encore, La Solitude du plaisir.<sup>10</sup>

Lack of feeling, monotony, superficial truth -- these are indeed the qualities of an intellectual mind which, by its very nature, must attempt to define reality and capture it in experimental fiction. Experience itself is left with no importance at all. Alice Mayhew, who finds Mauriac's mind and technique fascinating and sometimes brilliant points out that "There is, of course, the inherent danger of monotony. The incessant analysis and mass of detail may have the cumulative effect of a telephone book."<sup>11</sup> The reader is forced to follow the intricate, ceaseless train of thoughts in a ". . . vrai jeu de patience pour lecteurs attentifs."<sup>12</sup> The very nature of Mauriac's protagonist makes the novel both literary and intellectual, demanding to be read with an

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>11</sup>Mayhew, Commonweal, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup>Mauriac, Toutes les femmes sont fatales, p. 219.

interest in the subtleties of experience as seen by a probing intellectual mind.

Certainly the stream of consciousness, used by Mauriac as an intellectualized essay upon experience in Toutes les femmes sont fatales cannot be divorced from the consciousness of Bertrand Carnéjoux. There are, generally speaking, two important aspects of Carnéjoux's stream of consciousness which together produce the "objective" intellectual quality of the novel on the technical level. One aspect is a reduction of reality to immediate, conscious perception of objects, labelled "sensory impression" in Melvin Freidman's excellent Stream of Consciousness: A Study in Literary Method.<sup>13</sup> In such a thought as, "Ma main prend, sous mon regard, une importance inquiétante. Je ne suis plus que man main,"<sup>14</sup> we see Carnéjoux's reality as imaginative perception controlled by the intellect. His reaction to his hand is an immediate concentration upon an object, which, because of the mind's conscious concern with objects, becomes more important than itself through an instantaneous intellectual process. The first sentence of the novel

<sup>13</sup>Melvin Freidman, Stream of Consciousness: A Study in Literary Method (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 5.

<sup>14</sup>Mauriac, Toutes les femmes sont fatales, p. 119.

demonstrates more precisely Mauriac's perception as sensory response: looking at Mathilde, Carnéjoux's mind begins the novel, "Deux trous d'ombre à la place des yeux. . . ." <sup>15</sup> Sharp and concise, this recording of what is seen is objective and camera-like.

The second aspect of Carnéjoux's stream of consciousness presents a problem of definition suggested by Freidman's conclusion that the three devices in stream of consciousness literature are sensory impression, interior monologue and internal analysis. The true interior monologue presents the character's mentality verbally, stylistically disassociated from the author. <sup>16</sup> However, Freidman contends that "Internal analysis tends to summarize the impressions of the character in the words of the author and consequently never strays from the region closest to directed thinking and rational control." <sup>17</sup> The question of definition, whether to call most of Carnéjoux's thoughts interior monologue or internal analysis, is an important one because it demonstrates the confusion of forms of fiction, the autobiography and the novel. If Carnéjoux were clearly a

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>16</sup>Freidman, Stream of Consciousness, pp. 4-5.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 5.



character created by Mauriac whose thoughts were presented independent of the author's style, then Carnéjoux's reflections would represent the interior monologue. Such a distinction can not be made, however, since the reader is presented with only one consciousness whose perceptions and thoughts compose the work. Since the reader can never see that Carnéjoux is not a disguised Mauriac, we must conclude that Carnéjoux's thoughts are more closely representative of internal analysis. This observation reinforces our contention that Mauriac's work is an autobiography rather than a novel. Further, the internal analysis qualities of "directed thinking" and "rational control" apply consistently to Carnéjoux's thoughts, underscoring their introverted intellectual nature. Indeed, most of the protagonist's reflections are not only technically, but literally internal analysis, dominated by the pronoun JE. We shall see that Mauriac does make full use of the true interior monologue in both Le Dîner en ville and La Marquise sortit à cinq heures.

Mauriac's use of internal analysis (as defined by Freidman) is strikingly revealed in the following passage:

Irène est outrageusement décolletée. Chacun montre son sexe où il l'a disoit Mme de Staël. Les femmes sont toutes exhibitionnistes. Leur corps étant un seul et vaste sexe, il leur a suffi d'en faire voir les fragments que les mœurs de l'époque autorisaient à dévoiler: "La vue de votre pied me trouble."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Mauriac, Toutes les femmes sont fatales, p. 95.

The quality of mind revealed by this observation by Carnéjoux is directed and rationally controlled, both characteristic of the protagonist's consciousness. The candor and detached, ironic tone of Carnéjoux's observation reveal his most appealing characteristics. He is a mocker, both of himself and of the mores which motivate or guide human behavior. It is Carnéjoux's incisive observations of human frailty, coupled with his intellectual ability to articulate and synthesize his observations (the allusion to Mme de Staël, for example) which finally involve the reader in this private world of reflections and perpetual, onanistic truths.

Mauriac's imagery, as suggested by the discussion of his stream of consciousness is objective and it, too, underscores the intellectual nature of Carnéjoux's consciousness. The nature of Mauriac's imagery is, of course, closely related to the two aspects of the stream of consciousness mentioned above. The quality of description of what is perceived is consistently photographic. Whether Carnéjoux's mind is recording its perceptions of other people or of objects, the images used to express the perception are not metaphorical but concrete and photographic. Describing his immediate presence on a beach of Rio, Mauriac thinks, "Me voici de nouveau à plat ventre. Le front sur mon avant-bras gauche replié, afin

de ménager une espace pour ma respiration."<sup>19</sup> Further along, Carnéjoux thinks, "Le sable a une odeur. Parfum sale, sec, un peu fade. Et cette brûlure sur mon dos. Ce travail du soleil. Se méfier. Un chapeau de paille abrite heureusement ma nuque."<sup>20</sup> These physical descriptions, found throughout the novel, are instantaneous photographs of external reality by the mind's eye. This concern with objective perception relates Mauriac with the term chosiste, applied to other new novelists who seem to photograph reality. Since Carnéjoux is obsessed with women and physical relationships in Toutes les femmes sont fatales, much of his photographic description is of women. "Jeune Edwige aux noirs cheveux insolitement mêlés de mèches blanches.... Mathilde.... Avec ses seins lourds, sa taille mince, ses jambes longues, sa peau surtout, fruitée, veloutée, dorée...."<sup>21</sup> "L'honnêteté de Marie Prune. Son masque étroit, au réveil, plus lisse encore, avec la mince fente d'un regard de tendresse."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

Much more important than the physical descriptions in Toutes les femmes sont fatales, however, is the mental contemplation which accompanies or is motivated by the descriptions. What Carnéjoux thinks, then, is more important than what he sees, and the descriptions of what he sees seem to be only occasional pictures to illustrate the paths of the thinker's mind. Many of Carnéjoux's reflections combine momentary description with lengthy contemplations. This union is at the base of Mauriac's intellectualization of his experience. In a moment of intoxication Carnéjoux explains how his perception works:

Je me sens léger dans un univers dématérialisé. Chaque objet dès que je le regarde, est le centre du monde. Ses formes jaillissent et demeurent suspendues dans leur état de perfection avant de se défaire pour se recomposer. Ainsi, cette lampe redevenue vase de Chine et qui se modifie de nouveau muee en building absurde dominant ces objets épars, minuscules maisons à ses pieds.<sup>23</sup>

Thus Carnéjoux comments intellectually upon what happens to his senses. This introspective quality of reflection is usually shown in Carnéjoux's reactions to his many mistresses. "Observant Irène et son fils, je ne m'étonne pas d'éprouver un sentiment qui ressemble à de la jalousie. Ce n'est point par hasard si Rousseau donnait aux personnes qu'il aimait des noms empruntés du vocabulaire familial. Maman pour Mme de Warens. Thérèse

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

qu'il appelait sa tante."<sup>24</sup> This passage, introspective yet objective, demonstrates another intellectual characteristic already pointed out -- the allusion to a literary figure. Throughout the novel Carnéjoux contemplates ideas of literary figures and introspectively applies them to himself.

Mauriac's style, reflected by the verbalization of Carnéjoux's mind is entirely consistent with the patterns of perception followed by reflection and intellectual analysis, or of a thought built from a short segment of consciousness to a more coherent, developed verbal pattern. The juxtaposition of long, complex sentences with brusque two and three word fragments strikingly suggests how a verbalization of the mind might be recorded in prose. For example, a one word sentence is followed by several concise simple sentences, and then by more complex, reflective ones:

La guerre. On dit qu'il va y avoir la guerre. Je n'y pensais plus. L'amour efface. La guerre ne me fait pas peur. Elle est combat et je suis victorieux. C'est parce que je suis assuré de quitter bientôt Marie-Prune du fait de ma mobilisation que j'admets la possibilité de ce mariage.<sup>25</sup>

The longer, wandering sentences seem to lead themselves

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

along, as the mind, making associations and building upon its own thoughts, continues to think.

All of the elements discussed above help make up the structure of the novel which centers around four episodes. Each division has a double title: "La Plage de Rio ou les incertitudes du désir;" "Une Soirée dans le monde ou le sérieux de la séduction;" "La Promenade à New York ou les vérités de l'amour;" and "Une Nuit d'amour ou la solitude du plaisir." The first part of each title indicates the setting, the second, its theme. In each of the first three divisions Bertrand Carnéjoux is thirty-three, thirty-eight, and forty-two years old. In the last division he is only twenty-five. There seem to be several reasons for this structural pattern. Most important is the opportunity it gives Mauriac to create a "present" which will be remembered as past in the later sections, thus emphasizing the subjective, interchangeable nature of time. Of course in part three, both sections one and two will merge into a more complex remembered past. By putting the section which is chronologically first last in the novel, Mauriac seems to reinforce his belief that chronological time is of little importance. Further, this last section of the book suggests a continuum. Since Carnéjoux has aged through the first three sections of the novel, the youthful mind in the final sec-

tion points to what lies ahead, while the reader is aware of what has already taken place as well. Both the experimental nature of the novel, and the intellectual nature of Carnéjoux point to other reasons which cause the structure to follow the pattern that it does. Considering his own novel, Carnéjoux says that it may be "lu et relu dans tous les sens."<sup>26</sup> This is possible because Mauriac intends to present a continuous present reality of the mind. Action being subordinated to thought, chronology is of little importance since thought produces its own subjective time patterns.

The structure also supports Mauriac's apparent conclusion that the same questions and obsessions stay with the individual at any age. By placing the young Carnéjoux at the end of the novel, we see youthful anticipation of resolving the important problems of writing a novel, of discovering Truth. In retrospect the reader realizes, however, that the older and wiser Carnéjoux is still searching for answers, and although he has mellowed, he is still preoccupied primarily with physical response. The structure of Toutes les femmes sont fatales points also to Mauriac's quest for the unity which he believes links all relationships and events.

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

Aside from the technique, style and structure which all contribute to an intellectual view of experience in Toutes les femmes sont fatales, we are constantly brought back to the intellectual nature of the protagonist's mind, the novel itself, in which every obsession and theme is exhaustively intellectualized by Carnéjoux. What Carnéjoux thinks about is not necessarily intellectual, but for Carnéjoux, reality consists of introspective thought. In Toutes les femmes sont fatales, Mauriac creates an intellectual confession of Don Juan in both the literal and formal sense.

Carnéjoux's intellectual mind ultimately is narcissistic, onanistic as we have seen, for it lives only for itself. The protagonist's mind clearly explains its belief that all communication does not dissolve the isolation of the individual: "L'échange du plaisir est trompeur, chacun ne participant qu'au sien propre et ne le devant qu'à soi en dépit de tous les mirages."<sup>27</sup> The sterility of Carnéjoux's intellectualization of experience is unavoidable, since intellectualization of experience tends to deny or kill the importance of the experience. Even so, Carnéjoux's intellect is frequently sympathetic for it attempts to overcome its own notion that man is alone and can never really escape his aloneness.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 205.



Carnéjoux thinks:

...je suis pris de vertige en considérant toutes les années que j'ai vécues (ou plus exactement peut-être: qui m'ont vécu), me rongéant peu à peu, sans atteindre mon coeur. Le temps construit certains êtres dans la proportion même où il les détruit. Le métaphysique gagne ce que perd le physique. Pour moi, je me sens pauvre, n'ayant rien appris, rien compris. Me trouvant aussi démuné à quarante ans qu'à vingt et un.<sup>28</sup>

This passage includes significant elements which re-appear throughout the novel, and also helps explain Carnéjoux's mind as a fascinating intellectual host. Time, the inevitable disaster of life, preoccupies Carnéjoux for he cannot control it, and must live in time, becoming old, suffering the physical transformations of time. Even the concrete reality of the number of years lived frightens Carnéjoux: "Dans sept ans j'aurai atteint la quarantaine, La quarantaine! Il y a sept ans j'en avais vingt-six. Comment est-il possible d'avoir déjà vingt-six ans, d'être si vieux déjà, de n'être plus jeune."<sup>29</sup>

Time, obviously, is not the only concern in the passage above. In a sense, Carnéjoux's entire thought process is an attempt to discover if there is significance greater than intellectual thought arising from physical

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 161-162.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

action. In the third section of the novel, La promenade à New York ou les vérités de l'amour, Carnéjoux seems to consider his special relationship with Marie-Prune as a kind of metaphysical one which transcends any sexual union. Remembering Marie-Prune, Carnéjoux thinks: "Il y a des moments où mon passé me fait honte. Où je suis gêné d'avoir tant pris en donnant si peu."<sup>30</sup> But it is the intellectual nature of Carnéjoux's mind again, which prevents him from forming meaningful relationships (except as they are material for his contemplation) -- and Carnéjoux, at every moment, realizes this: "Lucidité qui m'a empêché d'être heureux."<sup>31</sup> Intellectuality could easily be substituted for the word "lucidité." Carnéjoux's intellectual mind has built its own reality and he must live within it. His attitude toward himself, toward women, toward life is in a sense philosophical, yet his tragedy lies in his inability to construct meaning in a world which he finds meaningless. Carnéjoux does not believe in "l'amour unique." All women are fatal because of this. Amelinha, Irène, Mathilde, Christiane, Louise, Béatrice, Chantal, Leslie, Edwige, Francine, Georgette, Pascale, Sophie, Raymonde, Rose, Elise, Laurette,

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

Marie-Prune: so many mistresses! For Carnéjoux one woman represents all women and all women are one woman. By choosing younger mistresses as he ages, Carnéjoux holds to youth and hopes, at least momentarily, to obliterate time: "Le temps qui nous détruit, nous le détruisons dans nos maîtresses choisies de plus en plus jeunes. Durée niée par ces compagnes sans cesse renouvelées."<sup>32</sup>

We have already pointed out that Carnéjoux's intellectual mind is highlighted and relieved by a persistent sense of irony, appropriate to the intellectual mind. Carnéjoux's mind seems to perceive and reflect with a touch of irony. This quality permeates his thoughts and descriptions. Thinking of one of his mistresses, Carnéjoux slyly comments:

Grâce aux lettres que Mlle de Lespinasse écrivit à M. de Guilbert, nous avons le compte rendu d'une double expérience amoureuse vécue simultanément par une même femme. (Je soupçonne Elise d'avoir été la maîtresse de Bernard Freissane en même temps que la mienne.)<sup>33</sup>

It is a sort of detached candor which reveals the irony in Carnéjoux's character. Calmly recalling a strip-tease show which he had seen in New York, Carnéjoux thinks,

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

La vedette, une fille monumentale nommée drôlement mais sans falsification sur l'appellation d'origine, Tempest-Storm, ponctue les instants culminants de son numéro par des sifflements rauques et des gémissements imitant ceux du spasme. Ce spectacle est si monstrueux qu'il tue le désir.<sup>34</sup>

This frank appraisal is especially ironic since Carnéjoux, the civilized, intellectual Frenchman, is most discriminating concerning his own obsession. Another observation should demonstrate the irony which Mauriac has given Carnéjoux. The protagonist thinks, "En un curieux paradoxe, D. H. Lawrence, dont le témoignage érotique est l'un des plus graves qui soient, ne savait selon toute apparence pas faire l'amour."<sup>35</sup> This ironic observation further reveals Carnéjoux's weary intellectual sophistication. For him, love making must be performed with "maîtrise," "désintéressement," "science."

Carnéjoux does possess interesting qualities which, though not particularly intellectual, make him a fascinating individual. He is sophisticated, well informed, and makes interesting allusions to various historical and literary figures. Too, Carnéjoux's reactions to Rio, to a cocktail party and to New York are striking and lucid. The anemia of this appeal is inevitably striking.

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 201-202.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

We need only remember Emma Bovary, Tom Jones, Molly Bloom, or even Benjy Compson.

Critical reaction to Toutes les femmes sont fatales is interesting, but most critics have ignored the two most obvious characteristics of the work -- its intellectualized content and its relation to the essay and confession forms of fiction. Most favorable have been the critics who accept Mauriac's experimental technique. Mayhew finds Mauriac's vision "particular and severely absorbing."<sup>36</sup> Henri Hell says of Carnéjoux's mental excursions, "Quête admirable, exaltante, quête vitale, certes, mais peut-être aussi stérile et vaine, puisqu'en définitive une femme résume toutes les femmes." Newsweek concludes that "Mauriac exhausts the possibilities of his subject long before he exhausts his verbal resources. Freshness of observation soon flags."<sup>38</sup> Roger Sale denounces the work, saying "it is very contemptuous in its lack of story and its eagerness to puff the platitudinous."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Mayhew, "All Things at Once," Commonweal, September 25, 1964, p. 20.

<sup>37</sup>Hell, La Table Ronde, p. 211.

<sup>38</sup>Review of All Women are Fatal, Newsweek, August 10, 1964, p. 70.

<sup>39</sup>Roger Sale, "Provincial Champions and Grand Masters," The Hudson Review, XVII, No. 4 (Winter, 1964-1965), 609.

The success of Toutes les femmes sont fatales must, by the very nature of its form, depend upon the richness and skill with which the protagonist's consciousness is presented. The artistic merit of a confession or essay is found in the quality of the writer's mind and in the skill with which his thoughts and feelings are expressed. The criticism cited above seems to ignore this necessary approach to Mauriac's form of fiction. Once it is established that Mauriac's work is not, properly speaking, a novel, its weaknesses become more evident. It is doubtful that a purely intellectual consciousness can be of sustaining interest in fiction without some relief - through action, or feeling, or unintellectualized impressions, for example. Although Mauriac's use of language skillfully suggests a conscious recording of verbalized perception (impossible to achieve, theoretically) and mental reflection, Carnéjoux's obsessions are tiring because they are relentlessly intellectual. Reality is more subtle, richer than the introspection of a single, intellectual mind. Mauriac seems to realize the impasse of his approach to reality in Toute les femmes sont fatales: his attempt to broaden and enrich his concept of reality is seen in Le Dîner en ville.

## CHAPTER V

### LE DÎNER EN VILLE

Le Dîner en ville (1959), Mauriac's second work, is considerably richer in theme and more skillful in technique than Toutes les femmes sont fatales. The author has increased his world of characters to include eight persons seated around a dinner table. In this novel Mauriac's concept of a simultaneous "three levels of reality" is brilliantly demonstrated. The conversation, the thoughts, the tacit understandings and communication: all three of these aspects of Mauriac's reality are clear-cut, fascinating and forceful in Le Dîner en ville. Perhaps the most significant difference between the first two works is the increased number of characters examined (recorded) in the second work. In the first novel, the reader was a captive audience to one mind, a mind constantly thinking, turned inward so that little conversation and no two-dimensional communication with another character was possible. In Le Dîner en ville, that intellectual protagonist, Bertrand Carnéjoux, is again an important pre-

sence in the novel, but his point of view is not the entire novel. Reality is, in a sense, much more relative in Le Dîner en ville, for the reader sees the dinner party both objectively, as the reader listening to the conversations and exploring the guests' minds, and subjectively, through the mind and eyes of each thinker, temporarily assuming that point of view.

Mauriac's attempt to unify and relate his works through several subtle and sometimes insignificant clues becomes apparent in Le Dîner en ville. This attempt will continue in all of Mauriac's fiction even though Carnéjoux will be called Nicolas in L'Oubli. The obvious connection in the works is the presence of Carnéjoux himself, who will later shed his fictional disguise to become Mauriac. Much as Mauriac attempts to make each novel an intellectual puzzle, composed of flash-backs, memories and images which form patterns that eventually reveal an event or situation, he makes the same attempt in establishing the acrostic-like connections among the works. For example, Carnéjoux briefly mentions the child, Martine, in Toutes les femmes sont fatales, hastening to observe that he will never marry her or anyone. In Le Dîner en ville he is indeed married, and to that same Martine. Another cross-reference in the works is the elusive personage, Zerbanian. An aging homosexual, he is fond of Carnéjoux who admires the old gentleman's candor and intelligence, even his



affectation. This same Zerbanian is unable to attend the dinner in Le Dîner en ville, and he is briefly mentioned in the dinner conversation, appearing also in the thoughts of Carnéjoux. Zerbanian finally appears as La Marquise in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures but his street walking did not really take place, Carnéjoux will say: he made it all up, simply imagined that Zerbanian went out at five. The interrelationship of Mauriac's works is always related to Carnéjoux, who reflects upon his earlier novel in the second one, remembering the song "Toutes les femmes sont fatales," musing upon the first novel's reception.

The rigidly confessional form of Toutes les femmes sont fatales, built upon continuous abstractions about experience and self-conscious essays about sex, life, reality and experimental fiction has changed significantly in Le Dîner en ville. Mauriac seems to have realized that one intellectual mind presents an artistic, even a contextual impasse. As a result Mauriac has both broadened and compressed the material which is to be the reality of Le Dîner en ville. The picture of reality is broadened in three very important areas, all relating to Mauriac's concept of "simultaneous reality." First, several characters are present in Le Dîner en ville, each one contributing a point of view or dimension to the

book's reality. Second, conversation is very important to Mauriac's intention to record what is said, without interpretation or the traditional identification of the speaker. Third, Mauriac's notion that tacit communication produces a most vital element in a momentary or simultaneous reality is frequently demonstrated in Le Dîner en ville through glances, the silent exchange of trust or understanding or of physical attraction, representing Mauriac's concept of the dialogue intérieur. Le Dîner en ville is compressed in the external limitations imposed on the spatial and temporal reality presented. Whereas Mauriac structured Toutes les femmes sont fatales around four parts, each representing a different setting and time, Le Dîner en ville unfolds, as the title suggests, in one room during the course of a meal. Le Dîner en ville is a rigorous attempt to apply a particular concept of reality to fiction. Such an attempt is in itself an intellectual approach to both reality and fiction. While the work is not so persistently intellectual in form as Toutes les femmes sont fatales, it does represent the demonstration of an intellectual concept, applied to fiction. Mauriac is not concerned so much with artistic illusion as with photographed or recorded reality. The result of this theoretical preoccupation again produces a work whose inspiration and effect are intellectual.

Before we discuss the particular intellectual nature of reality in Le Dîner en ville, a presentation of the characters and events in the novel will facilitate our discussion. The novel (thoughts, conversations, and tacit communication) is set around the dinner table in the apartment of Martine and Bertrand Carnéjoux. Six guests are present and the "plan de table," which is inserted after the title page of the printed novel, shows the seating arrangement of the eight characters. This chart is helpful to the reader since the thinker or speaker in the novel is identified indirectly, often from his location in relationship to the other guests at the table. The thoughts, "voisin de gauche," or "juste en face" give clues to the identity of the thinker and of the person reflected upon. However, the thoughts and frequently the conversation reveal who is speaking and thinking as soon as the reader has learned the essential preoccupations and patterns of thought of each mind. Here we should only add that each person at the table has an extremely individualized psychological attitude.

Aside from eating the food and drinking much champagne, the characters do practically nothing in this work. All action is secondary: the characters sit down at the table and are served. Conversation is clever, sometimes lively. The telephone rings but Bertrand chooses not to answer it. He gives a pair of cuff links to Jérôme

Aygulf. His wife, Martine, sends the maid, Armande, to get another pair for him. Marie-Ange rubs her ankle against Roland Soulaire's leg. She also stares at Lucienne Osborn's necklace. Martine Carnéjoux shows snapshots of her children. Eugénie Prieur removes her shoes. She also spills juice on the table cloth. Armande helps Eugénie take off a sweater and later, to put it on again. Jérôme Aygulf picks his nose continually during the dinner. Roland Soulaire rubs his beard stubble attentively. The lights are switched on by mistake, then switched off again. A window is opened because the room is too warm. Cars are heard passing outside, and a popular song from a few years earlier is heard from the apartment above the Carnéjoux's. The song is "Toutes les femmes sont fatales." The guests place their napkins on the table, rise and prepare to go into the drawing room for coffee. To complete a description of the external aspect of the dinner party, it must be mentioned that the conversation and eye-contact of the characters are the most important external action in the novel.

However, the external world of Mauriac's dinner party is much like the visible part of an iceberg. The most important world is hidden beneath the surface, a testament to both the past and the present. Le Dîner en ville is an attempt to reveal through written language

that reality hidden beneath the surface. Mauriac's skillful recording of preoccupations and unspoken reactions is extremely convincing. Thoughts are not an isolated reality in Le Dîner en ville, however, for thoughts, although they exist outside of chronological time, arise from experience and stimuli: at the dinner party, the present is a constant which moves forward in chronological time. At every instant there is a total reality, Mauriac contends, which is composed of every thought, glance, gesture, and word at that instant.

