

**CONTESTING FORMS :
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY
OF ROBBE-GRILLET**

Thesis Presented by Jonathan C. Brown

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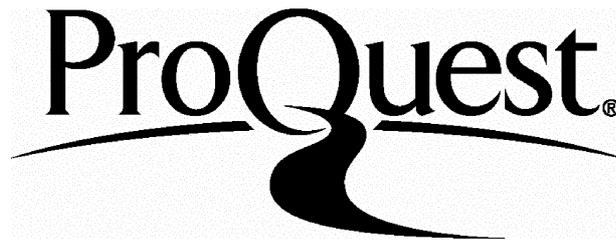
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Abstract

This is the first detailed study of Robbe-Grillet's complete works in film and literature. It argues that Robbe-Grillet's art is both a contestation and a contest of forms. In his filmic and literary texts, Robbe-Grillet violently subverts naturalised forms of narration. His work is also the site of a confrontation between media, as he consistently alternates between literary and filmic modes of creation, implicitly placing one in contest with the other. An interdisciplinary study of his art is thus the most productive: it also contests one art form with another through comparative juxtaposition, and demonstrates how both context and corpus inform, and are informed by, the interpenetration of theories, themes, techniques and intertexts from both media.

First, Robbe-Grillet's context is analysed via the genesis of narrative techniques, theories of authorship, and conceptions of language and narration in film and literature. Interdisciplinary textual analysis then illustrates the contestation of both filmic and literary forms in his work, via an examination of the dramatisation of formal play and of the contest for narrative control. Divergent theories of violence and eroticism in filmic and literary media are explored, in order to define further the controversial nature of the sadoerotic theme. The revolutionising of literary form by Robbe-Grillet is shown to culminate in a radical intertextual subversion of one medium by the other, via the contamination of filmic text by literary and pictorial intertexts, and in the staged confrontation between iconic and verbal elements in his picto- and photo-novels.

The interdisciplinary approach developed to account for the peculiar ontology of Robbe-Grillet's work finally seems to lead both to a method which could be further tested through an application to other authors who operate across different artistic media, and, through an analysis of representation and reception, to a theory of formal creativity.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
Acknowledgments	6
Abbreviations	7
Epigraph	8
<u>Chapter One - Introduction and Context</u>	9
<u>I. Introduction</u>	9
<u>II. The Genesis of Forms</u>	15
<u>III. The Comparison of Forms</u>	19
(i) Authorship and Commercialism	19
(ii) Inner Experience	21
(iii) Formal Manipulation	23
(iv) Conceptions of Language in Film Theory	24
(v) Filmic and Literary Narration: Space	29
(vi) Filmic and Literary Narration: Point of View	31
(vii) Filmic and Literary Narration: Time	35
(viii) Filmic and Literary Narration: Metaphor	37
(ix) Filmic and Literary Narration: Sound and Image	38
<u>IV. Criticism on Robbe-Grillet and the Interdisciplinary Debate</u>	40
(i) Film Criticism	40
(ii) Objective Literature as Filmic	43
(iii) The Hazards of Self-reflexivity	45
<u>V. Contexts: Bazin and the <i>Nouvelle Vague</i>, Metz, and Eisenstein</u>	47
(i) Bazin and the <i>Nouvelle Vague</i>	47
(ii) Metz	48
(iii) Eisenstein	48
<u>VI. Robbe-Grillet on Filmic and Literary Text</u>	50
Notes to Chapter One	58

<u>Chapter Two - Formal Play and the Contest for Narrative Control</u>	63
<u>I. Formal Play</u>	64
(i) Credit Sequence versus Prologue: 'G�n�rique' as Generator	64
(ii) Repetition as a Self-conscious and Subversive Device	69
(iii) The Semantics of Sound and Image	75
(iv) Narrative and Metanarrative of the Filmic <i>Mise en Abyme</i>	78
(v) Self-imaging in Literary and Filmic Text	83
(vi) Profilmic and Camera, versus Events and their Verbal Narration	86
<u>II. The Contest for Narrative Control</u>	91
(i) Death and Immortality: Intradiegetic Narrators in Novel and Film	92
(ii) From Duality to Multiplicity: Narrative Point of View in Film and Novel	97
(iii) Verbal Language versus the Image	104
Notes to Chapter Two	118
<u>Chapter Three - Filming and Writing Violence and Eroticism</u>	120
<u>I. Textual Evidence of the Sadoerotic Theme</u>	121
<u>II. Filmic and Literary Theories on Violence and Eroticism</u>	126
(i) Textual Violence and Eroticism as Transgression	128
(ii) The Critique of Textual Violence and Eroticism	136
<u>III. Robbe-Grillet and his Critics on Violence and Eroticism</u>	140
<u>IV. Interdisciplinary Textual Analysis</u>	146
(i) Unerasable Traces: Sadoerotic versus Structure	146
(ii) Film's Narration of the Obsession, versus Literature's Obsessive Narrator	155
(iii) The Sadoerotic as Metatext	166
(iv) Sadoeroticism as Structure	177
Notes to Chapter Three	187
<u>Chapter Four - A Topology of Intertexts and Media</u>	190
<u>I. Towards an Interdisciplinary Intertextuality</u>	191
(i) Theories of Intertextuality	191
(ii) Towards a Filmic 'Catachresis'	197
(iii) Figures of Filmic Intertextuality: The Star and the Profilmic	198
(iv) Literature as Prop	201
(v) The Creative Process as a Problem for Intertextuality	202
(vi) Autobiography in Film and Literature, and its Relation to Intertextuality	208

II. Robbe-Grillet and Intertextuality: Inter-media	212
(i) Robbe-Grillet on Intertextuality	212
(ii) Literary Intertextuality and the Critics	213
(iii) Intertextuality Between Media Within the Corpus	215
III. Topography of Texts Versus Ontology of Media: Interdisciplinary	
<u>Intertextual Analysis of Film and Literature</u>	219
(i) Filmic and Literary Paratextuality, Seriality and Self-reference: Intertextual Transformation Within and Between Texts	220
(ii) Filmic Hypertext, Filmic Versus Literary Hypotext: Intertextual Erasure	228
(iii) Filmic Hypertext, Literary Hypotexts: Collision of Texts and Media	234
(iv) <i>L'Immortelle</i> and <i>Marienbad</i>	235
(v) <i>Glissements</i>	236
(vi) <i>Le Jeu avec le Feu</i>	239
(vii) <i>L'HQM</i>	241
(viii) The Work of Literary Intertextual Proliferation in Film	252
IV. Interdisciplinary Intertextual Analysis: Film and Pictorial Art	254
(i) Filmic Hypertext, Pictorial Hypotexts: Picture as Frame	254
(ii) <i>L'Eden</i> and its Intertextual Transformations: Mondrian as Hypotext	257
(iii) Malevich as Hypotext	261
(iv) Duchamp, Delvaux, and Pop Art as Hypotexts	266
(v) <i>Glissements</i> , <i>Le Jeu avec le Feu</i> and <i>La Belle Captive</i> : The Integration of the Pictorial Allusion	271
(vi) <i>Glissements</i> and Yves Klein	272
(vii) <i>Le Jeu avec le Feu</i> and Narrative Structure	273
(viii) <i>La Belle Captive</i> (Film): Magritte, Manet	277
(ix) Film and Pictorial Art: Metatext	282
V. Pictorial Generators for the Literary Medium:	
<u>Reassembling the Hypotexts</u>	283
(i) The Verbal Picture: The Role of Painting in the Early Novels	288
(ii) Reading <i>Topologie</i> and <i>Souvenirs</i> : The Hazards of the Single-medium Approach	291
(iii) The Picto- and Photo-novels: Interdisciplinary Construction and Textual Analysis	293
(iv) <i>La Belle Captive: Roman</i> : Textual Analysis	296
(v) Robbe-Grillet and Johns: <i>La Cible</i>	303
(vi) The Photo-novels and Other Collaborations	308
Notes to Chapter Four	312
<u>Conclusion - Robbe-Grillet's Aesthetics of Contest (& Notes)</u>	317
<u>Appendix I - A Guide to Viewing Robbe-Grillet's Films</u>	325
<u>Appendix II - Synopsis of <i>La Belle Captive</i></u>	327
<u>Bibliography and Filmography</u>	350

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Abbreviations

In the interests of economy, the following abbreviations are used for certain of Robbe-Grillet's literary and filmic texts:

Pour un Nouveau Roman : PUNR

La Maison de Rendez-vous : Maison

Projet pour une Révolution à New York : *Projet*

Topologie d'une Cité Fantôme : *Topologie*

Souvenirs du Triangle d'Or : *Souvenirs*

Angélique ou l'Enchantement : *Angélique*

L'Année Dernière à Marienbad : *Marienbad*

Trans-Europ-Express : TEE

L'Homme Qui Ment : L'HQM

L'Eden et Après : *L'Eden*

Glissements Progressifs du Plaisir : *Glissements.*

'The observer infects the observed with his own mobility. Moreover, when it is a case of human intercourse, we are faced by the problem of an object whose mobility is not merely a function of the subject's, but independent and personal: two separate and immanent dynamisms related by no system of synchronisation. So that whatever the object, our thirst for possession is, by definition, insatiable.'

Samuel Beckett, *Proust*.

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

I. Introduction

We will begin by defining the nature of the interdisciplinary analysis of filmic and literary texts. We will go on to explain why this type of analysis is particularly suitable to a contestation of Robbe-Grillet's work, and to a grasp of his work as a contestation.

Interdisciplinary analysis is a mode of inquiry. Its theoretical premise is that via a process of comparison and differentiation between texts from separate media, the texts and media themselves may be more suggestively and more critically traced. In no way does the interdisciplinary study seek to superimpose one medium onto another. Rather, it strives for a mobile and comprehensive view of the relationship between media through an often violent confrontation of forms. Where possible, the comparison between media incorporates the yardstick of the common theme. Yet it is often the transformation of such a theme as it passes from one medium to the next which the interdisciplinary analysis ascertains. In this way, the interdisciplinary analysis primarily challenges the media via an assessment of each medium's potential to carry out certain objectives via modes of narration. It is then a powerful critical tool in the description of narration and of media, as a medium consists of the sum of its narrative possibilities.

Unlike the single-medium approach, the interdisciplinary study of filmic and literary texts openly affirms the reciprocal influence of media on each other, and exploits such influence for the very framework of the analysis. It is moreover founded on a belief that works from each medium are equally influential on the reader-spectator and thus demand equal critical appraisal. The interdisciplinary study of filmic and literary texts is then a reconciliation - as well as a staged confrontation - between aesthetic forms, lending each an equally important place within cultural production as a whole. As such, the interdisciplinary analysis is a necessary strategy for the dissection of society's texts,

which are increasingly comprised of filmic as well as literary representations, these two often intertextually linked.

And unlike the single-medium approach, the interdisciplinary analysis forefronts and freely admits to its comparison between media, a comparison which so often implicitly structures what claims to be exclusively film or exclusively literary criticism. Just as the theoretical analysis of a literary text is informed essentially by the relation between the text in question and the other texts among which it exists, so too the theoretical definition of any medium (the sum of that medium's texts) is to a significant extent informed by the relation between the medium in question and the other media among which it exists. This is particularly true of film theory, which has often defined its object of study in terms of other art forms, and has itself been structured on theories from other disciplines. Brunette and Wills highlight the extent to which Metz's 'grande syntagmatique' was based on a linguistic model, just as later film theory incorporated the psychoanalytic model as a discourse.¹ The interdisciplinary analysis, in its very nature, makes explicit the comparative process which is intrinsic yet often unacknowledged in other types of analysis, but it subordinates neither of the disciplines which it incorporates.

The relevance of such a method to an examination of Robbe-Grillet lies primarily in his status as both writer and filmmaker. For, the interdisciplinary study is the most authentic means of assessing the work of artists who operate in more than one medium. Rejecting a spurious and preconceived hierarchy of arts, the analysis between art forms becomes the only way in which the full import of the work of such artists may be accommodated. As a framework, it also most fruitfully reflects the scope and ambition of the artist who works across disciplines.

While there is a theory behind interdisciplinary study - namely, that via dynamic differentiation, definition may be attained - this method of inquiry nonetheless does offer a means of exploring texts of a particular author from the inside, without having recourse to a theory which is fundamentally external to the work. Admittedly, the interdisciplinary analysis (as we shall see) is informed by general theoretical work in the fields of film and

literature, and maintains an assessment of context in the interests of analytical rigour; it is therefore inevitably textured by theory. However, the movement between media signals a movement towards an internal history of the process of creation. Rather than assessing texts from a point outside them, the interdisciplinary analysis goes some way towards transcending the distance between theory and practice, penetrating further into the operations of the textual practice itself. The interdisciplinary analysis is then a contestation of the conventional role of theory as divorced from the work of art.

It is above all as an approach to Robbe-Grillet's art that the interdisciplinary strategy is justified. His literary and cinematic output are equal in volume and, in our belief, in significance. Secondly, the filmic and literary texts are interdependent. Not only are they firmly based in his own creative activity, but they also shed important light on each other, whether in terms of their explorations of a particular aesthetic preoccupation, or in the way in which their processes of creation may be compared, or in terms of intertextuality across media within the corpus.

As the first attempt at an analysis of his complete works in film and literature, our interdisciplinary study is then a contribution to Robbe-Grillet studies in general, through its fundamental aim of analysing all of his work to an equally rigorous degree. *

Furthermore, the interdisciplinary analysis is particularly suitable due to the large quantity of theoretical material on Robbe-Grillet's work which already exists. On the one hand, the comparison of filmic and literary texts is a new method of analysis and therefore promises new discoveries. The juxtaposition of filmic and literary theory and practice is both an aggressive and fertile means of isolating themes and techniques, and a method of assessing their significance in relation to the media in general.

Moreover, the interdisciplinary analysis of Robbe-Grillet offers a way out of the impasse that has been reached by the critical debate on his work, an impasse which Robbe-Grillet himself has exploited in the recent fictionalised autobiography which seeks

* Since the time of writing, Robbe-Grillet has made *Un Bruit Qui Rend Fou* (1995), but it is not yet possible to see this film commercially.

to invalidate critical readings of his texts.² Robbe-Grillet's work has always been controversial. Barthes finds two Robbe-Grillet's, Heath three, and Morrissette what can only be described as a variable amount.³ Since these distinguished writers, many more Robbe-Grillet's - and Robbe-Grillet critics - have been discovered. The inevitable result of such a proliferation is an invalidation, as the multiplicity of theoretical points of view must incur their own destabilisation, and hence frustrate any unifying theory of literary or of cinematic production.⁴ Such a conflict of critics penetrates the fiction itself as the fiction exists, to a significant extent, in terms of its relation to the criticism. The instability between theory and practice itself becomes a theoretical premise, such that Robbe-Grillet will state that the sole purpose of theory written about his work is to indicate to him 'une voie à abandonner'.⁵ Theory becomes a theory of non-practice.

The interdisciplinary analysis therefore shifts the emphasis back to Robbe-Grillet's work itself, and while this thesis will take the criticism and influences on Robbe-Grillet into account, it strives first and foremost to operate within the terms of Robbe-Grillet's own aesthetic production. It operates therefore both a centrifugal movement towards the ideas which have shaped the work and which the work has provoked, while maintaining a more emphatic centripetal focus on Robbe-Grillet's filmic and literary texts, and the contrasts and similarities between them. The analysis between media becomes a means of measuring Robbe-Grillet's work via its relation to the art forms themselves rather than in relation to a theory which may later be superseded. To prevent a loss of critical distance, we will however maintain constant consideration of theoretical context. The interdisciplinary analysis aims to position Robbe-Grillet's output within a mobile framework which enables fruitful interpenetration, rather than the penetration of the work by a theory which proves ultimately provisional and alien to it.

The interdisciplinary analysis does not seek to be prescriptive by establishing fixed capabilities for each medium's respective performance in the expression of a theme, as this would imply that certain narrative characteristics are natural to a medium. Rather, the movement between media strives to remain, precisely, mobile. Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic activity is a corrosive work on the media themselves; his texts self-consciously

contest the narrative forms which have become conventional to, or embedded within, the conception of a medium. The self-conscious aspects of Robbe-Grillet's work mean that the media themselves are the focus of the textual enterprise, and, in this sense, Robbe-Grillet's conception of the media is as elusive and as shifting as his very texts. Indeed, Robbe-Grillet's contestation of the forms of the media within individual texts alerts us to the fact that an analysis may find itself confined to recording the fractures in the media's conventions, rather than describing the nature of the media. Nonetheless, this highlights the importance of a study which strives to define the media, and demonstrates that any study of Robbe-Grillet must also be a study of the media in which he operates. It also points to the crucial role which textual analysis plays in any elucidation of media. If a mobility of media parameters is to be the inevitable conclusion of such an analysis, then rather than shy away from such a mobility as ungraspable, the interdisciplinary analysis generates itself out of such mobility, preserving confrontational interplay as its very essence, and is thus best suited to bearing witness to the transformations which each medium undergoes through the course of Robbe-Grillet's production.

If Robbe-Grillet's contestation of narrative conventions aims at a discontinuity, via the promotion of a constant re-vision of narrative forms, nonetheless, this thesis locates continuities throughout Robbe-Grillet's filmic and literary work, which may only fully be gauged via a movement between media which spans Robbe-Grillet's entire corpus. Moreover, it is Robbe-Grillet's own penetration of one medium by the themes, techniques and intertexts of the other, which most strikingly validates the interdisciplinary approach.

The structure of the thesis is as follows: Chapter One frames the interdisciplinary analysis within a discussion of the relation between filmic and literary media in general, a relation characterised by both antagonism and interdependence; such an acknowledgment of reciprocity is essential to our analysis before new intersections may be established. We explore central differences between the art forms via a detailed assessment of techniques and theories. Issues of authorship, language and narration, including the contribution of semiology to possibilities for interdisciplinary comparison, are presented. This is

followed by an overview of film and literary criticism on Robbe-Grillet seen specifically from an interdisciplinary viewpoint. We illustrate how the filmic medium has been implicitly recruited within discussions about his literary work for specific ends. This is followed by an account of Robbe-Grillet's filmic influences, leading on to a description of his own contradictory views on the relation between film and literature. These two forms are seen by him to be in contest with each other.

Chapter Two consists of interdisciplinary textual analysis. We examine the dramatisation of two of Robbe-Grillet's central aesthetic concerns within filmic and literary media: formal play, and the contest for narrative control, both of which instigate a radical contestation of naturalised forms of narration within his work. These thematic areas provide a common thread which the comparison between media may follow, even if they are often elusive in their emergence via formal strategies such as the generation of the text, the use of repetition or the self-conscious device on the one hand, and via the manipulation of point of view or sound-image dialectics on the other. The role of verbal language within the primarily visual medium of film offers a reflection on the conflicting relation between word and image, and the way in which Robbe-Grillet sets these at odds with each other in a process of confrontation.

Chapter Three examines theories and representations of violence and eroticism in filmic and literary media. Firstly, this determines the extent to which each medium may be defined either as intrinsically violent or erotic, or as constructed as such. Secondly, this enables an assessment of the significance of violence and eroticism as subversive themes, leading to an examination of Robbe-Grillet's use of violence and eroticism as a metatextual contestation of mimesis. Starting with an account of sadoeroticism in Robbe-Grillet's work, we then give an interdisciplinary overview of theories on violence and the erotic. The transgressive aspects of literary violence such as those of Bataille are compared with Barthes's analysis of the traumatic photographic image, and Eisenstein's theories of filmic montage as conflict, in order to arrive at an assessment of film and literature's potentially violent form. This is juxtaposed with a critique of violence as catharsis, combined with a feminist view of the objectification of women in the media, as

this relates specifically to Robbe-Grillet's own sadoerotic practice. An examination of the polarised views on Robbe-Grillet's textual sadoeroticism then prefaces a detailed interdisciplinary textual analysis of the complex representations of sadoerotic violence in Robbe-Grillet's filmic and literary texts.

Chapter Four is a discussion of interdisciplinary intertextuality, and establishes a general and operational approach to intertextuality which addresses each medium with equal pertinence. The chapter is also a detailed exploration of Robbe-Grillet's intertextuality in film and literature, underlining the crucial role that intertextuality plays in his contestation both of intertexts and of media. We begin by relating literary theories of intertextuality - and in particular those of Genette and Riffaterre - to a filmic theory and practice. We illustrate the workability of such theories within film using examples of intertextuality in the work of Robbe-Grillet. We then propose a detailed interdisciplinary textual analysis of specific filmic, literary and pictorial intertexts within Robbe-Grillet's work, which reveal the operations of intertextuality to be a radical confrontation of medium by medium. We discuss the conflict between filmic and literary references within *TEE*; we analyse the multiple and self-contesting literary intertexts in *L'HQM*. We discuss the many pictorial generators of films such as *L'Eden*, stressing the corrosive work performed by Robbe-Grillet on such intertexts through his very incorporation of them. We then assess the picto-literary collaboration and its relation to intertextuality. At all times the transformative work of text on intertext and vice-versa is forefronted in a diverse analysis of artists and media. The interdisciplinary approach pinpoints both reciprocity and conflict between media as major features of Robbe-Grillet's work. This chapter is followed by conclusions drawn from the thesis as a whole.

II . The Genesis of Forms

The ontological interdisciplinarity of the media of film and literature must first be addressed. An acknowledgment of their interactive development will elucidate both links

and discrepancies, as well as helping to define each medium, so that Robbe-Grillet's exploitation and contestation of their forms may be more clearly isolated later on. It will also illustrate the need to approach each medium in relation to the other.

While it is reductive to speak of one medium owing certain of its properties to another, it can only increase an understanding of the media to determine the degree of interrelation between filmic and literary forms. The similarity between literary and filmic media is seen by many critics as stemming from their shared status as narrative.⁶ Clearly this is not adequate to describe either medium; it is moreover the differences as well as the parallels between filmic and literary narrative strategies which any interdisciplinary analysis investigates. Yet the two media may initially be linked in certain ways which we must establish, in order to trace the cross-fertilisation between forms which has to an extent informed the genesis of the media.

Film's historical development sheds important light on the interpenetration between filmic and literary media. Film's development was initially marked by the appropriation of the characteristics of other art forms. While Mitry underlines this as a reciprocity, Bazin explains such a process as inevitable in the formation of a new art, the cinema initially modelling itself according to the 'arts sacrés', and soon influencing other art forms in turn, most notably literature.⁷

In terms of technique, film began by generating itself intertextually, learning much from literature and theatre. Richardson and Balázs argue that the most significant stage in the history of film was the development from Méliès to Edwin S. Porter, to Eisenstein and D.W. Griffith, which saw the introduction of montage and close-ups into filmic practice.⁸ Significantly, it is Eisenstein (taking the cue from Griffith himself) who was the first to insist that Griffith's pioneering use of the close-up, of parallel action, of the shifts in tempo which such montage enables, and even the incorporation of striking, exaggerated characters within the drama, are inspired by the literary work of Charles Dickens.⁹ Eisenstein moreover acknowledges his own debt to Griffith, which led to Eisenstein's conception of the 'montage trope', which strives for a poeticisation within film via associative juxtaposition.¹⁰ Balázs points to the way in which the close-up

subsequently led to a new stress on the visual, opening up a possible filmic narrative autonomy in its exploration, through microphysiognomy, of the 'hidden subtle adventures of the soul'.¹¹ Given the massive influence of Griffith and Eisenstein on film in general (and in particular the work of Robbe-Grillet as we shall illustrate), the role of literary techniques within film such as those practised by Dickens should not be ignored. For, literature might be said to have genetically engineered such stages in film's incubation. Eisenstein develops the comparison in detail, finding montage in Pushkin's poetry, and denying that film is autonomous and isolated, but rather, intrinsically and formally linked to the literary medium.

Yet, while film has undoubtedly borrowed or adapted formal devices from literature, literature has in turn been nurtured by film. If Henry James contributed considerably to the effacement of authorial intervention in the novel, the erasure of an intradiegetic narrator, as well as of an implied authorial presence in Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* must be seen as a filmic, or film-like, device. Orr stresses the importance in modern fiction from James Joyce to Thomas Pynchon of the moving image, described verbally within the text, which may signal a penetration of literature by filmic modes of narration.¹² Spiegel emphasizes the prominence of the visual in the modern novel starting as early as *Madame Bovary*, which later develops into a concretised, or cinematographic form in the work of writers such as Zola, Joyce, Conrad, Faulkner and Hemingway, culminating with the Nouveau Roman. This becomes evidence of a shared preoccupation in film and literature with a decrease in mediated narration, and an emphasis on an action that is seen, in turn promoting the evolution of the reader's consciousness.¹³

It is moreover helpful to see film as hybrid, for this illustrates a certain intersection between media which subsists along with the mutual influence of narrative techniques. Film contains other media within it.¹⁴ Morrissette outlines the shared characteristics of literary and cinematic genres since the end of the era of the silent film as consisting of the use of dialogue and language, ranging from realistic conversational exchanges to commentary, soliloquy, and voiced memory, to filmed pages of books, posters, passages read aloud, even telegrams held before the camera.¹⁵ The same might

be said for the appearance of pictorial art within the design of the shot, or the use of music within the sound track, both of these used allusively in Robbe-Grillet's filmic work, and potentially combining at once within the filmic sequence. Admittedly, the filmic incorporation of other means of expression is transformative, in ways that we shall assess more fully later on. Nonetheless, such an interchange between media is one way: music, painting and literature cannot incorporate film so directly within their means of expression.

Film's status as a collation of art forms is significant to an interdisciplinary study, as it allows us to establish an intersection between media. If film is a composite of aspects of other media, then the filmic text cannot but contain the trace of texts from other media within it, as a medium is defined by its texts. Metz states as much, when he claims that cinema was born of several preexisting forms of expression - the image, the spoken word, music and sounds - which do not entirely lose their own laws when incorporated as part of the filmic process.¹⁶ As will be more fully assessed in Chapter Four, this is important to a definition of film and its relation to intertextuality, as in its nature, film tends towards an inherent intertextuality via its relation to the forms of expression which it can contain. And if film constructs itself on multiple media levels, then, as we shall later see from the analysis of Robbe-Grillet, it may be more violently destabilised.

Such an interrelation has enabled film and literature to feed off each other in terms of the material which has generated their texts. Not only are many films generated from written film scripts, but, as Wagner and Orr emphasize, a great proportion of filmic texts are adaptations, and were therefore initially literary texts, whether plays, short stories or novels.¹⁷ While certain literary texts may be generated or inspired by filmically narrated accounts, the degree of novelisation of films in no way equals film's adaptation of literature.¹⁸ Such an interpenetration might then account for a bias within filmic production towards filmic narrative linearity, which is based on a traditional literary model. In this way, the source texts for a medium may accumulate and eventually contribute towards the formation of the medium itself.

Yet such apparent compatibility between literary and filmic versions must be balanced with a statement about the transformation and destruction of the model which the adaptation may perform. This will be assessed later, in terms of theory and practice, in relation to Robbe-Grillet's work. In general nonetheless we would note that the media may influence each other negatively, the achievements of one pushing the other in a contrary direction, which preserves innovation and autonomy through difference.

We will now explore similarities and differences between media in more detail, via a specific account of modes and theories of each medium. This contextual study will serve as a preface to our more specific assessment of Robbe-Grillet's theory and practice.

III. The Comparison of Forms

(i) Authorship and Commercialism

The comparison between film and literature, and their respective claims to a status as art, is framed firstly in terms of their respective abilities to capture the essence of experience or reality, and secondly in terms of their status as aesthetically manipulated interventions within that reality. Evidently such comparisons are contingent on a definition of reality or of experience on the one hand, and on the other, they depend on the extent to which art is defined as an intervention. While the definition of reality is not the direct concern of this thesis, nonetheless we cannot avoid touching on potentially ambiguous issues such as subjectivity, physical reality, and perception. The interdisciplinary analysis illuminates how such categories are explored within each medium, and strives to assess the modes of creative intervention available to the media.

An appreciation of film's status as an art has been increased by the 'auteur' theory, which draws a line around an oeuvre in order to compare internal aspects of a body of films. As such, we might see the 'auteur' theory as motivated by a desire to equate filmic with literary authorship, and thus as governed by an interdisciplinary process. Indeed, the

Cahiers du Cinéma group wished to unsettle the hierarchy between literature and cinema when they devised the theory in the 1950s, seeking to establish film as 'écriture', with the director as 'auteur', such that film could become, in Reader's terms, 'a mode of writing in its own right'. Taken up later by Andrew Sarris, the 'auteur' theory champions the distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value, and initially demanded that American film be studied in depth.¹⁹

The 'auteur' theory offers an apparent solution to the problem of collective or studio authorship in film. Unlike literary production, filmic texts tend to have more than one creator, and the process of creation may be mystified if authorship is attributable to everyone and no one. This in turn obstructs interpretation and runs the risk of submerging film within categories of the natural and inexplicable.

