



ISSN : 2350-0743



## REVIEW ARTICLE

### THE REAL NOVEL, REJECTION OF NOVELS?

\*Dr. Serge Fuchet

France

#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Article History

Received 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2025

Received in revised form

27<sup>th</sup> March, 2025

Accepted 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2025

Published online 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2025

##### Keywords: Missing

Contemporary, Intriguing  
Imagination.

#### ABSTRACT

The novel is a work of long-term prose imagination centered on characters and representation of observed reality. Since the sixteenth century, when it appeared in its contemporary form, that of a long story, this literary genre has never ceased to attract vocations and has accumulated thousands of novels on themes as varied as their respective values can be. The famous formula of a contemporary critic according to which "true novel begins with the rejection of novels" is therefore not surprising: there is novel... and novel. What is more intriguing is this principle of refusal. Is it conceivable? Why would a novel not feed on... novels?

\*Corresponding author: Dr. Serge Fuchet

Copyright©2025, Serge Fuchet. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: Dr. Serge Fuchet. 2025. "The real novel, rejection of novels?". International Journal of Recent Advances in Multidisciplinary Research, 12, (05), 11237-11239.

## INTRODUCTION

Should the critic who wrote this sentence ignore novels, whatever their form, nature, theme or plot? To conceive an authentic novel, true, subconsciously worthy of the name, it would be in the best interest of the critic not to look for a fundamental source of inspiration. From this principle is nourished the implicit distinction between true and false novel. It is also easy to understand that the false novel is one of plagiarism, a space for "negroes" in low-level literature and mass consumption. There are many poor copies of Tristan and Yseult, Robinson Crusoe, War and Peace or The Stranger: Chrétien de Troyes, Daniel Defoe, Léon Tolstoï or Albert Camus, to name just a few, were emulators among the authors of fiction. It is in relation to this deformation of the writing that this powerful feeling of rejection is expressed, where a latent desire for purity of the literary work maintains the very concept of existence of the true novel. This one develops within the literary genre of fiction. It welcomes over time new creations that form, like a family, an elite of the genre. Works of the past, of the present find their place there, as if they had been selected, classified, listed in a library of the real novel by this contemporary critic. As a sentence both murderous and generating, the formula, if it naturally finds leisure to apply to today's society, takes on a timeless dimension and selects, like species, the novels of the past, as she will ruthlessly make future creations of fake novels and real novels.

Thus, each novel has its own reputation for a literary genre which some people have regarded since the beginning of the century as "out of breath", despite its protean character. It is in fact a vector of all currents of ideas and subject to the conjuncture. It is then possible to think that a plethora of "false novels" have ended up corrupting the genre and compromising its very existence. So is it the concern to avoid plagiarism above all, but also harmful influences, which must motivate the rejection of novels? Is there not in the extreme path of thought a refusal of the kind, to its fundamental principles? One can only detect an implicit incentive to open up to other literary genres. The "true novel" has thus a vocation to borrow from poetry its lyrical, fantastic, surrealist style, as evidenced by the metaphors and symbolism that nourish the stylistics of Marcel Proust's work, or the surrealism and preciousness of Jean Giraudoux's novels. It will also be inspired by the theatre with which the novel genre presents so many similarities in the staging of conflicts or fates, and even cinema in the attempt made necessary to a narrative reproduction of reality.

Paul Valéry did not wait for the Nazi regime to burn books to express such a powerful refusal. It is an ideal of ideological purity, similar to that of "purity of the race", which has animated the Hitler youth in front of the pyres where went in smoke so many false novels with regard to the conception that had this regime of literature. Paul Valéry was an enemy of the novel genre. He was the first to say so. André Breton, in his

first Surrealist Manifesto, reported the Nihilist's comments on his willingness to never consent to write that "the marquise left at five o'clock". In a text entitled *Novel and poem* written for the special issue of *La Nouvelle Revue Française* on 1 January 1923 in tribute to Marcel Proust, Paul Valéry set out to grasp the essence of the novel genre by opposing it to poetry. On the day when Paul Valéry claimed that it was impossible for him to write a sentence like "The marquise asked for her car and left at five o'clock", the novel awakened national awareness of the scandal it represented in literature. This murderous phrase uttered by the nihilist somehow echoes the formula "The true novel begins with the rejection of novels". Until the declaration of the thinking master of Nihilism, the novel grew peacefully away from critics and Aesthetes, in the happy unconsciousness of literary genres that do not yet enjoy an official existence. Suddenly, here he is "rejected with a disdainful phrase into nothingness from which he should never have come out, and all the Novelists, suddenly pulled out of their sleep of creators, vaguely worried or completely desperate according to that they take the ideas more or less seriously, sobered in all case, hit each other in the chest and meditate on the vanity of their art "as Claude-Edmonde Magny so well wrote in a text entitled *The crisis of the novel*.

