

Les mémoires de nos lauréats

Selon une tradition désormais établie, nous demandons aux diplômés ayant obtenu les meilleurs résultats dans chacune des langues germaniques de résumer les lignes de force de leur mémoire. Pour l'anglais :

Mélanie Cüpper, *Less is more or less. Richard Brautigan: Willard and his Bowling Trophies (A Perverse Mystery), Sombrero Fallout (A Japanese Novel)*

The visuality, fragmentary arrangements, narratorial hopelessness, and cacophonous simplicity of Richard Brautigan's *Willard and his Bowling Trophies* and *Sombrero Fallout*, render both texts comparable not only in their structures and stylistic fast-foodism, but also in the themes which they address. While recognizing the influence and effect of consumer goods, food and American mass culture, the growth of technology and changes in the perception of reality, both novels identify the psychological difficulties in establishing (authorial) individuality in a fragmented world. Focusing on minimalist concerns for the near-at-hand, the domestic, the unexceptional, and the unpretentious, Brautigan, the writer of discontinuity and juxtaposition, aims at the enunciation of problematical and temporary truths while saying a minimum rather than a maximum: in his fiction, there is a constant vacillation between the maximalism of being and the minimalism of everyday life.

Willard and *Sombrero* are (meta)narratives, ordinary and transcendent at once. *Willard* is a novel full of sketches, a well-balanced mixture of erotic narrative and detective novel, where Anacreon is quoted while the door is kicked in; this *Perverse Mystery* is a collage of the hazardous interaction of the lives of two neighbouring couples and that of the picaresque Logan brothers. *Sombrero* is a literary triptych made up of the humorist's life, a Japanese dream and the story of a town; this *Japanese Novel* is the narration of a humorist's internal and a town's external conflict and the general progressive loss of proportion.

The subtitles *A Perverse Mystery* and *A Japanese Novel* express the author's wish to present his texts as if they were written in accordance with certain established conventions of genre; academically ignored, however, Brautigan's (pop)ular fiction remains mysterious, and to some extent genre-less; a vacuum of interpretation is left to be filled by a diversity of means, ranging from Marxist and Freudian thought to Adornoism and Hegelian dialectics up to visual art aesthetics and the author/text ("readerly") and text/reader ("writerly") relationships. *Sombrero* and *Willard* challenge not only the notion of the writer's or the reader's role, the idea of authorial control versus collaborative creation, but also the classification of the epistemological identity of the narration and its objects. Are they synoptic, analytic, or panoptic?

Like Brautigan's texts, my study employs a wide network of surface (main text) and depth (footnotes) to interconnect divergent ideas: Schopenhauer's Platonic disclosure is juxtaposed with Barthes' theories of myth and Debordian Situationism; there is a sombrero, some bowling trophies, a *papier-mâché* bird and lots of food, which is associated with the sex appeal of the (in)organic and examined from a number of recent theoretical perspectives including Lyotard's and Jameson's definition of postmodernism, while the whole leans towards semiotic fetishism, and Baudrillard's and Eco's descriptions of the hyperreal in American post-culturalism.