

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

THE COLOURED WORLD
OF ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
in FRENCH at
MASSEY UNIVERSITY.

IAN WRIGHT ADCOCK
(February, 1982)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

1. (a) I give permission for my thesis, entitled
THE COLOURED WORLD OF ALAIN ROBBE-GILLET.
.....
.....
to be made available to readers in the Library under the conditions
determined by the Librarian.
- (b) I agree to my thesis, if asked for by another institution, being sent
away on temporary loan under conditions determined by the Librarian.
- (c) I also agree that my thesis may be copied for Library use.

Signed Alain Robbe-Gillet
Date 12/2/82

The Library
Massey University
Palmerston North, N.Z.

The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author. Readers must sign their name in the space below to show that they recognise this. They are asked to add their permanent address.

Name and Address

Date

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

ABSTRACT

This thesis is the result of a close examination of the functions of colour in the works of Alain Robbe-Grillet, undertaken in the expectation that the careful study of this limited element would reveal the finer details of some of the important characteristics of his novels and films.

The Nouveau Roman and the works of Robbe-Grillet originate in a desire to produce creative literary forms which are a better representation of man's situation in the modern world of disorder and uncertainty, than the narrative forms of the traditional nineteenth century novel. An integral part of this search for new forms is the deliberate designation and subversion of the traditional conventions which Robbe-Grillet wishes to expose as neither natural nor necessary. Thus many of the colour terms in his works are used in ironic games with these traditional forms.

The illusion of realism is ironically subverted by colour and lighting references, which "foreground" the text as a fabrication of words, and also reveal that perception of reality is a subjective function and then of only one among many "realities" possible. His works therefore constitute their own reality, without necessary reference to any world "out there". However they are "realist" in that they are constrained by the laws of physical nature, e.g. description is elaborated only with illumination. Traditional colour symbols are degraded by colour, as is the convention of character, as Robbe-Grillet shows that situation and clothing do not necessarily define character or function. Fictitious characters are not "real" people but constructions of the text. The traditional anthropomorphic relationship between man and the world is thus destroyed. A related convention subverted is "le petit détail qui fait vrai", which false colour details show to be largely meaningless.

Robbe-Grillet's other important subversive use for colour is to reveal the limitations of our linguistic structures; our ability to perceive colour is not matched by our ability to describe it. Colour thus plays a significant subversive role in Robbe-Grillet's works.

However, to replace the traditional narrative forms, Robbe-Grillet uses colour constructively in several ways, it becomes dynamic rather than descriptive. Colour terms, at both the level of the signifier and signified, are manipulated in games with meaning to construct new texts. Traditional colour symbols are replaced with colours which become "symbolic" only in the context of a particular novel, as each now constitutes its own reality. Changing colours show the shifting focus of a narrative and create the personality of a character, while colour oppositions give movement and rhythm to texts. Specific colours generate texts through their metaphorical associations, and metaphor itself, after initial rejection, becomes a dynamic element. Colour produces many constructive forms to replace those of the traditional novel, to thus create a new "écriture romanesque".

The obvious dual subversive-constructive function of colour indicates a constant tension within Robbe-Grillet's works, a tension which is perhaps the conflict basic to all literature. The many different functions of colour suggest that Robbe-Grillet's works contain an inherent multiplicity, functioning on several levels of meaning. And the changing functions of colour through the various works point to a continual evolution in Robbe-Grillet's creative production. Thus the Nouveau Roman of Robbe-Grillet is created through multiplicity, tension and evolution.

ooo000ooo

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge gratefully the helpful advice and much appreciated encouragement which I received from my supervisor, Dr. Raylene O'Callaghan, during the preparation of this thesis. Grateful thanks also to my parents for their enthusiastic support during my many years at Massey University. Lastly many thanks to my flat-mate Jackie Sanders who had the tolerance and the patience to put up with me while this thesis was being written.

I.W.A.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Projet pour une thèse.	7
(Introduction)	
2. Topologie d'une réalité fantôme.	14
(The Illusion of Realism)	
3. Le Voleur	38
(Tradition Subverted)	
4. Dans le laboratoire.	57
(The New Colour Symbolism)	
5. Le Mot qui ment.	100
(Is the Word God?)	
6. Le Mot et après.	131
(Textual Generation)	
7. Souvenirs d'une métaphore.	148
(Using and Abusing Metaphor)	
8. Glissement décisif du plaisir.	167
(Conclusion)	
9. Appendices	176
10. Bibliography	181

1. PROJET POUR UNE THESE (Introduction)

In the works of Alain Robbe-Grillet there appears to be a significant use of colour, in both novels and films. Colour is in fact used more frequently as his works have evolved; in his novels the proportion of colour terms increases quite markedly from the first to the latest and in films Robbe-Grillet has moved from black and white to colour film, which, as we shall discuss, constitutes an important transition.¹ The intention of this thesis is to examine Robbe-Grillet's use of colour in the expectation that this detailed investigation of an isolated element will assist in a fuller comprehension and appreciation of his creative works.

Scholars have studied the use of colour in literature from all ages and from the earliest texts colour appears to have played a significant role in much creative writing.² That colour should assume this importance is probably due to the fact that it is a major element in man's dominant perceptive sense - sight. It is thus an important part of our perception and hence knowledge of the physical world and it is perhaps not surprising that the significance of colour is reflected in man's creativity. The study of colour in literature through the ages may thus provide information on man's changing view of the world and also the changing art of the creative writer. In a given work, colour is of interest in its own right, as specific colour symbols for example, but the study of colour in the works of a particular author or even group of authors may also be used as a means to obtain a more global insight into the works in question; that is a close examination of a limited element such as colour may illuminate more general characteristics in the work, the imposed constraints preventing the field of investigation from becoming unmanageably large.

In this thesis we shall thus discuss the various functions of colour in Robbe-Grillet's works, seeking to establish from this perspective some of the major

characteristics of his creative production. Some of these functions are specifically functions of colour, while in others the colour terms play a part in the construction of much larger functions, which nevertheless reflect the important role of colour in Robbe-Grillet's works.

For the purposes of this examination, we shall concentrate mainly on four of Robbe-Grillet's works, taken as a representative cross-section of his novels and films to date; the four works are the novels La Jalousie and Projet pour une révolution à New York, the colour film L'Eden et après, and the "picto-roman" La Belle Captive which contains a text by Robbe-Grillet generated by a selection of paintings by the Belgian Surrealist René Magritte.³ Although concentrating largely on these four works, we shall also draw examples from Robbe-Grillet's other novels and films to illustrate particular points. In the course of our discussion we shall refer to Robbe-Grillet's "early" and "later" novels, this distinction is made more for ease of reference rather than to indicate significant differences between the two groups. We thus see the "early" novels as those up to La Maison de rendez-vous⁴ which is perhaps a transitional novel, and the "later" group comprises Projet and subsequent works. Chronologically the first group contains those novels written in the fifties and the latter those written in the seventies, with the transitional work La Maison de rendez-vous being Robbe-Grillet's only novel from the intervening decade. Instantanés (1962)⁵, a collection of short prose pieces, has not been included in our discussion as it reveals little of significance about colour not already shown in other works, and is also difficult to place chronologically as the pieces were written and revised at various times.

In the course of our discussion, we shall use several examples more than once to illustrate different functions of the same colour term. This shows the complexity of the functioning of colour in Robbe-Grillet's works but also poses difficulties for the organisation of our discussion. To overcome these problems we shall discuss examples as they illustrate a particular function of colour,

rather than examine the various functions illustrated by one particular example.

As we mentioned above, Robbe-Grillet's works are complex and this has resulted in him being regarded as a "difficult" author, one best left to scholars and intellectuals. This attitude to Robbe-Grillet's works is probably due to the fact that they are not in general recognisably similar to conventional novels and films. The obvious deviation of his creative works from traditional forms immediately seems to arouse suspicion and mistrust, the traditional forms for some reason still being regarded as definitive by many in the literary world. For example, in an attack on the Nouveau Roman, a generally respected literary figure, Pierre de Boisdeffre, still appears to see a "good" novel as one which best competes with the great novels of the past;

Nous n'avons vu surgir depuis la guerre ni un nouveau Bernanos, ni un nouveau Céline, ni un nouveau Giono, encore moins un autre Proust ou une seconde Colette.⁶

Robbe-Grillet, however, does not accept that the modern novel should reproduce the forms of the past, and in Pour un nouveau roman⁷, a theoretical reappraisal of the novel, Robbe-Grillet strongly attacks Balzac, or more specifically the forms of the Balzacian novel, which he sees as still exercising considerable influence on the novel today. Balzac is singled out as the most influential of the nineteenth century novelists and is attacked probably because of his vision of unity, of an interrelated, unified universe based on "man". In many of his articles and interviews, "Une Voie pour le roman futur" being a good example, Robbe-Grillet constantly refers to the "récit balzacien", which much literary criticism appears to consider as the natural form of the novel to be imitated and reproduced ad infinitum, a view which Robbe-Grillet does not share;

L'erreur est de croire que le "vrai roman" s'est figé une fois pour toutes, à l'époque balzacienne, en des règles strictes et définitives.⁸

Robbe-Grillet is not attacking Balzac's novels in themselves, but rather the fact that the novel has not been allowed to evolve freely since his time; the successor of the Balzacian novel - with plot, character and causal chronology to the fore - is still regarded today in literary circles, and certainly among the "prix littéraires", as normative in form, content and style. Time in particular remains a major paradigm governing the novel and it is perhaps Robbe-Grillet's deliberate rejection of causal chronology which gives much of his writing its "difficult" quality.

One of Robbe-Grillet's main points of contention regarding Balzac's novels is that they reflect the society of his era and not ours. They mirror the social and political power of the bourgeoisie in the early nineteenth century, a bourgeoisie which reflected the belief that it was in control of the world and of events. Balzac's novels depict this society at the height of its power; however, its anthropomorphic view of the world is no longer the only possible relationship between man and the universe.

Cet ordre, que l'on peut en effet qualifier de naturel, est lié à tout un système, rationaliste et organisateur, dont l'épanouissement correspond à la prise du pouvoir par la classe bourgeoise. En cette première moitié du XIX^e siècle, qui vit l'apogée - avec la Comédie Humaine - d'une forme narrative dont on comprend qu'elle demeure pour beaucoup un paradis perdu du roman, quelques certitudes importantes avaient cours: la confiance en particulier dans une logique des choses justes et universelles.⁹

But this society no longer exists and thus the novelistic conventions we have inherited from Balzac belong to a bygone era. The importance of powerful

individuals or family dynasties, the forms of our individuality have been replaced to some extent by the forms of our collectivity; man and his place in the world have changed greatly since Balzac. As Robbe-Grillet points out, even in Balzac's era the novel was evolving into new forms in the hands of writers like Flaubert and Stendhal;

Non seulement l'évolution a été considérable depuis le milieu du XIX^e siècle, mais elle a commencé tout de suite, à l'époque de Balzac lui-même. Celui-ci ne relève-t-il pas déjà de la "confusion" dans les descriptions de la Chartreuse de Parme ? Il est certain que la bataille de Waterloo telle que Stendhal nous la rapporte, n'appartient plus déjà à l'ordre balzacien.¹⁰

Certainly the novel has changed since Balzac, Proust's À la recherche du temps perdu being a notable development with its replacement of the omniscient, omnipresent third person narrator by the subjective first person. However, in Robbe-Grillet's view, the forms of the Balzacian novel which create a coherent, ordered, meaningful reality still predominate in much of contemporary literature, as does the humanistic view of the world they present, a world of which man is master.

On voit tout de suite pourquoi les objets balzaciens étaient si rassurants: ils appartenait à un monde dont l'homme était le maître ... L'homme était la raison de toute chose, la clef de l'univers, et son maître naturel, de droit divin.¹¹

But man is no longer in control of a totality, he has no natural or divine power over events and thus the novelistic forms which represent this control are no longer valid. However, even after writers like Proust, Joyce, Kafka and Beckett, there seems to be a desire in the sphere of the novel to perfect these past forms rather than renew and build on them. This insistence on

past forms, by people like Boisdeffre, implies that the novel does have definitive forms, forms which Robbe-Grillet still attributes, perhaps rather polemically and simplistically, to Balzac.

La seule conception romanesque qui ait cours aujourd'hui est, en fait, celle de Balzac.¹²

Thus if, as claimed in "Une Voie pour le roman futur", the aim of Robbe-Grillet and the Nouveau Roman in general is to produce a new "écriture romanesque", then the traditional forms of the Balzacian novel must be replaced with new forms which better represent man's situation in the modern world.

Hence Robbe-Grillet entered the literary world in a state of rebellion, intent on the subversion of the dominant conventions of the novel and with a desire to invent new forms and structures for creative writing. This thesis is to be an examination of how Robbe-Grillet uses colour in both novel and film to bring about these changes and thus to create the Nouveau Roman.

ooo000ooo

Notes

1. See Appendices for comparison of colour use.
2. e.g. Sigmund Skard, "The Use of Colour in Literature," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 90, No.3 (July 26, 1946), pp.163-221.
3. La Jalousie (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1957). Projet pour une révolution à New York (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1970). For convenience this will be subsequently referred to as Projet. L'Eden et après (1970). Franco-Czech co-production, Eastmancolor, 100 mins. La Belle Captive (Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1976). Half of the text of this "picto-roman" appears without pictures in Topologie d'une cité fantôme and the other half in Souvenirs du triangle d'or.
4. La Maison de rendez-vous (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1965).

5. Instantanés (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1962).
6. La Cafetière est sur la table (Paris: La Table Ronde de Combat, 1967), p.44.
7. Pour un nouveau roman (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1963).
8. "Nouveau roman, homme nouveau," (1961) in Pour un nouveau roman, p.115.
9. "Sur quelques notions périmées," (1957) in Pour un nouveau roman, p.31.
10. "Nouveau roman, homme nouveau," p.115.
11. "Nouveau roman, homme nouveau," p.119.
12. "Une Voie pour le roman futur," (1956) in Pour un nouveau roman, p.15.

2. TOPOLOGIE D'UNE RÉALITÉ FANTÔME

(The Illusion of Realism)

Art, by definition, is an artificial phenomenon, that is it is a product of man's imagination. Yet as Robbe-Grillet remarks in "Du réalisme à la réalité", nearly all novelists aim to write novels which are representations of reality, denying that creative writing is, by its very nature, a fictitious, unnatural process. Robbe-Grillet writes;

Tous les écrivains pensent être réalistes. Aucun jamais ne se prétend abstrait, illusionniste, chimérique, fantaisiste, faussaire... Le réalisme n'est pas une théorie, définie sans ambiguïté, qui permettrait d'opposer certains romanciers aux autres; c'est au contraire un drapeau sous lequel se rangent l'immense majorité - sinon l'ensemble - des romanciers d'aujourd'hui. Et sans doute faut-il, sur ce point, leur faire confiance à tous. C'est le monde réel qui les intéresse; chacun s'efforce bel et bien de créer du "réel".¹

He goes on to say that literary revolutions are always undertaken in the name of realism; the Nouveau Roman, we shall attempt to show, is itself no exception. However the reality which emerges in the Nouveau Roman corresponds to a world very different to that of natural, absolute laws, from whence emerged the traditional Realist novel, a novel which reflected the stable, coherent universe of classical science. It corresponds rather to a world no longer seen as naturally stable and ordered with man at its centre in control of a totality; uncertainty, disorder and fragmentation abound, man does not necessarily have a dominant role. It is this new relativistic world which emerges from the descriptions of people, events and objects and from the general structures of Robbe-Grillet's works, a world quite different to that reflected in the nineteenth century novel.

Le grand roman français du XIX^e siècle en particulier, Balzac en tête, regorge de maisons, de mobiliers, de costumes, longuement, minutieusement décrits, sans compter les visages, les corps etc. Et il est certain que ces descriptions-là ont pour but de faire voir et qu'elles y réussissent. Il s'agissait alors le plus souvent de planter un décor, de définir le cadre de l'action, de présenter l'apparence physique de ses protagonistes. Le poids des choses ainsi posées de façon précise constituait un univers stable et sûr, auquel on pouvait ensuite se référer, et qui garantissait par sa ressemblance avec le monde "réel" l'authenticité des événements, des paroles, des gestes que le romancier y ferait survenir.²

Thus in the traditional novel, this sure and stable universe allows the illusion of realism to be created in that there is no uncertainty in description, it is an exact operation. The narrative functions as a window on reality, with, as Robbe-Grillet points out, the aim to "faire voir", the reader being expected to forget that he is reading a written text and to look behind the words to find a representation of some external reality outside the printed page. The claim of novelists such as Balzac, Zola and their modern successors is that they produce a mirror image of real life through the medium of language, the medium being considered as somehow transparent.

It is this notion of art acting as a window on life against which Robbe-Grillet has rebelled. Reality, he claims, is not an entity above and beyond the text, ordering and controlling the narrative, a pre-constituted and immutable Nature. As the universe is no longer sure and stable, Robbe-Grillet believes that any perception of reality can only be tentative and most likely transient, as there is no guarantee that any one description of reality is the only accurate description, it is but a possible one. As physicist Paul Davies writes in his book Other Worlds;

Our consciousness weaves a route at random along the ever-branching evolutionary pathways of the cosmos,

so it is we, rather than God, who are playing dice.³

Therefore any one perception of reality merely represents one throw of the dice, many others are possible. And it is an interesting coincidence that the analogy of dice should be used, for from the unused shots of his film L'Eden et après, Robbe-Grillet composed another film entitled N a pris les dés⁴ (a near anagram of the first title), this film being another organisation of the shots and thus the story filmed in L'Eden et après; it is in fact another throw of the dice.

This proliferation of possible realities implies that the objective window of Zola and others is an illusion, as all writing must be subjective, one expression of many possible states. Such a multiplicity of worlds is discussed in "Metamagical Themas" by Douglas R. Hofstadter. For him many different worlds are possible and each is equally valid.

And when a novelist simultaneously entertains a number of possible ways of extending a story, are the characters not, to speak metaphorically, in a mental superposition of states ? If the novel never gets set on paper, perhaps the split characters can continue to evolve their multiple stories in the author's brain. Furthermore, it would even seem strange to ask which one is the genuine version. All the worlds are equally genuine.⁵ (Hofstadter's emphasis)

This multiplicity of possible worlds is to a degree expressed in La Jalousie, where the multiple stories are continued on paper. The narrator examines the various narrative possibilities, each of which has equal validity in that the reader cannot state that any one scene is real and another not. All the possibilities are equally genuine.

The concept of the omniscient, omnipresent narrator adopted by the traditional novel, and which was already under attack⁶, can thus no longer function. The observation of this narrator is shown to be no more genuine than that

of any other observer; he was in fact only a convention of a particular historical, literary form. This realization is the basis for the descriptions in Robbe-grillet's novels. Art now constitutes and invents its own reality without reference to any one "true" view of the world, for that cannot exist.

L'écriture romanesque ne vise pas à informer, comme le fait la chronologique, le témoignage, ou la relation scientifique, elle constitue la réalité.⁷
(Robbe-Grillet's emphasis).

Thus Robbe-Grillet's novels define their own "reality", an essentially subjective presentation of the world, which is always uncertain and transient, a function of the observer's and the writer's social and historical situation and perceptions. However it is also a world of surfaces and objects, for man's immediate perception of the world, according to Robbe-Grillet, is bounded by those things around him; what he can most surely know about a given object are its empirical, physical, tangible properties - dimensions, surface texture, colour - properties which can be measured and quantified. Description then, must be a function of man's subjective perception of objects and hence initially Robbe-Grillet restricts description to "l'adjectif optique, descriptif, celui qui se contente de mesurer, de situer, de limiter, de définir."⁸ The anthropomorphic conventions of description in the traditional novel are rejected along with other conventions, to be discussed in the next chapter, in a general re-examination of narrative codes. As Robbe-Grillet himself said in an interview about his novels;

... there is an effort to undo the code of the narrative, that is, the normal practice, the established order. There is an established order for the novel, which I feel must constantly be put in question, destroyed, subverted. At the same time we must subvert the illusion of realism.⁹

The use of colour provides us with a good example of the way this subversion of the traditional forms and the illusion of realism is achieved.

Of all the physical properties of an object, colour is probably the hardest to define, where the subjective views of individuals can show the greatest variations. Colour is affected by many factors, such as the angle of incident light upon a surface, the intensity of the light, its spectral composition and so on. Hence any attempt at description of colour contains inherent difficulties and may often provoke disagreement. Robbe-Grillet, however, does seem to be aware of such problems. In La Jalousie for example, A... 's lips appear red in daylight only to "virer au noir" under the light of the oil-lamp. Colour is never a constant nor readily definable quality, especially since an author must also contend with the limitations of language in defining it.

The other major problem in dealing with colour is its strong emotive power; the colour adjective with its numerous cultural connotations can never be as innocent nor as neutral as a geometric term. Colour contains a strong associative element with which a writer must also contend, the link between red and the concepts of blood and violence being a good example.

Evidently objective description is not an easy task, but in his early novels, Robbe-Grillet does seem to attempt to counter the problems posed above. In La Jalousie he does this chiefly by not being definite about the colour of a particular object, using mainly black, white and the primaries in description. These terms may then be qualified with "pâle" or "foncé" or often by the even more indeterminate "-âtre", which gives only a general shading. Vaguer still is the use of "clair" and "sombre", when colour cannot apparently be determined. This imprecision of colour terminology allows room for manoeuvre and interpretation. In her study of colour in La Jalousie, Marie-Georgette Steisel states the situation thus;

Le noir étant précisément l'absence des couleurs, produite par l'absorption complète de tous les rayons

lumineux, et le blanc la fusion de toutes les couleurs simples, perçues simultanément sans qu'on arrive à les distinguer individuellement, peut-être n'y aurait-il dans cet emploi des deux termes que le souci bien arrêté de ne pas "faire en couleurs", de rester neutre. Précisément, du fait même que Robbe-Grillet s'attache à représenter la surface "intacte" des choses, les couleurs ne seraient rien qu'un attribut de surface. Cette volonté déterminée de laisser aux choses leur individualité propre, en dehors et par-delà l'oeil qui les regarde, le pousserait alors à n'employer que les couleurs élémentaires les plus vraies, exclues, si c'était possible, de toute valeur affective, adoptant seulement, suivant la distinction établie par le linguiste allemand Groos, les couleurs "figuratives" à l'exception de celles pourvues d'un contenu "sensoriel"; il resterait ainsi convaincu qu'il appelle un chat noir "un chat noir".¹⁰ (Steisel's emphasis)

Using this technique, Robbe-Grillet does appear to produce a neutral description, the imprecision of the language employed preventing the emergence of symbolic and emotive associations. However the apparent concern for neutral definition and description might well be seen as a relic of the traditional novel, for this type of description implies that there is still some external reality being depicted, "en dehors et par-delà l'oeil qui les regarde". Symbolic and associative language is avoided so that this external reality will not be betrayed, its position as an absolute is thus maintained. Robbe-Grillet's vague terminology thus seems to admit the existence of this external reality; it is merely apprehension and description of it that are imperfect. These colour terms reflect the inadequacies of the human mind and of language, the uncertainty of colour perception.

Yet, if, as Robbe-Grillet came to realize, description is a subjective function, this attempt at neutrality is a betrayal of his own beliefs, a denial of his own subjective perception of colour. In fact a writer can be

as precise as he pleases in colour definition, for he has complete control over the text which is a function of words and not of the "world out there". Robbe-Grillet had, as we have seen, in fact become aware of this trap early in his career as a novelist.

Il m'est arrivé, comme à tout le monde, d'être victime un instant de l'illusion réaliste. À l'époque où j'écrivais Le Voyeur, par exemple, tandis que je m'acharnais à décrire avec précision le vol des mouettes et le mouvement des vagues, j'eus l'occasion de faire un bref voyage d'hiver sur la côte bretonne. En route je me disais: voici une bonne occasion d'observer les choses "sur le vif" et de me "rafraîchir la mémoire"... Mais, dès le premier oiseau de mer aperçu, je compris mon erreur: d'une part les mouettes que je voyais à présent n'avaient que des rapports confus avec celles que j'étais en train de décrire dans mon livre, et d'autre part cela m'était bien égal. Les seules mouettes qui m'importaient, à ce moment-là, étaient celles qui se trouvaient dans ma tête. Probablement venaient-elles aussi, d'une façon ou d'une autre, du monde extérieur, et peut-être de Bretagne; mais elles s'étaient transformées, devenant en même temps comme plus réelles, parce qu'elles étaient maintenant imaginaires.¹¹ (Robbe-Grillet's emphasis)

The preciseness of colour, like the flight of a seagull, is largely irrelevant, it has only a tenuous link with an external reality. An examination of the vocabulary used in Projet, for example, shows that the colour terms have become much more exact; "pâle", "foncé" and the suffix "-âtre" are used much less frequently (in proportion to the total number of colour terms). Robbe-Grillet is now accepting full responsibility for the text as his own invention, moreover he begins to utilize the associative, emotive content of colour for his own purposes, as we shall discuss in later chapters.

Thus the descriptions in Robbe-Grillet's novels are

of an essentially subjective reality, however as things cannot be apprehended "en dehors et par-delà l'oeil qui les regarde", any use of colour is limited to that which the human eye can perceive. The colour used to describe an object can generally be accepted as a realist representation, where realist now means within the generally accepted bounds of human colour perception. In his novels the colour of an object rarely appears incongruous or misplaced, the cultural conventions of verisimilitude and the empirical knowledge of the properties of colour are respected.

Colour then, is not a constant, but is dependent on several variables, the most important of which is light. The example of the changing colour of A... 's lips suggests that Robbe-Grillet is well aware of this link. Thus before returning to colour in its own right, we will examine the role of light in his works, focusing on the convention of verisimilitude in description.

Colour, as we have mentioned, exists solely as a function of light; the colour of a given object being determined by the particular wavelengths in the visible spectrum which the object's molecular structure reflects, absorbs or even transmits (e.g. green light passes through gold leaf). Thus without light, colour does not exist and varies with different lighting and surfaces. For many years scholars were puzzled by Homer's references to the "wine-dark sea", but this appears to be the result of sunlight being reflected from a certain type of seaweed found in the shallow waters of the Aegean Sea. Thus what at first appears to be an anomaly, may in fact be an accurate description of a physical phenomenon.

Robbe-Grillet seems almost too aware of this link between light and colour, for from Un Régicide to Djinn¹², there is a preoccupation with specifying light sources, such as the oil-lamp of La Jalousie and the street-light of Dans le labyrinthe¹³, which provide the illumination necessary for the observer to elaborate a description. His novels could thus be called realist in that the physical laws of nature are apparently respected. This respect for nature or a certain level of physical reality (that of sensory perception), is evident in all his early

novels, and especially in La Jalousie where visual description is always accompanied by light, as the following scene of an evening on the terrace shows;

Là, l'obscurité est totale. Personne ne parle plus. Les bruits des criquets ont cessé. On n'entend, çà et là, que le cri menu de quelque carnassier nocturne, le vrombissement subit d'un scarabée, le choc d'une petite tasse en porcelaine que l'on repose sur la table basse..., la vue sur la vallée n'existant plus...

Le bois de la balustrade est lisse au toucher, lorsque les doigts suivent le sens des veines et des petites fentes longitudinales.(p.27)

In this scene there is a progression from one sense to the next; from sight, to hearing, to touch, the narrative advancing as each different sense comes into play. This also shows the importance of sensory perception in Robbe-Grillet's novels as a narrative generator, there being an intensification of the narrator's perception as he concentrates on various events around him. Although unable to see in the darkness, he can still hear and touch and thus continue the description.

The whole of La Jalousie functions in this same detailed manner, sight and colour existing only with light. This principle is in fact quite refined in this novel, for on another evening on the terrace (or is it the same one?), Franck's shirt can be seen only as "une tache claire" against the increasing gloom of nightfall. Only those elements close to the oil-lamp, such as the "coléoptère rougeâtre" which falls onto the table, can be distinguished by colour rather than a general shade.

Only once in La Jalousie, in the scene of the car-crash, does this realist principle appear to be transgressed. This incident occurs at night, but the car is still described as "la conduite-intérieure bleue" (p.167). In theory at least, the colour of the car should be indistinct. This could simply be an over-sight on the part of Robbe-Grillet who, as author, is controlling and ordering

the mind of the "absent" narrator. However this could also be an example of what is known as "memory colour".

The human memory stores information about familiar objects, such as their colour, with the result that an individual will often see an object as having a particular colour regardless of the incident light, whereas another observer, unfamiliar with the object, may not correctly distinguish its "true" colour (i.e. in full daylight), which reinforces the fact that colour is a function of light.

In La Jalousie, it is clearly impossible to state that a particular scene is happening, has happened, or is simply imagined (from the narrator's and thus the reader's point of view). However the scene of the car-crash could possibly be called imaginary with slightly more certainty than most others, and thus the faithful reproduction of physical law has not in fact been violated. The narrator knows that the car is blue, and thus imagines it so.

Hence as far as the physical demands of light and colour are concerned, La Jalousie and in fact all of Robbe-Grillet's novels, are "realist" in nature. It is apparent that Robbe-Grillet's scientific mind is at work in his writing and that he displays an awareness of, and even a curiosity in the functioning of the physical world. The physical principles seem, to a certain extent, to be influencing and at times ordering the text, as they impose constraints upon the author. Robbe-Grillet's novels are thus "vraisemblable", not from the traditional literary point of view, but from a scientific one, controlled by the different modes of perception. However, as has already been noted, the author totally controls the narrative, and is thus free to accept or to ignore these physical limitations; any constraints are self-imposed.

Although Robbe-Grillet's fiction has evolved considerably since the early works such as La Jalousie, the later novels do still maintain this level of realism; the need for light remains as an apparent constraint on description. For example, in Topologie d'une cité fantôme there is still "une torche qui éclaire d'une faible lueur

rougeâtre et vacillante un divan vide recouvert de velours noir."¹⁴ But in his later novels Robbe-Grillet no longer hides the fact that, as author, he has complete control over the text and can decide whether or not an object is to be illuminated for description. He now openly displays the editorial omniscience that any author must have, the narrator(s) have no autonomous existence.

In this way, for example, Projet functions simultaneously on two levels, firstly producing a realist description, and then calling attention to this verisimilitude. This novel contains forty-three references to light sources and from the very first page the illusion of realism is apparently maintained;

...il y a si peu de lumière de l'autre côté de la porte, qu'on ne distingue rien de ce qui peut, ou non, se trouver à l'intérieur. (p.7)

References of this type abound in the text, the light often being defined as "suffisante" or "insuffisante" to describe a particular object or scene. However Robbe-Grillet then reminds the reader that it is his choice as "scripteur" which controls the level of illumination and hence description, and not some external force of nature.

Ils observent la scène, qui s'éclaire alors d'un seul coup: les lampadaires se sont allumés aux quatre coins de ce segment de rue. C'est l'heure normale probablement; mais, pour des raisons ignorées du public, ceux des autres carrefours demeurent éteints. (p.162)

The reason for the other lights not coming on could simply be that they are not needed. On the one hand the realist illusion is maintained as the scene being described is illuminated, but on the other hand the "raisons ignorées du public" signal the fact that the text has nothing to do with any external reality. Robbe-Grillet is ironically demonstrating his power over the text which is simply a construction of his own imagination and can thus be

freely manipulated, as the switching on and off of lights shows. A similar example occurs ten pages later, when the author's intervention is even more blatant.

Sans que je sache clairement pourquoi, il est très important que je déchiffre les textes et dessins de ces panneaux publicitaires. Mais la faible et brève clarté des petites flammes fugitives, que je dois protéger de ma main, ne réussit à faire sortir de l'ombre que des détails si agrandis par leur proximité immédiate qu'il est impossible de leur attribuer un sens, et à plus forte raison de les replacer dans un ensemble.

Heureusement, voilà que des lampadaires d'une hauteur et d'une puissance inusitées s'allument d'un seul coup, de tous côtés à la fois; et je n'ai plus qu'à me reculer pour regarder les affiches. (p.172)

This whole passage is in fact pure artifice; Robbe-Grillet as author, firstly decides that the light of a match is insufficient and so summons up more appropriate lighting. But again this whole sequence is merely illusion, for, had he so wished, Robbe-Grillet could have illuminated the posters from the out-set. The game with matches and street-lights serves only to draw attention to the fact that all fiction is creation. No explanation is given for this sudden illumination of the scene, but nor is any needed, for, as we have said, Robbe-Grillet is free to manipulate the text as he chooses.

Physical constraints are thus outwardly respected - no illumination, therefore no description - but this is at once an ironic comment on the function and the power of an author. The text announces its own artificiality, that it is a fabrication in the most literal sense of the word. Respect for physical laws is not a true constraint on the narrative, as Robbe-Grillet can obviously include or exclude lighting to suit his purpose; the notion of an external reality ordering the text is meaningless.

This notion of reality in Projet is succinctly expressed by Susan Suleiman when she writes;

... the reader is prevented from falling into the illusionistic traps set for him by the traditional realistic novel, all of whose devices are essentially devices of naturalization - their aim being to make the reader "forget" that he is reading a text, and "believe" that he is witnessing a representation of reality.¹⁵

This, essentially, is how the references to lighting in Projet operate. They pretend to be real, but then draw attention to this pretence and thus, as Suleiman says, the reader is prevented from falling into the traditional realist trap.

In Souvenirs du triangle d'or, this ironic treatment of realism is taken even further by Robbe-Grillet. A narrator seems concerned as he is unable to identify the light source illuminating the scene before him;

La clarté ambiante, bleue et laiteuse, pose d'ailleurs un autre problème à l'esprit en éveil de celui qui s'avance (une fois de plus) à pas comptés, bien qu'elle se soit accrue de façon sensible, insensiblement, on ne parvient à déceler la présence d'une source lumineuse.¹⁶

The "esprit en éveil" is perhaps an ironic reference to the reader expecting clues to aid a realist reading, but any such hope is quickly frustrated. This hidden lighting has increased "de façon sensible, insensiblement", itself an ironic comment on language and meaning, but the reader is led to question the need for any lighting at all.

Although still obsessed with identifying light sources, this obsession now being explicit, the text progresses perfectly well without them, demonstrating once more that the "story" is a fiction created and destroyed by Robbe-Grillet's imagination. The earlier principles of realist illumination are now destroyed or at least debased, by this passage which seems to imply that light sources are actually irrelevant. This problem

for the narrator perhaps adds an element of mystery to the "story", but the whole dilemma is quickly dismissed and left unanswered as the narrative continues;

Ces diverses questions restées sans réponses s'effacent d'un seul coup devant une information tout à fait neuve et remarquable. (p.99)

The implication is that concerns with lighting are anything but "neuve et remarquable", and therefore are not worth undue interest. This passage is but a pause in the narration to point once again to its own artificiality and to remind the reader that the text is independent of any external reality, of the constraints of verisimilitude, or even of physical laws; the traps of the traditional novel have all been sprung.

Thus an evolutionary process at work in Robbe-Grillet's novels becomes apparent; from early concerns with the physical constraints on perception, which limit description, to the later novels, from Projet on, which overtly announce that they define their own reality. The reader is no longer presented with a text which claims to be "real". In Linguistics and the Novel, Roger Fowler states this new perspective thus;

There is a dreadful tradition of vapid reviewing which treats novels as if they were unedited, uncrafted, windows on life - the reader is supposed to look straight through the words at the pictured characters and settings, just as one peers out through a spotless pane on one's nextdoor neighbour. But the "world out there" of the novel is an artifice constructed through the novelist's technique and we must be inquisitive about the means by which this shaping takes place,¹⁷

Robbe-Grillet, however, does not allow the reader to look "through" the words at the "world out there". The references to lighting in his novels make it quite clear that his works are not windows on life, but constitute their own artificial world. Any attempt at a traditional

realist reading, especially of the later novels, is doomed to failure from the outset.

