

## ROBBE-GRILLET'S *MÉTAPHORICITÉ FANTÔME*

THOMAS D. O'DONNELL

*Clark University*

Literature of the twentieth century, as is often enough suggested, has been characterized by the importance it has attached to time. The *nouveau roman*, however "new" it might have been, did little if anything to change the situation. Recent years, however, have seen a metamorphosis in the attitude of French writers toward time. This new attitude is not the immediate result of any philosophical upheavals. Rather, the *nouveau roman's* underlying premises have been pushed in the direction of their penchant by the practitioners of the *nouveau nouveau roman*. As many of the writers involved move closer to Robbe-Grillet's ideal of someone who has nothing to say but says it well,<sup>1</sup> traditional characterization sometimes evaporates to such an extent that the narrative subjectivity which has traditionally favored the dominant thematic role of time virtually ceases to exist: it remains to be seen whether abstract literature will develop new approaches to time which will reintegrate this theme into contemporary approaches to the novel. Further, as meaning fades from the forefront, as message is replaced by bricolage among current writers, the traditional time-oriented and -honored metonymical approach to narration (i.e., the well-constructed plot)<sup>2</sup> is replaced to an ever-growing extent by metaphor, on the levels both of micro- and macro-structure. In the early stages of the transformation, this phenomenon was observable primarily in the structural metaphor.<sup>3</sup> A more extreme variation would be a novel (it would be safer, perhaps, to use the word "text") containing nothing but formally similar shapes. While metaphor can be treated temporally through the presentation of similar sequences of actions, as in *La Prise/Prose de Constantinople* and *Projet pour une révolution à New York*, it lends itself more readily to spatial treatment. Glancing at *Compact*, *Circus*, *Les Lieux-*

*dits*<sup>4</sup> or *Leçon de choses*, we find that de-emphasis of time in favor of topological metaphoric relationships has become generally characteristic of the *nouveau nouveau roman*.

In light of Jean Ricardou's self-assigned but largely uncontested role as leading theoretician of the *nouveau nouveau roman* and exponent of the virtues of the metaphor, Robbe-Grillet's well-publicized rejection not only of metaphor but of all forms of analogy would appear to present some problems.<sup>5</sup> The apparent conflict between metaphor and the esthetic proposed in *Pour un Nouveau Roman* was to a great extent resolved in 1975 at Cerisy-la-Salle, during discussion of "terrorism" and "theory." Robbe-Grillet was clearly not unaware of the friction between himself and Ricardou, as he demonstrated in his intervention following the Ricardou paper: "Just as I can be emotionally moved by your theoretical remarks, to that same extent, on the contrary, they turn me off as soon as you defend them with such imperialism, that very word you used on me."<sup>6</sup> The ideological differences in approach to theory and practice remain unresolved, but Robbe-Grillet's comments on the function of metaphor in his works call for some considerable revision of the academic "myth" of Robbe-Grillet based on his early essays.

Freely admitting the terroristic character of his well known remarks on the necessity of banishing metaphor, Robbe-Grillet is quick to point out that the articles had been solicited by *L'Express*, that he was aware, even while writing them, of how unreasonable they were, and further that he can't stand terrorism to begin with. "While I was writing that definitive condemnation of metaphor, *La Jalousie* went right on dealing with metaphors."<sup>7</sup> This apparent paradox finds its resolution in Robbe-Grillet's even more fundamental distrust of meaning. Metaphor had been condemned because it was supportive of the *sens institué*, but theoretical activity is equally dangerous for precisely the same reason. Rejecting the theory of writing in favor of the practice of writing, Robbe-Grillet is unwilling to be trapped by the *sens institué* of his own past terrorism, and so it is not all that astonishing to find a great deal of metaphor, structural or otherwise, in *Topologie d'une cité fantôme*.<sup>8</sup>