### **"THE NOVEL HAS THUS ACQUIRED A NEW FUTURE PERSPECTIVE"**

And it is a comparable ambition that can spring from a thought altogether very close to that of Paul Valéry, but much more general, to the extent that it is not an incentive to open up to poetry but to a much wider search for sources of inspiration, which deliberately ignores novels and turns to other genres, and especially to other disciplines. Because we must not forget that the novel is a corpus for philosophers, historians or sociologists. Great and authentic novels have been designed in relation to the humanities and psychology. The author of the "true novel" thus describes the emotional life of the "passions" in *Manon Lescaut* or *The suffering of young Werther*, uses *Psychopathologie* in *The Horla*, or evokes in the wake of Freudian and Reichian thoughts the emergence of the unconscious in the conscious. The "true novel" no longer needs novels to be built, because these have lost this informative function that had made the genre triumph in the nineteenth century, due to the correlative development of human sciences, especially history, sociology... Everything that can be artificial and ideological can also be rejected in novels. Novels are not ready-made explanations, much less a model of intelligibility of the world.

The novelists wish to create types of novels that do not propose clear stories but that would restore the opacity, the simultaneity of lived. The "true novel" is, in my opinion, an attempt to reproduce the real and return to the good old sources of the literary genre that are its avatars: Naturalism and Realism. The "true novel" will reject the stereotype of a novel, because there are archetypes of romance or adventure novels, spy trials or science fiction! On the contrary, he will not shy away from mystification, even if he relates imaginary facts, but will pretend to express the likelihood or artistic truth. Indeed, as Malebranche wrote, "it is by the strength of our mind that we discover the truth, and it is by the freedom of our mind that we are free from error "... to the point of making Stendhal say: "We can no longer reach the truth only in the novel." He is indeed endowed with a double truth. This one is first of all historical because the novel restitutes the facts and

people as if we were contemporaries. It is then psychological because it makes us better understand the meaning of this reality. To write everything, I will quote Michel Butor, the author of *The Modification*: "It is an essential component of our apprehension of reality".

It is therefore in this attempt to represent the observed reality that he embodies that the novel can be qualified as true. To restore the opacity, the simultaneity of the lived experience, such is its purpose. It implies a special attention to the writing and its role, as well as the renunciation of certain characters of the story. This attempt at the *Nouveau Roman*, prefigured by Virginia Woolf and Louis-Ferdinand Céline, stages the difficulty of telling by giving oneself characters and a story and cutting short as and when with this illusion: the characters are dissolved in time according to a process of depersonalization where silence and incommunicability reign. The world of objects then becomes predominant, according to Goldmann, author of the essay *For a sociology of the novel*. This novel, in its representation of the observed reality, is being built as an object, notes Michel Butor. The specificity of the novel has dissolved: novels are less new novels than rejections of novels.

### **"THE NOVEL IS INDEED AN EXPRESSION OF THE REJECTION OF NOVELS"**

There is a process of representation of reality, not because it attempted to stage the everyday, but because it lost its narrative specificity. As Robbe-Grillet writes about "the New novel", "Our novels are not meant to create characters or tell stories". This new wave of writers that he represents so well and which began to make talk about it with Samuel Beckett and Nathalie Sarraute in the forties, creates "the anti-novel" against the traditional novel, rejecting any psychological concern, moral or ideological.

He has the extraordinary faculty of rejecting novels as such, while trying to reflect on the novel. "The New novel" is the school of refusal but also the school of the novel. This ambivalence illustrates the depth of the problem. "The new novel" tends to define itself against the traditional novel, more than against the genre of fiction, or at least against the myth it has forged of the traditional novel. As such, it is defined above all by its refusals.

