Frédéric Vitoux and the Art of Indirect Expression

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T he relationship of the writer to language is clearly of major importance. Writers have, no doubt, always been aware of the difficulty of conveying what they want to say in exactly the right words, and one remembers particularly the comment of Flaubert's Rodolphe that "la parole humaine est comme un chaudron fêlé où nous battons les mélodies à faire danser les ours, quand on voudrait attendrir les étoiles.[1]   Since Flaubert's day, this difficulty has developed into a serious questioning of language itself, and of its ability to grasp non-linguistic phenomena. Saussure's famous affirmation of the arbitrary nature of any link between the signifier and the signified led to the realisation that words are not a transparent medium through which the writer has direct access to the world around him or her. As Barthes puts it: "On est ainsi ramené au statut fatalement irréaliste de la littérature, qui ne peut évoquer le réel qu'à travers un relais, le language, ce relais étant lui-même avec le réel dans un rapport institutionnel, et non pas naturel."[2] This leads, on one hand, to a sense of freedom, for language was now cut free from the dictionary and from the restraints of usage and custom. Language, and, through it, literature, is seen has having multiple meanings with which the writer can work unfettered by convention. However, this very multiplicity of meanings carries dangers with it, for, if language is saturated with meaning, perhaps, in the end, it has no meaning, for it cannot be pinned down.

These doubts about language are reinforced by certain other implications of Saussure's theories. Jameson points out that: "Saussure [. . .] is deflected by his very terminology from the whole question of the ultimate referents of the linguistic sign. The lines of flight of his system are lateral, from one sign to another, rather than frontal, from word to thing."[3] If, as Saussure argues, signs signify because of their relationship to other signs within a system or language, the relationship between a linguistic system and any reality exterior to it becomes tenuous. For certain theorists, language is a closed order in which each sign refers to another one, which refers to another one, and so on, in a process over which the speaker (or writer) has little or no control. Genette writes: "Le langage ne peut imiter parfaitement que du langage, ou, plus précisément, un discours ne peut imiter parfaitement qu'un discours parfaitment identique,

bref, un discours ne peut imiter que lui-même."[4]

This means that the writer cannot grasp in language anything outside of language, and that he or she has little control over language anyway. This has obvious implications for those who see literature as a mimetic activity that attempts to "copy" life. But it has implications beyond that, for such theories may be seen as an "attack on the traditional conception of authorship, authority and the authorial self."[5] For many writers, the result has been "undeniably single and strong, and can only be characterized as one of intense anxiety,"[6] and Derrida describes it as "un formidable mouvement d'une inquiétude sur le langage - qui ne peut être qu'une inquiétude du langage et dans le langage lui-même."[7]

This process is a complex one, and the summary presented here necessarily simplifies it. However, it is sufficiently familiar to the literary critic for this brief description to suffice. Indeed, the inability of language to grasp anything exterior to itself has become somewhat of a commonplace of literary criticism, and the above summary is presented only as a reminder that the contemporary novelist often has to come to terms with serious doubts about the ability of his or her medium to convey anything beyond itself. Such doubts are often openly confronted through the use of metafictional techniques that acknowledge the problems inherent in the use of language in fiction. But it would be wrong to assume that this sort of reflexive writing is the only way of coming to grips with the problems of language. There are also texts that use quite "traditional" means of "telling a story" but which also show awareness of the pitfalls inherent in the use of language. These texts wrestle with the problems of language and the relationship of the text to non-linguistic reality, but they do not do so in an obvious or self-conscious way. Frédéric Vitoux's texts are an excellent example of this non-reflexive approach.

Vitoux is clearly a story-teller, a writer who delights in telling tales that grip the reader's imagination. Critics have pointed to his "incontestable talent de conteur" and have described him as "ce que l'on appelait autrefois: un écrivain," and as "un écrivain comme on n'en fait plus."[8] One might say of him, as he has said of Céline: "Il raconte pour le simple plaisir de raconter."[9] Several of his texts are historical novels that lovingly recreate the atmosphere of past times; some are love stories; one is a detective novel. In other words, we are dealing with very "traditional" themes and techniques incorporated in texts that seem to assume a direct connection between words and a reality beyond language.