Nonetheless, the hierarchy which the theory initially worked against was soon reestablished, with the emphasis on the director as omnipotent. Moreover, the destabilisation of the author by semiology in both literary and filmic analysis, and the tendency of the 'auteur' theory towards generalisation through a denial of the idiosyncracies of the individual filmic work, reveals the provisionality of the 'auteur' approach. Reader compares the 'auteur' theory as applied to Hollywood cinema with early literary structuralism, as both modes of analysis sought to establish a hard core of motifs from work to work, therefore tending to efface the specificity of the single text.²⁰

Another approach to film authorship has been the semiological one, which implicates work in both media. Defining reality as the realisation of a social praxis, semiology questions the extent to which the author is the product of and component within that social praxis. This in turn problematises the notion of the individual work. The subject is no longer assumed as full immediate presence, point of origin and source, but is grasped in his construction within a series of signifying systems.²¹

The notion of both filmic and literary authorship is explored more fully in relation to Robbe-Grillet's practice in Chapter Four, but we would stress that the process of creation is often the focus of his work, the text gaining its very form from the confrontation between creative forces. The degree of individual authorship within

Robbe-Grillet's filmic production will therefore serve to illustrate how the director of a film can fruitfully incorporate, even celebrate the multiple creative influences of his collaborators within the work, while keeping the parameters of authorship mobile. For the purposes of clarity, we will nonetheless refer to the films which Robbe-Grillet has directed and written as 'Robbe-Grillet's films', with the caveat that each work may create its own laws.

While both literary and filmic texts may be influenced by commercial motives, the demands of the market are more often seen as responsible for the contents of the filmic text than they are for the literary work. Taken to an extreme, the form of the film may be dictated by the producer's, or studio's idea of what the potential audience wants to see. Again, such a collective, commercially based process need not work against film as art, so long as commercial aspects are taken into account during the assessment of all forms of art, literature included. Perkins's stress on the filmmaker's flexibility to improvise, coupled with a necessary resistance on the latter's part to servility to the film-going public, balances filmic authorship with the pragmatic demands a studio may make on the filmmaker.²² Degrees of compromise need not oppose a conception of film as art, so long as they are clearly calibrated.

(ii) Inner Experience

The conflicting views over film's ability either to reproduce, or to transform reality have structured debates over the nature of film and its status as art. Such debates have often taken place via a comparison with the literary form. The extent to which filmic or literary text may effectively engage the imagination through the reflection of inner experience, may be assessed via a comparison of media.

As many films are the dramatisation of a verbal script, the filmic text would seem to possess an extra dimension that the verbal message lacks. The filmic text's difference from words becomes a measure of the film's autonomy, as if, in order to justify making

or defining a film, film must triumph over the verbal structures which have generated it, and extending this assumption, film is more life-like than literature itself. Moreover, the apparent tangibility of the filmic image, which stems from its iconicity (discussed below), could be considered closer to what we perceive than the literary description. On the other hand, the literary text's potential to suspend its reality in an imaginary realm, engaging the individual subjectivity of each reader in a different way, may be seen as more faithful to an inner experience. Equally, if the work of fiction, whether filmic or literary, remains but one version (that of the author) of an infinite number of possible versions of a polymorphous and ungraspable reality, then we might posit the experience of the literary text as more real to the subjective consciousness, as it allows greater space for the imagination.

Burch's analysis of 'l'espace-hors-champ' extends the activity seen on the filmic screen so that it includes an imaginative engagement on the part of the spectator, who in turn supplies elements of narrative which the filmic account suggests, but which the screen itself excludes. The space outside the shot may be divided into six zones: four of these exist beyond the four side-edges of the screen; the fifth is behind the camera itself which in the spectator's mind is a continuation of the screened action; the sixth includes what is behind the decor, or behind the horizon itself.²³ These areas of unrevealed space take shape in the imagination of the spectator each time a character on the screen appears from one of these segments, or enters one. Burch's theory promotes the filmic text to a level that is as imaginatively engaging as the literary text, where what is not seen can be as affective as what is seen. As Morrissette points out, even the final surface of the filmic image may function in a way parallel to the visual or sensorial images generated by the verbal text, as the filmic image is transferred into the imaginary realm, where it produces inner images, pseudomemories, associative recalls and conjectures.²⁴ Filmic and literary media then may exploit more than what they make explicit, and maintain different but equally effective strategies for the preservation of imaginative mobility.

(iii) Formal Manipulation

The degree to which filmic and literary texts are characterised by formal manipulation sheds light on their interrelationship and the ways in which they have been defined. While the extent of formal design in a work depends on the decision of the individual artist, it is nonetheless helpful to assess this issue in general via debates over the media.

Bazin's claim that the photographic image is essentially objective due to the impartiality of the camera's group of lenses, tends towards a rejection of film as manipulated, invented expression.²⁵ As critics of Bazin point out, such a view can counter a conception of film as art. Perkins states that film's status as an art form has depended on its difference from reality, as otherwise, 'if the cinema is most true to itself when it absorbs reality, what claim can it have to our attention?'²⁶ The comparison between filmic and literary text has moreover run the risk of demystifying the literary medium at the expense of mystifying the filmic. Ricardou misleadingly characterises the perception of the filmed object as global and unified, in contrast to literary description which is fragmentary and proposes a deferred and differentiated synthesis.²⁷ Such a proposal is tactical in its attempt to offload literary language's naturalism onto the supposedly objective filmic text, in the interests of promoting the Nouveau Roman as non-mimetic, and as such it denies the filmed object's manifest potential to be fragmentary, elusive, and Robbe-Grilletian.

For, the extent to which the filmic image relies on a manipulation of the profilmic, and of the camera, sound and other filmic channels of expression must be appreciated if film is to be treated as art, and analysed as such. Burch stresses that the filmmaker not only modifies the profilmic when s/he films it, but even when s/he thinks it. Perkins settles for a compromise, seeing the filmic image as 'both reproduced and imagined, a creation and a copy'.²⁸ Moreover, the filmmaker's own subjectivity organises the filmic image, making the filmic text a fiction to be interpreted, rather than a tool to interpret the

world. The comparison with literary creation illustrates the double manipulation of the filmic process. As Monaco claims, after a filmmaker has decided what to shoot, the two obsessive questions are how to shoot it, and how to present, or edit the shot. He compares this with the paradigmatic and syntagmatic categories in verbal language, but stresses that in filmic creation the two phases are more distinct, whereas in literary composition they are less easily dissociable from each other.²⁹

(iv) Conceptions of Language in Film Theory

Film theory before Metz works against the notion of film as text. This might be seen as stemming from a mistrust of verbal language. In this way the debate over film has been informed by a negative comparison between media. Yet throughout writing on film theory there has been a concerted attempt to establish a language for film, in order to make the medium as definable and controllable as literature, which may be, admittedly not without problems, broken down into verbal elements. The desire for a film language has therefore been motivated by an interdisciplinary movement. The establishment of such languages has revealed what are intrinsic parallels between media, in terms of the codes which operate in filmic and literary creation.

Balázs champions filmic visuality as spiritual and universally comprehensible, and prioritises the gestural aspect of the body in film, seeing the silent film as free of the isolating walls of language differences.³⁰ This view of the filmic image as unmediated is also propounded by Mitry, in his comparison between film and novel.³¹ The sense that the filmic text exists outside the tyrannical structures of literary language, thus liberated to render a more realistic version of experience, is double-edged, as it pushes the film outside the realm of interpretation. The establishment of a loosely formulated language of film is not enough to bring the status of the filmic text back to that of artificial structure. As Heath explains, while Bazin and Astruc make cinema a language in terms of a direct transparent expressivity, Pasolini makes it the language of reality itself.³²

Yet the conception of a language for film has proved empowering for the formalist approach to filmmaking. Eisenstein claims that his montage elements are analogous to the word in spoken material.³³ Eisenstein's vision of montage as the creation of a network of associations through the juxtaposition of carefully selected attractions, stresses that such elements must refer to the elements next to them in the diegesis to create meaning, and to wider elements, tangentially, in the mind of the audience.³⁴ The notion of each montage element as a stimulus connoting a wider reality bears striking resemblance to the word within metaphorical constructions. That such a comparison is structured by a movement between media is borne out by Eisenstein's alignment of literary and filmic montage using the examples of Shakespeare and Pushkin in later essays.³⁵

Yet it should be asserted that Eisenstein never questions the referentiality of verbal language. Film on the other hand may convey a concept which is not visually representable via the juxtaposition of two terms which generate a third, outside the visual text. Film is therefore freer and more manipulable than the verbal form.³⁶ Eisenstein implies that the affect of each film shot is measurable in advance, such that each montage element becomes a controllable quantity, capable of conditioning the reflexes of the spectator, a theory which betrays a utopian desire to establish film as a fixed semantic code. Wollen sees Eisenstein's remarks on a prospective film language as 'very vague'.³⁷ Indeed the late essay 'Montage 1938' emphasizes the interconnection of all art forms in 'the ultimate kinship and unity of the montage method'.³⁸ In general, Eisenstein's conception of film as a language is a colourful analogy.

Theorists have formulated versions of a form of cinematographic grammar for the filmic text, which has as its correlative literary linking constructions. For example, the dissolve conveys the idea of 'meanwhile', 'elsewhere', or 'later', and thus has implications on the time, space, cause and effect of events within the diegesis, all of these categories potentially synthesised by such a technique.³⁹ For Balázs, filmic formal devices are both universal conventional techniques analogous to a grammar ("absolute" film effects) while also serving as subjective, pseudo-impressionistic touches individual to each

filmmaker. He lists fades, dissolves, slow-motion, time-lapse, soft-focus, distortion and double-exposure as among the chief technical means of injecting the cameraman's subjective viewpoint and mood into the picture of the object.⁴⁰ As conventions available to any filmmaker, such techniques reflect an individual aesthetics only when used in an individual way, in other words in a way which tends to destroy their conventional status.

The overriding difference between filmic and verbal languages resides in the notion of the code. For while the digital nature of verbal language means that signifier and signified may be considered independently of each other, and interlink through a language system (or 'langue'), the signs which comprise the filmic text may not be split so clearly into signifier and signified, due to the filmic image's analogical nature. The word operates on two levels, and is comprised of sounds (phonemes, or the units of the signifier), and semes (the units of the signified). In linguistic terms, it has been helpful to posit a distinction between connotative and denotative levels of signification in verbal language, these two potentially existing separately.

Indeed, there is a sense that the arbitrary nature of the relation between signs and their referents in verbal language is to an extent bypassed in the filmic medium. As Barthes suggests in his discussion of images used in advertising, the relation of the photographic image to what is photographed is characterised by a loss of equivalence between terms (an equivalence which would characterise a relationship between elements within a sign system), and the imposition of a quasi-identity. This in turn makes the photographic image a message without a code.⁴¹ As Jost suggests, to convey perception through verbal language depends on a kind of inter-semiotic exchange between author and reader, which enables the transcription of the non-verbal into the verbal, where the filmic text leaves the non-verbal at the non-verbal stage.⁴² This is not so far from the view that film itself is intrinsically non-communicative, as suggested by Mitry and Burch, both of whom claim that film begins with physical space or sensations, its abstract concepts communicated only after the experience of watching a film, read into the action by the spectator, where the literary text activates a reverse process, starting with conceptual space in the form of a narrative which in turn strives towards physical form.⁴³

Yet, as Metz states, the filmic text operates a series of codes, transcendent in relation to specific films, but which may be broken down into sub-codes when isolated within any one filmic text. The semiological drive towards a conception of film as text is not borne out of a desire to equate filmic and verbal languages. The central difference between the languages of each medium begins with Metz's negation of cinema as 'langue', as the latter is a system of signs destined for inter-communication.⁴⁴ Metz holds that cinema is one-way communication, is only partly a system, and lacks signs. Starting with the material categories which enable such communication, as against words in the literary medium, Metz states that the filmic text is made up of the moving photographic image, recorded musical sound, recorded phonemic sound, recorded noise, and graphic material. Gardies states that film may therefore propose five simultaneous and potentially contradictory readings, in contrast to the literary text's single channel of expression.⁴⁵ Such an elaboration of Metz is relevant to our study of Robbe-Grillet. Metz strives towards clarification rather than complication.

Metz initially states in 'Le cinéma: langue ou langage?' that the repeated use of certain '« procédés de syntaxe »' in films has resulted in their functioning as conventions comprising a type of system analogous to a 'langue'.⁴⁶ While Eco explores the codification of iconic representations in his 'Sémiologie des Messages Visuels', it is Metz who most coherently develops the five levels of codification which the cinematic message puts into play. Eventually, along with the sub-codes, these will constitute a 'langage cinématographique' within which specific filmic texts may trace a kind of 'écriture filmique'.⁴⁷ The codes which operate within cinema are: perception itself, which depends on an acquired system of intelligibility which varies from culture to culture; the recognition and identification of visual and sound elements denoted on the screen; the symbolisms within culture which the film incorporates; the variety of narrative structures which exist within culture as well as in films; the group of specifically cinematic systems which organise the manifestations of the first four codes into filmic discourse.⁴⁸ Later in *Langage et Cinéma* Metz adds to these five types of code the following: the command of the language of the filmic dialogue, and of the musical discourse within the diegesis.⁴⁹ He

stresses the interaction of these codes within the film. This in turn leads to a revision of Metz's statement that film is without a code; film has several codes. Certain of these are extra-cinematic, as they also operate outside the cinematic medium, and others are cinematic. Indeed, Metz acknowledges that both profilmic element and filmic operation are coded and must be so in order to be comprehensible and operable, even if there is no cinematic sign or unitary code.⁵⁰

Parallels between media might be made via Metz's conception of the individual work's relation to the general codes which underlie it. For the individual film is dependent on the codes but at the same time defines itself only via a work on them and difference from them. This is analogous to the literary text's construction, which is contingent on the existence of 'langue' but nonetheless is an operation against 'langue'.⁵¹ Metz's extra-cinematic codes (although prone to 'cinématographisation'), which are not specific to the filmic operation but rather comprise the cultural, ideological or psychological motivations or themes within the film, might equally be seen as an intersection between literary and filmic media.

However, Metz's cinematic codes (such as parallel montage, which, via an A-B-A-B-A-etc arrangement of images, indicates that events A and events B are contemporary in the diegesis of the film) may not be preserved when translated into literary form. Metz claims that when semiotic figures, such as filmic montage or flashback, are adapted from one medium to another they are profoundly distorted, and their structural identity is transformed.⁵²

Other theorists have formulated other interpretations of the filmic conventions at work within the medium. Wollen and Monaco employ Peirce's trichotomy to differentiate the modes of denotation and connotation at work in the filmic text. For them, cinematic signs are particularly rich because they may blend three orders of sign, namely, the Icon: a sign in which the signifier represents the signified by its resemblance to it; the Index: which measures a quality not because it is identical to it but because it has an inherent or existential relationship to it; the Symbol: a Saussurian arbitrary sign in which the signifier has neither a direct nor an indexical relationship to the signified, but rather represents it

through convention.⁵³ The Icon is the analogical, or short-circuit sign that is characteristic of the filmic text, whereas the Symbol is the arbitrary sign at the root of verbal language. The Index, which is denotative but possesses connotative potential, signals a combination of the other two categories.

Metz's exploration of the codes and sub-codes at work within the filmic text is close to a conception of film as having a type of language, which may be manipulated and interpreted in a manner analogous to literary language. Yet as the above analysis suggests, the conception of a language of film is inextricably bound up with the act of filmic narration itself, whereas verbal language may potentially be assessed linguistically as a structure independent of narratives. For this reason, we must extend our interdisciplinary analysis to an assessment of modes of narration.

(v) Filmic and Literary Narration : Space

The description of narrative method is a significant contribution to the description of a medium. Yet the analysis of narrative is often preceded by a conception of what a medium is capable of narrating, description becoming prescription. The interdisciplinary study goes some way towards mobilising the relation between modes of narration and the media themselves, in its insistence on interplay and on an infinitely revisable alignment or confrontation of forms.

Physical space is often perceived as a given within filmic narration. The potentially panoramic view is contrasted with the literary text's dependence on a specificity of description. The prominence of filmic space in turn works against notions of narration in film.

Chatman distinguishes between explicit and tacit description, viewing both as operative within filmic and literary texts, but asserting that film privileges tacit description, and conveys the properties of characters, objects and ideas secondarily.⁵⁴ Mitry encapsulates this in his comparison of film and novel, which claims that literary

depiction of space is always meaningful within the narrative progression, and therefore subordinated to the exposition of the action which will take place in that space. In the literary text then space is fragmentary and governed by a hidden motive, namely the development of the plot. However, in film Mitry argues, space is presented in its existential totality, apparently, for him, at odds with an intentionality on the part of the filmmaker.⁵⁵

The notion of a prominence of filmic space opposes what is seen as the literary medium's abstract conceptualisation. Perkins and Metz share this view. Perkins claims that moral, political, philosophical and other concepts attain in words a clarity which no other medium can rival.⁵⁶ Metz acknowledges that despite progress made in montage and camera techniques, such aspects of the filmic text remain considerably less flexible than verbal language in the expression of interiority, dislocations in point of view, temporal ellipses, the capacity to abstract, metaphor, and in the process of analytical exposition.⁵⁷

Yet more significant are the repercussions of such spatial aspects on filmic narrativity, as the latter is to an extent wilfully sacrificed to the former. The notion that narrative is intimately linked to a temporal progression through a series of events perhaps underlies the belief that space opposes narrative enunciation. As Metz claims, filmic time is relative to space, yet the precedence of space may freeze time into inertia.⁵⁸ Jost considers the debate in terms of the textual activity's tendency towards or away from mimesis. Filmic mimesis, achieved through the reproduction of physical space, works against narration. While the literary text which is narrated in the present can function in two opposing ways depending on whether one focuses on the story or on the narrative discourse, with the filmic text however, the analogical codes within the film draw it so far towards mimesis that the narrative is no longer perceptible.⁵⁹ The narrative act becomes distinguishable only when the image detaches itself from the mimetic illusion. This in turn develops a sense of film as surface. Fellows points to the way in which the image's presence and visual currency informs the content of filmic texts. The filmic protagonist may appear, and exist, without a background or origin traced by the

narrative. This in turn might force the spectator to reassess his/her own processes of inference, as the process of origination itself is no longer taken for granted.⁶⁰

Clearly the film is at liberty to develop origins for its protagonists if it so desires. It is notably through the exploration of space itself as subjective, or internally created by a protagonist's consciousness, that the filmic medium may undercut its reproduction of physical space, or ironically exploit the latter in the interests of the filmic portrayal of interiority. Robbe-Grillet's use of subjective disorientating space is an important exploration in this area, as is later discussed (Chapter Two, II, ii). But the nature of narration is perhaps most fully investigated by an assessment of point of view and the extent to which subjectivity may be filmically represented.

(vi) Filmic and Literary Narration : Point of View

The identification and definition both of narrator, and of narrative within literary and filmic texts are potentially equally complex, but, due to the generally accepted fact that it is semiologically impossible to signify the grammatical pronoun directly in film, the isolation of a narrator for the filmic text is more problematic.⁶¹ While there is a similarity between media in the role of intra- or extra-diegetic narrators as agents responsible for the overall textual exposition, the filmic text's narrating agent is often superimposed with the protagonist at the centre of textual events, without the film consciously identifying this protagonist as narrator. Filmic narration is rendered more mobile and less certain by the structure it may adopt; narration depends on the order of editing, the content of the image, and the extent to which images may actually be attributed to the narration, and/or experience of a protagonist or narrator. As every filmic image is the result of a point of view - that perceived through the camera - the ambivalence between narrative levels is intensified. Identification between spectator and what s/he sees is then superimposed upon this network, resulting in further complexity.

At a basic level, the link between two shots is potentially syntactical, insofar as it promotes as a causal link via juxtaposition. The actual meaning depends on the particular content of the linked images and the way in which these are shot, but as Burch states, the link itself does function as a type of signifier.⁶² Often, montage structures the filmic text by setting up the narrative source of a shot, thereby locating the very meaning of a shot or sequence within a protagonist's perception inside the diegesis. Yet the extent to which a protagonist who observes may be termed a narrator, in the literary sense, is controversial. It becomes more fruitful to investigate the relation between such points of view within the diegesis and the point of view taken by the camera.

Balázs claims that the basis of film's 'new form-language' is the moving camera with its constantly changing viewpoint, which in turn enables the new psychological effect of cinema, namely identification.⁶³ Yet this notion is far from innocent, as such a shifting point of view can work against the conception of film as narrated. After all, if perspectives shift constantly throughout the filmic text as a result of the moving position of the camera, any unity of perspective must to an extent be invalidated. Jost formulates the term 'ocularisation' to denote the relation between what the camera shows, and what a protagonist is supposed to see.⁶⁴ A study of the workings of narration in film then aims to assess the extent to which discourse may be assimilated to ocularisations; this will enable the analysis to gauge what is narrated (if it is), and by whom.⁶⁵

The notion of filmic text as seen through a camera also unsettles notions of narration in the literary sense. The filmic text is torn between absolute mimesis, and a status as a perspective. In Aumont's terms, the filmic text is haunted by the metaphor of the look, in the very manner in which visual material is treated.⁶⁶ The filmic text is therefore always made up of an admixture of subjective and objective reality, both a provisional and a total vision. Equally, the fact that filmic narration is necessarily constituted by a vision of events means that the spectator's identification is mapped onto narration in such a way that subjectivity, or the first-person singular of the spectator, suffuses the filmic events. Hence Mitry's claim that the filmic image is always tainted with subjectivity. The comparison with the literary medium finds a parallel to this

ambiguous use of perspective in the stream of consciousness or interior monologue techniques, which often represent a combination of impressions left either by a narrator or by a character's perceiving consciousness. Significantly, McLuhan sees the literary stream of consciousness as derived from film, pointing to further interdisciplinary interplay.⁶⁷

Yet although the filmic perspective may not be fixed to a single overriding viewpoint, the filmic image does contrive to signify a narrative attitude. Balázs hints that omniscient narration in film is attained through an absence of montage, the panoramic shot for him conveying the reality of space.⁶⁸ Monaco sees the omniscient style as conjured up by the shot-countershot sequence. The latter mode is contingent upon editing, whereby the rhythms of an insistent and intimate alternation of perspectives can be intoxicating, enabling the viewer to surround the conversation. Monaco finds an analogy for the third-person point of view in Antonioni's technique of filming a scene that a character has either not yet entered or already left, which emphasizes environment over character and action.⁶⁹

First-person narration may be set up within the filmic text, via the use of 'Voix Off' to suggest that the filmic events are being recalled by a character and therefore consist of his/her perceptions. Balázs suggests that the flash-back offers a form of pure subjective narration in film, achieved by 'an inner picture-sequence of associations' which denotes a mental process; such a statement implicates filmic subjectivity as narratable only in the past tense.⁷⁰ There is a general critical consensus that narrating consistently in the first-person in film is unworkable, or at least, highly problematic. Orr asserts that whereas in literary fiction, narrative language is used to describe consciousness, the camera has no analogous convention for rendering thought. The use of dialogue may be common to both, but the language of feeling and judgment which may texture the literary text becomes ambiguous when translated into the filmic image, which most often has no defining narrative voice.⁷¹ Kracauer and Bluestone see film's perceptual, presentational nature as at odds with literature's conceptual scope, verbal language offering the most suitable means of expressing the contents of thought such as dreams and memories,

which film may only attempt to convey via spatial variations and images of a physical reality. Conceptual imaging is by definition non-spatial, yet film has only space at its disposal.⁷² The world of the novel is a mental continuum.⁷³ Chatman sees this differentiation as a potential virtue, film's apparent unsuitability to the expression of the internal process of a protagonist's thought demanding more suggestive use of space so that the latter captures this inner essence visually. This in turn provokes a reading-in on the part of the viewer, whose own thought is more fully engaged.⁷⁴

Nonetheless, further criteria exist which permit images to be identified as subjective, with their source within the perspective of a particular character. These include, for Jost, conventions such as the exaggeration of the foreground, which suggests the proximity of an eye in a position corresponding to that of the camera-lens, such as when one sees the decor of a room through a key-hole.⁷⁵

Yet the levelling of a protagonist's point of view with that of the spectator does not necessarily mean, for the spectator, knowing anything about the character who is perceiving. Arguably, this is equally true of literary texts. However, the difference between sharing the point of view of a character and attaining some knowledge about them, in film, is particularly striking when the completely subjective shot is taken into consideration. In order for this shot to exist at all, the character-observer's face (and hence most probably his/her identity) is necessarily excluded from the screen. This will be explored more fully below, in relation to Robbe-Grillet's texts *La Jalousie* and *L'Immortelle* (Chapter Two, II, i). What is seen, and what is known about the seer, are therefore differentiated and potentially at odds within the filmic text. Such a distinction is less easily made with regard to the literary narrative, where sourceless words are rarely left to float unanchored, attributable to no one. While the latter technique is employed to obscure the source of narration in the Nouveau Roman, it is perhaps in the filmic medium that such a technique works against the sense that narration is actually taking place.

There are, in film, instances of narration, and instances of perception within the diegesis, which to an extent overlap, and which in turn form a network in conjunction with the viewer's perception, in the gradual establishment of textual discourse. Yet there

are other aspects of the filmic medium which have important implications on the act of filmic narration and which contrast with operations available to the literary form.

(vii) Filmic and Literary Narration : Time

The debate over tense and temporal frame of literary and filmic texts informs the assessment of each medium's representation of the process of consciousness, and is equally important to considerations of filmic versus literary narration. A common conception, such as that of Mitry, has been that the filmic text is characterised by an immediacy due to what has been perceived as film's perpetual present tense, as events unfold before the spectator's eyes without chronological hierarchy.⁷⁶ Balázs rightly emphasizes that only the silent film maintains no distinction between tenses, as the introduction of words into the film potentially incorporates a past or a future into the medium.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the Metzian view of filmic animated photography as characterised by 'un être-là vivant', due to its creation of movement, is persuasive.⁷⁸

Yet we must draw a distinction between filmic image and filmic diegesis, for the two are not the same. The filmic image may well be tenseless, but the filmic diegetic scheme often incorporates temporal conventions which function in a manner analogous to verbal temporal constructions. The present tense is attained in film, as Gardies claims, only by an absence of tricks such as 'fondus, fondus-enchaînés, flous, ouvertures à l'iris'.⁷⁹ Morrissette suggests moreover that, when reading a novel written in the past tense, the reader visualises scenes taking place in the present. He asserts that the film most effectively creates its own past by presenting past events in direct confrontation with events in the narrative present.⁸⁰

Moreover, both filmic and literary text may be interpreted as fundamentally suffused with a sense of the past, as both filmic and literary events must in some sense

have been accomplished in order to be recorded. Metz claims that it is the filmic image which is always in the present, while the film itself is always in the past just like the novel because both types of text are narratives.⁸¹ It is perhaps the filmic text's unique quality to force the spectator to be in both past and present at the same time. Perkins sees the only tense which is applicable to filmic exposition as the historic present, which evokes the vividness of memory and fantasy.⁸²

The conception of filmic temporality has implications for an assessment of filmic narrativity. Jost argues that the filmic text is characterised by a lack of distance between the act of narration and what is narrated, and it is this which accounts for the sense of a temporal present during the experience of a filmic text, and which in turn works against the act of narration itself: 'devant la quasi-impossibilité d'introduire une distance entre l'activité racontante et le raconté, l'image semble passer par-delà le récit pour atteindre directement le réel'.⁸³ Yet clearly there is an equivalent between media insofar as both are governed by a chrono-logic, a doubly temporal logic which Chatman rightly describes as external and internal, namely of the duration of presentation of the novel or film, and of the sequence of narrative events.⁸⁴ Even if this is the case, there is an important distinction to be made which affects any definition of the nature of filmic narrative. The key to this is found in Bluestone's claim that the literary text has three chronological levels at its disposal: the duration of the reading, the duration of the narrator's time, and the chronological span of the narrative events, where the film has only two, as the duration of the viewing and that of the narrator's time are aligned. The film's relentless rate of projection denies the viewer's control over his/her absorption in the filmic text.⁸⁵

For, the manipulation of time and space in the filmic text gain an effect particular to the filmic medium due to the temporal structure which is dictated by the speed of the projector. Incidences of narrative intervention in the filmic text can be highlighted by techniques such as ellipsis, which becomes a means of doctoring real time in the interests of narrative progression. Burch formulates techniques such as the 'ellipse mesurable' and 'ellipse indéfinie', the latter indicating that time has passed via a line of dialogue, a title on

the screen, a reading on a clock or calendar, or a change of clothing. Narrative continuity may also be maintained through chronological discontinuity, as in instances of parallel montage where two series of events are shown as if in sequence when they are in fact taking place simultaneously; the filmic text may cut back and forth, repeating the action artificially in what Burch terms a 'retour en arrière'.⁸⁶

Indeed, time becomes a form of narrative force within the filmic text, and we would stress that it is the temporal framework imposed onto filmic exposition which compensates for the apparent lack of a unified narrative voice stemming from the multiplicity of perspectives which we assessed above. This temporal framework is imposed via the process of the editing and so is extra-diegetic in its source, becoming a narrative structure which binds the film together. Indeed, the filmic medium's capability to link shots, thereby lending them an apparent causal relationship, enables a type of narration unsuited to the literary form. Divergent images, linked and projected at speed, retain a narrative relationship to each other due to their visual impact and the very fact of their juxtaposition. If this results in disorientation and conflict, this is the result of narrating within a form in which images may be linked regardless of their temporal or spatial logic within the diegesis.