However it must be pointed out that, even in the "subversive" later novels, Robbe-Grillet's scientific mind is still at work. In Souvenirs, for example, colour is still seen as a function of light and not simply as a property of an object.

C'est le printemps déjà, le printemps austral, un soleil encore pâle éclaire en vert tendre le feuillage neuf des marronniers. (p.27)

The green colour of the leaves is clearly a function of the sunlight; the "vert" being linked to "soleil" rather than to "feuillage" in the sentence structure, in this case the colour functions adverbially. But a very similar description is repeated later in the novel, with the colour now becoming a property of the leaf, an adjectival function.

C'est le printemps déjà, le printemps austral, un pâle soleil de fin d'après-midi éclaire le premier feuillage, vert tendre et beige, des marronniers aux bourgeons tout juste éclos. (p.221)

In this quotation, "vert" is now linked syntactically to "feuillage", the leaf is green and not illuminated as green. Thus Robbe-Grillet is juxtaposing his more scientific appreciation of colour with a conventional literary use. The repetition with variations may itself constitute an ironic comment which undermines both as descriptions of reality.

Another feature of these two passages is that they are good examples of the elaboration of a description. The second passage is a slightly expanded variation of the first and demonstrates how a text can be constructed by the permutation of different elements.

Hence, although the conventions of realism in the early novels, in so far as light is concerned, are ironically treated and debased in the later works, they are neither

completely discarded nor ignored, for, perhaps surprisingly, at no time is there description of colour without light in any of the novels. This makes the evolutionary nature of Robbe-Grillet's works even more apparent, as early principles are modified and expanded, while remaining as the base from which he works.

This discussion of light and description shows that the texts begin to function on more than one level; firstly there is construction of an illusion of realism, followed by what Robbe-Grillet has called deconstruction, as this illusion is exposed as such. Physical laws are accepted as constraints on description, but it is made clear that these constraints are purely artificial, as Robbe-Grillet accepts his editorial omnipotence as "scripteur". The following comment made by Anthony Pugh about Dans le labyrinthe could also be applied to Robbe-Grillet's other novels;

Ultimately, Robbe-Grillet wishes us to realize that the novelist is bound only by the requirement - so subtle and intangible - of the imagination, not of logic. And so he introduces into his last chapter details which through doubt on our interpretation, and which suggest that the novelist is manipulating the narrator as freely as the fictional narrator is manipulating his own invented characters.¹⁸

That which should be logical in Robbe-Grillet's novels, such as the link between light and description, soon becomes a game in which logical principles are ironically designated, as Robbe-Grillet the novelist manipulates the narrator and thus the text itself.

Such ironic deconstruction of the text, game with its elements, was noted as a characteristic of the modern novel as far back as 1925 by the Russian critic B. Eikhenbaum, who wrote in Sur la théorie de la prose;

Dans l'évolution de chaque genre, il se produit des moments où le genre utilisé jusqu'alors avec des objectifs entièrement sérieux... prend une forme comique ou parodique ... L'interprétation sérieuse ...

fait place à l'ironie, à la plaisanterie, au pastiche... (et) l'auteur lui-même vient au premier plan, et il détruit souvent l'illusion d'authenticité et de sérieux; la construction du sujet devient un jeu. ... Ainsi se produit la régénération du genre: il trouve de nouvelles possibilités et de nouvelles formes.¹⁹

The general movement referred to by this quotation parallels the changing functions of lighting within Robbe-Grillet's novels; the movement from serious exploration in descriptive writing, to game, to new forms.

The role of lighting in Robbe-Grillet's works has thus been analysed in some detail, it may not, however, be clear that such a discussion of light is useful in our examination of colour. Firstly light and colour are inseparably linked; without light colour does not exist, a physical constraint of which Robbe-Grillet seems well aware. Secondly, as our later discussion will attempt to show, the functioning of light in many ways parallels that of colour, and the discussion so far thus serves as a basis for our examination of colour.

Having attempted to demonstrate how lighting constructs and then subverts reality, we shall now examine how Robbe-Grillet also utilises colour in this dual role.

On reading almost any one of Robbe-Grillet's novels, the reader may be struck by the persistent references to hair and more particularly by the frequently appearing heads of hair "contaminated" by "reflets", this multiple colouring being the rule rather than the exception in the later novels.

Perhaps the best-known example of this is A... 's "chevelure noire aux reflets roux" in La Jalousie. As we shall discuss later the "reflets roux" serve more than one purpose, but taken, for the present, at face value, this description would seem to be a realist image of light being refracted around the ends of A... 's fine hair, thus producing the reddish tinge. In Souvenirs, this apparently realist appreciation of the principles of physics appears again with "ses boucles brunes se parent, à la nuit, de reflets bleuâtres" (p.92). Moonlight or light from

one of the "lampadaires" of which Robbe-Grillet is so fond, produce different effects to those of daylight, as is seemingly recorded here. However, towards the end of the novel, the heavy hand of irony once again destroys this illusion of realism.

Une jeune fille...., remarquable par sa chevelure blonde aux reflets de feu (est-ce un simple effet du soleil couchant qui en illumine les boucles à contre-jour?). (p.222)

By drawing attention to what was hitherto the implied, underlying scientific principle, Robbe-Grillet destroys its effect. Such explicit comment immediately points to its own pretence, its own artificiality. Neither the sun, the moon, street- nor any other light have any connection with the "reflets". They are yet again merely inventions of the text, words on the written page.

Another example of this ironic realism in Robbe-Grillet's works is his use of blood and its associated redness. Firstly, it is noteworthy that blood has only appeared in his novels since he began using colour film; thus Projet, his first "bloodied" novel coincides with L'Eden et après, his first colour film, both appearing in 1970. More than anything else, this is perhaps a reflection of what had been, up until then, considered acceptable material for use in novels and films. L'Eden et après probably could not have been made ten or even five years earlier, because of society's restrictions on images of sex and violence.

From the realist point of view images of blood are quite legitimate, as cuts and bullet wounds can bleed copiously. Robbe-Grillet notes that one of the first films to use blood in any quantity was Bonnie and Clyde, the film's director defending his heavy-handedness on grounds of realism, but as Robbe-Grillet comments;

... il aurait été frappé par la grande quantité de sang qui coulait des blessures réelles, et choqué

par la parcimonie bienséante de celles du cinéma...²⁰

So the blood which flows through the post-Projet novels and films could be justified on the grounds of realism. Other realist details of blood also appear; dried blood in Topologie is identified as "petites gouttes brunes" (p.29), and blood appears black under moonlight. The realist, scientific mind is still at work.

From one point of view the images of blood are thus realist, but a closer examination of the vocabulary used to describe blood again destroys the illusion of realism. In Projet for example, blood is often termed "rouge vif", "écarlate", or "vermeil", the redness of the blood is constantly stressed, if not exaggerated. In L'Eden et après, the blood also appears excessively red, and it soon becomes evident that it is not real blood at all, but is in fact red paint, which Robbe-Grillet was not, however, the first to use. Jean-Luc Godard's Le Week-end is the other film which Robbe-Grillet sees as having introduced blood to the movie screen, and Godard admits that in an earlier film, Pierrot le fou, he used red paint instead of blood. This artifice is shown up in the film when a live pig is stuck and real blood flows. Robbe-Grillet defines the difference thus;

À ce point, même, que l'on se demande si Godard n'a pas fait exprès, pour affirmer le parti qu'il prenait de la peinture rouge, de nous montrer par opposition un peu de vrai sang - celui d'un porc que l'on égorge - noirâtre, avare, médiocre, sans horreur ni attrait.²¹

The blood which Robbe-Grillet uses is not real blood, and obviously not so. The great quantities used create an initial illusion of realism, which is then betrayed by the exaggerated colour. Again it calls attention to its own pretence, the red paint is intended to be seen as red paint. As Robbe-Grillet writes of L'Eden et après and its images of blood;

Du sang.... il faudrait maintenant quelques taches de sang, du beau sang vermeil, plus rouge que nature, plus brillant, plus abondant, plus cruel.²²

Thus after the initial shock of the bloodied images, the artifice shows through and the irony becomes obvious. In L'Eden et après, for example, there is a scene in which Marc-Antoine is banging on a bright, red door. Observing a red imprint on his hand, he makes a humorous reference to Macbeth ("Merde, c'est Macbeth à présent"); instantly the spell is broken and the serious becomes a joke.

Hence, as Robbe-Grillet intended, he has, even in the limited field of colour, subverted any illusion of reality in his works, first by creating the illusion and then by ironically undermining it. This process of construction-deconstruction is at work throughout his novels and films, it is a game with the forms of the traditional conventions of realism. This whole operation is probably best summarized by Robbe-Grillet himself in the following extract from the interview with David Hayman;

But there is also the fact that my novels and films are quite tricky. That is, my relations with "realism" are not simple. I think there is a constant tension in my books between a sort of ideal abstraction to which I give voice and, despite everything, the sort of empirical reality we find in the novels of the last century. I feel that things are not as simple as Ricardou would have them when he speaks of a fiction which has become almost mathematical. I think that my books maintain subtle and more or less fraudulent relations with what one could call the "traditional novel", relations which at times appear like pieces in a collage more or less distorted, but only more or less, sometimes a bit less, sometimes a bit more.

Take Project for a Revolution in New York,

which is as realistic a novel as is possible, given the fact that the book does not concern itself with New York, and that the action is incredible, etc. There are fragments which seem unexpectedly to belong to the still-possible literature of a still-possible novelistic mode. The character of the little girl has at times a presence similar to the one she might have in a traditional novel. And it is that which interests me. If you wish, it is these unresolved tensions between two poles, a tension between the subjective and the objective, the realistic illusion and total abstraction, and between the erotic which functions as such and another which would be impossible within the domain of the erotic. Such unresolved contradictions maintain in the book or in the film lines of force, and I think if there is a possible reading, its thanks to this quality.²³

Thus in his works, Robbe-Grillet uses colour and light, first to designate and then to ironically subvert the realist illusion. As man is no longer the centre of a certain and stable universe, this narrative convention is, in Robbe-Grillet's opinion, no longer valid, as we can no longer be sure that any one description of reality is the only accurate one, it is but a possible one. Our perception of reality is thus an essentially subjective function, with our immediate knowledge of the world limited to the surfaces of objects. As a result, art is no longer a mirror of the "real" world, but constitutes and invents its own reality.

In his early novels, Robbe-Grillet uses vague colour terms which perhaps imply that he was still conscious of an external reality above and beyond the text. However, he soon realized that he was in fact a victim of the realist illusion and consequently, in his later works, the colour terms become more precise, as he accepts that his texts are totally his own inventions. Nevertheless, he remains aware of the physical constraints of nature on man's perception of the physical world, describing

only those objects and events which can be seen, heard, or touched (and occasionally smelled).

Although he allows his texts to be constrained by physical laws, Robbe-Grillet also announces in several examples that it is his decision as author to accept those limitations. Thus when it is too dark to see an object, he summons up appropriate lighting before proceeding with the description. The text remains faithful to the physical constraints, but at the same time announces that it is nothing more than an artificial construction. The notion of an external reality ordering the text becomes meaningless, as Robbe-Grillet demonstrates the editorial omnipotence which any author must in fact have. Art is an artificial phenomenon.

Robbe-Grillet uses colour, as well as light, in this process of subversion. The colours used in his descriptions are generally "realist" in that they are appropriate to the objects in question, however, by placing excessive stress on these "realist" colours, Robbe-Grillet then undermines any pretence of realism. This process is best seen in the images of blood in his novels and films.

In Robbe-Grillet's works the illusion of realism is initially created and then ironically subverted, as he rejects this and other anthropomorphic descriptive conventions which we shall examine in the next chapter. These traditional codes of the narrative are no longer valid in the modern world of uncertainty, disorder and multiplicity. However, as Robbe-Grillet states, this process of subversion also creates a tension within his works, between the traditional realist illusion and total abstraction, the illusion must first be present in order to be subverted. The subjective and the objective thus compete within his novels and films, but neither dominates, and the tension remains unresolved. The references to colour and light designate and subvert the realist illusion, but they do not obliterate it, and so the conflict continues.

Notes

1. "Du réalisme à la réalité" (1955 and 1963) in Pour un nouveau roman, p.135.
2. "Temps et description dans le récit d'aujourd'hui" (1963) in Pour un nouveau roman, p.125.
3. Other Worlds (Simon & Schuster, 1980) quoted in Douglas R. Hofstadter, "Metamagical Themas," Scientific American, (July 1981), p.15.
4. N a pris les dés, French coproduction ORTF/Como Films, Eastmancolour, 1971.
5. Hofstadter, p.15. (see note 3).
6. This convention has also been contested in earlier works, such as André Gide's Les Faux-monnayeurs and in Jean-Paul Sartre's attack on François Mauriac, for excessive editorial intervention in Thérèse Desqueyroux (in Situations II)
7. "Du réalisme à la réalité," p.138.
8. "Une voie pour le roman futur," p.23.
9. David Hayman, "An Interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet," Contemporary Literature, 16, No.3(Summer 1975), p.282. This is Hayman's own translation.
10. Marie-Georgette Steisel, "Étude des couleurs dans La Jalousie," French Review, 38, No.4(1965), p.489.
11. "Du réalisme à la réalité," p.138.
12. Un Régicide (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1949). This novel was written in 1949, but not published until 1978. Djinn (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981).
13. Dans le labyrinthe (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1959).
14. Topologie d'une cité fantôme (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1976), p.49. For convenience all further page references will be included in the text, they are all for this edition. Also, henceforward it shall be referred to simply as Topologie.
15. Susan Suleiman, "Reading Robbe-Grillet: Sadism and text in Projet," Romantic Review, 68 (Jan.1977), p.46.
16. Souvenirs du triangle d'or (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1978), p.99. All further references to this edition, title abbreviated to Souvenirs (see note 14).
17. Roger Fowler, Linguistics and the Novel (London: Methuen, 1977), p.3.

18. Anthony R. Pugh, "Robbe-Grillet in New York," International Fiction Review, 1, No. 2 (July 1974), p.120.
19. B. Eikhenbaum, Sur la théorie de la prose, pp.208-209, quoted in Bruce Morrissette, Intertextual Assemblage from Topologie to the Golden Triangle (Fredericton: York Press, 1979).
20. "Début pour un ciné-roman," in Obliques, No's 16-17 (Paris: Éditions Borderie, 1978), p.192.
21. "Début pour un ciné-roman," p.192.
22. "Début pour un ciné-roman," p.189.
23. Hayman, p.284. There is a probable mistranslation in this text of "jeune fille" as "little girl" instead of "young girl".

3. LE VIOLEUR (Tradition Subverted)

The illusion of realism and the mimetic function of writing in the novel are not the only traditional novelistic conventions to be subverted in Robbe-Grillet's works. We shall attempt to show in this chapter how colour is also used in an interrogation of some of the descriptive conventions in the traditional novel.

In this traditional novel, represented for Robbe-Grillet by Balzac and his successors, colours are often used symbolically, that is a colour is linked to a specific and generally known meaning, the relationship existing before it is used by an author. Colour is a "sign" for a particular meaning. Use of colour is thus governed by predetermined, if complex, conventions, available to both reader and writer.

In his article discussing the use of colour in Balzac's La Comédie Humaine, H.U. Forest demonstrates how this principle functions in Balzac's novels.¹ For example, in La Fille aux yeux d'or, most of the action takes place in a red, white and gold boudoir. Forest shows that the white symbolizes the heroine's virginity, the red her love, and the gold her passion. Similarly, in Le Lys dans la vallée, Mme de Mortsauf dresses in white and has exemplary conduct. In this case both the colour white and the lily symbolize her good conduct, both of these symbols having a long tradition in European literature. Thus the colours used by Balzac are determined by the action, characters and settings, the author drawing on the reservoir of accepted literary symbols.

A careful reading of Robbe-Grillet's early novels reveals that he has rejected this straightforward use of traditional colour symbols; we saw, for example, in the previous chapter that he integrates the conventional symbolism of the colour red, only to subsequently subvert it. A traditional analysis of Robbe-Grillet's novels has been attempted by Ben F. Stoltzfus, who sees the red curtains of the doctor's room in Dans le labyrinthe

as symbols of blood and life², but such analysis and indeed Stoltzfus's whole interpretation of Robbe-Grillet's writing is based on the very principles which Robbe-Grillet is trying to subvert.

In Robbe-Grillet's later novels, this conventional symbolic use of colour makes an appearance, particularly in La Belle Captive and Souvenirs, but once again colours are used only to be subverted and metamorphosed. For example, the rose is traditionally used to symbolize a pure, young girl (the Petit Robert defines "une rosière" as "une jeune fille, vertueuse, vierge"). Robbe-Grillet uses this rose symbol in La Belle Captive in "l'image métaphorique de la fleur saignante" (p.24). As we have seen in discussing the illusion of realism, explicit mention of a novelistic convention, in this case the metaphorical image, tends to be ironic. The words "l'image métaphorique" announce to the reader that "la fleur saignante" is a symbol, thus subverting the traditional subconscious functioning of this convention. In this case the "fleur" is "saignante" due to rape and thus becomes a symbol for loss of virginity, but this could perhaps also be read as a symbol of Robbe-Grillet's rape of the conventions of the traditional novel. Both the symbol itself and the functioning of symbols in a text are degraded in this example.

In Souvenirs, this process is repeated with another of literature's symbolic colours; white. A group of young girls "sous la conduite de sévères religieuses" are dressed in;

... des collants en filet noir, des plumes, et leur longs cheveux, ou encore toutes sortes de déshabillés profanes et légères, lingerie intimes dont la blancheur virginale accentue encore le caractère licencieux. (p.111, my emphasis)

This is a complete reversal of the traditional colour symbol, the irony almost excessive. The group of girls is under the control of nuns, supposedly the very paragons

of virtue and chastity, but these girls are all dressed, or rather undressed, in a very provocative fashion, the effect heightened by the heavily ironic "blancheur virginale" of their underclothing.

This inversion of symbols by Robbe-Grillet is a demonstration of the power of the text and thus the writer. By creating its own reality, the text can freely manipulate colour symbols, the author can change them as he pleases. Such a process is not, of course, entirely new; for example, in La Nausée, Sartre reverses the traditional colour symbolism of black and white.³

Another point to be noted in the above quotation, is that "blancheur" and "virginale" appear together, that is the colour and the idea it symbolizes are one entity in the text, a cliché. This procedure also occurs in the three following examples from Souvenirs;

son cerceuil de laque noir (p.55); L'épais liquide paraît noir, sous les rayons funèbres de la lune (p.194); Lord Corynth, pâle comme la mort (p.237).

In each case this doubling-up process is repeated, with "noir-funèbre", "pâle-mort" and "noir-cerceuil". Colour and image appear in each phrase, "pâle" and "noir" being traditional colour symbols of death. But this tandem use again destroys, to a certain degree, the subconscious effect of the symbol, the text makes the association and not the reader. Although these three examples are not perhaps as subversive as "la blancheur virginale", they again point to the power of the text over symbols. The text creates its own reality and hence its own symbols.

In the novels of Balzac and Robbe-Grillet, a comparison of the eye-coloration of the principal characters also proves revealing. In his book Balzac - ou l'envers de la création romanesque, Ramon Fernandez shows how the eye-colouring of Balzac's protagonists is linked to their particular character and function.⁴ For example, blue eyes are often a sign of good character, the eyes being described with terms such as; "limpide, une douceur

angélique, le bleu de l'innocence, pure comme le bleu de ses yeux." Military and active men have eyes which are "étincelants, francs, d'un bleu d'acier", and black eyes symbolize mystery or the Orient.⁵

However it is green eyes which appear interesting for this study, for in many of Robbe-Grillet's novels appear beautiful green-eyed women, A... in La Jalousie being one example. Fernandez sees a link in Balzac's novels between "vert" of eyes and "pervers" of behaviour, a correspondence which certainly describes A... 's behaviour at times. It may be out of sheer perverseness that she sits in front of the window at the dining-table;

Cette situation à contre-jour, dont le manque de commodité paraît flagrant, a été choisie par elle-même une fois pour toutes. (p.70, my emphasis)

Green may be the colour of perverseness, but it is also the classic symbol of jealousy. This may again, however, be considered ironic, as A... is certainly not the jealous participant in La Jalousie.

Green eyes are also an important feature in Djinn, but in this instance Robbe-Grillet points explicitly to their source.

Ses grands yeux verts, encore élargis par la pénombre, brillaient d'un éclat étrange "comme ceux d'une fille qui serait venue d'un autre monde". (p.108)

The quotation marks are the obvious clue that this is a reference to another work, and this source appears to be Baudelaire's prose poem Les Bienfaits de la lune;

La lune qui est le caprice même, regarda par la fenêtre pendant que tu dormais dans ton berceau, et se dit: "Cette enfant me plaît".

Et elle descendit mollement son escalier de nuages et passa sans bruit à travers les vitres.

Puis elle s'étendit sur toi avec la tendresse souple d'une mère, et elle déposa ses couleurs sur ta face. Tes prunelles en sont restées vertes, et tes joues extraordinairement pâles. C'est en contemplant cette visiteuse que tes yeux se sont si bizarrement agrandis; et elle t'a si tendrement serrée à la gorge que tu en as gardé pour toujours l'envie de pleurer.⁶

Djinn has these same large green eyes and pale complexion of such a moon-child and her erratic behaviour could certainly be called capricious. The difference between "capricieux" and "pervers" is not all that great and it is no surprise that A... 's eyes are in fact much like those of Djinn and Baudelaire's moon-child.

Ses yeux sont très grands, brillants, de couleur verte, bordés de cils longs et courbes, Ils paraissent toujours se présenter de face, même quand le visage est de profil. Elle les maintient continuellement dans leur plus large ouverture, en toutes circonstances, sans jamais battre des paupières. (p.202)

This description gives A... a doll-like quality and in his later novels, Robbe-Grillet describes many of his female creations as "poupées". Another famous woman with such eyes is the Mona Lisa, whose eyes are also said to stare a viewer in the face from any angle.

In the light of a reading of Djinn, the postulation of a link between the eyes of Baudelaire's moon-child and A... 's green eyes seems justified.

After a comparison of eye-coloration, an analysis of the colour of the dress of the principal characters in Balzac's and Robbe-Grillet's novels proves revealing. Clothing is particularly relevant to this study as many of the colour terms in Robbe-Grillet's novels are applied to items of dress; approximately one in seven of the colour terms used in La Jalousie, for example, describe

clothing.

In Balzac's novels, a character's clothing generally reflects the personality and the function of that person, as seen in the white dress of Mme de Mortsauf. Robbe-Grillet sums up this process thus in "Nouveau roman, homme nouveau";

Il y avait une constante identité entre ces objets (les objets balzaciens) et leur propriétaire: un simple gilet, c'était déjà un caractère, et une position sociale en même temps.⁷

And he makes this point even more explicit in a later article;

Un simple bouton de gilet peut signifier richesse, puissance, satisfaction.⁸

Possessions are thus extensions of a character, one implies the other. This novelistic convention is one which continues long after Balzac. Émile Zola, for example, writes in Le Roman expérimental;

L'homme est complété par ses vêtements, par sa maison, par sa ville, et sa province.⁹

It is this relationship between man and object which Robbe-Grillet wishes to destroy. If, "les choses sont les choses, et l'homme n'est que l'homme"¹⁰, then this man-object correspondence of Balzac, Zola and much of traditional literature is no longer valid, for it conceals man's true situation in the world.

In Robbe-Grillet's first published novel Les Gommès, he explicitly questions this false relationship between man and his dress. Chapter One opens with the following description of the central character, Wallas.

Wallas s'adosse au garde-fou, à l'entrée du port. C'est un homme encore jeune, grand, tranquille, au visage régulier. Les vêtements qu'il porte et son

apparence de flâneur sont, au passage, un vague sujet d'étonnement pour les derniers ouvriers qui se hâtent vers le port: en ce moment, à cet endroit, il ne paraît pas tout à fait normal de ne pas être en costume de travail, de ne pas rouler sur une bicyclette, de n'avoir pas l'air pressé, on ne va pas se promener un mardi au petit jour, d'ailleurs on ne se promène pas dans ce quartier-là. Cette indépendance vis-à-vis du lieu et de l'heure a quelque chose d'un peu choquant.¹¹

Wallas is presented in this description not for what he is, but for what he is not, his dress and situation being defined by negatives: he is in the wrong place at the wrong time, dressed in the wrong way. Thus he is not linked to the world around him in the way that Balzac's or Zola's characters are. As Zola writes ;

Je définirai donc la description: Un état du monde qui détermine et complète l'homme.¹²

The description in the above passage from Les Gommès in no way determines nor completes Wallas, it tells us little about him or his function, he has no place in the world described. Thus "cette indépendance" of his position in time and space is indeed "un peu choquant", for the reader of the traditional novel would expect a closer correlation between Wallas and the environment. Furthermore, Wallas's "visage régulier" may also be an ironic reference to Balzac's interest in physiognomy and phrenology, that is the judgement of character from facial and body features and the examination of the external conformation of the cranium to determine mental capabilities. The regularity of Wallas's face implies that the reader can learn nothing from it, it has no special features which "betray" his character. This pseudo-scientific principle is further subverted when the reader learns that Wallas's chief has measured his cranial capacity and found him lacking a few vital

cubic centimetres of intelligence.

The negative phraseology of the character description in the above passage shows that Les Gommes is very much an example of what Sartre has termed the "anti-roman"¹³, that is one which goes against many of the traditional conventions of the novel, in this case that of character description.

In La Jalousie, as far as clothing is concerned, Robbe-Grillet uses the traditional stereotypes of the tropical plantation, but these are again ironically degraded, with colour beginning to play a greater role in these descriptions. From the realist point of view the use of these stereotypes is quite legitimate, for it is a fact that the owners of colonial plantations generally dressed in a particular fashion. Thus there is nothing surprising about the following description of Franck's clothing when he comes to visit A....

Il est vêtu d'un short et d'une chemise kaki à manches courtes, dont les pattes d'épaules et les poches boutonnées ont une allure vaguement militaire. Sur ses demi-bas en coton rugueux, il porte des chaussures de tennis enduites d'une épaisse couche de blanc, qui se craquelle aux endroits où plie la toile sur le dessus du pied. (p.46)

In both style and colour then, Franck's dress epitomises the tropical plantation owner, as does the white suit he wears on the trip to town with A...; in fact he would be quite at home in a Graham Greene intrigue. Khaki and white are the traditional colours of men's tropical clothing.

However there is a chink in this conventional façade, for Franck's dress at the dinner table is not quite up to standard.

Il n'a ni veste ni cravate, et le col de sa chemise est largement déboutonné; mais c'est une chemise blanche irréprochable. (p.21, my emphasis)

Like Wallas, Franck is not dressed correctly for the occasion, he has no tie and his shirt is undone (perhaps a sign of his virility), and interestingly he is not wearing a "gilet", a garment which Robbe-Grillet seems determined to link to Balzac. This is only a minor point, which perhaps gives some idea of Franck's character, or the narrator's own prejudices and suspicions, but one wonders if there is not yet again irony in the choice of the word "irréprochable". Thus Franck's breach of the traditional code of dress is another example of Robbe-Grillet debasing the man-object relationship of the traditional novel; Franck may suggest that dress is not necessarily determined by a particular situation.

Franck's shirt is a "blanche irréprochable", which brings to mind Balzac's Mme de Mortsauf. After spending a possibly adulterous night in town with A..., Franck returns in a "complet blanc à l'éclat terni" (p.109). This appears to be the use of a traditional symbol, as the "irréprochable" becomes "terni" in both clothing and conduct. It could also be seen as a realist precision, as his clothes will obviously be dusty and soiled after the long trip over rough roads. However, both the symbol and the realist detail are somewhat ironic, as the reader can never be sure that anything really happens between A... and Franck, or that the trip to town ever takes place, it may all be a product of the narrator's imagination.

The second page of the novel indicates that A...'s dress is, like Franck's, also unconventional for the circumstances.

Elle est toujours habillée de la robe claire, à col droit, très collante, qu'elle portait au déjeuner. Christiane, une fois de plus, lui a rappelé que des vêtements moins ajustés permettent de mieux supporter la chaleur. Mais A... s'est contentée de sourire: elle ne souffrait pas de la chaleur, elle avait connu des climats beaucoup plus chauds - en Afrique par exemple - et s'y était toujours très bien portée. (p.10)

Firstly this description shows that A... is one of those women who remains cool, calm and collected in any situation, but again it also demonstrates that clothing is not necessarily dictated by situation in time and space. From the realist perspective, there is again nothing unusual about the colour of the dress, however the style seems unsuited to the tropics. In yet another frame of reference, A...'s tight dress appears seductive, adding to the sexual element in La Jalousie.

The subversive process can even be seen in the description of minor characters in La Jalousie; the natives.

... un noir en short, tricot de corps, vieux chapeau mou, à la démarche rapide et ondulante, pieds nus probablement. Son couvre-chef de feutre, informe, délavé, reste en mémoire et devrait le faire reconnaître aussitôt parmi les ouvriers de la plantation. Il n'en est rien cependant. (p.53)

This description again functions on more than one level. Firstly it may show the probable racism of the narrator, whose attitude seems to be the traditional "they all look the same to me", but it also shows that in fact "clothes do not maketh the man". In a Balzacian novel such a hat would have been a distinctive feature, but in La Jalousie, ironically, it is not. Finally the description may also be a comment on the processes of description; verisimilitude seems to be at issue in the comment "probablement pieds nus", as much as any physical limitations of the point of view of the narrator.

But perhaps the best example of this anti-Balzacian dress is the description of the calendar picture which hangs on the wall in A...'s bedroom. In this picture, there is a man who is first described as "un personnage vêtu à l'eupéenne", then in a later description his clothing is more detailed;

Il est vêtu d'un complet blanc de bonne coupe, il est coiffé d'un casque colonial. Il porte une moustache noire à bouts relevés, selon l'ancienne

mode. (p.172)

This appears to be an almost exaggerated description of the traditional European in the tropics, as is clearly indicated by the white suit, black moustache and colonial helmet. However the next paragraph continues;

Non. Son visage, qui n'est pas éclairé par le soleil, ne laisse rien deviner, même pas la couleur de sa peau.

Thus, once more, this correlation between a character and his clothing is subverted, the reader's expectations are frustrated. In La Jalouise, man is neither successfully nor definitively "complété par ses vêtements".

Even in Robbe-Grillet's later novels, this process is continued through game-playing with the Balzacian conventions of character, dress and corresponding colour. Like La Jalousie, Projet uses traditional stereotypes, the conventional underworld figures of modern-day New York; revolutionaries, prostitutes, mad doctors, delinquent youths and private detectives. The characters in this novel are dressed according to their particular role and it is noticeable that whenever a new character appears in the text, his dress is carefully described, thus defining the stereotype. For example, "le type en noir" keeping watch on a narrator's apartment is introduced in the following manner;

C'est à ce moment que j'aperçois le type en noir - imperméable verni à col relevé, mains dans les poches, chapeau de feutre mou rabattu sur les yeux - qui attend sur le trottoir d'en face. (p.14)

This first description of "le type en noir" immediately labels him as a private eye, the black rain-coat and felt hat being the traditional garb of such characters. The mad doctor is introduced in a

similar fashion;

Mais voilà qu'un homme aux cheveux argentés, vêtu de la longue blouse blanche à col montant des chirurgiens, entre dans le champ par la droite. (p.9)

This is the stereotyped doctor, authenticated by the greying hair and white coat, and after this introduction the man is referred to as "le docteur" for the rest of the scene.

Thus it at first appears that Robbe-Grillet is following the novelistic convention of linking dress with function and situation. However each new character, including very minor ones, is introduced by a detailed description of his clothing, and Robbe-Grillet thus undermines the convention by placing excessive emphasis upon it. The constant repetition of the same formula makes the functioning of this convention so blatantly obvious that its effect is degraded.

In Robbe-Grillet's view such stereotypes, which Balzac and Zola do in fact use, are merely artificial constructions in the larger artificial construction of the text itself. The difference between Robbe-Grillet and the traditional novel is that he no longer attempts to hide this artificiality; he does not pretend that they are "real" people, they are merely elements in the game of constructing a text.

Ce qui est nouveau, c'est que tels fantômes, surgis jadis mystérieusement des profondeurs abyssales, sont aujourd'hui renvoyés au grand jour à leur superficialité d'images d'Épinal, ou de bandes dessinées. Il n'y a plus pour nous que les figures plates d'un jeu de cartes, dépourvues en elles-mêmes de signification connue, de valeur, mais auxquelles chaque joueur donnera un sens, le sien, en les disposant dans sa main puis en les abattant sur la table selon sa propre ordonnance, sa propre invention de la partie qui se joue.¹⁴

Robbe-Grillet degrades characters to the level of cardboard cut-outs - "images d'Épinal" - which have no meaning, but he then gives them a new meaning in the context of the narration. He is subverting the novelistic convention of character and also reinforcing the fact that his texts create their own reality; characters and their dress therefore become functions of the text and not of some external reality. Again the dual process of construction-deconstruction is at work in Robbe-Grillet's novels.

Colour, which is often, as we have seen, a part of the description of clothing, assists in these processes and also contributes to the breaking of the anthropomorphic, man-object relationship of the traditional novel. Colour is an essential element in creating the stereotypes which Robbe-Grillet uses and degrades; Franck's khaki shorts and shirt, his white suit, Ben Saïd's black rain-coat, all serve to reinforce the stereotyping of the character.

Although the traditional colour conventions discussed so far, are still used in literature today, this system, as Robbe-Grillet has already noted, was already being questioned in the nineteenth century. The following entry in the Journal des Goncourt is quite revealing;

Flaubert nous disait aujourd'hui: l'histoire, l'aventure d'un roman, ça m'est bien égal. J'ai la pensée quand je fais un roman, de rendre une coloration, une nuance. Par exemple dans mon roman carthaginois, je veux faire quelque chose de pourpre: dans Madame Bovary, je n'ai eu que l'idée de rendre un ton, cette couleur de moisissure de l'existence des cloportes.¹⁵

In Salammbô, Flaubert's Carthaginian novel, this process results in such phrases as; "pourpre comme le soleil" and "le fond du ciel pourpre". These are hardly realist descriptions, thus it is again a case of the text constituting its own reality, giving importance to the

colour "pourpre", without using it as a traditional symbol, that is to represent royalty. Similarly, in Dans le labyrinthe, this same technique is used to "rendre une coloration", that of "grisaille". This is produced by the wallpaper and the dull skies and is passed to other other objects such as; "la façade grise" (p.47); "le tableau accroché au mur du fond n'est plus qu'un rectangle gris" (p.79); "un ovale gris" (p.80); "le jour blafard" (p.122) and "leurs visages blêmes" (p.123).