This concept in itself is intellectual, for it is concerned primarily with the question: what is reality insofar as a novelist may capture it? Mauriac is basically concerned again with recording reality. He does not interpret the meaning or importance of the people he presents. That would be impossible since Mauriac's concept of reality can only permit the author to record what he imagines as reality. Whereas Toutes les femmes sont fatales was made up of one intellectualized consciousness contemplating itself, Le Dîner en ville is the product of an intellectual mind (Mauriac's) which functions like a tape-recorder of conversation and thoughts.

Bertrand Carnéjoux, the host of the dinner party, is still the experimental novelist in Le Dîner en ville.

He is somewhat more important than any of the other people at the dinner table, but each person is a vital part of the reality at every given moment. Germaine Brée says of the reality,

The Dinner Party moves on two levels, both fragmentary which the reader must complete, combine and connect: the sophisticated conversational level of well-to-do Parisians; the inner consciousness of each isolated individual with his private obsessions, concerns, memories, and anxieties. As the conventional patterns form and move from character to character they reach into each private world, eliciting moods in which, even in so guarded a group, erupt to the surface, deflecting the conversation, causing sudden mute exchanges, tender, hostile, happy or sad, abrupt flashes of understanding.<sup>1</sup>

Although each person contributes to the conversation, and each individual, private world is an important part of the novel, Bertrand Carnéjoux is the most dominating presence at the table. He is superficially the most central figure because he is the host, but more important because all of the other guests reveal an attitude or an involvement with Carnéjoux in their thoughts.

Martine is his wife; Marie-Ange is his mistress;

Lucienne Osborn was his mistress several years before.

(This affair was presented in Toutes les femmes sont fatales, but Carnéjoux does not recognize Lucienne until late in the course of the dinner.) Gilles Bellecroix is professionally jealous of Carnéjoux; Jérôme is strongly attracted to Carnéjoux, but attempts to ignore his own

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<sup>1</sup>Germaine Brée, Review of The Dinner Party, Saturday Review of Literature, XLIII, No. 19 (1960), 20.

latent homosexuality; Roland, feeling horribly impotent, resents Carnéjoux's poise and virility, and Eugénie Prieur would like Bertrand to desire her. Carnéjoux is not, then, a protagonist, but his presence tends to bring out various preoccupations in the minds of the other characters. We may conclude that Carnéjoux's very presence at the dinner party gives the external party a rather intellectual tone, for he is the host and he is known for his intellect. Even in the thoughts of the other characters, an envy of Carnéjoux's brilliance is evident: Jérôme admiringly thinks, "Il est brillant. Il sait des choses."<sup>2</sup> Eugénie, the aging socialite, states an important truth about Bertrand's intellectual nature when she reads his palm. "Un mot seulement. Disons, voulez-vous, que vous avez un goût de l'indépendance trop grand pour votre coeur. Vous êtes, comment dirais-je, mettons: plus inconscient que méchant. C'est cela, totalement inconscient. Un peu égoïste, aussi. Un peu beaucoup. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Gilles, thinking about Bertrand, reveals both his admiration and resentment of him. "Bertrand est le plus brillant de

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<sup>2</sup>Claude Mauriac, Le Dîner en ville (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1959), p. 240.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

nous tous. Mais un peu long. J'ai assez ri. . . ."4  
 Carnéjoux's conversation, too, reveals him to be intellectual and interesting as he discusses literary matters, judging and comparing authors as a critic.

More important than Carnéjoux's presence as an intellectual, experimental novelist, however, is his private isolated world of thoughts. Carnéjoux is not so overwhelmingly introspective and intellectual in Le Dîner en ville as in the earlier work, for there are seven other people to whom he must react, at least on the surface. But Bertrand's inner world again reveals a mind obsessed with capturing reality as it is in fact being recorded by Mauriac. It is in those passages revealing Carnéjoux's obsessions and preoccupations that Le Dîner en ville most clearly represents Frye's classification of the confessional or essay form in fiction. Again, as in Toutes les femmes sont fatales, Carnéjoux's preoccupation with experimental fiction and the nature of reality lead to intermittent, self-conscious essays. The intensity of this intellectual form is broken in Le Dîner en ville because the conversation and presence of the other characters at the table diverts Carnéjoux's mind and limits his opportunities to continue his intellectual reflections.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 245.



Early in the novel Carnéjoux's thoughts begin to reveal two generally distinguishable intellectual preoccupations. The first is strictly literary, and is composed of Carnéjoux's reflections upon his first novel and upon the novel which he is considering writing. Denise Bourdet, interviewing Mauriac, explains, "Je reconnais le proustien qu'est Claude Mauriac quand il m'explique, 'Mes trois livres sont imbriqués l'un dans l'autre. Par exemple dans Le Dîner en ville il y a une femme que Bertrand Carnéjoux trouve désirable, sans se souvenir que dans Toutes les femmes sont fatales il a eu une petite affaire avec elle."<sup>5</sup> The second intellectual concern is even more abstract, since it is a preoccupation with reality itself, with the nature of time and human relationships.

Carnéjoux's reflections upon the experimental novel in Le Dîner en ville explain in interesting detail what Mauriac hopes to achieve in both Toutes les femmes sont fatales and in the novel which we are reading as the thoughts unfold, forming essays upon this fiction. As the dinner begins, Carnéjoux thinks, "J'ai toujours été sensible aux miroirs et à leurs jeux. C'est un des

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<sup>5</sup>Denise Bourdet, "Claude Mauriac," La Revue de Paris (janvier, 1962), p. 147.

thèmes de mon livre, Le Plaisir grave."<sup>6</sup> (This title is used to refer to Toute les femmes sont fatales throughout the novel.) This thought strongly suggests Carnéjoux's concern with the writer's attempt to record visual reality which a mirror captures at every instant. A few moments later in the dinner Bertrand thinks,

Curieuses virtuosités d'Eugénie Prieur et de Roland Soulaire. Ivres de leur culture, ils font honte à notre ignorance. Science vaine. Ce n'est pas ce qu'ils disent qui m'intéresse mais la façon dont ils le disent. A leur dialogue actuel s'en superposent d'oubliés, aussi nuls. Tant d'autres Parisiens qui ne sont pas là ce soir auraient pu se refléter dans ces glaces ombreuses et profondes. Ainsi se substitue au banal roman cosmopolite et mondain entrevu un nouvel essai romanesque du genre de celui que j'ai déjà publié et où, à la faveur d'un dîner comme celui-ci, l'espace et le temps s'anéantiraient.<sup>7</sup>

Here we see the actual birth of the novel we are reading in the mind of Carnéjoux. It is the presentation of reality, any instantaneous reality which seems important. Theoretically it would make no difference who the characters were, for Carnéjoux's (Mauriac's) novel will record, not evaluate. At one point Carnéjoux explains his novel in conversation, comparing it with the cinema, ". . . comme les cinéastes leurs films: Par plans séparés. Commenant aussi bien par la fin, ou par le milieu; puis

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<sup>6</sup>Mauriac, Le Dîner en ville, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 39-40.

vérifiant le montage, image à image, pour créer le rythme."<sup>8</sup> In a more detailed thought concerning his next book (the one which we are reading) Carnéjoux's mind, verbalized, becomes an essay upon the novel:

Dans mon prochain roman, il faudra remettre une nouvelle fois le héros en présence du monde objectif et montrer l'univers se désarticulant sous ses yeux (et sous les nôtres) pour s'organiser autrement mais de façon aussi juste. ... Le vrai roman comme le vrai cinéma de l'avenir, par l'entremise mais au delà des intrigues qui leur serviront de support, nous découvriront la vraie vie, celle qu'on ne voit pas à l'oeil nu et que nous révèle, par exemple, le grossissement de l'alcool....<sup>9</sup>

This concern with the novelist's attempt to conceive of, then record reality is in itself intellectual, but Mauriac adds a touch of humor to the obsession by having Carnéjoux announce Le Déjeuner au bistrôt as the title of his next novel, ironically giving force to the more elegant Le Dîner en ville. Explaining himself further, Carnéjoux thinks, "Le sujet! Comme si cela avait la moindre importance. Tous les sujets se valent. Tout est dans tout. Quant à parler de mes livres autrement que techniquement, avec des spécialistes, je ne l'ai jamais pu. On écrit ce que l'on ne peut pas dire."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 69-70.

This statement is extremely important in underscoring the intellectual nature of Mauriac's concept of the novel. He openly rejects the value of choosing a particular subject: importance is directed away from what has been considered important in the novel. Mauriac has no intention of choosing a subject which will permit him to interpret life or to comment upon reality as a moralist. His intellectualization of what the novel should do automatically points to technique as the important concern. Mauriac is, in a sense, an experimental realist. Recorded reality unmarked by evaluation and analysis is his intention. Carnéjoux's attitude toward his first book further reveals his concept of the novel. Meditating upon its reception he thinks,

On n'en a décelé que le pittoresque et la sensualité, alors qu'il s'agissait pour moi de renouveler, selon mes moyens, la forme romanesque en atteignant à la plus grande exactitude et précision possible dans la double vision extérieure et intérieure. Ce que nous pensons n'est ni plus ni moins vrai que ce que nous voyons. Nos idées ont autant de valeur que nos sensations. Les unes et les autres naissent mécaniquement: réactions à une réalité qu'elles interprètent et dont nous ne pouvons avoir d'autre connaissance....<sup>11</sup>

Bertrand Carnéjoux, speaking for Mauriac, thus concludes intellectually, much as Robbe-Grillet has done, that the world is neither significant nor absurd; it simply is.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 104-105.

<sup>12</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Une Voie pour le roman futur," La Nouvelle nouvelle revue française, VIII (juillet, 1956), 80.

To explain the world of thoughts in his novel, Carnéjoux seems to begin with the assumption that everyone harbors an individual set of obsessions and insecurities. "Nous sommes tous des obsédés, voilà le vrai,"<sup>13</sup> and each person exists in an isolated world with the self as God. Observation is therefore the key to writing a "nouveau roman," for the outer world can be seen minutely, and it automatically reflects an inner reality which the novelist must attempt to record scientifically. In this kind of fiction "L'imagination y a moins de part que l'observation. Toute invention y est suspecte. Notre ambition est plus proche de celles des peintres que de celle des romanciers."<sup>14</sup> This last statement is indeed open to vigorous criticism. Great painters have consistently been considered great because of their interpretation, their attitude as seen in their paintings as opposed to photography which reproduces the visual exactly. Carnéjoux and Mauriac, although greatly concerned with photography as well as with painting avoid an explanation of the major distinctions that could be drawn between photography and painting.

Carnéjoux is not, however, unaware of certain possible dangers caused by his technique: "Pensées en

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<sup>13</sup>Mauriac, Le Dîner en ville, p. 109.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

marge des conversations, oui, ce serait amusant d'essayer dans mon prochain livre. Mais il y aurait le danger, en partie inévitable, de rappeler les apartés de théâtre."<sup>15</sup> Finally as the dinner draws to a close, Carnéjoux indirectly admits the intellectual, highly personal nature of his work.

Ces indications qui sont le luxe de l'auteur. Aucun lecteur, jamais, ne sera assez attentif pour les remarquer. Moins encore pour déceler leur subtil agencement.... Ces éléments cachés de l'oeuvre en font, sans que personne ne le sache, la solidité, la nécessité, la beauté.<sup>16</sup>

Hence the reader is alerted to both the difficulties and the intentions of the novel that he is reading. But Carnéjoux does not give the novel an intellectualized quality simply because he is a novelist. On the most obvious level his conversation repeatedly points to his searching, literary-oriented mind. He speaks forcefully of Kafka; he quotes Pasternak; and he frequently considers the work of Proust, finding sources for Proust's reality and for the technique which permitted him to present that reality in a novel. It is important to point out that Carnéjoux's conversation and thoughts about literature are not separate and independent, for often the spoken word motivates lengthy mental considerations which may result

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

in more spoken dialogue. This two-level reality is continuous and each level perpetuates the other. Dina Dreyfus points out that ". . . notre vie intérieure si elle existe, n'est peut-être rien de plus que cette permanente verbalisation épique bien que spontanée de notre existence en train de se vivre."<sup>17</sup>

Aside from his constant concern with the experimental novel, Bertrand Carnéjoux projects an intellectual point of view in regard to several themes, all of them similar to his preoccupations in Toutes les femmes sont fatales. Carnéjoux seems to reject a concern with morality in the sense that the "nature of things" leads him away from a set of moral or philosophical values. His conscious intellectual quest revolves around the physical and mental; and the metaphysical, for Carnéjoux appears to be individual intuition arising from mental reflection upon physical experience. Carnéjoux does evaluate what he sees, but it is a detached, introspective, usually egocentric evaluation. "La frivolité de ces gens du monde m'étonnera toujours. Martine a eu raison d'insister pour que nous dînions au champagne. Ce sera plus gai. . ."<sup>18</sup> Contem-

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<sup>17</sup> Dina Dreyfus, "Cinéma et roman," Revue d'esthétique, XV, No. 1 (1962), 79.

<sup>18</sup> Mauriac, Le Dîner en ville, p. 12.

plating the relationship between an expectation and its fulfillment, Carnéjoux decides mentally, "La réalité ne tint pas les promesses du rêve. Mais sans le rêve il n'y aurait pas eu cette réalité."<sup>19</sup> This platitudinous conclusion points to the aridity of Carnéjoux's concept of life. There can be little fulfillment, he seems to suggest, since neither expectation nor happening is satisfactory in itself and since the relative nature of thought and action must both lead to a sense of unfulfillment. Carnéjoux's need to have sexual experience and the ultimate failure of his many experiences is another important concern in his thoughts: since he is having an affair with Marie-Ange, it is apparent that Martine Carnéjoux does not fulfill Bertrand's needs, and Bertrand realizes this: "Aujourd'hui, Marie-Ange elle-même ne me suffit plus. Mais quelle femme m'a jamais suffi? Pas même Marie-Prune."<sup>20</sup> This last admission is especially significant because Bertrand seems to convince himself at times that Marie-Prune was his only "true love." The fact that no single woman can satisfy Bertrand is not surprising, for intellectually Carnéjoux rejects "l'amour unique" and could not therefore be expected to believe in

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 27.



a single love. Nevertheless he does seem to seek a relationship which will be lasting and significant. Here again, his intellect condemns him to solitude. In this connection Richard Gilman points out that the entire novel is to a degree the "portrait of what Bergson called France's 'aphrodisiac civilization,' in which sex is made the subject of ceaseless pursuit, as well as being infused with intellectual values."<sup>21</sup> In another sequence of thoughts Bertrand Carnéjoux intellectually condemns the bourgeois society surrounding him but is forced to admit that though the individual is alone and isolated, he cannot escape his external social world. "Je n'échappe pas à cette dérision, moi qui essaye par mes sarcasmes intérieurs de m'exclure d'un jeu auquel il est hélas trop certain que je participe."<sup>22</sup> The use of the word "jeu" is further significant, for Carnéjoux frequently considers social conversation to be a sparring match, from which individual reality is excluded insofar as the speaker may keep his true concerns to himself. The vanity and futility of Carnéjoux's sexual experiences revolve around his painful obsession with the passage of time.

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<sup>21</sup>Richard Gilman, "Hermetic Fiction," Commonweal, May 20, 1960, p. 212.

<sup>22</sup>Mauriac, Le Dîner en ville, p. 45.

When he hears the old song "Toutes les femmes sont fatales" being played in the apartment above, Carnéjoux remembers the first time he heard the song and he reflects on the nature of time, ". . . le passé redevient simultanément présent sur plusieurs plans, trois moi coexistant soudain: celui de mon enfance; celui de certaines amours inoubliées. . . ,"<sup>23</sup> and the memory of the women who seem to link the inevitable passage of time with the present, forces Carnéjoux to admit that "Parfois encore, trop souvent, la fièvre de l'impossible me reprenant, j'essaye follement sur cette fille ou sur une autre, non pas indifférente mais inaccessible, ma misérable et ma vaine puissance."<sup>24</sup> As Carnéjoux reflects upon the futility of his experiences, time becomes even more significant, for this obsession leads us closer to the basis for Carnéjoux's anguish and for his intellectual quest for the nature of reality. Ultimately the existence of death imposes itself on all of Carnéjoux's conclusions. Sexual experience is an attempt to achieve immortality for Carnéjoux. For him, since reality is limited to instantaneous existence, the presence of death will destroy reality for him. It is Carnéjoux's belief

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

that death makes life futile that depersonalizes his mistresses and negates his own importance:

Quel intérêt avons-nous? A qui, à quoi cela sert-il que nous soyons nous-mêmes ou un autre, vivant ou mort? Et nous souhaiterions l'immortalité. Si je ne vois pas pour quelle raison une Lucienne Osborn mériterait l'éternité, il me faut honnêtement en conclure que ma propre survie ne s'impose pas davantage.<sup>25</sup>

That which moves Carnéjoux most deeply, as a result of his obsession with time, is the misery and loneliness which age brings. Carnéjoux rarely reveals emotion either in conversation or in thought, but as he looks at Eugénie Prieur he feels fear, almost panic as he realizes that he, too, must grow old.

Son visage est celui-là même du malheur et de la solitude. Et dans la glace du surtout, soudain, la révélation de cette face horrible d'un inconnu qu'il me faut bien identifier comme étant moi-même. Un inconnu dont sont exposés à tous les regards et aux miens les faiblesses, les fautes, les bassesses que ce reflet découvert par surprise m'a rappelées sans échappatoires possibles puisque, dans l'évidence de la surprise, je m'étais condamné avant de m'être reconnu.<sup>26</sup>

But even the fear and pain described in this thought is checked by the thinker's self-conscious recognition of his own reaction. His intellectuality, again, prevents his happiness, but it also helps dissolve the panic of his very human fear.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 216.

There is one more significant aspect of Carnéjoux's mind which reveals his intellectualization of reality. When Carnéjoux perceives the other people at the table, the recorded mental reaction is sharp and incisive, underscoring the quality of observation which he discusses. The description itself reveals an intellectual, objective, reaction to the people or objects perceived. He thinks:

Toutes ces mains tendues au-dessus de la table vers cette vieille personne trop fardée qu'on imagine si bien, avec ses cheveux teints, dans une baraque de foire. La jolie main aux ongles admirables de Marie-Ange, cette main qui caresse si bien. Les ongles trop rouges de Lucienne Osborn.<sup>27</sup>

There is a paradox in this description, for Carnéjoux's thoughts combine an objective presentation of what he sees with subjective overtones which suggest how he feels about what he describes. Nevertheless the mind perceiving is obviously detached, even though subjective, pointing again to the intellectual nature of Carnéjoux's mind. Another striking example of Carnéjoux's paradoxical objective and subjective perception of objects begins with a contemplation of his cuff-links:

Pierres dures serties d'or, mes boutons de manchettes. Un peu ternes sur ma chemise si blanche, ces petits cônes opaques me fascinent. Tout naturellement Martine, lorsque l'on fera ma toilette mortuaire, me mettra (me fera mettre) ces boutons de manchettes pour la raison que les préférant à tous autres je ne les aurais jamais quittés. Idée insupportable.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

Comment vivre avec ces petits objets qui seront  
enfermés dans le même cercueil....<sup>28</sup>

A seemingly objective perception quickly leads the thinker's mind to his obsession, and subjective thoughts result from a perceived object. Carnéjoux's point of view, however, remains predominantly intellectual.

As suggested above, what each of the eight people thinks reveals not only his private individual obsessions, but also reveals a marked attitude toward the other seven present. Thus for each person at the table the reader is presented with eight points of view; the thinker's attitude toward himself and his attitude toward all the others present. "C'était si l'on peut le dire, la description de cet être collectif et fugitif qu'est un dîner mondain."<sup>29</sup> The lengthy discussions of Bertrand Carnéjoux demonstrate what he thinks about, and what he thinks about himself especially. To complete the picture of Carnéjoux as revealed in Le Dîner en ville, it will be necessary to follow the thoughts of each of the seven other persons around the table and show how each one feels about Carnéjoux. Although we learn relatively

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>29</sup>Robert Kanthers, "Fruits d'or," La Revue de Paris (juillet, 1963), p. 116.

little more about Carnéjoux from the other seven, certain attitudes toward him reinforce skillfully what his own thoughts reveal about himself.

Marie-Ange, Bertrand's present mistress, reveals that she knows Carnéjoux is losing interest in her: "Au fond Bertrand n'a pour moi aucune considération. Je cesse de l'intéresser dès que je ne suis plus au lit avec lui."<sup>30</sup> This thought will demonstrate the complexity yet clarity of Mauriac's technique. Marie-Ange's thought reveals that she is having an affair with Carnéjoux and also that she is afraid he may leave her. The thought takes on double significance when Carnéjoux thinks of his affair with Marie-Ange, realizing that he is tired of her. Martine, Carnéjoux's wife reveals more about Bertrand than any of the others present. First, she remembers their courtship, which reveals that Irène is her mother. Irène, it will be remembered, was the hostess for the cocktail party described in the second section of Toutes les femmes sont fatales, and even more, Martine appeared in Bertrand's thoughts in Toutes les femmes sont fatales, but she was only a child at the time. Second, Martine reveals her reaction to Carnéjoux's first novel. This reflection in particular concerns Carnéjoux's intellectualization of physical love. His wife thinks, "Le

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<sup>30</sup>Mauriac, Le Dîner en ville, p. 22.

livre de Bertrand m'avait glacée dont il corrigeait alors les épreuves: l'amour physique affirmait-il dans Le Plaisir grave nous permet de communier avec la femme de toujours et de jamais. Et moi, Martine que devenais-je, moi?"<sup>31</sup> Martine's unhappiness and feeling of estrangement from Bertrand throughout her thoughts in the novel, offer skillful, fascinating clues which support Carnéjoux's own thoughts about himself while they reveal the thinker, Martine, at the same time. In fact, the strong attraction she feels for Gilles, the reader realizes, is a result of her frustration with Bertrand. At the end of the dinner, Martine's utter loneliness and frustration are revealed, while Bertrand's detachment and lack of warmth are emphasized. Martine wonders, "Quand Bertrand s'occupe-t-il de moi? Pas même lorsqu'il me fait l'amour, me traitant comme un corps sans visage et sans nom. Hier il m'a caressée machinalement avant de s'endormir."<sup>32</sup>

Lucienne Osborn's thoughts about Bertrand Carnéjoux reinforce the "proustian" involvement between Toutes les femmes sont fatales and Le Dîner en ville. At the beginning of the dinner she thinks, "Décidément il m'a

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

oubliée inutile de me faire reconnaître j'ai un peu honte de la provinciale que j'étais alors. . . ."33

Much later in the evening Carnéjoux suddenly remembers who Lucienne is, and both minds then reflect back upon the affair they once experienced, each one's thoughts revealing qualities of the self and of the other person.

Jérôme reveals subtly his homosexuality as he watches Carnéjoux. His hidden desires and ambitions are shown as he thinks,

Peut-être suis-je aussi sensible à la beauté des hommes? Oui c'est cela, je n'espère, je n'attends rien de lui, sinon qu'il m'accepte, qu'il me prenne, qu'il m'anéantisse, assumant mes responsabilités et jusqu'à ma personne. Parce qu'il est séduisant. Parce qu'il est riche. Parce qu'il a écrit un livre....34

Gilles Bellecroix strikingly reveals himself when he thinks about Carnéjoux, for he is concerned with writing a novel also. Failure as a novelist forced him into screen writing and he enviously and resentfully thinks of Carnéjoux, "Il est beaucoup moins connu que moi. Mais admiré des seuls critiques qui comptent, bénéficiant de prestige auprès des jeunes. Et cela à cause d'un seul ouvrage, Le Plaisir grave. Livre indigeste et surfait. . . ."35

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 102-103.



Roland Soulaire's' insecurities are sharply brought out by his reaction to Carnéjoux's lengthy discussion of the novel and particularly of Proust. Attempting to break into the conversation, Roland fails and sulks, "Le revoilà parti. Je n'y arriverai pas. Avec sa voix et qu'il sait belle, Bertrand Carnéjoux l'emportera toujours. . . ." <sup>36</sup> Roland's own high voice and his impotence make Carnéjoux seem all the more enviable, but reprehensible at the same time. Eugénie Prieur's hunger to be desirable is reflected as she thinks sadly, anxiously, "Cette indifférence polie de Bertrand. A aucun moment, lui qui est si pernicieusement homme, ne m'a ce soir regardée comme une femme, moi qui suis si douloureusement femme. . . ." <sup>37</sup> Thus we see that Carnéjoux, whose words and thoughts occupy very little more space in the novel than those of the other characters, is a focal point. His very brilliance is admired by most of the other guests, but his cold nature and intellectuality are revealed through others' thoughts as well as his own.