(viii) Filmic and Literary Narration : Metaphor

Concepts of simile and metaphor provide a fruitful area of comparison for the study of media. The tendency is to see filmic iconicity as working against metaphor, whereas verbal language, which connects with its referent via a 'langue', is already in a sense metaphorical and so better suited to suggestion and to the displacement of meaning.

Bluestone claims that the filmic metaphor is in essence non-realistic. Echoing Eisenstein's formulation of the montage trope, he locates editing as the means of creating metaphor via the juxtaposition of two disparate elements to create a third term which is

not visually shown. Where the literary metaphor draws its effect from its non-literal meaning, the film, which is always literal, cannot be as suggestive.⁸⁷

Metz's view, while more developed, parallels this, as he argues that whereas in the novel, one term of the metaphorical comparison is extra-diegetic, in the filmic text both elements of the metaphor are necessarily aligned such that the transfer of meaning is much less clear-cut.⁸⁸ The filmic image cannot break away from its literal referent, the profilmic, despite the operation of codes; moreover, the filmic text allows rich syntagmatic connections, but is characterised by a poverty of paradigmatic connections which work against comparison and instead can only suggest resemblances.

The extent to which elements of metaphorical comparison may be truly extra-diegetic is however open to debate; metaphors within a literary text are indissociable from the diegesis of which they are a function. Both filmic and literary text may contain, or invent metaphorical relationships within their texture at all levels, making Metz's formulation constricting (for illustrations of the invention of metaphorical relationships, see Chapter Two, I, iii). Moreover, the filmic text may exploit non-realistic or non-literal images which convey metaphors for other more literal elements within the diegesis, while respecting iconicity.

(ix) Filmic and Literary Narration : Sound and Image

The filmic medium differentiates itself most strikingly from the literary due to the narrative possibilities open to film via to the extra material channels of expression that film may exploit. The relation between image and sound and its implications on narrativity in film must therefore be taken into account; in Robbe-Grillet's films, a separate narrative message may be conveyed via the sound track, which works against the visual images (see Chapter Two, I, iii).

While the literary text conveys sensory aspects indirectly, the film manipulates recorded material which strives towards the status of directly transmitted stimuli. Visual

and auditory elements play a vital role in the spectator's identification with the action, and if the filmic text exploits these it is because, as Perkins maintains, the only sensations we can share with the protagonists are visual and auditory.⁸⁹ Yet the relation between sound and image, and between these elements and narration is complex and manipulative.

On the one hand, narration is homogenised by the filmic sound track which maintains a unity of performance or exposition.⁹⁰ However, sound is also a source of manipulation in film. Starting from the premise that, for psychologists (and he quotes A. Gemelli) the perception of a sound is contingent on the localisation of a sound, Jost suggests that film sound gives rise to an ambiguity in perception, especially as such sound is 'acousmatique', a term employed to denote a sound whose source is not perceptible.⁹¹ Film sound is therefore doubly 'acousmatique': not only is the direct source masked as what we see on the screen is not the real source but only an image of it; equally, the indirect source, consisting of the loud-speakers, is also concealed from view.

Jost sees the unity of sound with image moreover as most clearly evident in the literary text, where the differences between thinking, knowing and feeling are lessened because the method of expressing them is provided by a similar construction, such as 'il pensa que...' with its correlation in 'il sentit que...'. In the filmic text on the other hand, these different psychological attitudes are not necessarily transmitted by the same physical channel. The protagonist's experience of seeing may be deduced by the spectator from the cinematic sub-codes of shot and montage, while physical sensations may be expressed visually.⁹² There is then a sensory manipulation effected by the filmic text, as the emphasis is placed on seeing and hearing as narrative channels by which other sensorial data may be gauged.

The above comparative assessment of the relationship between media has provided an overview of theories and practices. Our interpretation of filmic and literary texts via concepts of language and the contrasting modes of narration available to each medium has been deliberately general in its avoidance of specific texts. For, this has enabled us to conceptualise the essential mobility of the interdisciplinary approach which

is an investigation as much as a description. It is now our task to focus on the theoretical work which has been written about Robbe-Grillet's filmic and literary texts. This will refine our analysis, as it is the first stage in approaching textual practice. It will moreover frame the discussion between disciplines, in its emphasis on the way in which Robbe-Grillet criticism has implicitly operated via a comparison of media.

IV. Criticism on Robbe-Grillet and the Interdisciplinary Debate

(i) Film Criticism

Robbe-Grillet's literary work has been assessed substantially more fully and more frequently than his filmic work. The films are sometimes mentioned in passing within what is primarily literary criticism. We would argue that this is because the filmic work has been taken less seriously, and that criticism on Robbe-Grillet has therefore imposed a hierarchy between media through its very choice of subject matter.

Many of the books which deal predominantly with Robbe-Grillet's films are out of date, or offer incomplete analysis of films. Admittedly, certain of Robbe-Grillet's films are difficult to see; in Appendix I, we propose a guide to finding and viewing the films themselves. Yet while we acknowledge that the number of filmic texts dealt with in earlier criticism is to an extent determined by the date of publication of such criticism, the failure to treat certain texts with as much detail as others is less easily explained. The present study strives for a complete perspective on all of Robbe-Grillet's cinema and literature, as produced up to our time of writing.

The film criticism rarely provides the detailed level of analysis required for a full understanding of the filmic texts, and often notably omits to contextualise Robbe-Grillet's theory and practice of cinema within a tradition. By discussing both his filmic influences and his theories on the relation between media in sections V and VI respectively, we attempt to fill this lacuna. For reasons of space, the following assessment does not

account for articles.

The most comprehensive book in English on Robbe-Grillet's films, Armes's *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet* (1981), offers detailed and perceptive analysis of the early films, but cannot discuss *La Belle Captive* as this came out after publication. Furthermore, Armes provides what is in our view an incomplete analysis of *Glissements* and *Le Jeu avec le Feu*, and the seminal *N a Pris les Dés* is dismissed as 'a virtually unknown work'.⁹³ Armes's use of a specifically and rigidly literary theory to interpret Robbe-Grillet's cinema leads him into making reductive statements about a contentious narrative order, or symmetry, which he claims characterises the filmic texts. Armes's explicitly stated project is 'to test Ricardou's theories against the films of Robbe-Grillet', and more precisely, those theories expounded in Ricardou's *Le Nouveau Roman*, such as the Nouveau Romanciers' prioritizing of self-referentiality, or 'littéralité', over referentiality (mimesis), and the mechanisation of the narrative.⁹⁴ Quite apart from dating Robbe-Grillet's filmic practice by tying it to a literary movement which Robbe-Grillet's literature has since moved beyond, Armes's search for a correspondence between theories of the Nouveau Roman and the filmic medium results in a restrictive schematisation of the films, as he attempts to pinpoint a symmetrical patterning within them. While much of Armes's analysis is interesting (and shall be referred to below), all too often the dislocations and asymmetries of the Robbe-Grillet text are ignored. Armes unwittingly demonstrates the incompatibility of literary theory and filmic practice, when forced into such a constricting alliance. His earlier book, *The Ambiguous Image* (1976) which is not solely devoted to Robbe-Grillet, offers less detailed analysis of only three films, *Marienbad*, *L'Immortelle* and *TEE*.

Gardies's volume is more partial in what it covers due to its earlier publication in 1972, with the result that all films after this date are excluded. As with Armes, *N a Pris les Dés* is passed over. Moreover, almost half of Gardies's text is taken up by interviews with Robbe-Grillet and his film casts, and photographs.

Van Wert's *The Film Career of Alain Robbe-Grillet* (1977) consists mainly of an annotated bibliography, which, however useful, means that the book contains only eleven pages of analysis. Stoltzfus, primarily a literary critic, will also ignore the existence of *N a Pris les Dés* in his *Alain Robbe-Grillet: Life, Work, and Criticism* (1987) which provides only cursory examination of the films. Fragola and Smith's 1992 book on the filmic texts, *The Erotic Dream Machine*, consists by its own intention almost entirely of interviews, its minimal analysis of the films obscured by the priority given to Robbe-Grillet's own interpretations of the texts themselves.

Chateau and Jost's challenging *Nouveau Cinéma, Nouvelle Sémiologie* (1979) discusses all of Robbe-Grillet's films except *N a Pris les Dés* and *La Belle Captive* (the latter not made at their time of writing). Yet the book uses the films to anchor a more general semiological investigation, and by the authors' own admission it does not claim to be an exhaustive account of all of Robbe-Grillet's films.⁹⁵ The book is chiefly a critique of Metz's 'grande syntagmatique', and while it pioneeringly assesses alternatives to conventional filmic narrative strategies put into play by Robbe-Grillet, we would argue that the films themselves are at times lost in the detailed semiological schematisations that the book proposes.

Finally, Michalczyk's *The French Literary Filmmakers* (1980) which combines analysis of filmic and literary texts, posits a continuity running throughout Robbe-Grillet's work in each media, but does not attempt an interdisciplinary analysis, listing instead, briefly and we would argue simplistically, what he sees as literary and filmic common features within the corpus.⁹⁶

The interdisciplinary analysis is then not a strategy which has been adopted for a full length study. Nonetheless, the literary criticism has been textured by comparison between media, and for this reason it is fruitful to focus upon the relation between media that has indirectly been established. This in turn sheds important light on Robbe-Grillet's literary texts themselves and their relation to a filmic-literary analysis. It will also orientate us within the contradictions Robbe-Grillet's texts have provoked, and establish unifying concepts within the criticism.

(ii) Objective Literature as Filmic

Barthes's, Blanchot's and Genette's stress on Robbe-Grillet's early literary texts (and notably *Les Gommages* and *Le Voyeur*) as proponents of an 'objective literature' is of central significance in the assessment of the perceived relation between his literary texts and the filmic medium.⁹⁷ Barthes implies Robbe-Grillet's writing is characterised by an essentially optical quality, connoted in the pun of his title 'Littérature Objective' with its Bazinian implication of the objectivity of the lens or 'l'objectif'. The text is described as 'objectal', and Barthes emphasizes the notion of the object as spectacle, no longer subjugated to the conventional dictates of plot or metaphor, and free of psychological necessity. This forefronts the visual representation which the Robbe-Grilletian object presents, and so ties in with a Bazinian notion of the filmed object as integrally and impartially reproduced. Barthes even stresses Robbe-Grillet's description as providing a cinematic vision. But he does point to the mystificatory potential of over-precise writing which denies the verbal text a status as pure exposition, lending it instead a fragmentary role.⁹⁸ *Les Gommages* offers an annihilation of time, which ties it to the conception of film as taking place in a perpetual present.

Blanchot's analysis of *Le Voyeur* has different results. Here, the objective clarity of description ('Dans le livre de Robbe-Grillet s'impose l'apparence de la description la plus objective') produces a paradoxical absence of view, the text disappearing entirely on the now notorious page 88.⁹⁹ For Blanchot, the Robbe-Grillet literary text operates a refined art of images, which in their number create what is not explicitly stated via indirect methods, so that the words are haunted by an obsession. The filmic metaphor of text as surface is then displaced by verbal language's double aspect. The written word's ultimate expressivity rests in its inability to express. This theory is also applied to *La*

Jalousie, which is narrated by a blank. The Robbe-Grilletian written text then captures the imaginary rather than the external surfaces of the world.

Genette's assessment of the manipulation of tense in the literary texts to create one temporality - the present - and a language of uniform and integral objectivity, illuminates the way in which chronological order is broken down in the interests of a perpetual present mode of narration, which we might compare with the filmic image and its perceived absence of tense. For Genette, *Le Voyeur* offers the paradigm of chronological confusion, as present, recent past and imaginary future are all described in the 'passé simple', and so lent equal weight. After the hypothetical rape, Mathias's invented alibis are given the same authority as the problematic crime when they too are described in the 'passé simple'. *La Jalousie* and *Dans le Labyrinthe* equally subvert chronological divisions, along with the distinction between real and imaginary events, through the use of the present tense. Applying Robbe-Grillet's comments from the introduction to *Marienbad* to a reading of the early novels, Genette states: 'On voit qu'en analysant la grammaire cinématographique, Robbe-Grillet définit aussi bien sa propre grammaire romanesque, puisqu'il a lui aussi réduit à une seule note la «gamme des temps».'¹⁰⁰ Yet as discussed earlier in this chapter (III, vii), whether or not one can speak of the filmic text as maintaining the present tense as a mode of narration is doubtful. It is then Robbe-Grillet's deliberate use of verbal tenses against their conventional structuring role which creates disorder; the comparison with film remains a comparison and nothing more, undermining Genette's equation of the Robbe-Grilletian 'grammaire romanesque' with a cinematic grammar.

Recent critics echo the association of an objective literature with categories of the filmic. Nelson stresses that the absence of an intermediary narrative voice in *Les Gommés* makes this text less a coded communication than a transcript of the characters' thought processes.¹⁰¹ Rather than employing a cinematic metaphor, Nelson compares the text to theatre, as its voice shifts towards the experiential and direct, toward a narrator-absent fiction.

The tendency therefore is to compare Robbe-Grillet's description with a photographic precision derived from Bazin (discussed below : V, i), in a metaphorical approach to the literary texts which is unsettled when the description ceases to be so precise. It is this tendency towards confusion, via an abandonment of realism, which further challenges such an assessment of Robbe-Grillet's literary work as objective or film-like. The movement towards a self-referentiality of verbal description in his literary fiction is now related to the interdisciplinary debate.

(iii) The Hazards of Self-Reflexivity

The prevalence within Robbe-Grillet's literary work of a Ricardoulian 'littéralité' or what Barthes terms the use of language as a lexicographical artifact, which is the activity of a writing which reflects on itself as writing, might at first sight undermine the filmic-literary comparison.¹⁰² The axis of referentiality could be deemed central to a movement between media, as only when artistic expression represents something may the modes of expression themselves be linked in any way, and measured against what they supposedly represent. Moreover, if self-conscious literary texts refuse to be anything other than linguistic construction, then they may only be referred to themselves, and not to some filmic process. Even when the literary text purports to be governed by referentiality, Barthes warns against the hazards of identifying the novel's real (in the theory of the realistic text) with the operable, arguing that the novel is comprised of codes of representation, never codes of execution. We might compare these with the cinematic codes which Metz describes, and which are assessed earlier in the chapter (III, iv). To equate representation with execution would be to subvert the novel at the limit of its genre, or so Barthes claims, with his statement in parentheses: 'd'où la destruction fatale des romans lorsqu'ils passent de l'écriture au cinéma, d'un système du sens à un ordre de l'opérable'.¹⁰³

For critics such as Ricardou and Heath, the Robbe-Grillet text is a dramatisation of the movement of writing itself as a producer of meanings, and as a process of representation.¹⁰⁴ Where Heath stresses the self-conscious aspect of Robbe-Grillet's use of language over the mimetic, Ricardou outlines the interplay of two modalities: 'le littéral, le référent', the former a metatextual reflection on the activity of the writing, the latter a mimetic reproduction of an illusion of referentiality, the prominence of one effacing the evidence of the other in a dynamic creative-destructive process.¹⁰⁵ The text's activity is then an attack on the novel and on the process of naturalization of social reality the novel engineers. Aligning himself with Genette, Heath points to the process of reassemblage and self-contestation within the texts as a self-reflexive demonstration of how writing works, via the combination of preexisting elements. The variation on paradigms that the text performs is a dramatisation of the use of language, each word a paradigm for a corresponding referent, Robbe-Grillet's technique of variation becoming a game of violation of meaning as text interposes between sign and referent.

Yet while the literary texts are evidently a dramatisation of the process of creation, and do indeed seek to fracture naturalised meanings, nonetheless such self-referentiality must be combined with a mimetic effect, in order for the literary text to remain readable. Moreover, such self-referentiality refers not just to words as lexicographical artifacts, but also to the whole notion of the production of meaning. Both of these factors enable comparison with the filmic text. For, as we shall see in Chapter Two, not only may the filmic form dramatise its own process of creation self-consciously, but the filmic text is also inextricably bound up with the production of its own meanings, just like the verbal processes isolated by Ricardou and Heath. The location of metatextuality by critics such as Ricardou and Heath therefore serves to strengthen the interdisciplinary analysis which may focus on themes which preoccupy both the filmic and literary text and metatext.

Before looking at Robbe-Grillet's own views on the relationship between filmic and literary forms, it is helpful to assess his filmic work in terms of the influences which

have either positively or negatively informed it. This will also fill the gap left by the relatively sparse amount of film criticism on Robbe-Grillet and his context.

V. Contexts: Bazin and the *Nouvelle Vague*, Metz, and Eisenstein

(i) Bazin and the *Nouvelle Vague*

Robbe-Grillet's strictures of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* group and *Nouvelle Vague* filmmakers such as Chabrol and Truffaut, those 'célèbres cinéastes du XIX^e siècle' (with the exception of Godard and Rivette), stem from his belief that they do not explore film in a non-realistic way, and that they prioritise commercial success.¹⁰⁶ Robbe-Grillet claims that the *Nouvelle Vague* do not escape an ideology of realism, and he blames this on Bazin, whose notions present a neo-realist manifesto against any idea of cinematic art. At the limit, Bazin's view implies that film obtains radical purity only through its own annihilation.¹⁰⁷ For Robbe-Grillet, Bazin's theories promote cinema as life, stressing that acting and shooting should be as natural as possible, and that the spectator should be made to forget the edge of the frame and the editing elisions. These precepts deny the possibility of any renewal of cinematic forms.

Nonetheless, Bazin's conception of the photographic image as objective, and thus as potentially divested of the distortive manipulations of the artist and of the spectator, parallels Robbe-Grillet's early literary theories in *PUNR* which promote a de-anthropomorphisation of description.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly too, Bazin criticises the formalist montage of Eisenstein, a montage which greatly influences Robbe-Grillet, for its tendency to dictate the film's message to the spectator, and for opposing ambiguity.¹⁰⁹ Bazin then sees certain uses of montage as too didactic, unsettling Robbe-Grillet's rejection of the Bazinian approach.

(ii) Metz

Robbe-Grillet's critique of Metz is developed in terms of a stress on the ambivalence of filmic narrativity, and the subversion of the sequence. In interview, Robbe-Grillet stresses that in his films, the sequence as rationalized unit of space and time is destroyed by false continuity in a given spatio-temporal domain and by the introduction of shots from other sequences in the middle of the given sequence.¹¹⁰ Disruption via montage distances Robbe-Grillet from Metz's formulation of the 'grande syntagmatique' with its stress on the sequence as a potential unit of film-syntax, which, for Robbe-Grillet, is based on the novel. Opposed to Metz's syntagmatics are ideas on parataxis, developed by Chateau and Jost, who analyse the possibilities of juxtaposing shots which have no syntactical link. Armes significantly abandons the Metzian model in his analysis of Robbe-Grillet, adopting the term 'segment' to denote a non-narrative sequence.¹¹¹ Metz's stress on narrative ignores the Robbe-Grilletian conception of the filmic text as itself a producer, rather than reproducer of meanings.

(iii) Eisenstein

Robbe-Grillet's adherence to Eisenstein's editing and sound techniques signal an espousal of both ambiguity and formalism. For Robbe-Grillet, film art can only derive from the exploitation of possibilities for dialectical confrontation, both in terms of diegetic development and formal conflict. On the one hand, the animated image offers an ideal means of expressing the Robbe-Grilletian 'réel', because the image is discontinuous and takes place in the present moment.¹¹² This means equally that the stress is on a manipulation comparable to Eisenstein's, in the form of spatial or temporal shifts and dislocations effected by montage.

While both filmmakers exploit conflict (as is more fully explored in Chapter Three, II, i), it is in their shared rejection of naturalist narrative filmmaking that the theory and practice of the two filmmakers are most clearly aligned. This in turn has implications on the role of the script. Eisenstein aims to liberate film from the plot-based script, and to use autonomous film material in the process of construction.¹¹³ The script becomes a cipher, a shorthand record of emotions which may only be realised by its transformation into filmic images.¹¹⁴ Such a conception may be compared to Robbe-Grillet's abandonment of a detailed script in the films he directed after *L'Immortelle*.

Eisenstein's rejection of naturalism moreover lies behind his unease about synchronised sound. The culture of montage is enhanced, Eisenstein argues, by the use of contrapuntal sound which tends towards a disruption of mimesis.¹¹⁵ Robbe-Grillet and Fano's innovations in this realm, developed in Chapter Two, offer a new development to add to this sound-image conflict, namely sound-*sound* conflict, both dialectics exploited within Robbe-Grillet's texts.

For both filmmakers, the filmic text may create its own semantic message. Just as in *L'Eden*, characters associated with good in Bratislava later become evil in Djerba so that semantic fixity is destabilised, so too for Eisenstein emphasis is laid on film's potential to manipulate association in order to invent new conditioned reflexes.¹¹⁶ The spectator should become an active creator of the filmic text. As in Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic, the Eisensteinian image exists not as something fixed or ready-made, but arises and unfolds before the spectator as it does before the author of the work.¹¹⁷

Equally, Eisenstein's conception of rhythm as suggestive of more than the purely visual image, a rhythm which is generated technically by montage, may be compared to rhythm employed in Robbe-Grillet's literary and filmic texts. The dialectics of mobility and immobility in, say, *Maison*, in which action solidifies into image, only to generate action again as the image is animated by the words, projects a disruption which the words themselves do not wholly account for. This might be compared to Eisenstein's

emphasis on a filmic rhythm which both represents the event depicted and extends far beyond it, raising the event to the utmost limits of specific generalisation.¹¹⁸

Yet the ideological ends of each filmmaker are undoubtedly different. Eisenstein's radical Marxism, implicit within the dialectical principle of montage, contrasts with the Robbe-Grilletian attempt to subvert what he perceives as fixed ideological systems. It is in Robbe-Grillet's drive to express the Unconscious, in the form of the displacement of meaning, confusion, the paradoxes of the imaginary, dreams, hallucinations and sexual fantasies that Robbe-Grillet most starkly differentiates himself from Eisenstein.¹¹⁹

While the above assessment goes some way towards placing Robbe-Grillet's theories and practices of cinema within context, it is only via an examination of his own views on the relation between filmic and literary text that our interdisciplinary analysis will provide a full framework for the debate between media.

VI. Robbe-Grillet on Filmic and Literary Text

The views of Robbe-Grillet himself on the relation between filmic and literary text are both illuminating and contradictory. Despite his claims that the two media are irreconcilable, the extent of the links between aesthetic production in each medium might best be exemplified by the comments on film in the supposedly purely literary *PUNR*. For many of Robbe-Grillet's views on film are generated by his theories of the novel; indeed, cinematic practice and novelistic production enjoy a reciprocal relationship. First, we will illustrate how in his theory Robbe-Grillet is a tactician, deliberately exploiting one medium to subvert the other, often in the interests of promoting his own aesthetic practice in each medium, and therefore implying linkages between media even if this is measured via their contestation of each other. We also aim to demonstrate how the form of the text and notions of construction, whether filmic or literary, are forefronted as central thematic concerns, as Ricardou and Heath claim. While the issue of textual construction is at the heart of Robbe-Grillet's denial of links between media, it is

nonetheless the salient feature both of his literary and of his filmic work and so in itself marks a central axis of comparison. Far from segregating the conception of each medium, the textual play of invention (as Chapter Two shows) characterises Robbe-Grillet's work in both disciplines, and offers a fruitful source for interdisciplinary study.

The alternate emphasis on objectivity and subjectivity which has characterised criticism of the literary texts extends to Robbe-Grillet's own comments on the filmic medium. The filmic medium offers a paradigm to which the novelist aspires, yet it is unclear whether such a paradigm is defined ontologically or merely idealised by the Nouveau Romancier to subvert literary traditions. Either way, the correspondence between literary and filmic theory and practice subverts divisions between the media.

PUNR offers a view of film as on the one hand objective, immediate and violent. The filmic text is upheld as a vehicle for the innovations Robbe-Grillet brings to the novel, with its ability to dislocate the object from its conventional context and hence from its meaning within the anthropomorphist grid. While the film is posited as a more suitable tool for wrenching the spectator from his/her 'confort intérieur', exposing him/her to 'ce monde offert, avec une violence qu'on chercherait en vain dans le texte écrit correspondant, roman ou scénario' (p. 19, *PUNR*), the literary endeavour to exploit the 'adjectif optique, descriptif' (p. 23, *PUNR*) unites both media in their drive to reveal the contingency and 'there-ness' of experience in the world. Both filmic and literary text aim at an escape from metaphor and analogy, which present a metalanguage, an unauthentic means of expression. The hierarchical structure of the written sentence, with what Barthes terms its subjections, subordinations and internal reactions might present a model of order which the film escapes.¹²⁰ But the examination of filmic technique demonstrates that a disruption of hierarchy is equally prevalent there as in Robbe-Grillet's literary texts.

For Robbe-Grillet, the alienation of the spectator from what he sees on the screen provides a metaphor for the situation of the subject in the world; the spectator may inhabit a point of view offered either by camera or by character, but he still remains an observer to the action. This metaphor is in turn adopted by the novel. Just as in film,

things exist as phenomena devoid of interiority, so too the novel may present reality as a surface, placing the human agent in the role of observer.

Yet the filmic text also captures subjectivity, or inner observation. The film becomes a potential vehicle for the representation of the imaginary, and hence is deemed an ideal vehicle for expressing internal human experience in process. Of the desire among Nouveaux Romanciers to make films, Robbe-Grillet states: 'Ce n'est pas l'objectivité de la caméra qui les passionne, mais ses possibilités dans le domaine du subjectif, de l'imaginaire' (p. 128, *PUNR*). In his oft-quoted introduction to *Marienbad*, Robbe-Grillet stresses the present tense of narration as central to the filmic image, which therefore more faithfully represents the process of consciousness, in contrast to the literary medium with its spectrum of tenses (p. 15, *Marienbad*). Yet the novel too, if handled correctly, can also become the site of 'des structures mentales privées de «temps»' (p. 130, *PUNR*). Nonetheless, the opportunity film presents to play on two senses at once makes the cinema even more in tune with the subjective experience of the world.

The filmic text is then capable of representing both subjective and objective experience. In this sense, Robbe-Grillet's conception of the medium parallels the view of, say, *La Jalousie* as either objective description or trace left by a subjective consciousness, and of *Dans le Labyrinthe* as a doubly objective and subjective text. In this way, shifts of emphasis in his literary production mirror conceptions of his filmic production.

Robbe-Grillet emphasizes the filmic text's exceptional potential to abandon pretensions to omniscience which characterise supposedly naturalistic works, whether literary or filmic. The move towards authenticity through the creation of a provisionality of narrative viewpoint is specifically filmic, as the overriding question for anyone making a film is: 'where to put the camera?' This is in turn a question about narrative point of view, which must be reassessed with every camera shot. The source of the narrative, and hence the authority of the text, are therefore constantly contested, as the positioning of the camera is necessarily changed. And while cinema has its realist or naturalist filmmakers, Robbe-Grillet implies that the filmic medium is more suited to self-

consciously manipulating narrative point of view than is the literary medium, as view is film's essence.¹²¹ The hand-held camera, exploited in films such as *TEE* and *L'HQM*, conveys liberty and provisionality, no longer occupying a privileged, fixed position.¹²² Yet such a use of film to disrupt the omniscient perspective reflects precisely the innovations which Robbe-Grillet and other Nouveaux Romanciers bring to the literary text in their deliberate fragmentation of narrative unity, as is illustrated in our comparison between filmic and literary point of view (Chapter Two, II, ii). Again, a parallel development occurs between literary and filmic production.

The text's creation of its own form is central to Robbe-Grillet's theory and aesthetic production. The notion that the text is only autonomous as art if it generates its own form presents a problem for the comparison between media, because it implies that filmic and literary text will always be separate, whether as individual works of art, or as works from individual media, as the forms of each will always be idiosyncratic. As Robbe-Grillet has stated, form is of the essence:

I write literature because the structures of sentences and words interest me, and I make films because the image and the sound interest me. But for me, there is no relationship among these different activities. Well, yes, there is a relationship - myself; that is all.¹²³

The manipulation of forms becomes the aesthetic activity; it expresses that which escapes conceptualisation. If there was an expressible idea behind (or before) the work, then the work would lose its purpose and authenticity. The importance of form is tied to the (unattainable) ideal of a language without metalanguage, which is capable of pure communication; the autonomous and authentic literary text chooses its own form where, as Barthes suggests, form is no longer at the service of a triumphant ideology.¹²⁴ The prioritising of the individual text's form in Robbe-Grillet's theory and practice is borne out by his refusal to adapt his own literary work to the screen (see Chapter Four, note

36, for details of adaptations of his literature which have been undertaken by other filmmakers).