But Vitoux's novels are not *just* well-told tales. Although they do not appear at first to raise questions about language and the relationship between the literary text and what lies beyond it, they do deal with these issues too. Vitoux is well aware that language does not constitute a direct and stable link with non-linguistic reality, and he knows that words have little purchase on the world around us. Indeed, they may even be used to isolate us from that world. He points out that, for two such different writers as Proust and Céline, the written word "leur

permet [. . .] d'échapper au monde, à une réalité qui leur est insupportable" (*Céline*, 20). He argues that Céline was often irresponsible and openly racist in his writing partly because he was aware that words were not part of the non-linguistic world. He believed that his pronouncements would have no effect on events because of this "décalage [. . .] entre le réel et les mots" (*La Vie de Céline*, 160).

Vitoux, too, has doubts about the nature of language. To use his own description of Céline, Vitoux is "cet homme de la parole se méfiant des mots, des mensonges, des fantasmes verbales" (*La Vie de Céline*, 160). There can be little doubt that Vitoux is describing his own feelings when he writes that one of his character (who is also a writer) belongs to "la confrérie de ceux qui savent la vanité des mots" (*Deux Femmes*, 15).

In his own texts, Vitoux comes to terms with the difficulty of grasping the world outside the text by approaching that world indirectly. Instead of attempting to seize it openly, he grasps it obliquely. He has said: "Un écrivain est quelqu'un qui ne doit pas dire exactement les choses."[10] Whatever the truth of this as it applies to writers in general, it is certainly an accurate description of his own technique. In his novels, he uses the very fact that langauge is imprecise and that it is saturated with meaning. He turns the suggestive power of words to his own advantage by alluding to and hinting at other realities and other presences behind what he appears to be saying. It is almost as though he uses what he calls "les vertus amplificatrices de la suggestion" to approach non-lingusitic reality and take it by surprise.[11] Consequently, his texts reveal things in the empty spaces that they leave, in the gaps between what they seem to be describing. "Non," he writes, "un romancier (ou un poète) doit parler toujours à côté."[12] Even the feelings of his characters and the emotions generated by his texts are conveyed indirectly, and he has described his goal as the creation of "une parole paisible qui laisse filtrer par ses vides les éclats et les émotions."[13] He tries to make the reader imagine a reality behind the events and characters that he describes.

Hence, Vitoux's historical novels, which appear to describe individuals involved in historical events, achieve much of their effect through creating other worlds and other presences that are latent in these people and events. In *Charles et Camille*, for example, he tells the story of Charles, a young officer of the Swiss Guard who escapes the mob at the time of the French Revolution, and who seeks sanctuary in the Venetian Embassy. Here he recovers from his wounds and falls in love with Camille, the French governess of the Ambassador's children. The horrors of the massacres going on in Paris are never openly described, but their presence is felt by the contrast that they form with the quiet, sheltered world of the Embassy. Charles is later forced to leave the Embassy, and, in time, he becomes an agent of Revolutionary France, using his position to search for Camille. He finds her in Venice, which is presented as another closed world that attempts to ignore the dangers of Napoleon and his army. Again, the threat represented by Napoleon is present mainly in the frivolity of life in Venice, and in the very

attempt to ignore the danger. The more Venetians try to forget the outside world in pleasure-seeking, gambling and masked balls, the more Napoleon's presence is felt. The glorious past of Venice is evoked in the decadence into which it has now fallen, and the power that it once held is seen in the very decay of its fleet. Camille, meanwhile, is half in love with a young Venetian named Leonardo. A kind of triangle is formed between these two and Charles, and whenever two of them are together, they are so aware of the missing one that he or she seems to be there with them, guiding their words and actions.