As if to force the reader to deal with the metamorphosis which has taken place in Robbe-Grillet's approach to the texts he produ-

ces, the very vocabulary used pejoratively in "Nature, Humanisme, Tragédie" is repeated in *Topologie*, jarring the sensibilities of any readers who still take his earlier remarks at face value. A woman's face, inside the "generative cell," is described as "averted in a similar way" (p. 18);<sup>9</sup> the comparison is with the face of another woman, previously mentioned. The same choice of words occurs much later, in the description of two and possibly three policemen, "the three of them, frozen in similar postures, ears cocked in the same fashion" (p. 130).<sup>10</sup> It might well be argued that this is nothing new and that we are dealing here with nothing more than the implicit (non-expressive) metaphors which were already to be found in *La Jalousie* and which function in the productive capacity of *ordinateurs* and *générateurs*; it is equally clear that the presence of three identical stereotyped *flics*, intertextual refugees from Magritte's *Assassin menacé*, from earlier Robbe-Grillet, or why not, from Raymond Queneau, is a humoristic device one of whose effects is the regionalisation of metaphor, a phenomenon seen by Ricardou as a necessary anti-terrorism. On the other hand, Robbe-Grillet does not feel obligated to indicate overtly every implicit metaphor in the text through the use of loaded vocabulary. The relationship between antique phonograph and pedal-powered sewing machine, for instance, is described merely as "a vague formal resemblance";<sup>11</sup> the "makeshift bed," whose immediate appearance on the beach is facilitated by the word *vague*,<sup>12</sup> is characterized only as being as old as the sewing machine and the phonograph. The bicycle, offering possibilities of analogy with the sewing machine on the levels both of metaphor and paranomasia,<sup>13</sup> receives no direct mention at all at this point in the text. Thus, it is not unreasonable to suspect that the word "analogue" is designed primarily to be extremely visible.

Along with "analogue," Robbe-Grillet uses the words "métaphore" and "métaphorique" on several occasions in the text. In a passage entitled "Love here now," we read that "We've had enough of . . . adjectives and metaphors" (p. 103).<sup>14</sup> The metaphors in question are contained in the previous passage, "La forêt magique," which begins with a description of an enchanted forest. The sequence is an example of a metaphorical text run amuck, as is suggested by the title, itself a phonetic anagram of "l'âge métaphorique," "the age of metaphor":

poisonous plants hanging down all over the place laugh in silent mockery above our heads, long creepers swing down from the branches as we pass to seize us by the waist, by the armpits or by the wrists . . . the large red-fleshed flowers falling ceaselessly from the orchids that adorn the giant trunks take advantage of our panting to force their way into our open mouths and start to choke us. Our hair, too, having come down in the struggle, is like tangles of snakes, and our torn dresses hang from our hips in long streaming scarves, bewitched sashes that start to dance the sara-band . . . (p. 103).<sup>15</sup>

"The sea," on the other hand, is a smooth surface on which one may walk "without sinking in or leaving the least trace" (p. 103),<sup>16</sup> remaining in the safe world of surface description of objects and avoiding the entanglements of metaphor. "The forest" and "the sea" reappear later in the novel, but the distinction between the two disappears to such an extent that their mutual relation is itself clearly metaphorical:<sup>17</sup>

The vast, abandoned forest completely surrounds the impossibly large dwelling that stands there empty, beset up to its topmost windows by foliage crowding the window recesses, shifting, rustling, beating at the panes like some sly sea alive with adjectives and metaphors, poised to swallow you up (p. 139).<sup>18</sup>

The text is running wild, here, as are the "frondaisons," the foliage which, by the terroristic logic of twenty years ago, would not have been allowed to crowd, literally to "assail" a building; likewise, doors, walls and windows would not have been described as "gutted" (pp. 70, 110),<sup>19</sup> even in the context of Ricardolian regionalisation.

