

whether to follow his own path or the path defined by society. This moral struggle not only encompasses the dominant concerns of the novel but also becomes the central concern for the rest of Gide's works. Michel is weak at the novel's close, a seemingly failed Nietzschean superman who faces an existential dilemma.

By ending the narrative with an open-ended question, Gide created a modernist work of art posing many of the same questions about human existence that JEAN-PAUL SARTRE and ALBERT CAMUS raised in the middle of the 20th century. In this way, *The Immoralist* is not only representative of its age but also foreshadows philosophic thought to come.

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Blake G. Hobby

I'M NOT STILLER (STILLER) MAX FRISCH (1954) With *I'm Not Stiller*, the author's third novel, the Swiss playwright and novelist MAX FRISCH (1911–91) established himself as a major contributor to post-war German literature. The English title is also the first sentence of the novel, whose central themes are generally held to be the existentialist quest for the modern self and, in close connection with that, the intricate dynamics of male-female relationships.

This focus of the novel on individuals and their private lives was perceived as unusual in the highly politicized literary field of the 1950s and '60s, especially when applied by a writer whose dramatic work stood firmly in the tradition of the German playwright Bertolt Brecht. Despite the novel's inbuilt satire of Swiss state officialdom and, for its time, shockingly matter-of-fact explorations of adultery, most early critics would either accuse *I'm Not Stiller* of being comparatively apolitical (and hence bourgeois) or—as MARIO

VARGAS LLOSA does as late as 1988—justify their high esteem of the novel by overemphasizing its political implications. Among modern academics, by contrast, critical discussions of the text primarily center on its philosophical background, narrative techniques, and multilayered imagery.

Whereas the style of *I'm Not Stiller* seems almost colloquial and deceptively straightforward, its structure is highly complex. Questioning personal identity not only with regard to the protagonist but also on the levels of narrator and author, Frisch communicates his story through several different and sometimes contradictory perspectives. Their organization and the general blueprint of the novel could be summarized as follows: Carrying an American passport under the name Jim White, the protagonist/first-person narrator travels back to Zurich. At the border, he is recognized as the Swiss sculptor Anatol Stiller, who has been missing for the last six years and is suspected of espionage and other illegal activities. During his imprisonment—he is released after 10 weeks—White/Stiller attempts to put his case in writing and thereby convince the court of his "true" American identity. He fills seven notebooks, which are, for the most part, what we read. Books one, three, and five contain his persistent claims to being Jim White (which he upholds even when faced by wife and friends); various diary entries about his current prison life; and his reflections and fantasies of, or related to, his years in America, where he seems to have been vainly searching for his personal version of the American Dream—that is, an authentic existence diametrically opposed to the stifling mediocrity of contemporary Switzerland.

Books two, four, and six are different. The mysterious narrator remains the same, as is clear from his occasional interjections. Yet here he produces seemingly objective third-person accounts of the missing Stiller. By means of focalization, he successively adopts the viewpoints of Stiller's beautiful, fragile, and sexually unresponsive wife, Julika (book two); his well-intentioned but habit-governed prosecutor, Rolf (book four); and his sensible, thoroughly emancipated ex-lover, Sybille (book six). Finally, in book seven, the narrator caves in and hesitantly acknowledges his identity with Stiller. All this is then followed by a 50-page epilogue

written by the prosecutor, Rolf, who also happens to be Sibylle's husband but has nevertheless become a friend of the accused, and now presents himself as the editor of Stiller's prison notebooks. "The Prosecutor's Epilogue" describes Stiller's renewed but doomed attempt at married life with Julika, which ends bleakly with her illness and death after two and a half years.

This skeletal summary at least hints at the numerous ambiguities in connection with narrative authority that Frisch plays with and at times quite explicitly highlights in the text. From whom do we learn about the various figures and how far can we trust their views of themselves and one another? The epilogue, for example, has been read as anything from a negligible and artistically misguided add-on to a thinly veiled authorial statement. What is less evident is the extreme and yet lucid subtlety with which Frisch, as in all his major novels, traces the difficulties, especially among lovers, of one understanding the other.

There are also Stiller's exuberantly vivid descriptions and adventure fantasies—for instance, when he talks about the Chihuahua desert or his subterranean cave experience in Texas. Crammed with allusions ranging from popular media culture to ancient myth, from Calvinism to westerns to Hades to matriarchy, these narrative excursions allegorically prefigure and reflect the more soberly realistic events of the novel. Perhaps, with its alternating creation of absorbing illusions and alienations of the reader, *I'm Not Stiller* might be considered Brechtian after all.

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Rudolph Glitz

INDIFFERENT ONES, THE (GLI INDIFFERENTI) ALBERTO MORAVIA (1929) The Italian author ALBERTO MORAVIA (1907–90) began writing

his masterpiece *The Incomprehensible* when he was 17 years old. Published when he was 21, *The Indifferent* bourgeois family during the 1920s. Moravia explicitly states that the novel is a moral or satirical novel. The Italian novel with dramatic overtones read out loud what was contained almost nowhere afterward.

Moravia's novel reflects the influence of French realist writers, such as Marcel Proust, and of the Russian Fyodor Dostoevsky. The novel takes place over a couple of days in Rome. The title's unity of time in a concentrated period, unlike the traditional novel, is the mother of a new sentimental, hypocritical, lover, Leo, seduces Carla, who she was a child; the ideal of a new life. On several occasions, Carla tells her to begin a new life but also because he was in a villa, which he graciously offers her. The title of its real value: a family to realize this. Frisch suffers from apathy. He manages to pitifully insert an ashtray at Leo but instead. Finally he buys a house to kill him, but it is a pathetic figure.

Michele is the story of a man who is unable to love anyone. He makes love to his mother, the lover of Leo's before. Michele is disgusted by his feelings, sentiments, that Leo proposes to marry him. Leo makes a last-ditch effort to persuade him with it. This is to no avail. He marries Leo, and the last part of the novel and Mariagrazia dresses herself to become their son's fiancée.