Although Carnéjoux is the most important spokesman for an intellectualized reality in the novel, Gilles Bellecroix is also an artist and is concerned with tech-

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

niques of movie making which would present an instantaneous reality. Occasionally his preoccupations are revealed as similar to those of Carnéjoux, and in this respect, his thoughts, like those of Carnéjoux, form short introspective essays upon literary and art theory. As the guests are being seated at the table Gilles thinks, "un dîner en ville pareil à tous les dîners en ville. A moins d'événements imprévisibles, il ne se distinguera pas dans notre souvenir de ceux, si nombreux, auxquels nous avons assisté."<sup>38</sup> This thought reveals a certain detachment in Gilles, which to an extent identifies him with Carnéjoux. Throughout the evening Gilles mentally begins a novel. Looking at Martine Carnéjoux who has just had her nose shortened, he thinks:

Son grand nez n'empêchait point Martine d'être belle. Ce pourrait être la première phrase d'un roman. Il faudrait que j'écrive un autre livre, que j'essaye une fois encore après ce long silence...SON GRAND NEZ...Brouillons les pistes, appelons-la Mélanie. SON GRAND NEZ EMPECHAIT MELANIE D'ETRE BELLE....<sup>39</sup>

Thereafter, Gilles' thoughts are occasionally the lines with which he intends to begin his novel. More frequently, however, he transcribes his thoughts of the other people into cinematic images. Thinking of the conversation at the dinner table, Gilles reflects, "Revoici la conversation

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

que l'on pourrait appeler tubulaire, à l'exemple d'un télescope dont les éléments sortiraient l'un de l'autre, mais trop vite pour avoir le temps de s'étirer complètement."<sup>40</sup> This reflection upon what is happening as it happens, is in a sense intellectual, although Gilles is much less objective in his thoughts than is Carnéjoux. At times, however, Bellecroix achieves rather poetic effects when his mind considers a theme in cinematic images. Gilles, too, is haunted by death, and at one point he subjectively envisions this scene:

Ces quelques vivants et ces morts innombrables sont emportés avec moi, là, exactement à un centimètre près. Là et pas ailleurs. Point sur ce talus ni dans ce champ. Foule pressée, tassée, des vivants et des morts le long de ce chemin étroit. Chemin de fer. A droite, à gauche, malgré les paysans qui de loin travaillent, ces étendues désertes. Sentiment d'angoisse. Envie de quitter le convoi en marche. En marche vers la mort.<sup>41</sup>

More often Gilles simply figures out in his thoughts how he would film a scene. This artistic distance from the dinner party around him is not so much a reflection upon reality as it is with Carnéjoux, but seems to fulfill Gilles' need to create, and further suggests his frustration as a writer. At one point he constructs a story in his thoughts which brings out his intellectual contempla-

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

tion of creativity but at the same time reveals his insecurity as a creative artist:

Imaginons pourtant que Bertrand soit jaloux de moi. Je pourrais raconter dans un film les lents et sûrs ravages d'un incident de cette sorte, dans l'esprit d'un mari soupçonneux. Il a d'abord encouragé cette danse de sa femme et de son ami, tout juste un peu surpris qu'elle laisse ainsi la joue de cet homme se poser sur la sienne.<sup>42</sup>

This passage reveals Gilles' suppressed need to have a mistress, which he is in reality afraid to have. His reflections on movie scenes permit his imagination to provide an escape from his own sterile fidelity.

Carnéjoux and Bellecroix are the only two people at the table who could be called intellectual in a strict sense, but it is apparent that Mauriac's purpose and technique in creating his eight-dimensional reality point to an intellectual concern in art. Thus far we have isolated the intellectual character of two people at the dinner party. The intellectual nature of Mauriac's reality is not limited, however, to the mentality of these two characters. The conversation around the table underscores Mauriac's skillful, detached observation which results from his attempt to record what is said, not to imagine or fabricate dialogue. The topics of conversation are not always intellectual in themselves, but

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

the precision with which the spoken word is recorded reveals Mauriac's ability to put his intellectual theory of the novel into practice. The conversation is never an end in itself; sometimes the spoken word reveals much of the person speaking. But more often it hides the inner self, and is a superficial externalization of a very private, complex consciousness. On one level the conversation functions much as a mirror, for each character wishes to gain the approval of the others, or to impress them. Eugénie Prieur and Roland Soulaire attempt to achieve importance through lengthy, tiring, pedantic discussions. These two, essentially impotent, spar verbally and turn their conversation into a contest of facts and meaningless knowledge. They discuss Joinville, Balzac, the entire French history of the nineteenth century, the difficulty of getting good servants, various scandals in Parisian society, palm reading, and many other "social" topics. In each case, however, these characters seem to be speaking to themselves; their erudite knowledge is used as a protection of their ego and the attempt at communication is futile. Gilles and Bertrand discuss photography, literary influences, and the relationship between photography and the new experimental fiction. Since both of these characters are vitally interested in these topics, their communication is somewhat more successful, although their inner thoughts reveal

that what each has just said affected the other very slightly. Lucienne Osborn's ignorance is revealed when she declares that, "Lorsque je suis allée à Athènes en 1937. . . il n'y avait aucune trace de peinture . . . ."43 (on the columns of the Parthenon). Chastised by the startled glances of the others, Lucienne attempts to gain favor later in the dinner by exhibiting her knowledge of the various sounds which animals make; this leads to argument and boredom, but Lucienne feels a bit restored. Martine talks about her children; Eugénie becomes just intoxicated enough to reveal significant facts about her past (she was Gilles' mistress years ago); Marie-Ange discusses clothes and fashions, and Jérôme reveals an interest in literature and hints as well at a strong communistic leaning. Other subjects of conversation are God, death, plays, common friends, Tibet, Proust, Nietzsche, Pasternak, and Barrès. During a lull in the conversation Roland introduces an insipid word game; this game, he explains,

C'est pourtant simple! Vauban est né en 1638....  
Compte tenu des longévités exceptionnelles, de  
ceux qui sont au contraire morts plus jeunes  
qu'il est normal, du fait aussi que l'on vit plus  
longtemps de nos jours, il suffit de se choisir  
dans la suite des siècles le plus grand nombre  
possible de ces contemporains d'une nouvelle sorte

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

et de faire une moyenne avec la date de leurs  
morts.<sup>44</sup>

This game, pedantic and ridiculous in itself, is interesting to the reader, for it stimulates the minds at the table to contemplations of death and of age, and it further reveals the age of each person at the table, either from conversation or thought. Thus a careful reading and a bit of numerical figuring produces the following birth dates: Jérôme, 1939; Marie-Ange, 1936; Martine, 1934; Lucienne, 1918; Roland, 1916; Bertrand, 1914; Gilles, 1910 or 1911; and Eugénie, 1893. These dates are helpful to the reader, for they help identify various thought sequences, and further they establish a chronological relationship between all of the individuals present. It is also important that the thoughts of each person are, in part, a product of that person's age. Hence we see Mauriac's skill: the conversation, which appears to be recorded, does not seem to reveal the characters to each other, but it reveals an important aspect of each character to the reader, for the reader is able to see the relationship between the spoken word and the hidden meaning. This is one example of what

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 94-95.

Carnéjoux calls ". . . Ces éléments cachés," which make "la solidité, la nécessité, la beauté," of the work. <sup>45</sup>

This discussion of the function and importance of conversation in Le Dîner en ville reveals a striking tendency toward the fictional form which Northrop Frye has labeled the satire or anatomy. This form, Frye points out, is extroverted and intellectual, and his description of the characters usually found in such fiction apply with remarkable accuracy to the people at Mauriac's dinner party. It will be remembered that this form of fiction, according to Frye,

...deals less with people than with mental attitudes. ...Pedants, bigots, cranks, parvenus, virtuosi, enthusiasts, rapacious and incompetent professional men are handled in terms of their occupational approach to life as distinct from their social behavior. The Menippean satire thus resembles the confession in its ability to handle abstract ideas and theories, and differs from the novel in its characterization which is stylized rather than naturalistic, and presents people as mouthpieces of the ideas they represent.<sup>46</sup>

Equally applicable to the conversation in Le Dîner en ville is Frye's observation that there is a tendency toward erudition in the anatomy form of fiction, toward an encyclopaedic outpouring of facts and knowledge as in

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>46</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 310.



Macrobius' Saturnalia.<sup>47</sup> In this archetypal anatomy people ". . . sit at a banquet and pour out a vast mass of erudition on every subject that might come up in conversation."<sup>48</sup> These observations characterize perfectly the quality of conversation in Le Dîner en ville as well as the quality of Mauriac's characters. Rather than complex, sympathetic characters, Mauriac has stylized his dinner hosts and guests in direct relation to a set of obsessions and preoccupations which recall, in the case of each character, a familiar, discernable type. Although only Carnéjoux and Bellecroix can be said to be mouthpieces of ideas, all of the characters reflect their type in the sophisticated conversation. The general tendency of this conversation toward erudition and pedantic, intellectual parlor games represents both the extroverted and intellectual nature of the anatomy. We have seen at length Mauriac's dependence upon the stream of consciousness, resulting in the intellectual confession or essay. In Le Dîner en ville, the anatomy form of fiction, intellectual and distinct from the novel is constantly apparent. There is a careful artistic balance of stream of consciousness essay and extroverted

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

anatomy in this work, however, which accounts for the harmony and effect of the whole.

It is Mauriac's technique for revealing his characters which stimulates the reader's interest as much as the people themselves. The important hidden elements in Mauriac's work are closely related to the revelation of each person's inner self. Following his theory once again, Mauriac reveals each mind, which is a maze of obsessions, not only by the recorded thoughts, but by subtle suggestions and hints which eventually lead the reader to certain conclusions about each character, even before the thinker has fully realized what he keeps pushing to the back of his mind. Mauriac's characters have been described as "Eight totally different people, eight garden-variety monsters whose thoughts reveal them to be foolish, cowardly, lying, possessive, jealous, fearful, egotistical, petty, stupid, pompous, nasty, lascivious and envious."<sup>49</sup> Germaine Brée says, "Claude Mauriac's characters in themselves are rather dull, stereotyped. . . and his psychology elementary."<sup>50</sup> Henri Peyre emphasizes ". . . the utter aloneness of these sociable and social

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<sup>49</sup>Whitney Balliet, Review of The Dinner Party, The New Yorker, May 14, 1960, p. 194.

<sup>50</sup>Brée, Review of The Dinner Party, Saturday Review of Literature, XLIII, No. 19 (1960), 20.

characters, eating, drinking, and chattering in common, but each of them imprisoned in his own mediocre self like a monkey in a cage."<sup>51</sup> It is true that Mauriac's characters do not move the reader, nor do they suggest or point to something larger or more important than themselves. But if we accept Mauriac's theory on his terms, life is the self, and reality is the total presence of one or several persons at a given place at a given moment. Indeed the characters are stereotypes, but Mauriac seems to believe that individual reality is not unique, for he focuses on common obsessions, apparently believing that individuals can be portrayed effectively from "the inner vision which draws both upon life and desire (or fear)."<sup>52</sup> This statement is puzzling and unclear, but Mauriac's psychological concern obviously is with recording plausible thoughts and thought patterns. The characters as they are presented are believable because each mind is consistent. Each individual's thoughts appear stripped of the outward need to be amicable and unselfish. Mauriac projects a cold, intellectual theory of selfishness and aloneness into his creation of character, for he

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<sup>51</sup>Henri Peyre, Review of The Dinner Party, New York Times Book Review, May 6, 1964, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup>Claude Mauriac, "The New Novel in France," New York Times Book Review, June 19, 1960, p. 4.

seems to believe that, within his mind, man is selfish and alone.

To demonstrate Mauriac's technique of recording psychological reality, a brief discussion of the patterns of thought in a few of the dinner guests will show what the author believes to be the true self of the characters in question, and will reveal his technical skill in exposing more of the character than the character realizes about himself. As the New Yorker points out, ". . . it doesn't take long to discover that this jumble of experimental knobs and dials works easily and beautifully. . . . Skillful and unobtrusive references and carefully differentiated manners of speech begin to accumulate."<sup>53</sup> Bouvier says, ". . . Claude Mauriac s'attache à suivre, à travers le décousu des paroles et des gestes où l'inconscient, se réfère au précédent proustien et aux théories psychanalytiques."<sup>54</sup> And Richard Gilman concludes that "The unspoken obsessions are what Mauriac handles so agilely, scarcely ever striking a false note or holding on too long."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Balliet, The New Yorker, 194.

<sup>54</sup>Emile Bouvier, Les Lettres françaises au XXe siècle (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962), p. 165.

<sup>55</sup>Gilman, Commonweal, 212.

In this connection, Mauriac makes skillful use of the true interior monologue. The stream of consciousness in Toutes les femmes sont fatales never appeared to be separated from the author himself, disguised as Carnéjoux. In Le Dîner en ville, however, Mauriac's skill at differentiating his characters thoughts and constructing a consistent pattern for each person demonstrates his ability to use the interior monologue. As Friedman says, "The character whose consciousness is uncovered via the interior monologue is always made to express himself consistently in words and syntactical units proper to his mentality."<sup>56</sup> Mauriac does indeed delineate his characters' consciousnesses skillfully, but he has simplified the difficulties. By limiting each person to a type (the ambitious actress, the aging socialite, the bitter young social rebel) and then providing each mentality with a set of obsessions or preoccupations, the author carefully controls his "psychological realities." Mauriac's control is, nonetheless, fascinating and intellectually stimulating. Even as the reader follows the thoughts of each character, he is aware of the author's intellectual presence, presenting subtle patterns of thought and hinting at Freudian repressions which the reader sees long before the character is aware of them.

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<sup>56</sup>Melvin Friedman, Stream of Consciousness (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), pp. 4-5.

Lucienne Osborn demonstrates Mauriac's technical skill in psychological presentation effectively. She is a shallow, selfish, rather unintelligent woman whose thoughts are continuously limited and egocentric. Hers are the only thoughts which Mauriac does not punctuate, adding a compulsive, jumbled, unconnected effect to her mental process. Her mind never once escapes her narrow, personal concerns. She reads the horoscope faithfully and wants her husband (born in 1880) to die. She is also very bored: "Qu'ils m'ennuient mais si John pouvait mourir dans un accident de voiture vite comme il conduit c'est ça qui serait intéressant dommage que les horoscopes donnent pas ce genre de détails-là. . . ." <sup>57</sup>

Lucienne is neurotically concerned with her suntan, and the appearance of her body in general. Noticing Martine's nose, she wonders, "Les nez refaits brunissent-ils aussi bien que le reste du visage mon nez est petit il est joli et je suis si brune si magnifiquement hâlée." <sup>58</sup> She adores her little dog, Zig, and is constantly preoccupied with what is going to be on television, ". . . et le pauvre Zig qui est le seul à la maison je peux en prendre un tout petit peu encore je ne me resservirai pas et ne toucherai pas au second plat

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<sup>57</sup> Mauriac, Le Dîner en ville, p. 21.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

qu'est-ce qu'il y avait à la télévision ce soir j'aime mieux pas savoir j'ai moins de regret. . . ."59 We also learn from her thoughts that she has a lover, Léon-Pierre, and that she worries about her husband's will. She abhors the thought of dying, and it is this obsession which reveals to the reader what Lucienne refuses to admit to herself. She is desperately afraid that she has cancer, and the reader, realizing this, can interpret her obsessive physical preoccupations as a paranoia resulting from her secret fear of cancer and ultimately of death. Further, her unpunctuated thoughts suggest that her mind is consciously attempting to block out her horror of cancer, to fill her mind with trivia in order to avoid the intrusion of her fear into her thoughts. She thinks, ". . . il n'est pas juste d'avoir à mourir un jour et c'est horrible j'ai peur peur peur comment font-il tous pour ne pas hurler de peur. . . ."60 At this point the reader sees that with television, sunbaths, a lover, her dog and clothes, Lucienne hopes to prevent the inevitable, or at least to prevent her mind from thinking about the inevitable.

Jérôme's two obsessions are even more skillfully revealed. Early in the novel this young law student takes

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

the part of servants, feeling that they should be treated with respect. This indirectly introduces his frustrated idealism. He does not want to belong to the bourgeois society which has raised him; he wants to be a revolutionary. His basic resentment of all those present is frequent and vehement. The reader soon becomes aware that Jérôme's attitude is a further manifestation of his frustrated desire to change the world. ". . . comment pourrais-je effacer jamais les traces de ma jeunesse et de mon education?"<sup>61</sup> "Je participe à cette immense duperie puisque je vis grâce à l'argent de mon grand-père, argent qui n'est pas le sien."<sup>62</sup> Jérôme's resentment of social inequality becomes increasingly strong as his thoughts continue during the dinner party. "Je sais où sont mes frères les hommes mais je n'ai pas le droit de me le dire des leurs."<sup>63</sup> Here we see Jérôme's attitude toward himself and toward his society.

Jérôme's other obsession which is revealed only indirectly revolves around his attraction to Bertrand Carnéjoux. The first hint of Jérôme's homosexuality is

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 234.



revealed in his thoughts about Martine, whom he fancies he loves.

Si j'avais été avec Martine et si Martine avait été ma femme au lieu d'épouser cet homme mûr au beau visage usé, ce Bertrand Carnéjoux auquel je dois, il me faut l'avouer, la découverte de Duclos précisément et que j'admire, que j'admire.<sup>64</sup>

The repetition of "que j'admire, que j'admire," is only a hint of Jérôme's feelings, but they become more evident as Jérôme thinks of his friend Raymond Frolet:

"Raymond Frolet est mon ami, voilà, mon seul ami, il me plait, . . ."<sup>65</sup> and later, "Que Bertrand m'admire et je ne désirerai plus rien."<sup>66</sup> Jérôme's thoughts finally reveal an almost feminine feeling of rejection when he has been unable to interest Carnéjoux at all. "Que Bertrand fasse seulement un tout petit peu attention à moi, rien qu'une seconde. . . ."<sup>67</sup>

Marie-Ange's thoughts flash frequently back to a field of "trèfles rouges" in which she was seduced at age fourteen. The words "homme roux" and "trèfles rouges" help identify Marie-Ange's thoughts, and emphasize her

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 265.

concern with the loss of innocence. Finally her point of view is stated implicitly:

Dès ce jour-là, à quatorze ans, je me suis jurée que ç'avait été la dernière fois, la première mais la dernière, qu'un homme m'imposait sa loi. Ce fut alors que je décidai, toute gosse que j'étais, de me servir des hommes au lieu de les servir, promesse que j'ai tenue.<sup>68</sup>

We also learn that she was a prostitute, that she thinks constantly of Hollywood, and that she intends to seduce whichever man will do her career the most good. This explains her concentration upon Roland Soulaire, an unattractive but very rich person of influence. Marie-Ange's thoughts are further characterized by her concentration upon counting the beads of Mrs. Osborn's necklace. It is psychologically significant, however, that Marie-Ange is finally most attracted to Jérôme, who, being young and red-headed, seems to remind her of her loss of innocence in the field of clover.

Eugénie Prieur reveals her past affairs, her abortion which haunts her, and her occasional wanderings on the street. A skillful double-perspective reveals Eugénie's character as the other guests think frequently of Eugénie's physical age, while she is worrying about her age in her own thoughts. She spills a bit of gravy, dozes off, and rambles on and on in conversation. In-

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

wardly, however, she only wants to be loved; to be saved from despair and loneliness. Her utter misery is reflected as she thinks:

Un endroit qu'il ne me déplait point de parcourir hâtivement la nuit, lorsque l'occasion s'en présente. Il arrive que l'on y rencontre les yeux d'un homme en quête d'une fille. Regard essayant toutes les femmes croisées et qui par habitude, entraînement, pour que le choix puisse être fait en toute connaissance de cause, se pose sur moi aussi au passage, toute vieille que je sois. Et certes lorsqu'il m'a vue, jaugée, jugée, il s'éteint d'un seul coup, ce regard, mais le temps d'un éclair, j'ai eu l'illusion d'être désirée, comme autrefois, lorsque j'étais jeune et belle. Si belle.<sup>69</sup>

Roland Soulaire is miserable because of his impotence and seeks an excuse for it throughout the evening. His thoughts are a curious mixture of stock-market figures and sexual anxiety. Consequently Marie-Ange's advances frighten him, and he quickly thinks of the stock-market for consolation:

Impuissant. Ce mot qui me définit, sur lequel je passe le plus vite possible dans le texte où je suis par hasard tombé sur lui, mais qui tire en arrière mon regard distrait par ces quelques syllabes fascinantes (angoissantes): impuissance, impuissant.<sup>70</sup>

"Gagner encore et encore plus d'argent pour oublier."<sup>71</sup>  
And Mauriac indirectly introduces thoughts which reveal

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

Roland's Freudian concern with masculinity: "Et mes doigts effleurent les poils piquants qui sur mon menton repoussent déjà, rapeuses arabesques dont je caresse non sans plaisir les contours."<sup>72</sup>

One other technically important aspect of Le Dîner en ville reveals Mauriac's careful attention to his theory. As the dinner develops both the conversation and thoughts evolve, at first imperceptibly, but then strikingly. First the conversation is purely meaningless. The guests talk superficially about subjects of little importance to the others, and the thoughts are almost wholly self-oriented. But as the dinner draws on, the conversation reaches closer to the real concerns of the speakers, and the thought patterns become more complex. No longer are the minds secure in their own private isolation. Anxiety, the need to communicate, grows in each mind as the dinner progresses, and finally there are certain understandings between the characters which require no expression. Most important, the dinner party has affected each person who attended. No one leaves the table unchanged. The reality of the evening has modified, even touched some of the individuals present. The reader can predict what will probably happen

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

to each of the characters, but the reality as it exists during the dinner is a whole in itself, and the reader leaves the table convinced that Mauriac has presented at least a part of reality.

Mauriac's technique in Le Dîner en ville has received generally warm praise. Peyre states, "It is original, if not great. It is a virtuoso piece brilliantly carried off. This picture of dismal boredom becomes tragic. . . . The technique is superb, but it overpowers the content."<sup>73</sup> (The conclusion of this review is hardly consistent with Peyre's dismissal of Mauriac's work in his recent The French Novel of Today.) But Mauriac's concept of fiction does not permit a division between technique and content. An intellectual mind recording reality is by nature an attempt to be exact. Brilliance is the logical result of such an experiment skillfully carried off. Mauriac does not intend to move the reader, but to affect him intellectually. The technique itself challenges the mind, and the characters fascinate rather than inspire him to a subjective reaction. Relying heavily upon the confession and anatomy forms of fiction, Mauriac's Le Dîner en ville is artistically balanced and demonstrates clearly the author's theory of reality. It is this intellectual

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<sup>73</sup>Peyre, New York Times Book Review, 4.

theory itself which appears to limit all of Mauriac's fiction to cleverness and intellectual appeal.

## CHAPTER VI

### LA MARQUISE SORTIT À CINQ HEURES

La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, Mauriac's third work, introduces a new dimension of the author's concept of reality. From the single consciousness of Bertrand Carnéjoux in Toutes les femmes sont fatales to the simultaneous reality of eight characters' words, thoughts and glances in Le Dîner en ville, Mauriac has added literal, historical material to produce a reality which is comprised not only of a simultaneous present, but also of an historical past, represented in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures by lengthy quotations from newspapers, journals, memoirs, letters, public documents and histories. Both the past and present are dimensions of the reality of the Carrefour de Buci in Paris. Mauriac's aesthetic and intellectual preoccupations have led him to an attempt to eliminate fiction from his work by relying heavily upon historical material to create, or more precisely, to record his version of reality. La Marquise sortit à cinq heures reveals a sequence, an

intellectual and theoretical chapter in the continuing quest of Mauriac and of Bertrand Carnéjoux to record reality in a fiction which, as far as possible, is not fictitious. This intention is more thoroughly revealed in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures because Mauriac himself enters the work to present his comments, his essay upon the work and upon his own intentions. At the end of the work, Mauriac explains what he believes to have been accomplished in the first three works.

Ainsi, l'histoire de Bertrand Carnéjoux qui dans ses commencements concernait un seul personnage et ses préoccupations égoïstes, a-t-elle rejoint, grâce aux huit convives de sa première suite, des vérités plus générales, pour s'épanouir et s'approfondir dans cette troisième partie où tout un peuple fut suscité et peut-être ressuscité. Le bruit éteint, la fureur morte, il reste la liberté. Ainsi le roman s'est-il dans ses avant-dernières pages peu à peu évanoui, et a-t-il disparu, sans feintes ni masques, au profit du romancier qui, s'il s'est mis directement dans son livre, l'a purifié à la fin de ses dernières traces de fiction en le faisant accéder à une vérité où l'exactitude littéraire fut préférée à la littérature. La Marquise ne sortit pas à cinq heures....<sup>1</sup>

Thus ends Mauriac's work which, he claims, is pure and exact because it is not fictitious. We have pointed out earlier that Mauriac's works (actually a single work with a single theme) are not novels, that they are more closely related to the essay or confession and to the anatomy -- two types of fiction which are persistently intellectual.

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<sup>1</sup>Claude Mauriac, La Marquise sortit à cinq heures (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1961), pp. 312-313.