The Robbe-Grillet text exemplifies such a conception of formal autonomy. Yet it does so both as film and as literature. The prioritising of form places formal invention on the level of theme, as both what the text is, and what the text is about. This is as much a filmic as a literary preoccupation. For, as Gardies states, echoing Robbe-Grillet on literature in *PUNR*, it is equally the use of cinema as a vehicle for doctrines outside itself which renders the medium alienating.¹²⁵

The importance of form in the work of Robbe-Grillet stems equally from the notion that creativity can only exist in the combination the writer makes of the givens of language and culture. The combination then becomes the primary creative act. The text sets up a series of stereotypes, those political facts, or major figures of ideology, and invents new structures for them, rather than seeking to avoid such stereotypes in favour of an impossible new.¹²⁶ The combinatory act makes the literary text a form of verbal montage. Yet we would emphasize that the generation of the text via the combination of formal elements characterises both literary and filmic texts, as Chapter Two shows. Repetition and textual generation occur in works from both media, and even provide channels of communication between media, as is the case with intertextual self-reference within the corpus, assessed in Chapter Four (II, iii).

Robbe-Grillet flirts with notions of verbal language as non-referential, as unable to describe the visible world, but he does not adhere to them. In the account of the Cerisy colloquium for the Nouveau Roman, Robbe-Grillet insists on a referentiality within language which subsists alongside a concomitant metalinguistic element. This influences his own production and choice of generators whether literary or filmic. Robbe-Grillet dismisses the Ricardoulian stress on pure linguistic play, as this divorces words from their connotations and mystifies meaning as myth. Robbe-Grillet accuses the non-referential text of aspiring to its own form of naturalism, or innocence, which in turn prevents it from any form of intervention. For it is as meaning that words form social language, and affect the freedom of the individual; only through the play of meaning will

the artist form his counter-attack. For this reason, Robbe-Grillet stresses the colour red (what red *refers to*), not the word 'rouge' as one of the principal generators within *Projet*.¹²⁷ This further validates the interdisciplinary approach.

Yet the doubt about verbal language's referentiality, discussed above in relation to the views of Heath and Ricardou, is at the heart of assertions of an antinomy between verbal and filmic texts. Robbe-Grillet claims that writing works against the notion of reproducing a real object precisely, and he posits literary production as a radical negation of the tangible, day-to-day world. Writing transforms the meaning of what it describes, creating a movement all of its own, which is the movement of the writing, rather than an aspect of the hypothesized referent. The written phrase is comprised of imaginary meanings, which are themselves verbal. In contrast, Robbe-Grillet stresses that his cinematic practice consists of focusing as closely as possible on a reality with an exterior origin, consisting of genuine settings instead of studios, real passers-by instead of extras, and actors who bring their own creativity into their roles.¹²⁸ The artist may either set himself against these elements or maintain them in their natural state; either way, unlike the verbal text with its purely cerebral impact on the reader, the filmic text appeals intensely to the senses of the spectator and conjures up a physical presence.

Such statements are useful to our analysis both of Robbe-Grillet and of the media, but most significantly insofar as they are contradicted by Robbe-Grillet's own practice. For if verbal language may only refer to itself as imaginary construct, why does Robbe-Grillet employ it in his early novels to describe in detail an external reality with a precision unrivalled by other novelists? And if film offers a unique method of depicting the tangible outside world, why does Robbe-Grillet exploit it to portray subjective, imaginary states and their interaction with an external world itself characterised by bizarre, unrealistic elements? Robbe-Grillet's theoretical pronouncements on the nature of film and literature, while helpful, are never definitive. More often than not they form part of aesthetic debates taking place at the time of writing, and are later contradicted, often deliberately. Robbe-Grillet's insistence on an antinomy between media also in part derives from a desire to differentiate Robbe-Grillet the filmmaker from Robbe-Grillet the

novelist, in order to dispel the view that his films are those of a writer. The publication of certain filmic texts as 'ciné-romans' testifies to the extent to which the two media have in fact been linked by him. While the 'ciné-roman' marks on the one hand the creation of a new genre, it seeks at the same time by its very existence to relate literary and filmic texts in its hybrid status as novel, published script and selection of photographs.

Most significantly for this study, Robbe-Grillet's formulation of conflicting theories about each medium deliberately constructs an opposition between disciplines which does not necessarily exist. Robbe-Grillet sets film and literature against each other, in order to create them as art forms in contest. This in turn enables a contamination of one by the other, as techniques or intertexts from one medium are incorporated disruptively within his work in the other medium. For the formulation of an intrinsic, ontological opposition between the two media is denied by Robbe-Grillet's very practice, as properties attributed to one medium are then exploited within his work in the other, such as when the supposedly external world of film suddenly takes on a dream-like, interior (and 'novel-like') form. The properties of one medium are cited to illustrate an ideal form of aesthetic activity (as in *PUNR*), but this ends up by linking the media, as both film and literature strive towards that same ideal. Robbe-Grillet therefore uses the media against themselves, in the very terms which he formulates for them.

The contestation of one medium by the other reveals itself to be part of Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic conception in general, which is informed by violent confrontation, and which may therefore only be traced via an interdisciplinary study of film in its dynamic relation to literature.

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This chapter has developed the interdisciplinary comparison between theories of film and literature in detail, culminating in an overview of Robbe-Grillet's theories on the media. The next chapter examines the way in which Robbe-Grillet's texts themselves

confront modes of narration through their very practice. The contestation of one medium by the other becomes a contestation of conventional conceptions of narration, uniting Robbe-Grillet's filmic and literary texts in their subversive aim.

Notes to Chapter One.

I. Introduction

1. Peter Brunette and David Wills, *Screen / Play: Derrida and Film Theory* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 52.
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3. Barthes, in his preface to: Bruce Morrissette, *Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet* (Paris: Minuit, 1963), p. 13. Heath, in Stephen Heath, *The Nouveau Roman, A Study in the Practice of Writing* (London: Elek Books, 1972), pp. 68-69. Morrissette, as is illustrated by the humorous title of his essay, Bruce Morrissette, 'Robbe-Grillet N° 1, 2 ... X', in *Nouveau Roman: Hier, Aujourd'hui*, ed. by Jean Ricardou and Françoise van Rossum-Guyon, 2 vols (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1972), II, pp. 119-133.
4. Fletcher states that 'There are in fact almost as many Robbe-Grilletes as there are critics of his work'. John Fletcher, *Alain Robbe-Grillet* (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 17.
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9. Sergei Eisenstein, 'Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today', in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. by Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949), pp. 195-255 (pp. 198-208).
10. Eisenstein, *Film Form*, p. 240.
11. Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, p. 84.
12. Orr, 'Introduction: Proust, the Movie', in *Cinema and Fiction*, p. 4.
13. Alan Spiegel, *Fiction and the Camera Eye: Visual Consciousness in Film and the Modern Novel* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), pp. x - xii, pp. 23-28, p. 151.
14. Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (New Jersey, Associated University Presses, 1975), p. 18. George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), p. 7.

15. Bruce Morrissette, *Novel and Film: Essays in Two Genres* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 13.
16. Christian Metz, 'Le cinéma: langue ou langage?', in *Essais sur la Signification au Cinéma*, 2 vols (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1975), I, pp. 39-93 (p. 64).
17. Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema*, p. 27. Orr, 'Introduction: Proust, the Movie', in *Cinema and Fiction*, p. 1.
18. Orr claims that there is a symbiosis of different cultural forms, implying thereby that plots, or texts, are not exclusive to either medium, in 'Introduction: Proust, the Movie', in *Cinema and Fiction*, p. 4.

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21. Stephen Heath, 'Introduction: Questions of Emphasis', *Screen*, 14, No. 1-2 (1973), 9-13 (p. 11).
22. V.F. Perkins, *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 160-161.
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25. Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le Cinéma?*, p. 13.
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27. Jean Ricardou, 'Plume et Caméra', in *Problèmes du Nouveau Roman* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967), pp. 69-79 (p. 70).
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30. Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, pp. 41-45.
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32. Stephen Heath, 'Film / Cinetext / Text', *Screen*, 14, No. 1-2 (1973), 102-127 (p. 102).
33. Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Film Attractions' (1924), in *S.M. Eisenstein: Selected Works Volume 1: Writings, 1922-34*, ed. by Richard Taylor (London: BFI Publishing, 1988), pp. 39-58 (p. 46). This view is reiterated in: 'The Form of the Script' (1929), pp. 134-135 of the same volume, where Eisenstein stresses that the script must be subjugated to the film, the latter consisting of the 'cinematic equivalent of literary expression' (p. 134).
34. Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Film Attractions', p. 41.
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- (London: Faber and Faber, 1943) pp. 15-57, the latter essay being substantially the same as 'Montage 1938'.
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 37. Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, p. 46.
 38. Eisenstein, 'Montage 1938', p. 326.
 39. Morrisette, *Novel and Film*, pp. 18-19.
 40. Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, p. 185.
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 53. Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, pp. 122-123. Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, p. 133.
 54. Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, p. 38.
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 57. Christian Metz, *Essais sur la Signification au Cinéma*, 2 vols (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1976), II, pp. 74-75.
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 61. Jost, *L'OEil Caméra*, p. 20.
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 67. Mitry, *Esthétique et Psychologie du Cinéma*, II, p. 61. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 295.

68. Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, p. 140.
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70. Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, p. 125.
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77. Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, pp. 120-121.
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81. Metz, *Essais sur la Signification au Cinéma*, II, p. 73.
82. Perkins, *Film as Film*, p. 66.
83. Jost, *L'OEil Caméra*, p. 34.
84. Chatman, *Coming To Terms*, p. 9.
85. Bluestone, *Novels into Film*, pp. 49-50.
86. Burch, *Une Praxis du Cinéma*, pp. 25-26.
87. Bluestone, *Novels into Film*, pp. 22-23.
88. Metz, *Essais sur la Signification au Cinéma*, II, pp. 75-76.
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 107. Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, p. 131.
 108. Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le Cinéma?*, pp. 13 and 16.
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 110. Anthony N. Fragola and Roch C. Smith, *The Erotic Dream Machine: Interviews with Alain Robbe-Grillet on His Films* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), p. 128.
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 112. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Angélique, ou l'Enchantement* (Paris: Minuit, 1987), p. 179.
 113. Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Film Attractions', p. 40.
 114. Eisenstein, 'The Form of the Script', p. 134.
 115. Sergei Eisenstein, 'Statement on Sound: Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigori Alexandrov', in *S. M. Eisenstein: Selected Works: Volume I: Writings, 1922-34*, pp. 113-114, (p. 114).
 116. Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Film Attractions', p. 49.
 117. Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, p. 25.
 118. Eisenstein, 'Laocoön', p. 130.
 119. Robbe-Grillet, *Angélique*, p. 182.

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120. Barthes, *Le Plaisir du Texte*, p. 80.
 121. In interview. André Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1972), p. 105.
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 128. Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'Brèves Réflexions sur le Fait de Décrire une Scène de Cinéma. Antinomie du film et du roman', in *Obliques*, No. 16-17, ed. by François Jost (Paris: Editions Borderie, 1978), pp. 23-30 (pp. 25-26).

**CHAPTER TWO - FORMAL PLAY AND THE CONTEST FOR
NARRATIVE CONTROL**

Robbe-Grillet's works are a work on narration, and they work against conventional uses of the media. Our exploration of Robbe-Grillet's conception of the media via interdisciplinary analysis is best put into effect via textual analysis, as his texts themselves are the sites of his contestation.

Interdisciplinary textual analysis moreover places filmic and literary media in contest with each other. It assesses the divergent forms that literary and filmic narratives take to express or construct certain themes. This in turn determines the degree to which a certain form may be capable of illustrating a certain theme, or it monitors the extent to which a form may transform or subvert a specific theme. Admittedly the establishment of a common theme is an *a priori* assumption of a relationship between media. We do not treat these themes as givens, but rather as concepts to be developed and redeveloped through complex formal networks operating within and invented by the possibilities of each medium. In many cases, a continuity of thematic content from filmic to literary text will enable the analysis to measure differences between each medium's treatment of such a preoccupation.

Yet like the corpus we examine, our analysis is equally motivated by a questioning of ontological definitions both of theme and of medium. On the one hand, we locate a subversion of the division between theme and form in the work of Robbe-Grillet, and posit the role of formal invention *as theme* within the filmic and literary narrative construction. On the other, we insist on an essential reciprocity between filmic and literary texts within the corpus, whether structurally, thematically or intertextually. Our analytical movement will be between disciplines, and therefore will be structured by a juxtaposition between analysis of filmic and literary texts.

The two thematic areas chosen for investigation in this chapter are formal play, and the contest for narrative control. One might claim that there is already a confusion in

the terming of such issues as themes; but as we shall see, these thematic aspects are central to Robbe-Grillet's filmic and literary work, which is primarily about the process of creation and the manipulations of narration. Only by treating formal play and narrative control as thematic concerns can any real comprehension of the innovations and aesthetic continuities of Robbe-Grillet's work be gauged.

I. Formal Play

In order to dramatise the process of formal play which constitutes the work of art as invented construction, the literary and filmic texts of Robbe-Grillet employ a variety of techniques. All of these are self-conscious to a greater or lesser degree, as all attempt to draw attention to the process of creation. The following subsections isolate particular self-reflexive and generative techniques, in order to demonstrate the different ways in which each medium dramatises its own production of meaning via filmic and literary narration. The emphasis on construction in turn contests existing structures, placing the texts' own formal activities in the foreground, and disrupting naturalised modes of narration.

(i) Credit Sequence versus Prologue : 'G n rique' as Generator

(*TEE, L'Immortelle, Le Voyeur, L'Eden, Projet, La Belle Captive, Le Jeu avec le Feu and Les Gommages*)

The credit sequence in Robbe-Grillet's films plays a crucially generative role that distinguishes it from a literary conception of the prologue or foreword found in novels. In *L'Eden, Glissements* and to a certain extent *La Belle Captive*, the credits consist of images taken from the film itself, which thus gain a preexistence as realities outside the diegesis of the film. When they are seen later on, in their place within the action, they are

already repetitions, with their origin in the credits, rather than in a recognisable outside reality. The filmic text becomes an organisation of repeated components, analogous to a conception of human experience as a process of combination, rather than creation, of received ideas. It is also a self-conscious structure which flaunts its own artifice.

Such a process reaches a parodic level in *TEE*, which tells its whole story, in the most reduced possible form, in the film's precredit sequence, rendering every subsequent telling a variation on this preexistent model; Gardies even goes so far as to name this a *mise en abyme*.¹ This is equally true of *L'Immortelle*, where the precredit sequence consists of a shot of the ancient ruins of Constantinople as seen from a car, culminating in the sound of a car-crash and a scream. This is followed by L's face, her expression blank, just as it will be later on after her real death. The precredit sequence therefore contains the narrative of the film in its basic skeletal shape (*L'Immortelle* as 'la mort de L'), transforming other visions of L's death into revisions. One might compare these two precredit sequences with the first lines of *Le Voyeur*, which describes both the violent attack on the young girl - the central (absent) drama of the book - and the arrival of the boat in the same ambiguous sentence, rendering the text itself an indirect repetition of this ambivalent event (see Chapter Three, IV [ii]).

L'Eden opens with the most pioneering example of credit sequence as generator. The 'Voix Off' lists themes and motifs that will later occur, or recur, in the film.² When encountered within the events portrayed, such themes may be referred back to the credits as primary source. In this credit sequence, the 'Voix Off' narration traces the process of creation that characterises filmmaking itself with the opening words: 'Générique, écriture, Eden, architecture, composition, maquillage...'.³ Biblical Eden as source of mankind becomes cinematic Eden as source of image and sound, or illusion of mankind.

The last words of the credit sequence themselves become self-generating, as the pre-scription of themes of the film becomes a play on words and associations: 'Objectif, Eden, subjectif, injectif, surjectif, bijectif ... objet, image, imagine, imagination, fantasme, fantôme, maison hantée, miroir, miroir tournant, miroir parallèle, miroir déformant, cinéma, réalité, ma vie'. To say that the credits solely announce the twelve themes of the

film to come, is therefore to oversimplify.⁴ Even within this 'générique' there is a sense of language as self-generating, as non-referential, obsessed with its own mutations rather than with what it is supposed to represent, including the film that the themes generate as provisional referent. Similarly *L'Eden's* counterpart, *Na Pris les Dés*, does not consist of the same material as the former, but contains a great deal of footage absent from *L'Eden*, and may therefore only partially be referred to it. Armes points interestingly to the ambivalent nature of the preconceived themes employed as generators in *L'Eden*, but his frustration at not being fully able to refer the filmic text back to his written list betrays a reductive view of the Robbe-Grilletian creative process.⁵ As a text, the film *L'Eden* must destroy the theory of its creation, otherwise it will remain fixable, and hence closed. The mobility of the themes and the inability of the spectator completely to break down the text into its thematic constituents therefore maintains textual openness and resists ordered analytical appropriation.

Analogous to the credits' generative role, the literary text offers a generative series in the scheme of its book-cover, comprised of title, author's name and publisher's emblem. Spencer highlights the prevalence in the text of *Projet* of triangles, of the recurring triangular letters V, W, M, and of the star-shaped hole left in the broken glass of the apartment, which are generated by the five-pointed star and its initial 'M' which comprise the emblem of 'Les Editions de Minuit'.⁶

La Belle Captive offers one image in the precredit sequence, which recurs throughout the film as much as an event within the film as a figment of the hero's imagination: Sara Zeitgeist, in sunglasses and leather, riding on her Hell's Angels-style motorbike. The sound of the bike is eerily distant, and the image almost fades to black, then reappears, as if flickering within a consciousness. Wind slightly ruffles her hair, in a manner which is wholly unrealistic. The credits then appear within a picture frame that stands on a deserted beach, the words flashing on an orange photographic filter that serves instead of a canvas, colouring the crashing waves beyond. This framing device forefronts the artistic process that generates the film as equally active and artificial as the process of painting pictorial art.

The conventional narrative role of the credit or precredit sequence aligns itself with that of the literary prologue or foreword in films in which the plot is already underway during the credits, or before the credits start, as in, say, the thriller genre. Part of the action is split off from the rest, soon to find its causal place alongside the bulk of the linear narrative once the credits are over. Structurally, however, the use of film credits as a kind of prologue offers merely an imitation of literary convention.

Le Jeu avec le Feu at first glance adopts the linear or literary model, such that the precredit sequence is used to set the scene. Georges Balthazar de Saxe sits at his desk in the process of reading, or reading over what he has written, played to us in 'Voix Off'. Then, on a train platform, a woman is stopped and dragged into a nearby tunnel by a group of kidnapers, in a scene from which de Saxe is apparently completely absent. The credits then appear over a shot of de Saxe, standing in freeze-frame at his window, looking out, as if observing the abduction we have just witnessed. Yet the house cannot logically overlook the train platform; moreover, the abduction scene takes place largely in the train tunnel, out of sight from any possible witness. The film's prologue is, then, but one in a series of semi-staged, semi-realistic scenes which have a dual status as reality and de Saxe's fantasy, and cannot simply be recuperated as the opening of a linear account. The precredits crime which in conventional cinema would then be solved in the course of the subsequent narrative, is as much the projection of de Saxe's sexually depraved mind as a real event. In this way Robbe-Grillet treats convention with playful ambiguity.

Thus the filmic text differentiates itself from the literary in its potential for dramatising the process of textual generation through the use of the credit sequence to create an extra level of reality. Events from the film can pre-exist as pieces of text, or textual doubles, outside the structure of the text itself, while remaining generative of that structure. The literary text may exploit its cover-page for similar ends, but the effect is less striking and less conducive to a dramatisation of the process of formal play. The breaking down of the division between credits and film, or between book-cover and

literary text, marks a subversion of the boundaries between fiction and reality, and a refusal of the formal presentation of text as dismissable illusion. It becomes a means by which the process of creation of the filmic or literary text is self-consciously highlighted and opened to spectator and reader.

The extremes of self-consciousness reached by *L'Eden's* credit sequence might then be compared with the explicitly theoretical commentary offered in the preface to the literary texts of Robbe-Grillet, such as the short essay which formed *Projet's* 'Avant-propos' in the original edition of this work, or the forewords of the 'ciné-romans', which are labelled 'Notes Préliminaires' (*L'Immortelle*), or 'Introduction' (*Glissements, Marienbad*). As explicitly theoretical pronouncements these do not however form part of the diegesis of these works. It is in *Les Gommés* that the prologue and epilogue both form part of the diegesis and offer a commentary on the text itself. This is partly the result of their framing of the five-chapter structure which parodies the five-act structure of Greek tragedy, in turn subverted by the text's farcical reconstruction of the Oedipus myth. It is also due to the prologue and epilogue's generation and destruction of the text, through the prologue's preemptive rehearsal of events enacted by Garinati, and the epilogue's subversion of the textual order in the series of deteriorating statements by the 'patron', as narrative authority is finally and irrevocably lost (for more on the role of the prologue in *Les Gommés*, see Chapter Three, IV, i).

It is through textual repetition in the literary text that the process of construction is highlighted in a way analogous to the self-reflexive generative role played by the precredit and credit sequence in the films. Repetition in primarily the literary text will be the subject of the next subsection.

(ii) Repetition as a Self-conscious and Subversive Device

(Les Gommages, Dans le Labyrinthe, Le Voyeur, Glissements, L'Immortelle, Projet, Topologie)

For Ricardou a means of effecting transition from one sequence to another, and of contesting the referential illusion of the text, repetition and variation in Robbe-Grillet's literary texts frustrate the insistent question 'Qui parle?', forcing attention away from what is narrated, to how this is narrated, and to who may be narrating it.⁷ Repetition acts metatextually to disrupt a recuperation of the narrative as a character's thoughts or actions, realistically described, and therefore becomes a means of highlighting the process of formal play within the literary text.

Activities depicted within *Les Gommages* provide the majority of this text's repetitions, such as the endless circular journeys of Wallas. Yet a parallel patterning of repetition may be located in the narratives within the text, as each new hypothesis about Daniel Dupont's supposed demise, imagined either by Wallas or Laurent, is described in the present tense, and thereby lent equal status with the text's actual events, in accordance with what Morrissette sees as false scenes presented literally.⁸ This creates the necessity that Dupont must die. Such hypotheses are moreover anchored in a specific character's perception, often in 'style indirect libre', where in later novels, particularly *Maison*, contrasting versions cannot be answered for so easily. In *Projet*, pieces of description associated with one narrating agent are often repeated with minor variations when applied to a different agent, so that separate narrative entities are conjoined and confused. In this sense *Les Gommages* is more conventional than the later texts.

There is however one striking use of repetition in *Les Gommages* which fractures the (constantly threatened) illusion of the text. Chapter 3 opens with Laurent reconstructing Dupont's last moments, here postulated as suicide. In the present tense, the text describes Dupont cleaning his gun, then briefly assessing his life.

C'est un homme méticuleux, qui aime que toute besogne soit exécutée proprement. (...) Dupont fait quelques pas sur la moquette vert d'eau, qui étouffe les bruits. Il n'y a guère de place pour marcher dans le petit bureau. De tous les côtés les livres le cernent: droit, législation sociale, économie politique...

(pp. 141-142, *Les Gommés*)

The hypothesis of the suicide culminates with a statement which reveals the passage to be Laurent's style indirect libre: 'Ici Laurent s'arrête' (p.143, *Les Gommés*). Later on, Wallas will endeavour to imagine the same final moments of Dupont. But when Wallas constructs his version, part of what was Laurent's narrative is repeated verbatim, notably:

C'est un homme méticuleux, qui aime que toute besogne soit exécutée proprement.

Il se lève et fait quelques pas sur la moquette vert d'eau, qui étouffe les bruits. Il n'y a guère de place pour marcher dans le petit bureau. De tous les côtés les livres le cernent : droit, législation sociale, économie politique...

(p. 173, *Les Gommés*)

But while many of Laurent's perceptions are reproduced here, the text's status is posited, crucially, as the style indirect libre of Wallas: 'Wallas pense maintenant qu'il aurait dû savoir convaincre le commissaire' (p.174, *Les Gommés*). While the two passages echo each other in a deliberately uncanny fashion, they each have different results: Laurent sticks to his conviction that Dupont committed suicide successfully, whereas Wallas convinces himself that the suicide attempt was a failure. What neither character realises is that the language of their supposedly private thoughts within the text is to a significant extent identical. This is an ironic device, ridiculing the characters and the plausibility of the narration, and metatextually asserting the process of writing over the naturalistic illusion of reality. But it is above all the constructive use of repetition to generate

potentially contradictory outcomes that draws attention to the invention of the text and invites the reader to participate in the play of meaning.

In *Dans le Labyrinthe*, repetition effects textual self-reflexivity. The echo highlights the text's status as text, as autonomous series of words and phrases. When certain phrases repeat themselves eerily, it is as if they are independent from any individual narrating consciousness; this effaces the division between objectivity and subjectivity. It also undermines the textual chronology. The echo of certain seemingly trivial phrases renders the text circular in structure, or rather, as comprised of a series of broken circles, or arcs. This is in fact the text's own image for itself, and the recurrence of the arc-shaped imprints left by a wine glass on the surface of the table account for a considerable part of the novel's repetitions.

The opening of *Dans le Labyrinthe* implies that the text is the projection of a subjective consciousness, with the words 'Je suis seul ici' (p. 9). The reader attributes what follows to the same narrating consciousness. When the overlapping imprints left by objects on the table are first encountered, they are therefore subjectively narrated, presenting: 'un rond, un carré, un rectangle, d'autres formes moins simples, certaines se chevauchant en partie, estompées déjà, ou à demi effacées comme par un coup de chiffon' (p. 10, *Dans le Labyrinthe*). This first-person narrative is then taken over by a third-person narrative (which at all times threatens to permeate what is hitherto subjectively recounted). Initially then, a fragile duality is formed between the narrative of 'je', and that which describes 'le soldat'. However, the repetition of this same image subverts this division. For when it recurs, it is part of the objective narration. This aligns the perceptions of 'je' and of the objective narrator who describes the soldier. The soldier finds himself before a table, on which uncannily similar patterns reappear: the square imprint of page 10 is picked up in the check design on the table-cloth, and the glass has left a series of interconnecting circular traces, described as:

Une série d'arcs plus ou moins fermés, se chevauchant parfois l'un l'autre, à peu près secs à certains endroits, ailleurs encore brillants d'un reste de liquide (...), le dessin rendu plus trouble par des déplacements successifs trop rapprochées, ou même à demi effacé par des glissements, ou bien, peut-être, par un rapide coup de chiffon.

(p. 40, *Dans le Labyrinthe*)

The imprints left by the objects on the table recur later on. The soldier is in the woman's home, where he asks for help in locating his supposed meeting place. On the wall is a photograph of a man in military uniform, presumably the woman's husband. The soldier imagines how the photograph was taken. The text produces a flashback to the taking of the photograph, as reconstructed by the soldier's imagination. The soldier visualises the husband then returning home after the snapshot and having a drink. Again the table-cloth is of the same checked design, and the same circular traces are left on its surface, presented as: 'une série d'arcs plus ou moins fermés, se chevauchant parfois l'un l'autre, à peu près secs à certains endroits, ailleurs encore brillants de liquide frais' (p. 69, *Dans le Labyrinthe*). The repeated motif equates the soldier as narrator with the narrated husband from the photograph. In its echo of the objective narrator describing the soldier himself (p. 40), and of the first-person narrator's subjective account given in the opening pages of the book, the repeated motif becomes a means by which all narrative levels are broken down. Repetition brings about an interpenetration of subjective and objective realms, forcing the reader to question the source of the narration, and hence involving the reader in the formal construction of the literary text.

Le Voyeur illustrates the extent to which repetition can create ambivalence, through the manipulation of temporality and topography. The repetition of certain words, in an apparently linear passage of description, effects a simultaneous chronological flash-back, to the period in the text in which the certain words were first read. A double chronology is thereby produced, as the text refers back to a time in the narrative past, while maintaining progress in the narrative present.

The room Mathias passes on his way to the ship before the journey to the island, is found again above the café 'A l'Espérance' on the island itself. The first time the room is encountered, it is in the narrative past in flashback. The second time, we are in the narrative present. Both chambers are characterised by an 'abat-jour tronconique' (p. 28, p. 68); in each, the bed displays signs of struggle: 'un lit bouleversé' (p. 28) and 'le lit présentait au contraire un aspect de lutte' (p. 68); both rooms are adorned with the same 'simple rideau de voile' (p. 28, p. 68), and by 'un petit objet rectangulaire de couleur bleue - qui devait être un paquet de cigarettes' (p. 29, p. 68). The repetition conveys on the one hand a subjective world of obsession. In the context of our other textual examples however, the repetition of the description draws attention to the uncanny nature of the textual world and forces us to see it as a construction. This replication of description moreover splits the diegesis so that chronologically events are happening in the past and the present in the same double time. This is a paradoxical situation, which in its ambiguity is specific to the literary text. Having said this, a similar effect is achieved in *Glissements*, when the Magistrat (Michel Lonsdale) himself appears within the flashback of the crime as Alice recounts it to him (although he was not there at the time), which, as the ciné-roman indicates, is 'une scène, passée ou imaginaire' (p. 47, *Glissements*).