In the context of our examination of the descriptive conventions of the novel, a related aspect which is of interest is the use of "le petit détail qui fait vrai", which is used in the traditional novel to make the story "ring true". It reinforces the illusion of realism by "authentic" description of minor details. Zola, for example, before writing La Bête humaine, travelled on the foot-plate of several locomotives in order to accurately describe the actions of the stoker and the driver, although such details add little to the main thrust of the novel. "Le petit détail" is used by the author to give the fiction the appearance of being real life, again the aim is to make the reader forget that he is reading a fabrication of words on a page. This convention is commonly used in the traditional novel and it is yet again one which Robbe-Grillet uses, only to subvert it with the help of colour. As Robbe-Grillet writes in "Du réalisme à la réalité", verisimilitude, which is partly created by "le petit détail", is no longer the aim of the novelist;

Dans ce réalisme nouveau, il n'est donc plus du tout question de vérisime. Le petit détail qui "fait vrai" ne retient plus l'attention du romancier, dans le spectacle du monde ni en littérature; ce qui le frappe - et que l'on retrouve après bien des avatars dans ce qu'il écrit - , ce serait davantage, au contraire, le petit détail qui fait faux.¹⁶ (Robbe-Grillet's emphasis)

Thus to subvert "le petit détail qui fait vrai", Robbe-Grillet uses "le petit détail qui fait faux". A subtle example of this is the following description from La Jalousie, where the narrator is watching A..., who is in the bathroom one evening as the sun is setting.

Elle est debout contre la table laquée de blanc ... son regard ne peut atteindre que la masse verte des bananiers.

La nuit ensuite n'est pas longue à tomber ... la table laquée devient vite d'un bleu plus soutenu, ainsi que la robe, le sol blanc, les flancs de la baignoire.

Seul le carré de la fenêtre fait une tache d'un violet plus clair ... L'oeil maintenant ne discerne plus rien, malgré les fenêtres ouvertes. (pp.136-138)

As the sun sets there is a progression through the colours of the spectrum; from white, to green, to blue, to violet, and finally to total darkness. This sequence is that of the ultra-violet end of the spectrum and once violet is passed, the human eye "ne discerne plus rien". This description appears to obey the physical laws of nature as the sun sets, but in fact such a sequence is physically impossible in this particular situation. In "real" life, as the sun sets, there is a shift in light composition (on the earth's surface), not towards ultra-violet, but towards the infra-red end of the spectrum, thus producing the glowing, red sunsets for which the tropics are famous.

Although the geometry of the house in La Jalousie cannot be precisely established, it appears that the bathroom is on the western side of the house, that is facing the setting sun. In this scene, the narrator is probably watching A... through the bathroom door from the office, and therefore is watching the sun set over A...'s shoulder. She is between the sun and the narrator. In such circumstances, the bathroom and objects in it should take on reddish hues and thus the description of this

scene is the very opposite of the "real" life situation. Apparently realist detail is, in this case, false, but like Flaubert's purple sun, the falsehood has little effect on the narrative, showing that "le petit détail", true or false, is largely irrelevant. Again the text is creating its own reality.

In Projet, the role of "le petit détail qui fait vrai" is also subverted, as was that of character. The following extract from David Hayman's interview with Robbe-Grillet is particularly revealing;

Q: In Project for a Revolution I sense that you are toying with a particular novelistic convention, namely the convention of situating the action in an America of the mind (the dream). For example, the apartment you describe, far from being an American apartment, is completely Parisian. Even the door...

A: A door with a key hole. There is no such door in New York... and a minute-miser in the hallway. There are no minute-misers in New York. And when you hear the firetrucks, you hear the noise made by Parisian firetrucks.

Q: And then I have a feeling that all the imagery of the novel is inspired by the paint-patterns on the door, that ugly imitation-wood-textured paint one finds on all the doors of Paris.

A: Yes, of course, and that one finds in every one of my books. There is also one in Le Voyeur. And the subway itself. In the New York subway the benches run parallel to the sides of the train, whereas here they are arranged in rows, like in the Paris Metro.¹⁷

Surprisingly for many readers, such false details are also explicitly discussed in the text of Projet;

... Autre chose: vous parlez du quartier de Greenwich, ou de la station de métro Madison; n'importe quel Américain dirait "le Village" et "Madison Avenue".(p.189)

The "petits détails qui font faux" used in Projet reinforce the complete subjectivity of the narrator and destroy any pretence of mimetic, realist description. In drawing attention to these false details, Robbe-Grillet shows that they are in fact unimportant, for the only reality in question is that of the **text**. Robbe-Grillet continues later in the interview with Hayman;

I've received letters from American readers, men, and particularly women, living in New York, who tell me, "Really, it's extraordinary how you manage to describe the anguish of this city. I live with that anguish and now each time I pass the window over the fire-escape, I check to see if it's really fastened shut, etc." You see, they have lived the book totally in terms of the realist illusion without being disturbed by the accumulation of details that are completely, historically, false.¹⁸

"Le petit détail qui fait vrai" is thus shown to be superfluous and its role is humourously undermined in Robbe-Grillet's novels. This is particularly true of Projet, which could be read as a revolution against the conventions of the traditional novel, which are integrated into the text, only to be interrogated and degraded. As Robbe-Grillet said in an ORTF interview;

Je ne suis pas de ceux qui veulent supprimer du roman tous ces éléments du passé, je suis de ceux qui veulent les contester, et pour les contester il faut qu'ils soient présents. Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est de les interroger.¹⁹

As we have attempted to show in this chapter, Robbe-Grillet does question some of "ces éléments du passé" which produced the traditional novel. Our examination reveals that he uses colour to subvert some of the traditional conventions of description in the novel.

The traditional colour symbol, widely used by Balzac and his successors, is integrated into Robbe-Grillet's works, only to be subsequently degraded in an ironic game. Robbe-Grillet also plays a game with another significant element of Balzac's colour use; the eye colouring of characters. A large number of the colour terms in Robbe-Grillet's novels are used in descriptions of clothing, these terms also working to subvert traditional conventions. In the novels of writers like Balzac and Zola, clothing is an extension of a character, one implies the other; thus a description of a character's clothing can immediately reveal his social position, wealth, power and so on. However Robbe-Grillet uses descriptions of clothing to show that this relationship between character and clothing is often false, that clothing need not be dictated by situation in time and space. He also uses stereotypes which at first appear to link character with situation, but the excessive stress placed on these stereotypes announces that they are only artificial constructions, and do not reflect "real" people, as the traditional novel would have us believe. Thus Robbe-Grillet uses descriptions of clothing, of which colour terms are a significant part, to undermine the anthropomorphic relationship between man and objects which is reflected in the traditional nineteenth century novel.

The related aspect of "le petit détail qui fait vrai", which is often used to give the appearance of authenticity, is also subverted by the colour terms in Robbe-Grillet's works. He deliberately uses false details to show that in fact this convention is irrelevant. A text creates its own reality and thus a novelist is free to manipulate details without reference to the "real" world.

Thus colour is one of the means through which Robbe-Grillet questions some of the conventions of description in the traditional novel. The conventions are apparently respected, but are in fact ironically subverted and reworked.

However, as the next chapter will attempt to demonstrate, this complex use is not yet a complete

definition of the uses to which colour is put by Robbe-Grillet. Colour functions in his works, not only to subvert conventional meaning, but more importantly to create new meaning.

ooo000ooo

Notes

1. H.U.Forest, "La couleur dans La Comédie humaine de Balzac," Modern Language Notes, 58(1943), pp.590-594.
2. Ben F. Stoltzfus, Alain Robbe-Grillet and the New French Novel (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1964), p.82.
3. D.J.Fletcher, "The Use of Colour in La Nausée," Modern Language Review, 63, No.2(1968), pp.370-380.
4. Ramon Fernandez, Balzac - ou l'envers de la création romanesque (Paris: Grasset, 1980).
5. Fernandez, pp.193-194.
6. Charles Baudelaire, "Les Bienfaits de la lune," in Baudelaire - Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).
7. "Nouveau roman, homme nouveau," p.119.
8. Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Révolution dans le roman?" p.7, quoted in Stephen Heath, The Nouveau Roman (London: Elek, 1972), p.78.
9. Émile Zola, Le Roman expérimental (Paris: 1928), p.299, quoted in Heath, p.78.
10. "Nature, humanisme, tragédie," (1958) in Pour un nouveau roman, p.47.
11. Les Gommages (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1953), p.45.
12. Le Roman expérimental, p.228, quoted in Heath, p.78.
13. In the preface to Nathalie Sarraute, Portrait d'un inconnu (Paris: Gallimard, 1949).
14. Le Nouvel Observateur (June 26,1970), included in Projet as a "prière d'insérer".
15. Quoted in H.U.Forest, see Note 1.
16. "Du réalisme à la réalité," p.140.
17. Hayman, p.282.
18. Hayman, p.283.
19. Interview - ORTF, "Cinéastes de notre temps," (Sept29,1969) quoted in Heath, p.130.

4. DANS LE LABORATOIRE (The New Colour Symbolism)

Colour has thus far been shown to play a part in the subversion of some of the conventions of the traditional novel, but Robbe-Grillet also uses colour for more constructive purposes. His concern with modes of signification leads him to use colour in an investigation of the processes of meaning and of the possibility of creating new meaning, a meaning which is not a pre-established element in the novel in the way that traditional colour symbolism was. Robbe-Grillet writes in "Nouveau roman, homme nouveau";

Le Nouveau Roman n'est pas une théorie, c'est une recherche.¹¹

In his novels then, the use of colour cannot be reduced to deconstruction, colour does appear to be an element in a creative experimentation and is not limited to a subversive, critical role. However this "recherche" does not simply produce a new symbolic colour theory which is to be the basis for all novels; indeed each novel must invent its own reality, its own forms. As Robbe-Grillet writes in "À quoi servent les théories";

Il n'est pas question, nous l'avons vu, d'établir une théorie, un moule préalable pour y couler les livres futurs. Chaque romancier, chaque roman doit inventer sa propre forme. Aucune recette ne peut remplacer cette réflexion continuelle. Le livre crée pour lui seul ses propres règles. Encore le mouvement de l'écriture doit-il souvent conduire à les mettre en péril, en échec peut-être, et à les faire éclater. Loin de respecter des formes immuables, chaque nouveau livre tend à constituer ses lois de fonctionnement en même temps qu'à produire leur destruction. Une fois l'oeuvre achevée, la réflexion critique de l'écrivain lui servira encore à prendre ses distances par rapport à elle, alimentant aussitôt de nouvelles

recherches, un nouveau depart.²

Thus each novel should constitute a new departure which extends old forms and produces new ones. The aim of this chapter is to show how colour is used in different processes and to demonstrate that Robbe-Grillet's novels show an evolution in colour use from one to the next. For the moment discussion will be limited to the early works, up to and including Dans le labyrinthe (1959), which are roughly contemporary to the above quote from "À quoi servent les théories". The later novels warrant separate discussion and will be considered in later chapters.

In Les Gommages, Robbe-Grillet's first published novel, colour does not appear to play a significant role, with comparatively few colour terms.³ The function of colour in this novel is perhaps best summed up by the following quotation from the text itself.

Les boutiques sont petites, mais nettes, bien lavées, souvent repeintes; presque toutes sont des magasins d'alimentation: une boulangerie ocre, une crèmerie bleue, une poissonnerie blanche. Leur couleur seulement et le titre qu'elles portent au fronton les distinguent les unes des autres.⁴

Colour in Les Gommages is very much the "adjectif optique, descriptif, celui qui se contente de mesurer, de situer, de limiter, de définir."⁵ In the above description colour is merely a method of distinguishing one shop from another; it defines and limits and thus functions much like the geometric adjectives with which many critics believe Robbe-Grillet to be obsessed. The functioning of colour in this novel is hence neutral and non-emotive.

This does not appear to be the case in La Jalousie where, as we have seen in the previous chapter, colour is used subversively, moreover in this novel colour also has an important creative function - used to direct the focus of the narrative, to show heightening emotions as the narrator's jealousy approaches paroxysm and to identify "suspect" objects as he searches for possible evidence of A... 's affair with Franck. Jealousy thus literally

"colours" the world in La Jalousie. This wider role for colour is reflected in a proportionally greater number of colour terms compared to Les Gommès, and there are in fact as many colour terms as geometric terms in the novel.⁶

Probably the most widely known and discussed element in La Jalousie is the centipede and the stain it leaves on the wall; an examination of the various descriptions of this scene provides interesting information on the way colour functions creatively in this novel.

The centipede first appears in the narrative as "une tache noirâtre" on the dining-room wall and we read that it has been killed at some time in the past, "la semaine dernière, au début du mois, le mois précédent peut-être, ou plus tard" (p.27). It next appears as "la trace du mille-pattes écrasé" on the "peinture claire" (p.50). The colour term has been transferred from the centipede to the wall. However in the next description these two coloured elements are combined, producing "une tache sombre, juste en face de A..., ressort sur la peinture claire, unie et mate" (p.56). Hence the colour terms are accumulating as the narrative progresses and the narrator's jealousy grows.

In his study La Jalousie de Robbe-Grillet, Jean-Pierre Vidal points out that the colour "sombre" may be the product of an earlier description in the text of Franck's shadow on the wall, "l'ombre agrandie et flou d'une tête d'homme - celle de Franck" (p.21). The centipede takes the place of Franck's shadow on the wall, creating a link between the two, and the "noirâtre" of the first description of the centipede becomes "sombre" as the result of a word-game with "l'ombre" of Franck's head.⁷

This "tache sombre" is then defined in more detail as "l'image du mille-pattes écrasé se dessine alors, non pas intégrale, mais composée de fragments assez précis pour ne laisser aucun doute" (p.56). Thus there is a movement in the description from an undefined stain to the identifiable, but still fragmented image of a centipede.

The centipede now having reached a precise form, its killing is described for the first time at the end of the second section. In this description the only colour terms

are again "claire" and then "sombre". The description opens with "sur la peinture claire de la cloison", and ends eight paragraphs later with "la peinture reste marquée d'une forme sombre", with A... 's movements being carefully scrutinised between the two. There is also movement from the whole centipede which Franck crushes, back to the fragmented image on the wall, "un petit arc qui se tord en point d'interrogation, s'estompant à demi d'un côté, entouré çà et là de signes plus tenus". (pp.61-64).

Hence this description of the crushing inverts the elements of the previous scene. The centipede starts as "une tache sombre" in the previous scene, becomes the fragmented but recognisable image of the centipede, then the whole centipede which is killed, finally reverting to "une forme sombre" and a fragmented image which is described as a question mark, and not as a centipede. Similarly the colours move from "une tache sombre" on the "peinture claire", to the "peinture claire" which bears "une forme sombre". In both cases there is a circular description which is an example of interior duplication in the text, that is an element in the novel reproduces the form of the novel itself.

The circularity in the description perhaps indicates a rise to peak, followed by a fall, which does in fact describe the changing emotions of the narrator. At first he has no suspicions, but as the centipede is crushed he carefully notes A... 's reactions; her hand clenching her knife and her quickened breathing. This appears to be the first sign of A... 's interest in Franck, the narrator's first suspicions are aroused. However, the description of the centipede in the third section indicates that this was only a minor crisis, a temporary flush of emotion.

The centipede next appears as "la tache formée par les restes du mille-pattes" which significantly is "à peine visible sous l'incidence rasante" (p.69). The colour has now gone from the barely visible stain and it has fragmented even further, which may indicate that, after the first killing, the suspicions of the narrator have been allayed, if only temporarily. Further proof of this

calmer period is that Franck is not present, although the third plate on the table suggests that he is expected for lunch. However, Franck does not arrive and this may explain the description of A... as "assise rigide et muette à sa propre place". Franck's non-arrival seems, on the other hand, to further calm the narrator, for now "la peinture immaculée n'offre pourtant pas la moindre prise au regard". The stain has disappeared altogether (p.70).

In the fourth section, A... and Franck return from town after spending the night in a hotel, and although Franck does not stay long, the narrator's suspicions again seem to have been aroused by A... 's absence, for "la trace du mille-pattes est encore parfaitement visible" (p.90).

This is followed in the fifth section by another description of the killing of the centipede. The actual killing is quickly described without colour, "C'est à ce moment que se produit la scène de l'écrasement du mille-pattes sur le mur nu" (p.112), and again this completes a movement from partial to whole form, from "la trace du mille-pattes" to "le mille-pattes" itself. Although the centipede is not coloured in this scene, many other elements are, for the description is now centred on A... 's reaction to the event and the narrator becomes very aware of the objects on the table around A... 's hand which is clenching the table-cloth. Thus immediately following the crushing there is; "la toile blanche - un mince ruban d'or - une surface blanche uniforme - la main de Franck, brune, robuste, ornée d'un anneau d'or - une petite tache sombre - la main brune". From A..., attention is then focused on Franck, the narrator noting the khaki colour of his clothing, which is insisted upon (dont la couleur khaki), even noting the yellow plastic buttons on Franck's shirt, which indicate the intensity of his interest. Particular attention is paid to "la lettre bleu pâle" protruding from his pocket, which may be a note from A... and thus proof of their complicity. The narrative then returns to A... 's arrival back from town, the event which earlier caused the reappearance

of the centipede in the narrative.

Thus this description demonstrates how colour reflects the shifting focus of the narrative away from the centipede itself, firstly to A... and her reactions and then to Franck and the possibly incriminating blue letter.

In the sixth section, attention again focuses on the centipede, and its killing is described without mention of either A... or Franck. At the time of this event A... and Franck are away in town which heightens the importance of the centipede, as only it remains for the narrator to focus his attention upon.

The episode opens with a pseudo-scientific discussion of the centipede, as the narrator attempts to identify the particular species in question. However the centipede suddenly moves and the tone of the narrative immediately changes.

Soudain la partie antérieure du corps se met en marche, exécutant une rotation sur place, qui incurve le trait sombre vers le bas du mur. Et aussitôt, sans avoir le temps d'aller plus loin, la bestiole choit sur le carrelage, se tordant encore à demi et crispant par degrés ses longues pattes, tandis que les mâchoires s'ouvrent et se ferment à toute vitesse autour de la bouche, à vide, dans un tremblement réflexe.

Dix secondes plus tard, tout cela n'est plus qu'une bouillie rousse, où se mêlent des débris d'articles, méconnaissables.

Mais sur le mur nu, au contraire, l'image de la scutigère écrasée se distingue parfaitement, inachevée mais sans bavure, reproduite avec la fidélité d'une planche anatomique où ne seraient figurés qu'une partie des éléments... (p.128)

Once the centipede moves there seems to be a sudden burst of emotion and the creature is crushed beyond recognition, becoming "une bouillie rousse". This is obviously an image of blood which reinforces the

excessive emotions the narrator appears to display. But it also creates a link with A... 's "chevelure noire aux reflets roux" which is another highly charged emotional element in the novel. In both cases the colour adds greatly to the emotional content of the images.

Again there is also movement from whole to fragmentary in this description. Once the centipede falls from the wall and is crushed, the sudden rush of emotion seems to subside, for attention now returns to "l'image de la scutigère" which is "reproduite avec la fidélité d'une planche anatomique", the pseudo-scientific tone being adopted once more. The image on the wall has only "une partie des éléments", thus completing the destruction of the centipede and then the fragmentation of its image as the outburst passes. This also shows clearly that the whole centipede is a more emotive element than its stain on the wall; the more complete the centipede, the greater the emotion of the narrator.

The stain on the wall is like "une encre brune imprégnant la couche superficielle de l'enduit" and the narrator sets about removing it, using a rubber and a razor (pp.129-131). He is obviously determined to erase this permanent correlative which he has come to associate with the possible liaison between A... and Franck. At first the mark disappears easily, but "la tête et les premiers anneaux nécessitent un travail plus poussé: après avoir perdu très vite sa couleur, la forme qui persiste reste ensuite stationnaire durant un temps assez long". Significantly the stain quickly loses its colour, completing the movement from the whole centipede which becomes "une bouillie rousse", to the fragmented and now colourless mark on the wall. Again the narrator is becoming calmer as the section ends.

In the seventh section, the narrator's jealousy appears to reach its paroxysm, a state which is again reflected in the descriptions of the centipede. As the narrator wanders through the house at night with the oil-lamp, the centipede suddenly appears;

La porte de l'office est fermée. Entre elle et l'ouverture béante du couloir, il y a le mille-pattes. Il est gigantesque: un des plus gros qui puissent se remontrer sous ces climats. (p.163)

The centipede has grown considerably in size, but significantly is still without colour. The colour of the stain was removed in the last scene, but events described are not necessarily in any chronological order, so Robbe-Grillet may again be ironically playing with the illusion of realism, underlining the fact that there is no distinction between real and imaginary scenes in La Jalousie. Another explanation for this lack of colour could be that attention is focused on the sound of the centipede after it falls to the floor, the same sound as that produced by A... brushing her hair, thus establishing another link, additional to colour, between the centipede and A...'s hair. This sound "le grésillement", then links A...'s hair back to the centipede which is now in a hotel room where A... and Franck are spending the night. This scene marks the peak of the narrator's jealousy, as he envisions A... in bed while Franck crushes the centipede once more (p.166). But again there is no colour, as sound has replaced sight (and hence colour) as the narrating sense, in this case reinforcing the realist illusion.

This use of sound extends into the next scene, when Franck's car crashes in the night. It immediately catches fire and the sound of the fire is noted, and not the colour of the flames as might be expected.

Aussitôt des flammes jaillissent. Toute la brousse en est illuminée, dans le crépitement de l'incendie qui se propage. C'est le bruit que fait le mille-pattes, de nouveau immobile sur le mur, en plein milieu du panneau. (p.167)

Thus, although colour is used to indicate heightened emotion, lack of colour does not necessarily indicate

weakening emotions, the change in the narrating sense accounting for the lack of colour.

In the eighth section colour reappears in description of the centipede, but now shows the dying jealousy of the narrator, for there is only passing mention of "les restes brunâtres du mille-pattes écrasé, qui marquent la peinture nue" (p.202). Significantly, Franck is not present, the centipede is once more fragmented and its colour imprecise; the narrative has come full circle, back to the "tache noirâtre" of the first description.

However the change of colour in the course of the narrative is quite noticeable, the stain has been transformed from "noirâtre", to "sombre", to "brune", to "brunâtre". Each colour is close enough to its predecessor for the changes to pass almost unnoticed, but comparison of the first and last terms shows that there has been a considerable progression in the colour descriptions. This firstly mocks "le petit détail qui fait vrai", as Robbe-Grillet changes these little details without the reader being truly aware of the transition, thus again showing the irrelevance of the convention. However it also shows that language does not always adequately describe our perception of the world around us and that any view of reality is subjective, but further discussion of this point will be left until the next chapter.

In the final short section of La Jalousie, the reader learns that in fact "la tache a toujours été là, sur le mur" (p.211). All reference to colour has disappeared and the stain is no longer even attributed to a centipede, thus showing that the narrator is once more quite calm.

Hence the various descriptions of the centipede in La Jalousie show how Robbe-Grillet uses colour to direct the focus of the narrative and also to show the changing emotions of the narrator. It is also clear from this discussion that Robbe-Grillet is creating his own system of colour use; the use of colour in La Jalousie is obviously different from its symbolism in the traditional novel. Colour now acts more as an arbitrarily created

sign of emotions, rather than a predetermined symbol of them. It is very much part of the creative process at work in Robbe-Grillet's novels, an integral part of the search for new forms.

However this process using colour is not limited to the centipede. A similar process can be seen operating in the descriptions of the banana plantation which surrounds the house in La Jalousie. Description of this plantation follows a similar pattern to that of the centipede, with movement from fragmentation to whole and the associated changes in colour.

At the start of the second section, the narrator is seated on the terrace looking out over the plantation and he carefully describes the disposition of the banana trees. This description is extremely precise and uses many geometric terms, but no colour. For example, one section is described thus;

Sans s'occuper de l'ordre dans lequel se trouvent les bananiers réellement visibles et les bananiers coupés, la sixième ligne donne les nombres suivants: vingt-deux, vingt-et-un, vingt, dix-neuf - qui représentent respectivement le rectangle, le vrai trapèze, le trapèze à bord incurvé, le même enfin après deduction des pieds abattus pour la récolte. (p.36)

In this description the emphasis is on the geometry of the plantation and each banana tree or stump can be counted individually, that is the plantation is composed of distinct fragments, as was the centipede in the early descriptions. However towards the end of this section, when the centipede is first killed, this fragmented, colourless description of the plantation suddenly condenses into "la masse verte des bananiers" (p.55). Again, as in description of the centipede, there is movement from fragmentation to completeness, and also towards definite colour. As emotion increases, objects become more unified and more highly coloured.

Description of the plantation as "la masse verte" also creates a link with "la masse noire" of A... 's hair, another emotive element in the narrative. As has already been discussed, A... 's hair is also linked to the centipede by common sound and colour ("roux"), and it is perhaps no great surprise that this sequence is continued by linking the plantation to the centipede. When viewed through the imperfect window pane in the dining-room, the plantation appears as "des taches de verdure circulaire" (p.57), which immediately link it to the "tache" left on the wall by the centipede. Thus all three of these coloured elements are linked to each other, constituting an important part of the creative process which reveals the rising jealousy of the narrator. These links between elements are also characteristic of this one novel, they function internally without reference to any external symbolism, and thus again demonstrate that La Jalousie is creating its own reality and its own system of colour use. The importance of these three inter-related elements is perhaps best shown in the following passage, in which they appear in close succession.

Au delà du verre grossier, d'une propreté parfaite, il n'y a plus que la cour caillouteuse, puis, montant vers la route et le bord du plateau, la masse verte des bananiers. Dans leur feuillage sans nuance les défauts de la vitre dessinent des cercles mouvants.

La lumière elle-même est comme verdie qui éclaire la salle à manger, les cheveux noirs aux improbables circonvolutions, la nappe sur la table et la cloison nue où une tache sombre, juste en face de A..., ressort sur la peinture claire, unie et mate. (p.55, my emphasis)

In this description, the colour adjectives help to highlight these three important elements; the plantation, A... 's hair and the stain on the wall. Jean-Pierre Vidal writes of this process;

Il y a dans La Jalousie un nombre considérable de séries organisatrices qui communiquent entre elles par un système de rimes d'une complexité telle que toute série choisie entraîne l'ensemble du texte.⁸

Throughout the narrative this process of fragmentation and coloration continues as the narrator's jealousy waxes and wanes. At the start of the fourth section, the plantation is again seen in fragmented, geometric terms;

Devant lui, sur l'autre rive, s'étend une pièce en trapèze, curviligne du côté de l'eau, dont tous les bananiers ont été récoltés à une date plus ou moins récente. Il est facile d'y compter les souches... (p.80)

But by the sixth section, this has transformed back into "la masse verte des bananiers", as the narrator's emotions rise towards their peak. However in the seventh section when paroxysm is reached, sound is again the dominant sense and thus, although the plantation is still seen as one mass, its colour has now disappeared.

Aigu et bref, le cri d'un animal retentit, tout proche, paraissant venir du jardin, juste au pied de la terrasse. Puis le même cri, au bout de trois secondes, signale sa présence de l'autre côté de la maison. Et de nouveau c'est le silence, qui n'est pas le silence, mais une succession de cris identiques, plus menus, plus lointains, dans la masse des bananiers, près de la rivière, sur le versant opposé peut-être, d'un bout à l'autre du vallon. (p.149, my emphasis)

Sound is obviously the dominant sense, and night has also fallen, thus the absence of colour in "la masse des bananiers" again emphasizes the realist illusion, as

colour does not exist without light.

Then as the narrator's jealousy dies down in the two final sections, there are corresponding changes in description of the plantation. At the beginning of the eighth section, it is described as "la verte étendue des bananiers" (p.184), colour is still present but the position of the adjective before the noun weakens its effect, reducing the phrase to little more than a banal cliché, devoid of much emotive power. Geometry then reappears in description, the plantation becoming "la ligne verte des bananiers" (p.188), fragmentation is beginning as "la masse" now becomes "la ligne", a far more precise term. In the short final section, colour disappears completely and description comes full-circle back to its precise but fragmented starting form.

Tout en bas, au fond de la vallée, devant la parcelle taillée en trapèze où les rayons obliques du soleil découpent chaque panache, chaque feuille de bananier, avec une netteté extrême, l'eau de la petite rivière montre une surface plissée, qui témoigne de la rapidité du courant. (p.213)

Individual leaves on the banana trees are now clearly distinct, indicating that the narrator's jealousy has receded and that he can now contemplate his plantation calmly as he did in the opening scenes.

Thus colour and fragmentation are again used, as they were in describing the centipede, to show the changing emotions of the narrator. However, in such descriptions, the colour itself is not symbolic, as it is in the traditional novel, it is rather the presence or absence of colour which is the "symbolic" element. The colour itself appears to be a realist description, that is banana plants, for example, are green, but the interest lies in the way in which colour is used, its position and rhythm of occurrence in the course of the narrative. Hence colour is in fact functioning on two levels in La Jalousie. For the narrator it functions at the level

of the signified, that is he is concerned with the concept of greenness. As his jealousy increases, he becomes more aware of the colours of objects around him, his interest is obviously in the colour itself. But for the reader, colour also acts at the textual level of the signifier, the word itself. The appearance in the text of colour words like "noir,roux,vert" immediately indicate the changing moods of the narrator to the reader. The appearance of the colour word becomes more important than the colour itself. This is seen in the changing colours used to describe the centipede; the presence or absence of colour is perhaps more noticeable to the reader than the changes in the colours used. This use of colours at the level of their linguistic form will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

The important role which colour plays in the creative process at work in La Jalousie has been demonstrated by the preceding analysis of descriptions of the banana plantation and of the centipede. These descriptions show that the colours used are not specifically "symbolic". However, in this novel, some colour is also used at the level of the signified, that is the colour itself becomes important.

The most obvious example of this in La Jalousie is probably the "reflets roux" of A... 's hair and the "bouillie rousse" of the centipede. The "rousse" of the crushed centipede is clearly an image of blood, while the "reflets roux" perhaps suggest the anger of the narrator who is "seeing red"; both are images of violence. The colour red is often associated with violence, bloodshed and passion, and Robbe-Grillet thus appears to be using a traditional symbol. Zola, for example, uses "sanglant" seventeen times as a synonym for "rouge" in Germinal.⁹ However the symbolic functioning of red is perhaps slightly different to that of other colours. As Carl Sagan points out in The Dragons of Eden, the colour red is symbolic of danger and violence because we associate the colour with that of our own blood, the drawing of which is generally painful.¹⁰ Hence the power of red as a literary

symbol could be derived from the personal experience of each reader, rather than from the code of traditional symbols.

The reddish images in La Jalousie do seem to provoke a primarily emotional response in the reader, the images helping to create the feeling of tension and increasing emotion in the narrator, and maybe even a suggestion of suppressed violence. In this case, the specific colour "roux" provokes this reaction, the particular colour used being more important than the textual appearance of the colour.

Another specific colour which has an important role in La Jalousie is blue; the blue of Franck's car and the blue of the letter which appears frequently in the narrative. Blue does not have the emotive content of "roux", but suspect objects in the novel are "contaminated" by the colour, the frequent references to these objects supporting the narrator's growing suspicions.

In the opening scenes of the novel A... is reading a letter which has been written on paper "de couleur bleue très pâle", and then sits down to write a letter herself on similar paper (p.14). Reference to this blue letter is then absent until the fifth section, when A... is again described seated at her desk writing a letter on this pale blue paper, in "son écriture fine, serrée, régulière" (p.103). Then later in the section, just before the centipede is killed, the narrator notices a similar sheet of folded paper protruding from the pocket of Franck's shirt.

Comme sa voisine, Franck regarde droit devant soi, tout en haut du versant opposé. Une feuille de papier d'un bleu très pâle, pliée plusieurs fois sur elle-même - en huit probablement - déborde à présent hors de la pochette droite de sa chemise. La poche gauche est encore soigneusement boutonnée, tandis que la patte de l'autre est maintenant relevée par la lettre, qui dépasse d'un bon centimètre le bord de toile kaki. (p.106)

"Une feuille" quickly becomes "la lettre" and the obvious conclusion for both narrator and reader is that A... has written a private note to Franck, a suspicion which is further reinforced when we read that the letter in Franck's pocket "est couverte d'une écriture fine et serrée", which ressemble A... 's. Hence the blue letter becomes a possible clue that A... and Franck are involved in some sort of secret liaison. However, as the narrator's jealousy dies towards the end of the section, colour again disappears and the sheet of paper becomes an undefined letter.

In the sixth section, the narrator examines A... 's writing pad and tries to read some erased writing, his suspicions obviously aroused by the blue letter in Franck's pocket. Then as paroxysm approaches in the seventh section, he goes further and searches through A... 's desk, the blue writing paper again being the centre of attention.

Dans le tiroir de la table, il y a deux blocs de papier pour la correspondance; l'un est neuf, le second largement entamé. La dimension des feuilles, leur qualité, leur couleur bleu pâle, sont absolument identiques à celles des précédents. À côté sont rangés trois paquets d'enveloppes assorties, doublées de bleu foncé, encore entourées de leur bande. (p.169)

Evidently the narrator is carefully examining the contents of the drawer and looks closely at the pads of blue paper which led him to go through A... 's personal belongings. However as the narrator calms down in the final section, colour again disappears, as it did in description of the centipede and of the plantation, and we read that A... "est en train de relire la lettre reçue de l'Europe" and that she is going to write a letter on "une feuille de papier" of no specific colour (p.211).

Thus in description of "la lettre" and "la feuille de papier", colour is used as a distinguishing feature, the pale blue sheets of paper on A... 's desk and in Franck's pocket become suspicious because of their common colour. Again an internal link is created and the colour

blue becomes "symbolic" of the possible affair between A... and Franck, the sheets of paper are "contaminated" by the colour and are thus rendered suspect.

The other suspect blue element in La Jalousie is Franck's car which also appears at regular intervals in the narrative. The descriptions of this car follow a similar pattern to those of the elements discussed above and further reinforce the "symbolic" nature of blue in the context of this novel.

As with the elements already discussed, there is a movement in the description of Franck's car and the yard in front of the house, this movement again using colour to show the changing emotions of the narrator. The yard is first described as a large space which "permet la manoeuvre des voitures", a general and imprecise description. Description then becomes more specific with first the "camionette bachée" and then Franck's blue car appearing. Again the process closely follows that used in describing the centipede, the blue letter etc., the appearance of the blue car corresponding to an increase in the narrator's jealousy. It is also closely linked, by descriptive processes similar to those already discussed, to the other emotive elements.

Dans le battant gauche, le paysage réfléchi est plus brillant quoique plus sombre. Mais il est distordu par les défauts du verre, des taches de verdure circulaires ou en forme de croissants, de la teinte des bananiers, se promenant au milieu de la cour devant les hangars.

Entamée par un de ces anneaux mobiles de feuillage, la grosse conduite-intérieure bleue demeure néanmoins bien reconnaissable, ainsi que la robe de A..., debout près de la voiture. (p.57)

The blue car most often appears in the narrative associated with A...'s return from her possibly adulterous night in town with Franck. Significantly, references to two other emotive elements also appear in the above passage;

"des taches" which bring to mind the centipede, and the plantation itself. The imperfections in the glass cause the reflected "taches" of the plantation to appear in the yard, bringing to mind the blue car and A... 's return, but also, as we have said, making a reference to the "tache" left by the centipede on the wall. Once again internal links are created between the emotive, coloured elements of the novel, which form a chain of associations throughout the narrative.

The accumulation of these different elements is also seen as the narrator's jealousy reaches paroxysm in the seventh section; once more the blue car appears closely linked to other supporting elements.

Dans sa hâte d'arriver au but, Franck accélère encore l'allure. Les cahots deviennent plus violents. Il continue néanmoins d'accélérer. Il n'a pas vu, dans la nuit, le trou qui coupe la moitié de la piste. La voiture fait un saut, une embardée... Sur cette chaussée défectueuse le conducteur ne peut redresser à temps. La conduite-intérieure bleue va s'écraser, sur le bas côté, contre un arbre au feuillage rigide qui tremble à peine sous le choc, malgré sa violence.