In his attempt to be exact, to record mechanically or scientifically what reality is, Mauriac has produced an intellectual work which rejects the importance of imagination, of creativity itself. In La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, Mauriac actually presents himself to the reader as if to say, only through my presence in my work does reality become pure or exact. The introspective, intellectual Carnéjoux gives way to his creator, thus eliminating the fiction of the writer-protagonist. This appearance of the "novelist" himself marks the most extreme realization of the autobiography, confession or essay form in fiction, for Mauriac removes the fictional dimension of Carnéjoux to produce his own intellectual presence as an inevitable reality, an integral part of his work. Since Mauriac is an intellectual writer, concerned with theoretical reality in experimental fiction, his own essay, like those of Carnéjoux deals with the work in which they are found. This authorial intrusion totally destroys the distance of the artist from his work. The reader is finally left not with a novel, not even with a work of fiction, but with the intellectual author himself.

This introspective exactness represented by Mauriac's own essays in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures is balanced by a more encyclopaedic, extroverted dimension of literal reality composed of direct quotes from every conceivable

historic and literary source which describes or discusses the historical Carrefour de Buci. The introduction of Claude Desprez, a dealer in autographs who is obsessed with the history of his area of Paris, obviously prepares the reader for his endless reflections upon the past of the carrefour, which are, in every case, reinforced by page after page of quotations from historical material. The direct quotation of historical material fulfills the role of exactness and adds an intellectual dimension to the work which can be called encyclopaedic and extroverted (newspaper reports, historical reports, letters, library records, journals), directly related to the anatomy form of fiction.

Mauriac's insistence upon his own presence in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures and his presentation of a detailed documentation of the carrefour represent the author's obsessive concern with authenticity. He apparently believes that imagination, the artistic illusion are not authentic. In other words, Mauriac's theory limits his work to the "authentic realities" of his own essay and to the quotation of historical material. This concept of literature appears to eliminate the writer's role as artist, who selects and gives form to his work. Mauriac's La Marquise sortit à cinq heures reveals two distinct intellectual directions. The introverted essays of

Desprez, Carnéjoux and finally of Mauriac reveal consistently intellectual preoccupations with reality, time and aesthetics. The other intellectual direction is indeed encyclopaedic, and is actually a history of the Carrefour de Buci, built upon an exhaustive presentation of primary documents which deal with the intersection.

In several ways, the structure of La Marquise sortit à cinq heures is similar to that of Le Dîner en ville.

The work attempts to capture the reality of thoughts, conversations, and tacit communications between five and six o'clock during a warm evening at the Carrefour de Buci. Superficially there is unity of time and place, while the historical past of the intersection suggests a timeless, almost cosmic sense of perpetual, cumulative reality. As in Le Dîner en ville, the external action during the hour "recorded" in the work is important only insofar as the events or happenings stimulate thoughts from various points of view and contribute to the impression of an exact, total reality. For example, a pretty redhead who runs across the carrefour motivates diverse thoughts in the minds of the other characters who see her. Envy, curiosity, disdain and lust characterize the thoughts aroused by the young lady, while her own thoughts add to the complexity, yet thoroughness of the simultaneous reality.

As in Le Dîner en ville, the thoughts and fragments of conversation reveal the identity and preoccupations of each character. The important difference in the two works is a striking one, for the previous "novel" was structured upon the thoughts and conversation of a set group of people who acted and reacted in direct relationship with each other. This superficial unity of action has given way, in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, to a vastly more complex and disunified panorama of characters whose sole link is their presence at the Carrefour de Buci. As a result, the unities of time and place seem all the more arbitrary, a facile external structural unity imposed by the author to intensify his concept of simultaneous reality which, in this work, includes not only the simultaneity of the present time, but of the entire history of a given place. Mauriac's (and Carnéjoux's) obsession with time has produced a "vision" which sees reality not only as the sum total of thoughts, words and glances in the present time at a given place, but also includes in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, the spirit of the past, the phantoms of earlier times.

A summary of the hour's reality in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures will suggest the complex, unrelated quality of the work's characters and action. The marquise goes out street-walking. She is gradually revealed to be

that aging homosexual Zerbanian, who addresses himself in the feminine third person as he prowls. A policeman, M. le Principal Piedeliève (whose name is finally presented on page 220) is on a stakeout; he has posted Pascot and Frelatoux at different points of the intersection, and all three hope to catch Filledieux, who is to be met at the carrefour by a second criminal. Bertrand Carnéjoux, now alone and withdrawn from society watches the carrefour, frequently with the eye of a novelist contemplating the next novel which he will write -- and which we are reading. Martine, Carnéjoux's estranged wife, has just left her husband's apartment where she and their daughter Rachel have visited. As she leads the child away she muses upon the same problems which preoccupied her in Le Dîner en ville. Desprez, a collector of autographs and rare manuscripts watches the street, constantly smoking and experiencing a powerful identification with the past. Two students, Raoul Lieuvain and Patrice Reslaut, think about themselves, school, each other and especially about Valérie whom they both love in their own way. They meet by chance, separate, then meet shortly before six o'clock again. Mme Claire, an elderly lady who has run the Hôtel du Valois on the intersection reveals her last, nostalgic thoughts before she dies. Ida, who lives in the hotel, has seduced Mme Clare's husband, thinks exclusively about movie stars

and about the couple making love in the next room. Eventually her desires are rewarded and the stranger comes to her as the other woman, left alone, speculates about this unexpected activity.

Mme Claire's husband returns as his wife dies and finds his mistress in flagrant délit. A woman in an imitation leopard skin coat buys a copy of Ring, attracts much attention, and sits in a café; her thoughts reveal fantasies of film stardom and sexual bliss. A young husband watches a secretary in a window across the street as his wife naggingly reprimands him. Various shopkeepers think about their customers, while a stream of minor personages cross the carrefour, their thoughts revealing the quality and concerns of their lives. The traffic policeman thinks about the cars and the people, a drunken old lady beggar curses the more fortunate, a self-conscious poetess proudly remembers her importance in her associations with Desnos, Eluard and Supervielle. A proud, lonely Negro crosses the square, his eyes communicating briefly with Carnéjoux, and a band of adolescent girls, then a group of shallow sophisticated ladies go through the carrefour, the thoughts and conversation of each group identifying them. Carnéjoux's cleaning lady, a proud Ferrari driver, the criminal Filledieux, and various shopkeepers and other minor figures complete the panoramic, complex tableau.

As we have pointed out, this "recorded" picture of reality tends to lose its fictional dimensions as Carnéjoux suggests in his thoughts that he is simply making up the thoughts, even the existence of his characters. The fictional illusion is destroyed altogether when, at the end of the work, Mauriac intrudes to proclaim that he created Carnéjoux, whereupon the reader is left with a most unfictional essay by a most assertively self-conscious Claude Mauriac.

In each of Mauriac's works, it becomes increasingly apparent that each "novel" is actually a part of the same work. We have seen the close, sometimes subtle connections between Toutes les femmes sont fatales and Le Dîner en ville. La Marquise sortit à cinq heures is a third movement in what Mauriac seems to consider a carefully structured symphony. The most striking connection in the works is, of course, Bertrand Carnéjoux: his literary and aesthetic preoccupations continue in each work, and in each successive work he has a larger body of his own literary production to contemplate. As a result, in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, Carnéjoux contemplates not only this same novel, but also his two previous ones, suggesting the subtle elements and technical problems particular to each one. Carnéjoux's aesthetic concern is by no means the only overt connection in the works.

His memory constantly recalls events and people from his past, events and people already presented in the earlier works. In this way Mauriac (Carnéjoux) tends to force an intellectual complicity from his reader, who, also remembering the event or person elicited by Carnéjoux's thoughts, experiences an intellectual satisfaction similar to that of fitting together the appropriate pieces of a puzzle, or perhaps, of winning the championship in a trivia contest. For example, Bertrand remembers various characters from his Le Déjeuner au bistrot (Mauriac's Le Dîner en ville) in order to introduce different "types" into the book he is currently writing (La Marquise sortit à cinq heures):

Ai-je pensé à noter cet autre trait: la dame qui croit, comme Lucienne Osborn, que tous les hommes sont amoureux d'elle? Il faudra aussi que je me serve de la petite Vasgne pour introduire dans mon livre une de ces toquées de cinéma qui, comme Marie-Ange (qu'est-elle devenue celle-là?) ne rêvent que d'Hollywood.<sup>2</sup>

This thought sequence demonstrates the quality of the connection in Mauriac's works. While the reader remembers Lucienne Osborn and Marie-Ange Vasgne from Le Dîner en ville, he is indirectly informed that similar types are to be found in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures. Implicit in this realization is the stereotyped nature of Mauriac's characters, who consistently represent a re-

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 137.



stricted set of psychological obsessions, as in the passage above -- "la dame qui croit, . . ., que tous les hommes sont amoureux d'elle." This conception of character, constant in all of Mauriac's work, again points to the author's rejection of the complexity, the individuality of human personality.

The presence of Martine and Rachel Carnéjoux further relates La Marquise sortit à cinq heures to the earlier works. Both Bertrand and Martine are now in a position to remember, to reflect upon their past life together, including fleeting memories of that dinner party they once gave on the Ile Saint-Louis. Further, the leitmotif "Toutes les femmes sont fatales" reappears in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, heard on the radio. This song is now several years old, and provokes, in Carnéjoux's thoughts, nostalgic reflections upon the days when it was new and popular. Another even more subtle "élément caché" which relates the different works is found in the character la marquise. On page one hundred three, the reader first suspects that this elegant marquise is really a man; this impression is soon confirmed as the marquise eyes various men who, in turn, think about the aging gentleman who is looking at them so intently. On page two hundred twenty-three, the marquise is finally identified as Zerbanian, that same candid and entertaining

homosexual who appeared in the second part of Toutes les femmes sont fatales, and who was unable to attend the dîner en ville. The subtlety of Zerbanian's role in Mauriac's works is most strikingly revealed by a single thought which occurs on page one hundred fifty-eight.

He thinks:

Évidement, lorsqu'elle était avec Gilbert, la marquise se sentait moins seule. Cinq ans de bonheur, nous deux, Gilbert et moi, et tout de même de liberté. Il me semble que je commence à recevoir moins d'invitations. Dans mes vacances, j'ai un trou entre le 30 juillet et le 15 août. Aucun château, pas la moindre petite maison de campagne. C'est bien la première fois que la marquise en sera réduite à se payer l'hôtel. Mais le 14 juillet c'est sacré, intangible, je serai comme chaque année chez Grüther où je retrouverai Roland Soulaïres.<sup>3</sup>

This thought presents the only mention of Soulaïres in the work, and immediately provokes an intellectual awareness of a relationship not described, merely suggested. The reader is forced to remember the wealthy, impotent Soulaïres of Le Dîner en ville, realizing that Zerbanian and Soulaïres are good friends in their loneliness and misery. The thought quoted above also stimulates a vague memory in the reader's mind that he has been confronted with Zerbanian and Gilbert's relationship before. Indeed, the origin of this "élément caché" is found on page one hundred two of Toutes les femmes sont fatales, when Bertrand remembers an amusing anecdote concerning

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

Zerbanian and his friend in a store: "(Dans le magasin où il faisait des courses avec son ami Gilbert: 'Vous êtes ensemble? -- Oui, mademoiselle, depuis cinq ans . . . .')"<sup>4</sup> Mauriac's skill in relating his works may thus be described as an intellectual scavenger hunt, wherein endless subtle clues and allusions provoke a response of intellectual sleuthing. The subtlety and complexity of Mauriac's clues represent the author's self-conscious intellectualization of the structure of his works as well as of their content.

As in the earlier works, however, it is the kind and quality of subject matter which reveals the intellectuality of La Marquise sortit à cinq heures. Carnéjoux reflects consistently upon his experimental fiction and upon the nature of reality, relating him again to the confession form of fiction in which his preoccupation with literary aesthetics and the nature of reality merge to form a self-conscious, intellectual point of view. Carnéjoux, and later Mauriac himself, permit no uninformed interpretation of their intentions in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, for their thoughts persistently explain the work as the work unfolds. Bertrand succinctly describes the structure of the work.

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<sup>4</sup>Claude Mauriac, Toutes les femmes sont fatales (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1957), p. 102.

Unité de lieu, unité de temps, multiplicité des actions: entreprise vouée à l'échec et d'autant plus que l'unité de temps actuel serait entourée, pénétrée, absorbée dans mon roman par l'infini pullulement des innombrables minutes écoulées.<sup>5</sup>

Whereas in Le Dîner en ville, the dinner itself created a superficial unity of action, La Marquise sortit à cinq heures complicates the point of view and quality of the various characters and their thoughts: in Le Dîner en ville each person's mind reinforces the total reality because all eight people interact. Even thoughts which are seemingly unrelated to the other dinner guests are frequently stimulated in relationship to the others present. In La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, the reader must follow thought sequences which are frequently unrelated to the thoughts which precede and follow. The thoughts become recognizable because each interior monologue is consistent and reveals certain obsessions or patterns of thought. Mauriac's technique requires very careful control of each personality in order to make this psychological distinction in such a large, diverse and unrelated group of characters, and his tendency to stylize or stereotype his "psychological entities" seems to result from the necessity to make each thought distinct. To put it another way, it

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<sup>5</sup>Mauriac, La Marquise, p. 273.

would probably be technically impossible to present dozens of recognizable, different consciousnesses in a compressed structure of time and space without resorting to a stylized presentation of each mind in which a set of obsessions or preoccupations is consistently present. Consequently, each character may be recognized through certain clues -- his words, syntax, perceptions, or more abstract obsessions. Since all of the characters are extremely egocentric, it is relatively easy to recognize the character who is thinking. The thoughts, turned inward, describe the thinker.

Of course this great variety of thought sequences stems from a very intellectual, theoretical preoccupation of the author, Mauriac, and of his writer-protagonist, Carnéjoux. Since Mauriac insists upon exactitude in his novels, and since he contends that an instantaneous reality may be said to be all the thoughts, actions, words and tacit communications at a given moment in a given place, the attempt to record and present as reality the disparate elements of thought, conversation, tacit communication and perceived action at the same time at the Carrefour de Buci is a demonstration of objective, intellectual observation. Henri Chapier correctly sees the importance of technique in Mauriac's intellectual treatment of fiction:

Profondément influencé par l'art d l'écran,... Mauriac qui fut de premiers à applaudir aux expériences de Robbe-Grillet et de Michel Butor, connaît mieux que ces pionniers les secrets d'une littérature fabriquée, jûe de prédilection pour les intellectuels fatigués d'avoir sans cesse recours au pastiche des romanciers français du XIXe siècle.<sup>6</sup>

Chapier further states that Mauriac's style, ". . .

atteint ici la rigueur des travaux de laboratoire."<sup>7</sup>

This observation underscores the "scientific" (intellectual) nature of Mauriac's attempt to capture the total reality of a place at a certain time. Mauriac adds yet a new point of view, as we have seen, by casting aside his fictional disguise as Carnéjoux to speak in overt essay style, explaining what he has done in

La Marquise sortit à cinq heures:

Je n'ai rien voulu prouver. Mon livre, je l'ai imaginé, écrit, achevé sans idée préconçue autre que celle de ce thème: la réalité du temps à la fois exacerbée et niée par cette foule qui de jour en jour, d'année en année, de siècle en siècle, n'a cessé de traverser un même carrefour de ma ville. Carrefour choisi par hasard, pour cette seule raison que mes souvenirs de la libération de Paris me l'avaient rendu cher après me l'avoir découvert, -- Car j'ignorais tout de lui auparavant, sauf sans doute son existence. Si donc j'ai trouvé et rassemblé tant de faits vrais relatifs à la petite histoire du carrefour de Buci et si tous ou presque tous ont eu la même coloration de stupre et de sang, ce ne fut point volonté, arrière pensée, goût obscur, à moi-même inconnu, mais seulement hasard.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Henri Chapier, "Claude Mauriac: La Marquise sortit à cinq heures," Synthèses (mai, 1961), 435.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 436.

<sup>8</sup>Mauriac, La Marquise, pp. 311-312.

In addition to the intellectual nature of total reality at a given moment, Mauriac has added a technical dimension which further gives his novel an intellectual tone and which reveals yet another preoccupation that is persistent in all of Mauriac's works: this intellectual concern is closely linked with the concern with reality and grows out of it. The role of time in the nature of reality haunts Mauriac and leads logically to a preoccupation with death. To synthesize the past with the present, Mauriac used the character Desprez, a dealer in autographs and a pedantic enthusiast of all historical facts and documents which are related to the Carrefour de Buci. Thus, through Desprez's thoughts and readings, "Contemporary events are linked with, and illuminated by, happenings of the past; in Claude Mauriac's composition they merge into a sort of symphony that -- in the long run -- constitutes an indictment of our civilization's unending record of violence and injustice. . . ." <sup>9</sup> This commentary accurately describes the relationship of the past with the present, but Mauriac claims that any indictment or judgment revealed in the book is not his, but results from the facts, from documented material, not

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<sup>9</sup>Leon Roudiez, "On a Balcony of Time," New York Times Book Review, April 29, 1962, p. 5.

from his interpretation of experience. In the last pages of the novel Mauriac states:

Je ne pouvais modifier quoi que ce soit à ce qui avait eu lieu ici et non point là, en cet étroit domaine exactement arpenté. J'ai tout noté textuellement de ce que j'ai décelé, remontant autant que possible la source lorsque le renseignement m'avait été donné de seconde main. Et je n'ai, à de rares exceptions près, découvert que des crimes contre les corps, contre les coeurs, contre les âmes. Les choses sont ce qu'elles sont ou plutôt ce qu'elles nous apparaissent, cela suffit à l'honneur et au bonheur d'écrire et de décrire. Mais si un sens se dégage de l'accumulation des faits enregistrés qu'y puis-je? Ce n'est pas moi qui suis pessimiste (ou optimiste). Ce n'est pas moi qui ai voulu démontrer quoi que ce soit, par exemple que les hommes tuent et se tuent, qu'ils violent et bafouent l'innocence, qu'ils sont souvent ignobles. Les faits le disent, que j'ai enregistrés mécaniquement, comme une machine fabriquée pour retenir tels renseignements plutôt que tels autres lorsqu'elle a été enclenchée d'une certaine façon. Un cerveau électronique aurait trié aussi bien et même mieux que moi, pour peu qu'on lui ait fourni une masse plus complète d'information à ventiler. L'homme a ses états de grâce qui échappent aux chroniques. Il y a peut-être eu des saints, il y a sûrement eu de saintes et de nobles gens dans mon quartier. Ce carrefour du crime fut aussi celui des secrètes grandeurs....<sup>10</sup>

This entire passage stresses most of Mauriac's intellectual concepts concerning the novel. First, he attributes a sense of the completely objective, of the mechanistic, to the novelist. According to Mauriac, the novelist's job ends with precision of detail, with a supposedly objective presentation of reality. Secondly, Mauriac de-

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<sup>10</sup> Mauriac, La Marquise, p. 312.



clares that the precision and objectivity are not selective, that there is no value judgment nor intentional conclusion in his work. The novelist, as conceived by Mauriac, refuses to select material which will point toward any moral, philosophical point of view, and even further refuses to color or interpret the material presented, for his reality, Mauriac believes is an end in itself. It is significant, however, that Mauriac admits the brutality and violence of the historical parts of his novel. This observation reinforces a point of view which consistently sees people as basically selfish and calculating, for all of Mauriac's own characters are to a large degree spiteful and egocentric.

In fact, Carnéjoux's continuous presence in the "novels" strongly infuses all of Mauriac's works with the intellectual point of view of that theorizing consciousness. This, in itself, indicates a philosophical point of view in all of the works which denies, intellectually, the importance of the human act, and reduces man to a mechanistic, egocentric being whose very existence is meaningless. Therefore, while Carnéjoux and Mauriac deny that they select or interpret experience, they suggest very decidedly their philosophical or at least intellectual orientation. Carnéjoux's very obsessions -- fear of time and death, abstract preoccupations with the nature of reality -- color the moral or philosophical

dimensions of his work, leading to various specific intellectual conclusions: man is a prisoner of his egocentric nature; man seeks communication in physical pleasure, which only heightens his awareness of solitude; man fears time and its destruction of physical matter, or life itself. Further, Mauriac very skillfully juxtaposes historical accounts of murder and rape with contemporary newspaper articles describing these very acts of violence. This juxtaposition is, obviously, intentional, and it blatantly contributes to a picture of man as sadistic and depraved.

Finally, the existence of the passage quoted above as the conclusion of the novel is ample evidence of Mauriac's obsessive, self-conscious concern with aesthetics and reality in objective fiction. Going one step beyond the writer-protagonist, Mauriac insists upon the literariness of his work by presenting an essay upon his own work in the text of that work.

As in the earlier works, Bertrand Carnéjoux lends a constant intellectual presence throughout La Marquise sortit à cinq heures. Early in the work his thoughts explain his separation from Martine, and his withdrawal from society. Contemplating the people whom he watches from his window, he thinks:

Humble peuple. Chacun avec ses petits problèmes et son vide immense. Moi seul échappant à cette inanité, non que je sois plus intelligent que ces insectes au travail. A peine plus cultivé. Mais j'ai conscience de mon néant en même temps que du leur. Je domine nos existences éphémères. Depuis que j'ai quitté femmes, enfants, journal et richesse relative pour me consacrer, non plus à mes plaisirs, mais à la compréhension de ce que signifiaient mes plaisirs.<sup>11</sup>

Here we find an even more introspective, isolated Carnéjoux than in the previous works. It is this self-awareness, this sense of isolation which appears to give Carnéjoux pleasure. Carnéjoux's withdrawal is not ascetic, for he thrives upon his contemplation of himself and his condition. Certainly the conscious arrival to a point of view which claims awareness of one's "néant" as the great virtue is an intellectual conclusion which relates Carnéjoux directly to the existentialist idea that existence in itself is essentially meaningless. Bertrand's idea of man's alienation from others, of his aloneness, further relates Carnéjoux to the philosophical concepts of absurdity and nothingness:

Car il n'y a d'autre rapport que de condition (je ne dis plus de convention) entre les êtres qui se croisent à mon carrefour: la condition humaine. Des passants ne forment jamais une société. A peine les avons-nous entr'aperçus que nous les perdons de vue. Ils sont mes semblables pourtant. Mes interchangeable, mes irremplaçables frères.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

It is his intellectual concern with the ideas of alienation and aloneness which points the way to Carnéjoux's persistent obsessions with time and death. Thinking of a song he has just heard on the radio, Bertrand relates his present to the past, with an attitude of nostalgia and a quickening realization of the continuity of time.

Voici qui est bien: aux radios du carrefour après une interruption due peut-être à ma seule inattention, l'air des "Femmes fatales" a succédé à celui de "La Danseuse est créole." La dernière fois que j'ai entendu cette musique captivante, capiteuse qui joue depuis des années un rôle si étrange dans ma vie... c'était encore quai d'Orléans, au cours d'un dîner avec Martine. Penser que c'est là, sous ma fenêtre, que se déroule un des passages de Manon Lescaut.<sup>13</sup>

Roudiez observes that in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures,

Love, death and the passing of time, the traditionally favored themes of lyric poets, are also those of M. Mauriac. The first two he might prefer to call "obsession with sex" and "fear of death" -- especially the fear of one's own inconceivable, unjustifiable and solitary death.<sup>14</sup>

As well as the intellectual nature of Carnéjoux's attitudes and abstract concepts, it is again the intrusion of Carnéjoux's thoughts about the "new novel," his own novels, which most obviously give an intellectual quality to the work. Admitting that it is his writing which gives him even greater pleasure than seeing his children, Carnéjoux does not want to risk ". . . d'être distrait de

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>14</sup>Roudiez, New York Times Book Review, 5.

l'oeuvre dont la lente et la belle croissance me redonne allégresse et fraîcheur, jeunesse aussi, mais libéré de son poids de malheur, de honte et de détresse."<sup>15</sup> Mauriac indirectly explains why he perpetuates Carnéjoux's role in all his works as Carnéjoux thinks,

Je n'aime pas que l'écrivain reste en dehors de son oeuvre ou qu'il y apparaisse masqué. Ni qu'il soit comme le peintre devant sa toile, plus loin d'elle puisqu'elle a quitté son atelier. Il me plaît de le reconnaître modestement figuré dans un coin de sa composition.<sup>16</sup>

Continuing to explain that he attempts to quote rather than create, Carnéjoux again stresses the importance of uninvited dialogue: conversation must be transcribed as if from a tape-recorder, and visual images described as a camera would record them, objectively. For the novelist must create them "moins qu'il ne les observe, se donnant pour règle d'inventer au minimum, de citer le plus possible. Décrivant de là où il est ce qu'il voit comme il le voit."<sup>17</sup> Emphasizing why he gives so little importance to chronology and plot in the traditional sense, Mauriac has Carnéjoux think:

<sup>15</sup> Mauriac, La Marquise, p. 137.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 172-173.

Dans le présent comme dans le passé, les anecdotes à quoi se réduiront mon essai romanesque n'auront aucune importance.... Il n'y a jamais de dénouement qu'arbitraire. La mort elle-même n'est pas une fin.<sup>18</sup>

This idea underscores Mauriac's belief that reality is merely the objective presentation of external and internal thought, action and communication at a certain moment, which is but a fleeting representation of the continuum of reality, for even death, which haunts the individual, never ends the continuation of time.