The implicit polyvalence of "frondaisons"<sup>20</sup> provides us with a good opportunity to gauge the extent to which the text is, in fact "grouillant," alive with metaphors. The urban jungle of *Projet's* mythical New York City has been transformed here into an alphabetical botanical garden, teeming with words, letters, phonemes. The logic of their interplay within the text's subconscious determines what "happens" on the text's surface. Here is the sentence which begins "frondaison"'s paragraph: "I listen to the nagging chatter of the jays in the everpresent forest and the thud of the

axes in the bottom of my chest, attacking at its base the trunk of a still gigantic tree" (p. 139).<sup>21</sup> The French paragraph's first syllable reminds us of the *G/H* split which obsesses the entire novel and which in turn intertextually suggests *Les Gommés*, the rejection of the anthropocentrism of a hypothetical *Les Hommes* (cf. p. 72; the alphabetical order is reversed here). The *G* of "J'écoute," echoed immediately by "jacassement," "geais" and "géant," is present starting with the first chapter, or "space," which describes the "generative cell." Later, four giant soldiers standing near a "smoky flame" will help generate an "oriflamme" (p. 37).<sup>22</sup> The "géants," who eventually appear in the final description of the forest (p. 139), also produce the letter *G* on the oriflamme; this in turn produces a word sequence and also the novel's "hero," David. Specifically, David *G.*, who will become David *H.* (p. 57 ff.). *H.*, of course, reappears in the "*haches* qui cogent au fond de ma poitrine." *G* associated with David, in the context of Robbe-Grillet's propensity for onomastic games,<sup>23</sup> inevitably suggests Goliath, an especially logical suggestion in light of the "géants" which generated David in the first place (p. 37). Robbe-Grillet follows through with his logic as the "*haches*" chop away at the "still gigantic"<sup>24</sup> tree trunk. Hence the *frondaisons*, economically suggesting the etymologically distinct roots which unite David's slingshot and the forest's foliage in a single passage. Metaphor, like "the forest," is "ever-present": "Who was it saying . . . that there was no forest . . . ?" (p. 139)<sup>25</sup>

The "frondaison" of the procedures of analogy operates both on the level of the signified, as metaphor, both implicit and explicit, and on the level of the signifier, in the form of paranomasia, including alphabetical and phonetic anagrams. These operations begin before the book has even been opened, within the novel's title. The French title is both overtly and covertly polyvalent. On the more obvious level, the "cité" suggests not only the city or cities through which the narration proceeds, but additionally the idea of quotation, i.e., of intertextuality. Thus,

We are reading old-fashioned novels set in the depths of a phantom Africa, full of psychological dramas that are quite incomprehensible in the humid heat and the chirring of crickets.

The coffeepot still stands on the table . . .  
We have stolen the voyeur's bicycle (p. 99).<sup>26</sup>

Other writers wander through the text from time to time. Proust, present from the beginning ("before I fall asleep"<sup>27</sup> appears six times in the first several pages), is certainly present in "Soft Escape": "In sleep the walls of the prison fray away into thin sheets of fleecy mist that glide gently along the ground. They are like sheep wandering over the heath in search of the lost fold..." (p. 90).<sup>28</sup> Mallarmé is already present in the title: "*cit  fant me*" breaks down into the phonetic anagram *St phane* and *tome*. Like Proust, he reappears later, as "*malles*" and "*b ton arm *" converge on the same paragraph (p. 84).<sup>29</sup> The "*Coup de Th atre*" of the preceding chapter seems more like a *coup de d s* due to the presence, italicized, of the otherwise gratuitous expression "par hasard" in the French text (p. 105).<sup>30</sup> The fact that within the novel's text the title's city is virtually never a *cit * but rather a *ville* emphasizes the role of such intertextuality in the novel, both as a source of textual generation and as a frame of reference indicative of the author's scriptorial metamorphosis.

The covert range of polyvalence goes well beyond the extent of intertextuality proposed by *cit *. We are, of course, dealing with the topology of a phantom city: a consideration of spaces and of spatial relationships in a city whose several mutually metaphorical existences fade in and out of each other. The superficial archeological aspects of Robbe-Grillet's endeavor invite us, however, to attempt an archeology of his own title, in search of possible titles below the titles. The general absence of an urban *cit * in the text suggests the hypothetical substitution of *ville*; the absence within the text of the word *topologie* likewise encourages us to substitute its closest relative appearing in the novel, *topographie* (p. 68). The first "sub-title" is then "Topographie d'une ville fant me." The presence of only one specific reference to a *ville fant me* (p. 52), however, encourages additional digging, resulting in a further shift to *fille fant me* (p. 80); the transition is facilitated by the "formal association" "filles   raser" / "ville nue" (p. 45).<sup>31</sup> There is much, evidently, to be said for the ludic possibilities of the metaphoric treatment of the body, as has been demonstrated by both Robbe-Grillet and Ricardou, among many others. In the context of Robbe-Grillet's past use of the female body as a prop in metaphorical object lessons about the nature of writing, it way well be appro-

priate to look for the same in his manipulation of spaces in *Topologie*.

