



**Michel
Butor**

Degrees

METHUEN

DEGREES

Pierre Vernier, a French schoolmaster, is trying to write a novel about the life of the lycée where he teaches which will contain nothing but the truth. For him the study of reality is the study of things as they are: the surface of objects, the observable behaviour of people, words that one hears.

Half way through he becomes conscious that, as a teacher, he is a privileged, and in some ways, prejudiced witness and seeks to incorporate into his book the testimony of one of his pupils, his nephew Pierre. His nephew's attempt to record the truth is thwarted because of the mounting uneasiness of his school fellows and the part is then assigned to another master, but again the limitations of one spectator's view become frustrating. To this extent Vernier's attempt is a tragic failure; but in another sense it has succeeded through its very uncompromising boldness.

pour Mr et Mme Batuz
très cordialement
Michel P

Nice, le 20 août 1983