Further, Carnéjoux contends, the novelist must be objective because he must admit that all which he describes and records is independent of the writer. For this reason, according to Carnéjoux, the novelist distorts when he begins to interpret. Nevertheless Mauriac's goal is not slight, for he believes that, by using his camera-technique, while fusing authentic historical fragments with the present daily life at the carrefour, ". . . tout cela ensemble devant former non pas tant un roman qu'une symphonie, un poème, et un film."<sup>19</sup> It is apparent from this discussion that Carnéjoux's thoughts constitute Mauriac's essays upon his own work, the ultimate degree of self-conscious intellectualization in fiction.

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 271.

Finally, Mauriac's own theories require that he overtly enter the work, for, to be totally objective, must not the writer admit that his own reality is himself, that objectivity is pure only when the writer admits that his observations are his own and that he used his senses to perceive reality, while his intellect recorded, then reflected upon this process of perception and recording.

The other character in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures who most conspicuously adds to Mauriac's intellectualization of reality is Desprez. Constantly relating the present to the historical past, Desprez's thoughts reveal an amazing amount of knowledge of obscure detail which becomes significant since it reflects on what has led up to the Carrefour de Buci as it is today. Desprez's erudition and obsession are presented early in the novel as he thinks:

Emotion de me dire que je suis sans doute le seul,  
en France et dans le monde à connaître par coeur  
ce "Dit des rues de Paris" dans ses différentes  
versions, la plus ancienne datant de 1280 environ.  
Son auteur est Guillot....

De la Grant rue Saint-Germain  
Des Prez, si fait rue Cauvain  
Et puis la rue Saint-Andri  
Dehors mon chemin s'estendit  
Jusqu'en la rue Poupée  
Adonc ai ma voie adressée....

Texte qui donne inépuisablement à rêver. La rue Couvain  
ou Gaugain, c'était notre rue de l'Eperon. Saint-Andri  
Dehors est une faute, bien sûr: il faut lire Saint-  
André-des-Arts.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

This concern with exactitude strengthens Mauriac's technique and demonstrates his explanation quoted earlier of his use of historical facts. Certain passages quoted from historical documents are especially effective when applied to contemporary mores. Thus Desprez reads from Guibert de Nogent:

Hélas, la modestie et l'honneur virginaux ont été misérablement délaissés et l'autorité maternelle affaiblie à la fois en apparence et en fait, si bien que toute leur conduite ne révèle qu'une gaieté indécente, qui ne fait entendre que des moqueries accompagnées de clins d'yeux et de langues qui caquettent, une démarche sans retenue et des façons tout à fait ridicules. La qualité de leurs vêtements les éloigne tant de la réserve d'autrefois que l'élargissement de leurs manches, le resserrement de leurs corsages et leurs souliers en maroquin de Cordoue à points retroussée. Bref, toute leur personne ignore la honte.... C'est de cette façon que les temps modernes se corrompent....<sup>21</sup>

Such a passage forces an analogy with the present day and draws a smile since it presents an idea which has persisted in every age. The passage is especially ironic because it is juxtaposed with thoughts which condemn the dress and obvious moral laxity of the young redhead who runs across the intersection. Her slacks are definitely too tight, and what is the world coming to? She obviously is not wearing a brassiere.

Historical passages describing murder and mutilation are blended in Desprez's readings with entertaining conversations among writers and critics, adding an obviously

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 96-97.



intellectual aspect to La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, while demonstrating Mauriac's theory of past and present as an interrelated unity. But to an extent Desprez is as aware of the reasons for his obsession with the past as Carnéjoux is. He thinks:

L'Histoire m'est un refuge. C'est certain. Et pas seulement parce que je puis oublier grâce à elle mon ignorance, ma vulnérabilité, ma solitude, -- et c'est pourquoi je vends des autographes, pourquoi je rêve au passé. Elle me permet aussi de ne plus penser aux abominations de mon temps, d'essayer de n'y plus penser, comme si les crimes anciens, tout aussi nombreux et atroces, perpétrés eux aussi au nom du droit et de la justice, parfois même au nom de Dieu, ce qui était pire (je n'ai jamais eu de religion, mais je me fais tout de même une certaine idée de Dieu), comme si ces supplices et ces meurtres avait perdu avec le recul ce qui les rend insoutenables aujourd'hui, lorsqu'ils se commettent en Algérie ou ailleurs. M'y revoilà. La fuite est-elle donc impossible?<sup>22</sup>

In this way Desprez's very personal thoughts reveal the source of his interest in history, and his quotations combine with his introspection, while contributing to the unity of past and present as conceived by Mauriac. Chapier observes that,

En choisissant comme lieu de son action le carrefour Buci...le romancier n'a pas seulement voulu mettre en scène quelques personnages: la vie des foules, des siècles passés, la topographie des rues par siècle, les silhouettes célèbres et anonymes qui les ont hantées, tout relève d'un même soin évocateur, et de la même précision d'analyste.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>23</sup>Chapier, Synthèses (mai, 1961), p. 435.

The result of Mauriac's technique is correctly stated in this summary, even though Mauriac vigorously denies that he deliberately "chose" the Carrefour de Buci other than arbitrarily. Chapier very soundly remarks, as we have seen, that ". . . la description atteint ici la rigueur des travaux de laboratoire."<sup>24</sup> This observation points to the term "new realism" which has been applied to the "nouveaux romans," and of course, suggests the scientific and intellectual concerns with precision in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures.

Concerning the relationship of the past and present as revealed through Desprez, Dorothy Nyren concludes that the technique gives ". . . a tapestry effect of reds and blacks of passion and death against a neutral background of quotidianness."<sup>25</sup> It is difficult, however, to accept the term neutral as a description of the present in the novel, for Mauriac reveals in the present thoughts those very passions, worries and fears which lead historically to the reds of passion and blacks of death, suggesting that only the perspective of time lends distinction to past violence.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 435.

<sup>25</sup>Dorothy Nyren, Review of The Marquise Went Out at Five, Library Journal, April 17, 1962, p. 1630.

In a different way, Martine, Bertrand Carnéjoux's estranged wife, contributes to Mauriac's intellectual view of reality. She has just visited Bertrand with their daughter Rachel, and her thoughts are a mixture of maternal love, as seen in Le Dîner en ville, and of contemplation of Bertrand and his life alone. Her thoughts about maternal love are essentially a preoccupation with an escape from loneliness and from age, much as they were in the earlier novel. At one point, however, Martine, obviously interested in her husband's experimental fiction, unites her thoughts of affection for her children with a contemplation of how Bertrand could capture his mother-child relationship in fiction.

Ces regards d'enfant que l'on surprend levés sur soi, quelle merveille. Conversation muette, si intense, grâce à laquelle une communication immédiate et totale se réalise. Échanges parfaits. Bertrand m'a dit un jour qu'il aimerait écrire tout un livre sur un dialogue semblable entre une petite fille et son papa. Il disait: son papa. Mais avec moi la maman, ce serait encore mieux. Il disait que seule son amie Nathalie Sarraute avait su exprimer ces échanges tacites, si peu connus bien que chacun en ait l'expérience. Il disait que presque personne encore n'avait compris Nathalie Sarraute parce que les secrets indicibles qu'elle essayait de saisir à leur source vivante dans les profondeurs de l'être étaient trop nouveaux. Il disait que moi, j'étais des rares êtres de sa connaissance ayant déjà l'intelligence de ces choses. Quelle récompense lorsqu'il me parle ainsi.<sup>26</sup>

This passage of Martine's thoughts reveals several important characteristics of Mauriac's technique. First we

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<sup>26</sup>Mauriac, La Marquise, pp. 70-71.

realize that Martine is basically self-centered. Even her affection for Rachel leads to an egocentric consideration of her husband's writing. The thoughts reveal their own content, of course, but more important, they reveal the nature of the thinker which in Martine's case is not known to her. It is Mauriac's ability to present certain characters who are aware of themselves and others who are much less so that led the New Yorker to observe, "the mental and vocal articulateness of his characters is always in strict ratio to their intelligence."<sup>27</sup> Martine, though called intelligent by her husband, is instinctive rather than introspective or intellectual. Second in the passage quoted above, Martine's admiration for her husband, and her detached affection for him are made apparent. (This is also an example of Mauriac's sly, subtle sense of irony, as he smiles at his characters as they admire his intellect and his ideas.) Finally, Mauriac, through Martine has returned to his favorite intellectual consideration -- the technique of the "new novel." It is no doubt with a strong sense of humor, but with serious intention that Mauriac, true to his belief in exactitude, mentions and explains Nathalie Sarraute by name. This "inside" literary reference is amusing, but further reveals the literary, inbred nature of the work.

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<sup>27</sup>Review of The Marquise went out at Five, The New Yorker, September 15, 1962, p. 174.

Another element in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures is the result of Mauriac's theoretical concern with the importance of tacit, momentary communication which isolates two individuals and temporarily overcomes the aloneness of the human condition. Since many of the characters in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures are strangers to each other, Mauriac frequently describes the brief exchange of glances, of communications as an important achievement. Carnéjoux, looking out of his third floor window sees a young Negro man and thinks, "Il me sourit, ce garçon, et je lui souris et j'en éprouve je ne sais pourquoi un peu du bonheur que j'ai en vain attendu de ma petite fille."<sup>28</sup> The young man thinks of their exchange,

Il m'a répondu, le monsieur du second. Savoir même s'il n'y a pas eu coïncidence entre nos deux sourires, rencontre spontanée, appels simultanés. Nous nous sommes tout dit. Il ne serait pas possible d'en exprimer davantage. Nous connaissons-nous intimement que nous n'irions jamais plus profond dans l'amitié et la communication.<sup>29</sup>

Thus again Mauriac reveals his own theory indirectly through the mind of another character. He has called this kind of tacit communication the "dialogue intérieur," believing it to be one of the most important aspects of

<sup>28</sup>Mauriac, La Marquise, p. 25.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

his literary technique. In fact. Mauriac will decide, after the publication of La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, to call his first four works Le Dialogue intérieur, thus stressing the significance of subtle, unspoken communication represented by thought sequences which respond mutually to a glance, to an immediate, unspoken understanding between characters.

The title character, Zerbanian, is significant in another way. Aging sophisticate of the streets, he characterizes Mauriac's tour de force effect, for the Marquise realizes the salvation in humor, even if bitterness is its motivation. Constantly talking to himself, this marquise amuses himself and the reader. He thinks, ". . . pauvre Marquise. Rentre ton ventre. Sois mince. Je ris jaune, mais je ris. L'humour sauve. . . ." <sup>30</sup> And during his furtive, lecherous glancing at the young men on the street, la marquise, completely aware of his weakness, chides himself:

Elle est fraîche, la marquise, elle a bonne mine! Elle ferait mieux de rentrer préparer son petit dîner, puis de se coucher, sans plus rêver aux gentils jeunes gens. Ce n'est plus de son âge, les ravissants. Cette habitude que j'ai de me parler à la troisième personne. Ça me tient compagnie.... Elle est moins seule, la Marquise, lorsqu'elle se sent un peu respectée. <sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 111-112.

This character adds humor and pathos to the novel, as Mauriac deftly creates an entertaining but tragic individual who is finally revealed not to be a Marquise at all, but an intelligent, but precious dandy of the streets, who, in fact, turns out to be that same Zerbanian of Toutes les femmes sont fatales and Le Dîner en ville. It is unlikely that Zerbanian would not see or recognize Martine and Rachel Carnéjoux in the work, and even more so that he would not be aware of Bertrand's presence at his window overlooking the carrefour, but it really does not seem to matter since Mauriac admits in the last sentence of his work that the marquise really did not go out after all, suggesting that the entire sortie was only imagined by Carnéjoux, or rather Mauriac.

It need only be added here that Mauriac's presentation of dialog in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures shows a sense of rhythm and precision which fills out his reality of the Carrefour de Buci. The street language of the shopkeepers, the gossip shared by old friends on the street, an occasional cat-call, the breathless jabbering of teenage girls going home from school, the supercilious sophisticated flattery of fashionable women in a café: all these spoken words create the impression of actually hearing the speaker, of hearing several conversations at once which blur and superimpose themselves

upon each other in the listener's mind. It is this fidelity of recorded reality mixed with thoughts and historic allusions and quotations which, according to the Herald Tribune, make La Marquise sortit à cinq heures ". . . more successful in giving the 'one-soulness' of a big city than the techniques of Jules Romains and John Don Passos of a generation ago."<sup>32</sup>

Superficially, La Marquise sortit à cinq heures lacks focus and unity of action, but Mauriac's attitudes toward his writing, his intellectual and theorizing preoccupations, as well as his sense of irony appear often enough to unify the tone of the work and to explain the very reasons for the variety of thoughts. As the work draws to a close, Mauriac steps up the speed of his recording technique as different thoughts and spoken words flash from sentence to sentence with no external designation as to change in point of view. This speeding up of tempore-emphasizes the spontaneity of what has happened throughout the novel, and as the "spontaneity" of reality reaches a dizzying speed, it stops abruptly, and Mauriac himself enters the work to candidly report on what he has done.

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<sup>32</sup> Review of The Marquise went out at Five, New York Herald Tribune, May 20, 1962, p. 8.



Critical reception of La Marquise sortit à cinq heures has varied in direct relation to the critic's concept of the novelist's role as shaper or interpreter of reality. LeSage believes that if Mauriac had sustained the satirical tone which seems promised by the title (taken from Valéry's refusal to write a novel because he could not bear to begin one with such a line as "La Marquise sortit à cinq heures. . . ."), the novel would have been more successful. LeSage concludes that Mauriac fails because he is too serious while obviously presenting us with a tour de force.<sup>33</sup> Chapier appreciates more fully the nature and accomplishment of the work. Seeing that it is humorous, witty, ironic, and caustic, he suggests that,

Exercice de virtuose, La Marquise sortit à cinq heures est plutôt un défi lancé aux confrères de la Rive Gauche, qu'un ouvrage destiné à un grand public: un contre sens sur la vertu de la tentative guette à chaque page le lecteur non averti.<sup>34</sup>

Time magazine describes Mauriac as "perhaps the most appealing and most readily understandable (if not the most profound) of the French group variously called the Anti-

<sup>33</sup>Laurent LeSage, "Snatches of Life at Twilight," Saturday Review of Literature, May 26, 1962, p. 31.

<sup>34</sup>Chapier, Synthèses (mai, 1961), p. 436.

Novelists, the New Realists. . . ."35 But Time refuses to accept the value of Mauriac's experimentation completely, concluding that one ". . . looks to the novelist to give these gifts (of reality) shape and meaning -- and that Mauriac refused to do."36 There is no question of Mauriac's refusal to shape and interpret what he records. Roudiez raises the same question, however: "Perhaps Claude Mauriac is capable of giving us more than an intellectually exciting book, but in order to write a truly great novel he will have to let his intellect give freer rein to his heart."37 Mauriac's intellectual incisiveness and brilliant technique are strikingly seen in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, but the inbred, literary nature of the work limits its appeal to one of intellectual appreciation.

Perhaps the most fascinating result of Mauriac's intellectualized fiction is seen in the endless direct quotations from historical and literary sources. This aspect of La Marquise sortit à cinq heures clearly suggests the work's relationship to the anatomy tradition in fiction,

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<sup>35</sup>Review of The Marquise went out at Five, Time, April 27, 1962, p. 79.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Roudiez, New York Times Book Review, 51.

in which erudition and encyclopaedic passages of information and facts contribute significantly to the intellectual nature of the work. If all of the quoted passages dealing with the Carrefour de Buci were isolated from the present reality of La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, the result would be a rigorous, colorful panorama of the history of the intersection spanning ten centuries of historical and literary material. To intensify this objective presentation of the past, Mauriac has placed a tourist in the work who reads from his guide book, thus introducing even more literal reality to the reality of the Carrefour de Buci. Further, as the work progresses, Desprez's thoughts and readings reveal a chronological order which begins with the medieval period and moves, century by century, toward the present time. Guibert de Nogent, the Livre de la Taille de Paris pour l'an 1292, Jean Juvenal des Ursins, Jacques Du Breul, Pierre de L'Estoile, Molière, Dumas, Hugo, Géraud's Paris sous Phillippe le Bel, Nicolas de Blegny's Le Livre commode des adresses de Paris pour 1692, Furetière, Louis Racine, François et Claude Parfaict, Charles Duclos, Pierre Laujon, Jean de Boschère, André-François Prévost, Edmond-Jean-François Barbier, Mlle Clairon, Nicolas-Sébastien Roch (de Chamfort), l'inspecteur Durocher, Poncet de la Grave, different dossiers from the Bibliothèque de l'Arsénale and the Bibliothèque Nationale,

L'Abbé Sicard, Léon-Paul Fargue, an Almanach des plaisirs de Paris, Balzac, Goethe, Pierre Veron, the Bibliothèque de Rouen, Magny, Sainte-Beuve, Théophile Gautier, Taine, Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, Paul Verlaine, Pierre Arnouet, André Salmon, Apollinaire -- all of these historical and literary figures, public documents, official records and private letters are quoted directly, some at length, others briefly.

Such an amount of documentation is in itself encyclopaedic and represents a tremendous amount of research and attention to detail. Aside from Mauriac's concern with simultaneous reality in the present, his use of documented material is effective and indeed, is often the most interesting aspect of the exact reality presented in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures. Carnéjoux's intellectual preoccupation with literature and aesthetic theory and Desprez's obsession with historical material logically leads to the mass of erudition and historical and literary allusion in the work. The students Patrice Reslaut and Raoul Lieuvain also contribute to this scholarly, intellectual documentation, for the former is well versed in literature, the latter in history, as revealed in their thoughts. The thoughts of an aging lady poet further reveal intellectualized content in the work as she remembers her associations with Desnos, Eluard and Supervielle.

The intellectualization of content in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures has two major directions, as we have seen. The first is the introverted, intellectual pre-occupations dealing with aesthetic theory and the nature of reality represented primarily in the thought-essays of Carnéjoux and to a certain extent in those of Desprez. This tendency is merely a continuation of the intellectual quality already seen in Toutes les femmes sont fatales and Le Dîner en ville. Equally intellectual and even more impressive is Mauriac's use of the anatomy form of fiction. He has attempted to defictionalize his intellectual concern with time and history through a meticulous, precisely documented history of the Carrefour de Buci, producing a mass of directly quoted material which is fascinating in itself, while it reinforces the author's concept of timeless reality.

## CHAPTER VII

### L'AGRANDISSEMENT

With the publication of L'Agrandissement, Mauriac grouped his first four works under the title Le Dialogue Intérieur. This decision clearly suggests the author's abiding concern with technique, and in particular, his insistence upon the importance of the interior dialogue in his first four works. The role and a definition of the interior dialogue are presented in a front-piece quotation in L'Agrandissement wherein Mauriac quotes that inveterate writer of experimental fiction, Bertrand Carnéjoux:

L'un des problèmes fondamentaux de la littérature d'aujourd'hui n'est plus seulement celui du monologue intérieur mais celui de ces monologues intérieurs qui se répondent les uns les autres et deviennent ainsi dialogues intérieurs sans que les intéressés, pour parler à coeur ouvert, aient à ouvrir la bouche.<sup>1</sup>

This passage reflects the nature of Mauriac's reality in L'Agrandissement. Ostensibly, the author has taken two

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<sup>1</sup>Claude Mauriac, L'Agrandissement (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1963), p. 8.

minutes from the hour's reality of La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, much as one might take a tiny detail of a photograph, enlarging it so that previously invisible or unnoticed details are brought into view. Actually, however, this enlargement process has produced a reality which is almost entirely discursive, representing Mauriac and Carnéjoux's self-conscious essays upon Mauriac's own fiction.

We have seen that the fictional dimension of Mauriac's work is undermined by Carnéjoux's thoughts in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures. Carnéjoux, the experimental writer, admits, for example, that he is inventing the thoughts of different characters, even as he offers those thoughts as part of the reality in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures. The result of this admission is obvious: the independence and the fictional reality of those characters, avowedly "made up" by Carnéjoux's intellectual imagination, tend to disappear, revealing the writer-protagonist's conscious theory and invention as the reality of the work. This process of intentional "defictionalization" of the literary work is pushed to its logical conclusion in L'Agrandissement. In effect, Mauriac has decided to insist upon his notion of purity in fiction: this purity refuses to admit of a reality outside the writer's mind, and consequently leads to an

exploration by Mauriac's mind, presented as a lengthy confession, in which only the experimental artistic process and its various difficulties compose the reality of the work. The reader is overtly informed that the characters of La Marquise sortit à cinq heures were not really characters at all, that they were figments of the author's imagination. Further, in L'Agrandissement, Mauriac's stream of consciousness technique is vividly applied to himself rather than to his writer-protagonist. The author's mind is unveiled as he speculates upon what characters to put in his current work, and upon the difficulties of choosing characters whose psychology is alien to the experience of the writer. Rather than an independent work of fiction, L'Agrandissement attempts to present the artistic consciousness as it functions. It is now apparent that L'Agrandissement is neither in the tradition of the novel, nor of fiction, for Mauriac has chosen not to intensify his recording of simultaneous reality, but to limit his agrandissement largely to the consciousness of Bertrand Carnéjoux whose actual existence is synonymous with that of Claude Mauriac. A fragment of the external reality of La Marquise sortit à cinq heures is preserved. Superficially L'Agrandissement is an enlargement of pages twenty-three to twenty-six of La Marquise sortit à cinq heures. In the former work,



Carnéjoux wonders whether or not his wife will turn to look at him as she disappears on the street, the young Negro experiences a silent communication with Carnéjoux, and the tourist consults his guide book. In L'Agrandissement, these two minutes comprise two hundred pages. The difficulty of such an enlargement is blatantly obvious. It is hardly conceivable that two minutes of reality (largely composed of Carnéjoux-Mauriac's consciousness) could produce the amount of thoughts, which verbalized, would amount to two hundred pages of prose. There is, then, a striking lack of vraisemblance with respect to the passing of time. Mauriac, however, is much less concerned with creating a recorded reality in space and time than in exploring the very nature of his creative process. Carnéjoux and Mauriac think continuously about their experimental work, and since their thoughts compose most of the work, the reader is presented with a literary essay which both describes and demonstrates Mauriac's literary theory. The presence of Raoul Lieuvain, a professor of literature, perpetuates Mauriac's analysis of his own work. Mauriac reveals that Patrice and Raoul, the students in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, were actually elderly colleagues; he simply took the liberty of presenting them as students in his imaginary reality at the Carrefour de Buci. Raoul is giving a course which appears to deal exclusively with the work

of Claude Mauriac (Bertrand Carnéjoux). Raoul's lectures and discussions in the classroom are an important part of the two minute reality of L'Agrandissement. The professor's concern with the interior dialogue leads to a rigorous attempt to find literary precedents for Carnéjoux's theory. Whereas Desprez functions as the encyclopaedic historian of the Carrefour de Buci in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, Lieuvain becomes the literary historian and critic of Mauriac's works, especially of his concept of the dialogue intérieur. L'Agrandissement is a literary essay, built upon the intellectual and literary preoccupations of Carnéjoux, Lieuvain and Mauriac himself. These three literary theorists reflect different aspects of preoccupations upon experimental fiction, and by the end of the work, only Mauriac's presence remains as he discusses his works in considerable detail.

Early in the novel Carnéjoux's thoughts suggest that L'Agrandissement is no more than an attempt to reveal the process of literary creativity itself. About to introduce the thoughts of a young Negro into the work (the one we are reading), Carnéjoux must include his own thoughts about the presentation of this character since he, the writer, experiences an intricate thought-process concerning the presentation of characters in his own works. Hence we read:

Ici commence la difficulté pour le romancier qui essaye de reproduire le plus exactement, le plus fidèlement possible, écrire étant décrire ou n'étant rien. Ce Noir, c'est comme l'ouvrier qu'il faudrait que je fasse traverser à ce carrefour, si j'écrivais l'un des essais romanesques auquel je pense: pour la vraisemblance, un ouvrier, un seul, ce serait le minimum. Mais que sais-je de la vie d'un ouvrier parisien ou d'un jeune homme de race noire? Inévitables parties faibles de mon roman, si je me décide à le composer.<sup>2</sup>

This passage demonstrates very well the role which Carnéjoux's mind plays throughout the novel. The entire novel is, in fact, an essay upon writing a novel like L'Agrandissement, the whole indeed composing this novel. Whereas in the previous novels, the characters introduced seemed to have an existence separate from Carnéjoux's creating mind, in L'Agrandissement Carnéjoux insists upon explaining the reasons for or problems of creating a simultaneous reality in fiction. The result is a work, in large part a literary essay, in which Carnéjoux finally gives way to a very literate Claude Mauriac, who ends the novel speaking directly to the reader, giving advice to anyone who would write a novel himself.