Aussitôt des flammes jaillissent. Toute la brousse en est illuminée, dans le crépitement de l'incendie qui se propage. C'est le bruit que fait le mille-pattes, de nouveau immobile sur le mur, en plein milieu du panneau. (p.166)

The first three sentences of this passage are ambiguous, they could refer either to the car or to the sexual activity of A... and Franck in the hotel room. The blue car is thus clearly linked to their "adulterous" behaviour, in the erotic imaginings of the narrator. As discussed earlier, the noise of the flames from the crash, conjures up images of the centipede and A... brushing her hair, so yet again we see that Robbe-Grillet is interweaving these emotional, coloured elements to reinforce the changing emotions of the narrator. Such

interweaving also shows the care which Robbe-Grillet takes in constructing the text, and the tight control which he exercises over the choice of each word. The previous discussion of colour in La Jalousie further demonstrates that the novel is very much a deliberate, carefully organised construction. The text is no longer produced by a "literary genius" but has become what Levi-Strauss calls "bricolage", that is the physical world (centipedes, letters, cars etc) is ordered and classified into structures. In the case of La Jalousie, the physical world described in the novel is ordered so that the suspect objects correspond to the emotions of the narrator, with colour being a significant element in this ordering. The mind of the jealous narrator is in fact structuring the physical world around him, to find proof of the suspected affair between A... and Franck. The obviously subjective nature of this structuring again shows that La Jalousie creates its own reality, this particular structure being elaborated as a function of the "hidden" narrator, and thus is peculiar to this one novel.

However this does not mean that each novel is a completely separate entity, for as Bruce Morrisette has shown, Robbe-Grillet makes extensive use of intertextual assemblage¹¹; that is elements of a novel reappear in different contexts in later novels, a technique which also applies to colour. In La Jalousie, blue becomes closely associated with A...'s suspected adulterous behaviour, the blue letter and Franck's blue car being part of the evidence which supports this suspicion. This association with A...'s sexual encounters gives the colour blue some erotic significance which, while not perhaps explicit, is intimated by the constant reappearance of the blue objects in suggestive contexts. This erotic symbolism of blue then reappears in La Maison de rendez-vous as "la Villa Bleue" which is the scene of erotic entertainments performed by several prostitutes. In fact, as shall be discussed in detail later, blue, and particularly the blue sea, acquires even more erotic

importance in Robbe-Grillet's later novels, the blue sea becoming a powerful erotic metaphor for women and their function in these novels.

The interweaving of elements discussed previously can also be seen in a slightly different structural technique which Robbe-Grillet uses. This is the use of interior duplication of elements in the text. This technique has been used before, particularly in painting, but it appears that André Gide was the first to propose it as a particular literary theory, and due to the following entry in his diary the term "mise en abyme" was adopted to describe it.

J'aime assez qu'en une oeuvre d'art, on retrouve ainsi transposé à l'échelle des personnages, le sujet même de cette oeuvre. Rien ne l'éclaire mieux et n'établit plus sûrement toutes les proportions de l'ensemble. Ainsi dans tels tableaux de Memling ou de Quentin Metzys, un petit miroir convexe et sombre reflète à son tour, l'intérieur de la pièce où se joue la scène peinte. Ainsi dans le tableau des Menines de Velasquez (mais un peu différemment). Enfin, en littérature, dans Hamlet, la scène de la comédie; et d'ailleurs d'autres pièces. Dans Wilhelm Meister, les scènes de marionnettes ou de fête de chateau. Dans la Chute de la Maison Usher, la lecture que l'on fait à Roderick etc... Aucun de ces exemples n'est absolument juste. Ce qui le serait beaucoup plus, ce qui dirait bien mieux ce que j'ai voulu dans mes Cahiers, dans mon Narcisse et dans la Tentative, c'est la comparaison avec ce procédé du blason qui consiste, dans le premier, à en mettre un second "en abyme".¹²

This seems to mean for Gide that elements contained in a novel mirror the functioning of the novel itself, thus the play within a play of Hamlet reproduces the central conflict with which Hamlet is confronted. A good example of this in La Jalousie is the native's song, the

form of which describes the global structure of the novel itself.

Sans doute est-ce toujours le même poème qui se continue. Si parfois les thèmes s'estompent, c'est pour revenir un peu plus tard, affermis, à peu de chose près identiques. Cependant ces répétitions, ces infimes variantes, ces coupures, ces retours en arrière, peuvent donner lieu à des modifications - bien qu'à peine sensibles - entraînant à la longue fort loin du point de départ. (p.101)

The construction of this song parallels, and in fact almost describes, that of the narrative as a whole, with the repetition of virtually identical scenes containing slight changes which draw the narrative far from its starting point through the various stages of the narrator's jealousy. Thus the structuring principle governing the whole novel is reproduced "en abyme" in the functioning of limited elements contained in the text.

This technique of "mise en abyme", or interior duplication, can also be seen in the functioning of colour in La Jalousie. Descriptions of A... 's lips show this process almost in microcosm using colour.

... ses lèvres sont fardées, de ce rouge identique à leur rouge naturel, à peine un peu plus soutenu...(p.42)

As with the native's song, the lipstick on A... 's lips is the same - "identique" - but different - "un peu plus soutenu" - to their natural colour. The slight modification draws the narrative forward in the same manner as the changes in the descriptions of the centipede and of the other elements discussed above. Each small change contributes to the overall construction of the narrator's jealousy.

A similar process can also be seen at work in descriptions of the balustrade on the terrace which frequently appear in La Jalousie. The paint peeling from

the balustrade reveals different colours underneath.

Entre la peinture grise qui subsiste, pâlie par l'âge, et le bois devenu gris sous l'action de l'humidité, paraissent de petites surfaces d'un brun rougeâtre - la couleur naturelle du bois - là où celui-ci vient d'être laissé à découvert par la chute récente de nouvelles écailles. (p.182)

The different coloured layers on the balustrade could be read as interior duplication of the different levels of meaning in the novel. The narrator peeling off the paint with his fingernail parallels the function of the reader reconstructing the various possible levels of the narrative, or the stages of the narrator's jealousy. Thus the mention of "la chute récente de nouvelles écailles" is possibly a humorous reference to the scales falling from the eyes of the reader, as he realizes that La Jalousie is more than just an endless repetition of the same geometric, expressionless descriptions, and is in fact a novel of some complexity and sophistication.

However the functioning of the balustrade is open to more than one interpretation. In his Marxist analysis of La Jalousie, Lecture politique du roman, Jacques Leenhardt offers another explanation for the coloured layers and several of the other coloured elements in La Jalousie. This appears to be the only significant critical study of La Jalousie which takes more than passing note of the colours used, so it is now perhaps appropriate to discuss some aspects of Leenhardt's analysis.¹³

Leenhardt sees La Jalousie as a representation of the breakdown of Western colonial imperialism, with a corresponding resurgence of the "natural" world of the natives. Thus, in his view, the principal opposition in the book is black versus white, the natural world versus the civilized. In Leenhardt's opinion, the balustrade is one of the elements in La Jalousie which expresses this resurgence in black power, an interpretation based on

the colours of the different layers. He interprets the above description of the balustrade thus;

Tout est gris d'abord, milieu entre blanc et noir; mais des événements récents, la chute de nouvelles écailles, ont fait apparaître une couleur naturelle, qui est du registre de la nature: le brun rougeâtre (couleur de la cruche indigène). ¹⁴

The peeling paint thus shows the decay of the white man's world, and significantly A... wants the balustrade repainted.

Toute la balustrade doit être repeinte en jaune vif: ainsi en a décidé A... (p.40)

Leenhardt sees this repainting as a symbol of the white man reasserting his dominance over the natural world, by covering the threatening natural colour of the bare wood. However, yet another interpretation is possible, another level of meaning. The colours used may also be indications of the personalities of both A... and the narrator. The grey paint, with which much of the house seems to be covered, could possibly point to the narrator having a rather dull personality. In fact there are clues in the following quotation that he is responsible for this dull colour on the walls and the balustrade.

Un lavage du mur, d'autre part, n'est guère praticable. Cette peinture mate ne le supporterait sans doute pas, car elle est beaucoup plus fragile que la peinture vernie ordinaire, à l'huile de lin, qui existait auparavant dans la pièce. (p.129)

Knowledge of the previous paint covering and of the type of paint now on the walls indicate that the narrator probably either, repainted the house himself, or chose the paint for the job. Thus this matt, grey paint could be seen as indicative of a rather dull personality.

This seems even more likely when one considers that A... now wants the balustrade repainted in bright yellow, suggesting a more lively personality, but also the conflict between the two, for A... has chosen an almost "opposite" colour scheme. This could well be due to the same deliberate "perverseness" as her choice of seat at the dining-table. Hence the opposition of colours could symbolize the conflict between A... and the narrator instead of, or as well as, the conflict between black and white.

The colours of the bare patches on the balustrade - "le bois devenu gris" and "de petites surfaces d'un brun rougeâtre" - could also be further clues to the personality of the narrator. The paintwork is obviously in very poor condition, the narrator detaches flakes of paint with his fingernail, and in fact;

... la peinture, qui a presque complètement disparu sur le dessus de la barre d'appui, commence également à s'écailler sur les parties bombées des balustres.(p.39)

If the bare wood is now grey due to the humidity, it would seem that this decaying process has been going on for some time, and is still continuing. Thus it appears that the narrator is allowing the condition of his house to run down, again indicating a rather dull, lazy personality, especially when one considers that the native workmen would probably do the actual repainting. However there are plans for some work in the future.

Il n'est question de repeindre, pour l'instant, que les jalousies et la balustrade - cette dernière en jaune vif. Ainsi en a décidé A... (p.211)

This perhaps implies that more of the house needs painting than will be done, and in this case the "ainsi en a décidé A..." could apply to the colour of the balustrade and also to the decision to repaint. Thus the work will be done on her urging, again pointing to a certain passivity on the part of the narrator, or a

possible difference of opinion with A.... Similarly the yard in front of the house is partly overgrown, which Leenhardt again sees as a symbol of the resurgent native world, but this, like the peeling balustrade, could also be interpreted on a more personal level, pointing to the laziness and inefficiency of the narrator.

The descriptions of the balustrade also reveal some other interesting points. The reference to "la couleur naturelle du bois" is again ironic, as the grey colour of the exposed wood, caused by the humidity, is also "natural", that is, caused by the action of nature and not of man. The balustrade has more than one "natural" colour, blurring the distinction between the pair of opposites; natural - artificial. These peeling layers are also an example of Robbe-Grillet's preoccupation with the instability and the decomposition of the material world.

J'ai découvert des poutres pourries dans une maison que j'ai à la campagne et que j'aime l'image des solives qui tombent en poussière me poursuit ... J'ai toujours l'impression de vivre dans un monde miné, menacé par un cataclysme, prêt à s'écrouler. C'est contre ça que je lutte.¹⁵

The paintwork on the balustrade shows this decay in progress, but the plan to repaint it also shows the cyclical nature of time in Robbe-Grillet's works. The process of decay is followed by that of renewal and the cycle starts over. In La Jalousie, the wall of the dining-room has already been repainted, the balustrade is to be repainted, and the bridge, which termites and floods are destroying, is in the process of being replaced during the course of the narrative. A more detailed discussion of this process is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the balustrade is one example of the general cyclical functioning of time in Robbe-Grillet's works.

The above discussion shows that, like the layers of paint on the balustrade, there are several possible levels of meaning in La Jalousie. The balustrade can be seen as

a structural device of interior duplication, as an indication of the respective personalities of A... and the narrator, or as part of Leenhardt's Marxist analysis. Similarly the other coloured elements in La Jalousie which Leenhardt discusses, are also open to multiple interpretations.

The "cruche indigène" mentioned in the above quotation from Leenhardt is linked to the balustrade and the natives' world by its colour - "brun rougeâtre" - and, according to Leenhardt, its rounded as opposed to linear shape stresses "l'appartenance de la cruche à l'univers chthonien des noirs". The presence of the "cruche" in the dining-room thus signals the gradual take-over of the white world by the natives. Significantly, the "cruche" appears in the seventh section just before the narrator's jealousy reaches its paroxysm, as he imagines A... and Franck together in the hotel room.

Derrière la table, au centre du long buffet, la cruche indigène à l'air encore plus volumineuse: son gros ventre sphérique, en terre rouge non vernissée, projette sur le mur une ombre dense qui s'accroît à mesure que la source lumineuse se rapproche, disque noir surmonté d'un trapèze isocèle (dont la grande base se trouve en haut) et d'une mince courbe fortement arquée, qui relie le flanc circulaire à l'un des sommets du trapèze. (p.163)

However the shadow cast by the "cruche" could also be read as a vaginal image - "disque noir", the vaginal entrance, surmounted by the "trapèze isocèle" of the pubis (emphasized by the extra precision that the trapezium is inverted). This interpretation seems even more credible on reading the reference two sentences later to "l'ouverture béante du couloir", another possible vaginal image, which is followed by the appearance of the centipede, the most emotive of the supports for the narrator's jealousy. Similarly, "son gros ventre sphérique" could be an oblique image of a pregnant female, the

absence of children in La Jalousie being noticeable. Thus once more Leenhardt's discussion can be reinterpreted at another level, that of the characters, in this case showing the frustrated sexual desires of the narrator.

Another erotic element in La Jalousie is A... 's black hair, with which the narrator seems obsessed. Leenhardt again interprets this as a symbol of the native world, claiming that in a truly white-dominated world A... 's hair would be blonde.

Si nous reprenons l'opposition principale du livre, noir vs. blanc, nous pourrions nous attendre à ce que la chevelure de A..., comme toute sa personne, s'inscrive pleinement dans le registre de la blancheur, et que le narrateur nous la présente donc comme une blonde. Le paradigme constitué autour de blanc aurait donc inclu "blonde". À la lueur de ce qui nous est apparu des conditions de possibilité de l'érotisation, savoir un arrière-fond de menace, nous comprenons qu'il ait été plus cohérent de faire se dérouler le fantasme érotique à partir d'une chevelure noire, c'est-à-dire déjà porteuse elle-même des signes menaçants (la couleur noire), que d'une blondeur n'offrant à l'érotisation rien sur quoi se détacher. Il fallait que la chevelure fût noire pour que le fantasme fonctionnât pleinement.¹⁶

Obviously individual fetishes will influence the erotic functioning of a particular colour, but black is probably generally accepted in Western civilization as the most powerful colour of seduction and eroticism. However, it does not necessarily function as such because of the inherent menace of the black world, as Leenhardt suggests. Black can also function erotically in other contexts. Elizabeth Taylor, for example, has both A... 's unblinking green eyes and her black hair, and she has appeared in many seductive film roles without the help of racial overtones. And then one of Hollywood's greatest sex symbols, Marilyn Munroe, was as blonde as is possible, and was no doubt the subject of many an erotic day-dream.

Thus A... does not necessarily have to have black hair, which itself is not necessarily a racial symbol.

The black colour of A...'s hair perhaps derives its erotic power from popular pornography, the black leather and black lingerie of sado-erotic movies and magazines, elements of the Western world's collective sexual fantasy displayed in the sex-shops of 42nd Street in New York and many other cities the world over. Thus in the context of La Jalousie, A...'s black hair does perhaps contain an element of racial contamination, however, Leenhardt is perhaps overlooking the already strong sexual connotations of black in Western culture.

The other colour in La Jalousie which Leenhardt attributed to the natives' world is green, especially the green of the plantation overtaking the yard as mentioned above. Vegetation is very much a part of the natural, primitive world of the blacks and in Leenhardt's view, the description of the car-crash in the seventh section, when Franck's car leaves the road and crashes into a tree, constitutes a movement from the world of the whites, the car, to the world of the blacks, the tree; again the black world is reasserting itself. However this argument appears somewhat exaggerated when one considers that Albert Camus died in a similar crash in the middle of a very white-dominated, civilized France. M. Leenhardt is perhaps seeing symbols where none exist.

Like the green vegetation, Leenhardt also sees the green blotter on A...'s desk as an element of the natural, uncivilized world (significantly it is covered in "l'écriture à l'encre noire").

Le vert, la masse amorphe du buvard couleur de nature...¹⁷

This blotter is only a very minor element in the novel, whereas Leenhardt has completely ignored the blue letter, which, as we pointed out previously, seems of much greater importance. He makes no reference to the blue colour of this letter nor of Franck's car, which is surprising when one considers that blue, a pigment

difficult to obtain from natural sources, is seldom found in primitive societies. It is very much a product of the material, Western world, as are the blue objects themselves. Hence the car and the letter (written language), through both their functions and their colour, are definitely part of "le paradigme constitué autour de blanc".¹⁸ These coloured objects, which have prominent positions in the narrative and which Leenhardt has overlooked, could in fact support his analysis of La Jalousie.

In claiming that the principal opposition of this novel is black versus white, Leenhardt is perhaps also overlooking the fact that in all of Robbe-Grillet's novels, black and white are, by a wide margin, the colours most frequently used. However it appears that only in Projet could this distribution be accounted for in racial terms, which, surprisingly perhaps, Leenhardt does not do. In Projet pour une critique, a paper he presented at the Colloque de Cerisy on Robbe-Grillet, he ignores the obviously significant role of colour in this novel. However this was only a short paper and can only be considered a very limited analysis compared to his critique of La Jalousie.¹⁹

The omission of the blue elements and the specific role attributed to black and white in Leenhardt's discussion perhaps show the limitations of examining any one of Robbe-Grillet's novels in isolation. If, as Robbe-Grillet says, "la réflexion critique de l'écrivain" is at work on previous novels to construct "de nouvelles recherches, un nouveau départ", then no one novel should be examined in isolation as Leenhardt has done.

Some of M. Leenhardt's interpretations may seem only slightly questionable, but he has, however, made one major mistake in his analysis of La Jalousie. His whole discussion is based on the assumption that the novel is set in Africa, and can thus be compared to colonial life in that continent, but on the very first page of the novel we read;

Mais A... s'est contentée de sourire; elle ne

souffrait pas de la chaleur, elle avait connu des climats beaucoup plus chauds - en Afrique par exemple - et s'y était toujours très bien portée. (p.10)

This clearly implies that the novel is not set in Africa, although A... once lived there: M. Leenhardt appears to have committed a major faux pas. However, in all fairness, it must be pointed out that the setting of La Jalousie appears to be an amalgam of life in the West Indies, where Robbe-Grillet worked for some time, and plantations in French Equatorial Africa. Thus M. Leenhardt is guilty at least of an indiscretion in either missing this fact or in not declaring it to his readers, although this omission does not in fact greatly affect the logic of his discussion.

Whether or not one accepts Leenhardt's interpretations probably depends to some extent on the reader's own political persuasions and views on literature, but the above discussion does show that Robbe-Grillet's works are open to a number of possible interpretations at varying levels, they have an inherent multiplicity of meaning. La Jalousie, for example, can be viewed as the construction of a narrative, from a more traditional perspective as the story of a "ménage à trois", or from a political viewpoint as a Marxist critique. The elements of La Jalousie fulfill multiple functions and these functions are open to multiple interpretations, stressing the polysemous nature of all Robbe-Grillet's works.

Our discussion of the various elements in the novel, shows the importance of colour in La Jalousie, that its use is a new departure both from his earlier novels and perhaps more importantly from traditional literature. La Jalousie is a search for a new colour symbolism, a symbolism which is now a function of the internal structure of the novel.

If Robbe-Grillet is faithful to his theoretical pronouncements (which has not always been the case), then one would expect colour use in his next novel, Dans le labyrinthe, to proceed from the techniques of La Jalousie. Leenhardt claimed that the principal

opposition of La Jalousie was black versus white, an opposition symbolic of racial conflict. However the opposition of colours also works on a textual level in constructing the narrative itself. Leenhardt's statement is thus true but perhaps for the wrong reasons.

In La Jalousie, the most obvious use of this colour opposition is seen in description of A... brushing her hair, the black hair falling across the white silk of her robe.

Elle a gardé son déshabillé matinale, mais sa chevelure, libre encore de tous enroulements ou chignons, est déjà peignée avec soin; elle brille au grand jour, lorsque la tête en tournant déplace les boucles souples, lourdes, dont la masse noire retombe sur la soie blanche de l'épaule, tandis que la silhouette s'éloigne derechef vers le fond de la pièce en longeant la cloison du couloir. (p.186)

The opposition of black and white creates a movement in the description, similar to that in the descriptions of elements such as the centipede. In fact description of these elements uses the same principle of colour opposition, as the movement from no colour to colour is equivalent to the movement from black - absence of colour - to white - fusion of all colours. Thus in La Jalousie, the opposition of colours is an important structural element, producing movement in description which Stephen Heath also notes in The Nouveau Roman;

It is perhaps La Jalousie that provides the clearest example of this movement in the series of versions of the killing of the centipede and the various descriptions of the stain left on the wall of the bungalow.²⁰

In Dans le labyrinthe, this structural principle is even more basic to the construction of the text,

the direct opposition of elements seems to play a more important role than in La Jalousie. The opening lines of Dans le labyrinthe immediately show this process in operation.

Je suis seul ici, maintenant, bien à l'abri.
Dehors il pleut, dehors on marche sous la pluie en
courbant la tête, s'abritant les yeux d'une main
tout en regardant quand même devant soi,... (p.9)

There is a movement in this description from the inside - "bien à l'abri" - to the outside - "Dehors il pleut" - followed by a partial return to shelter - "s'abritant les yeux". Thus as each element is introduced, it is balanced by its opposite. In Robbe-Grillet's novels, description no longer defines a static situation but is itself a dynamic progression. Heath summarizes this process thus;

The opposition is central to the development of the course of the writing which moves constantly from room to street, and is one example of a basic structural principle of the text, progression by the substitution of elements in a relation of antonymy the one with the other along the narrative line of the novel. This use of opposites as a structural principle presents an immediate rhythm of composition and this rhythm is stressed in the development of the individual paragraphs and sentences of the text.²¹

The colours used in description also follow this principle of oppositions. As in La Jalousie, black and white are the principal colours used in this process, this fundamental colour opposition appearing in the first paragraph of Dans le labyrinthe.

Dehors il fait froid, le vent souffle entre les
branches noires dénudées; le vent souffle dans les
feuilles, entraînant les rameaux entiers dans un

balancement, dans un balancement, balancement, qui projette son ombre sur le crépi blanc des murs. (p.9)

The description progresses from the black branches to the white wall, via the intermediary of the shadow; again each element is balanced by its opposite (e.g. dénudées - feuilles), and as Heath remarks, it is not by chance that the word "balancement" appears in this first paragraph.

There is also more direct opposition of black and white in the text, as the colours are used in direct contrast, as shown by; "la tête blême du soldat qui se détache toujours sur le fond noir de la nuit" (p.39), and the young boy "serré dans sa pèlerine noire, déjà blanche de neige" (p.118). However this technique is not limited to only black and white, but also includes other combinations of colours, producing ; "à ce moment il aperçoit une silhouette noire, devant lui, dont la tête et le haut du corps se découpent sur les carreaux lumineux de papier mauve" (p.134), and "les lampadaires noires... dont les ampoules brillent d'un éclat jaune dans le jour blafard" (p.122). Again the juxtaposition of different colours gives movement and rhythm to the narrative. This allows progression from one element to another while preserving an overall unity in the text, as each element is related in some way to the next, by both synonymous and more often antonymous associations.

In Vertige fixé, Gérard Genette (to whom Heath also acknowledges a debt), again using the opening lines of Dans le labyrinthe as an example, summarizes the fictional technique of Robbe-Grillet thus;

... l'art de Robbe-Grillet consiste à disposer dans l'ordre métonymique de la narration et de la description romanesques un matériel de nature métaphorique, puisque résultant d'analogies entre éléments différents ou de transformations d'éléments identiques. Après une scène d'un roman de Robbe-Grillet, le lecteur attend légitimement, selon l'ordre

classique du récit, une autre scène contiguë dans le temps ou l'espace; ce qui lui offre Robbe-Grillet, c'est la même scène légèrement modifiée, ou une autre scène analogue. Autrement dit, il étale horizontalement, dans la continuité spatio-temporelle, la relation verticale qui unit les diverses variantes d'un thème, il dispose en série les termes d'un choix, il transpose une concurrence en concaténation.²²
(Genette's emphasis)

The use of colour in Dans le labyrinthe is an example of this general process at work in the novel, a process most clearly seen in the direct oppositions which appear in the text, such as inside-outside or black-white. Colour is used to link diverse elements in this horizontal progression of the narrative. By using colour oppositions, the text can progress through a sequence of seemingly unassociated elements without overt use of editorial omnipotence; that is one scene links to the next without an obvious lacuna betraying the role of the author who is in fact controlling the narrator's point of view. This can be seen in the following passage from the novel;

Le soldat croit avoir définitivement perdu la piste, quand il voit à quelques pas de lui, sous un réverbère, le gamin arrêté qui l'attend, serré dans sa pèlerine noire, déjà blanche de neige.

"C'est là," dit-il en désignant la porte, toute semblable aux autres. (p.118)

The soldier appears to have lost his way, but the child, his guide, reappears; the first association in the chain is established, path-guide. The child is standing "sous un réverbère" which is described as black in other descriptions, thus creating a link to the "pèlerine noire"; association by colour. The child is reduced by synecdoche to the "pèlerine noire". These first three examples are all synonymous associations which are followed by three antonymous links. The function of the "pèlerine" is to provide warmth against the cold of the snow, which now

appears, this association being further reinforced by the contrast of the black coat and the white snow. This sequence thus contains a double antonym; warm-cold, black-white. The words spoken by the child - "C'est là" - imply a further opposition, that is "ce n'est pas ici", producing movement from "ici" to "là". The "là" is the door which leads inside out of the snow, creating the fundamental inside-outside opposition of the novel.

This sequence of associations thus allows the narrative to progress smoothly, the opposition of black and white allowing the series of synonymous links to become antonymous, and hence allowing the transition from outside to inside to occur almost unnoticed. The next sentence then continues; "Puis c'est l'ampoule électrique qui se balance au bout de son long fil" (p.119). The transition is thus complete and again, as the text tells us, balance is maintained. In his analysis of Dans le labyrinthe, Jean-Pierre Vidal defines this process thus;

Elle (l'épure) n'est formée, nous l'avons vu, que de deux lieux extrêmes; les autres parties se caractérisent par l'adjonction d'un ou de plusieurs lieux intermédiaires qui vont insensiblement combler l'espace et établir un lien (un lieu même) de continuité entre ces deux poles extrêmes. Une continuité qu'enfin la fiction récupérera.²³

In this analysis of the structure of the novel, Vidal also discusses some other linking sequences which use colour. For example, he notes a progression from the sun, to light, to flame, which in turn produces colour.

Enfin il commande toute la série des métaphores basées sur la flamme et il introduit la couleur ("la lampe en cuivre", p.11 - "rideaux rouges", p.11 - "le bois, brun rouge", p.13; noter les trois matières sur quoi se pose le rouge: métal, tissu, bois: elles forment avec le verre les matériaux de

base de la première partie).²⁴

Again colour is part of the progression from outside - the sun - to inside - the red objects. And as discussed previously, Robbe-Grillet appears to "rendre une coloration" in Dans le labyrinthe, with the pervading "grisaille" of both the inside and the outside settings. Vidal notes that this "grisaille" originates in the dust on the floor and the grey wallpaper and is then transferred to the exterior façades.

Et le mur tout entier adopte, dans le même temps, l'image de la neige qui tombe dans un jour gris ("un papier gris pâle, rayé verticalement de bandes à peine plus foncées", p.20)²⁵

And this "grisaille" is also transferred to the soldier standing beneath the street-light.

Son visage est formée de cette "grisaille" qui vient de la chambre.²⁶

This produces the following description;

Son visage est grisâtre; les traits en sont tirés, et donnent l'impression d'une extrême fatigue; mais peut-être une barbe de plus d'un jour est-elle pour beaucoup dans cette impression. L'attente prolongée, l'immobilité prolongée dans le froid peuvent aussi avoir enlevé leurs couleurs aux joues, au front, aux lèvres.

Les paupières sont grises, comme le reste; elles sont baissées. (p.16)

Once more there is this movement from inside to outside, the "grisaille" of the room being transferred to external objects. Similarly, there is transferral of elements in horizontal planes to vertical planes (and vice-versa); for example, the grey of the dust on the floor (horizontal) reappears on the exterior façades

(vertical). Vidal points out that a similar process occurs in the emergence of the static soldier from the painting on the wall, to become a dynamic element in the text, a process which again uses colour.

Son extraction du tableau - entraînant celle de l'enfant, puisque les deux personnages sont liés - se fait par la transposition horizontale d'une couleur d'abord verticale. En effet, le soldat, dans la rue, portait un numéro matricule noir sur fond rouge. Après l'évocation ici de ce numéro (dont il est dit, p.31, qu'il a déjà été "rapporté"; les deux soldats, par lui, ne font donc plus qu'un), la couleur, comme transportée implicitement, apparaît dans le tableau qui était, lors de la première description, "une gravure en noir et blanc", p.25. Voici maintenant que la toile cirée à des carreaux "blancs et rouges" (p.31). Où l'on peut lire la modification d'une palette: noir sur rouge (matricule) - noir et blanc (gravure) - blanc et rouge (toile cirée, abolition de la gravure).²⁷

Thus, by using colours, elements can move from one setting to another, as boundaries between immobility (gravure) and animation (le soldat) are abolished. As Vidal then says;

Tout est en place, le tableau peut devenir scène et le "cabaret" café.

Colour would seem to play an important role in the construction of Dans le labyrinthe, the opposition and transposition of colours giving movement and rhythm to the narrative. Our discussion thus far already shows how study of a limited element can be fruitful in discerning more general trends in the overall construction of a novel.

The extensive use of black and white in Dans le labyrinthe as elements of a construction, may perhaps cast more light on their frequent use in Robbe-Grillet's other novels,

for black and white are by far the most often used colours in all of them. Certainly Leenhardt's Marxist interpretation of racial conflict seems inadequate.

Nor is the predominance of black and white limited to Robbe-Grillet's novels. In discussing his film Excalibur, director John Boorman stated that he believed the function of films is to express man's inner visions, his fantasies, and that black and white heightened the dream-like quality of a film. Man does generally dream in monochrome, images tend to be more important than colours, which only become significant in certain states of dreaming. Robbe-Grillet's first four films were made in black and white, and for L'homme qui ment, he deliberately chose black and white in preference to colour film.

Vous savez que les producteurs et les distributeurs aiment la couleur, et pour L'homme qui ment, en particulier, le distributeur aurait voulu qu'il soit en couleurs, ce que je n'ai pu accepter puisque je le voyais en noir et blanc.²⁸

Thus Robbe-Grillet's choice of monochrome perhaps follows Boorman's view that it heightens the oneiric quality, yet paradoxically Robbe-Grillet was unhappy with just this reaction to his earlier film L'année dernière à Marienbad.

J'avais été gêné moi-même par ce côté "onirique" que j'avais donné à Marienbad.²⁹

Significantly the grey shades in this film were suppressed using special laboratory techniques to produce a strong contrast between black and white, which could thus be partly responsible for the dream interpretation. Although Robbe-Grillet may initially have seen L'homme qui ment in black and white, he stresses that his works are fictional inventions rather than dreams. He continues;

Le récit moderne, qu'il soit dans le roman ou dans le cinéma, affirme l'invention. Les personnages sont des fictions; il ne sont que des fictions, et c'est leur caractère fictif qui est justement le sujet même de l'oeuvre.³⁰

Interpreting L'année dernière à Marienbad as a dream, is to impose a frame of reference on the film which immediately renders it "récupérable" in traditional, humanistic terms and denies its literal reality. In such terms the film is no longer a fictional construction, but merely the representation of a disoriented human mind, thus rendering its apparent strangeness harmless and comprehensible. In Topologie, Robbe-Grillet again affirms that his novels and films should not be read as dreams.

Et d'abord, si c'était un rêve, il n'y aurait pas de couleurs. (p.125)

Hence the presence of colours, other than black and white, in all his novels, argues against such interpretations. For example, this implies that La Jalousie cannot be interpreted as the visions of the wandering mind of the narrator, as he sits on the terrace one evening recalling past events. Distinguishing between "real" and "imagined" events is a meaningless exercise and as Heath notes, Robbe-Grillet "was able to treat the composition of La Jalousie as a matter of greater importance than the situation of the jealous husband which is now seen as no more than a prop for the accomplishment of the writing".³¹ To construct is not the same as to dream, even though both processes are functions of the imagination.

There is however another possible explanation for this excessive use of black and white in Robbe-Grillet's novels, one which is provided by the text itself, that is the black letters on the white page. The contrast produced on the page of a novel (or on a film screen) could work on the subconscious mind of the reader in assisting to create an image, an image which is probably

also in black and white unless the reader makes a specific effort to visualize a particular colour. A colour adjective used in a text will not necessarily produce an image of that colour in the reader's mind.

Such a use of black and white also emphasizes the "textuality" of a novel, and as we shall see in discussion of Projet in Chapter Six, Robbe-Grillet in fact sees the basic opposition of a novel as the conflict between the blank, white page and the black words a writer wishes to impose upon it. Thus this black-white contrast also points to the "artificiality" of fiction, that it is a product of the writer's imagination and that it is never more than words on a page, which again undermines any belief that there is a reality above and beyond the text. What is described is no longer important, but rather how it is described, what Roland Barthes calls "le plaisir du texte".

However it must also be pointed out that Robbe-Grillet is not alone in his predilection for black and white. In his article The Colour-Sense in Literature³², Havelock Ellis reviews colour use by various writers of different nationalities from ancient to modern times. His findings show that black and white (although not always both), are very often among the preferred colours of these writers (a notable exception is the Lake Poets who prefer green and other bright colours for obvious reasons). In the first three books of Homer's Iliad black and white are the most frequently used colours, a preference which may, however, be as much a result of language limitations as of Homer's own choice, for in Homeric Greece (and modern India) black could also mean dark, and white equate with light. This anomaly has already caused much ink to flow in discussion of Homer's use of colour in description.

At the end of the nineteenth century there was a debate, led by William Gladstone, concerning man's ability to perceive colour in Homeric times³³. This debate stemmed from the predominance of black and white and the relative paucity of other colours in the Iliad. It was postulated, with Gladstone leading the attack, that

man has only gradually developed his colour-sense, perceiving first black and white, then red, followed by orange and so on through the spectrum, a theory which seemed compatible with ancient literature from various sources.³⁴ However, through testing the colour perception of primitive tribes, that is people considered to be at an equivalent stage of development to ancient man, it was found that the problem lay, not in the ability to perceive colour, but in the ability to express the colour perceived. An African tribesman, for example, may only have a two word colour vocabulary, one word for each half of the spectrum; that is red, orange and yellow are all described by one word, even though the tribesman can distinguish between each of the three (similarly for green to violet).

It is now thought that ancient man had a fully developed colour-sense which was not, however, matched by the development of his vocabulary. Division of the spectrum is in fact a function of language and not of nature. Black and white predominate in the Iliad because Homer lacked words to describe other colours; there was a gap between his perception of colour and the vocabulary at his disposal to express this perception, he was not in fact colour-blind as some have suggested. In fact this problem still exists today, as shown by Robbe-Grillet's use of indeterminate colour terms. This problem of relating language to colour is to be the subject of the next chapter.

