APPROCHE PHENOMENOLOGIQUE DU PROBLEME DE LA REALITE

DANS L'OEUVRE ROMANESQUE DE JULIEN GREEN

PAR

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THESE

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SUMMARY

Julien Green's novels show a sense of the enigma of reality which reductive analysis fails to understand. It appeared interesting therefore to analyse the work from within and to follow the text itself in order to see how different forms of reality emerge from it. A phenomenological approach is chosen as the most appropriate for this purpose. This approach increasingly reveals that a deeper relationship exists between the phenomenologists and the writer, so much so that it seems possible to define Green's 'phenomenological style'. The first five chapters deal with the determination of this style. One can observe in Green's work the attitude toward reality as in the phenomenologists (chapter: "À la recherche du réel"): that is, not to define the substance of reality but to follow the movement by which reality takes form through the consciousness of the characters. One may conclude that although Green firmly maintains the existence of a 'échelle des réalités' in which the supreme reality—God—dominates all other realities, still reality as we experience it remains elusive,
changing, in contradiction with itself, and must be conquered. There is a marked similarity in the way both Green and the phenomenologists try to grasp this reality. Imagination, for instance, is not a turning away from reality but a procedure by which reality is tested and confirmed (chapter: "La réalité et l'épreuve de l'imagination"). Further, phenomenology identifies reality in its empirical evidence, mainly through visual perception. But, this vision tends to become eidetical or a vision of essences. This attitude is apparent also in the novels of Julien Green (chapter: "La vision essentielle")

The phenomenological principle of reduction is also illustrated in Green's novels (chapter: "Réduction et modes de vision"). The theme of the mirror symbolises the phenomenologists' tenet that the world has to be put within parentheses in that that consciousness leads to contemplation by itself. That reduction can never be totally fulfilled, however, is again symbolised by the image of the veil.

The study of language (chapter: "Langage et réalité") further confirms the similarity between the phenomenologists and Green. Although the comparison between
Merleau-Ponty's theory of language and Green's language appears quite illuminating, it is however in the area of language that differences appear to exist. For Merleau-Ponty, human language itself is enough to reveal reality, while for Green there is a divine 'archi-parole' only which can bring reality into being.

In the final four chapters an attempt is made to understand more clearly the various forms of reality. This is a more traditional literary study of themes. A further development of the study of language (chapter: "Les techniques d'expression du réel") is considered to form a link between the two parts of the thesis since language is both a way to grasp reality (the first part) and also an expression of this reality (the second part).

The analysis of symbols, images, and myths leads to a comparison of Green with the symbolic movement; but the symbolic elements in Green's writing appear also to be a way to reach reality, to form 'une voie d'accès au réel'. The chapter on this theme attempts to show how intimately literary analysis and philosophical meditation are related.

The study of the reality of time (chapter: "La réalité temporelle") is necessary to understand both the rhythm
and structure of Green's novels and how the reality of 
being is also being-in-time although a feeling for what 
is beyond time is possible. The chapter on "La réalité 
spatiale" completes the study of time. The reality of 
the world is confirmed only in so far as space becomes 
a living-space, but here too a longing for a 'beyond' 
remains. Finally the reality of the other (chapter: 
"La réalité d'autrui") appears as the converging point 
of all questions about reality. Only through intersub-
jective relations and particularly through meeting with 
the 'Other' (l'Autre) can reality be confirmed. Green 
maintains his belief in an 'échelle des réalités' and 
in the existence of a transcendent reality, still a 
reality as experienced by Green's characters. This rea-
liity as seen through the medium of a story becomes am-
biguous in perpetual transformation and is never achieve-
ed. It is a reality which has to experienced again and 
again.