In L'Agrandissement, Carnéjoux's endless reflections upon his own fiction emphasize the unity and intricate relationships of all of the works. In the earlier works, as we have seen, the "éléments cachés" were subtly

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<sup>2</sup>Claude Mauriac, L'Agrandissement, p. 13.

woven from work to work, providing an intellectual cross-word puzzle to be solved by an observant reader. Carnéjoux's thoughts in L'Agrandissement explain rather than perpetuate the relationship of his works. Until Mauriac completely replaces the fictional Carnéjoux, Toutes les femmes sont fatales is called Le Plaisir grave, Le Dîner en ville is Le Déjeuner au bistrot, La Marquise sortit à cinq heures is Les Barricades de Paris and L'Agrandissement is Le Balcon. By following Carnéjoux, then Mauriac's theorizing mind, the author's complete arts poetica is fully established. The birth of L'Agrandissement is presented:

Agrandir un coin du tableau qui lui-même, dans un autre futur, pourrait faire l'objet de la même opération. Et ainsi d'agrandissement en agrandissement, j'obtiendrais le détail essentiel, grossi au point que je n'en perdrais plus rien.<sup>3</sup>

Carnéjoux also discusses his decision to fabricate the character la marquise. Watching an old man on the street, Carnéjoux's mind quickly transforms him into a different character:

Ce vieux, tel qu'il est, au cache-nez près, peu vraisemblable, dévisageant avec concupiscence non plus une femme déjà mûre, ni même une fille, mais un garçon. Un pédéraste sur le retour que je mettrais dans mon livre à la place de ce veillard banal.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

Finally Mauriac's obsession with purity in fiction leads him to the inevitable conclusion. To be pure, the writer cannot invent or imagine; therefore he alone is the reality of his work:

Et si je supprimais mes jeunes gens comme j'ai effacé mes vieillards? Plus d'adolescents, plus de marquise, plus de professeur, plus de livres: rien que moi-même.<sup>5</sup>

As we have repeatedly suggested, this concept is not fictional, but autobiographical, and in L'Agrandissement Claude Mauriac reaches the impasse inherent in his obsessive concern with pure fiction, and especially with his refusal to conceive of reality as greater than technical experimentation. In effect, Mauriac appears to believe that fiction is not authentic since it relies upon invention and imagination to transform reality into an artistic illusion. This sterile, hermetic approach is constantly revealed by Mauriac's obsession with technique rather than with experience. Carnéjoux's awareness of the limitations of his notion of capturing reality is forcefully suggested by his use of the word formule in the following passage:

Voici plus de cinq ans que j'ai enfermé dans cette formule tout ce que je pouvais savoir du dialogue, intérieur, voilà plus de cinq ans que je l'ai

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

imprimée, alors à quoi bon continuer à se fatiguer, repos, repos, j'ai fait ce que j'ai pu, comme je l'ai pu.<sup>6</sup>

A danger of experimentation in fiction is strikingly apparent in Carnéjoux's theorizing. The experimentation seems to become an end in itself. Theory and formula replace the reality they claim to transcribe and even Mauriac's "recorded" and "simultaneous" reality give way to reflections upon the technique, rather than a demonstration of it. Rather than pursuing a dramatization of his experiment (as represented by Le Dîner en ville and La Marquise sortit à cinq heures), Mauriac is finally reduced to an endless examination of that experiment. Frequently his explanations and interpretation appear pretentious and unnecessary for Mauriac is apparently incapable of permitting his skillful experiments to speak for themselves, fearing that the artistic virtuosity of the works will be ignored, or misunderstood. As a result, he insists upon explaining his style:

Ce qui compte, ce ne sont pas les phrases, à peine davantage ce que les phrases disent, mais leur équilibre, la place qu'elles occupent les unes par rapport aux autres, de sorte que si j'en insère une à tel endroit, il me faut aussitôt intercaler son homologue en une ligne précise de telle ou telle

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

autre page. Ainsi font les peintres en disposant leur taches de couleur, faites pour s'appeler et pour se compléter.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed this observation on his own style suggests the intricate balance necessary to dramatize a "simultaneous reality" of various thoughts, conversations and tacit communications, but further, it suggests the calculated, mechanical nature of Mauriac's experimentation. Further, Mauriac's insistence upon his close relationship to painting techniques is not convincing. The elements of speech, thought and tacit communication are carefully balanced and skillfully related in Mauriac's works, but this artistic control of the different elements is subtly calculated to resemble a puzzle, an intellectual game. Since imagination is eliminated in favor of a kind of mathematical symphony, Mauriac's style makes its appeal to the intellect, not to a sensory or aesthetic response. This quality suggests the important difference between Mauriac's prose and painting which, first of all, makes a visual, a sensory appeal. It is further puzzling that Mauriac, so concerned with technique, never suggests what style or concept of painting his prose works resemble. He would surely not contend that the painter does not interpret, color, and shape, visually, the very nature of

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 182-183.

physical appearances to create a particular quality of artistic reality. As we have suggested, Mauriac's theory itself resembles more closely the function of a camera or tape-recorder.

Mauriac's theoretical concern in L'Agrandissement is the problem of the dialogue intérieur in experimental fiction. His decision to call Toutes les femmes sont fatales, Le Dîner en ville, La Marquise sortit à cinq heures and L'Agrandissement parts of one work -- Le Dialogue intérieur -- suggests the importance of tacit communications in all of the works. This decision further underscores Mauriac's concern with technique as the essential consideration in his fiction. To explore as fully as possible the role of tacit communication in literature, Mauriac presents Raoul Lieuvain in the classroom, discussing the works of Bertrand Carnéjoux and evaluating his achievement with respect to the interior dialogue. Through the discussions and thoughts of Professor Lieuvain, Mauriac adds a dimension of technical, literary scholarship to L'Agrandissement which reinforces the intellectual, theorizing nature of the work while it suggests the anatomy tradition in literature. Certainly Lieuvain's discussions of the interior dialogue are the most extroverted parts of the work, and his thorough scholarship reveals an attempt to trace the interior



dialogue which dates at least to the medieval period.

Thus Lieuvain summarizes to his class:

Mais de même qu'une lecture de Flamenca nous avait découvert, durant nos leçons de l'année dernière, on ne peut plus inattendu et bouleversant dans ce roman en langue d'oc du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, un soudain passage du style indirect au monologue intérieur, monologue intérieur dont vous vous souvenez que nous avons trouvé des exemples chez Rabelais, sans oublier Shakespeare (...), monologues intérieurs que nous n'aurions décelés chez aucun de ces auteurs d'autrefois si Edouard Dujardin et James Joyce ne nous les avaient retrospectivement découverts, de même certains textes anciens, laissent désormais apparaître à nos yeux étonnés ...des traces plus ou moins précises de dialogue intérieur.<sup>8</sup>

This self-conscious passage of literary history candidly demonstrates Mauriac's concern with literary technique. The professor of literature functions as Mauriac's scholar and apologist: the presence of such scholarly material in the work seems to give importance to the interior dialogue as an essential literary technique, while it obviously reflects Carnéjoux's (Mauriac's) importance through the importance of his literary ancestors and their achievements. By finding precedents for his own technical concerns in Rabelais, Molière, Balzac, and Joyce, Mauriac emphasizes his own achievement. Professor Lieuvain carefully analyzes Balzac's Le Curé de Tours to show his

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 50-51.

class that in 1832 Balzac was attempting to record the dialogue intérieur as revealed in the following passage of Le Curé de Tours:

(Je te devine, rusé coquin! pensait-elle; mais nous voilà mis à l'abri de tes calomnies. Quant à toi, si tu prends le désistement, tu t'enferreras, tu avoueras ainsi ta complicité.)<sup>9</sup>

As the teacher explains the importance of the interior dialogue in a lengthy passage from Balzac's work, he explains:

Avec ces deux seuls mots: "pensait-il," "pensait-elle," dont la plupart de nos auteurs s'embarrassent encore de nos jours et qu'il n'y aurait qu'à faire sauter dans cet extrait du Curé de Tours pour lui donner l'apparence d'un texte d'avant-garde actuel.<sup>10</sup>

The teacher goes on to point out that Balzac did suppress the "pensait-il" and "pensait-elle," thus leaving a recorded interior dialogue.

Raoul Lieuvain is a dedicated apologist for Mauriac, and his discussions reveal that he, like Mauriac, is preoccupied with literary technique, especially with the interior dialogue. This preoccupation in itself reflects the sterility of Mauriac's work, even of his theory. He sees only the problem of technique, suggesting that the interior dialogue is a major literary discovery, fully

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

developed by himself. The narrowness of this preoccupation leads to the supposition that the interior dialogue is an important consideration in the works of Balzac, for example. Such an insistence appears banal because it is an obsession with the obvious. The phenomenon of tacit communication, as Carnéjoux repeatedly suggests, is a common one, experienced by most people at one time or another. Mauriac's obsession with the technique of the interior dialogue becomes, finally, exasperating because it is given an importance out of perspective with the nature of human experiences or of artistic achievement. The accomplishment of Joyce or Faulkner, for example, is hardly limited to their technical experimentation which in itself, is more complex and subtle than Mauriac's.

Although Mauriac's L'Agrandissement represents the author's rejection of fiction to rely entirely upon his own intellectual theorizing, the work's introversion is frequently interesting as a literary essay, and provides skillfully revealed insights into Mauriac's intellectual creative process. First we see Carnéjoux on Carnéjoux, often followed by the thoughts of the professor on Carnéjoux, and Mauriac does not hesitate to explain his use of the different points of view toward his own work. Frequently problems of characterization and point of view are solved arbitrarily: Both Patrice and Raoul who were

both students and rivals for the affection of Valérie in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures are now about sixty-six years old. Carnéjoux explains:

Car il y a cinquante ans, c'est aujourd'hui:... Flash-forward parmi tous ces flash-back. Leur passé est le futur de mon roman.... Je fais de vous deux jeunes gens, que vous aviez été, que vous êtes, et rien ou presque rien n'est changé à mon livre. C'est le passé qui est le présent, le futur qui est le passé. Le temps n'existe pas.<sup>11</sup>

In this fashion, we see Carnéjoux take liberties which tend to support his conception of the nature of reality, but which, at the same time, seem to destroy that objective, observed reality which he so often declares is the legitimate aim of the novelist.

Even though L'Agrandissement has, in a large measure, substituted literary commentary for an observed reality, the essential attitudes projected by Carnéjoux in the earlier novels remain the same. Two qualities, in particular, reveal his mind as intellectual, especially since they are part of a totally self-conscious artist's mind. Honesty and frankness are constantly in evidence as Carnéjoux seeks his own meaning as a human being and as an artist. Early in the novel Bertrand, reflecting upon the difficulty of communication between individuals thinks, "Il n'empêche que je me serais senti

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

plus proche de n'importe quel chien, tout à l'heure, que de ma petite fille."<sup>12</sup> This thought, which might ordinarily seem brutal or even cruel, simply demonstrates Carnéjoux's power to admit what he realizes, a bit sadly perhaps, to be true. At the base of this statement is his abiding concern with the inability of communication in situations where communication should be vital. With a stranger or an animal, Carnéjoux contends, there is no demand, no expectation; simply a need for a response, however brief. And closely allied with this idea is Carnéjoux's belief that the individual, because of time and death, is but one who represents all other individuals. Watching a small boy cry, Carnéjoux thinks, ". . . Il représente tous les enfants qui ont été, qui se sont crus malheureux, il n'est peut-être pas là où je le vois, il y sera un jour, ou bien il y a été et l'empreinte en est demeurée visible pour moi seul."<sup>13</sup> This idea of the relative nature of individuals is nothing new in Carnéjoux's mind, for the very heart of the idea was presented in Toutes les femmes sont fatales, when the young Bertrand, looking at the church of Saint-Germain-des-Près realized that, ". . . j'étais un garçon comme les autres qui

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

cesserait lui aussi d'être jeune pour vieillir et mourir sans que le monde en soit appauvri. . . ."<sup>14</sup> But in L'Agrandissement Carnéjoux's conscious belief that he, the writer, is of little relative importance leads to lengthy passages of honest, and almost always ironic reflections.

This quality of irony, present in Carnéjoux's mind in the earlier novels, reaches a much greater intensity in L'Agrandissement, and it is often Carnéjoux's ironic tone, lending humor and relief to his endless reflections on his own life and art which save the novel from monotony. Indeed Carnéjoux seems to smile continuously at his own attempt at presenting reality, but realizes that he, as an artist, is condemned to attempt to write. Numerous passages in L'Agrandissement demonstrate this ironic quality underscoring Carnéjoux's introspective intellectual awareness, while they also reveal important ideas and concepts toward the artist and his work. In an almost bitter passage early in the novel Carnéjoux explains his own frustration, his condemned state as a writer:

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<sup>14</sup> Claude Mauriac, Toutes les femmes sont fatales (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1957), p. 99.

Mais je ne me sens jamais quitte. Il me faut dire et redire, écrire et récrire, indéfiniment me répéter pour me trouver à la fin (il n'y a pas de fin) avec la même impression de malaise et de culpabilité. Aveux de la littérature: confessions sans absolution.<sup>15</sup>

Here we see an extremely vital concept which overrides all of Carnéjoux's theory concerning the novel. "La fin" in this passage would be a point of perfection at which the literary work would be completely achieved. Carnéjoux must admit, however, that the absolute is not attainable. Further, as a writer, Carnéjoux is also condemned to seek his own meaning, and in L'Agrandissement he does so largely with an examination of his own literary production. Even this examination is seen with considerable irony, and at the same time Carnéjoux makes candid fun of the ineffectual attempt at scholarship to explain his literature:

Aussi bien étudie-t-on mon oeuvre dans certaines universités des Etats-Unis. C'est à la fois émouvant et risible. On fait son petit travail, comme on le peut, aussi bien qu'on le peut, et puis un beau jour on reçoit une lettre d'un collège des U. S. A. où on vous demande sérieusement de venir parler de "votre oeuvre," et on y va, et on en parle aussi gravement que possible, sans être dupe pourtant de cette bouffonnerie.<sup>16</sup>

This refusal to take himself seriously except for himself alone -- "Je sais moi, j'ai enfin compris que je n'ai

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<sup>15</sup> Mauriac, L'Agrandissement, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

aucune importance. J'ai même appris à n'avoir à mes propres yeux que le moins d'individualité possible."<sup>17</sup>  
 -- reduces the works, especially L'Agrandissement, to a sort of "inside story" which the reader must accept or reject, as the case-history of a brilliant intellect concerned with writing. Ultimately it appears that L'Agrandissement was written by the author, for the author, and Mauriac's admission that his work is indeed a confession supports our contention that this fiction is in the tradition of the essay and the autobiography. As has been pointed out, Le Dîner en ville and La Marquise sortit à cinq heures were essentially novels demonstrating Mauriac's theory of an objective presentation of reality. In L'Agrandissement he seems to have substituted the writer's thoughts for any attempt at recording reality, and finally presents much more an essay than a work of fiction since the work fails to create or form a picture of reality.

It is logical, consequently, that the passages on literature are the most interesting parts of the essay. Since the characters and incidents in the work are obviously secondary, and almost always serve as a basis for literary concern, having little importance in themselves, it is

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 17.



these passages which must serve as evidence for the inbred, intellectual reality in L'Agrandissement. It will be especially appropriate here to present Carnéjoux's thoughts upon his previous work. Concerning his first work, Toutes les femmes sont fatales, Mauriac thinks: "Rien qui ne me paraisse aujourd'hui moins compréhensible que cet hymne à l'amour physique que fut mon premier essai romanesque."<sup>18</sup> This thought is revealing in two respects. First we realize that the concerns of Bertrand Carnéjoux, actually of Claude Mauriac, are much different at the time he is writing L'Agrandissement than they were when the earlier work was written. The importance of the physical has given way to more esoteric considerations. And yet the reader remembers that the search for the self, especially for the artistic self was at the very heart of the concern with physical love in the first novel. Secondly it must be said that Toutes les femmes sont fatales, a presentation of introspective thoughts though it is, is actually a much more consistent presentation of reality, rather than a discourse upon that presentation. Even though Mauriac rejects, in L'Agrandissement, the obsession described in the first work, he does not present another reality in its place. This is perhaps ex-

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

plained near the end of the book; again thinking of his first work, Carnéjoux (soon to be totally replaced by Mauriac) admits:

C'est fini. Je ne souffre plus. Je ne suis pas jaloux. Mais je sais maintenant qu'il m'est impossible d'être jaloux et de souffrir.... (Tardive sagesse ou vieillesse prématurée?) D'où ma gêne, lorsque je relis Le Plaisir grave, ma gêne et ma répulsion pour tout ce qui, dans ce premier essai romanesque, relève de l'anecdote, du souvenir....<sup>19</sup>

Much of the weakness of L'Agrandissement can be explained from this passage. It may easily be argued that Carnéjoux, unable to suffer, is unable to live other than a completely sterile existence. Though wisdom may negate jealousy, perhaps even suffering, it seems hollow and unimportant that wisdom may be found in a frequently arid preoccupation with the nature of the interior dialogue.

As L'Agrandissement draws to a close Claude Mauriac assures the reader, "Mais attention! Que votre exigence de logique soit comblée: ces deux minutes, elles aussi, n'existent que dans et par mon imagination."<sup>20</sup> Continuing to discuss his four works, Mauriac points out the obvious:

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

Chaque partie de ma suite romanesque Le Dialogue Intérieur est continue. Les quatre chapitres de Toutes les femmes sont fatales se déroulent dans un temps qui pour chacun d'eux est sans rupture. Les romans suivants se présentent dans leur totalité, d'une seule coulée: Le Dîner en ville durant ce qu'il faut au cérémonial d'un repas; La Marquise moins encore: une heure; et L'Agrandissement que voice; à peine deux minutes.<sup>21</sup>

This brief summary at the end of L'Agrandissement coupled with occasional passages indicating his fatigue as a novelist suggest that Claude Mauriac may have exhausted his capacity or need to write fiction. The intellectual awareness of Carnéjoux (Mauriac) throughout L'Agrandissement suggests, in fact, that the writer of this work completes an expression which will no longer be necessary.

De moi, à moi elle [his work] me suffit. Au point même que si je n'écrivais plus un seul essai romanesque dans l'avenir, je ne-connaîtrais pourtant plus jamais sans doute la sorte de découragement, presque de désespoir qui, longtemps, m'accabla. Et qui t'accable, toi, mon jeune lecteur.<sup>22</sup>

The "de moi, à moi" of the passage points again to the very heart of Mauriac's works, especially L'Agrandissement. Smilingly Mauriac reminds the reader that his novels were written for himself, that his obsession has been softened through the expression of it. Mauriac ironically suggests

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

that the reader should, in fact, be a writer also:

"Qu'importe, mon exemple doit te donner confiance. Tu l'écriras, ton livre. Tu le pousseras, ton pauvre cri inutile et pathétique. Ridicule et admirable."<sup>23</sup> Here Mauriac seems to sum up his concept of the writer. What is important, he seems to say, is that the work was written, that the "cri inutile et pathétique" was uttered. This indirect denial that the novelists say anything which shapes or interprets life lies at the base of Claude Mauriac's work. It is in a sense, a lucid, intellectual acceptance of the absurdity of life, from which point the writer must express himself because that is all life offers him as a means of existence. In writing his conscience is clear.

Another singularly important aspect of L'Agrandissement is Mauriac's use of actual literary references and quotations to explain and demonstrate his own ideas concerning his work and his obsession with the interior dialogue. Since Carnéjoux is but another name for Claude Mauriac, L'Agrandissement offers many passages which are, in effect, "a French new-novelist on the French new novel." Mauriac alludes to or quotes Léautaud, Hediger, Henry Miller, Heidegger, Anaïs Nin, Balzac, Molière, Simone de Beauvoir, François Mauriac, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Joyce,

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

Proust, Dos Passos, Godard and many others. These literary references, coupled with cross references to fictitious characters seen in the earlier novels (Gilles Bellecroix, who still desires Martine Carnéjoux, and Jérôme Aygulf, who is now an important film director), makes an interesting, intellectual composition, but Mauriac has attempted to do what is perhaps impossible: to present the writer's thoughts concerning experimental writing as art.

L'Agrandissement is, then, the ultimate manifestation of the intellectual confession wherein aesthetic, literary preoccupations replace recorded reality. The literary allusions and quotations suggest the intellectual anatomy tradition in fiction, and serve as Mauriac's reference material to support or clarify his own theories. Mauriac has reached an impasse by eliminating fiction from his writing. Carnéjoux is finally unmasked to reveal Mauriac and the author remains as the only reality in the work. Le Dialogue intérieur has moved from the consciousness of Carnéjoux (Toutes les femmes sont fatales) to an artistic demonstration of Carnéjoux's simultaneous reality emphasizing the interior dialogue (Le Dîner en ville and La Marquise sortit à cinq heures) to an elimination of the recorded, yet fictional reality leaving only the author and his preoccupations (L'Agrandissement).

To be purely, completely objective in this last work, Mauriac is forced to watch himself: "L'Agrandissement s'inscrit donc fortement dans le sillage de l'actuelle reflexivité où l'artiste, dans la lucidité aiguë qu'il porte sur ses moyens d'action, en faisant se regarder faire."<sup>24</sup> In L'Oubli, Mauriac's most recent work, he will preserve much of the experimental technique, but new dimensions of reality will be explored.

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<sup>24</sup>Adolphe Grégoire, "L'Agrandissement," La Nouvelle Revue, XXXVII, No. 10 (1963), 350.

## CHAPTER VIII

### L'OUBLI

In L'Oubli (1966) Claude Mauriac continues his relentless exploration of the nature of time and the process of aging. This recent work attempts to dramatize the functioning of memory and forgetfulness, essential elements in man's relationship to the passing of time, in his inevitable aging process. Mauriac's concern with time was repeatedly seen in Bertrand Carnéjoux's introspective consciousness: in L'Oubli Nicolas plays precisely the same role as Carnéjoux did in the four earlier works composing Le Dialogue intérieur. Indeed the intellectual, introverted quality of L'Oubli results from those preoccupations with abstract concepts and experimental technique found in all of Mauriac's work. Nicolas, scarcely distinguishable from Carnéjoux or from the author himself, reflects at length upon the nature of time, physical love and death in passages similar to those examined in the earlier works. Particularly closely related to Carnéjoux's preoccupation with physical

love in Toutes les femmes sont fatales are numerous thoughts in which Nicolas explores his past, trying to establish the identity of a young lady he allegedly knew. Aside from Nicolas' preoccupation with those concepts so important to Carnéjoux, he, also, is a writer of experimental fiction. Consequently, many of his reflections deal with experimental fiction writing and with several important aspects of aesthetics. In this respect, Nicolas' thoughts offer frequent essays upon his own fiction, especially with regard to technical theory.

As in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures and L'Agrandissement, L'Oubli is structured upon two important dimensions of intellectualized content. First, the confession or essay form is represented by Nicolas' conscious, lucid interior monologue which deals persistently with abstract concepts and with aesthetic theory. Early in L'Oubli Nicolas explains his theory of the novel to the young lady who has introduced herself as his friend:

Peu importe ce qu'il raconte. On raconte toujours la même chose. L'intéressant est la façon dont on le raconte. Ce que j'essaye de faire, c'est comment dire.... Une sorte de roman policier intellectuel, sans gendarmes ni voleurs -- ou juste ce qu'il en faut pour retenir l'attention du lecteur. Du lecteur qui est en quelque sorte le détective, si vous voyez ce que je veux dire.



...mais je procéderai de telle sorte qu'il y aura une explication et une seule pour chaque point mystérieux, que n'importe quel lecteur un peu intelligent et attentif sera capable de résoudre, s'il me lit avec soin et tient compte des indications que je donne. Chacune des allusions, des images, des questions que rencontrera le lecteur devra ou tout au moins pourra être élucidée, comprise, résolue. Rien qui ne puisse être légitimé, expliqué. Pas une ligne. La diversité des plans ...car il s'agit d'un film tout autant que d'un roman...leur diversité, ce qu'il entre de mystère, parfois même de policier, dans l'intrigue, devrait, si je n'échoue pas, équilibrer les parties plus subtiles. Aussi bien aimerais-je que l'on ne me prenne pas trop au sérieux....

In this passage Nicolas explains his intentions and technique, while pointing out the difficulties inherent in his experimental work. Nicolas' existence, it is obvious, is no more independent from Mauriac himself than was Carnéjoux's, for the work described by Nicolas in the passage above is, expectably, L'Oubli. Further Nicolas' verbalized essay suggests the same self-conscious, intellectual quality as Carnéjoux's while the aesthetic theory presented is very little different from Carnéjoux's. The last line of this passage reflects a detached tone of irony and candor, frequently representative of Carnéjoux's intellectual consciousness. Nicolas (Mauriac) does not want to be taken too seriously because he cannot conceive of his work as profoundly important. Rather, Mauriac

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<sup>1</sup>Claude Mauriac, L'Oubli (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1966), pp. 38-39.

prefers to smile at his own experimental efforts which are for him, as well as for the reader, an intellectual game, although a serious one. Nevertheless, Mauriac's self-conscious analysis of his own work is an inevitable result of his intellectual introspection, as seen in the following one-column reflection:

...Manon Roland, Sophie  
Cannet, j'ai, en me relisant, l'impression, d'abord vague, puis de plus en plus précise, de les avoir déjà évoquées, presque dans les mêmes termes. Nous écrivons indéfiniment le même livre, n'ayant qu'un seul secret à dire qui est indicible. Une rose jaune dans leurs cheveux noirs, Manon et Sophie, tandis que le loriote chante. A quoi bon vérifier où j'ai déjà pleuré ces petites filles trahies? Il est étonnant que je m'en sois souvenu, à la fin, aussi peu que ce fût. L'oubli, toujours, l'oubli au travail en moi, comme en vous. Je suis, vous êtes Nicolas. Ceci est mon roman et votre film. Mon film et votre roman. Et il y aura autant de romans-films que j'aurai de lecteurs....<sup>2</sup>

Nicolas' consciousness merges with Mauriac's and, as in L'Agrandissement, the fictional dimension of the work is temporarily destroyed. However, Mauriac's appearance in

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 103-104.