In his early novels, Robbe-Grillet appears to use colour to fulfil several different functions. In Les Gommages, colour adjectives are used in the same way as geometric terms, that is to situate and define a particular object; they are neutral, scientific terms. In La Jalousie, colour is used to show the shifting focus of the narrator's attention and his changing emotions. It is also part of Leenhardt's Marxist analysis and plays a role in other elements of the novel, such as the use of interior duplication, the cyclical nature of time and erotic imagery. In Dans le labyrinthe, colour is used largely as a structural device, the opposition of colours,

especially black and white, giving movement and rhythm to the narrative. Colours are also used in this novel to generate new elements in the text, such as the red images based on flames and the transposition of grey from interior to exterior elements. The frequent use of black and white in Robbe-Grillet's novels and films provides interesting comparisons with other works and also some possible insights into Robbe-Grillet's own aims.

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that the functioning of colour in Robbe-Grillet's early novels is a departure from traditional colour symbolism and that the techniques which he uses evolve from novel to novel, as each constitutes a new investigation of the powers of language. In writing these early novels, Robbe-Grillet was very much "dans le laboratoire".

ooo000ooo

Notes

1. "Nouveau roman, homme nouveau," p.114.
2. "À quoi servent les théories," p.11.
3. See Appendix 1.
4. Les Gommages, p.50.
5. "Une voie pour le roman futur," p.23.
6. For an analysis of the geometric terms in Robbe-Grillet's early novels see Östen Södergard, "Remarques sur le vocabulaire de Robbe-Grillet," Le Français Moderne, 32 (1964), pp.111-115.
7. Jean-Pierre Vidal, La Jalousie de Robbe-Grillet (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1973), p.80
8. Vidal, Jalousie, p.77.
9. Philip Waller, "Zola's use of colour imagery in Germinal," PMLA, 77 (1962), pp442-449.
10. Carl Sagan, The Dragons of Eden (New York: Random House, 1977), p.182.
11. Bruce Morrisette, Intertextual Assemblage from Topologie to the Golden Triangle (Fredericton: York Press, 1979)
12. André Gide, Journal-1893 quoted in Bruce Morrisette, "Un Héritage d'André Gide: la duplication intérieure," Comparative Literature Studies, 8, No.2(1970), pp.125-142.

13. Jacques Leenhardt, Lecture politique du roman: La Jalousie d'Alain Robbe-Grillet (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1973).
14. Leenhardt, p.92.
15. Le Nouvel Observateur(19-25 Oct, 1970), p.49.
16. Leenhardt, p.149.
17. Leenhardt, p.198.
18. Leenhardt, p.149.
19. "Projet pour une critique," Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1976), pp.7-21.
20. Heath, p.148.
21. Heath, p.147.
22. Gérard Genette, "Vertige fixé," Figures I (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), pp.69-90.
23. Jean-Pierre Vidal, Dans le labyrinthe de Robbe-Grillet (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1975), p.31.
24. Vidal, Labyrinthe, p.34.
25. Vidal, Labyrinthe, p.43.
26. Vidal, Labyrinthe, p.41.
27. Vidal, Labyrinthe, p.51.
28. André Gardies, Alain Robbe-Grillet (Cinéastes d'aujourd'hui) (Paris: Seghers, 1971), p.122.
29. "Table Ronde," Cahiers internationaux de symbolisme, No's 9-10 (1965-66), pp.99-100, quoted in Heath, p.119.
30. Heath, p.119.
31. Heath, p.119.
32. Havelock Ellis, "The Colour-Sense in Literature," Contemporary Review, 69 (Jan-June, 1896), pp.714-729.
33. William Gladstone, Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age, 1858.
34. Montagu Lubbock, "On the Development of the Colour-Sense," Fortnightly Review, 31 (1882), pp.518-529.

5. LE MOT QUI MENT (Is the Word God?)

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God, but if, as Nietzsche informs us, God is dead, what has happened to the Word ?

Words are the fundamental elements from which all literature is constructed and so it is perhaps only natural that literate man should be inquisitive as to their functioning. In the modern world of mass media, the word, both written and spoken, has immense influence, but can we ever be sure that the words we read and hear are telling the "Truth" ? This chapter is not to be a discussion on the nature of Truth, but an examination of the way in which language functions in description, of the relationship between language and our perception of reality. In fact, we have already mentioned examples which show that descriptions of colour are functions of language and not of perception, and similar examples will now be examined in more detail in this chapter.

In the previous chapter, we noted that a word or linguistic sign consists of two components, what Ferdinand de Saussure called the signified and the signifier. The former is the image or concept which the word produces and the latter is the word itself, as sound or as letters on a page. The relationship between these two terms is completely arbitrary, there is no "reason" why the word "tree" for example, should be used to describe a physical tree growing in the ground. Our aim in this chapter is to examine closely the functioning of language, at both the level of the signifier and the signified, in Robbe-Grillet's novels.

In dealing with colour, there is often a problem, as many of the following examples will demonstrate, in relating our limited colour vocabulary to an infinite physical reality, that is the colour spectrum is infinite in the sense that it is a continuum. There is of course a limit to the individual distinctions man can make in the spectrum, but the number of colours which he can distinguish is nevertheless extremely large, far larger

in fact than our colour vocabulary, a point we hope to clearly demonstrate.

In description our vocabulary is often inadequate to describe a particular colour, Robbe-Grillet's frequent use of the colour suffix "-âtre" is evidence of this. This whole chapter is closely linked to Chapter Two which discussed the illusion of realism, for this illusion is created through the medium of language, it invites the reader to forget that he is reading written words on a page. As Roger Fowler remarks in Linguistics and the Novel;

Generally prose fiction of the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, unlike verse, avoids "foregrounding" the physical substance of the text. Claiming to be rational, referential discourse pointing to a "reality" beyond language, the novel pretends that its medium is transparent, playing down the visual and phonetic shape of the text.¹

Robbe-Grillet, it seems, is a novelist who no longer ignores the physical substance of the text, his ironic comments undermine the realist illusion and leave the reader in no doubt that he is reading a fictitious construction of words on a **page**. Robbe-Grillet stated in the colloquium on the Nouveau Roman at Cerisy;

Aujourd'hui nous sommes décidés à assumer pleinement l'artificialité de notre travail: il n'y a pas d'ordre naturel ni moral ni politique ni narratif, il n'existe que des ordres humains créés par l'homme, avec tout ce que cela suppose de provisoire et d'arbitraire.²

Language, above all, is an order created by man, a completely arbitrary order. Nathalie Sarraute, for example, sees language as "un système de conventions extrêmement simplifiée, un code grossièrement établi pour la commodité de la communication".³ It is the simplification and

grossness of language which create problems for the writer, who may not always be able to find the exact word or words to convey the exact image, a colour for example, that he has in mind. A text containing imprecise terms immediately reveals, either deliberately or in an attempt to faithfully reproduce an external reality, both the arbitrariness of linguistic structures and the incomplete nature of any description. We shall attempt to show in this chapter that Robbe-Grillet deliberately utilizes the linguistic sign, not to illustrate a reality beyond the language system, but to illuminate the workings of the linguistic system itself.

It must also be pointed out that an author, who has complete control over his text, can hide any limitations of our language system by using only exact, precise terms. The "realist" writer would use vague terms as they best fit a particular description, while novelists like Robbe-Grillet use such terms deliberately to point to the imprecision and inadequacy of our language system.

Although an author may "foreground" the physical substance of a text, many critics are still quick to account for any irregularities in colour description in terms of the realist illusion. Despite some degree of acceptance of Robbe-Grillet and the Nouveau Roman in the literary world (they are studied in universities for example), interpretation of novels which totally ignores the work at the level of the signifier still persists. In his thesis on Proust's use of colour in À la recherche du temps perdu, Allan H. Pasco has deliberately omitted what he calls "doubtful" colour terms, that is those which could in fact be said to highlight the problem of relating a linguistic sign to a physical reality.

Color terms such as "couleur de grès" (I, 662), "teint de feu" (II, 63) and "en jupe hortensia" (II, 177), have also been deleted if I am sufficiently doubtful as to the colour involved. Sandstone, for example, is of many colors from yellow brown to

"rouge" (I,910) to "noirâtre" (ii,81,531). Fire may also include the whole range from yellow to red to blue. The decisions as to whether or not to include such borderline cases are in a sense arbitrary, but they reflect a constant desire to downgrade dubious data.⁴

This also reflects a constant desire to downgrade Proust's work to a "realist" novel. Pasco is concerned only with the image (signified), that is the reality described, ignoring the role of the words as text (signifier), that is the way a reality is described. His labelling of these terms, all of which clearly refer to colours, as dubious, immediately points to the inadequacies of our colour vocabulary, in that the meaning of these terms is unclear, our system allows imprecision. To some extent this represents poor scholarship, as Pasco is in a sense, editing Proust's work, ignoring the intentions of the author in deliberately excluding the colour terms mentioned in the above quote from his study. Omission of these terms renders his thesis incomplete, although in terms of traditional, "realist" literary criticism, Pasco's avoidance of the problem is probably acceptable. However Pasco's attitude seems even more puzzling when one considers that he is acquainted with Robbe-Grillet's novels, using Dans le labyrinthe for comparative purposes in his thesis, for there are many examples in Robbe-Grillet's novels, similar to the above examples from Proust which Pasco has omitted. These examples in Robbe-Grillet's works cannot be ignored as so many of the colour terms which he uses, highlight the problems in attempting to describe colour.

In Robbe-Grillet's first two novels, Un Régicide and Les Gommès, colour appears to function in a fairly limited fashion; the terms used appear to be part of "realist" description. However in Le Voyeur, Robbe-Grillet begins to use colour in an interrogation of our linguistic structures.

After cycling around the island trying to sell his watches, Mathias stops at a café where he is served an

apéritif. The colour of this drink is first described as "un brun rougeâtre assez foncé" (p.107), there being nothing unusual in this description as it is a wine-based drink. However in immediately following descriptions this same apéritif is described as "cette boisson rougeâtre" and then "le liquide brun", the colour terms of the original description are each applied separately in the subsequent ones. This change in terminology points to the difficulties in accurately describing colour, that the limited number of words in our colour vocabulary cannot cover the wide range of colours in the spectrum. It also emphasizes the subjective nature of colour description, as the range from "rougeâtre" through "brun rougeâtre" to "brun" is not great, the choice of one colour term over another becomes a matter of personal preference. We do not always have a specific colour term for every point one might select from the continuum, and we must thus formulate hybrids, such as "brun rougeâtre", to cover the gaps in our vocabulary.

However as the writing of a novel is an artificial operation, an author can change colour terms as he chooses, as Robbe-Grillet does in the above example from Le Voyeur. He need not in fact attempt to faithfully reproduce the world "out there".

This minor example from Le Voyeur thus serves a dual function; the changing colour terms show the artificiality of all creative writing, and also that our vocabulary is often inadequate to describe a physical reality. We are attempting to cover an infinite range with a finite system, a system which Robbe-Grillet, like Nathalie Sarraute, would seem to consider an extremely simplified group of conventions.

In Robbe-Grillet's next novel, La Jalousie, there are even more examples, using colour, which question our linguistic structures, examples which again highlight the often arbitrary and incomplete correlation between our ability to describe and our ability to perceive the physical world.

An example in La Jalousie with similar characteristics to the apéritif of Le Voyeur, is the description of the

lizard as "gris-rose" (p.51). Again a hybrid term is used to describe a colour for which there is no specific word in our colour vocabulary. The colouring of the lizard lies between the two, just as the *apéritif* lies between "brun" and "rouge".

Similarly there are inconsistencies in descriptions of the stain left by the centipede, which is "noirâtre", "sombre" and "brunâtre". However the first description ("noirâtre") is at night under the light of the oil-lamp, while the last ("brunâtre") is in daylight, and thus the discrepancy could be accounted for by the change of lighting, that is it is a "realist" precision, the indeterminate "sombre" covering both of the other two. This example again emphasizes that colour is a function of light, a fact shown even more clearly in the following description of A... 's lips.

A... est en train de terminer son discret maquillage: ce rouge sur les lèvres qui se contente de reproduire leur naturelle, mais qui paraît plus noir sous cette lumière trop crue. (p.141)

The harsh light of the oil-lamp makes objects appear darker than in daylight, as these descriptions of the centipede and A... 's lips show. Description of the centipede thus first appears to show the imprecision of our colour vocabulary, but closer examination reveals that the colour terms used are, in this case, "realist". The realist use of colour in this example, however, serves to highlight the questioning of linguistic structures in examples we shall now discuss, examples which cannot be accounted for in realist terms. The juxtaposition of the two cases points to the artificiality of writing fiction and of language as a whole, as again the choice of terminology is, in both cases, the author's choice.

An example from La Jalousie which is difficult to explain in realist terms, is description of the "brousse" which surrounds the plantation. The colour of this scrub is mentioned four times, and is each time different; "roussie" (p.41) "roussâtre" (p.117), "jaunâtre" (p.180),

and "jaunies" (p.184). From a realist point of view, these changes could perhaps indicate changing seasons, which would tend to support an interpretation of this novel as being the recollections of the jealous narrator, that is he is recalling events from various times in the past.

There is also a pattern to these changes in description which can be seen in the changing endings of the adjectives; "-ie, -âtre, -âtre, -ie". These changes create a movement in the description from a reasonably precise term to a more general one and back again. Again the colours used are reasonably "similar", red and yellow are adjacent in the spectrum, and thus the transition from reddish to yellowish hues is not perhaps too incongruous, and can easily pass unnoticed. This change again underlines the subjective nature of expressing our colour perception in specific words; what one person describes as "roussâtre", another might describe as "jaunâtre".

In this case, however, an examination of the colours themselves (signifieds) proves revealing. As discussed in the previous chapter, the colour "roux" acquires an emotional charge in La Jalousie, through the colouring of A...'s hair and the crushing of the centipede. It is thus significant that the two descriptions using "rousse" appear in the narrative before paroxysm is reached, that is as the narrator's jealousy is growing (note also the "brousse-brousse" link which reinforces the colour one). Between the pairs of red and yellow descriptions of the scrub is the scene of the car-crash (p.167), in which the scrub is illuminated by flames. As was noted in the previous discussion of this scene, colour is absent. However the red colour of the flames has perhaps already been suggested by the previous "red" descriptions of the scrub. Thus when the scrub is lit up by the flames, the combination of the earlier reference and the no doubt reddish flames lead the reader to again associate the scrub with the series of reddish correlatifs. After paroxysm has passed, the narrator becomes less emotional and the reddish hues

change to less emotionally charged (for the narrator) yellowish ones.

An example from La Jalousie which perhaps more specifically questions our linguistic structures, the limitations of our colour vocabulary, is description of the blue letter on which the narrator often focuses his attention. The following passage is particularly revealing;

Dans la poche latérale sont glissées onze feuilles de papier à lettres, d'un bleu très pâle, du format commercial ordinaire ...

Dans le tiroir de la table, il y a deux blocs de papier pour la correspondance; l'un est neuf, le second largement entamé. La dimension des feuilles, leur qualité, leur couleur bleu pâle, sont absolument identiques à celles des précédents. (pp.168-169)

The first sheets of paper are coloured "d'un bleu très pâle", but the other blocks of paper which are "absolument identiques" to the first, are only "bleu pâle", that is the colour is not identical, it is the same but different.

This contradiction seems to suggest that the precisions in the text are in fact meaningless. For the reader, the distinction between "bleu très pâle" and "bleu pâle" probably exists only in the words on the page (signifier) and not in the colours produced (signified). Preference for one term over the other in describing a light blue object is again a subjective choice, so yet again Robbe-Grillet is calling our attention to the limitations of our colour vocabulary in precisely defining colours; fine distinctions in shade are in fact very difficult to express.

As we have mentioned several times, division of the spectrum is a function of language and not of nature, which results in our description of colour being influenced and limited by this arbitrary division. We see seven colours in the rainbow, because Isaac Newton

named only those seven colours when he first refracted light to produce the spectrum, and we have defined nearly all colours in terms of these seven ever since. However the average individual can in fact distinguish between 128 pure colours (light of homogenous wavelength) in the visible spectrum if allowed to make comparisons. Taking blue as an example, the average person can detect a variation between a blue of 450 millimicrons wavelength and one of 455 millimicrons if they are projected side by side on a screen. However, as the description of the blue paper suggests, expressing this distinction in words is a difficult task. The eye can easily distinguish between "bleu très pâle" and "bleu pâle", but verbal definition of this distinction is not at all easy; as far as our colour vocabulary is concerned they are virtually the same colour. Any distinction we can make, is of only limited value and still rather vague. This problem of making fine distinctions appears again in Dans le labyrinthe, the colour in question again being blue;

Tout cet ensemble est de la même couleur bleu-marine, ou plus exactement de diverses nuances se rattachant à cette couleur. (p.90)

In this case, Robbe-Grillet does not attempt to describe each shade of colour, he merely tells the reader that they exist, but again this implies that our language is inadequate for a more detailed description, it can only suggest, it cannot exactly define. Our language system is, quite simply, not as refined as our ability to perceive colour. Blue is not the only colour to highlight these limitations in La Jalousie, the narrator also has difficulty in describing A... 's lips and lipstick;

... ses lèvres sont fardées, de ce rouge identiques à leur rouge naturel, à peine un peu plus soutenu...(p.42)

Like the blue letter, A... 's reddened lips are the same, but different. Our system of colour definition can

make the distinction only in this limited manner.

These limitations on colour definition may also account for the frequent use of primary colours in Robbe-Grillet's novels. Since Newton's first definition of the spectrum, our language has to some extent influenced our perception of colour, for man (in the Western world) is trained from birth by our language system to see colour in terms of those of the spectrum, they are generally the colours we use to define others (see any dictionary for example), we relate all colours back to what we consider the basic colours of the spectrum. Thus Robbe-Grillet uses the colours which have the most "meaning" for readers.

In order to increase the finite range of our colour vocabulary, we use words which have multiple meanings; each of the seven colours which we name in the spectrum for example, is in fact a general term covering a range of similar colours. However one limitation to this use of multiple meanings is that they can lead to ambiguity and meaninglessness, for the multiple meanings attached to a particular word are not necessarily interchangeable. Such limitations can be seen in description of one of the native workers in La Jalousie;

C'est un indigène, vêtu d'un pantalon bleu et d'un tricot de corps, sans couleur, qui laisse nue les épaules. (p.37)

His singlet is "sans couleur" which, taken literally, implies that it is transparent, a physical impossibility for a knitted garment. The Petit Robert gives "sans couleur" as a definition for the adjective "incolore", a word which Robbe-Grillet also uses (Le Voyeur, p.226; Projet, p.90, both of these examples using it as meaning transparent). However the Petit Robert also gives "sans couleur" as a definition for "pâle" and thus a possible ambiguity arises; "sans couleur" can in fact refer to two different colour terms.

This description of the native's singlet as "sans couleur" may also be a reference to the fact that many

primitive societies do not name the colour of common objects. For example, the colour of the sky or of vegetation is seldom mentioned in ancient literature, as they in fact define their own colour, the sky is blue and trees are green and thus to name their colours would be redundant.

This example of the native's singlet shows the problem which can result from a word having multiple meanings. It shows that meaning is dependent on context, which above would mean that "pâle" is the preferred definition. In taking a word out of context meaning can be destroyed. As Jacques Ehrmann states;

Meaning is organized within non-meaning; it does not take its place. It neither covers over nor obliterates it. It designates and "presents" it. Therefore, since non-meaning does not efface itself (politely) before meaning, we cannot claim that the latter is ever established. Since it cuts, disposes, executes, meaning is accessible only in the form of violence, scandal, tyranny. Always a usurper, meaning is never legitimate. That is why it is advisable to denounce it rather than submit to it.⁵ (Ehrmann's emphasis)

In the above example of the native's singlet, conflict does appear, one meaning must dominate the other in order to make the description "understandable". It is, as Ehrmann says, an usurper. The description thus denounces and subverts the processes of meaning and signification of our linguistic structures. It suggests that meaning is related to context and if the context is removed then ambiguity results and meaning becomes non-meaning. Charles Russell writes of Robbe-Grillet's early novels;

It is important to realize, however, that the obsessive vision and recording of experience by his early characters, particularly the husband of La Jalousie, reveals more about the structure and failure of the characters' language and interpretation than it describes those characters' worlds.⁶

In revealing the structure and failure of his characters' language, Robbe-Grillet also reveals in his early novels, by implication, the structure and failure of our language as a whole; their language is our language. Russell continues;

The novels offer a critique of language, the images demanding of the reader an awareness of the structure and the unavoidable tenuousness of the process of interpretation. Even though one might "interpret" the story of the characters' psychological obsessions, it is evident that Robbe-Grillet is seeking to shift the reader's attention from the events of the tale to the telling of the tale. The move is one from the false profundity of the characters' world to flatness, to the surface of the text as it is being read and created.

The move from the events of the tale to the telling of the tale, is equivalent to a move from the level of the signified to that of the signifier, from the images to the words creating those images. It is thus not so much, as Russell suggests, the images which demand the reader's attention, as the way in which these images are created. In the words of Jean Ricardou "le récit d'une aventure" has now become "l'aventure d'un récit".⁷

In the examples from La Jalousie which we have examined, it is the limitations and the imprecision of our colour vocabulary which make the reader aware of the tenuousness of the process of interpretation. Our interpretation of reality is limited and influenced by our linguistic structures, structures which, Robbe-Grillet seems to suggest, are at times grossly inadequate and imprecise.

In Robbe-Grillet's next novel, Dans le labyrinthe, the questioning of our linguistic forms and significations in the field of colour seems less developed than in La Jalousie, there being fewer examples which illustrate the workings and limitations of our language system. However some terms point to the same aspects of colour

description as those questioned in La Jalousie. The soldier, for example, is dressed in "une capote militaire de teinte douteuse, passée, tirant sur le vert ou sur le kaki" (p.16). As with the apéritif in Le Voyeur, the difference between the two colours, green and khaki, is not great and either could be used depending on personal preference. The problem of colour definition again arises, as the description implies that there is no specific word for this colour; the description is itself "douteuse".

However this example also points to Robbe-Grillet's control over the text, for the problem could be avoided by omitting either colour. The apparent concern for exact colour description at first reinforces the realist illusion, it is as though the narrator were observing and attempting to describe the soldier's coat in "real life", and not in a fictitious narrative. But this distinction is in fact a false precision which denounces the realist illusion, as it betrays the editorial omnipotence of the author.

In La Maison de rendez-vous, Robbe-Grillet again uses colour in a game with both meaning and our linguistic division of the spectrum. Description of a canapé on which Lady Ava is seated appears several times in the narrative, and an examination of the colour terms used is of interest for our discussion.

La plus âgée des deux, assise sur son canapé de velours rouge - ou plutôt de velours jaune - observe en souriant la plus jeune, debout devant elle, mais tournée de profil dans une autre direction; ... elle fait un pas vers le canapé rouge et, très lentement, relevant un peu le bas de sa robe d'un geste souple et gracieux du bras gauche, elle met un genou en terre devant Lady Ava ... (p.37, my emphasis)

In the space of two sentences, Robbe-Grillet contradicts himself twice, the canapé is first red, then yellow, then red again. This is once more an example which reveals that division of the spectrum is a function of our language, as some societies with an even less refined colour vocabulary than our own, would use one

word for both red and yellow. The Hill Tribes of India, for example, although they can distinguish the different colours, use the same term to express blue, green and violet. The linguistic distinction between red and yellow in the Western world is in fact a completely arbitrary decision.

The canapé, with its changing colours, is again red in the next description (p.62), but on the following page returns to yellow and then becomes striped.

Je traverse cette partie du salon pour atteindre à mon tour le canapé jaune - ou plutôt à bandes jaunes et rouges, comme je le constate de plus près.(p.63)

The conflict is apparently resolved by making the canapé striped, in this case neither term can dominate, as in the context they are exactly equivalent. The earlier contradictions are explained away as being due to the distance of the narrator from the canapé. However, the "comme je le constate de plus près" is an ironic comment which again subverts the realist illusion. It again implies that the narrator, moving about the room, is attempting to describe a physical reality, but it is in fact another indication of Robbe-Grillet's editorial power, he, not the narrator, is creating the description of the canapé.

The colour of the canapé then changes once more, as the narrator appears to avoid the problem altogether by resorting to vague terms;

Lady Ava, assise solitaire sur son canapé aux couleurs indéfinies, a pris tout à coup une figure fatiguée.(p.83)

The indefinite colours point to an indefinite colour vocabulary, to say that the colours are indefinite is in fact to say that we lack adequate vocabulary to describe them. Our language system must resort to vague and imprecise terms such as "indéfinie" due to the

limitations and arbitrary nature of our colour terminology. Such words, "pâle", "clair" and "sombre" are other examples which Robbe-Grillet frequently uses, are convenient hold-alls which can be inserted when a more precise term is difficult to choose.

This game with colour and meaning continues in the next description of the canapé;

Sur le côté, près d'une embrasure de fenêtre aux lourdes rideaux fermés, Lady Ava est toujours assise sur son canapé sans couleur ... (p.184)

The "couleurs indéfinies" are further transformed to become "sans couleur" in a manipulation of meaning. Indefinite means without definition which Robbe-Grillet then extrapolates to mean without colour. Thus through the successive transformations of meaning the canapé has passed from its original red to be now either colourless or pale. The context implies that pale is the preferred meaning, which allows a final change in colour;

Tout à fait à l'écart du reste de ses invités, Lady Ava attend, elle aussi, toujours assise sur son canapé au velours décoloré par le temps. (p.204)

"Sans couleur" and "décoloré" can, through the common link of "pâle", be synonymous, and thus Robbe-Grillet substitutes the latter for the former. The comment that the canapé is "décoloré par le temps" is an example of how Robbe-Grillet uses objects to show the passage of time, but this reference is also ironic as, in this novel, the changing colours are not caused by the passage of time, but by the passing from one level of meaning to another. This transition points to the inexactness of language and the problems which arise in using words with multiple meanings.

In Robbe-Grillet's following novel Projet, colour description again highlights the difficulties in defining a particular colour by one specific term.

With the frequent descriptions of naked females in this novel, an examination of the various skin-colourings of the young women is particularly interesting. In Projet these females belong to one of three major racial groups; white, black or mulatto. Description of each group reveals the same characteristics about our language; the lack of precision in our colour vocabulary and the resulting need to use conventions in description to make up for the inadequacies.

In the white register, skin is variously described as; "pâle" (p.15), "rose pâle" (p.54), "blanche" (p.75), and "laiteuse" (p.185). These are all traditional clichés which describe more or less the same skin-colouring, that of a "white" woman. "Rose" in particular is the colour traditionally associated with a woman's skin; Colette, for example, frequently uses "rose" for this purpose in her novels. This plethora of clichés points to the literal misnomer of describing Caucasians as "white", only albinos have truly white skin. The use of these conflicting terms is seen in the following passage;

--- Déchirure au rasoir pratiquée à vif en travers d'une surface satinée, généralement convexe mais parfois concave, de chair blanche ou rose. (p.191)

Although "blanche" and "rose" are clearly distinguishable colours, they are practically synonymous in describing skin colour, that of a Caucasian, Robbe-Grillet's distinction is in fact meaningless. This description is also an interesting example of Robbe-Grillet's use of intertextual assemblage, the "text" in this case being Luis Bunuel's film Un Chien andalou, the above passage being roughly analogous to the opening scene of the film in which an eyeball is sliced with a razor.

We often avoid the problem of naming the various shades of Caucasian skin-colouring by using the one general term - "white" - to cover the whole range. Hence reference in Projet to a "sompueuse fille de race blanche" (p.57), is merely a linguistic convention. It again

demonstrates that our perception of some colours is influenced by our language; just as we are trained to see seven colours in the spectrum, we are also socialized into seeing Caucasians as "white". This is in fact an example of linguistic imperialism, when one considers that white is a traditional symbol of goodness and purity.

Thus, in Projet, negroes are similarly described by convention as "black" ("une main d'homme très noire" (p.54)). However in description of the television programme about an African ritual, the young African girls, who of course have common ancestry with American negroes, have "des cuisses brunes" (p.80), itself a contradiction of the title of the programme - "Le Rouge et le noir". Most negroes have brown skin, but by social and linguistic convention, we label them as "black". This again shows our linguistic imperialism as black is traditionally, in the Western world, the colour of evil and the devil. This racist element in description also appears in reference to the young girls in the schoolyard, who are "des fillettes de couleur" (p.119). In this case "de couleur" takes on a pejorative sense, it really means "not white", which in turn implies inferiority. This example again shows that meaning is related to context; no colour is defined in this description, but it is clearly implied from the context. These examples do not imply that Robbe-Grillet is racist, but rather that he is demonstrating the social power of language.

The problem of defining skin colour in Projet appears even more difficult when describing young women of mixed blood, "la belle métisse" who appears frequently in this novel. For example in the course of one description, a mulatto victim has; "la peau brune", "la tempe cuivrée" and "le corps couleur d'ambre" (pp.196-197). These are again traditional clichés, each of which, appearing separately, would arouse little comment. However the Petit Robert defines "ambré" as "jaune doré", and "cuivré" as "rougeâtre", both of which are clearly distinguishable from "brune". The young woman's skin thus seems to be, if taken literally, red, yellow and brown. Once more Robbe-Grillet is exposing the limitations of

our colour vocabulary, the problem in this case being worsened by our lack of a convenient "label", such as black or white, to use in such descriptions.

Description of skin as "cuivrée" raises another interesting point of colour use by Robbe-Grillet; the description of copper itself. According to the Petit Robert, copper is a red metal. In Les Gommages, Robbe-Grillet's "scientific" novel, there are "des casseroles en cuivre rouge" (p.90), but in his next novel Le Voyeur, copper is described as yellow - "la lampe est en cuivre jaune" (p.226). Similarly in Projet, there is "un bougeoir en cuivre jaune" (p.26); in Topologie, "une grande plaque de cuivre poli aux reflets de miroir pâle" (p.33); and in Djinn, "un chandelier en cuivre, qui brille comme de l'or" (p.31) and also "un grand chandelier à trois branches, en cuivre jaune" (p.105). The description of copper in Djinn as both golden and yellow is interesting as gold is usually regarded as the "yellow" metal; again Robbe-Grillet is playing with our colour conventions.

Thus copper, like skin, resists our attempts to assign it one conventional colour, our limited, imprecise colour vocabulary cannot match the infinite and subtle variations of nature. In fact each of these descriptions of copper can be considered legitimate from a realist point of view, as the colour of copper does vary greatly with the degree of polish or tarnish on its surface, just as skin varies with pigmentation or sun-tan.

Description of copper as yellow and skin as "cuivrée" provides an interesting result; if skin is "cuivrée" and copper is yellow, then the skin must also be yellow. Yellow is of course the conventional colour of Orientals, and thus use of the term "cuivrée" to describe a mulatto is incorrect. Our use of colour conventions can at times produce some unusual results.

To return to skin-colouring, there is in Projet yet another type to be examined, that of the mannequin. This first appears as "une femme nue articulée en matière plastique rose" (p.161). In this description, it has the traditional rose skin-colouring of a Caucasian, but in the next description it is "un mannequin déshabillé,

fait d'une matière élastique couleur chair" (p.176). The pair "plastique - élastique" is an obvious play on words, but the description "couleur chair" creates a problem. This is ambiguous, for, unless the reader remembers the first reference as "rose", this could refer to any of; white, pale, milky, pink, amber, copper, brown or black. The context does not give preference to any one term and the description is thus meaningless. It is not until we read that the mannequin has a "visage de poupée laiteuse" that we know it belongs in the "white" register. "Couleur chair" is a meaningless term which emphasizes the problem we have in defining skin-colour in specific words. It makes the reader aware of the multiple terms which Robbe-Grillet uses to describe the colour of one object, and hence emphasizes once more the limitations of our colour vocabulary.

In La Belle Captive, Robbe-Grillet continues this game with skin-colouring, playing with the convention of "rose" and showing that "whites" certainly need not have "white" skin, the "white" paradigm is extended even further.

In this "picto-roman", there are numerous descriptions of sun-tanned young girls, who are variously described as; "dorées" (p.56), "d'un joli brun clair" (p.76), "bronzée" (p.86) and "ambrée" (p.89). In Projet, such terms would put these young girls in the mulatto register, but again context is all important, and thus "ambrée", for example, can refer to either the degree of a certain pigmentation or to the degree of sun-tan in a Caucasian. Ambiguity is yet again possible due to this multiplicity of meaning. These conventions of describing sun-tan perhaps also reflect a changing view of what is considered "beautiful". Last century pale skin was regarded as a sign of beauty, a fact reflected in the traditional clichés such as "pâle" and "laiteuse", but today a sun-tanned body is generally considered a sign of both good-health and beauty, and so a new set of conventions is needed for description. In this case we are modifying our language to suit changes in our collective representations.

Robbe-Grillet also plays with the multiple meanings of "rose", taking the rose as a flower from Magritte's paintings and using it to subvert the traditional "rose" colour of skin, the third paragraph of the text shows this play on words;

Fraîche rose couleur chair, pendue la tête en bas dans l'embrasure de la fenêtre grande ouverte ... Déchirant soudain le silence, on entend alors un cri de femme, tout proche, qui paraît venir de la chambre à côté, à travers une cloison sans doute très mince; la voix est jeune, claire, au timbre pur et chaud, musicale en dépit de la violence du hurlement (comme d'une fille qu'on poignarde) qui meurt dans un bref descrescendo. Fleur éclatante, couleur de chair à blessure fraîche... (p.9)

The first sentence is totally ambiguous, referring either to a flesh coloured rose or to "rose" coloured flesh. The context is of no assistance in deciding between the two; the next sentence in a sense takes up the flesh image, producing the young girl's scream, while the following sentence then takes up the flower image. The two images are linked by the reference to stabbing in the second sentence which produces "à blessure fraîche" in the third.

Nor are Magritte's paintings, which partly generate the text, of any help, as the above passage could apply to two different paintings. Portrait de femme (pp.10-11) depicts the head of a woman upside down in an opening (which does not appear to be a window), while Le Tombeau des lutteurs (pp.20-21) depicts a giant rose (right way up) in front of a window. "Fraîche rose couleur chair" seems to be an amalgam of these two paintings, but it still, however, remains totally ambiguous. This ambiguity is maintained with later reference to "la rose chair à coeur écarlate" (p.18).

This deliberate ambiguity undermines our use of colour conventions in description, as it shows that our language system can produce situations in which these

colour conventions no longer function, thus pointing to the inadequacies of our linguistic structures as a whole. However this example does also reveal the metaphorical richness of language through which new texts can be created, as we shall show in detail in the next example.

Robbe-Grillet further plays with this descriptive convention to link young women to the fish which appear in several of Magritte's paintings, such as La Présence d'esprit (p.103) and L'Exception (p.132).

Si le mot "saumon" a été prononcé, ça ne peut être que pour évoquer la couleur chair de cette rose citée à plusieurs reprises. Et le seul poisson en cause serait la jeune fille elle-même, quand les marins l'ont remontée à la surface, prise dans leurs filets de pêche. (p.103)

The text is a game with images from Magritte's paintings (signified) and the words which represent these images (signifier). The transition from one signified, the fish, to another, the woman, is achieved through their common colour, this colour being the signifier of a third image (signified) from Magritte's paintings, the rose. Thus through this rather complex interplay of images and words the narrative is generated, the multiple meaning of "rose" again being used for constructive purposes, rather than to highlight limitations in our descriptive capabilities.