The presence of a further transformation within the title is suggested by the text's insistence on the eye of the camera. Associated with the various birds listed in the novel (cf. pp. 92, 93), the camera lense dominates the novel's second space and much of the novel's fourth space: hence, *Photographie d'une fille fantôme*. Thus David G., whose birth had been foretold by the first syllables of "génératrice" (p. 17),<sup>32</sup> becomes a photographer only after he has been assigned the new name of David H.; the H is the letter remaining after the primordial title, *Photographie . . .*, has been transformed anagrammatically into the second phase, *Topographie . . .* Usually referred to as D. H. (pp. 57-63), David H. onomastically unites the *haches* (p. 198) of the enchanted forest with the dice of Mallarmé, suggested later in "*Coup de théâtre*"; because *D. H.* is pronounced in French the same as the words for "dice" and "axe," the *coups de hache* are somewhat Mallarmean as well. David H. is, of course, also David Hamilton, whose erotic photographs have for some time been popular in France and are now becoming more so in the United States. Hamilton's models, like Robbe-Grillet's *filles fantômes*, are often just barely beyond adolescence; the hazy atmosphere which is the trademark of a Hamilton portrait is equally descriptive of *Topologie's* nymphs and of the constant metamorphoses of the city and its buildings. It is worth noting that Robbe-Grillet has paid attention to Hamilton before (in *Les Demoiselles d'Hamilton*), and that six Hamilton photographs appeared in 1975 with modified passages of *Topologie's* "Coda" (e.g., "It is important not to alarm the lazy young vanessa pretending to be asleep") as their captions.<sup>33</sup>

The formal similarity which defines metaphor exists between David and his female counterpart, Vanadé. This particular variant of "David" is not a photographer but a god, "the male counterpart of Vanadis, the hermaphrodite god of pleasure" (p. 34).<sup>34</sup> Robbe-Grillet has borrowed freely from and even more freely transformed the Scandinavian mythological trinity of Nyorth, Freyja and Freyr, described by Joseph Campbell as a "distinctly phallic complex,"<sup>35</sup> and his borrowings play a significant role in *Topologie*, as an outline of the myth will show. Tacitus mentions a female deity, Nerthus, who would logically correspond to Nyorth. Nyorth, how-

ever, came to be considered hermaphroditic, possibly because of some grammatical confusion. This sexual ambivalence is reflected in his daughter and son, Freyja and Freyr, sometimes called twins. Freyja's surname, Vanadis, indicates only that she belongs to the peaceful, benevolent race of the Vanir. Her brother Freyr (it is difficult to imagine Robbe-Grillet not taking advantage of the potential pun) has no such nickname. As Scandinavian mythology develops, Freyja becomes a fertility goddess and her cult is associated with vegetation rituals such as those in "*La Forêt magique*." Her cult is associated as well with that of a different goddess, Frigg, who rapidly becomes Friga, goddess of love, south of the Baltic. Freyja and Friga are thus often confused.