L'Oubli is usually distinct from Nicolas' consciousness, largely preserving the fictional existence of the author's protagonist. As in the earlier works, Mauriac insists upon the mechanical aspect of his art.

Mais si, une machine peut faire le travail, elle est capable de créer une oeuvre d'art, la machine, pour peu que le nombre d'informations que nous lui fournissons soit suffisant.<sup>3</sup>

For Mauriac, the artistic quality of a literary work depends solely upon the technical virtuosity of that work. Hence the poesis, the illusion of formulated feeling in fiction is dismissed, for Mauriac's aesthetic theory is concerned not with artistic creation through imagination, but with artistically recorded and balanced bits of perceivable reality. Nicolas further reiterates Carnéjoux's theory of relativity: the subject matter of a literary work is not important, he suggests, because the human act, even human experience is insignificant. For Mauriac, the writer's concern must be with the technical aspects of recording a specific reality, arbitrarily limited in time and space so that the author may control his presentation. Mauriac states his belief in the relative nature of man's acts in the following passage,

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

Tout est dans tout et Proust dans La Bruyère comme dans Maupassant. Le conte La Femme de Paul nous montre un homme aussi fin que Swann fasciné par une femme qui n'est même pas son type. Les écrivains, qui se valent entre eux à génie égale, valent les peintres, mais aussi les cinéastes. Les reflets, les reflets.<sup>4</sup>

Here Mauriac offers the key to his philosophical and aesthetic points of view. His concept of individual insignificance, first stated in Toutes les femmes sont fatales ("Ainsi ai-je compris à dix-neuf ans que rien ne me distinguait des garçons de ma génération et de mon milieu, mes idées les plus chères n'étant pas plus à moi que ma façon de m'habiller.")<sup>5</sup> reappears in the idea "Tout est dans tout." Mauriac's concept of man's nature apparently eliminates the possibility of originality in art, especially with respect to ideas. Such a view is not original, yet it emphasizes Mauriac's insistence that the content in literature is unimportant because every conceivable story has been told, every view of the human condition already explored. To avoid what he believes to be an impasse in the substance of fiction, Mauriac focuses upon technique in an obsessive attempt to present verifiable reality by means of experimental technique. The danger of such an attempt, we have repea-

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

tedly seen, lies in the assumption that literature need only appeal to an intellectual response, stimulated by subtle, clever technical innovations. In L'Oubli, as in the earlier works to a considerable degree, Mauriac attempts to make the banal or the obvious interesting through his skillful recording of it. Nicolas, in a lengthy dream sequence, delivers a lecture on his own experimental fiction. As in Carnéjoux's theory, we read:

Ce qu'il faut.... Ce qu'il faut....  
 ...C'est décrire avec le plus d'exactitude, le plus de précision possible ce que nous voyons derrière les vitres et sur les glaces, sans imiter ceux qui, avant nous, ont déjà évoqué une plage comme celle-ci, l'été...  
 Ne pas copier, surtout ne pas copier. Et pas Proust plus que le autres. Je pourrais, moi aussi, écrire un roman bien fait, un de plus, qui raconterait avec de vieilles formules mes jeunes joies. Cet adolescent sur la plage, derrière la vitre, regardez-le, c'est moi. Il est un peu ridicule parce qu'il appartient à un autre temps. Il se sent ridicule parce qu'il n'appartient pas au temps des autres. Il van vers cette jeune fille, il lui parle. La scène a été mille fois écrite.  
 ...dit-il retorqua-t-elle avoua-t-elle dans un sourire soupira-t-il.<sup>6</sup>

This dream sequence continues as Nicolas presents a parody of the situation he has just evoked. By resorting to the traditional use of "lui dit-elle," "balbutia-t-il," Nicolas and Mauriac intend to support their belief that such narrative devices are clumsy and unnecessary. This brief parody of the traditional narrative emphasizes

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 107-109.

Mauriac's self-conscious theorizing again, for he attempts to demonstrate the inadequacy of traditional aesthetic techniques in fiction. While Nicolas claims that it is futile to describe his "jeunes joies" by the use of "vieilles formules," he seems even more intent upon denying the importance of evoking these youthful joys in fiction. He appears, rather, to reject the authenticity of psychological states which do not reflect an egocentric, obsessive set of preoccupations. By reducing human consciousness to an intellectual process of perpetual self-analysis in Carnéjoux, then in Nicolas, Mauriac reveals his own egocentric, intellectual imprisonment. Theoretically, as Nicolas states in the passage above, the writer must describe exactly the reflections of reality. This concept emphasizes the importance of the totally objective world of things, of external, visual, reality in Mauriac's fiction. Nicolas is even more obsessed with the image of mirrors in his fiction than Carnéjoux. The mirror, since it reflects visual, external reality, records what the writer must attempt to record. Mauriac's preoccupation with "mirror-truth" suggests again his relationship to the "chosiste" concern with surface reality. The writer functions as a camera (hence the machine concept discussed above), and, Mauriac implies, the writer is free to discuss his aesthetic

objectives, thus insuring the authenticity of his recorded picture. However, Mauriac does not (unlike Robbe-Grillet), limit his recorded reality to a presentation of perceivable objects. He intends, rather, to present visually the elusive, fragmentary reality of the conscious mind. In the works composing Le Dialogue intérieur the consciousness of various characters was recorded in prose which intended to reveal various, individual perceptions of the objective world as well as the consistent patterns of each person's subjective preoccupations: the whole formed an important part of Mauriac's simultaneous reality. In L'Oubli Mauriac's concept of the writer as mirror is rigorously applied to the evocation of consciousness. The author, in his effort to dramatize, to actually demonstrate the functioning of memory, uses the image of a mirror to record the fragmentary, extremely complex and seemingly unrelated elements which exist fleetingly in the mind's effort to recall the past: "La glace la plus proche dans laquelle se contemple un Nicolas de dix-sept ans s'étoile et se brise en trois morceaux. Répercutée, comme sous les voûtes d'une église, une voix."<sup>7</sup> Mauriac thus establishes the appropriate metaphor which will reflect Nicolas' mental process. In this way the author

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

attempts to visualize the functioning of the mind, while Nicolas' thoughts reflect a conscious awareness of Mauriac's image. Nicolas thinks:

...fragments dont il assure, dont saint Bernard nous dit, qu'ils sont ceux de la mémoire qui était, vous vous en souvenez, l'image de la divinité, dont ces trois morceaux représentent ce que saint Bernard appelle les pensées affectueuses, les pensées onéreuses et les pensées oiseuses....<sup>8</sup>

These two passages constitute the presentation of the author's technique which is reinforced by the protagonist's continuation of Mauriac's initial image in thoughts which are obviously near the consciously verbal level. The technique becomes more fully developed as an isolated sentence following the above passage states, "Un oiseau au vol calme dans un des fragments du miroir."<sup>9</sup> This isolated image demonstrates Mauriac's attempt to present memory in visual terms which reflect the fragmentary images in Nicolas' thoughts as his mind consciously explores the past. An audial image joins the visual one in the mirror of memory, "Voix lointaine, ironique, indulgente d'une femme invisible."<sup>10</sup> This nebulous image becomes concrete as the quality of the voice leads to its vocal expression, "--Coquefredouille, Va!"<sup>11</sup> Mauriac's use of

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 114-115.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.



imagery underscores the cinéma-vérité technique in L'Oubli which appeals to the sensory while revealing the function of memory. In an unusually poetic reflection Nicolas explores another metaphor to describe the function of memory:

Comme la lave en apparence solidifiée craquelle la croûte noirâtre du cratère en rouges striures de feu, puis se cicatrise, s'entrouvre de nouveau pour redevenir éphémèrement cette grise et cendreuse écorce unie, une fois de plus fissurée, ainsi la lave en fusion des souvenirs fait-elle éclater, par endroits, la surface de ma mémoire, bientôt refermée, je n'y ai vu que du feu, je revois le feu, images fulgurantes surgies des abîmes, ensevelies, scellées. Le volcan de l'oubli entrerait-il en éruption, tout mon passé jaillirait d'un coup, je ne résisterais pas à cette coulée d'images en fusion, à ce bombardement de souvenirs solidifiés. Il faudrait canaliser cette force prodigieuse, domestiquer le volcan, cela se fera un jour, cela se fait déjà, je l'ai vu dans un film....<sup>12</sup>

The metaphor of the mirror suggests Mauriac's concept of memory in sensory, fragmentary terms: by introducing the volcano as a metaphor for memory, Mauriac indicates the qualitative nature of memory. The author is well aware of contemporary scientific studies dealing with memory: concerning the effect of chemicals upon the functioning of the brain, especially with respect to memory, Nicolas' dream sequence includes a psychiatrist's explanation of this physiopsychological phenomenon.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

...Ces expériences prouvent ou tendent à prouver que ce phénomène par excellence spirituel, la mémoire, se ramène sans doute à un processus chimique et que n'importe qui pourra peut-être acquérir, un jour n'importe quoi, des connaissances, une langue étrangère,....<sup>13</sup>

This observation is followed immediately by three successive images:

"Visage de Gérard de Nerval.

Visage de Marcel Proust.

Visage de François Mauriac."<sup>14</sup>

The juxtaposition of a discursive observation with the three pictures of writers relates a psychological phenomenon with three authors who were acutely aware of the importance of memory to human personality. Further, Mauriac's "Visage de...." reveals his concern with presenting a visual reproduction of spontaneous mental imagery resulting from Nicolas' intellectual association of the concept of memory with a fleeting picture of a related literary figure.

To a certain extent, Mauriac's attempt to dramatize the process of memory is self-consciously dogmatic. He believes that the origins of most psychological discoveries relating to human personality may be found in literature. Writers, he believes, ". . . savent tout, avant

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

tout le monde. Avant vous, les hommes de science. Toutes vos découvertes, ils les ont pressenties."<sup>15</sup> It is for this reason, Mauriac states, that ". . . nous avons essayé de nous grouper, de travailler, en équipe, nous aussi."<sup>16</sup> The nous apparently refers to the anti-romanciers and offers Mauriac's candid apology for the militant, dogmatic group which he represents. Nevertheless, Mauriac continues his argument that writers have revealed psychological phenomena long before the discoveries of psychologists:

...Il y aurait tout un travail à faire sur les origines littéraires de la psychanalyse. Montaigne, déjà, a parlé de transfert.... Et tenez .... Je viens de relire Notre-Dame de Paris. Pour moi, qui suis, comme vous le savez, du bord de Jung, un passage comme celui....<sup>17</sup>

Nicolas then reads a passage from Hugo's work in which the word psyché is found, applied to the subtleties of Quasimodo's personality. It becomes apparent that Claude Mauriac, too, hopes to have discovered at least a fragment of psychological truth in his experimental attempt to demonstrate the subtleties of memory as it functions.

Nicolas' confession essays upon Claude Mauriac's aesthetic theory forms an important part of L'Oubli.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

Equally intellectual, although less self-conscious, is Nicolas' reliance upon literally quoted texts of numerous authors. The presence of various passages from Marivaux, La Bruyère, Proust and other writers indicates the literary orientation of L'Oubli's protagonist and of its author. Moreover, this concern with the literal quotation of passages from various writers which deal with themes important to Nicolas tends to relate L'Oubli to the anatomy tradition in fiction. Mauriac has chosen a theme -- memory, forgetfulness -- and has presented literary excerpts which discuss or demonstrate different aspects of that theme. Furthermore, since Nicolas is preoccupied with the nature of memory and man's relation to the passing of time, his documentation of passages from La Bruyère and Proust for example, stimulate further reflection in Nicolas' mind. In this way the diverse intellectual dimensions in L'Oubli are carefully unified. The pattern of intellectualized content may be described as follows: Claude Mauriac first chooses an abstract theme, the nature of memory. He then projects a protagonist who is obsessed not only with this theme, but with the technical possibilities of dramatizing the theme in fiction. Naturally the intellectual, literary orientation provides Nicolas an opportunity to synthesize his reading and intellectual knowledge with the particular theme of

memory (or forgetfulness, or man-in-time), while Mauriac manipulates his protagonist's reflections, readings, and less conscious mental associations to demonstrate the psychological process of memory. The reader watches Nicolas' mind remember as Mauriac presents key sensory images which form patterns apparent to the reader, but undetected by Nicolas himself. Mauriac's conception of memory seems to view Proust's involuntary memory as too simple and one-dimensional to actually reflect the fleeting, fragmentary nature of the mind remembering. He attempts, rather, to trace the almost imperceptible working of memory which might, finally, lead to an unexpected association of images, recreating, momentarily, a scene or an incident long forgotten. We have seen that the song "Toutes les femmes sont fatales" stirred Bertrand Carnéjoux's memory, serving as a leitmotif which related many important moments in Carnéjoux's life. In L'Oubli the leitmotif is the image "Le loriot chante" or "le chant du loriot" which lingers in Nicolas' memory, suggesting significant associations that he does not succeed in bringing to consciousness until late in the work. Whereas the song "Toutes les femmes sont fatales" was actually heard, stimulating memory of incidents related to the song, the Oriole's song is not heard by Nicolas, but is remembered repeatedly, suggesting

associations which elude Nicolas' consciousness. When the significance of "le chant du loriot" is eventually clarified, Nicolas solves the riddle of the forgotten lady's identity although he is unaware of this connection.

In many respects, then, L'Oubli represents a continuation of Mauriac's intellectual preoccupations developed in Le Dialogue intérieur. He has, however, limited his abstract obsession to a consideration of the effects of time, and pursues the application of his aesthetic theory to record the process of memory. Nicolas' introspective, intellectual consciousness constantly recalls Carnéjoux and Mauriac himself. Mauriac has, however, added an introverted literary element in L'Oubli, which tends to intensify his intellectual presence in the work. In effect, he interrupts the work occasionally to insert a footnote concerning his source for various ideas or technical devices. For example, splitting the page into two columns representing two simultaneous interior monologues, he writes, "(Hommage à Stig Dagerman, romancier suédois -- 1923-1954 -- C'est de lui que me vient ce lien, je le lui ai pris, il m'attache à lui: . . . )" <sup>18</sup> A substantial quotation from Dagerman follows the reference note to

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

clarify Mauriac's indebtedness to his alleged source. This self-conscious citation of literary influence further provides the subject matter for Nicolas' interior monologue. In this fashion Mauriac interrupts his protagonist's thoughts to comment upon the source of his technique, permitting Nicolas' interior monologue to enlarge upon the importance of the literary source as well as upon the technique inspired by that source. Such an authorial intrusion establishes the inseparable relationship between the mind of the author and of his protagonist, and consequently diminishes the fictional dimension of the work much as Mauriac's overt intrusion in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures and L'Agrandissement did.

The essentially intellectual elements of L'Oubli are little different from those in Mauriac's earlier fiction. It is in the area of technical accomplishment that L'Oubli represents a marked change from the works of Le Dialogue intérieur. The subtle cross references and interrelationships of the earlier works have given way, in L'Oubli, to an introverted, intellectual detective story, complete with a baffling mystery and assorted thieves. It is significant, of course, that our discussion has not had to deal with the "plot" of L'Oubli. The intellectual elements of the content (all related to

Nicolas' consciousness) tend to obscure what is superficially an extremely simple situation. On the fourth of August, 1966, Nicolas, a distinguished author of some fifty years, walks to a cocktail party at his friends, the Brouges' apartment, rue Suchet. He chats, observes, then meets an attractive lady who insists that they know each other, that they have had an affair. Nicolas, embarrassed at his inability to remember the woman, leaves with her; they dine and dance, planning to meet at his apartment later since she has an engagement. Nicolas walks home, reflects upon the girl's identity, vainly attempting to remember her, to associate her with his past. He arrives home, dismisses the housekeeper, reads Le Monde, thumbs through an album, remembers his numerous affairs, calls the Brouges to inquire if they know his companion, dozes off to sleep, has an elaborate dream involving various incidents from his past. Gradually the patterns in Nicolas' memory lead back imperceptibly at first, then more clearly to a moment when he was twelve in a park where he once met a little neighbor girl, whispered a secret to her while an Oriole sang. Nicolas can not remember the secret. An imagined sitting with his psychoanalyst leads to further memories and associations. Nicolas finally awakes, the woman (called Manou) arrives, they go to bed, he falls asleep, she



reluctantly steals a dossier, then remembers an important moment years before when a little boy whispered his secret to her -- Nijni-Novgorod, revealing a memory related to a film adapted from Gorki which took place at Nijni-Novgorod, now called Gorki. The ending, a self-conscious joke, reveals that the girl and the two thieves who followed her to Nicolas' apartment intended to steal "les plans secrets du nouveau roman."<sup>19</sup> Mauriac assures the reader, however, that the plans are safe, which may either relieve or disappoint.

As Robert Kanthers points out,

M. Mauriac a vraiment machiné son roman comme s'il était un roman policier: nous voyons Nicolas errer entre ses souvenirs vécus, entre ses livres et ses films du temps passé, nous avons l'impression qu'il est à cent lieues de ce qu'il cherche, et cependant il brûle sans le savoir, et le lecteur lui-même ne le saura que s'il revient sur ses pas après avoir achevé le volume, parce qu'il y a des souvenirs qui émergent sans que nous sachions pourquoi, comme si quelqu'un en nous faisait des liaisons à notre insu entre des fragments de notre passé. Comme pour accentuer ce caractère ironiquement policier, le souvenir d'Arsène Lupin (lié pour M. Mauriac lui-même à des activités cinématographiques) revient avec insistance sans que Nicolas sache pourquoi ou peut-être même puisse le savoir,....<sup>20</sup>

We have already attempted to characterize the intellectual quality of L'Oubli as represented by much of Nicolas'

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>20</sup>Robert Kanthers, "Le Temps s'en va et nous passons," Le Figaro Littéraire, no. 1074 (17 nov. 1966), p. 5.

conscious reflection. This intellectualization of much of the work's content is, however, the result of Mauriac's presentation of an intellectual detective story in which the psychology of memory will play the major role, actually composing much of the work. Early in the work the narrator states that Nicolas is being followed. Then Nicolas meets the lady-stranger. While Nicolas attempts to establish her identity in his memory, the reader is provided significant but subtle clues which finally reveal the lady's identity. The reader, then, must resolve the mystery, he must answer the riddle through careful attention to Mauriac's clues.

In L'Oubli, there is indeed a kind of plot as well as a narrator, both elements completely absent from the earlier works in which Mauriac's theory of simultaneous reality excluded both story and narration. Mauriac's narrative in L'Oubli, however, is carefully limited to the description of Nicolas' physical movements, or to concrete visual scenes, and even this small amount of narration functions much as stage directions for the dramatist, or scenario for the film director. The work seems to have been conceived largely in cinematic images, for the narrator consistently presents visual, unrelated images, suggesting either the movement of a camera from scene to scene, or, in the case of Nicolas' memory,

suggesting appropriate cinematic imagery to suggest the fragmentary, yet visual representation of Nicolas' interior monologue. This impression is verified by Nicolas and Mauriac's overt references to the work as a film as well as a "novel." The following scene reveals Mauriac's use of descriptive narration to set his stage in visual, cinematic terms:

Nicolas repose le livre sur la table. Il voit sans y penser ces objets, autour de lui, trop familiers pour qu'il les remarque....

Une photo sous verre de la cathédrale de Senlis, reconnue dans ses moindres détails tout à l'heure effacés.

des petits souliers d'enfants, oubliés sur le tapis bleu,

un grand bocal de pharmacie, style ancien, d'un bleu profond, violacé,

disposées dans le même cadre, en éventail, non loin du divan où il est assis, une dizaine de cartes postales du Paris de la Belle Epoque....<sup>21</sup>

The spacing of the text on the page is extremely important in L'Oubli, as seen in this passage. By separating the different visual scenes on the page, Mauriac insists upon the entity and separateness of each one, attempting to evoke the impression of a camera focusing upon different details of a room. The author's attempt to achieve a visual effect on the printed page produces some startling results. At one point, in order to reproduce a

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<sup>21</sup>Mauriac, L'Oubli, p. 77.

momentary blank in Nicolas' memory, Mauriac leaves the page blank. He is not, unfortunately, capable of letting the device make its own impression, for we read, ". . . Quelle drôle de mise en page. . . . Ces blancs, tous ces blancs."<sup>22</sup> This amused response to his own ingenuity, however, does not satisfy Mauriac, for he proceeds to explain,

Juste le moment où le narrateur n'est plus sûr....  
Il y a des lacunes dans sa mémoire qu'il n'aurait  
pu combler qu'en se et en nous mentant.<sup>23</sup>

By visually reproducing the memory blank, Mauriac claims, he simulates authentic recorded reality. He uses an equally striking technique to reproduce two simultaneous interior monologues. By splitting the page into two columns, the author simulates the simultaneity of the two thought sequences, further intensifying a visual impression of authentic reproduction. As the stranger leaves Nicolas' bed, they both think:

...cinq heures déjà  
Dormir, avec ou sans  
elle, mais dormir, me  
reposer. Chasser ces  
pigeons, tous ces pi-  
geons au-dessus du  
Vésuve. Volcans  
jumelés, seins, lave  
et feu du plaisir,  
Cybèle si belle.  
Refaire l'amour. Elle  
est là. L'appeler.  
Dormir.

non, cinq heures, il  
devrait faire jour,  
nuages blancs dans  
la nuit blanche, il  
est temps. Je ne crois  
pas qu'il dorme  
vraiment.  
Patientons encore un  
peu. Un ours en  
peluche. Un enfant  
dans la maison? Son  
enfant?

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

bref aboiement, des pneus crissent, une promesse de  
jour à fleur de nuit,

coup de frein au  
proche carrefour. Je  
la sens qui me sent.  
Rapprochés, unis par  
les bruits que nous  
entendons au même  
moment.

peu d'autos encore,  
mais je le sens qui  
me sent. Il me sait  
là avec autant de  
certitude que s'il  
avait les yeux  
ouverts.<sup>24</sup>

This example of Mauriac's technique demonstrates strikingly his attempt to evoke a visual impression of recorded reality. The thought sequences progress as isolated, yet connected units of a momentary reality. The impersonal, descriptive intrusion in the passage above again reveals Mauriac's narrator-role to be similar to that of creating a film scenario in which the sensory effects of sound and visual imagery suggest those special effects so important to a film's sensory orientation. The two-column technique is closely related to screen-splitting so common in film, wherein two or even several images may be present at the same time. As in cinematic technique, Mauriac's visual appeal attempts to simulate either simultaneous reality (the two-column interior monologue), or the process of memory in action (the flashes of fragmentary, subtly associated sensory images). Concerning this attempt to capture this labyrinthine explosion of memory, Mauriac explains

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 215-216.

the cinematic possibilities. "Il faudrait canaliser cette force prodigieuse, domestiquer le volcan, cela se fera un jour, cela se fait déjà, je l'ai vu dans un film."<sup>25</sup> This reference is probably to Robbe-Grillet's L'Année dernière à Marienbad, directed by Resnais, in which a barrage of dazzling, obscure images gradually reveals a series of patterns which intend to reproduce visually the elusive, fragmentary quality of memory.

One other technical device contributes significantly to Mauriac's simulated visually recorded reality. His scenario descriptions consistently produce an effect of concrete, present reality. As L'Oubli opens, we read:

Un homme dort, sur un divan, entouré de journaux dépliés, datés du jeudi 4 août 1966. L'un d'eux porte en lettres capitales, sur toute la largeur de la première page: ORAGE DANS LE COEUR DE CINQ VEDETTES. Autres titres, sur d'autres feuilles: Kossyguine a déclaré: "La coexistence pacifique devient une nécessité objective." -- Le mauvais temps fait refluer les touristes sur la Côte d'Azur. -- Tempête sur le massif du Mont-Bland. Deux alpinistes anglais meurent d'épuisement. Un faubourg d'Haiphong a été bombardé.<sup>26</sup>

This exhaustive, literal description emphasizes Mauriac's concern with visual detail as well as with "une réalité concrète." The author has not imagined or invented his opening scene. He has, rather, photographed a group of

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

news captions, creating an impression of visual precision and unpleasant banality at the same time. Certainly the daily news serves Mauriac's pessimistic philosophical orientation very well. The reader is forced to an unpleasant realization that these news headlines seem tedious because they are so familiar, so much a part of everyday life. Nevertheless, the presentation of such a variety of news stories tends to reflect the state of the human condition accurately, subtly reinforcing the author's belief that man is a prison of his own inclination toward violence, destruction and sensation.