This fish woman association also appears in several of Magritte's paintings; from those depicting individual fish and women, to Le Vieux Canonnier (p.71) which depicts a woman being embraced by a half-man half-fish, to L'Invention collective (pp.94-95) and L'Univers interdit (pp.120-121) which both depict half-woman half-fish (one a mermaid, the other reversed). The associations in the paintings are recreated in the text, in this case through the use of colour and through, what has been in previous examples, a problem in our colour description.

In Topologie, Robbe-Grillet extends the white

paradigm further still with description of skin as "nacré" - "une jeune fille blonde à la chair nacré" (p.109). Again the definition in the Petit Robert is revealing, stating that an object of this colour is iridescent, that is it shows the colours of the spectrum with varying light and position. This is indeed a rather unusual skin-colouring for a human, however realism does not appear to be the aim in this case. This term again associates women with the sea, as did "rose-saumon" (a topic for later discussion), and Robbe-Grillet once more utilizes associations at the level of the signified to generate new images, producing "la fine peau nacré, qui laisse échapper une perle de sang" (p.164). Nacre is of course mother-of-pearl. This image is then reversed on the final page of the novel as shells take on the colour of flesh, "les frais coquillages aux couleurs de chair nacré" (p.201).

As seen in discussing several examples in Chapter Two on the realist illusion, Robbe-Grillet explicitly points to some of the conventions of description in his later novels. Thus, in Topologie, a young girl has "une chair de lait dans la meilleure tradition décorative" (p.162). Robbe-Grillet is overtly telling the reader that, like all the adjectives he uses to describe skin-colour, "chair de lait" is yet another cliché, as is another addition to the list from Souvenirs; "son teint de porcelaine pâle" (p.20). In Souvenirs, some unnamed person interrupts the narrator to ask;

Le mot "rutilant" comporte-t-il pour vous la notion de rouge ? (p.128)

This explicitly questions the problem of using words with multiple meanings, as "rutilant" can mean either "bright red" or just "bright". This apparently misplaced question is the implicit question which so many examples in Robbe-Grillet's earlier examples ask. It shows both the problem of multiple meanings, which suggest the basic inadequacy of our language, and that the choice of one meaning over another is a subjective decision, as the "pour vous" clearly implies.

Another element running through Robbe-Grillet's novels which shows the influence of colour conventions on our perception, is the description of fire and flames, a topic that, it may be remembered, Pasco conveniently omitted from his study of Proust. In Projet, Robbe-Grillet refers to "la couleur traditionnelle des flammes" (p.40) which is of course red; red flames being one of the generating elements in this novel, producing "un beau feu bien rouge" (p.179). However, description of fire in his other novels reveals that the "traditional" colour of flames is not necessarily the "real" colour.

In Le Voyeur, fire is both "jaune" (p.136) and "orange" (p.224); in La Jalousie, the oil-lamp produces a yellow light (p.172); in Topologie, a burning torch gives "une faible lueur rougeâtre" (p.49); and in Djinn, candles burn "à la flamme jaune" (p.148), (in L'Eden et après, the large bonfires appear to be an incandescent orange, but this is also a purely subjective assessment). Thus description of flames as red is shown to be a cliché, a traditional convention; the colour of a flame in fact depends on the substance being burned. Our linguistic conventions of colour description are not necessarily always realist, but they are convenient.

Thus far in our discussion, most of the examples examined could be regarded as critical of our language system, showing up its limitations and deficiencies. However, as we have already seen in the discussion of "rose" as both flower and colour, Robbe-Grillet also uses these apparently negative aspects in the construction of new meaning.

A game with signifier and signified can be seen in a description of A... 's blue letter paper in La Jalousie;

Comme sa voisine, Franck regarde droit devant soi, vers la ligne d'horizon, tout en haut du versant opposé. Une feuille de papier d'un bleu très pâle, pliée plusieurs fois sur elle-même - en huit probablement - déborde à présent hors de la pochette droite de sa chemise. La poche gauche est encore soigneusement boutonnée, tandis que la patte de

l'autre est maintenue relevée par la lettre, qui dépasse d'un bon centimètre le bord de toile kaki. (p.106, my emphasis)

The reference to "la ligne d'horizon" in close proximity to the colour blue creates a traditional image - the blue sky of the horizon - with both words functioning on the level of the signified. However, by combining the two at the level of the signifier to produce "bleu horizon", a new image is created, for this is the name given to the uniform worn by French soldiers in World War I. This image is further reinforced by Franck's shirt, khaki being another military colour, a shirt which also has "une allure vaguement militaire"(p.46). In this case the narrative is not generated from this game, but a new reference is created. Robbe-Grillet is again utilizing the multiple meanings of some words, not to produce ambiguity, but to demonstrate the creative aspects of our language system. This particular play on words in fact reappears in La Belle Captive, again emphasizing the intertextual nature of Robbe-Grillet's works.

... je lève les yeux vers la ligne brillante de l'horizon, limitant à sa partie supérieure une mer plate et bleue. (p.53, my emphasis)

Robbe-Grillet also plays a similar game with colour terms in Souvenirs, this time playing with the sound of a signifier to produce a new association.

... je suis fasciné par son teint de porcelaine pâle, par ses grands yeux cernés, par ses prunelles vert d'eau qui me fixent sans un tremblement des paupières. (p.20, my emphasis)

"Vert d'eau" can produce the homophonous "verre d'eau", which is supported by the double meaning of "prunelle", which is both the pupil of an eye, and a liqueur made from blackthorn (sloe-gin). The play on words thus

produces two images of liquid.

Constructing a text through the sound of a word is generally considered to be the domain of the poet, whose work has both a verbal and written dimension. Thus Robbe-Grillet's use of what is foremost a poetic technique is perhaps surprising when one considers that he has been strongly attacked for the lack of "poetry" in his writing. Even a sympathetic critic like Roland Barthes writes in "Littérature objective";

L'écriture de Robbe-Grillet est sans alibi, sans épaisseur et sans profondeur: elle reste à la surface de l'objet et la parcourt également, sans privilégier telle ou telle de ses qualités: c'est donc le contraire même d'une écriture poétique.⁸

Robbe-Grillet's writing may indeed be the contrary of poetic writing, but many of the colour terms which he uses in his novels demonstrate that he is capable of using basic poetic techniques which work on the signifier, that is on the words of the text themselves.

As seen in the previous chapter, Robbe-Grillet's use of opposition gives balanced movement and rhythm to a narrative, both basic requirements for any poetry. Similarly the example of the "vert d'eau" from Souvenirs demonstrates the use of sound associations, and La Jalousie in particular uses several onomatopoeiaic words, such as "crépitemment" and "grésillement". Onomatopoeia is another basic poetic device. It is also interesting to note that onomatopoeiaic words constitute one group in which the relationship between signifier and signified is not arbitrary; the signified, the sound itself, produces the signifier, the word.

There are also many examples of alliteration in Robbe-Grillet's colour descriptions. In Projet, there is; "à peine plus pâle" (p.10), "un peu plus pâle" (p.192), and "un réseau de ruisselets rouges" (p.185). Alliteration in two terms is more common; in Le Voyeur, "la borne blanche" (p.191); in La Belle Captive, "une toison soyeuse aussi pâle que la paille" (p.89) and "une mer

blanche et bleue" (p.12); and in Souvenirs, "un pélican pâle" (p.10); there being many more examples not included here.

Robbe-Grillet also uses rhyme in his colour descriptions. In his first novel Un Régicide, a pool of water has "des reflets violets" (p.40), with "reflets" later being used alliteratively in the "reflets roux" of La Jalousie and other novels. In fact Robbe-Grillet often uses rhymes with "roux" and "rouge" in colour descriptions; in La Jalousie, "la brousse roussie" (p.41); in Topologie, "les bouches rouges" (p.33); in Souvenirs, "la touffe rousse" (p.107); and in the sub-title of Djinn, "Un trou rouge entre les pavés disjointes". Rhyme is also often used in the description of eyes, particularly the green eyes we discussed earlier. In La Maison de rendez-vous, Robbe-Grillet plays on the homophonous pair "vert-vers", producing on successive pages; "ses yeux verts" (p.85), "tourne enfin les yeux vers le lit" (p.86), and "les grands yeux verts" (p.87). In his next novel the pair "vert-ouvert" is used; "aux grands yeux verts étonnés" (p.176) and "ses yeux sont grands ouverts" (p.179). Clearly rhyme is a device which he often uses in colour descriptions. There is even one example from La Jalousie which uses both rhyme and alliteration; "à peine un peu plus soutenu" (p.42).

Yet another example of Robbe-Grillet's word-games is the naming of characters. In Un Régicide, a tombstone bears the inscription "Ci-gît Red" (p.58) which becomes as the text tells us "une anagramme accusatrice: Régicide!" (p.58), with the Red of the first inscription thus becoming symbolic of the murder in the second. Similarly, in Le Voyeur, Violette's name symbolizes her impending fate through another homophonous association - "Violette - violet - violer".

Hence the above discussion suggests that, as a careful reading shows, there is perhaps a greater degree of "poetry" in Robbe-Grillet's novels than many critics have noticed. In fact Robbe-Grillet seems to use these poetic devices, such as rhyme and alliteration, more frequently than most "traditional" authors. In the past,

his novels have perhaps been read more at the level of the signified than at that of the signifier. All of the poetic devices discussed above emphasize the textuality of the novels, rhyme and alliteration both work specifically on the signifier. These examples also point to the difficulties in adequately translating Robbe-Grillet's novels; of all the "constructive" examples discussed above, only the fish-rose-woman game can be translated into English (but not necessarily any other language), while still preserving the play on words. Translation of the other examples would destroy the games which Robbe-Grillet is playing with colour.

The above examples generate parts of a narrative at the level of the signifier, and in the view of Jean Ricardou, Robbe-Grillet in fact generates a whole novel, Projet, at this level. In his article "La Fiction flamboyante", Ricardou claims that the word "rouge" is the "cellule génératrice" which produces, using partial anagrams, new words such as; "orgue, rogue, roue, urge, orgasme".⁹ However Ricardou's argument falls down in that partial anagrams could eventually generate nearly any word through the gradual inclusion of letters missing from the initial generating term. As Bruce Morrisette states;

It is particularly in the generative analysis of others' work that Ricardou has had recourse to what is perhaps his most controversial principle, that of the "partial" anagram; obviously, if one is not obliged to find all, or even nearly all, the letters of a given word in its alleged transformation, the door may be opened to unlimited ingenuity of inventions.¹⁰

In fact from the initial five letters of "rouge", the ingenuity of Ricardou's inventions results in a list of words which includes seventeen of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet (ignoring accents as Ricardou does). Those omitted include k,w,y,z which are not too common

in French anyway, leaving only f,l,p,q,v as the "major" omissions, all of which could no doubt be included if the process were continued. Despite Ricardou's careful analysis and arguments, Robbe-Grillet himself denies generating Projet at the level of the signifier, claiming that the novel is in fact generated by the colour red (the signified), and not the word. The generation of Robbe-Grillet's novels at the level of the signified is to be the subject of the next chapter.

Before concluding this chapter, it is interesting to note that Robbe-Grillet is by no means the first author to use fiction to question the nature of language. A young lady, by the name of Alice (to whom Robbe-Grillet actually makes allusions in Projet¹¹), had already become inquisitive about the functioning of our language during the last century.

She was rambling on in this way when she reached the wood: it looked very cool and shady. "Well, at any rate it's a great comfort," she said as she stepped under the trees, "after being so hot, to get into the - into the - into what?" she went on, rather surprised at not being able to think of the word. "I mean to get under the - under the - under this, you know!" putting her hand on the trunk of the tree. "What does it call itself, I wonder? I do believe its got no name - why, to be sure it hasn't!"¹²

As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, also taking a tree as an example, the relationship between an object and its name is completely arbitrary. Alice's question, "What does it call itself, I wonder?" is a similar question to that which many of Robbe-Grillet's colour terms pose to the reader. The tree does not call itself anything, but we give it the name "tree", just as we name the colours of our spectrum.

Like Alice, Robbe-Grillet questions the way in which our linguistic systems function, the colour terms in his novels being good examples of this interrogation. Perhaps

the major point raised by this examination is the inadequacy of our language in our attempts to describe physical reality. Our attempt to cover the continuum of the colour spectrum with a finite colour vocabulary leads to vagueness and imprecision in our colour definition. Fine distinctions in colour are difficult to make and the verbal definition of colour becomes a subjective choice, limited, not by our colour perception, but by our colour vocabulary. Division of the spectrum is a function of language and not of nature. "Faithful" description of a physical reality "out there" is thus difficult if not impossible.

This finite-infinite conflict results in what amount to "gaps" in our colour vocabulary, which we try to fill by using vague terms, such as those with "-âtre", or by concocting hybrids, that is a combination of two colours which approximates a third. Also, to overcome the limited nature of our vocabulary, we give words more than one meaning, a solution which, as Robbe-Grillet clearly shows, can easily lead to ambiguity. This use of colour terms with multiple meanings also demonstrates that meaning is very often dependent on context, by changing contexts some colour terms can in fact be used to describe more than one colour.

One method to avoid some of the above problems is to use colour stereotypes, conventions which are accepted as describing the colour of an object, even if this description is not "realist". Once the conventions are learned, colour description becomes less of a problem. This use of stereotypes also points to the strong socializing influence of language, that it can in fact, in its turn, help determine our perception and description of colour.

The colour terms which Robbe-Grillet uses do not, however, show only the negative aspects of our language system, for Robbe-Grillet also uses some of the characteristics which cause problems for more constructive purposes. Through games with signifier, signified, multiple meanings, sound etc. he creates new images and words, using apparently negative aspects to generate new texts

and meanings. Such games are in fact the basis of much of poetry and also comedy, which are often also games with words, contexts and meanings.

Similarly, Robbe-Grillet also uses language positively in the poetic devices that appear in his colour descriptions. Accused of destroying any element of "poetry" in prose writing, Robbe-Grillet nonetheless uses poetic techniques such as onomatopoeia, alliteration, rhyme and rhythm, to focus attention on the material and the functioning of the text - the narration rather than the fiction.

The colour terms in his novels are thus part of Robbe-Grillet's interrogation of our language system, the examples discussed illustrating both positive and negative aspects of this system. Robbe-Grillet's descriptions of colour again emphasize the subjectivity of any perception of reality and the textuality of his novels. The Word may no longer be God, but it is still a powerful force.

ooo000ooo

Notes

1. Fowler, p.67.
2. Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui II (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1972), p.160.
3. Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui II, p.32.
4. Allan H. Pasco, The Color Keys to "À la recherche du temps perdu" (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1976), p.22.
5. Jacques Ehrmann, "The Death of Literature," New Literary History, 3, No.1 (1971), p.44.
6. Charles Russell, "Toward Tautology: the Nouveau Roman and Conceptual Art," Modern Language Notes, 91(1976), p.1048.
7. Jean Ricardou, "Esquisse d'une théorie des générateurs," Positions et oppositions sur le roman contemporaine (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971), p.143.
8. Roland Barthes, "Littérature objective," Essais critiques (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), p.30.
9. Jean Ricardou, "La Fiction flamboyante," Pour une théorie du nouveau roman (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971), p.211.

10. Bruce Morrisette, "Post-modern generative fiction: Novel and Film," Critical Inquiry, 2, No.2(1975), p.257.
11. Hayman, p.280.
12. Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass in Martin Gardner, The Annotated Alice (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), p.226.

6. LE MOT ET APRÈS (Textual Generation)

The previous chapter examined the relationship between colour and language in Robbe-Grillet's novels and dealt with colour mainly on the level of the signifier, that is looking at the words which Robbe-Grillet uses in colour description. However, as was pointed out in the discussion of Ricardou's analysis of the generation of Projet, colours themselves also play an important role in the construction of some of Robbe-Grillet's works. Robbe-Grillet deliberately uses colour at the level of the signified to generate texts, the best examples of this technique being Projet and his first colour film L'Eden et après, both of which use colour as fundamental generating devices.

These colour generators work through the various associations produced by a particular colour. This technique is seen in a limited manner in Dans le labyrinthe, in which a series of red images are produced from the initial generator of the red flame, the red colour being transferred to other objects, and thus allowing the narrative to advance. In his following novel, La Maison de rendez-vous, Robbe-Grillet may be using colours as basic generators for the whole text, although the technique is neither as refined nor as evident as it is in Projet. The clue to the possible generators does not in fact appear until near the end of the narrative.

In this novel, there is a restaurant in Hong-Kong harbour which serves some rather unusual dishes and more significantly, it contains a pool of variously coloured fish;

Il y a peu de monde ce soir, dans la grande salle rectangulaire, trouée en son centre d'une piscine carrée où l'on aperçoit dans l'eau verte une multitude de gros poissons bleus, violets, rouges ou jaunes. (p.200)

As John Sturrock points out in The French New Novel, the choice of the above four colours for the fish is by no means accidental;

Here Robbe-Grillet has found a more delicate if more mysterious way of referring to the genesis of a fiction than he did, for example, in an early novel like Le Voyeur, where the whole in the centre is actually conveyed by blank pages in the text. It is in the improbable whole in the centre of the restaurant that the monsters of the deep dwell, and even their colours, it seems, can be connected up with the characters who inhabit La Maison de rendez-vous: blue because of the Villa Bleue, the scene of most of the novel's events, which are "blue" indeed; "violets" surely because of the homophonous "violées"; red because of Robbe-Grillet's suggestions in this novel that the mysterious Ralph Johnson (that is, himself) is a communist agent; yellow because of the Chinese background and Eurasian girls who are victims of the erotic experiments.¹

The role of these coloured fish as generators of the text is probably rather limited, they serve more perhaps as a common link between the various elements of the novel, a view supported by the fact that the above description appears late in the novel. The coloured fish perhaps symbolize rather than generate the elements of the novel.

If colours do not specifically generate La Maison de rendez-vous, the same cannot be said for Robbe-Grillet's next novel, Projet, which is directly generated by the colour red. As we mentioned in the last chapter, Robbe-Grillet denies generating this novel at the level of the signifier by using the word "rouge", preferring instead to use images created by the colour red itself. His reply to Ricardou (although not directed specifically at him) is as follows;

... j'ai renoncé très vite aux mots eux-mêmes comme générateurs: par exemple le mot "rouge" pris comme ensemble de sonorités ou comme associations d'un certain nombre de consonnes et de voyelles, sur lesquelles on peut ensuite opérer des variations anagrammatiques, ou paragrammatiques.²

Robbe-Grillet thus refuses Ricardou's suggestion that the text of Projet is generated by signifiers, claiming that such a process is an attempt to render writing a "natural" activity, an idea which Robbe-Grillet rejects because such generation denies the author's position in and interaction with his environment. He continues later;

Pour cette raison, je ne prendrai pas comme générateur le mot "rouge", mais la couleur rouge, choisie au sein de quelques objets mythologiques contemporains: le sang répandu, les lueurs de l'incendie, le drapeau de la révolution, qui organisent entre autres le Projet.³ (Robbe-Grillet's emphasis)

Projet is to be a construction of red images which belong to the contemporary mythology of modern-day New York, a city where, the media at least would have us believe, murder, rape and robbery are common occurrences. In Projet, the three major themes are revolutionary acts which will finally solve the conflict between black and white. Budding revolutionnaires receive lessons on the importance of the colour red.

Le thème de la leçon du jour paraît être "la couleur rouge", envisagée comme solution radicale à l'irréductible antagonisme entre le noir et le blanc. Les trois voix sont chacune attribuées, à présent, à l'une des actions libératrices majeures se rapportant au rouge: le viol, l'incendie, le meurtre. (p.38)

The perfect revolutionary act will be the rape of a virgin, followed by disembowelling and then burning. The novel then continues with various descriptions of such acts, the scenes often describing the sado-erotic torture of beautiful young girls. The major colours in the novel are black, white and red, with the predominant red image being that of blood. The blood images are mainly produced by physical violence, rather than the rape of a virgin, with fire also providing comparatively few red images. The main emphasis appears to be on the tormenting of the young girls.

This use of the three "red" acts is perhaps best seen in the sado-erotic torture of J.R. in the disused lot full of junk. In the course of this event a whole series of red images appear. J.R. herself is "cette belle créature rousse" (p.176), her sexual organs are set alight with petrol producing "un beau feu bien rouge" (p.179) and "les rougeoiements de la torche vivante" (p.180), which is then followed by more physical torture with pliers and a saw and thus "des filets de sang commencent à couler" (p.182), followed by "un réseau de ruisselets rouges" (p.185) and then "le sang a coulé en si grande abondance de cette dernière blessure qu'il a jailli sur les aines et sur le ventre, maculé de trainées rougeâtre la matière visqueuse..." (p.185). Similar scenes appear throughout the novel with the same emphasis on blood and the colour red.

Besides the three basic red images which generate much of the text, there are also number of other red elements in the novel which reinforce the three major themes of the revolution. These include descriptions such as; "la terre rouge, mon verre de Marie-Sanglante, des cheveux roux, le bouton rouge, le papier peint écarlate, la moquette rouge, la dentelle rose, sa robe rouge vif, les aiguilles rougies au feu, leur initiale brodée en rouge". The basic conflict of the novel is even reflected in the colours of the gags used on the young victims, being variously black, white or red.

Some of the images generated by the colour red also

in turn generate more images themselves. For example, J.R. probably receives her "chevelure rousse" from the initial generator "rouge", but red hair is also seen traditionally to denote Irish descent. The Irish are also traditionally Catholic and many Irish Catholics became policemen in New York. Because of her Irish ancestry J.R. wears an emerald green dress. Thus from the initial generator "rouge" a series of associations is formed which then become the elements of the crime for which J.R. is to be punished. She is "condamnée par le tribunal secret lorsqu'on a découvert sa triple appartenance à la race irlandaise, à la religion catholique et à la police de New York"(p.201). A further association which does not appear in the text is also created by J.R.'s ancestry and religion, for Irish Catholicism in the U.S.A. is symbolized by one family; the Kennedys. Considering the political power of this family of Irish Catholics, conviction of J.R. for belonging to their group can be seen as part of the overthrowing of the established political order. To attack Irish Catholicism in the U.S.A. is to attack the Kennedys, a truly revolutionary act; an act, however, which is highly ironic as Projet is not about a political revolution.

The conflict between black and white, however, does not necessarily refer only to racial disharmony, for it can also be interpreted on a more literal level as the conflict which arises in trying to impose the the written word (black) on a blank page (white). The creative process is inherently one of violence, meaning is imposed on non-meaning, the written text is imposed on the empty page. In Projet, the conflict is resolved through the colour red, itself the colour of violence, as it provides the content for the written word to invade the blank page. Thomas O'Donnell points out in his discussion of the generation of Projet⁴, that pen-like objects abound in the text; these include, for example, catheters, hypodermic needles and gun-barrels lengthened with silencers. The association between such objects and the writer's pen is reinforced by the description

of Laura's interrogation in the subterranean cell; Morgan takes out "un stylo en or à plume rentrante, dont il manoeuvre avec précaution le mécanisme comme s'il s'agissait d'une seringue à injection" (p.148). Near the end of the novel, the young Caucasian girls are stabbed with long, hollow needles producing "le sang s'écoule goutte à goutte par chaque fin canal d'acier" (p.211). Blood flows like ink from a pen and black on white is replaced by red on white, again reinforcing the pen-weapon association. This association is to be expected as murder is one of the methods which will resolve the antagonism between black and white.

Rape is another red act which Robbe-Grillet uses to generate the text and it is not perhaps surprising to find pen-phallus associations in Projet. Reference to a "crayon à feutre" (pp.159,199) could be re-read as "crayon à foutre", given the productive nature of both ink and sperm. The three elements pen-phallus-weapon are then united in the final description of the poster on the subway walls, which, like much of the subway system in New York, has been defaced with graffiti. The young white girl in the poster now appears with "un sexe masculin de trois mètres de haut, dressé verticalement jusqu'aux lèvres disjointes" (p.173). The important point is that this has been drawn with a "pistolet à encre noire", and as O'Donnell suggests, the instrument of writing is also one of murder and rape. Hence in Projet, "l'irréductible antagonisme entre le noir et le blanc" is resolved through the violence of the pen, the red images allowing the black words to cover the white page.

It is also interesting to note that Robbe-Grillet's next novel, Topologie, begins with a "cellule génératrice", which is a room with bare, white walls. Various elements then appear within this room as the text is constructed, in the same way as black words gradually fill the white page. This white room in fact appears as early as Les Gommages, with the injured Daniel Dupont sitting in a small, white room in the doctor's clinic; similarly in Dans le labyrinthe, the doctor's room and the objects in

it are the initial generators of the text; and again in Projet, there is "une toute petite pièce nue, cubique, peinte en blanc sur ses six faces" (p.33). This apparent repetition in the generation of Robbe-Grillet's novels also suggests that he is pointing more and more explicitly to both the artificiality and the textuality of his writing as the role of the white room becomes clearer in the later novels.

Projet is Robbe-Grillet's only novel in which the textual generation is based so specifically on colour, however his film L'Eden et après, which, like Projet, was released in 1970, also uses colour as a basic generating device. This was Robbe-Grillet's first colour film, the change from monochrome being inspired by a visit to Tunisia;

Effectivement c'est la Tunisie qui m'a incité à l'employer... Mais ce qui m'ennuyait avec la couleur, c'était la verdure. J'ai horreur du vert en Eastmancolour. Par contre, la Tunisie avec son sable blanc, sa mer bleue et le gris de ses oliviers convenait parfaitement. Le régime néo-destourien a repeint toutes les constructions en blanc et bleu. Donc à partir du moment où la couleur m'a été accordée, le film a été conçu en fonction de ce bleu et blanc, sur lequel tranche le rouge du sang artificiel.⁵

L'Eden et après is constructed from twelve elements arranged in five series⁶, with blue and white acting as common linking elements throughout the film. The film is a compositional game with these various elements and colours.

The events of this film occur in three locations; a café, a large factory and in Tunisia. The café is constructed from sliding panels which are reproductions of Mondrian's paintings (and some of Delvaux's), these paintings being made up of rectangular areas of primary colours (blue, red, yellow and white), divided up by thick black lines. Similarly the actors' clothing is

mainly in the primary shades. In the factory, several large pipes have also been painted with these bright, primary colours. In this, his first colour film, Robbe-Grillet makes full use of the visual impact of colour, the effect being at times almost overpowering with the constant appearance of bright, saturated colours. As Claude Mauriac writes in a review of this film;

Le film est en couleur, écrit, construit pour la couleur, subtilement, et de façon on ne peut plus satisfaisante pour le regard, que l'on se trouve parmi les Mondrian, les Delvaux, les Duchamp du café Eden, ou dans une Tunisie bleue et blanche...⁷

After the lack of success of L'homme qui ment, Robbe-Grillet had some difficulty finding financial support for a colour film, but once obtained he made full use of its advantages, certainly L'Eden et après in monochrome would lose much of its impact.

One of the major elements in the film relies on colour for its effect; this is the blue and white painting which first appears hanging on the wall of Violette's bedroom. The "action" of the film revolves around this painting which has been left to Violette by an uncle. The painting, of some value, is stolen from Violette's room, and competing groups subsequently search for it in Tunisia. In traditional terms, the film is the story of the theft of and ensuing search for this blue and white painting.

This painting is also very similar in outline to the postcard of a scene in Tunisia which Violette finds in the jacket of the dead Duchemin. The postcard has been stained with blood, which is significant as many primitive tribes stain idols and fetishes with blood, especially in fertility rites, in order to bring them to life. The action then shifts to the Tunisia of the postcard, where Duchemin is very much alive. As Robbe-Grillet points out above, Tunisia is a predominantly blue and white country, with blue sea and sky, white sand and blue and white houses. The house depicted in the postcard,

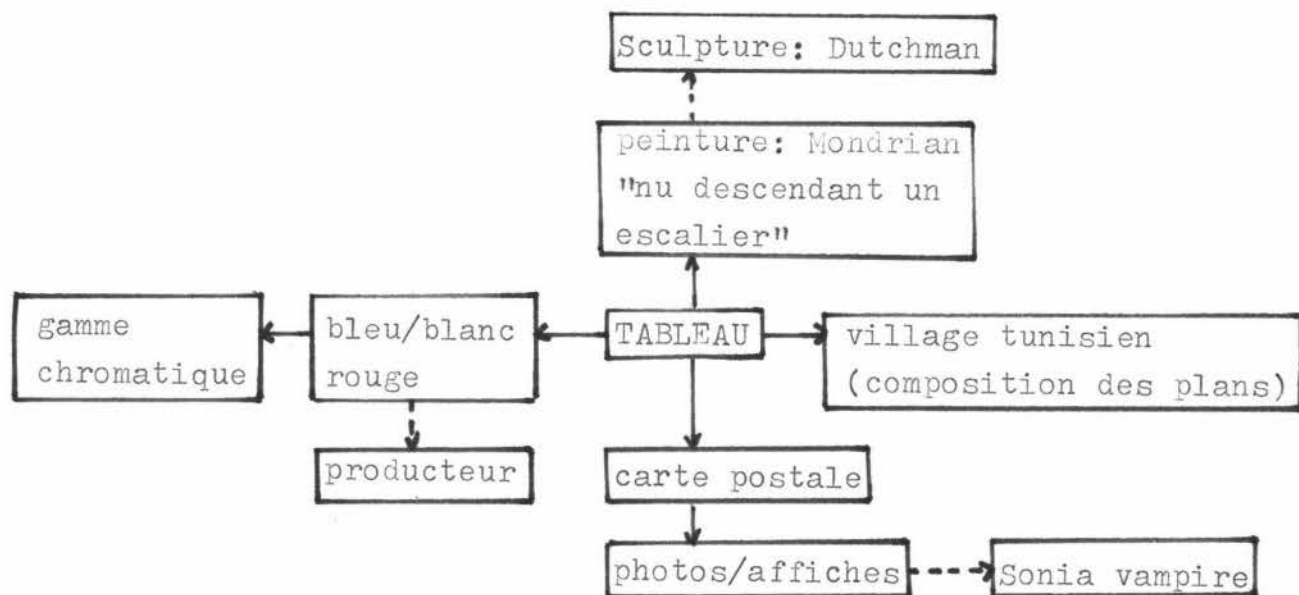
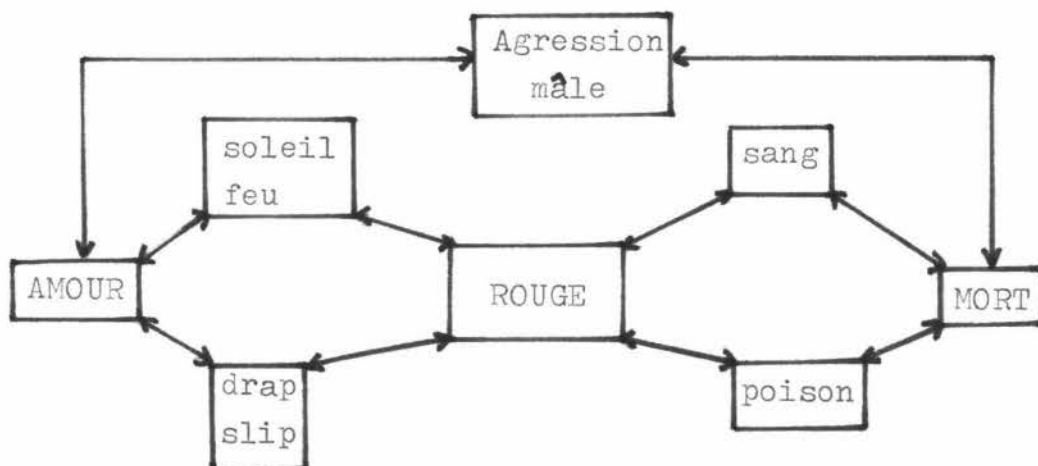
which has a similar outline to the painting, appears several times and it is in this house that Violette finally finds the blue and white painting, the succession of blue and white images thus coming full circle.

Blue and white thus act as basic colour generators; the blue and white painting producing the Tunisian postcard which in turn generates real scenes in Tunisia. Both the painting and the other blue and white elements act as links, unifying the various settings of the film. In his analysis of Robbe-Grillet's films, André Gardies sums up this functioning of the blue and white painting in both written and diagramatic form (see Diagram 1);

Au niveau des couleurs, des formes, des constructions en séquences, vont surgir des correspondances. Les thèmes seront alors doublement générateurs, générateurs du récit, générateurs d'une prolifération de sens, conduisant à une lecture productrice.

L'exemple privilégié du petit tableau bleu et blanc tracera la voie de cette approche... C'est autour de lui que s'articulent les conflits; vols, poursuites, bagarres, meurtres; c'est lui qui semble le point de convergence de toutes les actions...

Le petit tableau est à l'évidence une peinture de facture moderne, une surface plane (et une simple surface en raison de l'absence de perspective), un jeu de couleurs simples (le bleu et le blanc), un ensemble de formes géométriques où l'angle droit est tempéré seulement par l'arc de cercle. Une première filiation se dessine entre lui, la carte postale trouvée sur le cadavre de Duchemin et les vues du village tunisien (où plusieurs plans se composent exactement comme le tableau). En raison de ces points communs, l'un appelle l'autre. La simplicité des lignes, le jeu des couleurs élémentaires sur une surface limitée établissent une analogie immédiate avec le décor du café "Eden", lui-même composé en référence à Mondrian. La présence implicite de la peinture justifie du même coup le Nu descendant un escalier, mais aussi l'activité de

DIAGRAM 1DIAGRAM 2

Dutchman: sculpteur. Par le glissement vers la carte postale, c'est à la photo comme mode de représentation et mise à plat de la réalité qu'il est fait allusion...⁸

As with the coloured objects in La Jalousie, colour is used to establish links between the various elements of L'Eden et après, the colour correspondances generating, as Gardies points out, both the "story" and a proliferation of meaning, as each coloured element creates analogies with others.

The other important colour which Robbe-Grillet uses in this film is red. As in Projet, the red images are the product of violence, with copious quantities of blood (or rather red paint) flowing. Blood images in the café scenes include Duchemin's trick with some broken glass, Sonia acting as a vampire, the students' drinks, and when Violette takes the "poudre de peur", she sees a succession of violent, red images which later reappear as the scenes in Tunisia. These scenes include young girls with red blindfolds, others being tortured on spikes, bloodied hands, Marie-Eve in a bath of blood after committing suicide and other scenes of violence which do not include blood. The double appearance of these scenes in the film again creates a link between the various settings, the brief images which Violette sees in the café are later repeated as the scenes in Tunisia. In this case, the "poudre de peur" generates the first sequence of red images, which then serve as basic generators for the scenes in Tunisia; red thus functions in a similar manner to blue and white in the construction of the film. Gardies sees red as having a double meaning in the film (see Diagram 2);

En sa proliférante progression, le film se construit lui-même, pour peu que le spectateur veuille jouer le jeu et se montrer disponible; la satisfaction esthétique provient précisément de ces constants glissements et appels. La couleur rouge en fournira un bon exemple.

Rouges, bien sûr, sont un certain nombre d'objets: le sang, le liquide coulant sur l'amas visqueux, le vin dans lequel sera versé le poison, le soleil, le feu, le drap dans lequel s'enveloppe Violette et le slip que porte l'héroïne dans le désert. Mais le rouge est aussi à la base de la composition du décor (celui du café "Eden" ou de l'usine). À le décrire ainsi, il apparaît comme un élément statique; or, bien plus important est son dynamisme. Rouge est le sang, rouge est le liquide qui reçoit le poison, or le sang par contiguité appelle la mort tout comme le poison; révélateur aussi la couleur orange des bouteilles dont est chargée la camionnette lors de l'accident final. Le rouge est donc lié à la mort. Cependant, c'est aussi l'amour qu'il appelle par le soleil, le feu, le drap et le slip. Ambivalence mort-amour, celle-là même que réalise l'agression mâle.