Vanadis offers Robbe-Grillet a number of advantages in her function as one of the first metaphors introduced in the production of the text. She is, first of all, immediately transformable into Vanadé, suggesting the type of morphological development which is the linguistic metaphor for the archeological thrust of the novel; her new name, of course, is a partial anagram of David and ends in the Mallarmean *dé*. Vanadé has an anagrammatic relation to the first words of the novel's "*Incipit*," "Avant de" (p. 9), as well as to the carved Latin inscription, "...NAVE AD..." (p. 34) which introduces David in the first place. Moreover, Vanadis/Vanadé is in reality not a single, unambiguously defined entity but rather a constellation of several deities whose onomastic relationship (the domain of the signifier) is that of paranomasia and whose thematic similarities (the signified) indicate metaphor; Vanadis/Vanadé is thus herself a metaphor for the phantom city, whose forms are simultaneously stable and fluid.<sup>36</sup> Nyorth's hermaphroditism ("hermaphrodeity" seems appropriate here) is clearly suggestive of Robbe-Grillet's fascination with the juxtaposition of opposites (cf. the United Manichean Church of *Projet*, or his use of Barthes to preface *Morrisette*). Finally, Vanadé is an early link in a chain of generators, both thematic and *langagiers*, contributing to the production of vanessas and Vanessa, Veronica, Vampire and Venoms.

While much, and perhaps even most, of the metaphorical activity which abounds in *Topologie* is tucked away in substrata which are not always immediately visible, the novel itself contains a number of metaphors which, although neither explicit nor expressive, are sufficiently obvious in their mutual relationship to con-

stitute a constellation of the sort Ricardou calls a *récit abymé*.<sup>37</sup> While other archetypal figures might well be added, butterflies, birds, eggs, rocks and sheets of paper should provide more than sufficient illustration of the function of metaphor in the ordination of the text.<sup>38</sup>

Butterflies pervade *Topologie*, to such an extent that the *bateaux-mouches* one would expect to find cruising on the river have become *bateaux-papillons*. The hermaphroditic David approaches his harem, "his ambiguous genitals" forming "a kind of butterfly," his arms folded behind his head like "two huge butterfly's wings" (p. 35);<sup>39</sup> his ponytail is tied by a "noeud papillon" or bow knot, as is the ribbon worn around the neck of his partner, and as are all the neckties mentioned in the novel. Since the butterflies which appear in the opera *La Naissance de David* are specifically identified as the type called "Vanesse Belle-dame" (p. 101), it is only natural to encounter a human Vanessa or perhaps several, later on (pp. 185, 191). Finally, the novel concludes with the generic "young vanessa," photographed so carefully by David Hamilton, being impaled with a pin on the altar of Voluptuous Vanadis (p. 141).

The sexual character (and ambivalence) of *Topologie's* butterflies is similarly reflected in the several species of birds which nest in the forest of metaphors. The schoolgirl of the fourth space, in her *sagesse*, does not look at the pigeons, nor does she listen to the cooing when "the pigeons" are replaced in the text by "the pairs of pigeons" (p. 92). Her attention is, however, caught by the mating dance of "a puffed up male" before "the woman with her sleek plumage, she meanwhile pretending to see nothing at all" (p. 92).<sup>40</sup> As the "schoolgirl" plays the role of the female pigeon, the male becomes, through a metaphorical transit already implicitly present in *Le Voyeur's* seagull, David Hamilton's camera. Most of the other birds are female. Like "the little iridescent goddesses" of the "*Coda*" ("[they] make such unexpected, rapid movements that one barely sees their transformations take place, as if they had passed without transition from one costume to the other . . ." (p. 141)),<sup>41</sup> "she" is transformed into a dove and disappears in a "cloud of reddish brown vapor" (p. 101).<sup>42</sup> Her reappearance takes place in the form of a "pretty little redhead" (p. 115)<sup>43</sup> whose portrait is framed in the antechamber of the brothel. (The bird logically to

be expected in a French, or at least Francophone, brothel is a *poule*, which means in French both "hen" and "woman of ill repute"; *poule* appears only indirectly, in the form of the "*pouliche* alezane [qui] fait pipi debout en écartant les jambes (p. 135);<sup>44</sup> the *pipi* is apparently precipitated by *poulaine*, an etymologically distinct word which mediates *poulain*, m. ("colt"), and *pouliche*, f. ("filly"), and which means, among other things, "latrine."<sup>45</sup>

The hermaphroditism of the butterfly god David is itself transformed into parthenogenesis as butterfly is transformed into phoenix (p. 192; cf. p. 45). *Topologie's* phoenix is distinguished from others of its genre in that it is not born from the ashes of its own funeral pyre, but rather is eaten like a roast capon after it has first laid an egg. The three phoenix eggs (pp. 155, 180, 187) are wired to explode, creating a pyre not for the bird but for someone else.