A somewhat similar situation is evoked in *Esther et le diplomate*, in which François, the representative of Revolutionary France in Florence, is keenly aware of the chaos of war and revolution mainly by contrast with the calm of Florence. The immobility of the Florentine leaders and their reluctance to take sides throws into sharp relief the swiftly moving events in Europe that are barely mentioned. *La Comédie de Terracina* is also saturated by the presence of Napoleon and Revolutionary France, but this time the novel is set after the fall of those régimes. In it we meet Henri Beyle (not yet writing under the name of Stendhal), who seeks escape in Italy from the dreary bourgeois world of post-Napoleonic Europe. Everywhere in the unheroic world around him, he sees reminders of a glorious Napoleonic adventure of which he was a small part, and which still governs his acts and fires his imagination.

Sérénissime is set on the Île Saint-Louis in the 1930s, and it depicts a group of individuals who so dislike the France and the Europe that is coming into being that they decide to work for the independence of their island. This constitutes an attempt to ignore the rise of Fascism, the anti-Jewish laws being introduced in Germany, Mussolini's Ethiopian campaign, and the political divisions rending France, but these political realities are all present since, although rarely mentioned, they are the very motivation of the characters in their search for independence. The outside world is also there, by contrast, in the peace and tranquillity of the island. We read of life on the Île Saint-Louis: "Il ne s'y passait rien, et tout s'y reflétait." (92), and Vitoux himself has said of this novel: "J'ai préféré évoquer cette histoire en la rapprochant de la dexième guerre mondiale pour mieux souligner le contraste entre les menaces d'une apocalypse qui s'apprêtait à fondre sur le monde et l'irresponsabilité heureuse de mes protagonistes."[14] Another presence in this novel is evoked by the very title: the Venice whose sturdy independence the protagonists try to hold up as an example.

In *Fin de saison au palazzo Pedrotti*, Giuseppe Pedrotti tries to hide from the ugliness and the political realities of modern life by shutting himself in his palazzo, where he dreams of an ancestor who fell in love with Adélaide Belgioso, one of Rossini's prima donnas. But the political divisions outside his palazzo enter in the sounds of unseen celebrations held by various political parties in the town square. The very past of which he dreams holds within in awareness of the present. Finally, he falls in love with a brash young woman who brings even more alive in his mind the beautiful, idealised prima donna. From then on, whenever one of these two is

present, the other stands behind her as a kind of shadow. One critic aptly comments that this novel is: "Construction au point d'ombre dont les personnages ne sont que des reflets."[15] Even death, which threatens the narrator's female companion when she falls ill, is evoked obliquely. It is in the calm atmosphere of the hospital, in which the narrator senses "peur de la maladie et de la mort" (85). Its hidden presence is conveyed by the scene in which the narrator surveys a curtain of trees hiding a graveyard, and "ce rideau, déchiré en lanières verticales, laissait deviner l'ordonnance des tombes" (130).

The narrator of *La Nartelle* goes to the south of France to launch a book that he has written about the American landings there in 1944. He is assailed by memories of summers spent here in his childhood, and, behind the modern Americanised South of France (symbolised by the American landings) stands the one of his childhood. While there, he invents a story of two lovers, set in the nineteenth century. These two characters seek escape from politics by isolating themselves in a small village, but political events and violence in the village penetrate their retreat, and are always present in their minds by contrast with the peace of the house in which they live. Vitoux's goal here is: "Suggérer, comme un continuel effort de mirage à l'intérieur du mirage, ou comme un autoportrait constamment gommé par un autre."[16]