Armes's analysis of 'contamination' within the filmic text offers an enlightening parallel to techniques of repetition within the literary texts.⁹ Repetition as contamination dissolves linearity and draws attention to the process of creation of the film. Shots 14 to 16 (pp. 23-26, *L'Immortelle*) consist of three versions of the same movement, each performed by a different character. The fisherman stares at N's window, the boy looks towards the car, then the old man looks round; shot 17 then annuls all of these, with its 'Reprise exacte de la fin du n° 13' (p. 26, *L'Immortelle*). Yet in comparison with the literary text, this filmic device cannot subvert its source of narration. The acting may be unnaturalistic, and the camera work may mimic itself in uncanny fashion, but the subversion of chronology and narrative hierarchy that repetition incurs in the literary text is not as easily attained in the filmic process due to film's non-identification of its narrating voice.

In *Projet*, the repetition of words or their echo is a means by which a passage's narrative status is shifted. Early on, we are familiarised with the table inside the door of the narrator's house, where he puts his keys. The words 'clef(s)' and 'console' appear notably on pages 12, 26, and 49, and each time the keys are mentioned in this context, it is in a passage of objective narration. The objective narrative form is then intimately associated with these words. Then on page 84, seven lines into a passage of direct speech, we read: 'Sans avoir à me retourner, je remarque aussitôt, dans la glace qui surmonte la console, sur le marbre de laquelle je dépose mon trousseau de clefs en rentrant chaque soir (...)' (p. 84, *Projet*). Sure enough, due to the recurrence of the keywords, the paragraph that follows this has no speech marks. The text has become objective narration due to the narrative mode associated with words in the text's scheme: 'console' and 'clef'. These comprise structural generators which create narrative form. Repetition becomes constructive, as repeated phrase rephrases, transforming the sense of the narrative.

Topologie demonstrates the role of generative repetition as anti-mimetic and as the dramatisation of an obsession. The recurring figure of the flayed woman, the tarot cards, or the triangular and phallic motifs which form both the façade of the temple ('un fronton triangulaire soutenu par cinq colonnes épaisses', p. 27) and cockpit of the ship ('surmontée en guise d'habitable par un temple pentastyle', p. 47), later reproduced in the frame for the landing stage (p. 56) and in the railway signals (p. 58), all form scenarios that are constantly replayed in *Topologie*, which uses the same blueprints for many of its scenes. The text's recreation of its own models in different contexts, a technique also exploited in *Souvenirs*, becomes anti-mimetic through the emphasis of self-replication over and above the textual creation of an illusion of reality; this is then, 'un roman qui s'invente lui-même' (p. 108, *PUNR*). The obsession of this repetitive process derives from the proliferation of the same pattern within the text, implying that the repeated scene is unavoidable, inevitable. Indeed, were it not for the crucial role played by intertextual photographic and pictorial generators in these texts (explored fully in Chapter Four), one might argue that the generative process eventually culminates in

closure, as the text proposes a series of interconnecting image-structures which lead first away from, then back to themselves, culminating in a form of stasis. Nonetheless, the text's dramatisation of the process of self-invention, as a model for the individual's experience within the world, becomes a process of combination and re-combination, even if the text's success may be gauged only through an assessment of its agility in re(as)sembling its own repeated components.

The self-consciously repeated image analysed above is then mainly a feature of the literary text, which draws the reader into the process of meaning-production the text engineers. In the filmic text, the construction of meaning is reflected upon through the interplay of sound and image, which, while relying on repetition and variation, exploits techniques available only to the filmic medium due to the dialectical possibilities of sound and image tracks. This is explored in the next subsection.

(iii) The Semantics of Sound and Image

(Marienbad, Le Jeu avec le Feu and L'HQM)

In the filmic medium, the interplay between verbal and visual texts enables the creation and destruction of meaning through the manipulation of association. The use of visual and verbal tracks to connote each other becomes a means by which denoted meaning is destabilised. This in turn dramatises the filmic process as formal play. In *Marienbad*, repeated words formerly associated with a certain image become, without that image, connotative of it. The absent, suggested image leaves a semantic trace but opens a semantic space, which, in conjunction with the new visual image, enables the creation of a temporary metaphor. The metaphor dislodges the denoted meaning, and the visual-verbal correspondence is fractured. When later the initial image is reintroduced with a new verbal track, the play of association generated by the two meanings enables the introduction of a third, which may destroy the first two.

Marienbad's first visual sequence is the long corridor, with a verbal text which describes, or denotes it. When later on X caresses A in the garden and she resists him, X repeats words first heard in his 'Voix Off' at the start of the film. In this second context, instead of denoting what we see, the words connote it. The concept of the endless corridor comes to mean X's failed attempt at seduction.

A : *Je vous en supplie... laissez-moi...*

Puis c'est de nouveau le silence, comme au début du plan.(...) (C'est toujours la même scène de jardin, ainsi que dans les huit plans qui suivent, mais le décor est peu visible.)

X : *Toujours des murs, toujours des couloirs, toujours des portes, - et, de l'autre côté encore d'autres murs.*

(p. 112, *Marienbad*)

The new relationship between visual and verbal track is one of connotation, and it works because there is a convincing metaphorical relationship between the arid clausturation implied by the empty corridor seen at the start of the film, and this sexual rebuffal. However, this connotation is an invention. The film will therefore demonstrate its provisionality. Later when the corridor is seen again, the sexual trace persists, but the meaning shifts again, to one of X's satisfaction, as the camera speeds along the now brilliant white passageway as A is (ambiguously) violated by X. The corridor now connotes X's fulfilled desire. The manipulation of sound and image then enables the slippage of meaning through the play of equivalence and connotation. The ultimate sense is one of potentially infinite provisional meanings which may be created by filmic text and by spectator.

Jost analyses the comparable functioning of sound and image in *Le Jeu avec le Feu*, which operate via thematic analogy rather than Metzian syntagmatic progression.¹⁰ The codification of the sound track, such that it conveys a separate meaning from the image track, in turn signals a departure from the Metzian stress on the shot as a minimal

unit of filmic narrative; one shot may interact with several other meanings simultaneously projected by the accompanying sound domain.¹¹ Images or sounds fit into the narrative structure of the filmic text, but also fulfill a non-narrative role. Through the variation and repetition of a visual or sound paradigm, such as the sound or image of a train, another moment from the film, or another film altogether (*TEE*), may be recalled. In this way, thematic mirroring effaces the division between two scenes (or texts) which are not narratively linked. Such a process is enhanced if the syntagmatic elements of the narrative or plot are weakly justified; this enables their displacement by the recurrent theme which over-signifies, culminating in Jost's 'musicalisation de la narration'.

Such a process of associative manipulation occurs within the semantic code that *L'HQM* both constructs and explodes via the soundtrack of the film. The sound's supposedly fixed relation to the image is the given which the film subverts and reinvents through a redistribution of sound and image, so that the two terms of the equation are re-evaluated. As Fano states, 'Le son précède, coïncide, ou mémorise (on pourrait aussi dire « réfléchit » l'image qu'il *signe*.' ¹² The filmic medium with its essentially separate tracks becomes vitally different to the literary medium, as it shows itself capable of dramatising the process of codification, and the creation of meaning in a wholly original way. In *L'HQM*, Boris mimes the action of pouring a drink and smashing a glass, but while the glass and liquid are not visible, the sound track is realistically relayed as if the action were taking place. In this way action and sound are dislocated. Later, the image of real glass smashing will be seen, accompanied by the sound of gunfire, as if a new meaning has attached itself to the image.

The simultaneity of sound and image which are not linked semantically establishes an arbitrary relation between the two elements, which are nonetheless tied narratively, as Gardies states.¹³ Armes points lucidly to Robbe-Grillet's and Fano's subversion of the conventional hierarchy of sound in the cinema, which would traditionally comprise the following order of narrative significance: dialogue, then music, synchronous effects, and finally atmosphere. In *L'HQM*, Fano's 'formants' constitute basic sound elements which shift almost imperceptibly among themselves, so that the

division between musical and non-musical sound is effaced.¹⁴ The manipulation of sound becomes an assertion of the invented narrative order over a preexisting sound-image correspondence.

The dramatisation of the production of meaning is then an ongoing process within the filmic text which manipulates equivalence and association. It may however equally consist of an isolated instance within the filmic or literary text, both of which create images for themselves in the course of their narration. Such instances of self-imaging are the focus of the next subsections.

(iv) Narrative and Metanarrative of the Filmic *Mise en Abyme*

(*L'Immortelle*, *L'HQM*, *L'Eden*)

The explicitly self-conscious technique in film and novel undercuts the concept of the natural, invention within the text inducing invention outside the text. The freezing of the illusion via inner-duplication, as words transform into images or other representations, is a process central to Robbe-Grillet's work, whether filmic or literary. Analysis of the *mise en abyme* in Robbe-Grillet must nevertheless take account of the prevalence of mirroring devices in the filmic and literary texts, which render the isolation of particular instances of *mise en abyme* highly problematic. The *mise en abyme* in Robbe-Grillet is rarely a clearly defined moment in the récit, but permeates the texture, becoming far more subversive. Ricardou links the *mise en abyme* to the text's self-contestation, which in turn works against obscurantism, functioning instead as the text's conscience, or consciousness of itself as text.¹⁵ Yet, if a text strives for obscurity or non-explicability through non-mimesis, how can a *mise en abyme* for it exist? The *mise en abyme* as condensed image for the text within the text becomes impossible, or at least, reductive, due to the uncertain nature of what the text itself is actually about, and therefore of what the *mise en abyme* should reflect. Witness Ricardou's choice of the pictorial representation of a young girl kneeling on a sheepskin rug, connoting imminent

sexual violence, as a *mise en abyme* within *Le Voyeur*, a text which is therefore interpreted by Ricardou as 'about' sexual violence; significantly, this picture is an image for the one scene - the rape and murder of the young shepherdess - which is not in the novel.¹⁶ There would at the limit be as many instances of *mise en abyme* in a text as there are interpretations of that text.

The *mise en abyme* in the cinema of Robbe-Grillet is more explicitly defined than in the literary texts. This is doubtless due to the immediately recognisable nature of photographs from the film when seen within the film in their self-reflexive context. The *mise en abyme* enjoys a dual status as both self-reflexive device and narrative component. Ambivalence arises from the possibility of recuperating this image for the text as an equally important image within the text, or event within the récit. The tension between these two interpretations becomes emblematic of the wider drama enacted within Robbe-Grillet's cinematic work, which both constructs and undermines the filmic text's representational role.

In texts characterised by their self-conscious imagery, the *mise en abyme* becomes the most highly developed of metatextual elements, and if each self-reflexive aspect of the text is suggestive that the text's only reality is its textual one, the *mise en abyme* is a statement of this fact. In this sense the *mise en abyme* symbolises the text as object for (self-)contemplation, rather than as narrative. The narrative that subverts itself has as its logical endpoint a status as stasis, as line or form rather than as encoded and narrative word. With the *mise en abyme* therefore the narrative becomes text-object, the appearance of this metatextual symbol forcing both the text's process of representation and the reader/viewer's process of identification with the text to grind to a halt.

It is perhaps for this very reason that in Robbe-Grillet's filmic texts the *mise en abyme* is employed as at once a self-reflexive and narrative device; the film moves towards narrative stasis but never quite reaches it, for if it did, it would become invisible. Ricardou's stress on the three functions of the *mise en abyme* as repeating, condensing, and preempting the text as a whole, corroborate our view of the device as ambivalently both revealing and subverting the textual process.¹⁷ *L'Immortelle's* postcards, depicting

images from the film itself, which N looks at outside the mosque when searching for L, are both self-advertising trick alerting us to the film's status as image, and plausible event within the film's story. On the one hand the postcards present an Eisensteinian micro-montage: as N flicks through them in a mechanical way suggestive of projecting apparatus, the cards mimic the movement of the film's frames passing through a projector, many of them showing the same picture, just as each shot on the screen comprises many identical frames connected together on the reel. As the script informs us, N looks at an image of L depicted on a postcard, then:

La suivante est identique, et la main la garde elle aussi un certain temps;
celle qui la remplace est encore la même, et ainsi de suite pour celles
qui viennent après, qui défilent de plus en plus vite. Le plan est coupé sur
le geste de la main changeant les cartes d'une façon mécanique.
(p. 181, *L'Immortelle*).

Indeed, shot No. 291 of *L'Immortelle* consists of 'les cartes postales vues par N; l'image comprend seulement les cartes elles-mêmes et les mains de N' (p. 180, *L'Immortelle*). The postcards almost fill the screen, suggesting a parallel between them and the frame of the film itself.

Nonetheless this *mise en abyme* is also a coherent component within an interpretation of *L'Immortelle* as the story of a forbidden love. Both N and L are, throughout the film, surveyed. L seems constantly pursued by M - 'l'homme aux chiens' (p. 12, *L'Immortelle*) - who may therefore be viewed as her jealous husband, lover or pimp. Moreover, the various local people become agents of M, such as the 'pêcheur' stationed outside N's window and N's female servant, both of whom seem to be either spying on N and L or conspiring to keep them apart. Catherine Sarayan (Catherine Robbe-Grillet) suggests L may be a victim of the white slave-trade, furthering this impression: CATHERINE: 'Vous savez qu'il se passe ici des choses particulières (...) Des enlèvements, des prisons secrètes, des filles qu'on vend' (p. 168, *L'Immortelle*). The

postcards, then, become photographs taken by L's pursuers as evidence of her whereabouts, analogous to the file of a private detective (a secret role the postcard vendor could also be playing), which render this self-reflexive device equally recuperable as a component within the representational narrative of a doomed love story.

The Codex in *L'HQM* has a similarly dual role as both metatextual *mise en abyme* and textual element within the 'mise en scène'. But to complicate matters further, the Codex's role as narrative component is also ambiguous, due to the multiple narratives *L'HQM* proposes. As with the postcards of *L'Immortelle*, the Codex contains images from the film itself, some of which have already been seen, others of which are about to be revealed. In this way the text's artificial status as a process of invention is outlined, and the *mise en abyme* becomes the generator of the text insofar as images seen later on in the film were originally seen in the postcards or Codex. Hence, just as the script to *L'Immortelle* states when describing shot no. 291: 'La première carte postale représentait la mosquée vue de loin, comme elle le sera au n° 293' (p. 181, *L'Immortelle*), so too in *L'HQM*, the Codex which Boris finds on the chemist's counter preempts shots from the latter part of the film. The Codex contains a series of photographs of Jean Robin, some from his youth and therefore not found in the film at all as they refer to the history of the actor playing Jean Robin, but others are recognisably stills of later scenes. One of the Codex's images depicts Jean and Boris in the underground chamber where Jean will fall to his death, another shows Jean holding a gun, as he will in the scene at the end of the film when he shoots Boris. Codex as directory of chemicals becomes metatextual code, wherein the separate elements of the film are broken down, affirming the text of the film as a concocted structure.

Alongside such metatextual significance, the Codex has a complex textual one. The ambiguous narrative role played by the Codex stems from the pharmacienne's double nature as both ally of Jean and traitor to his cause: the photographs are then either an album in loving memory of Jean or a file kept for surveillance of him. Initially, the pharmacienne helps Jean escape down a secret passageway leading from the chemist's, then she rushes off to warn Laura of the danger's to Jean's plight. PHARMACIENNE:

'Ne restez pas dehors, il y a une opération de contrôle en ville. (...) Jean a pu s'échapper' (*L'HQM*). Soon afterwards however, a variation on this scene takes place. This time, once Jean has entered the underground chamber, the pharmacienne leads enemy soldiers to an ambush point outside, where they wait for Jean, guns at the ready. The *mise en abyme* thus works alongside the network of contradictory versions proposed by Boris, which together comprise the film's textual generators. The *mise en abyme* as exploited in the cinema of Robbe-Grillet may be seen as emblematic of a conception of the text as both a coherent récit or network of récits, and as a metanarrative, or self-reflexive, self-determining structure.

Gardies suggests that the 'Poudre de peur' sequence is *L'Eden's mise en abyme*.¹⁸ Yet we argue that while Violette's hallucination, incurred by the consumption of a suspicious white powder, undoubtedly preempts later events in the film in its presentation of clips which will be seen later on, the form in which the vision comes to her is in no way a reflection on the filmmaking process, and thus does not present the workings of the text in microcosm (unless of course the filmmaker was on cocaine while shooting the film). Such a point of contention alerts us to the double nature of many textual elements within the filmic (and literary) texts which like the *mise en abyme* offer a metatextual commentary on the creative process. The following subsection compares literary and filmic self-conscious devices which are embedded or dispersed within the texture of the work, and which are thus less easily identified.

(v) Self-imaging in Literary and Filmic Text

(*Projet, Maison, Topologie, TEE, La Belle Captive, L'HQM, Dans le Labyrinthe*)

The text self-consciously highlights its aesthetic nature, and its use of the stereotype as a figure within the text, when description becomes an image within a poster or advertisement. The blurring of the division between the text's words and the poster's image, both of which are interchangeable, effects a transgression by the text of its own conventions through a subversion of narrative stability. Hence, in *Projet*, the vision of Laura's pose, initially described as she lies on the floor of the apartment, is transformed into the sexually charged image of an advertisement for a play:

Un peu de sang bien rouge, en tout cas, tache le creux de sa paume levée,
et aussi, à mieux regarder, un de ses genoux, celui qui se trouve fléchi.
Cette teinte vermeille est exactement identique à celle qui colore les lèvres,
ainsi que la très petite surface de jupe visible sur l'image. (...)

L'affiche bariolée se reproduit à plusieurs dizaines d'exemplaires,
collés côte à côte tout au long du couloir de correspondance. Le titre de la
pièce est: « Le sang des rêves ».

(pp. 28- 29, *Projet*)

Similarly in *Maison*, the recurring scene of the reception at Villa Bleue appears depicted on a magazine cover lying in the street: 'Sous une inscription horizontale en grands idéogrammes aux formes carrées, qui occupe tout le haut de la page, le dessin - de facture grossière - représente un vaste salon à l'européenne (...)' (p. 35, *Maison*). In *Topologie*, such a re-presentation is effected when a scene slips from Tarot card to enacted reality, eliding topographies of prison cell and exterior landscape, from 'l'image au dessin naïf d'une haute tour en maçonnerie' (pp. 67-68, *Topologie*) to the tower itself, where Mrs Hamilton and her twins are finishing their tour of the town.

Significantly for our comparison between media, these examples illustrate the extent to which the literary text makes use of the static visual image or freeze-frame to disrupt the progression of the narrative and draw attention to the process of creation of the text. The literary medium then borrows from the filmic or photographic medium in order to contest the words' reality. The text then deliberately sets word and image against each other.

Such a technique finds its counterpart in the filmic text, in which, precisely, words are employed to subvert the narrative of the image. This in turn demonstrates crucial contrasts between media. In *TEE*, the comic book which Elias takes to Mathieu when returning to Antwerp offers a parallel to these auto-representations within the novels. A shot of Elias reading in his compartment is followed by a close-up of a page from the comic, on which an ink drawing depicts Lorentz watching Elias suspiciously, in reproduction of an earlier scene. Significantly, the thought bubble in the comic strip picture is written, and it is this insertion that offers a narrative variation on the previous, real scene it re-presents: 'Humm! Je crois qu'il m'a repéré' implies a far greater authority over events than Elias could ever lay claim to. However, whereas in the literary text, narrating agent and/or physical topography shift through verbal mirroring, the film's visual mirroring possesses no such generative potential, proposing instead a flat introjection of a moment of the film. A filmic equivalent in narrative terms of the literary device would consist of the film's switching to comic-book style animation, continuing the pursuit scene between Lorentz and Elias in cartoon form. *La Belle Captive* will make use of precisely this in Walter's hallucination sequence, in which his thoughts are captured on a TV-monitor in Van der Reeves's experiment, which brings to life the Magritte-inspired nightmare; Walter himself will however not become animated. The ambiguity of verbal language exploited within the literary text enables a switch in the source of narration, which in turn lends the verbal medium a capacity to disorientate more than can the filmic image.

The slowing down of the narration to the stasis of description, as when actions become an image in literary texts such as *Projet*, is further developed filmically in

L'HQM, when the moving image is slowed to a freeze-frame. As Gardies shows, this occurs when the chemist betrays Jean Robin to the enemy soldiers.¹⁹ Gardies fails to note that this use of freeze-frame occurs directly after the Codex sequence where still photographs comprise a *mise en abyme* of the film. The progression from Codex (stasis) to freeze-frame sequence (mobility + stasis), to normal action (mobility) serves as a self-conscious formal reflection on the process of animation that characterises filmic production. This is further enhanced by the punctuation of each freeze-frame with a different sound-effect, such that sound is equally implicated within the illusion-making process of the film.

An analogous device is found in the literary text which exploits the tension between fixed image and narrative progression through the ambivalent alternation between a description of a picture in the text and an account of supposedly real events. In *Dans le Labyrinthe*, much of the narrative is both action and two-dimensional pictorial reproduction. The erosion of the frame around the picture in the text effects ambiguity and posits the text as a self-consciously generated aesthetic process. Initially, the picture is apparently clearly demarcated:

Le tableau, dans son cadre de bois verni, représente une scène de cabaret.

C'est une gravure en noir et blanc datant de l'autre siècle, ou une bonne reproduction. Un grand nombre de personnages emplit toute la scène:

une foule de consommateurs, assis ou debout, et, tout à fait sur la gauche,

le patron, légèrement surélevé derrière son comptoir.

(p. 24, *Dans le Labyrinthe*).

After this, however, the scene's status becomes ambivalently both what the picture depicts and what is going on inside a bar where the soldier himself is having a drink. Just when the description seems to be too involved to be attributed to the picture and is on the verge of becoming narrative action again, phrases such as 'Sur la droite, c'est-à-dire au centre du tableau' (p. 24) and 'L'artiste les a représentés avec autant de

soin' (p. 28, *Dans le Labyrinthe*) re-affirm the passage's role as the description of a painting. Moreover, the appearance in this description of certain aspects of the world of the text, add to the ambivalence. The child, who plays a major role in the text's action, is apparently in the picture too, holding what seems to be the soldier's 'boîte à chaussures' (p. 26); later the child's words '«Tu dors?»' (p. 30, *Dans le Labyrinthe*) posit the text as activity rather than stasis. The pictorial description fades out, without the text indicating when exactly, and the narrative becomes a depiction of the soldier, who then becomes inanimate. The text's description of him alive may as well be the picture's two-dimensional representation of him. In this way categories of the real and of the aesthetic are interconnected. The obvious mirroring by one representation of the other affirms the text itself as self-reflectively artificial.

(vi) Profilmic and Camera, versus Events and their Verbal Narration

(L'Immortelle, Marienbad, L'HQM, Projet, Djinn, Glissements)

The interplay between stasis and mobility to contest and generate meanings within the literary or filmic text is equally obtained filmically through the dynamic relation between profilmic and camera. This becomes a means of highlighting the production of meaning as a textual activity, specific to the filmic medium. *L'Immortelle* exploits the stasis and rigidity of acting in order to demonstrate the mobility of the camera: the less the actors move, the more attention will be drawn to the act of filming itself as the camera's view of unmoving actors noticeably shifts. This also marks a subversion of what for Van Wert constrains film with the responsibility of capturing reality, namely film's ability to record motion. Stasis within the shot becomes connotative of a subjectively perceived vision, in contrast to the omniscient connotations of the shifting point of view shot which captures profilmic movement.²⁰ Ricardou highlights a similar effect in *Marienbad*, obtained through the animation of the immobile via fluid

camera movements when filming the enigmatic statue, and via the immobilisation of the animate through the rigidity of the acting.²¹

Equally, the profilmic draws attention to its contrived nature. The appearance and reappearance of a character within one continuous pan (achieved simply by the character's walking around the back of the camera, to reappear uncannily in the same shot in a different place) highlights the artificiality of the filmic representation, as character is literally re-presented. For Armes, the use of this technique in *L'Immortelle* (shot 37) is an interruption in continuity.²² We argue however that it consists of a temporal continuity at the expense of a spatial one. The film's mimetic dimension (what is seen) is subjugated to the temporal dimension, or time of the filming (narration). In this way the latter, as process, is forefronted at the expense of the former, such that realistic effect is effaced by filmic affect. Such false continuity marks a subversion of conventional editing, as here, editing occurs without a cut. Such a technique is particularly prominent in *L'Immortelle*, as this is a film which opens with a series of shots of L in different locations, in different clothes, all edited together as if in a continuum, yet in no way serving to advance the narrative chronologically. This contrasting excess of editing (as opposed to the erasure operated in shot 37) produces a subjugation of the temporal to the spatial, in an inverse process of that outlined above.

Gardies's formulation of four ways in which the sequence may be disrupted: 'la fissure, la substitution, le «raccord à appréhension retardée» et l'inclusion' provides insight into the methods by which the filmic text may forefront its process of creation self-consciously through the rupture of continuity or the preempting of future sequences.²³ *L'HQM* offers examples of the first two terms: 'fissure' occurs when two shots show the same action being performed by the same character continuously through two different locations edited together; 'substitution' arises when one character in one location completes the action begun by another character in another location, the two edited together as if in a continuum. Burch's 'raccord à appréhension retardée' is effected when a voice offscreen begins as 'Voix Off' and becomes synchronised speech when a character appears in shot speaking the words.²⁴ 'Inclusion' is the insertion of an initially

irrelevant shot, with or without sound, into a linked sequence; only later will the irrelevant shot recur as part of its own linked sequence and so gain diegetic function.

The abandonment of naturalism in the profilmic is equally a means by which self-reflexivity in the filmic medium is obtained. For Van Wert an attack on anthropomorphism, self-conscious textual creation is effected in the later films (*L'Eden* and *Glissements*) through the replacement of physical depth within the shot by the flattening of surfaces, achieved by the use of cardboard sets, stereotyped characters and the use of paint for blood.²⁵ This forefronts the plasticity of the filmic world, and denies moral depth or naturalism any visual representation.

The literary text parallels the dynamic relation between profilmic and camera through the creation of tension between narrator and events. Often in *Projet*, objective narration of events slips into a self-querying account which subverts the finality of the narration. The self-questioning narrator discusses the textual vision with himself with phrases such as 'mais voilà qu'une question préliminaire se pose' (p. 81, *Projet*) and 'ce peut très bien être' (p. 82, *Projet*), which convey a provisionality. Yet at the same time they connote the narrator's absolute power over events: he foresees any problem and highlights it with casual confidence. The elements of the narrative become toys within the game: 'Quant à l'escalier de fer - j'y pense - on l'utilisera quand même' (p. 82, *Projet*).

Equally, objective or subjective narration transforms into direct speech. This may take the form of dramatisation of the reader's possible response to the text, relayed as dialogue within the text. On page 16, the text consists of the narrator's conversation with Laura. It is a routine exchange, of the type held by a husband with his wife on coming home from work. Before he arrived, she was alone and afraid. Then: «C'est vous qui rentrez si tard, dit-elle. Vous m'avez fait peur.» (...) « Rien de nouveau? dit-elle. - Non, dis-je, rien de nouveau' (p. 16, *Projet*). When the dialogue finishes on page 17, objective narration takes over. The scene transforms from one of intimacy to one of aggression. The narrator becomes the potential rapist, come to attack Laura, just as she had feared. 'Elle veut crier, mais une main chaude et ferme se plaque sur sa bouche, tandis qu'elle éprouve la sensation d'une masse écrasante qui se glisse contre elle et bientôt la

submerge tout entière' (p. 17, *Projet*). The dialogue of before designates one reality, and the objective narration records another, and more specifically, the objective narration is a concretisation of Laura's nightmare/fantasy, rather than a description of the concrete. The rape ensues, narrated from the narrator-rapist's point of view, but this culminates in a resumption of dialogue. This time however, the dialogue is about the rape. The speakers are no longer the narrator and Laura, but are now the rapist and some other agent. '« Et ensuite? » - Ensuite elle s'est calmée peu à peu' (p. 18, *Projet*). The objective narration describing the rape is converted by this exchange into a story. The reader's own response is dramatised by the auditor's question 'Et ensuite?' incriminating the reader within what has been described, as if the rape were an enactment of the reader's own fantasy. In this way the reader is both absorbed within the production of fantasy and distanced from it through the self-reflective narration.