Mauriac's presentation of concrete, present reality is even more elaborately found in lengthy passages which quote literally from Le Monde. Since Nicolas is reading that newspaper, Mauriac insists upon his authentic recording of reality by quoting an entire article reporting the United States bombing of Haiphong on the fourth of August, 1966. "(De l'envoyé spécial de l'A.F.P., Jean Rafaelli.)"<sup>27</sup> This distressing report, begun by Nicolas on page eighty-three of L'Oubli is reprinted in a single column to reproduce a newspaper effect. The text of the article, interspersed with Nicolas' reactions to it, is printed in full. At the end of L'Oubli the August fifth editions of newspapers are out, and Nicolas begins reading

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

an editorial concerning the war in Viet Nam, faithfully reproduced in the text. The author's own editorial comment, however, is powerful: "Nicolas a encore appris qu'il y aurait le lendemain vingt et un ans que sur Hiroshima tombait, au matin du 6 août 1945, la première bombe atomique. Puis il rendormit."<sup>28</sup> Mauriac's camera then focuses briefly upon the news headlines again, revealing many of those from the day before, as well as the additional caption that, ". . . Luci Baines Johnson, fille cadette du président des Etats Unis, deviendrait demain matin Mrs. Pat J. Nugent."<sup>29</sup> Mauriac's concern with precision has two equally important dimensions. First he insists upon the exactitude of minute, faithfully recorded surface reality. Second, he attempts to capture the more complex reality of the mind remembering in sequences of graphic, fragmentary imagery.

We have seen that L'Oubli represents a continuation of self-consciously intellectual fiction. This intellectual quality is largely a result of Mauriac's own literary and aesthetic theory, expressed in Nicolas' consciousness and in the author's overt intrusion in the work. The

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 237.



technical aspects of the work reinforce the intellectual quality of the work, for in every case, the technical experimentation is a self-conscious attempt to dramatize the author's theory. The technical experiments are frequently effective, but they appeal to an intellectual appreciation of the theory they are demonstrating. Even when the technique evokes a powerful sensory response, the author reminds the reader what he is attempting to achieve, thus tending to diminish the impression evoked by the technical device.

L'Oubli does, however (unlike Mauriac's earlier works), finally stimulate an emotional, and affectual, response. It is a paradox that the "plot" of L'Oubli, composed of subtle clues to be pieced together by the reader's intellect, leads to the evocation of a tone of futility and even pathos. It is not logical that a totally intellectual detective story should stimulate the reader's sensibility. The explanation of this phenomenon reveals Mauriac's skill in creating an intellectual suspense story, structured around an abstract theme -- memory or the passing of time. As the clues form coherent patterns, the reader realizes the vital importance of a scene when Nicolas was twelve, in which he talked of Arsène Lupin, and told a little girl an important secret while an Oriole sang. In itself this fleeting

memory seems insignificant, but the stranger lady, who admits at the end of L'Oubli that she had never seen Nicolas before, tells her fellow-thieves that she once knew a little boy who told her a secret, the "plan Nijni-Novgorod." The lady remembers that long forgotten scene because, she suggests, her interest in Arsène Lupin may have led to her choice of profession. Early in the work, not realizing Nicolas' role in her past she had jokingly asked him if he did not remember their secret -- Nijni-Novgorod. Even later, while remembering the little girl, Nicolas does not remember what he said to her.

It is Mauriac's technical skill in recreating Nicolas' memory and in cleverly spacing his clues which make this simple, even implausible situation highly effective. Even as Mauriac engages the reader's detective-intellect, the suspense appeals to the reader's sensibility, for he, not the characters involved, is aware of what has been forgotten. As the lady leaves Nicolas' room to disappear into another world, a sense of profound sadness is produced. This impression is not a result of what is recorded in L'Oubli; it is, rather, a response to the irony of circumstances dramatically demonstrated by the work. The reader, intellectually involved in solving a puzzle, is emotionally affected by the implications of the situa-

tion. While L'Oubli reiterates those intellectual pre-occupations of Le Dialogue intérieur, Claude Mauriac has refined his introverted technique to produce a work which intrigues the intellect and finally affects the reader by demonstrating the irony of circumstances. This impression is quickly destroyed, however, because Mauriac insists upon mocking his own achievement. By exposing the thieves to be literary vandals, intent upon stealing the plans of the new novelists, Mauriac undermines the seriousness of his work by a self-conscious parody. As in the earlier works, the reader is left with the self-conscious, intellectual presence of Claude Mauriac.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

The introduction to this study of the intellectualized content and experimental technique of Claude Mauriac's fiction attempted to establish a critical perspective upon the nature of the novel, especially with respect to its practice and evolution in contemporary fiction. Our most general presupposition has been that there is an important tradition in the contemporary novel which reflects a preoccupation with technical innovation intended to suggest states of human consciousness as opposed to the presentation of a picture of man in society (the traditional concern of the novelist). This tendency in the contemporary novel is characterized by an intellectual preoccupation with aesthetics, and a hermetic concern with theory and technique, generally reflecting an introverted or self-conscious point of view. The importance of the stream of consciousness technique in contemporary fiction directly reflects this introversion and self-consciousness which deals with a private, interior world of perception and reflection. Both Aldous Huxley

and Graham Greene have seen that there is, indeed, a tradition in the contemporary novel which is both self-conscious and intellectual in the sense that technical refinement and individual consciousness suggest its inspiration. Greene emphasizes that this tendency in contemporary fiction, represented by the English neoimpressionists, denies the importance of the human act.<sup>1</sup>

Huxley is more emphatic, characterizing such fiction as anemic and constipated.<sup>2</sup> In Point Counter Point, Huxley's Rampion singles out Proust as the archvillain, the progenitor of a self-conscious, intellectual mode in fiction which he declares is an endless masturbation.<sup>3</sup> These observations, although antipathetic to the tradition we have labeled hermetic or intellectual, reveal accurately the quality, the essence of that tradition in contemporary fiction. To limit our application of the term hermetic tradition to a manageable context, the literary lineage of

<sup>1</sup>Graham Greene, "François Mauriac," The Lost Childhood and Other Essays (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>Aldous Huxley, "Vulgarity in Literature," Collected Essays (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 104.

<sup>3</sup>Aldous Huxley, Point Counter Point (New York: Doubleday, Doran, and Company, 1928), p. 400.

Proust, Woolf, Sartre and particularly the French new novelists reflects a loosely related evolution of this tendency in contemporary fiction. Gide's concern with purity in the novel and his elaborate use of a writer-protagonist in Les Faux-Monnayeurs reveals that he is also related to this tradition wherein aesthetic theory plays a consistently important role.

Susanne Langer's observation that "Our interest in personality is what makes our world different and most of its problems relatively new,"<sup>4</sup> singles out a preoccupation in contemporary fiction which suggests the dramatic relationship of those writers we have grouped under the terms hermetic or self-conscious. All of these writers have revealed a two-fold preoccupation with personality. They are concerned first with an abstract concept -- the nature and function of individual personality -- and more concretely with the aesthetic problems of presenting an artistic version of their concept of personality in fiction. It is logical, probably inevitable, that a preoccupation with the nature of personality will lead to a concern with different aspects of the stream of consciousness technique in fiction, and ultimately will result in an introverted, self-conscious literature intended to reflect

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<sup>4</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 286-287.

the subtle, elusive quality of the human consciousness reflecting or perceiving. It is also this concern with human personality as represented by the conscious or perceiving mind which relates much of the fiction of Woolf, Gide and Robbe-Grillet, for example, to lyrical poetry, a relationship pointed out by Wayne Booth in The Rhetoric of Fiction, and developed as an important thesis by Ralph Freedman in The Lyrical Novel.<sup>5</sup> By attempting to present a subjective state of consciousness, or by describing the objective world relentlessly, this fiction recalls the aesthetic principles of lyrical poetry.

Northrop Frye's invaluable Anatomy of Criticism attempts to establish a systematic approach to literary criticism, and his study of fiction tends to confirm and clarify what we have called the hermetic tradition in contemporary fiction. Frye finds four strains or types of fiction which may, of course, coexist in the same work, a fact which has led to much critical confusion. The novel, the romance, the confession and the anatomy represent, Frye believes, four types of fiction, each characterized by a particular group of principles and qualities. The

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<sup>5</sup>See Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 62-63; 384-398, and Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 1-41; 271-283.

confession and anatomy forms of fiction, according to Frye, may be called intellectual and introverted and intellectual and extroverted, respectively. It has been our contention that the hermetic tradition in contemporary fiction, epitomized in many respects by Claude Mauriac and the French new novelists, reflects a literature not in the tradition or nature of the novel, but of the confession and anatomy, and that the appeal of this fiction is as Frye suggests, predominantly intellectual.<sup>6</sup>

Claude Mauriac's fiction is representative in several important respects of that group of French writers called the nouveaux romanciers, chosistes or new realists. Generally, the work of this group reflects an attempt to suggest the subtleties of consciousness and personality in a literature influenced by the phenomenological concepts of Husserl and Heidegger, or to present a concrete literature in which the physical world of perceivable images suggests an impersonal, objective reality, mechanically observed or recorded. As noted above, this generalization is supported by separate observations made by Langer, Booth and Freedman. Susan Sontag aptly summarizes the scope and accomplishment of much new novel fiction when

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<sup>6</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1968), published by the Princeton University Press in 1957. For Frye's discussion of prose fiction see pp. 303-326.



she emphasizes the importance of its tendency to deal with personality, or with the concrete, perceivable world: "Whether they try to transcend psychology by Heidegger's phenomenology (a powerful influence) or undercut it by behavioristic, external description, the results are at least negatively similar, . . . ." <sup>7</sup>

Mauriac's philosophic and aesthetic preoccupations relate him, to a certain extent, to both tendencies in the "new novel." In his concept of simultaneous reality, Mauriac implies an almost equal importance between simultaneous states of consciousness and the concrete, physical world. In practice, however, the physical world of objects is not described impersonally by the author, but is perceived through the eyes of various characters, frequently with extreme precision and acuity. In this way the thought sequences in all of Mauriac's work tend to reveal different kinds of conscious awareness. The character may perceive objectively an object or he may apprehend the objective world in terms of a subjective obsession, or as in the case of Bertrand Carnéjoux, a purely sensorial perception may lead to a highly abstract or subjective contemplation evoked by that perception. In L'Oubli, Mauriac himself records or

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<sup>7</sup>Susan Sontag, "Nathalie Sarraute and the Novel," Against Interpretation (New York: A Delta Book, 1966), p. 104.

describes the objective world, while Nicolas contemplates that world more subjectively, much as Carnéjoux did in Le Dialogue intérieur. Mauriac's treatment of objective and subjective reality is, however, consistently a demonstration of the author's own abstraction -- his concept of reality, and more important, the author insists upon underscoring the importance of his aesthetic principles relative to that concept of reality in all of his work.

It is this dimension of self-conscious preoccupation with aesthetic theory which most pervasively infuses all of Mauriac's fiction with a highly intellectual, introverted quality and, as a result, recalls Frye's view that the confession form of fiction is introverted and intellectual, revealing ". . . some theoretical and intellectual interest in religion, politics, or art. . . ." <sup>8</sup> The theoretical and intellectual interest in Mauriac's fiction is art: yet even this interest is intensely introverted and self-conscious, for Mauriac's aesthetic interests are largely limited to an obsessive concern with technique in his own work. The importance of this preoccupation is underscored in all of the works by the presence of a writer-protagonist, first Carnéjoux, then Nicolas, who speak overtly and at length for the author.

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<sup>8</sup>Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 308.

As we have seen, each of Mauriac's works includes an entire statement and apology for the author's concept of reality and in greater detail, of his aesthetic problems in the work in which these passages appear. Toutes les femmes sont fatales, Le Dîner en ville, La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, and L'Agrandissement represent Mauriac's successive attempts to exhaust his notion of simultaneous reality by controlling the spatial and temporal aspects of each work more rigidly than in the previous one. At the same time, Mauriac's decision to call these four works Le Dialogue intérieur indicates the contextual and technical principle that Mauriac hopes to have developed and demonstrated. Isolated thoughts and spoken words are only two dimensions of Mauriac's simultaneous reality. Equally important is tacit communication which results from a shared glance, a private exchange between two people that Mauriac believes to be the most profound kind of communication because its very existence depends upon spontaneous, mutual understanding. Mauriac's intellectual introversion does not allow this concept to go unexplained, and Bertrand Carnéjoux's reflections compose a persistent essay upon the phenomenon that Mauriac attempts to elucidate. Further, the introverted, confessional character of Mauriac's fiction is intensified in L'Agrandissement into a virtual literary essay in which recorded reality is excluded, pre-

senting not a picture of reality, but a discursive analysis of Mauriac's concept of the creative process (his own): this essay upon Mauriac's aesthetic principles results from Raoul's lectures on the interior dialogue, Carnéjoux's contemplations of his own attempt to record reality and finally Mauriac's overt explanation and defense of his own work. Ostensibly Mauriac purifies his work by finally defictionalizing it.

Much of the reality in Mauriac's fiction, then, composes the author's confession, directly reflecting his aesthetic preoccupations. The presence of a writer-protagonist in the works provides the mouthpiece for these confessional essays. Certainly Mauriac's use of a writer-protagonist is not new in fiction, but Carnéjoux's role is both more important and more introspectively intellectual than such predecessors as Huxley's Quarles or Gide's Edouard. In Toutes les femmes sont fatales, Carnéjoux studies his physical experiences intellectually, mentally exploring the possibility of capturing his experience in experimental fiction. Le Dîner en ville presents Carnéjoux as the host of the dinner, thus tending to establish him as the focal point of the novel. Again his major preoccupation is his own literature and his attitude is intellectual as he talks, perceives objects, the other people, and as he thinks constantly about the creation of his fiction. La Marquise sortit à cinq heures reveals the

same Carnéjoux, more withdrawn from the world, and consequently even less involved in direct human experience, thus freer to contemplate his past experience and his aesthetic theory. L'Agrandissement intensifies this introspective withdrawal even further, revealing the interior monologue to be nothing other than self-conscious essay. Nicolas, in L'Oubli, is a thinly disguised Carnéjoux or Mauriac, involved in an intellectual game of memory.

Bertrand Carnéjoux's mind may be called intellectual in two general ways. First, this protagonist is obsessed with abstractions and theory, especially his own aesthetic theory. Even more basically intellectual, however, is Carnéjoux's attitude toward experience. Obsessed with recording reality, experience in itself is merely a vehicle for his immediately detached, reflective analysis of the nature of that experience, in a sense relegating experience to the realm of the mechanical, the nonessential. Further, Carnéjoux's intellectual introversion is characterized by an objective quality of sensory perception. His perceptions are clear, precise and incisive, demonstrating a mind which observes objectively, with an eye for the significant detail. Especially in Le Dîner en ville and La Marquise sortit à cinq heures in which several characters are present, Carnéjoux's interior dialogue reflects the precision of his perceiving mind. Finally,

Carnéjoux's introspection, by no means unaware of itself, reveals a sense of irony which tends to relieve the self-conscious seriousness of the writer-protagonist's theorizing. Nevertheless, Huxley's metaphor of masturbation describes Mauriac's intellectual and physical process accurately. Through Carnéjoux and Nicolas, Mauriac presents an intellect which is introverted and insatiable, feeding upon its own theories to compose a fiction intended to demonstrate those theories. Even Carnéjoux's prolific sexual life is acutely obsessive and solitary, an act which provides only temporary release and intensifies a sense of temporal vulnerability and individual isolation.

The stream of consciousness technique is particularly appropriate to introverted, intellectual fiction, as Frye points out, since such a technique, by its very nature, reveals a private world of consciousness.<sup>9</sup> For Mauriac, this technique frequently becomes an essay upon an abstraction, especially in Carnéjoux and Nicolas' obsession with aesthetics, love, time, and death. The interior monologue of various other characters in Mauriac's fiction intensifies the intellectual quality of the works. Gilles Bellecroix is obsessed with presenting reality in the films he directs, this preoccupation composing many of his thoughts

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 307-308.

in Le Dîner en ville, and young Jérôme Aygulf's interior monologue in the same work reveals a need to act in support of his leftist political views. Claude Desprez's obsession with the historical past of the Carrefour de Buci in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures reveals an intellectual, introverted consciousness whose role is as important as Carnéjoux's. Desprez's erudition provides a body of literal, historical material which further characterizes Mauriac's concern with intellectual precision.

This insistence upon the presentation of quoted historical material in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures suggests an aspect of Mauriac's fiction which is, to a large extent, representative of the anatomy tradition in fiction. This type of fiction, according to Frye, is both intellectual and extroverted and may be characterized by learned conversation, encyclopaedic erudition and stylized characterizations.<sup>10</sup> Much of the intellectualized content in both Le Dîner en ville and La Marquise sortit à cinq heures reveals an affinity with the extroverted tradition of intellectual fiction. In Le Dîner en ville the quality of the dinner conversation is pedantic if not always erudite. Such conversation is obviously extroverted as

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 308-312.

opposed to the introverted simultaneous interior monologues and dialogues, and the conversation, while frequently superficial and banal, projects information and opinions concerning literary and historical topics which interest most of the people present. The dinner conversation, although it does not reveal the most vital reality of Le Dîner en ville, is nonetheless sophisticated, superficially intellectual and usually learned, representing both the extroverted and intellectual quality of the anatomy in fiction. The presence of encyclopaedic historical research, quoted at length in La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, may also be called extroverted since it is literally represented and exists independent of Desprez's consciousness. This body of literary and historical material is intended to constitute an erudite demonstration of temporal continuity, suggesting the omnipresence of an historical past at the Carrefour de Buci. Such a body of material does, in fact, provide an anatomy, a learned analysis with satirical overtones, of the human condition as represented by the historic intersection.

As we have seen, much of the subject matter in Mauriac's fiction is intellectual in itself, dealing with various abstract preoccupations, especially with the author's aesthetic concerns. In addition to this intel-



lectual and intellectualized content, Mauriac's technical theory also produces results which are intellectual in their appeal. Each work is structured upon a system of subtle, cleverly placed relationships and clues which, when integrated by the reader, are supposed to reveal the unity and harmony of the work. Carnéjoux and Mauriac frequently explain the importance of the subtle and hidden elements in each work: "La composition serait rigoureuse sous des apparences relâchées. Minutieux agencements. Equilibres subtils. Symétries cachées."<sup>11</sup> The very nature of this kind of technical appeal is to the intellect. Mauriac's self-conscious technical cleverness, although it is an important aspect of his aesthetics, does not, finally, appeal to an aesthetic response or to a response of sensibility. Rather, the reader is engaged in an intellectual game in which he must discover and fit the clues and hidden signs together. The importance of this kind of sleuthing is ironically exaggerated by Mauriac in L'Oubli, which, on the anecdotal level, is an intellectual parody of the roman policier, to be solved by the reader. The four works comprising Le Dialogue intérieur are related primarily

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<sup>11</sup>Claude Mauriac, Toutes les femmes sont fatales (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1957), p. 218.

through Mauriac's use of clever cross-references which presuppose the reader's familiarity with the previous works. The impression produced by Mauriac's system of allusions and clues closely resembles the challenge of a cross word puzzle or, in mathematical terms of a series of algebraic equations. Such an introverted set of interrelationships suggests the artifice of Mauriac's technique which appeals to an intellectual kind of problem-solving. The aesthetic failure of this kind of appeal is implied in Susanne Langer's observation that "The cardinal principle is that every artifice employed must be employed to a poetic purpose, not because it is fun, or the fashion, or a new experiment, to use it."<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, much of Mauriac's experimentation appears superficial because it is self-consciously imposed upon the work's content to serve not a poetic, but a dogmatic, theoretical purpose.

Further, Mauriac's recording of thoughts in verbal language adds, inadvertently, an intellectual quality to all of the works. In the interior monologues of the various characters Mauriac intends to reveal consciousness at various levels of awareness. However, in Le Dîner en ville and La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, even the recorded thoughts of characters who are obviously unintel-

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<sup>12</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 282.

ligent, suggest, paradoxically, an intellectual, or at least an objective quality. This effect results from Mauriac's attempt to record thought patterns in differentiated, revealing language. The pettiness or stupidity or insecurity of a character is thus revealed, but the mind in action is too aware of itself, the egocentric thoughts are too lucid and calculating. Consequently, even the thoughts of the characters who are revealed as extremely subjective are so clear and self-aware that a kind of objectivity is created. This paradoxical impression suggests a major aesthetic difficulty in the presentation of several simultaneous interior dialogues. It is possible to argue that consciousness can be expressed verbally only when thoughts or perceptions are at a verbal level of existence in the mind. Mauriac's attempt to differentiate his characters' thoughts forces him to construct several sets of concise verbal patterns which are meant to express nonverbal levels of consciousness. By multiplying the number of simultaneous consciousnesses in Le Dîner en ville and La Marquise sortit à cinq heures, the interior monologues become stylized in order to be readily distinguishable. This stylization eliminates the illusion of complexity in the characterizations and produces the seemingly objective impression in the thought sequences.

The intellectuality of Mauriac's fiction consistently recalls the confession or anatomy traditions in fiction, and the intellectuality of the content of Mauriac's fiction is intensified by a highly self-conscious technical manipulation in all of the works. Indeed Mauriac's aesthetic principles and his fictional achievement represent the epitome of intellectual self-consciousness and experimentation. This body of fiction does depict a world, but it is an intellectualized world characterized by uninterrupted self-consciousness and does not, on the whole, ". . . convey a vision -- both inner and outer -- which resembles no other."<sup>13</sup> In Mauriac's claim he seems to have confused unique artistic vision with intellectual preoccupation, and in practice Mauriac's fiction is constantly verging on what may be described as an impasse of authenticity. This impasse results from Mauriac's refusal to admit the function of such concepts as imagination and creativity into his aesthetic theory. Thus he immediately limits his work to an attempt to describe exactly, to represent in language a reality which is composed of thoughts, words and tacit communications. He conceives the novelist's role as a mechanical one, destined to record reality much as a

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<sup>13</sup>Claude Mauriac, "The New Novel in France," New York Times Book Review, June 19, 1960, p. 4.

camera or tape-recorder. Further, he insists that any subject matter is as good or acceptable or authentic as another because it is not the novelist's job to select or transform reality, merely to describe what reality appears to be to him. Such a concept of the writer identifies Mauriac's theory as representative of the so-called new realists who claim to record perceived reality.

The limitations and vulnerability of Mauriac's theory are numerous and can be logically demonstrated. First it can be argued that such an aesthetic theory is foreign to the very nature of art. To describe exactly may be important in the creation of a work of art, but as an end in itself it is no more artistic than the intention of newspaper script or a film documentary, either of which may be artistic, but both follow discursive, not artistic principles of achievement.<sup>14</sup> Mauriac's concern with recording reality precisely represents, to a certain extent, the abdication of the artist's role: the meaning, importance or form of reality is denied or ignored by Mauriac's theory. Further, such a theory limits the nature of reality to the surface, to the external world, surely an arbitrary emasculation of Reality or Truth. It is in fact paradoxical that while Mauriac's

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<sup>14</sup>See Langer's discussion of the nature of art in Feeling and Form, pp. 3-41.

theory insists upon a literature that describes reality exactly, Mauriac attempts to capture verbally a reality which does not technically exist at the verbal level -- the reality of consciousness or thoughts or perceptions. Mauriac is aware of this paradox, and it is a result of his insistence upon authenticity that he finally enters his own work to declare that the only reality he has presented is the reality of his own mind since he can not authentically simulate thoughts of characters whose existence is foreign to his own experience. He is reduced to disclaiming not only imagination or artistic transformation but fiction itself.

Mauriac's achievement is, however, more convincing and interesting than his theory. In Le Dîner en ville and La Marquise sortit à cinq heures there is an illusion of artistically formulated reality. Mauriac's concept of simultaneous reality and the interior dialogue is demonstrated with clarity and dramatic force in these two works. The movement of thoughts, conversations and tacit communication is carefully structured and evokes a vital, although egocentric and petty, view of man and experience. In L'Oubli Mauriac's picture of memory in action is psychologically dramatic and the author's appeal to a sensory vitality in memory is vivid and skillfully structured. It is Mauriac's constant intru-

sion in each work that marks an artistic imbalance in the name of authenticity. Since his own aesthetic theory is Mauriac's most abiding concern, he is forced to propose that very theory as a large part of his personal reality. This self-conscious intrusion destroys the artistic illusion of reality and on Mauriac's terms this is a logical process, for he must remind the reader that his fiction does not intend to be an illusion but a recording of reality. Mauriac's powers of observation are acute and his literary and historical research are painstakingly accurate. His attitude is sophisticated and intellectually stimulating and his stylistic virtuosity is intriguing. The appeal of Mauriac's fiction however, is relentlessly intellectual. Such a one-dimensional appeal may stimulate the intellect, but it does not affect the reader. This fiction presupposes an intellectual preoccupation with the aesthetic theories so important to Mauriac, and in its introversion, presents a sterile, hermetic view of human experience. Intellectual theory, or even the self-conscious demonstration of an intellectual theory does not constitute the poetic illusion of human experience. Such a view does not formulate feeling as Langer says,<sup>15</sup> and in Mauriac's fiction,

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

it ignores the complexity and subtlety of human experience so accurately described by Aldous Huxley: ". . . the consciousness of events which we have immediately, through our senses and intuition and feelings, is incomparably subtler than any idea we can subsequently form of that immediate experience."<sup>16</sup> Mauriac's fiction tends to reduce the novel to the essay, thus moving from the artistic illusion of experience to the discursive presentation of aesthetic theory.

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<sup>16</sup>Huxley, "Vulgarity in Literature," Collected Essays, p. 104.



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