Ainsi transparait le mouvement propre au film: les thèmes, par leur retour cyclique, donnent naissance à la fiction et la structurent, tandis que les connotations introduisent une lecture horizontale. Le film s'alimente sans cesse à ce double mouvement.⁹

Once more we see in this film that there is a tension between two poles, between love and death which are inseparably linked by the colour red. The colours blue, white and red generate elements of the film, which in turn generate others, with the generation finally returning to the initial elements; again objects are used to show the cyclical nature of time. The film ends with the arrival of Duchemin at the café, the scene being very similar to his earlier arrival; the story and the elements in it all start over again.

The texts of Robbe-Grillet's novels and the visual images of his films are brought together in his "pictoromans", such as La Belle Captive. The text of this work is generated by a selection (Robbe-Grillet's own choice) of René Magritte's paintings. The choice of Magritte's

paintings as generators is not surprising in light of the following passage from The Shock of the New by Robert Hughes;

Magritte's work serves its modern audience rather as the sultans of Victorian narrative painting, the Friths and Poynters and Alma-Tademas, served theirs - as a source of stories. Modern art has been well supplied with myth makers, from Picasso to Barnett Newman. But it had few masters of the narrative impulse, and Magritte was its fabulist-in-chief. His images were stories first, paintings second, but the paintings were not slices of life or historical scenes. They were snapshots of the impossible, rendered in the dullest and most literal way: vignettes of language and reality locked in mutual cancellation. As a master of puzzle-painting, Magritte had no equal, and his influence on the formation of images - and on how people interpret them - has been very wide.¹⁰

Robbe-Grillet makes full use of the narrative impulse in Magritte's paintings, which show concerns with some of the same points as Robbe-Grillet's novels; the relationship between images and reality, for example. And nor are Robbe-Grillet's novels slices of life or historical scenes, they are, like Magritte's paintings, puzzles.

Considering the extensive use of colour as generators in Projet and L'Eden et après, one might expect Robbe-Grillet to draw on the colours of Magritte's paintings to generate parts of La Belle Captive. In this work, colour terms are in fact used more frequently than in his earlier novels¹¹, however it seems that Robbe-Grillet has actually drawn very little colour from the illustrations, the blue and white sea and the red velvet couch being the only obvious examples. The text in fact appears to be generated by the images in the paintings, with Robbe-Grillet's imagination providing the colour terms. For example, an orange rose

appears in two of Magritte's paintings, Les Fleurs du mal (p.16) and Le Retour de flamme (p.147), but instead of using the quite noticeable orange colour of the roses, Robbe-Grillet takes only the rose image and gives it a red colouring which is more appropriate for the contexts in which it appears, for the games Robbe-Grillet plays with the rose and its colour. Robbe-Grillet himself writes in a postscript to the text, that it is the images in the paintings which generate the narrative;

... ayant d'abord accepté les images comme impulsion génératrice, c'est bientôt l'écart variable entre elles et le texte - quelquefois aussi le rapport métonymique ou même l'opposition - qui devient le principal paramètre du jeu.¹²

Robbe-Grillet draws on the images in the illustrations and these images then generate appropriate colours in the text.

In La Belle Captive, it is also noticeable that over half of the reproductions are in black and white (25 colour, 52 b/w), even though many of the originals are colour paintings. This again suggests that Robbe-Grillet is interested in the images created, rather than their colour, and possibly supports the view that the human mind functions in black and white images. However, perhaps selection of black and white is merely an economic measure to keep the price of the work at a reasonable level, as printing in colour is much more expensive than in black and white. But whatever the reasons for this imbalance, the result is that the colour terms in La Belle Captive appear to be generated at a secondary level by the text, which is initially generated by the images in Magritte's paintings. Thus in a work where one might expect Robbe-Grillet to use colour as a textual generator, he does not.

As with many of the points already discussed in Robbe-Grillet's use of colour, textual generation by colour is explicitly mentioned in the text of Souvenirs;

Tout à coup je me souviens: l'empreinte de la main était rouge, le soulier bleu, la règle jaune ... En combinant la règle et le soulier, on pouvait obtenir le vert cru de la pomme. Il doit y avoir là l'espoir d'une solution ... La règle avec la main donnerait une orange, qui ne saurait donc tarder à paraître ... La main puissante sur la fine chaussure féminine produirait le verbe violer, dont le rappel figurait déjà bien évidemment dans le bout de corde avachi, enroulé sur lui-même en forme de 8. (p.149)

By combining the three colours, new colours and objects are formed, thus generating new text. The green apple has already appeared; by playing with the dual colour-object nature of orange (c.f. rose), there soon appears in the text "une grosse orange parfaitement sphérique à la peau douce" (p.151). The verb "violer" speaks for itself in Robbe-Grillet's later novels; the homophonous pair "violet-violer" now appearing explicitly in the text, the association in this case also being reinforced by the generating objects as well as the colours; the powerful hand on the woman's shoe.

Robbe-Grillet's use of red, blue and yellow, which are also the colours of the café in L'Eden et après, is again interesting in that they are the three artist's primaries, as opposed to the primaries of physics, which are red, blue and green. An artist wishing to produce a different colour would mix varying amounts of red, blue and yellow, while a physicist would produce the same colour from red, blue and green - for him yellow is a combination of red and green light. The answer to this apparent paradox is that the artist produces colour with pigments, while the physicist uses combinations of coloured lights. All spectral colours can be created by adding, in varying degrees of intensity, different amounts of red, blue and green; on the other hand the pigment colours of the artist are produced by subtraction, they absorb certain parts of the spectrum and reflect others. Thus the difference lies in the mechanism which

creates the colour; the artist subtracts, the physicist adds. In a sense the above example from Souvenirs is equivalent to an artist's mixing of pigments, and it is also a further example which highlights one of the oddities of colour in the physical world.

Robbe-Grillet has in fact tried his hand at art, producing several collages of torn newspaper scraps on coloured backgrounds, which are daubed with red paint.¹³ Interestingly, the black and white pieces of newspaper again show the basic colour contrast which runs through all of his works, as does the colour red also.

The importance of colour in Robbe-Grillet's novels and films is perhaps highlighted by his use of colours as specific textual generators, which make its role very difficult to ignore. In Dans le labyrinthe, there is a very limited amount of colour generation, while in his following novel, La Maison de rendez-vous, we see in the coloured fish the beginnings of the textual generation which becomes central in Projet and L'Eden et après. Robbe-Grillet rejects Ricardou's suggestion that Projet is generated by the word "rouge", insisting instead that it is generated by the colour red itself. The text is thus produced by the three major "red" acts; rape, murder and arson, acts which are mainly part of the sado-erotic torture of young girls. The red generators in turn generate further series, as seen in the associations created by J.R.'s red hair. L'Eden et après, Robbe-Grillet's first colour film, makes full use of the visual impact of colour, the effect being at times almost overpowering. The blue and white of the painting, the postcard and Tunisia create a basic link between the different series of the film, as do the red images of violence. L'Eden et après is a film constructed for and by colour. In La Belle Captive, one might expect Robbe-Grillet to draw colours from Magritte's paintings, but he in fact uses only the images as textual generateurs, which then generate the many colour terms. Finally in Souvenirs, textual generation by colours appears explicitly in the text, with new colours and objects and thus new text being created by

combinations of the three artist's primaries.

In these works which are generated by colour, Robbe-Grillet is again utilizing the positive, constructive relationship between the spectrum and language. Colour plays a major subversive role in Robbe-Grillet's early works, but in the later ones it assumes a more constructive role, generating new texts rather than undermining them. In both processes, Robbe-Grillet makes full use of the dual nature of language; on the one hand he uses the signifier in a largely (but not totally) subversive role, but on the other he uses the signified to produce new meaning. That Robbe-Grillet should use colour for such specific purposes highlights the important and varied roles which colour plays in his works.

ooo000ooo

Notes

1. John Sturrock, The French New Novel (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p.188.
2. Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui II, p.157.
3. Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui II, p.160.
4. Thomas O'Donnell, "Thematic generation in Robbe-Grillet's Projet...," in Twentieth Century Fiction: Essays for Germaine Brée, ed. George Stambolian (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1975), pp.185-197.
5. Gerard Langlois, "L'Eden et après ou les Mille et une nuits d'Alain Robbe-Grillet," Les Lettres Françaises, 1330, No's 15-16 (April 15-21, 1970), p.15.
6. See Appendix 5.
7. Claude Mauriac, "Robbe-Grillet et après," Le Figaro Littéraire, (27 April-3 May, 1970), p.27.
8. Gardies, p.89.
9. Gardies, p.90.
10. Robert Hughes, The Shock of the New (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1980), p.243.
11. See Appendices for comparison
12. La Belle Captive, p.152.
13. Some of his paintings are reproduced in Obliques.

7. SOUVENIRS D'UNE MÉTAPHORE (Using and Abusing Metaphor)

In a fictitious text, any colour which is used symbolically rather than descriptively is a metaphor; that is the particular colour brings to mind one or more associations depending on the context. The colour white, for example, can be used as a metaphor for either purity or death. The colour symbols which we discussed in Chapter Three are in fact all metaphors which time and usage have made conventional symbols known to both writer and reader. Obviously the study of metaphor takes us into a large and complex field, and even the restricted scope of colour in a narrative makes a large number of possible metaphors available to a writer. However, it appears that, initially at least, Robbe-Grillet did not wish to draw on this field, for, early in his literary career, he rejected outright the use of metaphor in his writing; the example he attacks is description of a village as "blotti au creux du vallon";

La métaphore qui est censée n'exprimer qu'une comparaison sans arrière-pensée, introduit en fait une communication souterraine, un mouvement de sympathie (ou d'antipathie) qui est sa véritable raison d'être. Car, en tant que comparaison, elle est presque toujours une comparaison inutile, qui n'apporte rien de nouveau à la description. Que perdrait le village à être seulement "situé" au creux du vallon? Le mot "blotti" ne nous donne aucun renseignement complémentaire. En revanche il transporte le lecteur (à la suite de l'auteur) dans l'âme supposé du village; si j'accepte le mot "blotti", je ne suis plus tout à fait spectateur; je deviens moi-même le village, pendant la durée d'une phrase, et le creux du vallon fonctionne comme une cavité où j'aspire à disparaître.¹

Robbe-Grillet believed that metaphors create a false relationship between man and nature which he saw as the

basis of all humanism. Metaphor creates a "humanised", anthropomorphic world which denies the subjectivity of each person's perception of reality;

Le principe de cette communion une fois admis, je parlerais de la tristesse d'un paysage, de l'indifférence d'une pierre, de la fatuité d'un seau à charbon. Les nouvelles métaphores ne fournissent plus de renseignements appréciables sur les objets soumis à mon examen, mais le monde des choses aura été si bien contaminé par mon esprit qu'il sera désormais susceptible de n'importe quelle émotion, de n'importe quel trait de caractère. J'oublierai que c'est moi, moi seul, qui éprouve la tristesse ou la solitude; ces éléments affectifs seront bientôt considérés comme la réalité profonde de l'univers matériel, la seule réalité - censément - digne de retenir sur lui mon attention.² (Robbe-Grillet's emphasis)

Robbe-Grillet sees metaphor as part of the humanist tradition against which he is rebelling and as a result his early novels appear to be totally devoid of metaphors. For Robbe-Grillet, the world is simply there, without any significance above and beyond that given it by each individual.

However, despite Robbe-Grillet's stated desire to rid his early writing of metaphors, it seems that he was not in fact all that successful. In his article Inquiète Métaphore, Jean Ricardou points out that in Le Voyeur, Robbe-Grillet uses several associations which Ricardou terms structural metaphors.³ An example of this is the recurring description of figure-eights, such as the ball of string Mathias picks up and the marks made on the side of the wharf by two iron rings. Description of one element brings to mind that of the other. Ricardou writes;

... la description n'est pas un outil astreint à la servitude. Ses mécanismes sont pièges. Décrire, en ses particularités apparemment anodines, la marque de

l'anneau, c'est appeler l'un des instruments du supplice: la cordelette.

En se fondant sur une similitude, par l'effet d'une métaphore structurelle, la description peut à tout moment, sans crier gare, choisir un autre objet. Libérant, en ses particularités, des analogies spécifiques, la description trahit le narrateur qui prétendait ne trouver en elle qu'un pur espace sans relations.⁴

Although Robbe-Grillet soundly condemned the metaphor in the perhaps simplistic polemic of Pour un nouveau roman, metaphorical devices, like those Ricardou points out, do play an important role in his early novels. In fact, if Robbe-Grillet is to be believed and is not just being wise after the event, the following quote would suggest that the use of these structural metaphors is deliberate;

... j'ai toujours été tenté de mettre en pratique, d'un côté, ce que je condamnais de l'autre. Pour voir, pour opérer la contre-épreuve... N'oubliez pas que mon jugement sans appel interdisant toute métaphore dans l'écriture est exactement contemporain du roman La Jalousie, qui, depuis son titre jusqu'à ses moindres insectes, est un vaste piège à lecture métaphorique.⁵

As Robbe-Grillet admits the whole of La Jalousie is a metaphor of the narrator's jealousy and like Le Voyeur it also contains several structural metaphors, some of which use colour, to make associations. As we have already discussed in Chapter Four, Robbe-Grillet creates links in the text of La Jalousie between diverse elements, such as the scrub, the centipede, Franck's blue car, the blue letter and A... 's hair. These associations are in fact examples of Ricardou's structural metaphors, where description of one element brings to mind another and so on. Colour plays an important role in some of these metaphors, with "roux" for example, linking the scrub, the centipede and A... 's

hair and "bleu", Franck's car and the suspect letter. Blue is also used in the "indirect" metaphor of "bleu horizon", in this case the association being with a concept outside the text.

Interestingly, in Proust's À la recherche du temps perdu, Allan H. Pasco sees colour as acting in a similar fashion to Robbe-Grillet's structural metaphors, with colour linking various episodes within the novel;

Its (colour) function is nonetheless extremely important, for it serves to unite related contexts which, when seen as interdependent provide a clear understanding of a major concept. As a colour appears over and over again in similar contexts, the colour finally serves to recall other contexts in which it was found. The reappearing colour invites the reader to bridge episodes and to form an extension, preferably because of involuntary memory, but in any case inviting review and comparison.⁶

In La Jalousie, the reappearing colour "roux", for example, acts in a similar fashion, linking descriptions of the different elements with this colour to give an overall unity to the text.

In this novel, there is however one explicit metaphor which uses colour; the handle of A... 's hair-brush is described as "couleur d'os" (p.64). It may at first appear that Robbe-Grillet has allowed a "traditional" metaphor to infiltrate into the text, but in fact this colour term is part of a larger structural metaphor which links several elements in the novel. The brush obviously brings to mind A... 's hair itself, which then through common sound and colour evokes the centipede; the colour of the brush brings to mind the bones of the crabs and birds eaten at meals which in turn through similarities in description are also associated with the centipede. Thus a circular series of associations is formed in the text by this one colour term; centipede - hair - hair-brush (couleur d'os) - crabs (birds) - centipede. An apparently

minor colour metaphor creates a much larger structural one, as again diverse elements in the text are united, partly using colour but also by shape and sound. Robbe-Grillet uses similar structural metaphors in his next novel, Dans le labyrinthe, where, as we saw in Chapter Four, there is a series of associations based on flames and the red colour they produce.

The structural metaphors of the early novels are internal devices which work within the text, rather than creating associations with concepts outside it as is usually the case with more "traditional" metaphors. In his analysis of La Jalousie, Jean-Pierre Vidal neatly describes the operation of these devices;

L'art de Robbe-Grillet, il va de soi, n'est pas un lettrisme. Mais la manipulation particulière qu'il fait subir au matériau a pour effet de transgresser l'aspect informatif du langage, parce que le rapport qui articule le signe ne se situe pas seulement hors de l'oeuvre mais en elle, dans une véritable remise en jeu du code.

Ainsi la scutigère de La Jalousie n'est pas la simple évocation d'un animal mais, à travers elle, l'instauration de certains rapports textuels:

- métaphoriques: cette scutigère, par sa forme, n'évoque pas mais devient (soit une métaphore "disséminée") écriture sur une lettre, crabe de terre dans une assiette. Le bruit qu'elle émet n'évoque pas mais devient le bruit d'une brosse sur une chevelure etc.
- métonymique: la place de cette scutigère dans ce récit sans cesse recomposé est susceptible de variations et modifie ainsi l'ensemble où chaque fois elle se situe différemment.⁷

Vidal's analysis is perhaps slightly strongly worded in saying that one thing becomes another, but the process of association is evident with textual relationships being created by shape, sound and also colours which Vidal has not mentioned.

To recapitulate then, at the time of writing his early

novels Robbe-Grillet strongly attacked the role of the metaphor in creative writing, apparently rejecting it outright, but as he himself admits, while he was saying one thing, he was doing the opposite. Certainly his early writing is largely devoid of "traditional" anthropomorphic metaphors, but instead he makes frequent use of structural metaphors which operate within the framework of each novel. It appears that, having rejected the conventional metaphor, Robbe-Grillet has created his own system of metaphors which are peculiar to any one novel and to a certain extent to a particular author (obviously he can be copied). Again this suggests that Robbe-Grillet's texts create their own reality, or more specifically their own conventions of metaphor, to describe and even construct this reality. For the Nouveau Roman, Robbe-Grillet has invented the Nouvelle Métaphore.

However the structural metaphors are not the only ones which Robbe-Grillet uses, for metaphor can also be produced by the metonymic progression of a text. As Roman Jakobson points out in Fundamentals of Language, there are two available semantic paths, the metaphoric and the metonymic, along which a narrative can progress;

The development of a discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or their contiguity. The METAPHORIC way would be the most appropriate term for the first case, and the METONYMIC way for the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively.⁸

He continues that any symbolic process manifests a competition between these two poles, with poetry being forwarded mainly by metaphor, while prose is forwarded essentially by contiguity. However due to the competition between these two semantic modes, although one mode may dominate, it does not necessarily exclude the other. Thus as Vidal points out above, description of the centipede in La Jalousie in fact functions along both axes; along

the metonymic , the centipede metamorphoses into various shapes and colours, but in the course of this metonymic metamorphosis the metaphoric pole comes into play as the shape, sound and colour of the centipede create associations with other elements which have similar properties. As Vidal states there is "l'expulsion de la métaphore par la métonymie qui s'emplit alors d'une charge métaphorisante".⁹

The structural metaphors in Robbe-Grillet's novels are examples of a discourse functioning simultaneously along the two semantic axes. The narrative of La Jalousie, for example, is forwarded essentially by descriptions which are contiguous in space, that is the descriptions proceed from one object to another, rather than from one event in time to another as is usually the case in the traditional novel where description is contiguous in time. However, as we have seen, in the course of this contiguous progression associations are created along the metaphoric axis. To concentrate on colour in La Jalousie, "roux", "bleu" and "couleur d'os" all create associations with objects of similar colour. However, these structural metaphors are not the only type which can be produced by a metonymic discourse. For, in La Jalousie, colour also functions in such a manner to create associations "outside" the text, with abstract concepts rather than with other concrete objects; these metaphors are more symbolic than textual.

In Chapter Three we discussed the description in La Jalousie of A... standing in the bathroom as the sun sinks, with a corresponding progression through the colours of the spectrum; white, green, blue, violet and finally darkness (pp.136-138). As we pointed out this sequence is a physical impossibility; it can, however, also be interpreted through Jakobson's two semantic modes of discourse. The progression of colours is clearly metonymic, as each colour is contiguous with the next in the spectrum. Significantly, the progression is towards the cold end of the spectrum, away from the warmth of infra-red rays which would in fact accompany such a sun-set. Thus the passage could perhaps be read as a metaphor of the

state of relations between A... and the narrator; that is relations are rather cool, a concept supported further by description of A...'s dress as "bleu froid" (p.136), as well as other minor details such as A... locking the bathroom door when she takes a shower. Also as our discussion in Chapter Five suggested, "violet" may well have a double-meaning, the suggestion of rape perhaps indicating that all is not well between the two. Thus, although Robbe-Grillet has disregarded the laws of the physical world in this case, he has, through the colour terms, created a metaphor from a metonymic progression. This metaphor is now an abstract concept "outside" the text, as opposed to the structural metaphor which functions totally within it.

As well as progressing towards the cool end of the spectrum, the description of the sun-set also moves from the white of sunlight ("la cour est blanc de soleil") to the black of night ("la silhouette noire de A..."). A similar progression from light to dark can also be seen in the following description of the contents of A...'s writing desk.

Dans la poche latérale sont glissées onze feuilles de papier à lettres, d'un bleu très pâle, du format commercial ordinaire...

Dans le tiroir de la table, il y a deux blocs de papier pour la correspondance; l'un est neuf, le second largement entamé. La dimension des feuilles, leur qualité, leur couleur bleu pâle, sont absolument identiques à celles des précédentes. À côté sont rangés trois paquets d'enveloppes assorties, doublées de bleu foncé, encore entouré de leur bande....

Excepté deux crayons noirs, une gomme à machine en forme de disque, le roman qui a fait l'objet de maintes discussions et un carnet de timbres intact, il n'y a rien d'autre dans le tiroir de la table.
(pp.168-169)

The successive colour terms in this description become progressively darker; "bleu très pâle", "bleu pâle",

"bleu foncé" and "noir"; the progression is thus analogous to that of the sun-set. This movement towards black can also be seen in one of the descriptions of A... 's lips "qui paraît plus noir sous cette lumière trop crue".

The progression of colours in the above description of A... 's writing materials is again metonymic, but this constant movement towards black in descriptions could perhaps be read as a metaphor of the narrator's rather "black" view of life, that is a rather dull and pessimistic attitude which contributes to his suspicions of A... 's infidelity. Marie-Georgette Steisel sees this pessimism as a possible explanation for the emphasis on black in the narrative. Discussing the darkening of A... 's red lips under the harsh light of the oil-lamp, she writes;

Pourtant c'est sous l'œil perçant, scrutateur du Jaloux qui soupçonne sa femme de vouloir le trahir que ce rouge naturel devient noir. Ce noir vrai, quasi tangible de la chose physique sert évidemment de "support" à la passion exaspérée de celui qui imagine la noirceur des desseins de l'aimée. Car, l'homme-qui-voit fait naturellement de ce noir extérieur "le support de ses passions comme de son regard". Ce n'est pas que le Jaloux voie tout en noir, suivant l'expression consacrée, mais bien plutôt que sa vision se pose de préférence sur toutes choses noires, ... le "pur" regard jaloux appuie avec insistance, par dix-sept fois, sur la couleur d'ébène des cheveux de sa femme, et de façon nouvelle, moderne, toute extériorisée, l'impression transmise au lecteur par ces rappels visuels, ces reprises structurales, ce mouvement du chat qui joue dans l'ombre avec la souris est celle d'un obsédé, d'un être foncièrement pessimiste, nerveux, inquiet. Ceci sans aucun commentaire psychologique, superflu, de la part de l'auteur.¹⁰

Robbe-Grillet creates the character of the narrator through the constant movement of the narrative towards black and darkness, the metonymic colour progressions

becoming metaphors of his pessimism. Again, as he does with structural metaphors, Robbe-Grillet creates metaphors which are peculiar to this one novel; they function only in the particular context of La Jalousie. Although seeing life "en noir" is, as Steisel points out, a traditional metaphor, the way in which Robbe-Grillet makes use of the association is unique. Similarly, as we have already mentioned, the choice of paint colours for the house is perhaps also indicative of A... 's and the narrator's personalities.

In La Jalousie, colour plays an important role in the creation of the metaphors "hidden" in the narrative, colour creates internal links between various elements in the structural metaphors giving an overall unity to the text, and the metonymic progression of colours in some descriptions creates "psychological" metaphors of the personality of the narrator. Taken together all of these various metaphors, through the accumulation of linked elements which provide proof of A... 's infidelity and through the construction of the narrator's pessimism, produce the giant metaphor of the whole novel; jealousy. As Robbe-Grillet himself admits La Jalousie is nothing but "un vaste piège à lecture métaphorique".

It is now evident that Robbe-Grillet rejected the metaphor as a narrative device, only to fill his novels with metaphors, although these may not be readily apparent to the reader. As part of this self-contradiction, Robbe-Grillet also manages to subvert the traditional use of metaphor in La Jalousie. In the third to last paragraph of the text, the narrator describes the sky as "violemment éclairé" (p.217). Clearly a metaphor, the red of the sky at sun-set (which contradicts the violet of the bathroom scene) has been replaced by its traditional metaphorical association - violence. Allowing this blatant metaphor to slip in could be an oversight on the part of Robbe-Grillet. It may, however, be intended ironically, as at this stage of the narrative the narrator seems quite calm, the paroxysm of his jealousy having passed. In the context this metaphor is meaningless, it

is the other metaphorical devices which Robbe-Grillet uses that create the narrator's emotions.

In his early novels Robbe-Grillet claims to reject but nonetheless uses metaphor, if in new ways; however with Projet his attitude changes and he begins to use metaphor explicitly. This can be seen in his use of "violemment" in Projet;

Autour du lit sont disposés trois projecteurs de forte puissance, allumés, l'un aux pieds de la fille, les deux autres à droite et à gauche de sa tête, qui éclaire le corps nu aussi violemment que pour une opération chirurgicale. (p.176)

In this case the use of "violemment" is not at all ironic as it immediately precedes the sado-erotic torture of J.R. and is thus a constructive metaphor. It presages the coming description and draws attention to the mechanisms at play in the textual generation.

In Projet and his following novels, Robbe-Grillet makes increasing use of the associations language can create through metaphor to construct his texts. As we have already seen, the description of J.R.'s dress in Projet as "couleur d'émeraude" and her red hair signify her Irish descent. Description of skin as "couleur de suie" (p.11) produces a link with fire, one of the initial generators, and description of a spider as "une tache d'encre" (p.92) and hair as "d'un noir d'encre" (p.192) bring to mind the basic antagonism of the text; the black word imposed on the white page. The ink black spider and hair are nothing more than creations of Robbe-Grillet's pen. In fact Projet is of course initially generated by the three metaphorical associations of the colour red; murder, rape and fire. Unlike those of La Jalousie, these metaphors are no longer hidden, but as we saw in the last chapter, they now appear openly in the text as the three revolutionary acts.

As we discussed in Chapter Five, Robbe-Grillet often uses the multiple meanings of words to construct his texts, the game with the flower-colour meaning of "rose" in

La Belle Captive being a good example. These manipulations of meaning are metaphorical in that Robbe-Grillet utilizes the various associations produced by particular words to generate new images and thus text. Metaphor thus assumes a more dynamic role than in the traditional novel, it is now a generative rather than descriptive device.

However Robbe-Grillet does not totally reject traditional descriptive metaphors. In La Belle Captive, for example, there is "une perruque aile de corbeau" (p.30), a common metaphor used to describe black hair which even appears in the Petit Robert. But in this case the metaphor is perhaps generated by the illustration on the preceeding page, L'Idole, which depicts a large, black bird. In this example the text thus appears to be a game with both image and word to produce the stereotyped, descriptive metaphor. But again, in using such metaphors, Robbe-Grillet explicitly announces in the text the convention of creative writing which he is using. In La Belle Captive, he refers to "l'image métaphorique de la fleur saignante" (p.24). As we mentioned earlier, no longer is the reader left to make the association; any subconscious power of the metaphor is destroyed. Thus while using metaphor Robbe-Grillet is also subverting it in a game with the narrative convention. Similarly, as we also discussed before, in his later novels, a colour and its metaphorical association often appear together in a text. This "double" description again appears in the following passage from Souvenirs;

... les trois grandes bêtes au pelage noir brillant ...
l'haleine brûlante des gueules écarlates,... (p.159)

In this example, fire (brûlante) and red (écarlate), the traditional colour of flames, both appear in the description, as opposed to that in La Jalousie of the sky as "violemment éclairé" where the colour is completely replaced by its metaphorical association. By using such double terms Robbe-Grillet may be trying to intensify

the image, with the two terms acting as mutual supports. However, to a certain extent, they also announce themselves as metaphors. The reference is not explicit as it was in the above example of "la fleur saignante", but the heavy-handedness does draw attention to the double image, and again may subvert the traditional role of metaphor, which is to create a subconscious rapport between man and the world.

It is also interesting to note with regard to Robbe-Grillet's use of metaphor that the titles of some of his novels themselves are metaphors. Les Gommages can be read as meaning erasers, but in French this is also a slang term for venereal disease which links to the underlying erotic themes in this novel. La Jalousie refers to both the narrator's jealousy and the blinds on the windows. In his two latest novels colour metaphors appear in the titles, the "triangle d'or" from Souvenirs can be read as a metaphor of a female's triangular pubic hair, or the opium triangle of South East Asia. The subtitle of Djinn, "Un trou rouge entre les pavés disjointes" is a possible metaphor of female sexual organs, although unlike Souvenirs the erotic content of this novel is not explicit.

Robbe-Grillet's works, it seems, are not lacking in metaphors if examined closely, and this discussion has of course been limited to those metaphors which use colour.

In the course of our discussion of the functions of colour in Robbe-Grillet's works, we have given several examples which link woman and the sea. A thorough examination of this relationship in Robbe-Grillet's works is a large topic, and might well justify a thesis in its own right. However we shall include a rather broad, if limited discussion at this point of some of the salient aspects of this topic, as, in the course of the research for this thesis, it became apparent that a very significant number of Robbe-Grillet's colour terms, particularly blue and green, are used in description of the sea.

In Robbe-Grillet's first written novel, Un Régicide, the role the sea will play in all his subsequent works is already explicit. The sea is a haven for both beautiful women, perhaps the Sirens of ancient times, and monsters

of the deep. The young women of the sea are defined in the following passage from Un Régicide;

Sur les plages torrides, au creux des rochers, nous trouverons les jeunes femmes aux écailles dorées, à la nage rapide et souple, à la chevelure d'algues onduleuses. (p.117)

These young women are quite at home in the sea, and although they may lure man to join them, he must remain wary of the monsters of the deep, lying in wait;

--- N'y va pas, pour l'amour du ciel! La marée d'hier a laissé sur le sable les démons de l'été, les terrifiants poisons humains descendus des mers chaudes, qui ne cherchait ici que notre mort. (p.142)

The above two passages are good indicators of the many similar descriptions to follow in Robbe-Grillet's novels, although to date these recurring themes appear to have passed largely unnoticed in the critical studies of his works. In Les Gommages, water is still the lair of monsters;

... dernier refuge aussi, dans l'étouffement de ces terres asséchées, pour la nuit, l'eau du sommeil, sans fond, l'eau glauque remontée de la mer et pourrie de monstres invisibles. (p.49)

Then later in the novel, Wallas looks into the aquarium in the café and the image of a woman appears;

Un dernier remous, vite amorti, fait un instant trembler la masse. De nouveau tout est calme ... Jusqu'à ce que, soudain, une nouvelle forme émerge et vienne coller contre la vitre son visage de rêve... Pauline, la douce Pauline ... qui, à peine entrevu, disparaît à son tour pour laisser la place à d'autres spectres et fantômes. (p.126)

If Wallas is a modern Oedipus, as Bruce Morrisette, suggests, then perhaps the face he sees is that of his lost mother, the object of an incestuous desire. Water thus becomes an erotic metaphor for the female, who remains, however, unobtainable. Although lured to join her, man cannot go for fear of the monsters, which in Le Voyeur, he placates with the sacrifice of a young maiden;

... une jeune vierge, chaque année au printemps, devait être précipitée du haut de la falaise pour apaiser le dieu des tempêtes et rendre la mer clémente aux voyageurs et aux marins. Jailli de l'écume, un monstre gigantesque au corps de serpent et à la gueule de chien dévorait vivante la victime, sous l'oeil du sacrificateur. (p.221)

Man must sacrifice the woman he desires to buy his own safety at sea. This sacrifice is of course a veiled rewriting of the sadistic murder of Violette by Mathias, the murder being in a sense justified as a ritual act.

Even in La Jalousie, where the setting is an inland plantation, the sea still appears in the picture in the calendar, and the above descriptions from Robbe-Grillet's preceding novels explain what is at first a rather obscure description of A... 's dress as "du bleu des profondeurs" (p.136). As we have mentioned the term "froid" suggests the cool relations between A... and the narrator, but the passage again links a beautiful woman with the ocean depths, the distant place where A... can penetrate, but where the narrator may not. This may again be symbolic of the gap between them and also points to the narrator's frustrated sexual desires.

It is interesting to note that Robbe-Grillet's next novel, Dans le labyrinthe, which appears devoid of any erotic content, is also devoid of any reference to the sea. The water in this novel is frozen into snow, which could also suggest that any erotic desires are also frozen, if only temporarily. In the following novel, La Maison de rendez-vous, Hong-Kong is very much a sea-port, and with the sea comes the return of a very strong erotic

content and significantly, as was discussed in the last chapter, the genesis of the novel can perhaps be seen in the coloured fish swimming in the pool of water.

In the chronological progression of Robbe-Grillet's novels the emphasis seems to shift from the sea as a haven for monsters as well as women, to a greater focus on the erotic link between females and the sea. In Projet, although New York is a sea-port, the sea as such does not appear, however analogies between the sea and females still persist;

... Joan, la robe trop courte et trop décolletée, dont la fine soie couleur d'émeraude bouge avec trop de complaisance sur une chair tendre et ferme, douce, nerveuse, et comme trop provisoirement voilée par ces algues vertes aux reflets mouvants, souples lames impalpables qui remuent lentement au gré de courant sournois, noyé dans la masse liquide, poisson des grandes profondeurs dont le corps immobile, à demi-caché dans les ulves, ondule lui-même à peine par instant, prêt à se cambrer de torsions soudaines, violentes, prêt à s'ouvrir en une bouche molle et avide aux replis compliqués, précis, multifformes, remodelés sans cesse par de nouvelles excroissances ou invaginations, mais qui conservent en dépit de leurs sinuosités changeantes une constante symétrie bilatérale. (p.67)

This "poisson des profondeurs" hidden away among the "ulves" (a missing "v" ?) can also be read as a fairly obvious description of female sexual organs, an erotic link between the sea and females thus being explicitly established in this description.

In L'Eden et après we see that water is an alien world for man, as Duchemin is found drowned in the canal near the factory, and is also killed when knocked into the sea in Tunisia, and Marc-Antoine is also drowned in a fight in the sea with Boris. On the other hand, after escaping from her captors, Violette flees to the sea, passing en route some "monsters" of the deep (what appear

to be the bloodied bodies of an octopus and a dogfish), but for her the sea holds no threat and she announces that she is returning to "la mer" which is a near homophone of "la mère". In the plan of the film Robbe-Grillet writes that water provides purification and thus Violette's return to the sea is perhaps a metaphor of the return to the womb and innocence.