Both filmic and literary text create images for their production of meaning through the recording of themselves. As the recording of sound is an intrinsic part of the filmic rather than literary process, we might see such a technique as influenced by the filmic medium. In the scene between Laura and JR at the address on Park Avenue beginning on page 57 of *Projet*, unidentified noises of a struggle can be heard from the neighbouring room: 'piétinements, meubles heurtés, respirations haletantes, étoffes froissées, déchirées, avec même bientôt des gémissements, des supplications étouffées' (p. 59, *Projet*). When this scene is resumed on page 63, the dialogue claims that the sounds are a tape-recording, played in the next room in order to frighten Laura. Laura explains that the recording cannot be stopped: '- Non, on ne peut pas: la boîte est fermée à clef' (p. 64). The tape-recording, Laura explains, is interspersed with silences. The narration continues with what could be either objective description, or words and noises on the tape-recording, echoing sections of the text from earlier on in *Projet*, and culminating in the line we have already read at the start of the novel (implying everything we have read may equally be a recording): '« Tais-toi, idiote, ou je te fais mal »' (p. 65). Laura then opens the tape-recorder and stops the cassette. Now the dialogue between Laura and JR resumes, and reveals what we took as their previous discussion *about* the

cassette to be in fact the recording *on* the cassette. The tape-recorder wasn't locked at all: the voice which claimed it was, was a recording. Hence: '- Et pourquoi a-t-elle dit que son père avait mis la bobine en route et fermé la boîte à clef? - D'abord elle n'a pas dit que c'était son père. Et puis, de toute façon, elle ment sans arrêt' (p. 66). Through a series of baffling inversions, the text destabilises its own narrative process. Similarly, the use of a tape recording for Djinn's voice in chapter 5 of that novel overturns the narrator's authority, as his belief that he is hearing the real voice of his fantasy woman is revealed as completely illusory (pp. 74-75, *Djinn*).

Projet's sequence is directly alluded to in *Glissements*, when the sound of sexual violence may be heard by the Magistrate as he approaches Alice's cell. When he enters, he sees Alice merely looking out of the window; the noise is coming from a gramophone record playing nearby (pp. 59-60, *Glissements*). The filmic version of this self-reflexive technique produces quick and effective humour and little more. In the literary text it is more drawn out and more unsettling, questioning as it does the status of the text as both fantasy, reality, truth and lie.

In conclusion to this subsection, we would make the following general statements about the difference between filmic and literary texts as illustrated by our examination of self-conscious techniques in each medium. In the literary text, the self-reflexive device adjusts the source of narration. This takes place each time the narrating agent changes, or when the topographical location shifts inexplicably, or when the status of the words transforms from 'real' to fantasy, from subjective to objective, from action to picture or recording. The self-conscious filmic device does not have such disruptive implications. This is because, despite maintaining view as its essence, film is less a drama of perspective than a perpetual perspective of drama.

For in contrast to the literary texts of Robbe-Grillet in which the drama often focuses on the question: 'who is narrating?' the film's narrative source is always necessarily absent from the filmic text, as the process of filming cannot be shown within the film. The stills photographer may enter Alice's cell in *Glissements*, and Robbe-Grillet himself may even be seen behind the camera filming a scene from *TEE* within that very

film, but while they alert us to the film's manufactured status, these moments do little to disrupt the filmic narrative. The inevitable effacement of the narrative source from the filmic text means that it is less the subject of the text's formal investigation than it is in the literary process. The filmic text dramatises its process of production of meaning through self-conscious manipulations of sound and image, of camera and profilmic, or of credits as generative material, but none of these reorientate the source of narration with anything like the drama created by the literary text's subversion of its own source and hence of its own authority. This is also because the exclusively verbal nature of the literary text means less is required for it to challenge its very existence. The filmic text may put each of its constituent channels of communication (image, dialogue, sound-effects, music, graphic material) into crisis, but rarely subverts all five of these at the same time.

Yet the filmic text may dramatises its narrative process through the manipulation of point of view and through the staging of narrative struggle between forces and forms operating within the text. The next section begins with an examination the manipulation of point of view in both filmic and literary texts, and then assesses the process of conflict generated between verbal and visual forms within the filmic medium. This will enable a more general assessment of the media's modes of narration, conceived by Robbe-Grillet in terms of forces contesting each other.

II. The Contest for Narrative Control

In the filmic text, what is narrated consists of what is seen and heard by the spectator. This may or may not be part of a character's field of experience. The source of narration in the filmic text is less fixable, less identifiable, and consequently less subvertible than in the literary text. What may be taken as intradiegetic narration, may not in fact be narration at all; vision in conjunction with sound is the definition of filmic truth, yet it is ambiguous whether such vision is anchored in an intra- or extra-diegetic

agent. While the protagonist in the filmic text may orientate the spectator's gaze, as Heath states, there is however no radical dichotomy between subjective point-of-view shots and objective non-point-of-view shots.²⁶ The intradiegetic agents within the filmic text then become the only explicit channels through which the filmic narration is expressed, in the absence of an explicitly present extradiegetic organising voice which we might find in the literary text. Yet the extent to which such intradiegetic agents actually narrate, or are narrated, is far from easily determined.

In the filmic texts of Robbe-Grillet, the disruption of point of view in the filmic text undermines the spectator's unified perspective of a filmic truth. Nevertheless, as we shall see, such a slippage between point-of-view shots becomes the hall-mark of the literary as well as of the filmic texts, forging indisputable links between narrative modes within media. Indeed, the multiplicity of narrative voice which reaches anarchic proportions in the later literary texts is influenced by Robbe-Grillet's work in the cinema. It can be no coincidence that in the novels from *Maison* to *Souvenirs*, the narrative source becomes less and less identifiable. The filmic fluidity of perspective has gradually contaminated the literary narration, which in novels such as *Les Gommages* or *Le Voyeur* could generally be attributed to a specific character's consciousness.

In the ensuing comparative analysis, we trace the manipulation of point of view in literary and filmic texts in order to highlight the differences between modes of narration within each media. The contest for narrative control of the text illustrates crucial differences and similarities between media. We will affirm the extent to which the filmic invades the literary, culminating in a reciprocity.

(i) Death and Immortality: Intradiegetic Narrators in Novel and Film

(La Jalousie and L'Immortelle)

The issue of whether the filmic text may represent pure subjectivity may be clarified via the comparison of *La Jalousie* and *L'Immortelle*. This in turn reveals the

fragility of narration within the filmic text, which unlike the literary text must place its narrator on the screen as a character within the diegesis in order to show that narration is actually taking place. The literary text may on the contrary maintain a personalised subjective narrative power whilst completely annihilating its intradiegetic narrator.

La Jalousie and *L'Immortelle* play on their dual status as both subjective expressions of a narrating consciousness and objective traces left by a narrator external to the events depicted. In the novel, the words may have their source either in a jealous husband or in an external (camera-like) entity describing events dispassionately. In the film, N may either be observing everything from his own subjective point of view (hence the bizarre nature of the apparitions and dreamlike sound-effects) or he may himself merely be narrated by the camera. Yet whereas *La Jalousie* maintains a constant ambiguity over the presence-absence of the husband/narrator by excluding his physical presence from the text, *L'Immortelle*, and by extension, the filmic text in general, cannot do this.

La Jalousie's force lies in the implicit, unsaid presence of the obsessive husband and/or narrator, who need not actually appear for the drama of the text to intensify. Textually, the hypothetical jealous husband does not exist at all, hence critics' description of him as a 'je-néant'.²⁷ He is nonetheless glimpsed through the text's topographical organisation. The aspects of objects and events described, and the rhythms of repetition which characterise the text, produce effects of the character of a possible narrator, and hence a fragment with which to answer the insistent problem of the text: 'who is speaking?' The many references to a third glass when Franck and A... are drinking on the terrace, and the varying number of chairs which indicate that there is a third person present, are the most obvious clues as to the existence of *La Jalousie's* narrator-witness. More significantly for our comparison of media, it is through structure and the nature of description that this absent witness is ambivalently creatable. This in turn differentiates the literary texture from the filmic.

Various descriptions of Franck provide characterisation of the narrator as possibly jealous, as when Franck appears with his shirt unbuttoned:

Il n'a ni veste ni cravate, et le col de sa chemise est largement déboutonné;
 mais c'est une chemise blanche irréprochable, en tissu fin de belle qualité,
 dont les poignets à revers sont maintenus par des boutons amovibles en ivoire.

(p. 21, *La Jalousie*).

The reader might infer that only a jealous observer would need to qualify the shirt as irreproachable; this makes up for the otherwise unsuitable nature of Franck's dress. Yet this narration is also, ambiguously, style indirect libre, and could refer to A...'s view of Franck's appearance. This literary narrative mode then offers a perfect means of creating ambivalence, as the thoughts of one character are proposed by what is also objective narration, rendering them equally the thoughts of an intra- or extra-diegetic narrator-observer, or indeed, of any other character within the text. Hence, the following statement is both the worry of a tormented intradiegetic husband-narrator, or an objective account of A...'s thoughts by an impartial, extradiegetic narrator: 'Il serait difficile de préciser où, exactement, il [Franck] néglige quelque règle essentielle, sur quel point particulier il manque de discrétion' (p. 23, *La Jalousie*). This may moreover be read in a third way due to the sentence's very ambivalence: it is difficult to specify how Franck is being indiscreet or suggestive, because he is not being suggestive at all.

The association of certain passages of description with a subjective point of view is effected through juxtaposition in *La Jalousie*. Such juxtaposition parallels the filmic point-of-view shot, where the screen shows a certain scene, then a character looking, thereby establishing that the character is looking at that scene. In the literary text, however, such a process may be operated on a more ambiguous level than in the filmic text. In the film, unless a character is actually seen seeing, then his/her presence is effaced, and his/her role in narrating the text is nonexistent. The shot which has no character-witness becomes an establishing shot, omnisciently narrated. In the literary text however, the status of such scenes retains a higher degree of ambivalence. For *La Jalousie* hints at the presence of a voyeur-narrator without ever explicitly revealing his presence. Certain scenes gain a duality through juxtaposition, as both omnisciently and

subjectively perceived. Cutting from one description to another creates a screening device such that the narrator is projected by what he suppresses from the text. This is seen most clearly when the narrator appears to look away, as in the following passage:

Les fenêtres de sa chambre sont encore fermées. Seul le système de
jalousies qui remplace les vitres a été ouvert, au maximum, donnant ainsi
à l'intérieur une clarté suffisante. A... est debout contre la fenêtre de droite
et regarde par une des fentes, vers la terrasse.

L'homme se tient toujours immobile, penché vers l'eau boueuse, sur
le pont en rondins recouverts de terre.

(p. 40, *La Jalousie*).

On the one hand, this example describes what A... sees from her window as she looks out. Another reading would be that the voyeur-narrator has averted his gaze from A... to the man who leans over the muddy water, so that A... will not see that she is being watched; it is then a double point-of-view. Thirdly, the passage is an objective description of two figures within the diegesis, namely A... and 'l'homme'. The fact that all of these are equally valid interpretations, asserts the literary text's ability to maintain concurrent narrative points of view (which may be mutually exclusive) over that of the filmic text.

For whereas the literary text may efface its intradiegetic narrator while nonetheless constructing his/her presence, the filmic text must present its narrator tangibly in frame. *L'Immortelle* can only tend towards the effacement of its central narrator-protagonist in the interests of a filmic presentation of subjectivity. For Morissette, *L'Immortelle* is mostly observed psychologically from inside N's consciousness, making his physical appearance on the screen schematic and abstract; we are also of this view.²⁸ The spectator's attention is therefore drawn not to him, but rather to what he sees, a process played out by N's own performance, as his perception concentrates on L, not on himself. L is moreover absent from the screen when her

dialogue is most poetic; her very existence is thus lent a nuance as N's invention - an imaginary erotic apparition often dissolving into pure words within his mind. Subjectivity in film then tends towards a non-presence, pure subjectivity towards a non-film.

The implications of the above analysis on the process of narration of filmic and literary text are as follows: the expression of the subjective process of experience in film is achieved via a staging of the protagonist's struggle to narrate, or to gain control over events unfolding before our eyes, whereas in the literary text such subjectivity may be conveyed in the absence of an intradiegetic narrator, via the reader's struggle to invent such an organising presence. The annihilation of the narrator in the novel which retains the drama of subjectivity, finds its filmic equivalent in a narrator of immortality.

The reciprocity between media is moreover emphasized by the relation between *La Jalousie* and *L'Immortelle*. For it is the use of a technique in *La Jalousie* which is influenced by the filmic point-of-view shot but exploited in conjunction with the absent intradiegetic narrator (possible only in the literary medium), which produces an innovation within the literary text. Interestingly, Spiegel locates Robbe-Grillet's adaptation in *La Jalousie* of the cinematographic close-up, which reduces the physical world to a state of petrification, and finally works against description and visibility. This is a further illustration of the use of one media to antagonise the conventions of another.²⁹ Robbe-Grillet then transforms the literary medium with aspects from the filmic, employing a filmic technique to produce something wholly specific to the literary medium.

Now that we have examined the literary and filmic possibilities for subjective narration, we will move on to the alternation and conflict between viewpoints. The implications of an explicit duality of perspective form the focus of the next subsection.

(ii) From Duality to Multiplicity: Narrative Point of View in Film and Novel

(Marienbad, Un Régicide, L'HQM and Souvenirs)

The divergent methods by which the contest between narrative viewpoints may be staged in filmic and literary texts is best exemplified via a comparison between *Marienbad* and *Un Régicide*. The former is structured around the conflict between the versions of its central protagonists; the latter around the versions of what could be either one or two protagonist(s). Both texts subvert a unified narrative view through explicit conflict, yet each medium attains this through vitally contrasting methods.

Marienbad consistently employs editing to cut up a univocal view of reality, whether of protagonist or spectator. The point-of-view shot becomes a means of creating jarring combinations of perceiver and perceived which in turn disrupt the narrative. In *Marienbad*, it is A whom X attempts to control through his narration, and it is A who proves least narratable; the unlikely juxtaposition which implies an impossible point of view posits her image as source of hiatus. This is seen in instances like the following: 'Sur les derniers mots, A lève les yeux vers la caméra, qui se trouve à la hauteur d'un homme debout. Aussitôt, contre-champ représentant le jardin' (p. 68, *Marienbad*). The first sentence frames A in the act of observing, and therefore centring the spectator's gaze; the second should then correspond to the object of her gaze. Yet the advancing 'homme debout' implied by A's attitude is not in evidence. The film exploits such shots which do not align themselves with a specific intradiegetic point of view, to convey the sense that the filmic reality is autonomous, or imagined. This in turn creates a narrative struggle between the spectator's expectation, or narrative desire, and that of the film: 'Puis une série de plans fixes montrent des aspects plus inattendus du groupe de pierre, ces photos étant prises par des observateurs imaginaires placés n'importe où: dans les airs aussi bien (angles impossibles pour de simples promeneurs)' (p. 71, *Marienbad*).

Montage equally acts to oppose the narrative forces of X and A. The series of images alternating between scenes in the hotel bar, and in the bedroom (where A will

eventually be violated), enacts the narrative struggle that characterises the text as a whole. The varying length of time given to bar or bedroom denotes the varying control each chamber has within the récit and hence the degree of control A or X may maintain over narrative events (pp. 92-96, *Mariénbad*).

The literary text subverts narrative hierarchy through a comparable opposition of narrative forces within the diegesis. Yet as is exemplified by *Un Régicide*, the literary medium may frame its struggle within a single narrative source. For narrative conflict in this text is created largely by a duality of narrative voice which consistently subverts itself, creating an irresolvable ambiguity over whether the narrator is one or two agencies. This very ambivalence, within what may be a narrative monologue issuing from one split source, in turn places all other elements of the text in crisis, where in the filmic text such a crisis is enacted through an exchange, or dialogue between separate entities. *Un Régicide* demonstrates the extent to which a doubt over the identity of the narrator generates (and is generated by) topographical interpenetration, chronological manipulation, a subversion between metaphor and reality, and between realms of the real and the imaginary.

In this novel the narrative is initially dual. The use of the first-person singular in conjunction with the present tense to describe beach, sand and sea conjures up an autonomous universe characterised by a personalised, immediate vision which connotes the dreamlike, hence the subjective. This narrative alternates with and opposes sections narrated by the third person and in the past historic, from the point of view of Boris, which convey banality and objectivity. Such a differentiation establishes a division between narrative forces within the text. Yet such a division is soon revealed as illusory.

For the present tense invades Boris's field of experience, and while the third person is maintained, the world in which Boris features becomes more and more dreamlike, as when the regicide is first described: 'Il faut aller vite. Boris frappe, puis retire l'arme vivement et reste stupéfié comme si lui-même venait de recevoir le choc...' (p. 127, *Un Régicide*). Similarly, the 'je'-narrative slips into the perfect tense, thus linked

to the supposedly detached world of Boris: 'Hier soir Malus est venu' (p. 105, *Un Régicide*).

The initial establishment of the two narrative realms, which gradually interpenetrate, also offers a means by which metaphor is literalised and transformed into reality. The more lyrical, oneiric 'je'-narration is initially exploited as a metaphorical expression for Boris's more routine experiences or states of mind. Yet this distinction is eroded as both narratives are aligned as equally real, or unreal. This is most clearly seen in the following example. The indecision characterising the political project of constructing public buildings and roads is described within the framework of Boris's style indirect libre:

Les partis, s'ils étaient d'accord sur la nécessité d'entreprendre ces travaux, se séparaient radicalement quand ils décidaient de leur nature: (...)
Depuis des années que la discussion durait, aucune entente ne parvenait à se faire, si bien que rien n'était jamais commencé; et chacun restait persuadé de la supériorité de sa méthode.
(p. 39, *Un Régicide*)

A page later, an image for this stasis is presented within the world identified with the first-person narrative: 'Sur une côte rocheuse, un trou d'eau, étroit et profond, dont le niveau monte et s'abaisse, calmement, régulièrement, au gré des ondulations de la mer. Le fond sableux donne à l'eau claire une transparence lumineuse et *verte*' (p. 40, *Un Régicide*, our italics). Then, however, this apparent metaphor becomes a concrete reality as Boris's narrative resumes: 'Boris regarda le journal qu'il avait gardé dans la main sans s'en rendre compte. «Eclatante victoire...» La feuille, roulée en bouchon, vint se poser sur *l'eau verte*; une brise légère la poussait vers le large' (p. 40, *Un Régicide*, our italics). The initially metaphorical green water gains a literal presence within Boris's narrative, as his newspaper turns into a ball of scrunched up paper on the surface of the water itself. Crucially, this in turn is disrupted as the passage shifts again, continuing as follows:

'Longtemps, *je* suis des yeux cette boule de papier qui s'éloigne' (p. 40, *Un Régicide*, our italics). Boris is effaced by 'je', as the initially metaphorical role of the 'je'-narrative is transformed into a literality. The co-existence of 'je' and Boris results in a subversion of each narrative's hierarchical position as real or unreal.

The topography of *Un Régicide* initially establishes physical distinctions between the narrative realms of the text. Boris's room and daily routine comprise a familiar, realistic world, in which the reader can imagine existing. In contrast to this is the world of 'je', portrayed as a separate continent: 'J'habite une île, trop éloignée de tout continent pour qu'on puisse jamais songer en sortir. (...) il n'y a rien chez nous que des landes, de la pierre, du sable' (p. 21, *Un Régicide*). Malus 'le solitaire', a quasi-mythological character, informs the 'je'-narrator that their world is not of the earth (p. 101, *Un Régicide*). Chronology further differentiates the two realms:

Les saisons sont, ici, si peu marquées qu'il nous arrive de les oublier. De même, lors des fréquentes périodes de brume, la nuit se distingue à peine du jour à travers les petits carreaux des pièces enfumées, où la lampe à huile brûle alors sans interruption.
(p. 22, *Un Régicide*, our italics).

This is in contrast to Boris's concern for chronological exactitude: 'dimanche 18 août. On était le 18 août' (p. 23); 'Boris regarda de nouveau sa montre' (p. 26, *Un Régicide*). The distinctions between topographies associated with first- and third-person narratives are however soon eroded causing an implosion of the two into one conflicting space. For by page 46 the chronology of Boris's world is undermined while he is at work when the clock stops completely. Similarly, the je-narrative gains seasons: 'Nous sommes au milieu de l'hiver...' (p. 47, *Un Régicide*).

Un Régicide illustrates therefore the extent to which grammatical modes such as the choice of narrative pronoun and tense may be manipulated to create conflict within the literary text, where in the filmic text editing offers the most fruitful means to achieve

disruption. Montage is moreover exploited by Robbe-Grillet to suggest contrasting subjective worlds within the diegesis, and most notably in *L'HQM* which uses this technique to confuse topographical space. The varying paths from entrance to attic in the castle in which the women live, signify, for Armes, a constant reinvention of space.³⁰ In the castle, routes between supposedly fixed locations differ depending on which character is taking them, creating subjective realms within the filmic text.³¹ Such sense of conflict within the film is further perpetuated through the variations in dress which occur at unlikely moments, and by the technique of intercutting faces of characters apparently watching certain events in a scene, despite the fact that previous sequences suggest such characters should logically be situated elsewhere. Both montage and a manipulation of the profilmic may then reorientate space in the filmic medium, transforming what is initially a physical set into shifting, imaginary settings.

The later literary texts of Robbe-Grillet exploit a mobility of perspective which parallels the rapid shifts in viewpoint generated by filmic montage. As in other works from both media, such a mobility produces a struggle for narrative control, but unlike in the filmic text, this technique may in the literary medium maintain a paradoxical source within one intradiegetic narrating consciousness. It may in turn become a means by which the process of writing itself is dramatised.

For the use of a multiple narrative viewpoint in *Souvenirs* through the constant (re-)generation of new identities becomes a means of accommodating conflict and containing dissolution within a mobile textual system. Narrative technique becomes a means by which the creative process is captured in its struggle and rhythm, played out as an alternation between pseudo-personae, quasi-moralities, and shifting states of consciousness.

The text's opening establishes the imaginary status of the text's reality, projected from the generating cell as in *Topologie*. But in *Souvenirs* the interconnecting narrative segments are significantly rooted in one voice, with many guises. Before identity is fully assumed by the speaker of the text, he is visited by fantasms. Initially within the cell, the narrator describes his visions of the three hunters chasing the nude girl on horseback at

the water's edge, and of the prostitute dragging the fresh animal hide. It is only when the two policemen present the narrator with a news-clipping depicting a crime, that his identity begins to form. The sadoerotic murder generates a lengthy discussion of the possible circumstance and construction of the scene, which in turn forces an assumption of identity: 'Ce serait donc moi le mystérieux criminel de seconde main, venu ensuite sur les lieux pour parachever le supplice?' (p. 21). Absorption within the criminal fantasy leads back to the generating cell: 'Il faut donc recommencer le récit plus tôt qu'il n'avait été prévu à l'origine. Immobile, ai-je dit' (pp. 25-26, *Souvenirs*).

The narrator's criminal guise is then transformed into that of policeman, as the focus of the text becomes Inspector Franck V. Francis, now investigating a sado-sexual crime. Francis's name posits his existence as predominantly textual, recurring as he does in the film *La Belle Captive*, or as the gangster Franck in *TEE*. Francis retains the third-person form, while also assuming the 'je' form of narration, significantly fusing with the criminal narrator of the text's opening: 'Je téléphone au bureau. C'est Morgan qui me répond. (...) Franck V. Francis ressent un vide soudain qui se creuse à l'intérieur de son corps (...). Il balbutie quelques mots incompréhensibles et il raccroche l'écouteur' (pp. 36-37, *Souvenirs*). But a few pages later, Francis has lost consciousness, and is captured by the militia, as the text melts back into the generating cell. Identity is once again fluid, indeterminate, both subjectively and objectively conceived: 'L'homme est seul, dans le silence, au milieu de la cellule. Et peu à peu, comme avec prudence, je constate que c'est moi, probablement' (p. 41, *Souvenirs*).

Whether criminal or policeman, neither of these narrative identities will be adhered to for long. For the narrator, self-consciously constructed as 'portrait-robot' (p. 42, *Souvenirs*), will next personalise himself as Dr. Morgan, initially introduced objectively as: 'cet inconnu aux tempes grises qui ressemble à un chirurgien' (p. 47, *Souvenirs*). After moving temporarily back to the cell, the narrator maintains this doctor's guise, performing the abduction of a young girl, in an episode generated from the black book the narrator reads within the cell. When he closes the book, the abduction temporarily finishes, and the narrative returns to the cell once more.

The constant return to the cell, and subsequent production of events exterior to it from the cell, create the text's topography as an interior creative space, both prison and sanctuary. The sometimes provisional, sometimes omniscient perspective conjures up an immediacy of vision, despite the cell's absence of view. The dynamic process which switches narrator from morally good to bad, from perceiver to perceived, and from an observer of the sadoerotic to a participant in sadoerotic practices, produces a reflection on the process of writing, caught between fantasy and structure. Use of multiple identity illustrates the extent to which the written text may maintain one narrative entity, with many narrative issues.

The literary text may thus establish what are at first impervious grammatical oppositions to suggest opposing narrative forces, only to erode the division between the two, revealing realms of subjectivity and objectivity, metaphor and external reality as essentially porous, permeating each other on a thematic and structural level. Such a technique may be compared to the manipulation of montage in the filmic text which reorientates the perspective of the intradiegetic character or narrator, as well as that of the spectator. In both literary and filmic text the topography is transformed in order to disrupt the unity of the narrative in the interests of portraying conflicting subjective experiences.

Our comparison between media thus suggests a filmic influence on the later narrative method within the literary texts. The extremes of narrative multiplicity attained in the later literary texts of Robbe-Grillet do connote the rapid shifts we associate with filmic montage. The innovation here is that Robbe-Grillet combines such multiplicity with a recurrent transformation of narrative identity. This generates the paradoxical situation of a single narrator who is nonetheless multiple, which is an exclusively literary formulation.

The next section focuses specifically on the way in which the contest for narrative control is enacted via iconic and verbal elements within the filmic medium. We locate a movement away from verbal language as a structuring device within the filmic works of Robbe-Grillet, which in turn implies an increasing autonomy lent by him to the iconic

element within his conception of the medium. While the following analysis is purely filmic, it compares visual and verbal forms in terms of their interrelationship, and as such sheds light on the comparison between verbal and visual media as a whole.

(iii) Verbal Language versus the Image

*(Marienbad, TEE, L'HQM, L'Eden,
Le Jeu avec le Feu, Glissements)*

Despite the dual nature of the filmic medium as potentially both sound and image, which renders the filmic text's content a composite of verbal and visual elements, it is nonetheless fruitful to consider verbal language separately from its iconic counterpart when analysing the workings of the Robbe-Grilletian narrative. Indeed, from *Marienbad* (1961) to *La Belle Captive* (1983), an increasing role is played by the image in the process of narration, verbal language gradually losing its structural and structuring function within the text's framework. This shift in emphasis in turn becomes representative of a changing conception of cinema and of its narrative potential which is then increasingly independent from any literary or verbal model. The absence of words themselves, or their irrelevance to the visual reality the film proposes, offers a blueprint for an autonomous image-language.

Critics have often stressed the importance of words within the films of Robbe-Grillet. For Goldmann it is the magic of the word which enables X's seduction of A in *Marienbad*, transforming the reality of the film.³² Armes reiterates this, adding that *Marienbad* is generated from a verbal nucleus, comprised of the theatrical performance that opens the film, along with X's descriptions of the statue and the disjointed initial conversations among guests.³³ Yet such observations have not stimulated critics properly to assess the progression within Robbe-Grillet's cinema towards a greater emphasis on the image.

For, *Marienbad*, *TEE* and *L'HQM* forefront the act of verbal narration as their central drama. The conflict between different verbal versions, and the hiatus between what is narrated by a certain character and what actually happens, comprise the thematic and narrative core of these films. As in all of Robbe-Grillet's work, these texts explore the problematics of representing a subjectively perceived reality objectively, situating this within the wider drama of the individual's process of experience within the world. But these films use words to frame and generate the image, implying that verbal language is the image's primary generator and hence reality's primary generator. The later films will see this movement significantly reversed.

Marienbad dramatises the process of narration as man's invention of his own life, setting image and voice at odds with each other to effect disorientation and struggle, in what for X becomes 'une lutte désespérée contre les images que l'on voit sur l'écran' (p. 135, *Marienbad*). While camera movements juxtaposed with a static profilmic, and disruptive editing, account for much of *Marienbad*'s tension (see I, vi and II, ii above), the uncertainty about what actually happens in the film is largely due to contrasts between, and contrasts within both visual and verbal texts. This in turn becomes a 'mise en scène' of the battle of desires, and of Robbe-Grilletian 'réel' versus structure. Like Boris at the inn in *L'HQM*, X gains the components of his narrative from stereotypes in the world around him. Before his pursuit of A, X hears other representations of male-female desire, such as the theatre scene that begins the film, or the couple which X observes with their parody of a lover's exchange: the man's supplication, the woman's rebuffal (pp. 35-36, *Marienbad*). Yet unlike *L'HQM*, *Marienbad* manipulates the voices of its protagonists to demonstrate X's mimetic copying of the models he sees around him. The stylised theatrical scene employs X's own voice, in 'Voix Off', in place of that of the male actor performing rigidly on the stage (p. 29); equally, X will also contribute in 'Voix Off' to the couple's dialogue, substituted for that of the man (p. 39). It could be argued that, as X's voice is the first to be heard at the opening of the film, all subsequent events are formed by his own subjectivity. This is only true to a certain extent. It is precisely the scenes which are outside X's control which point to a more ambivalent

interpretation of *Marienbad*. Such ambivalence is played out through the narrative struggle between visual and verbal texts.