Roger in *Il me semble désormais que Roger est en Italie* is another character who flees the ugliness of the modern world. But, as he travels in Italy, he can sense that world behind the quiet hill towns and the beautiful churches. When he dies, Roger himself becomes even more present in the narrator's mind, inspiring him to write this text. The short stories in *Riviéra*, reveal behind their depiction of the modern Côte d'Azur, the traces of an earlier age when life was slower and tourists were refined and rich. One story in this volume is a particularly fine example of indirect revelation. "Les Deux Paris Match" tells how an adolescent boy discovers the poverty and mediocrity of his own family background by comparison with that of a girl who fascinates him because of the glamour of her wealthy milieu. He enters briefly a world in which "ses échelles habituelles, l'ordre de la logique, des habitudes, des points de vue semblaient d'un seul coup bouleversés" (51). Without actually describing this character's background, Vitoux reveals it by such telling details of another world as the fact that the girl's parents buy *two* copies of *Paris Match* so that each can read the most recent copy at the same time.

Les Cercles de l'Orage is dominated by the presence of storms and cyclones at sea without any of these actually being described. While Captain McWhirl is away at sea, he, and the dangers that he confronts, are all the more present in the peaceful domestic life of his family because his wife and daughter constantly think of them. The cyclones that he faces become even more present in their safe lives when they suddenly cease to receive messages from him. Their lives are like the still centre of these cyclones, a stillness in which the surrounding storm is constantly present by contrast. In this novel, "la distance et l'absence apparaissent

nécessaires pour permettre à l'imaginaire de combler l'insuffisance ou l'opacité de la réalité."[17] One critic of this work writes: "Selon Frédéric Vitoux, le typhon qu'il faut choisir de contourner ou de braver figure les conditions et les limites du roman."[18] In fact, what Vitoux chooses to do is sail around the storm, as it were. His whole novel achieves its effect by avoiding direct confrontation with what he actually wants to convey. His is "une parole paisible qui laisse infiltrer par ses vides les éclats et les émotions."[19] Even when he writes biography, Vitoux has used this indirect approach. In addition to his straightforward and "direct" biography of Céline (*La Vie de Céline*), he has also written a book entitled *Bébert, le chat de Louis-Ferdinand Céline*. As the title implies, this is a "biography" of Céline's cat, and there is little doubt that Bébert does stand and the centre of the text. But, of course, through the life of Bébert, Vitoux is also writing about Céline's life. The houses in which the cat lives, his surroundings, the principal events described are a reflection of, or are provoked by, the circumstances of Céline's life.

All the texts so far described illustrate Vitoux's indirect approach to reality outside the text. There are, however, two novels in particular that most obviously show him reflecting on the art of writing and on the need to approach non-linguistic reality obliquely. The first of these, *Cartes postales*, is a meditation on literary creation. In it, the narrator comes into possession of a collection of post cards, and, as he sorts through them, he tries to imagine who sent them, to whom they were sent, and what links might exist between these people. He invents lives for the senders of the cards, describes events that they may have known, and imagines motivations for what they write. Like any novelist, he is creating characters and events from a few premises, ordering imaginary lives according to a logic that he imposes. As the narrator himself points out: [Il] s'agit alors de TOUT réinventer, de forger à ma guise la famille rêvée, ses menaces, ses deuils, ses joies, ses rivalités, ses espérances. Clarté d'une histoire *recrée*. Encouragement à imaginer. À écrire" (30. Capitals and italics in original).

What is more important for our purposes is that the narrator chooses to invent his stories by imagining what lies *behind* the cards, by looking at the messages written on them and attempting to read between the lines and to guess what is not explicitly stated. He even speculates that the various ways in which the stamps are affixed to the cards may constitute a code, and he tries to deduce the character of the senders from their writing. The scenes represented by the pictures on the cards are likewise used as a spur to imagine a place and a time, and to guess why a particular image was chosen for a particular person: "Qu'importe l'image en soi d'une calèche qui s'éloigne au coin d'une rue! L'essentiel est dans le geste qui le met en mouvement: l'émotion naît de l'attente de ce qui va survenir" (210). The characters invented to explain why the cards are sent are shadowy figures conjured up from a few images, referred to by one critic as "ces silhouettes arrachées à leur immobilité."[20]

Vitoux suggests a whole world, a society of the past, and characters living at that time.