Having demonstrated the authentic relationship between *poule* and *oeuf* in the "bleeding eggs" scene of *Glissements progressifs du plaisir*, Robbe-Grillet seems satisfied in *Topologie* to generate "coquillage" (p. 201) and "quille" (p. 186),<sup>46</sup> to put a watermelon in a nest (p. 61) and to point to the formal similarity between rocks and balls of paper. The first rock is "un *caillou* gros comme un *poing*" (p. 36),<sup>47</sup> thus generating the stylet ("*poignard*") which accompanies it. The *pierres* and *cailloux*, which are continually being dropped or thrown from heights, onto dry land or into water, resemble the balls of paper hurled at the swimming girls in a gesture which parallels the slaughter of the Vanadian virgins (p. 57; cf. p. 50); landing in the water, the papers unfold, like those associated with Proust's *madeleine*, to reveal a text.

Because of its shock value, the "forêt magique" of *Topologie* is perhaps the section that will remain longest in the mind of the reader. However, the position of the sea *beyond* the forest (p. 143) makes it a *meta-forest*; the re-appearance of the sea (p. 145), or rather of a different sea which wets one's feet and which contains creatures not entirely dissimilar to those of the forest, suggests a new attitude on the part of Robbe-Grillet. The impossibility of definitively attributing "grouillante" (p. 198) to either forest or sea corroborates the suggestion: *Topologie* is to be taken as a metamorphosis in Robbe-Grillet's scriptorial development, a conscious rectification of the purge of metaphor in the 1950's. The smooth

sea-like surface of pure description was, it would seem, a myth, like any other.

*Topologie d'une cité fantôme* brings Robbe-Grillet closer to Ricardou's theory of the novel than he has been before, and probably closer than he would himself care to admit. Cruising across the sea toward Ricardou's personal turf of Metaformosa, Robbe-Grillet finds that his ever-increasing distance from the traditions of plot and characterization moves him closer to the *récit abymé*. In 1972, Robbe-Grillet expressed his cynicism about *générateurs langagiers*; <sup>48</sup> in 1976 *Topologie* is flooded with them. Ricardou might well predict that, to the extent that the metonymical elements plot and characterization are inversely proportional to metaphor, metaphor will increasingly characterize the novels of Robbe-Grillet as it will those of other contemporary French writers. A word of caution, however, is in order, especially in light of the playfulness which has increasingly come to typify Robbe-Grillet's fiction. We might well suspect that his "acceptance" of metaphor as a legitimate basis for fiction is merely one more game being played with his readers: if Robbe-Grillet willingly parodies himself, why not assume that he is capable of parodying Jean Ricardou as well? Yet such a postulation cannot by itself account for his remarks at Cerisy (1975), and so there is no evidence to suggest that Robbe-Grillet is not serious about his use of metaphor. Nor, on the other hand, is there any reason to consider irony and serious intent to be mutually exclusive, especially here and in the light of the ludic nature of any fiction produced by using textual generators. Robbe-Grillet's attitude toward metaphor may never become as fetishistic as that of Ricardou, but it is clear that the rigid condemnations from the 1950's have been relegated to the past.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See "Sur Quelques Notions Périmées" in *Pour un Nouveau Roman* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1967), Coll. Idées, pp. 29-53, esp. p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York, Harvest Books, 1954), p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> For the most thorough treatment of structural metaphor in *Le Voyeur*, see Jean Ricardou, "Réalités variables, variantes réelles" in *Problèmes du nouveau roman* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967), pp. 23-43.

<sup>4</sup> Robbe-Grillet pointed out that the book's title means "topology." See *Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui* (Paris: 10/18, 1972), vol. 2, p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> See "Nature, Humanisme, Tragédie" in *Pour un Nouveau Roman*, pp. 55-84, esp. pp. 59-62.