A's first contact with X is via his rootless words: 'VOIX DE X: *Mais vous ne semblez guère vous souvenir. A tourne la tête de droite et de gauche, assez rapidement, comme quelqu'un qui chercherait d'où est venue la phrase que l'on vient d'entendre*' (p. 49, *Marienbad*). As we will demonstrate with regard to *TEE*, words initially predominate, here pre-existing their speaker. But they do not coincide with the speaking image. Similarly X's dialogue is characterised by its desire to dominate, his needling 'vous' striving to invent his relation to A (and hence invent the film); yet this in itself betrays his absence of control. The interplay of power becomes a process of dominance and submission between image and voice.

VOIX DE X: *Vous étiez seule, à l'écart. Vous vous teniez, un peu de biais, contre une balustrade de pierre, sur laquelle votre main était posée, le bras à demi étendu...*

La voix s'arrête. A ne se trouve pas dans la pose indiquée par le texte que l'on entend (...). Elle rectifie ensuite la posture (...).
(p. 69, *Marienbad*)

The 'Voix Off' is conventionally used to conjure up a recollectable past, or to reveal the intimate thoughts of the speaker; it is hence the voice of retrospective knowledge, or of personally witnessed events or emotions. As at the start of *L'HQM*, it is exploited throughout *Marienbad* for precisely the opposite purpose. The 'Voix Off' of X invents an image-text that could also be inventing itself, independently of him, and which is therefore unknowable. Similarly, the supposedly recuperable past is just as much present and future, constantly improvising away from the dictates of the convention. For just as in the above example the image seems to respond to the voice by correcting itself, elsewhere, as the next example shows, the image is generative of the voice:

VOIX DE X: (...) *Vous ne faisiez pas un geste. Je vous ai dit que vous aviez l'air vivante.*

Après le mot *vivante*, mais avec un décalage de quelques secondes, un sourire se dessine peu à peu sur les traits de A, mais un sourire absent, qui ne semble s'adresser à personne. (...)

VOIX DE X: *En guise de réponse, vous vous êtes contentée de sourire.*

(p. 70, *Marienbad*)

The 'Voix Off' as vehicle for X's passion - an intimate communication from X to A - is subverted when characters within the shot seem to hear words spoken in 'Voix Off'. The narrative realm X and A seem solely to occupy, framed within X's uttered supplications, is thus fractured as it permeates the more public world inhabited by other guests. The most striking example of this takes place when X is in shot with some hotel guests. He is not speaking, but his 'Voix Off' is; it is talking about the moment we are watching. The guests around him are being discussed, and they seem to know this:

VOIX DE X: (...) *Les autres continuaient de se taire. - J'ai eu de nouveau l'impression que personne ne comprenait vos paroles, peut-être même que j'étais le seul à les avoir entendues.*

Sur le *peut-être même* l'image a changé: gros plan du visage de A, sérieuse, un peu tendue.

Puis c'est une série de gros plans des visages du groupe. Toutes les figures sont figées, comme celles de gens écoutant quelque chose, guettant des bruits (...).

(p. 85, *Marienbad*)

Contradiction within the verbal text, spoken in dialogue, as when A initially refutes X's recollections, further destabilises both 'Voix Off' and image-text. Yet the immediacy of the image-sequences which depict A acting out X's words (as in the above

example from page 69), work equally to undermine such dialogue, as they imply X and A are in agreement about the past (/ present / fantasy). The conversations between X and A in which they disagree about the possible past, are themselves undermined whenever a version of that past is authenticated on the screen as an image-reality. Thus a constant dynamic effacement of image by voice and vice-versa is put into play.

Similarly, the hypothesis that the images represent X's fantasy is refuted when they become A's fantasy. This is most remarkably seen when A denies remembering certain characteristics of the bedroom in which X claims to have previously made love to her. In a brilliant use of paradox, A's denial that she was there becomes a testimony to her involvement in such a scene, because she creates aspects of the room that X himself cannot remember (X: '*Quel miroir? Quelle cheminée?*' - p. 121); this in turn renders all A's previous denials suspect. Moreover, *Marienbad* reminds us that neither X nor A have any real control over their own screen-presence in the first place. Everything is a trick. X cannot even, on page 75, prevent his text from becoming 'absolument incompréhensible' due to manipulation of his variable sound-reality.

TEE may be viewed as an image reality with an eroding verbal frame. Even if the film's project is to outline verbal language's incapacity to control the reality it strives to master, nonetheless this very issue posits the properties or shortcomings of verbal language as of central structural and thematic importance to the filmic text. The film is obsessed with verbal narration, even if its theme is the sado-masochistic creation and destruction of verbal language's effects. Chateau and Jost also see *TEE* as placing its emphasis on the verbal element within the dialectic of sound and image.³⁴ The reality of the image, and the autonomy of Elias's (Trintignant) behaviour which slowly abandons the text of Jean (the author, played by Robbe-Grillet), only exist in relation to the text they rebel against and destroy. The tension becomes one of precisely verbal versus visual text, in a film characterised by the struggle for narrative power.

The first and most obvious verbal generators for the narrative are the three texts within the film which comprise the title. While critics such as Gardies and Stoltzfus have analysed the title, it has not been viewed as an essentially verbal generator of the text.³⁵

'Trances' is the pulp novel Elias finds in his case, the pages of which have been cut out to make a secret compartment for a revolver. The word 'trances', meaning trances or agony, connotes therefore both the trance-like state induced in the spectator of cinema by the process of watching a film, and the sado-masochistic urges which will eventually overcome and destroy Elias, as if the latter's domination of Eva is inextricably bound up with the average viewer's easy submission to the standard, unself-conscious filmic narrative. The very absence of the novel's pages indicates that Elias's project for the film is to supply them; in this sense his fate gains a literary predetermination. 'Europe', the next word that generates the title, is the name of the magazine containing pictures of women in chains which provide a model for scenes Elias will later act out. 'L'Express' completes the sequence: Jean reads the latter in the train compartment, and it could be argued that this magazine sparks off his idea of drug trafficking as the subject for the film, a current hot topic he may have read in one of the articles. These three verbal texts therefore announce themes that will characterise the text as a whole, and may be viewed as generators of the film, which in turn gains a kind of literary basis.

The second verbal source for the image text in *TEE* is Jean, the author of the film within the film. Even if Jean seems, from the start, to have little or no control over events he attempts to orchestrate, nonetheless there is often an intersection between his narrative and the film's overall narrative of which Jean is himself a passive and manipulated component. Indeed, one certainly cannot claim that the film *TEE* is created by Jean as it is seen by us. Yet the film we see and the film Jean creates nonetheless share many of the same narrative elements, and without Jean's film, Robbe-Grillet's would not exist. Jean's words, therefore, play a considerable role in the formation of the text, which gains another verbal generative basis.

Jean's version is in turn influenced by the contributions of his fellow passengers Marc and Lucette, played by Paul Louyet and Catherine Robbe-Grillet, with whom Jean holds an ongoing dialogue. It is Marc who initially has the idea of setting the film in a train, and who proposes the title of the film itself: 'On devrait tourner un film dans un train comme ça. (...) On pourrait l'appeler 'Trans-Europ-Express'. C'est un bon titre'

(*TEE*). Marc raises questions of casting (of Trintignant, he asks Jean, 'Qu'en penserais-tu pour ton film?'), of realism ('Mais est-ce que ça existe vraiment, la drogue entre Anvers et Paris?'), of continuity and of causality ('Ecoute, cette histoire de valise volée; ça ne va pas du tout; ça mène à rien'). Jean's assistant Lucette contributes a similar commentary which eventually has its effect on the narrative of the film. The conflict between her and Jean's versions is clearest when she questions Jean over whether or not Elias has his things with him after his rendez-vous in the docks with Franck. Onscreen, Elias does not have his parcel of possessions, in accordance with Jean's version. Then, as if obeying Lucette's version, Elias suddenly gains the parcel as if from nowhere. Finally, obeying Robbe-Grillet the filmmaker's version, Elias hurls the packet into the water three times in rapid succession, to a blast of Verdi. Robbe-Grillet's narrative triumphs with this parodic burst of implausible activity. In this sequence then, verbal and visual narratives intersect and separate, the lacuna between them filled by the actual author's implicit presence in the organization of the text.

Other characters who act as narrative agents are the gangster Franck, the policeman Lorentz, and Eva, the prostitute. Of these three, Franck's contribution is the most explicitly verbal one. This is conveyed in his long passages of dictation when he meets Elias at their various rendez-vous. At their first meeting, some of Franck's orders are blatantly meaningless, analogous to an artist's whims: FRANCK: 'Dans une heure vous changerez d'hôtel (...) Juste pour le changement'. Franck's use of references to exams, tests and diplomas when telling Elias he is being observed and tried out for the job, add a scholarly dimension to Franck's parodic narration, so that Elias's actions are lent an underlying literary status. Eva offers Elias an alternative plot which he does not participate in: EVA: 'Si tu veux travailler dans une affaire sérieuse, tu n'as qu'à me faire signe'. This leads her to manipulate him later on, giving rise in part to her death, depending on how one interprets her supposed theft of the key to the left luggage locker, which sparks of Elias's murder of her. And Lorentz sets his trap for Elias through the *written* story in the newspaper announcing Eva's death, which Lorentz orders to be placed next to the advertisement for the strip club where Elias will eventually be killed.

LORENTZ: 'Vous coupez dans la page neuf pour coller le placard de publicité du cabaret Eve. Vous l'avez toujours? Oui, c'est ça, avec la femme enchaînée. Et juste au-dessus vous passez un fait divers. Voilà le texte'. Later on Elias reads the headline: 'Dernière minute. Une prostituée étranglée par un maniaque', and responds to the advertisement next to it, these two verbal blueprints serving as narrative agents for the film's dénouement.

It is Elias's obsession with rape which is activated by Lorentz's text, but which pre-exists all the text's narrative strands; it is what motivates Elias to buy the magazine 'Europe' at the opening of the film, and then hide it inside his copy of 'L'Express'. The fulfilment of this obsession may then be viewed as Elias's own narrative project. For Armes, Elias's enactment of rape is the assumption of his own identity, and of his role as a director: the selection of shots edited together of Eva in different poses before the first sex-scene comprise possibilities which generate the games of rape, directed by Elias as performance, enabling a commentary about it later on in the form of pillow-talk, as if the rape-scene were a *mise en abyme* of the process of making a film.³⁶ It is Elias's compulsion towards the murder of Eva which significantly escapes the grid of causality and explicability which Jean attempts to impose on events. The reason Elias kills Eva is, superficially (or according to Jean's narrative), because she has betrayed him by stealing the key to the locker and giving it to the policeman Lorentz. Yet in a preceding scene, Elias has himself given the same key to one of Franck's men. At the time of Eva's alleged theft, therefore, there is no key to be stolen. Elias's sexual murder of Eva is motiveless, therefore, in terms of the other narratives; it escapes the logical predetermining structures of the other competing versions within *TEE* and becomes a narrative in its own right. Neither Jean nor his assistant Lucette can find a solution to this story, which continues in spite of them:

LUCETTE: Il y a une chose qui n'est pas claire. Si Elias a remis la clé à l'intermédiaire, Eva ne peut pas la voler ensuite, dans la poche de son imperméable.

JEAN: C'est pourtant cette clé qu'elle est allée apporter à Lorentz quand on l'a vue descendre.

LUCETTE: Et l'autre scène alors? Qu'est-ce qu'on en fait?

JEAN: On la supprime?

(*TEE*)

The news story which Jean, Lucette and Marc find printed in the paper on arrival at Anvers, describing the 'Double Crime', finally alienates Jean from what was initially, provisionally, his creation: 'Après avoir étranglé une jeune prostituée un trafiquant de drogue est abattu par son chef, sous les yeux de la police, dans une boîte de nuit du port'. Jean is reading the dénouement to his own text, which has been written without him. Indeed, this short passage comprises the whole of Jean's narrative, in terms of what actually happens; the two killings are the only dramatic events of the film. No drugs have been smuggled: all Elias has really performed is glorified undercover sugar importation. The divagations and tangential narratives of the film are cancelled out, leaving nothing but the news item. This piece of text crucially asserts the verbal over the visual, imbricating the plot of the film itself within the literary form of a written narrative.

In *L'HQM*, a role analogous to that of Jean is played by Boris Varissa. In this later film, Boris is the only verbal narrator. He seems, then, to be in charge of his own story. Gardies claims erroneously that the images exist only as a function of the verbal discourse.³⁷ It is immediately apparent as the text proceeds that a series of both textual and intertextual forces are determining the course of Boris's actions. Whereas in *TEE*, the text's conflicting narratives are initially verbally generated, sometimes even written down and then acted out, in *L'HQM* such narratives are to an extent interiorised, implicit, and indirect. Already methods of narration are shedding their once explicitly verbal form. The intertexts (admittedly often literary and hence verbal) of, say, Kafka's

The Castle, or the story of *Don Juan*, become equally important as generators of the text as anything a character may say or do to determine the shape of the plot (see Chapter Four, III, vii). While this may imply a literary basis for the work, *L'HQM* reveals the image-text to be the primary basis for the film's narrative, the visual reality of the film gaining more autonomy than in *TEE*. Sound effects also take on an independence from both image and dialogue; the filmic medium overall therefore is explored in a way that highlights its non-literary properties.

Yet the essence of verbal language and its role in man's self-creation comprise the theme of *L'HQM*. In this film, visual and verbal realities are played off against each other in such a way that the nature of text as construction, and of reality as combination of constructions, may be illustrated. The inherent properties of the respective media are exploited for this end.

At the opening of *L'HQM*, a discrepancy is established between visual and verbal realms. The visual, or what we see actually happening, is framed as reality. This is in contrast to what start out as Boris's lies. Hence Boris's first statement in 'Voix Off', the medium of authoritative retrospective narration: 'Mon nom est Robin, Jean Robin. Je vais vous raconter mon histoire'. Boris is not, however, Robin. Verbal language is therefore initially cast in a treacherous role. Similarly, as Boris approaches the town, he describes what we have just seen: 'Ça a commencé dans une forêt, une grande forêt. Et il y avait une sorte de sentier, un peu incertain'. We have just seen this forest in the credit sequence, therefore we are in a position to measure the truth of Boris's words against what we have seen. The words are less important than the image text; they are anterior to it, play no part in its creation, and so have a lesser status as definer of truth. Gradually, images of Laura, Sylvia and Maria playing blind-man's-buff in the castle are intercut with the images of Boris that Boris is himself narrating. He cannot see these images; his eye-witness description of the forest therefore becomes irrelevant, as he is seeing less than we are. Then, Boris's verbal text becomes even more problematic; it conflicts completely with the visual text of the film, and is thus revealed as fallacious. BORIS (V.O.): 'Je recommence. La première fois que je suis arrivé à ce village, j'ai erré

d'abord à travers les rues, anonyme parmi la foule des passants'. Onscreen meanwhile, Boris is strolling down a deserted street. Some moments later, he corrects himself, as if agreeing with our opinion: 'Oui. Les rues étaient désertes évidemment'. He proceeds to the local inn, informing us, still in 'Voix Off': 'La première fois donc que je suis arrivé au village, je me suis dirigé tout droit, vers l'auberge, vide elle aussi comme d'habitude à cette heure matinale'. But when Boris enters, the tavern is packed with people.³⁸

Boris's verbal text therefore initially contradicts the visual text, such that he is a liar, in accordance with the role the title of the film imposes on him. The visual images of the film are, therefore, truth. The self-evidence, or immediacy of the filmic image provides at the start of the film a model for a kind of truth or reality, which the film's resemblance to the world of objects enables. However, such a status is soon eroded.

After Boris has gleaned minimal information about Jean Robin at the inn, such as his age, popularity, and the fact of Jean's disappearance, Boris's words themselves begin to create the visual realities that the filmic text projects. What begins as a tension or discrepancy between verbal lie and visual truth becomes a composite cinematic invention. This invention in turn splits and proliferates so that the film suggests several contradictory and equally possible versions of the past. Such a scheme is most clearly illustrated by Boris's opposing accounts of Jean Robin's prison escape, where Robin starts as a hero, and ends up a traitor to the cause. Boris's words cease to be lies, as the visual text ceases to be truth. As his narration takes visual shape, what he claims to have happened, happens, and Boris's story becomes history, or several self-effacing histories. Once the image and word are aligned, both are imbricated within the process of fiction-making which in turn undermines any conception of lie or truth. As we watch heroism transform through Boris's renarration, and the film's reality, into treachery, the image, once immediate and real, becomes illusion or trick.

Therefore in *L'HQM* the visual aspect of the filmic text is initially isolated from its verbal counterpart and exploited as more objectively real. This in turn points to a conception of cinema as inherently more recognisable as a true representation of the physical world. Slowly, however, Robbe-Grillet's perception of film as text effects an

erosion of cinema's pretensions to an ideology of realism and truth. Both verbal and visual realms are revealed as construction, and their respective claims to represent reality are established as equally provisional.

By *L'Eden* and *Le Jeu avec le Feu*, Robbe-Grillet's use of 'Voix Off' narration has become an exercise in derision. This signals a movement away from the use of verbal language as a structuring device within the filmic narrative. For whereas X invents the seduction of A with his words in *Marienbad*, and *TEE* dramatises the conflicts of verbal narration, in *L'Eden* the 'Voix Off' parodies itself, and has no narrative power over events. For Gardies, Violette's 'Voix Off' narration is a 'faux récit'.³⁹ Violette's deadpan claim that the waiter Frantz deals in mirages, is but one example of the way in which the contradictions that previously existed between image and voice are now incorporated within the voice track itself, creating a verbal dialectic which works alongside, but largely separately from, the visual dialectic. Just as the words contest each other, so too do the images, but they do this largely within their own tracks. In *L'Eden*, there is less dialogue than in the other films, and it is therefore relegated to filling out the visual spectacle. Conflict is generated on screen within the image or within the 'Voix Off', the latter becoming dysfunctional within the narrative scheme of the filmic text.

Similarly, as Robbe-Grillet himself points out, *Le Jeu avec le Feu* begins with Georges de Saxe both writing and speaking, as if telling the story of the film, as he alludes to the imminent threat that his daughter will be burned alive. Yet there is no proof that his verbal text(s) are generative of or reflective upon the images the film presents. The invasion of Mathias the butler destroys the order de Saxe's narration suggests, introducing a new narrative force into the film.⁴⁰

Glissements' structural aim is to intercut narration with punctuation shots, which then gain a significance which undermines the narration, causing the two structures to fuse through slippage. The conventional use of punctuation shot as close-up with no diegetic role, is therefore subverted within *Glissements*, as objects within the punctuation shots gain relevance to the diegesis. The interpenetration of what are initially separate narrative realms parallels the interconnecting structures of novels such as *Un Régicide*.

As Morrissette states, the punctuation shot imputes the structuration to the author of the film.⁴¹ We would add that the invasion of the diegesis by objects initially seen in the punctuation shots erodes the division between the text and its process of creation, as a significance for each object is gradually created in the course of the action.

Glissements' punctuation shots are also evidence of the way in which the image disrupts the verbal form in this film, as the pieces of evidence which are used to incriminate Alice appear in the punctuation shots, gradually dissolving the logic of the investigation. As Chateau and Jost stress, these shots constitute filmic parataxis, as they are inserted within the diegesis without adding meaning to the scenes they are supposed to punctuate, attaining instead a narrative importance equal to the apparently linear scenes of the film's action, hence eroding the conventional hierarchy of filmic narration.⁴² The verbal interviews with which Judge, Priest and Policeman try to break Alice down, are moreover part of the verbal order which the images undermine and deride. The sexual fantasies within the film which suffuse the text with disorder are after all primarily visual spectacles which also disrupt the rationality of the verbal form. The shift to pictorial art as an overt generator of the narrative in *La Belle Captive* (fully analysed in Chapter Four, IV, viii) further illustrates the movement away from verbal language operating in the later films.

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Thus the interplay and conflict between verbal and visual elements within the filmic texts of Robbe-Grillet illuminates the antagonistic narrative roles these elements play, as they are often set against each other, or used dynamically to call the textual production of meaning into question. Contests between points of view, as between word and image, have revealed themselves to be recurrent means by which the textual process itself is contested, as mimesis, linearity and narration are destabilised. Confining our analysis to the filmic medium for this last subsection has equally enabled an assessment of

the decreasing role played by the verbal form in the structuration of narrative through the course of Robbe-Grillet's filmic production.

This chapter has been concerned with the formal strategies adopted by Robbe-Grillet in filmic and literary media in order to dramatise formal play itself, and in order to stage a contest between narrative forces within texts. We have demonstrated the forms available to each medium, and the confrontational uses to which they are put by Robbe-Grillet. This has in turn highlighted contrasts between the media in general. Chapter Three will examine the significance of the specific themes of violence and eroticism in film and literature, and will analyse the implications of Robbe-Grillet's sadoerotic theme.

Notes to Chapter Two.

I. Formal Play

1. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 42.
2. For a detailed shot-list of the credit-sequence in *L'Eden*, see Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 126-127.
3. All quotations from the dialogue of *TEE*, *L'HQM*, *L'Eden*, *N a Pris les Dés*, *Le Jeu avec le Feu* and *La Belle Captive* are taken directly from the soundtrack of the films. Quotations from *L'Immortelle*, *Glissements* and *Marienbad* are taken from the published 'ciné-romans'; where necessary, distinctions between ciné-roman and finished film will be highlighted.
4. Armes gives a table of *L'Eden*'s generative themes on p. 130 of *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, but says nothing on this point. The themes as Robbe-Grillet originally conceived them may be found in *Obliques*, No.16-17, pp. 194 and 197.
5. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 131-134.
6. Michael Spencer, 'Avatars du Mythe chez Robbe-Grillet et Butor: Etude Comparative de *Projet pour une Révolution à New York* et de *Mobile*', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy*, I, pp. 64-84 (pp. 74-75).
7. Ricardou, *Le Nouveau Roman*, pp. 79 and 121.
8. Bruce Morrisette, *Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet* (Paris: Minuit, 1963), p. 42.
9. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 54.
10. François Jost, 'Le Film-Opéra', in *Obliques*, No.16-17, pp. 239-246.
11. Chateau and Jost, *Nouveau Cinéma, Nouvelle Sémiologie*, p. 33.
12. Michel Fano, 'L'Ordre Musical chez Alain Robbe-Grillet: Le discours sonore dans ses films', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy*, I, pp. 173-213 (p. 186).
13. Gardies, 'Récit et Matériau Filmique', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy*, II, pp. 85-110 (p. 93).
14. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 112-115. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 80.
15. Ricardou, *Problèmes du Nouveau Roman*, p. 182.
16. Ricardou, *Problèmes du Nouveau Roman*, pp. 183-184.
17. Ricardou, *Le Nouveau Roman*, p. 50.
18. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 46.
19. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 18.
20. William F. Van Wert, *The Film Career of Alain Robbe-Grillet* (London: George Prior, 1977), p. 13.
21. Ricardou, *Problèmes du Nouveau Roman*, pp. 85-86.
22. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 58.
23. Gardies, 'Récit et Matériau Filmique', pp. 99-103.
24. Burch, *Une Praxis du Cinéma*, p. 35.
25. Van Wert, *The Film Career of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 15.

II. The Contest for Narrative Control

26. Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), p. 48.
27. See Morrisette, *Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet* (1963), p. 111. Also: Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (London: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 57.

28. Bruce Morrissette, *The Novels of Robbe-Grillet*, rev. edn. (London: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 226 and 229.
29. Spiegel, *Fiction and the Camera Eye*, pp. 125-126.
30. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 101.
31. Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'Discussion', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy, II*, pp. 68-84 (p. 75).
32. Annie Goldmann, *Cinéma et Société Moderne: Le Cinéma de 1958 à 1968: Godard - Antonioni - Resnais - Robbe-Grillet* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1971), p. 230.
33. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 28-29.
34. Chateau and Jost, *Nouveau Cinéma, Nouvelle Sémiologie*, p. 256.
35. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 83-84. Ben Stoltzfus, *Alain Robbe-Grillet: Life, Work, and Criticism* (Fredericton: York Press, 1987), p. 30.
36. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 82.
37. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 75.
38. While Gardies also alludes to these disparities in *L'HQM*, he fails to make a comparative analysis between verbal and visual elements in the filmic text, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 77-80.
39. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 75.
40. Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'Discussion', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy, I*, pp. 131-172 (p. 135).
41. Morrissette, *The Novels of Robbe-Grillet*, rev. edn. (1975), p. 302.
42. Chateau and Jost, *Nouveau Cinéma, Nouvelle Sémiologie*, pp. 128-129.

**CHAPTER THREE - FILMING AND WRITING VIOLENCE AND
EROTICISM**

The interdisciplinary study of Robbe-Grillet will now be developed via a comparative assessment of the portrayal of violence and eroticism in his filmic and literary texts. These themes are subversive, and are potentially transgressive. Yet Robbe-Grillet's use of them is problematic in its sadoerotic objectification of women, and for this reason, violence and eroticism in his work and in the media in general must be reappraised. This in turn will produce a new assessment of the role of violence and eroticism as themes of contestation. Moreover, by juxtaposing formal aspects of texts and media in a confrontational exploration of artistic method in the depiction of these themes, our interdisciplinary study will also trace the parameters of filmic and literary art forms themselves.

The controversial subjects of violence and eroticism are highly useful to our comparison of media, for, as potential limit-issues, they are perceived by many reader-viewers as comfortable in neither medium. If such themes are already problematic, then the filmic and literary treatment of them will inevitably produce tensions and contrasts which will better enable a differentiation between the art forms. They are not, therefore, chosen innocently by this study.

Nor are such themes selected innocently by Robbe-Grillet. While Chapter Two placed emphasis on the formal techniques available to each medium in the expression of themes, nonetheless, it illustrated that the distinction between form and theme is subverted by Robbe-Grillet's positioning of form as theme in his work. This is equally the case with the portrayal of violence and eroticism. For these issues are more than just themes which the text portrays descriptively. They also function metaphorically, in ways which deny their purely mimetic role. Eroticism and violence in Robbe-Grillet's work become sites of displacement, informing or deforming structure and thereby transgressing their own superficial meaning.

We cannot begin without locating what is undoubtedly a continuity within Robbe-Grillet's work, namely, the essential place occupied by violence and eroticism within his filmic and literary texts. This will ground our subsequent general and textual analyses in actual filmic and literary practice. Section II is an overview of theories of violence and eroticism and their relation to a filmic and literary practice; sections III and IV are an assessment of criticism on Robbe-Grillet's use of sadoeroticism, followed by detailed interdisciplinary textual analysis.

I. Textual Evidence of the Sadoerotic Theme

As we have shown, much of Robbe-Grillet's textual violence is generated via a self-reflexive contestation of narrative. Strategies of subversion, whether in literature or film, are informed by conflict and confrontation with aesthetic conventions, and there is a sense in which the more violent the textual activity, the more potentially innovative it is. In this sense, much of what is discussed in Chapter Two might be included in the category of textual violence, insofar as the dramatisation of the text's own process of creation is an attack on mimesis, and seeks to overturn naturalised forms of narration. One might then assert a continuity in the very discontinuity which Robbe-Grillet's formal devices strive towards.

Yet not all violence is generated by a renewal or destruction of forms. Robbe-Grillet's work contains images and descriptions of violence, much of it sadoerotic, in other words it is a violence intimately connected with sexual sadism. Most importantly, such sadoerotic violence is always directed against women. It is such sadoeroticism which can counter the innovation which formal violence seeks to achieve. For, images or descriptions of sadoeroticism, which insistently subjugate female 'victims' to male aggressors, become proof of a manifest 'double jeu' played by Robbe-Grillet, which, as with Eva in *TEE*, leads to an annihilation, this time of the texts' own revolutionary thrust.

An unsettling ambivalence arises when such images of sadoerotic violence against women become inextricably bound up with the formal violence of innovation.

It is therefore useful to highlight at first the prominence of the sadoerotic filmic or photographic image, and literary description, which we will initially consider separately from formal devices.

Robbe-Grillet's filmic and literary work becomes more explicitly sadoerotic during the course of his artistic production from the 1950s through to the late 1970s. After this, with *Djinn* and the film *La Belle Captive*, sadoeroticism is less prominent, reappearing as ambivalent 'auto-fiction' in *Le Miroir Qui Revient*, *Angélique* and *Les Derniers Jours de Corinthe*.

The early literary texts suggest, rather than state, their sadoerotic preoccupation. As our textual analysis will later clarify, in *Les Gommès* sexual violence against women serves as a disruptive trace within the overall structure, while in *La Jalousie* and *Le Voyeur* the threat of repressed sexual violence permeates the texture on almost every page. Critics have noted this sadoeroticism from the texts' first publication, Morrissette terming Mathias of *Le Voyeur* a sadistic schizophrenic, and stressing the narrator's vision in *La Jalousie* as characterised by psychopathic hysteria.¹ In *Maison* and *Projet*, the craving for sexual violence against female characters is much more blatantly revealed, the former depicting a sadomasochistic world within the text, the latter offering scene after scene of imaginative and horrific torture of women. By *Topologie* and *Souvenirs*, the textual presentation of erotic violence is both explicit and explicitly aesthetic, *Souvenirs* charting the adventures of a secret society of amateur erotic specialists, whose attentions focus on the golden triangle of the female pubis.

