

*The Subject in Question: The Languages of Theory and the Strategies of Fiction.* By DAVID CARROLL. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. 1982. vii + 231 pp. £10.50.

The title of this monograph may impress the reader by its scope. In his introduction, David Carroll defines his aim: the book 'attempts to give neither a theoretical account of fiction nor a fictional account of theory' (p. 3); it 'proposes different critical strategies for dealing with the various theoretical and fictional texts treated' (p. 8).

Being especially interested in the French New Novel, Dr Carroll has chosen some novels of Claude Simon as material for analysis. As for methods of investigation, post-Jamesian, psychoanalytical, Marxist, and structuralist — that is, pluralistic — approaches are used. Different 'languages of theory' and their rather complicated relationship with modern fiction are critically discussed. The author has no preference for any single approach or method; he allows the reader to find his own way among different trends in modern literary criticism.

Of course, not every chapter is strictly devoted to 'the subject in question'. It could be said that Chapter 7 is the only one where the relations between the language of theory and the novelist's strategy are the centre of investigation. Jean Ricardou's analysis of Claude Simon's *La Bataille de Pharsale* allows Dr Carroll to co-relate *bricolage* as literary strategy and the *bricoleur's* approach to the text. In other chapters (2–6), he gives examples of critical analysis in various methodologies and does so with originality and persuasiveness.

Chapter 6, to my mind, is marked by the highest degree of integrity. Claude Simon's novel *Histoire* is analysed by means of the synchrony-diachrony opposition. The main principles of the structuralist approach to the text are here clearly defined and well illustrated.

The book is successful as a whole; but it must also be praised for certain specific achievements. In Chapter 1, the difference between phenomenological 'ideology' and structuralist 'science' is lucidly described and commented on. In Chapter 4, the evolution of Georg Lukács as a critic and a thinker is clearly delineated. Historians of Western literature will be especially interested in the brief discussion of the relations between social history and the nineteenth-century European novel (pp. 119–20).

There are some points in the monograph which can and will raise objections. Certainly, David Carroll is perfectly justified in representing the Marxist approach to literature by the sole figure of Georg Lukács, and he is not far from the truth when

he comments on the Hegelian nature of some of Lukács's viewpoints; but it is not correct to call Lukács's theory a 'metaphysical' one (p. 105). In Marxist theory the word 'metaphysical' is traditionally opposed to the word 'dialectical', and the latter quality is characteristic of both Marxist and Hegelian thought. It is strange that, in his remarks on formalism in literary criticism, the author completely ignores the famous Russian Formalist school, though he does mention the late Mikhail Bakhtin's attacks on the formal method.

On the whole, the book will surely be useful and of interest to literary scholars and students. In a laconic way, Dr Carroll says a great deal and says it well.

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