<sup>6</sup> "Autant je peux être sentimentalement ému par vos propos théoriques, autant, au contraire, ils me rebutent à partir du moment où vous les défendez avec un tel impérialisme, ce mot même que vous m'aviez envoyé." Robbe-Grillet: *Colloque de Cerisy* (Paris: 10/18, 1976), vol. 1, p. 48.

<sup>7</sup> "Pendant que j'écrivais cette condamnation définitive de la métaphore, *La Jalousie* ne cessait de traiter des métaphores" (*Cerisy*, I, p. 35).

<sup>8</sup> Robbe-Grillet, *Topologie d'une cité fantôme* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1976). For the sake of clarity, some quotations have been left in French in the text of the article: page references following a quotation in French refer to the *Minuit* text; those following an English translation refer to the Grove Press edition (*Topology of a Phantom City*, trans. J. A. Underwood [New York: Grove Press, 1977]). Translations without page references are my own, as are all italics.

<sup>9</sup> "détourné d'une façon *analogue*" (p. 22).

<sup>10</sup> "immobilisés tous les trois dans une posture *analogue*, l'oreille tendue tous les trois" (p. 185).

<sup>11</sup> "une vague ressemblance formelle" (p. 184).

<sup>12</sup> The French "vague" means both "vague" and "wave" in English.

<sup>13</sup> On the level of metaphor, a sewing machine is similar to the bicycle through the piston and rotative movements associated with its operation; Robbe-Grillet's substitution of bicycle riding for copulation in *Le Voyeur* was a tribute to Georges Bataille. On the level of paronomasia, the *machine à coudre*, "sewing machine," suggests *machine à foutre*, "screwing machine."

<sup>14</sup> "On en a assez . . . des adjectifs et des métaphores" (p. 144).

<sup>15</sup> "des plantes vénéneuses suspendues partout alentour ricanant en silence au-dessus de nos têtes, de longues lianes descendent des branches pour nous saisir au passage par la taille, par les aisselles ou par les poignets . . . les grandes fleurs de chair rouge, qui tombent sans cesse des orchidées dont sont garnis les troncs géants, profitent de nos halètements essoufflés pour pénétrer de force dans notre bouche entrouverte et commencent à nous étouffer. Les chevelures elles-mêmes, défaites dans la lutte, sont comme des buissons de serpents, et nos robes déchirées nous entourent les reins d'immenses écharpes flottantes, ensorcelées, qui se mettent à danser la sarabande . . ." (pp. 142-43).

<sup>16</sup> "La mer" . . . "sans y enfoncer ni laisser la moindre trace" (p. 143).

<sup>17</sup> This is, in the context of English jargon, really a simile. It should be noted that Ricardou considers polar opposition of the type found in the first description to be a sub-set of metaphor.

<sup>18</sup> "L'immense forêt perdue cerne de tous côtés la trop vaste demeure, vide, assaillie jusqu'aux fenêtres les plus hautes par des frondaisons qui se pressent dans les embrasures, bougeant, bruissant, frappant aux vitres, comme une mer sournoise, grouillante d'adjectifs et de métaphores, prête à vous happer" (p. 198).

<sup>19</sup> "éventrées" (pp. 70, 110, 116); literally "disembowelled."

<sup>20</sup> "Fronde" means both "frond" and "slingshot."

<sup>21</sup> "J'écoute le jacassement criard des géais, dans la forêt toujours présente, et le bruit sourd des haches qui cognent au fond de ma poitrine, attaquant à la base le tronc d'un arbre, encore géant" (p. 198). "J'é," "géais" and "gé" are all homonyms of the letter "G" in French; "hache" is pronounced like the letter "H."

<sup>22</sup> "smoky flame" and "streamer" (p. 37).

<sup>23</sup> See Jean-Pierre Vidal, "Le Souverain s'avarie. Lecture de l'onomatistique R. G. au rusé Ulysse," in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy*, vol. 1, pp. 273-309.

<sup>24</sup> "Encore géant," "still gigantic," is in the text. "En corps géant" and "en corps gisant," "as a gigantic body" and "as a body lying in state," are not in the text but are readily extrapolated from it.