He recreates the France of the first couple of decades of the twentieth century by simply describing some images on post cards. This was, of course, a time dominated by the First World War, but, curiously, the cards rarely mention the war. Yet its presence can be felt behind many of the greetings and messages, a kind of absent presence that is all the more disturbing because it is rarely named. Even the cards that are sent by soldiers in that war do not often refer directly to their experiences: "Les combats, la mort se marquent par défaut, par ce silence qui rôde autour de ces cartes tragiquement bavardes et futiles" (23). The very absence of details about the war becomes an eloquent statement about it, and "par leur absence complète de détails sur la vie des tranchées, les messages qu'ils envoient s'avèrent si obsédants" (53). When the war or other tragedies do affect the writers directly, they are referred to obliquely by various circumlocutions such as "circonstances trop longues à raconter sur cette carte" (99).

In one of the stories imagined by the narrator, a soldier at the front is wounded and unable to send messages for some time. The sudden silence, the very absence of communications from him, become an obsessive presence in the mind of the girl waiting for him to write. He becomes a "présence-absence douloureuse et exaltante" (145). When he is finally able to write, he makes light of his wounds, but the very lack of details becomes more eloquent than lengthy description, and his post card is "carte qui, par la brièveté poignante, laisse soupçonner l'évidence muette de la guerre" (158). The soldier in question is represented as an individual who never openly expresses his emotions, and whose goal in his postcards is "montrer qu'*ailleurs* résident toutes ses pensées, tous ses espoirs" (137. Italics in original).

Andréa, the person to whom the cards are sent, and who originally collected them, is, perhaps, the most mysterious of the characters. Even though the postcards are sparing in details about their senders, they say even less about the person to whom they are sent. She is "Andréa l'absente" (61). Yet she is the most essential and weighty presence, for, without her, the messages would not have been sent. Naturally, she becomes the centre of the stories that the narrator invents, despite the lack of details about her. In much the same way, the photographers who take the photographs for the cards are absent from the images, yet the cards would not exist without them. They are present in the choice of images, in the style of photography, in what is highlighted or kept in shadow. Yet they are never actually seen. The place that Andréa and the photographers occupy is like the empty space at the centre of any text, and the narrator of *Cartes postales* states that his goal is to make the reader aware of this space. His aim is: "Parler du centre de tout récit comme d'un espace silencieux qu'il faut s'efforcer d'atteindre, que l'écriture a seulement pour but de rendre sensible dans son absence *tangible*" (39. Italics in original). Both Andréa and the photographers may be taken as images of the writer, who stands in the gap left at the centre of the narrative, an absent presence who is always sensed but who is never directly present.

Yedda jusqu'à la fin is also a meditation on the form and language of the novel. It begins

with the death of the narator's neighbour, Yedda, who leaves him her library. As he moves methodically around her empty apartment, noting and cataloguing the books, he tries to reconstruct Yedda's life and personality from the books that she read. This, of course, is one more an image of the way in which the writer builds up his or her fiction from hints, memories and items in the world around, and also from other texts that inevitably influence his or her creative process.

The epigraph to this novel indicates that we are also dealing with Vitoux's usual indirect expression, for it quotes the following lines from Victor Hugo: "Comme ce maniaque qui faisait sa soupe en suspendant près de la cheminée un morceau de viande qui se reflétait dans l'eau - et qui trouvait exquis ce bouillon d'ombre." *Yedda jusqu'à la fin* likewise evokes shadows and reflections. Foremost among these is Yedda herself, who is revealed in her books, and "les livres deviennent les témoins, jalons, signes d'une vie morte dont ils constituent l'assise et la légende."[21] Yedda's library becomes "un labyrinthe à emprunter pour tenter de retrouver en son centre la *présence* de sa propriétaire" (31. Italics in original). The titles of her books, the editions chosen, the order in which they are placed on the shelves, the rooms in which they are kept, all reveal Yedda's tastes, her life of adventure with her husband (who was an archeologist), and her declining years in her apartment on the Île Saint-Louis. The narrator discovers that: "Une bibliothèque ouvre un espace vital et révélateur. Chaque livre engage. Il révèle son possesseur" (32). Gradually, behind the text that describes the narrator's journey through this library, another one takes shape, revealing the life and times of a woman who, although absent, becomes obsessively present.

