

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).

⁵ Robert Viau, "Entrevue: Yvon Rivard, Entre le rêve et l'errance," *Lettres québécoises* N^o 52 (Hiver 1988-1989), 23.

Alain Robbe-Grillet.

Les Derniers Jours de Corinthe.

Paris: Minuit. 1994. 230 pages. 88FF. 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 Gommés* (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

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-surgling, 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 undermining 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'attraction, ... la vigilance et la noyade, ... le

désir et l'horreur." But soaring majestically above any *spleen* is an element of serenity of which he remains happily aware, and mirth, *allégresse*, can still ride upon what he beautifully terms, tipping his hat to Lautréamont," le 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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Le Cirque bleu.

La Courte échelle. 1995. 155 p.

Le Cirque bleu est un roman d'une apparence simplicité, mais haut en symboles et en métaphores. Il se lit à

plusieurs niveaux: pour le plaisir de découvrir une histoire agréable, ou comme des fouilles archéologiques où chaque couche dévoile des sous-thèmes beaucoup plus profonds et subtils.

L'histoire de base est simple: Hugo, un homme dans la trentaine, est clown dans un cirque. De même que Bobby, le lanceur de couteaux, il est amoureux de Sally, leur partenaire de numéro. Un accident arrive, Sally est tuée, Hugo s'enfuit, persuadé que Bobby voulait le tuer par jalousie et a manqué sa cible. Il se retrouve à Montréal, après dix ans d'absence, chez sa demi-soeur Marthe, et la véritable histoire commence. Cette jeune femme est en fait bien différente de celle qu'il croyait être, et lui-même se découvre être un tout nouveau personnage. Au fur et à mesure qu'ils se dévoilent l'un à l'autre tout autant qu'à eux-mêmes, souvent lors d'un repas qui prend la forme d'un rituel, on creuse tout près de chez Marthe un vieux dépotoir. Les souvenirs du passé rejaillissent parallèlement aux vieilleries enfouies sous la terre. Les nettoyages, physiques et psychologiques, se font en silence, l'un parlant pour l'autre.

De même, la vie de cirque est sans cesse vue en parallèle avec la vie réelle: ne sommes-nous pas souvent au centre d'une piste, sous les feux? Ne sommes-