roman à un éditeur, celui-ci le refusa assez violemment sous prétexte que c’était trop allemand. “Ce refus, loin de m’attrister, me confirmait la justesse de la voie dans laquelle je m’étais engagé [...]” (74-75).


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Alain Robbe-Grillet.  
*Les Derniers Jours de Corinthe.*  
ISBN 2-2707-1479-X.

The third volume of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s trilogy of “autofictional wanderings” after *Le Miroir qui revient* (1985) and *Angélique, ou l’enchantement* (1988) is both close to and distanced from the poetics underpinning the new novel as he wrote and conceived it. There, in classics like *Les Gommes* (1953), *La Jalousie* (1957) and *Instantanés* (1962), Robbe-Grillet developed factors of textual autonomy, “play,” “objectivity,” authorial distance or “death,” evacuation of realist modes of psychological, philosophical and sociological orientation, and so on, thus setting the novel, its text, free, floating upon the waters of infinite semiosis, and unstable (because liberated) meaning. *Les Derniers Jours de Corinthe* cannot be said to retract this aesthetics, though its centre of attention self, self’s being, memory, the articulation of (self’s) being may arguably have shifted and its structural modes equally arguably with it. In many respects, however, such shifts are more apparent than real and an admirable constancy of vision affirms itself via, moreover, characteristically lucid self-questioning and — analysis.

Vast swathes of long-standing obsessions provide grist to the ever-churning mill of this New Autobiography or, as Robbe-Grillet terms it on one occasion, “[s]on entreprise autohétérobiographique:” the alter-ego Henri de Corinthe; the *Maison Noire*; many of Robbe-Grillet’s earlier books; Jérôme Lindon and the Editions de Minuit; anecdotal testimony bearing upon the literary and other positionings of Claude Simon, Nathalie Sarraute, Jean Ricardou, Marguerite Duras, Robert Pinget and other writers; swirling feminine figures such as Marianic, Marie-Ange, Angélica von Salomon, constantly caught up in hallucination, phantasm, doubling

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effects; scenes ranging freely from Brittany to Paris to Brazil to St. Louis, and so on; images, at once disconnected, dreamlike and hauntingly continuous, that bring to inked and often eloquently moving life the seemingly banal (a wine bottle’s label), the ephemeral (wind or light upon trees or rocky shores), the fading-surging, flickering being of the psyche. In all of this, inevitably, repetitions, interwinings and contradictions abound. White space fades in and out the “drift” of re-collection and projection; gaps open, embraced, erasures constitute occasions not just of “ruination” but of rich elaboration, musing, analysis and fancy; time and tense shift, revealing the psyche as a place of unified, even if holed, perception, and autobiography as an act not of banal chronological reconstruction but rather of atemporal complexity and foldedness. In this sense Les Derniers Jours de Corinthe generates very real “autobiographical subversion,” though its sights, as with Dada, remain set upon some (in) conceivable “absolute” (as Tzara wrote), an improbable effort to build, as with the New Novel, and “malgré la peur et sans aveuglement [,] quelque chose de solide sur ces débris, au milieu des brumes, de la dérision.” These structures whether of New Novel or New Autobiography must be understood, however, as “moving”, unstable, lacking in manifest consistency, yet felt and urgent in their pertinence. "Construire sur des ruines," Robbe-Grillet explains, “ne signifie pas remettre debout quelque nouveau système de cohérence, de vérité, de verrouillage, comme si de rien n’était. C’est au contraire prendre l’état des notions ruinées et la notion même de ruine comme fer­ment d’une existence à inventer, légère et vacante.” Writing thus is not in itself collapse and, as it were, dis-accomplishment, for it retains a marvellous buoyancy, a resilience via the “joyous drifting” it operates. What, principally, it under­mines is the “former supremacy of mean­ing” attaching to earlier novelistic and autobiographical modes, though, once, more, it is essential to understand that this underming liberates thought and lan­guage from all weight of “finality:” their swarming energies thrive in endless pro­jection, in multiplication of optic, of fea­sible meaning, in the teeming play of “impossibility of representation.” Anguish and despair might be thought to ensue from such a poetics and a truly lived, viscerally performed poetics at that. And, indeed, Robbe-Grillet undoubtedly writes somewhere along the axis of what he calls “la répulsion et l’atte­rirance, ... la vigilance et la noyade, ... le
désir et l’horreur.” But soaring majestically above any spleen is an element of sereneness of which he remains happily aware, and mirth, allégresse, can still ride upon what he beautifully terms, tipping his hat to Lautréamont,” the vieil océan d’encre au paroxysme de son déchaînement.” It is no doubt in this perspective that Robbe-Grillet may be deemed one of the masterwriters of his age: “vivre,... être transpercé sans cesse par la béance et l’aveuglement,” yet giving us a self-critical psychic autobiography of the greatest honesty, the most smiling, even if at times disturbing, fictionality.

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Jacques Savoie.

Le Cirque bleu.

Le Cirque bleu est un roman d’une appara...