Yedda is revealed not just in the books that are in her library, but also in the ones that are *not* there. Her tastes and her dislikes are evident from the works that she chose *not* to read, and she appears in the gaps in her collection. In fact, the narrator finds these gaps fascinating, and he describes them as "une zone de vide dont le silence — scandaleux — me séduit" (125). When he discovers her journal, he also realises that Yedda is revealed more in what she decided *not* to write than in what she did write. Then, as he remembers his past conversations with her, he understands that she told him more about herself in what she did *not* say than in what she acutally chose to speak about. Her silences, her avoidance of certain topics, her evasive answers to certain questions were as eloquent as her words. He moves around her empty apartment, and her very absence makes her seem present. He senses her in the bare rooms, in the marks left in the dust by furniture that has been removed, which become "une sorte d'inscription en creux" (188). Even when he returns to his own apartment, beneath Yedda's, he is conscious of her in her absence, in the fact that when the telephone rings, he does not hear her answer it.

One of the things that the narrator learns from his exploration of Yedda's library is her fear of death, which she never explicitly revealed during her lifetime. He concludes that she

did not like writers like Céline (whose works are not among her books) because of their preoccupation with death, and "il ne fallait surtout pas l'importuner avec la misère et la mort qui rôdaient autour d'elle" (132). The very fact that she kept a diary, recording her life as though it would continue for ever, indicates this fear. Her diary is thus "la plus grande illusion: celle du refus de la mort, même si cette mort nourrit l'essentiel de ses réflexions" (161). Beyond this fear of death, he discovers the actual presence of death: "Et finalement c'est une double image qui ondule et surgit du fond de cette recherche: l'image non pas de Yedda mais de sa mort" (12). Although he discovers Yedda in her books, it isYedda's death that he also sees. "Elle m'y apparaît surtout *morte*," he concludes (121). After all, he points out, it is only after its owner's demise that a library is normally examined, catalogued and dispersed, so death is present in every moment that he spends in Yedda's library. He sums up the situation: "Une bibliothèque rapproche de la mort" (32).

Yedda's choice, in her declining years, to abandon the outside world and to hide herself in a book-lined apartment, reveals her dislike of an ugly modern world. The narrator sees that her library was a form of protection, and the absence of books about contemporary life shows how much she disliked the modern world. Her choice of a certain kind of literary text also reveals her family background and education, and her attachment to "une culture classique, approfindie et sage" (52). The narrator discovers "les valeurs culturelles sur lesquelles Mme. Goddard et son mari ont vécu" (51). Behind these books lies a world that has now disappeared. Her archeological texts, Forster's *A Passage to India*, Lawrence's *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, novels by Malraux, all speak of a world of adventure, unexplored deserts and European expansion which no longer exists. The death of an age, a culture and a certain literature are present in Yedda's library without the need for Vitoux to describe them directly. As Alain Clerval points out, "avec la mort de Yedda Godard, Frédéric Vitoux évoque la disparition d'un romanesque exotique, disparu en même temps que la vocation impériale d'une Europe qui s'interrogeait encore sur son destin."[22]

Yedda jusqu'à la fin ends with this sentence: "En attendant, l'appartement est vide et il n'y a plus rien à dire" (190). These words may be interpreted in two ways. They may be seen as an ironic comment, since the whole novel points to the fact that it is precisely in the silences, gaps and empty spaces that a work like this is most revealing. Or, they may simply mean that there is nothing more to be said, since this emptiness speaks for itself and reveals more than any words ever could. In either case, they may be taken as a comment on the whole of Vitoux's fiction, which reveals most when it appears to be depicting something else. In a body of work ranging from fairly obvious meditation on the process of writing, to texts that are deceptively straightforward and "traditional," he has pursued one possible means of coming to grips with the world outside the text and outside of language while providing a literature that holds the reader's attention by its ability simply to spin a fascinating story.

