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Review: *Apikoros Sleuth* by Robert Majzels

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φ boundary 2  
1 (1) Fall 1972:  
150.

θ Is Spanos's representation entirely accurate? Could we say instead that the postmodern paradigm has less to do with frustration and refusal than with the virtue of not jumping to ethical conclusions?

ξ In a recent interview, Majzels indicated his desire for a "different kind of reader." To read this book is to become that different kind of reader—one that is estranged from the text because the text does not lend itself to comfortable linearity, yet, at the same time, one that is forced to read closely, intimately, lest the thread of meaning be lost completely. λ

In "The Detective and the Boundary: Some Notes on the Postmodern Literary Imagination," the American postmodernist William Spanos distinguishes the modernist paradigm from that of the postmodernist using the metaphorical figure of a detective. The modernist detective relies on "the comforting certainty that an acute "eye," private or otherwise, can solve the crime with resounding finality by inferring causal relationships between clues which point to it ... suggesting the primacy of the rigid linear narrative sequence. φ

The paradigm of postmodernism, on the other hand, is that of the "anti-detective story ... the formal purpose of which is to evoke the impulse to 'detect' ... in order violently to frustrate it by refusing to solve the crime." φ/θ There are no final solutions.

Without revealing the (re)solutions with/in Majzels's narrative, it is into the latter paradigm that *Apikoros Sleuth* snugly fits. This book raises questions that will not be answered, but does so in an evocative way that is symptomatic less of a collapse into despairing and hopeless nihilism than it is of courage in the face of the indeterminability of logic and language (and, consequently, of a fixed ethics). ξ

λ Similarly, the most effective way for this reviewer to present his sense of the spirit of the book is to talk around it (that is, without revealing its particulars) whilst simultaneously throwing himself into its centre by presenting his review in a form that is nothing more than a reinterpreted reproduction of the original.

## *Apikoros Sleuth* α

by Robert Majzels ψ

144pp / Mercury Press (2003) / \$19.95

Reviewed by Emmet Cole

α A novel

ψ A  
Canadian

**A** *pikoros Sleuth* is a postmodern β detective novel presented in Talmudic format: Forgive me if comparisons and convenient categorisations don't come readily. Majzels's novel, his third, delivers a double movement, which points the reader towards and away from the authoritative language of ethics. The quasi-Talmudic format (similar to the format used here) evokes a nostalgia, perhaps, for the ethical certainties of previous ages, but like the Talmud itself, *Apikoros Sleuth* retrieves for the sake of reinterpretation, not for the purposes of recapitulation. Further, the Talmud (and, by extension, Majzels's novel) belongs to a hermeneutic tradition that places the word above spirit and person; a hermeneutic in which divine truth is revealed first and foremost through a rhizomatic language behind which God may be seen laughing. Is there a narrative? γ Of course. But Majzels's intention, it seems, is to confront the reader with the impossibility of certitude rather than the comfort of resolution. τ

γ The snake-like unfolding of narrative is consistently discontinuous, which is entirely in keeping with a key paradox at the heart of the book: that any ethical authority that we might possess (or that might possess us) is itself experimental, transitory, and anarchic.

τ The author succeeds in this aim, but as is often the case when a philosophical goal has been achieved, the reader is left with a sense of dissatisfaction born out of a yearning for that which has been left out. π

β *Apikoros Sleuth* is a novel about ethics. Since one of the primary questions of ethics is whether or not we can speak of ethical certainties and, as a matter of consequence, derive from them a ground for ethics, an ethical reading—one that is supported by epistemological categories—appears just. φ

φ "Just-so." Perhaps on another occasion.

ππ An ungrateful, but necessary question: Comedy, intimacy.

π What then is lacking? π π