He demonstrates by the historicist development of his "school" that it is impossible to refuse everything in novels, or to refuse all novels. He ends up needing the novels, just as he irresistibly calls for an interpretation that is external to him and yet will complete it. Thus, seeking in itself its own end, and not in an ideological or moral message, the new novel presents itself as a kind of reflection on the novel itself. Sartre wrote of Nathalie Sarraute's *Portrait of an unknown* that it was an "anti-roman". In fact, the formula of "anti novel" would apply better to the works of "the school" because what describe or tell the New Novelists is what happens before the novel begins in the classical sense of the term, before there are characters and a story, before any exhibition scene. In short, it is a question of whether or not an apparently simple undertaking such as

writing a novel is possible. Through this reflection on the novel it is then possible to design a "true novel", but it already seems that it becomes difficult to refuse the novels en bloc. The "New novel" is more the school of nuanced refusal. It is above all, and exclusively, to reject the traditional novel of type Dumas, its conventions, that is to say "some outdated notions". The novelist must no longer be omnipotent but must disappear from the narrative and limit himself to the role of the anonymous narrator. The character must give way to "a broader, less anthropocentric consciousness"; the plot is dislocated. As *The Modification* shows, Space and Time must be perceived according to our human experience, that is, with backtracking, projects. To make the novel evolve, it is not the content but the form that must be changed. The "New novel" is de facto a partial and conditional rejection of novels.

Is "the New novel" therefore a fake? More generally, a novel that will not refuse the novels will be necessarily false? Should we not instead look for the falsity of the novel in the imposture that makes it a "lie-true"? According to Aragon's expression, the novel falsifies life because, like all art, it chooses in reality and recreates it. As Guy de Maupassant wrote, "To make true is therefore to give the complete illusion of the true, following the ordinary logic of facts." In the light of her thought, she shows the unbearable lightness of the representation of reality; she questions this principle as a criterion for the authenticity of the novel. The true novel is perhaps at its beginning a rejection of novels, but it is not perhaps one that represents reality, no matter what the proponents of Naturalism or Realism.

However, the rich hours of French literature confirm the principle of the existence of the "true novel". It would not be long ago that a critic came one day to affirm that there is no real French novel although this is controversial. It would be perjuring many illustrious writers such as Chateaubriand, Maupassant, Constant, Hugo, Barjavel and so many others... Only, it is necessary to give oneself the means to understand what a "real novel" is, and it is not necessarily by refusing novels that one succeeds, nor, moreover, by conceiving it as a pure product of the imagination or even as an authentic representation of reality. There was not only Naturalism or Realism in Literature.

It is true that Futurism, a doctrine rejecting everything that belongs to the past, can encourage the rejection of novels. Did this one inspire the writings of Blaise Cendrars, Guillaume Apollinaire or Max Jacob? Is it not rather to detect a somewhat passionate taste for modernity? Nothing is less certain.

## CONCLUSION

Has Classicism accepted such a principle? There was in the artistic achievements of that time such admiration for the Ancients and for Greco-Latin culture, considered as such as the paradigm to imitate, that one misunderstands the novel by Madame de La Fayette, *The Princess of Clèves*, as not having inspired many humanistic novels. Camus, Gracq or Sartre must have found inspiration for their authentic masterpieces in classical or humanistic novels. Beyond the intellectual and artistic currents, it is certain that the Ecole du Nouveau Roman created "the anti-novel" against the traditional novel, rejecting certainly any moral, psychological or ideological concern, but also wanting to reflect on the novel. Making a novel reflect on the novel is already beginning to accept the novels. Or Michel Butor's *La Modification* is a real novel. So a real novel can start with the acceptance of novels. There are real novels as there are authentic works of art: the gallery of portraits would be well stocked. French literature is rich in its past. But should we infer that these novels are "true" because they were born from the rejection of novels? Perhaps because the paths to perfection in literary creation are impenetrable, as are the roots of truth. In any case, a novel is true by its nature because it is supposed to be a representation of reality. If it can therefore refuse some of its congeners, the true novel cannot exclude the true novels... because it is called "roman".

## REFERENCES

- Frédéric Acquaviva, *Isidore Isou, Hypergraphic Novels 1950-1984* (english language), Romanian Cultural Institute, Stockholm, 2012
- Mikhaïl Bakhtine, *Aesthetics and theory of the novel*, Moscow, 1975; translated from Russian by Daria Olivier, Gallimard, 1978.
- Serge Fuchet, *Treatise on Actants and Spaces* (english language), Our Knowledge Publishing, 2024