Notes

[1] Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (Paris: Flammarion, 1966), p.196. I have used the following editions of Vitoux's works in this article. (The place of publication is Paris): *Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Misère et parole* (Gallimard, 1973); *Cartes postales* (Folio, 1973); *Bébert, le chat de Louis-Ferdinand Céline* (Grasset, 1976); *Les Cercles de l'orage* (Grasset, 1976); *Fin de saison au palazzo Pedrotti* (Seuil, 1983); *La Nartelle* (Seuil, 1984); *Il me semble désormais que Roger est en Italie* (Actes Sud, 1986); *Riviéra* (Seuil, 1987); *Céline* (Belfond, 1987); La Vie de Céline (Grasset,1988); *Sérénissime* (Seuil, 1990); *Charles et Camille* (Seuil, 1992); *La Comédie de Terracina* (Seuil, 1994); *Yedda jusqu'à la fin* (Folio, 1995); *Deux Femmes* (Seuil, 1997): *Esther et le diplomate* (Seuil, 1998).

[2] Roland Barthes, *Essais critiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), p.264.

[3] Frederic Jameson, *The Prison House of Language* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1974), p.32.

[4] Gérard Genette, *Figures II* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p.55.

[5] Howard Felperin, *Beyond Deconstruction. The Uses and Abuses of Literary Theory* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1985), p.29.

[6] Felperin, 109.

[7] Jacques Derrida, *L' Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), p.9.

[8] Dominique Bona, "Le rendez-vous du romanesque,"*Le Figaro Littéraire*, no.14973 (12 oct.1992), 4; Claude Mauriac, "L'ensorcellement même,"*Le Figaro Littéraire*, no.1581 (4-5 sept.1976), III; Agnès Vaquen, "Plaisir d'écrire,"*La Quinzaine Littéraire*, no.481 (1er au 15 mars 1987), 11.

[9] Frédéric Vitoux, "Les Trouvailles du système Céline," *Le Magazine Littéraire*, nos.136-137 (mai 1978), 78.

[10] Hector Bianciotti, "Frédéric Vitoux: "Conrad m'était nécessaire pour parler d'autre chose,""*La Quinzaine Littéraire*, no.232 (1-15 mai 1976), 7.

[11] Bianciotti, 7.

[12] Bianciotti, 7.

[13] Bianciotti, 8.

[14] In a letter to the author dated 14 October, 1998.

[15] Nadine Sautel, "Une construction au point d'ombre," *Le Magazine Littéraire*, no.193 (mars 1983), 59.

[16] Nadine Sautel, "L'Éternité d'une passion," *Le Magazine Littéraire*, no.219 (mai 1985), 85.

[17] Alain Clerval, "L'Attente du récit," *NRF*, 48, no.384 (août 1976), 106.

[18] Claude Mauriac, "De la stratégie romanesque des tempêtes," *Le Figaro Littéraire*, no.1556 (13 mars 1976), 14.

[19] Clerval, "L'Attente," 107.

[20] G. R., "Frédéric Vitoux: *Cartes postales*," *NRF*, 42, no.269 (sept. 1973), 103.

[21] Alain Clerval, "Frédéric Vitoux: *Yedda jusqu'à la fin*," *NRF*, 52, no.307 (1er août 1978), 129.

[22] Clerval, "Frédéric Vitoux," 129.