As the examples on the constructive use of language suggest, there is, in Robbe-Grillet's later novels, increasing reference to this relationship between woman and the sea. In La Belle Captive, for example, the hair of a young girl hangs "jusqu'au sol en algues onduleuses" (p.14), and another has "grands yeux bleu pâle de náyee" (p.18). And as we have seen in discussion of many other examples that which is not readily obvious in the early novels is mentioned explicitly in one of the most recent. The following passage from La Belle Captive is revealing;

Les algues - suivant ce qui a été relaté, répété même à plusieurs reprises - sont une métaphore désignant la longue chevelure blonde, d'un ton chaud à reflets d'ambre, dont les boucles remuent doucement dans le ressac, entre les roches, sur le fond vert-bleu des eaux profondes. Quant au coquillage, ça ne peut être qu'un genre de porcelaine, dont l'intérieur est rose vif et l'ouverture une fente étroite à bords crénelés. La forme générale est ovale, bombée sur le dessus; quelquefois, des rayons plus ou moins allongés et sinueux flamboient tout autour de la fente. L'objet est trop familier pour qu'il soit utile de le décrire davantage. (p.116)

The recurring metaphors which appear in many of Robbe-Grillet's novels are now designated explicitly and it must be remembered that in his very first novel, Un Régicide, the young girls from the sea had "chevelure d'algues onduleuses"; description has thus come full circle.

From this rather superficial examination of the role the sea and woman in Robbe-Grillet's works, it is evident that this is a topic of some importance, with even our

limited study of colour revealing several interesting points.

Although this chapter has focused on the limited topic of colour use, it is nonetheless apparent that metaphor plays a significant role in Robbe-Grillet's writing. Initially Robbe-Grillet strongly rejected the metaphor and all anthropomorphic terms, claiming that they were humanist literary devices which created a false rapport between man and the world. Despite his loud protests, however, Robbe-Grillet was actually using metaphors of different varieties in his early works.

In Le Voyeur and La Jalousie there are several linked chains of associations which Jean Ricardou terms "structural" metaphors, in which a common quality, such as colour, links two or more disparate objects. Also in La Jalousie the examples discussed show that the metonymic progression of colour in the text can produce metaphors which reflect the mental states of the characters. The structural and metonymic metaphors combine to produce the giant metaphor of the novel itself; jealousy. Thus as Robbe-Grillet admits, he is putting into practice on the one hand what he condemns on the other. It seems that in his early novels he rejects only the traditional anthropomorphic metaphor. Replacing this with metaphors which function only in the context of a given novel, Robbe-Grillet is perhaps using the Nouvelle Métaphore.

Robbe-Grillet's attitude does, however, change as can be seen in the examples from Projet in which he begins to make constructive use of multiple meanings, employing metaphors to create a proliferation of meaning from which new texts can be constructed. In the novels following Projet, it is also noticeable that, at least with colour terms, Robbe-Grillet uses both a colour and its metaphorical association in descriptions. This doubling of colour and concept perhaps reinforces the image but may also draw attention to the fact that it is a metaphor, thus subverting any subconscious effect. And as with so many of the examples discussed in this thesis, in his later novels, Robbe-Grillet explicitly points to his use

of metaphor, again subverting their traditional functioning.

One of the metaphors which Robbe-Grillet explicitly mentions is that of the association between the sea and women which runs through all of his works. From his first novel, Un Régicide, the sea is continually linked to beautiful women who lure man to join them, but it is also linked to the monsters of the deep which man fears. The sea thus becomes an ambivalent metaphor for man's desires, but also his fears. This metaphor is not a specific function of colour, but many colour terms are used descriptively in relating the sea to females and monsters.

The role of metaphor in Robbe-Grillet's works thus shows that his writing has evolved, from the early novels in which metaphor was strongly rejected, but covertly used, to the most recent in which metaphor is an integral part of the creative process. Study of a limited element like colour demonstrates the ways in which metaphor remains an important tool in a new practice of creative writing.

ooo000ooo

Notes

1. "Nature, humanisme, tragédie," p.49.
2. "Nature, humanisme, tragédie," p.50.
3. Jean Ricardou, "Inquiète métaphore," in Obliques, pp.111-119.
4. "Inquiète métaphore," p.116.
5. François Jost, "Lettre à Alain Robbe-Grillet," in Obliques, p.2.
6. Pasco, p.19.
7. Vidal (Jalousie), p.27.
8. Roman Jakobson & Morris Halle, Fundamentals of Language (Paris: Mouton, 1971), p.90.
9. Vidal (Jalousie), p.62.
10. Steisel, p.490.

8. GLISSEMENT DÉCISIF DU PLAISIR (Conclusion)

In the course of this thesis, it has become apparent that Robbe-Grillet uses colour in many different ways; colour terms are much more than "descriptive" devices, providing information about a surface quality of an object. His colour terms are subversive, but also constructive, sometimes both at once, and the functioning of an outwardly simple colour term is often far more interesting and complex than the reader might at first suspect.

The first topic which we discussed was colour and the illusion of realism. In the traditional novel, the writer attempts to make the reader forget that the story is merely words on a page and believe that the medium is transparent, that is "see" the images and events as if they were actually happening. The creation of this realist illusion supposes that there is only one "true" reality which can be faithfully represented in words, but in fact any one person's view of the world is entirely his own, perception of reality is a subjective function which renders objective description impossible. If the objective is replaced by the subjective then art, in Robbe-Grillet's opinion, constitutes its own reality without necessary reference to any world "out there". The realist illusion created in the traditional novel is thus unjustifiable.

In his novels, Robbe-Grillet uses colour and its source - light, to subvert the realist illusion and expose the falsehood of the omniscient, omnipresent third person narrator who pretends to describe the one "true" reality. References in the text to such things as lights suddenly coming on for no reason or the illumination of a scene without a light source, overtly announce the control of the author who is free to control the text as he wishes, without concern for the credibility of events. The examples which we discussed emphasize that Robbe-Grillet's novels are fabrications in the most literal sense, products of his imagination and not representations of "real" life. Robbe-Grillet also subverts the illusion of realism through the colour of blood in both his novels and films;

the redness of blood is excessively stressed in his novels, and in L'Eden et après, the blood used is clearly not blood at all but red paint. Again the reader/viewer is reminded that Robbe-Grillet's works are artificial constructions and do not necessarily represent any recognisable reality.

Despite the desire to subvert the realist illusion, Robbe-Grillet allows his writing to be constrained by the laws of the physical world. For example, while arbitrarily illuminating scenes, he does not describe colour unless it is illuminated, that is unless the objects can be seen by the narrator "inside" the text. This constraint applies in all of his novels and possibly explains the frequent descriptions of light sources. The colours which Robbe-Grillet uses to describe objects are also "realist" in that they do not appear incongruous, unrelated to common experience; blood in his works, for example, may be excessively red, but it is still red like all blood. Thus while on the one hand subverting the realist illusion, his works are also "realist" on the other, description remains constrained by the laws of physical nature which limit man's perception of the world. An unresolved tension is thus created between the subjective and the objective, the realist illusion and total abstraction.

The illusion of realism is but one of the conventions of the traditional narrative which Robbe-Grillet subverts with colour. He ironically designates traditional colour symbols, showing that they are only artificial literary conventions. Similarly the traditional relationship between character and dress is degraded, as Robbe-Grillet demonstrates that character cannot be judged from clothing or situation in time and space. Colour plays a significant role in creating the stereotypes which Robbe-Grillet again designates only to subvert; the excessive stress placed on these stereotypes announces that they are only conventions, not "real" people. He does not attempt to hide the artificiality of these stereotypes, these two-dimensional cardboard cut-outs. Colour also subverts the convention of the "petit détail qui fait vrai", as Robbe-Grillet carefully describes objects and events which are in fact

impossibilities and includes minor details out of context thus rendering them incongruous. Through using the "pétit detail" in this false manner, Robbe-Grillet points out that such precisions are largely irrelevant and again emphasizes that his novels create their own reality and that he is free to incorporate any details he pleases in his texts. Thus Robbe-Grillet uses colour, which plays a part in the techniques and functions of description in the traditional novel, to ironically designate and subvert these techniques and functions, the conventions of description which are still seen by many to provide a definitive form for the novel.

The functions of colour in Robbe-Grillet's works are not however limited to subversion, for he also uses colour to construct his own forms. In Les Gommages, the colour terms appear to be purely descriptive, situating and defining objects in the same way as the geometric terms; in La Jalousie, however, the colour terms take on a more active role, showing the shifting focus of the narrator's attention and also his changing emotions as he seeks evidence of A... 's infidelity. In what appears to be the only other significant examination of colour in any of Robbe-Grillet's works, Jacques Leenhardt sees some of the colour terms as supporting his thesis that La Jalousie is in fact a Marxist criticism of colonial powers. His analysis would, however, seem to be open to some dispute, at least as regards his interpretation of the colour terms. The colour terms in La Jalousie also play a part in constructing other forms of the novel such as cyclical time, interior duplication and the erotisation of the text. In the following novel, Dans le labyrinthe, Robbe-Grillet uses colour largely as a structural device, with the opposition of colours, especially black and white, giving movement and rhythm to the narrative. Colour is also used in this novel to generate parts of the text; for example, a series of red images is generated by flames and grey is transposed from one element to another as the text progresses. The use of colour oppositions appears throughout Robbe-Grillet's novels and provides a possible explanation

for the preponderance of black and white in his works.

Robbe-Grillet has thus rejected traditional colour symbolism and instead, in his early novels, uses colour in various techniques which give them symbolic significance only in the context of a particular novel. These techniques show an evolution from one novel to the next, with each one creating its own reality and own constructive functions for colour.

The subversive and constructive aspects of colour in Robbe-Grillet's writing can also be seen in the actual words that he uses in descriptions. Many of the colour terms show that attempts to describe an object can lead to vagueness and imprecision, as we have only a finite colour vocabulary but a huge range of colours in the spectrum. Fine distinctions of colour are often difficult to make and verbal description of colour is often a subjective choice limited, not by our colour perception, but by our vocabulary. Division of the colour spectrum is a function of language and not of nature and thus description of the world "out there" is rendered problematic. We attempt to fill the "gaps" in our colour vocabulary by using deliberately vague, broad terms, by forming hybrids or by giving words more than one meaning dependent on context. However, as Robbe-Grillet shows, the use of these colour terms with multiple meanings can lead to ambiguity which again points to the limitations of our language system.

To avoid these problems, Robbe-Grillet demonstrates that colour conventions and stereotypes can be used, which, although not always "realist", provide points of common agreement from which colour description can be attempted. In turn these conventions point to the strong socializing influence of language and to the fact that it can determine our very perception and description of colour.

On the constructive side, Robbe-Grillet uses these apparent limitations to create new texts and meanings. In games with signifier and signified, new images and texts can be generated, as the associative power of language comes into play. Colour terms are also employed in a positive fashion in the poetic techniques which

Robbe-Grillet often uses in colour description; these include onomatopoeia, alliteration, rhyme and rhythm. Such techniques are usually considered the domain of the poet, but in Robbe-Grillet's novels they reinforce the textuality of the writing, foregrounding the text as an artificial construction of words.

The various colour words which Robbe-Grillet employs thus again show the dual nature of his creativity, the tension between the subversive and the constructive. His writing is part "anti-roman" and part "nouveau roman".

Perhaps the major constructive role colours play in both Robbe-Grillet's novels and films is as textual generators, that is the genesis of a text lies in a specific colour and its associations. The beginnings of this technique can be seen in the coloured fish of La Maison de rendez-vous and it becomes explicit in Projet where the colour red generates the text through its three metaphorical associations; rape, murder and fire. In his first colour film L'Eden et après, Robbe-Grillet makes full use of the visual impact of colour, with the constant appearance of saturated primaries and the main generating colours of the film; red blood and the blue and white of the painting which generates the post-card of Tunisia and then in turn Tunisia itself, a land of white sand and blue sea and sky. Surprisingly perhaps Robbe-Grillet does not use colour from René Magritte's paintings to generate the text of La Belle Captive, which appears to be produced by the images in and titles of the paintings, with the colour terms being generated at a secondary level by these images and titles.

In using colour to generate images and texts Robbe-Grillet is again utilizing the constructive, positive relationship between the spectrum and language. In demonstrating through colour both the positive and the negative characteristics of our linguistic structures, he points to the functioning of the dual components of all language; the signifier and the signified.

A constructive aspect of language which Robbe-Grillet at first rejected is the metaphor. Initially he refused it as he saw it as a humanist anthropomorphic device

which created a false rapport between man and the world. However, at the time of these early polemical statements he was nevertheless using "hidden" metaphors in his novels. In La Jalousie for example, Robbe-Grillet employs both structural and metonymic metaphors to produce the giant metaphor of the novel's title. These metaphors are peculiar to a given novel and thus Robbe-Grillet is perhaps creating the Nouvelle Métaphore for the Nouveau Roman. Hence while condemning and subverting metaphor on the one hand, he was actively using it on the other; again we see the tension between subversion and construction in his novels, or as Robbe-Grillet himself puts it, between construction and deconstruction.

In his later novels, however, Robbe-Grillet's attitude changes and he accepts the metaphor as a literary device, using it to generate new meaning from which new texts can be constructed. One metaphor, which colour helps create, and which runs through all of Robbe-Grillet's works, is that of the sea as a haven for beautiful women and lair for monsters of the deep. The sea is thus a metaphor for man's unobtainable desires. Thus after his initial rejection but continued use of metaphor, Robbe-Grillet comes to accept it as a legitimate device in the practice of creative writing.

Our examination of colour shows that some colour terms have specific functions in themselves, as textual generators for example, while others play significant roles in the functioning of much larger elements in Robbe-Grillet's works. It is also clear that these functions of colour are by no means simple operations. The complexity and skill of Robbe-Grillet's use of colour is evident in that this one limited element reveals so many of the characteristics of his novels and films.

In the course of our discussion, the reader may have been concerned that several examples are used more than once - A...'s red lips for example - to illustrate quite different and often unrelated points. These examples, however, fulfil more than one function. In one context a colour term may be subversive, in another constructive. These colour terms in particular, and indeed all the

colour terms which examine and question elements of the novel, suggest that there is a deliberate multiplicity in Robbe-Grillet's works, a constant proliferation of meanings. La Jalousie, for example, is simultaneously the story of a love triangle, a possible "Marxist" novel, and an exercise in narrative point of view - and as our discussion shows meaning multiplies in a similar fashion in all of his works.

Thus the first main conclusion which we might draw from our examination of Robbe-Grillet's use of colour is that multiplicity of both function and meaning is an integral and possibly essential part of the construction of his novels and films.

It is often said that conflict is the basis of all literature and our discussion suggests that Robbe-Grillet's works are no exception. Frequently during the discussion, the various functions of colour have shown both positive and negative aspects, a subversive and constructive role. Thus his novels are "realist" and yet subvert the traditional illusion of realism, they thus contain a tension between the illusion and total abstraction. The conventions of description in the traditional novel are designated, only to be ironically degraded and reworked. Again Robbe-Grillet creates a tension between their presence and the desire to subvert them. We also discussed the basic antagonism of creative writing, between the black of the words on the white of the page, and also the use of colour oppositions to generate texts. Robbe-Grillet's colour descriptions reveal many inadequacies in our linguistic structures, but he also turns these inadequacies to constructive purposes in games with meaning. He rejects metaphor only to fill his novels with "hidden" metaphors which themselves manifest a competition between the metaphoric and metonymic poles.

Throughout his works Robbe-Grillet creates unresolved tensions and antagonisms between opposing poles; texts say one thing but imply the opposite, statement then contradiction. In denying the traditional novel, Robbe-Grillet's works in fact draw their life-blood from the traditional conventions of description and narration,

for these conventions must first be present in his novels and films so that they can be questioned and subverted. It is in this unwanted but necessary presence that the antagonisms lie. His works feed on conflict, they are produced through violence, which perhaps explains the violent content of much of his work.

Thus our study of the functioning of colour in Robbe-Grillet's novels and films may allow us to conclude that, in common with much of literature through the ages, conflict is also an integral, if not essential part, of Robbe-Grillet's creative world. His works are generated and sustained through the creation of internal tensions, as opposing poles compete in the never to be resolved conflict of creative writing and film production. There is a constant competition between the "anti-roman" and the "nouveau roman".

The third and final major conclusion to be drawn from our study is that the changing functions of colour point to the constant evolution of Robbe-Grillet's work. Each of the works mentioned in this thesis exhibits some different use of colour to the next; colour is "scientific" in description, shows shifting attention and moods, generates texts, subverts literary conventions and creates new ones. Robbe-Grillet's use of colour is in a constant state of flux, changing from one novel to the next, overlapping but never exactly the same. Thus Robbe-Grillet's writing and films are not static repetitions of a basic formula, but they constitute dynamic investigations into the processes and techniques of creativity.

This discussion also shows quite clearly that examination of a limited element, such as colour, in an author's works can be a particularly useful means by which to obtain an understanding of his works as a whole. Characteristics of the lesser element can often mirror more global trends in the whole.

Finally to conclude this thesis, our examination of the functions of colour in Robbe-Grillet's works thus reveals three major characteristics of his creative production: the internal tensions which he creates and employs, the conflict basic to all literature; the

multiplicity of meaning and function, an essential part of his creative process; and the constant evolution of his works, in the examination and questioning of the modes of creativity. These major characteristics and the various functions of colour discussed in this thesis reveal the at times bewildering complexity, but also, and more importantly, the skill, beauty and pleasure to be found in the creative and coloured world of Alain Robbe-Grillet.

ooo000ooo

9. APPENDICES1. Les Gommés

(All feminine and plural terms are included under the masculine singular.)

blanc	27	jauni	2
blanchi	1	jaunissement	1
bleu	10	multicolore	1
bleuâtre	2	noir	35
bleui	1	noirci	1
brun	6	ocre	1
doré	2	rose	2
gris	15	rouge	8
grisâtre	2	rouillé	4
gris-jaune	1	vermillon	1
gris-perle	1	verdâtre	6
jaunâtre	10	vert	<u>1</u>
jaune	3		144

Colour ratio: 1 colour term / 530 words of text (approx.)

2. La Jalousie

beige-grisâtre	1	multicolore	1
blanc	48	noir	47
blancheur	1	noirâtre	1
bleu	24	noirci	1
brun	7	pâle	6
brunâtre	2	rose	1
brun rougeâtre	2	rouge	10
clair	10	rougeâtre	4
doré	3	roussâtre	1
d'os	1	roussi	1
foncé	3	roux	5
gris	15	sans couleur	2
grisaille	1	sombre	4
grisâtre	2	verdâtre	1
gris-rose	3	verdi	1
jaunâtre	4	verdure	1
jaune	4	vert	25
jauni	1	violet	<u>1</u>
kaki	4		249

Colour ratio: 1 / 165.

3. Projet pour une révolution à New York

ambré	3	grisâtre	1
argenté	1	incolore	1
blanc	72	jaune	14
blanchâtre	3	laiteux	4
blancheur	3	multicolore	1
bleu	20	nacré	1
bleuâtre	3	noir	85
blond	20	noirâtre	1
brun	8	noir bleuté	1
brunâtre	3	pâle	6
clair	3	rose	9
couleur chair	1	rouge	33
cuivré	4	rougeâtre	2
d'éméraude	1	rougeolement	1
d'encre	2	rougi	1
de porcelaine	1	roux	20
de rubis	1	sépia	3
de suie	2	sombre	5
doré	6	vermeil	2
écarlate	3	verdâtre	1
foncé	3	vert	13
gris	14	violet	<u>2</u>
			384

Colour ratio: 1 / 143.

4. La Belle Captive

abricot	2	multicolore	1
ambré	2	noir	41
blanc	29	noirâtre	1
bleu	6	orange	1
bleuâtre	1	poivre et sel	1
bleui	1	rose	4
blond	10	rose-saumon	1
bronzé	2	rosi	1
brun	3	rouge	9
brun-rose	1	rougeâtre	1
clair	2	rougeoyant	1
couleur chair	2	roux	1
de paille	1	sombre	3
doré	9	vermillon	1
écarlate	2	verdâtre	2
gris	6	vert	2
jaune	1	vert-bleu	<u>1</u>
laiteux	1		153

Colour ratio: 1 / 100.

5. L'Eden et après

	Les étudiants sans Duchemin	Duchemin à l'Eden	L'usine et ses environs	Djerba: maison de Duchemin	Événements à Djerba
1.	viol collectif. sexe mâle	l'étranger arrive. portes	les ombres. imagination	le cinéma. imagination	danse du feu. imagination
2.	le hall de la fac. danse	main sanglante. sang	le piège. prison	les indicateurs labyrinthe	la prison. prison
3.	roulette russe. prison	l'Afrique. imagination	l'épreuve du verre. sang	tableau des portes. portes	les tortures. sexe mâle
4.	bleu et blanc. tableau	le L.S.D. double	l'objet innomable. sperme	l'eau lustrale. eau	le poison. sperme
5.	jeu du poison. sperme	la peur. labyrinthe	chaînes et fouet. sexe mâle	les coupoles. danse	les cadavres. sang
6.	marche funèbre. mort	l'eau qui guérit. eau	égarement. labyrinthe	tableau suicide. mort	l'évasion. portes
7.	portes de verre. portes	courte paille. prison	flottement. danse	le bain de sang. sang	le désert. labyrinthe
8.	la limonade. eau	l'oeuf cru. sperme	la porte fermée. portes	tableau des cages. prison	le double. double
9.	le faux professeur. double	la clef. sexe mâle	le canal. eau	tableau des supplices. sexe mâle	combat dans l'eau. eau
10	le haschich. imagination	amour et mort. mort	la mort. mort	colle blanche. sperme	accident; crime. mort
11	les issues bouchés. labyrinthe	le jerk. danse	dédoublément double	vol du tableau. tableau	coeur du labyrinthe. danse
12	la vampire. sang	le lavabo. tableau	le tableau disparu. tableau	les charrues. double	don du tableau. tableau

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Robbe-Grillet's major publications

(Unless otherwise stated all works are published by Éditions de Minuit, Paris.)

- Un Régicide (novel); written in 1949, published in 1978.
Les Gommages (novel); 1953.
Le Voyeur (novel); 1955.
La Jalousie (novel); 1957.
Dans le labyrinthe (novel); 1959.
L'Année dernière à Marienbad (ciné-roman); 1961.
Instantanés (short stories); 1962.
L'Immortelle (ciné-roman); 1963.
Pour un nouveau roman (critical essays); 1963.
La Maison de rendez-vous (novel); 1965.
Projet pour une révolution à New York (novel); 1970.
Rêves de jeunes filles. Paris: Laffont, 1971. Text by Robbe-Grillet, photos by David Hamilton.
Les Demoiselles d'Hamilton. Paris: Laffont, 1972. Text by Robbe-Grillet, photos by David Hamilton.
Glissements progressifs du plaisir (ciné-roman); 1973.
Construction d'un temple en ruine à la déesse Vanadé. Paris: Le Bateau-Lavoir, 1975. Text by Robbe-Grillet, water-colours and etchings by Paul Delvaux.
Topologie d'une cité fantôme (novel); 1975.
La Belle Captive. Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1976. Text by Robbe-Grillet, paintings by René Magritte.
Traces suspectes en surfaces. (limited edition, details unknown). Text by Robbe-Grillet, lithographs by Robert Rauschenberg.
Souvenirs du triangle d'or (novel); 1978.
Djinn (novel); 1981.

2. Robbe-Grillet's major films

- L'Année dernière à Marienbad (1961), Franco-Italian co-production, black and white, 94 mins.
L'Immortelle (1963), Franco-Italian co-production, black

and white, 100 mins.

Trans-Europ-Express (1966), French production with Belgian participation, black and white, 94 mins.

L'Homme qui ment (1968), Franco-Czechoslovakian co-production, black and white, 98 mins.

L'Eden et après (1970), Franco-Czechoslovakian co-production, Eastmancolor, 100 mins.

N a pris les dés (1971), French co-production ORTF/Como Films, Eastmancolor.

Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974) French production, Eastmancolor, 105 mins.

Le Jeu avec le feu (1975), Franco-Italian co-production, Eastmancolor, 100 mins.

Piège à torture (1978), details unknown.

3. Critical studies on Robbe-Grillet's works.

(i) books

Alter, J.V. La Vision du monde d'Alain Robbe-Grillet. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1966.

Armes, Roy. The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet. Amsterdam: John Benjamin B.U., 1981.

Bernal, Olga. Alain Robbe-Grillet: le roman de l'absence. Paris: Gallimard, 1964.

Chateau, D. & F. Jost. Nouveau cinéma, nouvelle sémiologie. Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1979.

Gardies, André. Alain Robbe-Grillet (Cinéastes d'aujourd'hui). Paris: Seghers, 1971.

Janvier, Ludovic. Une Parole exigeante. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1964.

Leenhardt, Jacques. Lecture politique du roman: "La Jalousie" d'Alain Robbe-Grillet. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1973.

Micciollo, Henri. "La Jalousie" d'Alain Robbe-Grillet. Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1972.

Miesch, Jean. Robbe-Grillet. Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1965.

Morrisette, Bruce. Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1963.

- Intertextual Assemblage in Robbe-Grillet from Topology to the Golden Triangle. Fredericton: York Press, 1979.
- Obliques: Robbe-Grillet. No's 16-17. Paris: Éditions Borderie, 1978.
- Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy (2 volumes). Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1976.
- Stoltzfus, Ben F. Alain Robbe-Grillet and the New French Novel. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1964.
- Vidal, Jean-Pierre. "La Jalousie" de Robbe-Grillet. Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1973.
- "Dans le labyrinthe" de Robbe-Grillet. Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1975.
- (ii) articles.
- Barthes, Roland. "Littérature objective." in Essais critiques. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964, pp.29-40.
- "Littérature littérale." in Essais critiques. pp.63-70.
- Brooke-Rose, C. "Baroque imagination of Robbe-Grillet." Modern Fiction Studies, 11 (Winter 1965-66), pp.405-423.
- Chalon, Jean. "L'Eden selon Robbe-Grillet." Le Figaro Littéraire (April 13-19, 1970), p.26.
- Elliot, J.C. "Harmonie chez deux maîtres: Paul Delvaux et Alain Robbe-Grillet." French Review, 50 (1977), pp.619-624.
- Gerhart, Mary-Jane. "The purpose of meaninglessness in Robbe-Grillet." Renascence, 23(1970-71), pp.79-97.
- Guers, Y. "La Technique romanesque chez Alain Robbe-Grillet." French Review, 35 (1962), pp.570-577.
- Hayman, David. "An Interview with Robbe-Grillet." Contemporary Literature, 16, No.3 (Summer, 1975), pp.273-285.
- Langlois, G. "L'Eden et après ou les Mille et une nuits d'Alain Robbe-Grillet." Les Lettres Françaises, 1330 (April 5-21, 1970), pp.15-16.
- Lecuyer, M.A. "Robbe-Grillet's La Jalousie and a parallel in the graphic arts." Hartford Studies in Literature, 3 (1971), pp.19-38.

- Lefèvre, Raymond. "L'Eden et après." Revue du Cinéma, 286 (August 1974), pp.80-84.
- Livingston, Beverly. "An Interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet." Yale French Studies, 57 (1979), pp.228-239.
- Mauriac, Claude. "Robbe-Grillet et après." Le Figaro Littéraire (April 27-May 3, 1970), p.27.
- Morrisette, Bruce. "Surfaces et structures dans les romans de Robbe-Grillet." French Review, 31, No.5 (1958), pp.364-369.
- O'Donnell, Thomas. "Thematic generation in Robbe-Grillet's Projet..." in Twentieth Century Fiction: Essays for Germaine Brée. Ed. George Stambolian. New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1975. pp.185-197.
- "Robbe-Grillet's ghost town." Yale French Studies, 57 (1979), pp.195-207.
- Pugh, Anthony R. "Robbe-Grillet in New York." International Fiction Review, 1, No.2 (July 1974), pp.120-124.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain. "La Littérature aujourd'hui - VI." Tel Quel, 14 (Summer 1963), pp.39-45.
- Södergard, Östen. "Remarques sur le vocabulaire de Robbe-Grillet." Le Français Moderne, 32 (1964), pp.111-115.
- Steisel, Marie-Georgette. "Étude des couleurs dans La Jalousie." French Review, 38, No.4(1965), pp.485-496.
- Suleiman, Susan. "Reading Robbe-Grillet: Sadism and text in Projet..." Romantic Review, 68 (Jan.1977), pp.43-62.

4. The Nouveau Roman

(i) books.

- Baqué, Françoise. Le Nouveau roman. Paris: Bordas, 1972.
- Bloch-Michel, Jean. Le Présent de l'indicatif. Paris: Gallimard, 1963.
- Boisdeffre, Pierre de. La Cafetière est sur la table. Paris: La Table Ronde de Combat, 1967.
- Où va le roman? Paris: Del Duca, 1972.

- Heath, Stephen. The Nouveau Roman - A Study in the Practice of Writing. London: Elek, 1972.
- Mercier, Vivian. The New Novel from Queneau to Pinget. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971.
- Nadeau, Maurice. The French Novel since the War. London: Methuen, 1967.
- Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui (I - Problèmes généraux, II - Pratiques). Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1972.
- Peyre, Henri. Contemporary French Literature. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.
- Raimond, Michel. Le Roman depuis la révolution. Paris: Armand Colin, 1971.
- Ricardou, Jean. Le Nouveau roman. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973.
- Sturrock, John. The French New Novel. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969.
- Zeltner, Gerda. La Grande Aventure du roman français au XX^e siècle. Paris: Éditions Gonthier, 1967.

(ii) articles.

- Morrisette, Bruce. "Un Héritage d'Andre Gide: la duplication intérieure." Comparative Literature Studies, 8, No.2 (1970), pp.125-142.
- "Post-Modern Generative Fiction: Novel and Film." Critical Inquiry, 2, No.2 (1975), pp.253-262.
- Piper, D.G.B. "Russian formalism and the nouveau roman." Forum for Modern Language Studies, 3, No.1 (Jan. 1967), pp.36-48.
- Ricardou, Jean. "L'Histoire dans l'histoire." in Problèmes du nouveau roman. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967, pp.171-190.
- "La Fiction flamboyante." in Pour une théorie du nouveau roman. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971, pp.211-230.
- "Esquisse d'une théorie des générateurs." in Positions et oppositions sur le roman contemporaine. Paris: Klincksieck, 1971, pp.143-162.

Russell, Charles. "Toward Tautology: the nouveau roman and conceptual art." Modern Language Notes, 91(1976), pp.1044-1060.

5. Structuralism, linguistics and associated topics

(i) books.

Ducrot, Oswald. Le Structuralisme en linguistique.
Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968.

Fowler, Roger. Linguistics and the Novel.
London: Methuen, 1977.

Hawkes, Terence. Metaphor. London: Methuen, 1972.

----- Structuralism and Semiotics. London: Methuen, 1977.

Jakobson, Roman & Morris Halle. Fundamentals of Language.
Paris: Mouton, 1971.

Macksey, Richard & Eugenio Donato, eds. The Structuralist Controversy. Baltimore: The John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1970.

Sanders, Carol. Cours de linguistique générale de Saussure.
Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1979.

(ii) articles.

Caws, Peter. "What is structuralism?" Partisan Review,
35, No.1 (Winter 1968), pp.75-91.

Genette, Gerard. "Vertige fixé." in Figures I. Paris:
Éditions du Seuil, 1966.

Lodge, David. "Metaphor and metonymy in modern fiction."
Critical Quarterly, 17, No.1(Spring 1975),
pp.75-93.

Niel, Andre. "Comment utiliser l'analyse structurale."
Le Français dans le Monde, 75(Sept.1970),pp.6-17.

6. Modern Art (Magritte, Delvaux and Rauschenberg.)

(i) books.

Henning, E.B. Fifty Years of Modern Art. Cleveland:
Cleveland Museum of Art, 1966.

Hodin, J.P. et al. Figurative Art since 1945. London: Thames & Hudson, 1971.

Hughes, Robert. The Shock of the New. London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1980.

Kozloff, M. Renderings. London: Studio Vista, 1961.

Rubin, W.S. Dada, Surrealism and their Heritage. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967.

(ii) articles.

Pleyner, M. "La Peinture de Robert Rauschenberg et l'actualité." Tel Quel, 13 (Spring 1963), pp.68-69.

7. Colour in Literature

(i) books.

Fernandez, Ramon. Balzac - ou l'envers de la création romanesque. Paris: Grasset, 1980.

Pasco, Allan. H. The Colour Keys to "À la recherche du temps perdu". Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1976.

(ii) articles.

Bailey, Ninette. "Le Rôle des couleurs dans la genèse de l'univers proustien." Modern Language Review, 60(1965), pp.188-196.

Bieler, Arthur. "La Couleur dans Salammbô." French Review, 33 (Feb. 1960), pp.359-370.

Ellis, Havelock. "The Colour-Sense in Literature." Contemporary Review, 69 (Jan - June, 1896), pp.714-729.

Fletcher, D.J. "The Use of Colour in La Nausée." Modern Language Review, 63, No.2(1968), pp.370-380.

Forest, H.U. "La Couleur dans La Comédie humaine de Balzac." Modern Language Notes, 58(1943), pp.590-594.

Goddard, Eunice R. "Colour in Lamartine's Jocelyn." Modern Language Notes, 36(1921), pp.221-225.

Meeterkerke, C.E. "Was Victor Hugo Colour-Blind?" The Gentleman's Magazine (London), 290(1901), pp.376-379.

- Monnier, P. "Gustave Flaubert Coloriste." Mercure de France, 52 (1921), pp.401-417.
- Olken, Ilene. "Aspects of Imagery in Colette: Colour and Light." PMLA, 77 (1962), pp.140-148.
- Skard, Sigmund. "The Use of Colour in Literature." Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 90, No.3(July 26, 1946), pp.163-221.
- Waller, Philip. "Zola's use of colour imagery in Germinal." PMLA, 77(1962), pp.442-449.
- Wilson, Clothilde M. "Proust's Colour Vision." French Review, 16 (1942/43), pp.411-415.

8. General Works on Colour

(i) books.

- Mueller, C.G. & M. Rudolph. Light and Vision. Nederland: Time - Life International, 1972.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Remarks on Colour. Trans. C.C.McAlister and M.Schattle. Ed. G.E.M.Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977.

(ii) articles.

- Ellis, Havelock. "The Psychology of Red." Popular Science Monthly, 59(1900), Part I pp.365-375, Part II pp.517-526.
- "The Psychology of Yellow." Popular Science Monthly, 68(1906), pp.456-463.
- Lubbock, Montagu. "On the development of the colour-sense." Fortnightly Review, 31(1882), pp.518-529.
- MacKenzie, Donald A. "Colour Symbolism." Folk-Lore, 33 (1922), pp.136-169.
- Wood, F.A. "The origin of colour names." Modern Language Notes, 20 (1905), pp.225-229.

9. General Works

(i) books.

- Altizer, T.J.J. et al. Truth, Myth and Symbol. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962.

- Bachelard, Gaston. The Psychoanalysis of Fire. Trans. A.C.M. Ross. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964.
- Baudelaire, Charles. Oeuvres complètes. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.
- Carrol, Lewis. Through the Looking Glass in Martin Gardner. The Annotated Alice. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960.
- Cirlot, J.E. A Dictionary of Symbols. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962.
- Cooper, J.C. An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols. London: Thames & Hudson, 1978.
- Foulkes, David. A Grammar of Dreams. New York: Basic Books, 1978.
- Jacobi, Jolande. The Psychology of C.G. Jung. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1942.
- May, Rollo. Symbolism in Religion and Literature. New York: George Braziller, 1960.
- Sagan, Carl. The Dragons of Eden. New York: Random House, 1977.
- (ii) articles.
- Bertherat, Y. "La Lettre et le symbole." Esprit, 34 (May 1966), pp.1113-1116.
- Ehrmann, Jacques. "The Death of Literature." New Literary History, 3, No.1 (1971), pp.40-51.
- Hofstadter, Douglas R. "Metamagical Themas." Scientific American (July 1981), pp.10-15.
- Ullman, Stephen de. "Laws of language and laws of nature." Modern Language Review, 38(1943), pp.328-338.