<sup>25</sup> "Qui donc disait... qu'il n'y avait pas de forêt...?" (p. 198).

<sup>26</sup> "on lit des vieux romans démodés qui se passent au fond de l'Afrique fantôme, pleins de drames psychologiques incompréhensibles dans la chaleur moite et la stridulation des criquets.

La cafetière est restée sur la table....

On a volé la bicyclette du voyeur" (p. 137).

<sup>27</sup> "Avant de m'endormir" (p. 9 ff.).

<sup>28</sup> "Pendant le sommeil, les murs de la prison s'effiloquent en minces pans de brouillard laineux, qui glissent doucement au ras du sol. On dirait des moutons errant sur la lande, à la recherche de l'étable perdue..." (p. 124).

<sup>29</sup> "trunks" and "reinforced concrete" (p. 84).

<sup>30</sup> "Coup de théâtre" loses something in its translation to "Dramatic turn of events." "Par hasard": "by chance."

<sup>31</sup> "girls to be shaven"/"bare citadel" (p. 34).

<sup>32</sup> "géné" is a homonym of *G. né*, "G. born."

<sup>33</sup> "Il ne faut pas effaroucher la jeune vanessa paresseuse qui fait semblant de dormir..." ("La Collection Privée de David Hamilton," *Lui*, no. 137 (juin 1975), pp. 88-95). Cf. also Robbe-Grillet and Hamilton, *Dreams of a Young Girl* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1971), and *Sisters* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1973), which juxtapose Hamilton photographs and the texts of the two parts of *Topologie's* fourth space.

<sup>34</sup> "le double masculin de Vanadé, divinité hermaphrodite du plaisir" (p. 45).

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), p. 285n.

<sup>36</sup> See Claude Simon, *Leçon de choses* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1975) for a different treatment of the same pre-Socratic paradox. *Leçon de choses* bears a number of remarkable resemblances to *Topologie*.

<sup>37</sup> Jean Ricardou, *Le Nouveau Roman* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973), pp. 47-75. "Every *mise-en-abyme* contradicts the global functioning of the text containing it" (p. 73). In the case of *Topologie*, "the *mise-en-abyme* tends to restrict the scattering of fragmentary *récits* through a grouping together of metaphorical *récits*" (p. 75).

<sup>38</sup> This reading will not deal with the many visual generators involved in *Topologie*. See Robbe-Grillet and René Magritte, *La Belle Captive* (Paris: La Bibliothèque des Arts, 1975).

<sup>39</sup> "son sexe ambigu... comme un papillon"; "deux grandes ailes de papillon" (p. 46).

<sup>40</sup> "un mâle gonflé" before "la fille aux plumes lisses qui fait semblant de ne rien voir" (pp. 127-28).

<sup>41</sup> "[elles] ont des mouvements si imprévus, si rapides, qu'on voit à peine leurs transformations s'accomplir, comme si elles passaient sans transition d'un costume à l'autre..." (p. 200).

<sup>42</sup> "nuage de vapeur rousse" (p. 162).

<sup>43</sup> "caille rousse" (p. 162).

<sup>44</sup> "The chestnut filly pees standing up with her legs apart" (p. 97). This is a sophisticated example of a paronymic transit as a generative device. See Ricardou, *Le Nouveau Roman*, pp. 79, 85-87. A further footnote: in the Middle Ages, the "poulaine" was also "the most blatantly sexual and pornographic shoe style ever worn." See William A. Rossi, *The Sex Life of the Foot and Shoe* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1976), p. 105.

<sup>45</sup> The morphological intersection of etymologically distinct words parallels techniques used on a much smaller scale in textual generation. Cf. Roland Barthes' open use of false etymologies in *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977).

<sup>46</sup> "shellfish"; "skittle-pin" (pp. 141, 131). "Coquillage" is also suggestive of roosters and eggs.

<sup>47</sup> "a pebble the size of a fist" (p. 28).

<sup>48</sup> Robbe-Grillet, "Sur le Choix des Générateurs" in *Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui*, vol. 2, p. 157 ff.