We might trace a parallel unveiling of the sadoerotic within Robbe-Grillet's filmic production. While Resnais suppressed *Marienbad's* written rape scene, the threat of a forced seduction of A by X is nonetheless implied throughout the film, and a rape is metaphorically if ambivalently enacted in the white scene which Resnais used instead of Robbe-Grillet's stylised violation. *L'Immortelle* more openly associates women with violent death, beginning with the sound of the car accident which will later kill L, so that

her existence within the film as an erotic apparition is in a sense generated by her death. The menacing dogs which M unleashes, have a sadistic role which is clarified in *Le Jeu avec le Feu* when a canine attacks and later performs oral sex on a female victim. *L'Immortelle*, like *Maison*, contains references to the white slave trade, of which the film's heroine may be a victim.

TEE exploits the sexual, threatened image of the scantily dressed woman more than does *L'Immortelle*, most obviously in the recurrent sadomasochistic sequences between Elias and Eva, but also in the final show at the strip club, which echoes the cabaret scene in *L'Immortelle*. *L'HQM* is less explicit than *TEE*, but contains an undercurrent of sadomasochistic lesbianism most clearly seen when Maria's execution is acted out playfully with Laura and Sylvia. Boris's sexual behaviour when in bed with Sylvia is aggressive, recalling that of Elias in *TEE*, as both characters are aroused by strangulation (BORIS: 'Toutes les filles sont des putains, seulement tu manques encore d'expérience'). This is then echoed in *Le Jeu avec le Feu*, when Trintignant performs sadomasochistic sex with one of the girls.

L'Eden presents more explicit and shocking scenes than the black and white films, most evidently in the series of images in which women are initially seen in cages, then tortured, one crucified, another writhing on a bed of spikes. Violette is scantily clad throughout the film and often acts in a sexually provocative way, eventually herself becoming part of the artist Dutchman's harem. The more brutal of these scenes are cut from *N a Pris les Dés*, although the women in cages feature in both films, as well as the abduction of Violette/Eve (Catherine Jourdan), and the sequence in which she dances by the fire, which is in turn an image for the burning of women first introduced in *Le Voyeur* and picked up in *Glissements* and *Le Jeu avec le Feu*.

Both *Glissements* and *Le Jeu avec le Feu* are characterised by the almost constant presence of a sexually provocative female, and both contain scenes of sadomasochistic sexual activity, *Glissements* reintroducing lesbianism and the sexual murder and torture of women, *Le Jeu avec le Feu* exploiting the abduction, molestation, rape, immolation and torture of women, even suggesting cannibalism when a woman is

served up to a male client on a bed of spaghetti. Cannibalism is also alluded to in *Souvenirs*, when women are recommended as tinned food in the form of '« saumon aux aromates »' (p. 76, *Souvenirs*).

The film *La Belle Captive*, while far less violent and erotic, nonetheless is about the bizarre sexual behaviour and recurring death of an attractive woman, Marie-Ange, who repeatedly appears lying inanimate in the road with a gruesome wound on her inner thigh. When Walter first finds her in this position, her hands are tied behind her back with a gold chain; the gentlemen at Villa Seconde where Walter tries to get help instantly recognise her as a sex slave, and her wanton behaviour would seem to corroborate this (see Appendix II, for a synopsis of this film).

It is in the photo-novels that Robbe-Grillet's interest in sadoeroticism and lesbianism is most blatant. While the collaborations with David Hamilton, *Rêves de Jeunes Filles* and *Les Demoiselles d'Hamilton*, depict naked young girls in poses which do not imply an imminent violence, the volume entitled *Temple Aux Miroirs* is strikingly corrupt and insidious. Ramsay points to the resemblance of *Temple Aux Miroirs* to commercial paedophilia, and, while we are unqualified to make such a comparison, we also tend towards this view.² Photographed by Irina Ionesco with a written text by Robbe-Grillet, this book contains pictures of a clearly prepubescent girl (Temple), either naked or dressed in provocative, sophisticated underwear, posing as a sex object either alone or alongside older, jaded-looking prostitutes. These women are sometimes photographed with sadomasochistic paraphernalia, one appearing with a dog's leash around her neck. The setting is a brothel. The written text fantasizes about a sadistic violence which awaits the women depicted: 'la décoration de perles laisse craindre (ou espérer) le pire quant au sort qui les attend'. The prepubescent girl's expression - bored, sad or placid - conveys to the reader a deep sense of disappointment and horror that Robbe-Grillet should be implicated in such activity. Unlike in the 'picto-romans', the juxtaposition of words and photographic images attempt no formal innovation. As a glorification of child prostitution, the text is the most problematic of Robbe-Grillet's works. Moreover, its use of written material which reappears as pages 97-115 of

Souvenirs (the latter work in turn consisting of fragments taken from other texts, as explained in Chapter Four, V, iii), implicates the rest of Robbe-Grillet's textual production within such an exercise.

In all of the above texts, sexual violence is directed at the female body. This body is created as aesthetically decorative, often barely clothed, and young, superficially innocent and vulnerable. In all of the above texts, the male is the aggressor, and the woman the victim, except in the lesbian sequences in which the aggressive role is also female. Whenever the woman is given an active role, as in the case of Violette in *L'Eden* or Alice in *Glissements*, she is nonetheless simultaneously objectified and presented as sexually appealing to a projected male viewer. The recurrence of the sadoerotic image in both filmic and literary or photo-literary work indicates a sadoerotic obsession with the violation of the female which characterises Robbe-Grillet's work, and which must be seen as primarily reinforcing a male fantasy of domination over women in its most gruesome form.

While the sadoerotic violation of women is undoubtedly one of Robbe-Grillet's most prominent textual obsessions in his films and in his literature, nonetheless, we cannot leave the debate there with a conclusive accusation of misogyny. While such an accusation doubtless applies (as the above résumé clearly shows), a refusal to develop our analysis further would be detrimental to an understanding of Robbe-Grillet's texts and of the media. For the sadoerotic theme also plays a complex structural role within the literary and filmic texts. Eroticism and violence in Robbe-Grillet subvert mimesis and metatextually suffuse textual structure. As we shall see, it is only by analysing the imbrication of the texts' very structure within the thematics of sadoeroticism, that the true extent of Robbe-Grillet's absorption within such images of violation may be ascertained.

Before addressing the specific texts, we will broaden our interdisciplinary analysis by examining more general theories on the representation of violence and eroticism within the two media. This will in turn provide a context in which Robbe-Grillet's

practice may be placed. The theorists chosen for debate are those whose ideas most fruitfully inform or criticise the types of textual activity which Robbe-Grillet practises.

II. Filmic and Literary Theories on Violence and Eroticism

Formal technique is always closely connected with, and creative of, images or descriptions within texts, as form is to an extent indissociable from content. Yet form and content continue to be divisible, and this is particularly evident when we speak of violence and eroticism. Formal violence may act on the reader-viewer as forcefully as denoted or described violence, but is achieved in very different ways: montage in film, as a formal method of composition, can create violence without the aid of violent iconic images; similarly, modes of literary narration may simulate eroticism without mentioning sex.

Perhaps because of this, theoretical debates over the media in terms of the representation of violence and eroticism often segregate form from content. This is useful to an interdisciplinary analysis, as it enables us to determine whether violence or eroticism are *intrinsic* to a medium, due to that medium's formal nature, or whether the media are merely *constructed* as violent or erotic, due to a specific artist's design and choice of subject-matter.

The following overview seeks to distinguish conceptions of the media which are made in formal terms from those which emphasize subject-matter. And while the previous chapter admittedly operated between notions of form and theme, such a strategy was essential to explaining Robbe-Grillet's textual activity. In the following explanation of theories on the media, the distinction between form and subject-matter may be traced, even if it is acknowledged as unstable.

Theorists of an aesthetics of violence and/or eroticism are polarised between a view of such representations as on the one hand liberating, transgressive and cathartic, and on the other as destructive and ultimately reactionary. There is a tendency for

violence and eroticism to be interconnected, theories on one therefore overlapping with theories on the other. This is useful to our analysis of Robbe-Grillet, as the two issues interpenetrate in his work as sadoeroticism.

The view of textual violence and eroticism as cathartic is most often structured on a theory of forms, which emphasizes technique at the expense of the subject of description or the content of the filmic image. This is linked to a view of the textual activity as both non-mimetic and concerned with its self-creation. The view of textual violence and eroticism as reactionary on the other hand, moves the focus back to a conception of aesthetic activity as predominantly mimetic, forefronting what is represented; this in turn frequently becomes a feminist critique of a phallogentric textual practice, as it is women whom Robbe-Grillet targets in his images. From a feminist view point, the kind of formal innovation with which Robbe-Grillet's sadoeroticism can be associated (as we will see in sections III and IV) acts as a cover for the propagation of images which objectify women and are detrimental to female liberty.

The broad debate below, which we employ to frame a more specific study of Robbe-Grillet later on in the chapter, is therefore often focused around gender issues, dividing feminists such as Kappeler and de Lauretis from aesthetic male libertines such as Bataille. Conflict arises over the role and nature of representation itself. The disagreement over whether sexual violence against women should be represented, shifts to a debate over whether such sexual violence is part of a male human 'nature', or whether it is in fact already a representation, before it is represented. The aesthetic representation of sexual violence is then, for some, a metalanguage with no real basis. What some take as nature, others take as fiction, and claim it is created as natural due to the nature of representation itself and the gender of the artists responsible.

(i) Textual Violence and Eroticism as Transgression

Bataille's views on the relation between violence, eroticism and transgression illuminate Robbe-Grillet's practice. Bataille's theories are informed by his conception both of the general formal activity of different types of literary text, and by his views on what texts focus on as subject-matter. Following Bataille, there would be no distinction between eroticism and violence, both belonging to the same domain of violation and both opposed to the rational order. In this sense, the representation of violence in filmic or literary text would equal the representation of eroticism (however problematic their representability within language may be). For Bataille, the literary form of poetry tends towards an innate eroticism, through its capacity to blend and fuse separate objects.³

Yet the urge to represent violence is also an urgent attempt to accommodate the imminent and immanent threat posed by violence and death, which are universal. As in the work of Robbe-Grillet, sexual activity is indissociable from violence, the link between these exemplified by menstrual blood which is for Bataille a potent symbol.⁴ And while Bataille also discusses the torture of male victims, this view of eroticism as innately violent links with Robbe-Grillet's work in terms of an association of the female with violence. Sexual activity and violence therefore become sites of transgression, hence of liberty, such that the extent to which violence and eroticism may be represented artistically comes to reflect the extent to which structure may accommodate transgression and freedom. Extending this argument for our own purposes, the representability of violence and eroticism as subject matter in film and literature becomes a measure of each medium's ability to capture a mobile and threatened authentic experience.

Bataille argues for the non-representability of the erotic climax within the rational order. 'L'érotisme brûlant' (p. 46, *L'Érotisme*) takes on literal filmic and literary form in Robbe-Grillet's work as white heat, in *Marienbad* during the (admittedly ambiguous) repressed rape-scene where white light fills the screen signalling a forced sexual and photographic aperture. While this was Resnais's idea, to neutralise Robbe-Grillet's

written scene, ironically it finds its literary equivalent in *Le Voyeur's* blank page, where Mathias's unspoken crime can only be said to have taken place. While the violent orgasm is neither filmed nor written, it is nonetheless intensely perpetrated by both works.

Barthes's analysis of the traumatic image which depicts extreme violence ties his conception of the representation of violence to Bataille's, through the potential of the shocking photograph to bypass distortive second order connotation, and to short-circuit mythological effect.⁵ The photographic image is seen in terms of what it represents, but this also has implications for the form of the photographic image. The absolutely traumatic image (whether of a male or female undergoing violence) offers a suspension of language, hence a blockage of meaning, providing a model of pure denotation, in its absence of the rhetoric or writing of the photo which is incurred when the analogue is distorted by photographer. Admittedly this stems from the fact that the photographer, for Barthes's purposes journalistic, had to be there. Yet the immediate effect of this type of violent image may equally be gained from the experience of watching a violent filmic text, which may exploit the same authentic effect in its use of real people as profilmic element, along with convincing effects. The criterion for Barthes's statement, that the photographer has captured reality, is itself a connotation for the viewer of the photograph (as Barthes himself points out): this meaning must be annulled at the moment of impact when the trauma is seen, as with shocking scenes in film, for them to be believed.

Thus while the context of filmic violence is often loaded with ideological connotation, Barthes suggests that the image which depicts violence is potentially non-coded, even transgressive. While sadoerotic images in Robbe-Grillet's films suggest the trauma which Barthes focuses on, nonetheless, most often such sadoeroticism contains highly unrealistic aspects which simultaneously undermine their impact. This will be clear from our analysis of *Glissements* below (IV, iii).

While Barthes's analysis itself has implications on textual form, his conception of a multiplicity of meanings within the filmic image ties film's very essence to violence, due to the terror instilled by the uncertain existence of the visual signs, such that the meaning

of objects and attitudes cannot be pinned down.⁶ Such an inherent uncertainty is in Robbe-Grillet's filmic work exacerbated by the disruption of chronology, topography, and of a unity between sound and image.

Heath's comments on pornography in film - a pornography with which Robbe-Grillet's overtly sexual images of women overlap - extend Barthes's views on the portrayal of violence to the portrayal of sexual activity, with contrasting implications. While not necessarily erotic, the pornographic film's tendency to show everything culminates in an abandonment of plurality, reducing the codes within cinema to a sole order of representation. Pornography becomes an effacement of possibilities and of readings, working against a freedom of engagement on the part of the viewer.⁷

The removal of a connotative level in the sequence of pornographic images in film becomes a form of openness in the literary work of pornography, which for Sontag is inherently parodic, deliberately excluding emotions from its texts in order to allow the reader room for his/her own responses. Such a view might be applied to the explicitly sadoerotic scenes of Robbe-Grillet's *Projet*. Yet Sontag sees the pornographic text as equally a challenge to notions of the acceptable, which can lead to liberation in its exploration of the extremes of consciousness, and transcendence of social or psychological individuality.⁸ Like Freud, Sontag stresses a natural link between violence and sexuality which ties her view to Bataille's, and views the erotic glamour of physical cruelty as a given within the fantasy life of the individual.⁹ Pornography, which can include the use of sex or violence as subject-matter, becomes the playing out of an encounter with death within the textual apparatus.

Barthes's view of the photographic image parallels his view of a certain type of literary activity, and is thus of use to our comparison between media. The Robbe-Grillet literary text might align its effect with that of the traumatic image, in its violence against the conventional, connoted use of language with its second-order memory which mysteriously persists in the midst of new meanings. As with the work of art which constructs its own form (explored more fully in Chapter One, VI), autonomy in literary language is attained only when the text enacts a violence against itself, gaining what

Barthes terms 'la structure même du suicide'.¹⁰ The pleasure of the literary text is moreover also generated by a violence, as it is located at the points of collision in the text, where two antipathetic codes come into contact, or between two onslaughts of words, those imposing systematic presences.¹¹

Following Barthes, the Robbe-Grilletian narrative effects a state of 'jouissance' through its insistent unsettling of the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, and determination to bring to a crisis his/her relation with language.¹² Equally, such theories illuminate Robbe-Grillet's formal practice and the way in which form invades content. As our textual analysis will demonstrate below, auto-destruction becomes a theme within the text (see IV ii, and iii). The thematisation of dismemberment becomes a dramatisation of the activities of the text in its conflict against connotative systems. The text's sadomasochistic attack on its own characters becomes the metatextual activity of a writing or filmic text which dramatises the work of connotation as subjugation. Robbe-Grillet's sadoeroticism, viewed as a reflection on the text's formal activity, might then be seen as the staging of the interplay of forces of meaning, which the text cathartically encloses, neutralises and hence strives to alienate from its own process.

In contrast to the immediacy of impact generated by the absence of connoted meaning, which Barthes suggests in his analysis of the traumatic photographic image, violence may be more sustainable when seen in terms of the formal structure and essence of the literary text, as conceived by Blanchot. Blanchot's analysis of the nature of literature emphasises the text in its entirety as a space of temporal annihilation and death.¹³ Blanchot posits a solitude of the text, which exists through the elimination of what is external to it. Such a view is helpful when considering the self-generating aspects of Robbe-Grillet's work in both film and literature. While the inevitability of an intertextual reading of film and novel, developed further in Chapter Four, denies such extreme insularity, Blanchot's notion illuminates the relation of literary production to violence.

The written word becomes the site of time's absence, where what is new renews nothing, where what is present merely represents itself, and belongs to perpetual return. Textual time is dead time, a time where, logically, even the notion of death is annulled, as there are no origins, and no terminations. Equally, there is a sense of annihilation experienced by the reading subject, as the involvement with the text engenders an anonymity in the reader, via the passage from first to third person. The suspension of the image via reading produces a paradoxical present absence.¹⁴ Violence is enacted by the text on the reader. It is also enacted by the author on the reader, and vice-versa, through a perpetual claiming and relinquishing by reader and author of the text, which will always be a violent, impersonal affirmation. It is in the space opened by this affirmation that the freedom of the text may be situated. In this sense the violence which the text puts into play is generative of its liberty, and by extension, of the liberty of its reader or creator. This is effected by the very form of the literary text. Blanchot's theories are then comparable to those of Bataille and Barthes in their espousal of an inherent violence within the text. But Blanchot's views imply that the literary text need not however represent violence or eroticism in order to be violent.

Heath's theories on the filmic medium, which are linked to those of Metz, tie film's formal operations to violence. Film becomes a dramatisation of the workings of death, as, for its sequentiality, the filmic text requires a joining of dismembered moments in time to create a reality which is, to quote Heath, 'perpetually flickered by the fading of its present presence, filled with the *artifice* of its continuity and coherence'.¹⁵ Following Metz, the film creates itself as a memory trace, simultaneously a reality and a record of that reality. Its very essence then is as ^a series of end-points, a testimony to dead moments, each brought to life and then put to death by the film, as the cinematic signifier, while characterised by unaccustomed perceptual wealth, is unreal, imaginary.¹⁶

And if the film engages the viewer's subjectivity within a process of identification with this signifier, then that subjectivity is simultaneously involved in the process of death in which the signifier itself is involved. This extends to the viewer's engagement in the filmic action. The viewer's subjectivity is brought to life, and temporarily annihilated

by the moving image. For example, even if the characters remain alive when offscreen, it is only within the viewer's memory that they exist; they may never reappear again. Heath views narrativization as the mode of a continuous memory, stressing that the spectator is equally remembered in subject unity throughout the film, leading to a potential kinship between film and themes of violence, as he states in parentheses: 'which is why, within this process, images of dismemberment provide such a powerful and lucrative theme, as witness *Jaws*'.¹⁷ The pressure of remembering characterises the filmic process, in terms of its narration of recorded events, and its constant dispersion and binding up of the subject, which accounts for the pleasure of film. Such an interpretation of the formal nature of the filmic medium ties its operations to violence and death.

Metz highlights the relevance of Freud's interpretation of the sexual aspects of seeing, or voyeurism, to an analysis of film.¹⁸ The cinema relies for its existence on the perceptual passions, informed by the scopic drive. The desire to hear is also affirmed as a sexual drive, impulses both of seeing and of hearing feeding on an absence which maintains their intensity, as they pursue an imaginary object of desire. That such drives are an intrinsic aspect of experiencing a filmic text implies an innate erotic activity at the heart of the viewer's engagement with a filmic text. It is Burch who extends such a link to one between watching and violence. Burch locates a kinship between optical aggression and an aggression within the content of the filmic image, implying in turn that this renders film suitable to narratives of aggression and violence.¹⁹ Robbe-Grillet's use of sadoerotic images as dream-like projections within a fantasy of a hero/narrator within his films manifests an exploitation in his texts of the kinship between sexual voyeurism and cinematic spectating.

Indeed, the analysis of dreams proposed by Freud and Lacan, and the process of censorship through which the unconscious passes in its problematic expression, further illuminate a reading of Robbe-Grillet's filmic and literary portrayal of sadoeroticism. The sexual violence in his texts is often of a bizarre, oneiric nature. On the one hand therefore, such violence could be interpreted as the unveiling of the true content of a repressed unconscious mind. The recurrence of the same motifs - rape, immolation and

cannibalism, for example - suggest that the sadoerotic images are to an extent fixed as obsessions, and hence unchangeable, unlike the disruptive formal structures into which they are inserted.

Nonetheless, Freud's conception of 'representability' points to an inevitable transformation which the unconscious undergoes in its self-expression. This in turn denies the mimetic value of images produced in dreams, as dreams are always evidence of something other than themselves. Latent dream-thoughts cannot be articulated other than via codification, effected by a process of symbolisation, or 'in a change in the *verbal expression* of the thoughts concerned'.²⁰ Thus, being run over by a train becomes a symbol of sexual intercourse (p. 362, *The Interpretation of Dreams*); one is reminded of Eva whom Elias envisages run over by a train in *TEE*, and alerted to the potentially displaced nature of Elias's fantasy.

Lacan further emphasizes the possibility for images of dismemberment to act as the displaced expression of unconscious impulses. Such 'imagos' are, for Lacan, creations, and are evidence of an aggressive drive which is transformed during its passage into the symbolic order. The images themselves are displaced, and cannot be interpreted simply for what they are. Lacan's '*imagos du corps morcelé*' consist of 'les images de castration, d'éviration, de mutilation, de démembrement, de dislocation, d'éventrement, de dévoration, d'éclatement du corps'.²¹ Seen in this light, Robbe-Grillet's images become strikingly obscure. For as dream-like images, they are potentially non-mimetic, and are the sites of other ungraspable meanings. The theme of sadoeroticism becomes in its essence metaphorical and hence subversive insofar as it unsettles what it purports to represent. The tendency of the sadoerotic theme to disrupt hierarchy within Robbe-Grillet's literary texts will become evident in the textual analysis below.

Eisenstein's development of montage, essential both to his own and to Robbe-Grillet's conception of the filmic medium (see Chapter One, V, iii), promotes an aesthetics of violence in formal terms, which champions an intentional, strategic violence in filmmaking. This illustrates the extent to which violence may be a conscious use of

aggressive energy within the filmmaking process. Eisenstein explains both the interaction of shots, and of intra-shot elements, as characterised by collision and generative of conflict.

Just as one shot may react against another aggressively, so too components within each frame may interact violently through opposition. The intra-shot violence is attained by many techniques, among them the following: the conflict of graphic directions or lines within the frame, the conflict of shot levels, of volumes, of masses (volumes filled with varying intensities of light), of spaces; it is attained by the breaking up of the intra-shot element into antagonistic fragments, and by the conflict between the frame of the shot and the profilmic. The cinema is, for Eisenstein, the materialisation of the conflict between the organising logic of the director and the inert logic of the phenomenon in collision: these produce the dialectic of the camera angle.²² In other words the conflict inherent in optical counterpoint (as in contrapuntal sound) becomes representative of the process of artistic creation, which is necessarily a violent confrontation between the artist and the world. Such a violence provides the basis for Eisenstein's aesthetic of film. Given Eisenstein's influence on Robbe-Grillet, such a formal expression of violence is most helpful in an examination of the latter's work, and points to the violence inherent in a formalist approach to film, which in turn may be used to contest ideologies.

The comparison between the way in which literary and filmic texts are experienced, due to the temporal frame of narration dictated by the projection time of the film, also aligns filmic form to violence. Orr points to the compression of the filmic experience into a 90- to 120-minute experience for a full-length feature film, which is shorter than the average time given to reading a novel. This, coupled with the kinetic impact of the big screen generated by simultaneous visual and sound effects, necessarily intensifies the filmic image, making it act aggressively on the viewer.²³ Such a claim implies that the filmic image begins with a formal violence.

Indeed, in terms of form, it is Robbe-Grillet himself who sees both media as violent when structured as such. While he stresses that the filmic medium is inherently

more aggressive than the written phrase,²⁴ *PUNR* suggests the literary text may be unstable and destructive, in a dramatisation of or onslaught upon the mental process of the reader: 'Ici l'espace détruit le temps, et le temps sabote l'espace. La description piétine, se contredit, tourne en rond. L'instant nie la continuité' (p. 133, *PUNR*).

Theoretical work on violence and eroticism in the media tends therefore to tie filmic form intrinsically to violence, positing the act of spectating itself as intimately linked to sexual activity, and the filmic exposition as bound up with a process of dismemberment. Equally, certain types of writing or filmic/photographic production may exploit eroticism and violence to investigate transgressive representations, in the potential of the traumatic image to evade connotation. Often, theorists of eroticism and violence perceive such themes as interlinked, and as an inherent part of human life, and imply that the representation of the themes is an authentic expression of real experience. As an oneiric exploration of the unconscious, the sadoerotic theme displaces mimetic meaning, and therefore plays a formal role, implying that its actual meaning is to be found elsewhere. All such aspects of filmic and literary violence illuminate Robbe-Grillet's use of the sadoerotic theme.

The emphasis in the above section has been on the liberating and subversive aspects of violence and eroticism which may be accommodated or attained via the formal properties or strategies of the media. We will now examine the critique of violence and eroticism in - and of - representation, particularly as it relates to Robbe-Grillet's sadoerotic objectification of women in his texts.

(ii) The Critique of Textual Violence and Eroticism

The critique of textual violence or eroticism, which may in turn be most fruitfully applied to Robbe-Grillet's type of sadoeroticism, shifts the focus away from formal strategies of subversion or transcendence. It investigates instead a textual representation which is trapped within a process of creation of violence and - *or as* - eroticism, and it

stresses that these issues are anything but intrinsic to filmic and literary media. Such theories place emphasis on the way in which textual activity constructs violence deliberately through the choice of violent or erotic subject-matter, which counters a conception of liberty, and becomes merely a glorification of violence. For the purposes of our interdisciplinary study of Robbe-Grillet, it is most fruitful to consider such theories from the point of view of the portrayal of women, as it is the image of woman which is framed sadoerotically within his work.

Theorists opposed to views which link sexuality to a violent essence, and who refute an inherent violence of forms within the media, are those that interpret representations of violence and eroticism as responsible for constructing links between these issues. De Lauretis's conception of cinema as an '*imaging* machine' equates the production of images of women in the filmic medium with a production of woman as image.²⁵ The filmic text then sets in place a social imaginary in which the woman is the looking-glass held up to man, but in which woman as active subject is effaced. The woman is telos, representing the fulfilment of the narrative promise and hence is a figure of narrative closure, as the representation works to support the male status of the mythical subject.²⁶ Such a process equates filmic narration with an act of violence against the figure of the woman. Robbe-Grillet's positioning of Violette and of Alice as the heroine-narrators of *L'Eden* and *Glissements*, works against the sense of woman as 'passive object', even though in their very appearance as erotic images, the status of these female characters as active women is undermined as they are exhibited for male pleasure.

De Lauretis's view parallels that of Mulvey, whose analysis extends to an assessment of filmic form in terms of the psychoanalytic implications of spectating. Mulvey stresses that the erotic has been coded into the language of the dominant patriarchal order in mainstream films, the image of woman denying her an active representation; in other words, the narratives have manipulated such a situation. However, more significantly, Mulvey employs Freud's account of scopophilia, combined with a reading of Lacan's 'mirror phase', to interpret cinema in general as encouraging voyeuristic fantasies while bolstering the (male) ego libido, in a complementary process

at the expense of women's subjectivity. While this analysis is concerned with particular narratives, nonetheless it extends to a general view of the medium of film. Mulvey stresses that the incorporation of woman within filmic representation as a passive image is in no way intrinsic to the medium, yet her analysis does indicate that certain (male) pleasures derived from film in general are inevitably sadistic.²⁷ The erotic filmic exposure of the naked female body such as one finds in Robbe-Grillet's cinema, in conjunction with the positioning of the gaze which creates her as object, therefore becomes a process of alienation of woman and of the annihilation of her liberty.

In her analysis of pornography, Kappeler emphasises that the objectification of woman is a result of the subjectification of man, who, as author and spectator-reader, controls the contract of exchange in which the woman is the traded object.²⁸ The positions of subject and object are then organised and re-organisable. Such a view is also that of Lederer, for whom the pornographic representation constructs the sadoerotic as a norm; such a norm may then be rendered abnormal through the creation of other, contrary representations.²⁹

Similarly, Susan Griffin argues that the association of sex with violence in pornographic representations is responsible for the need for such sexual violence; the violent nature is then a construct resulting from male nostalgia for the imagined loss of primal violence.³⁰ Catharsis is the result of this fabricated male identity which each sadoerotic representation reflects and reinforces. Susan Lurie will equally stress the extent to which pornographers shape female sexuality in the image of male sexual fantasies.³¹ Robbe-Grillet deliberately and often self-consciously constructs his female protagonists as fantasy-figures for a male spectator. The extent to which this self-consciousness exempts him from charges such as Lurie's is highly problematic. For in many ways the 'parodic' pornographic aspects of Robbe-Grillet's films cannot avoid reinforcing the power relations which the feminist critique of pornography isolates and condemns.

Yet as Chapter Two has demonstrated, Robbe-Grillet forefronts the process of invention of his texts, and in this way he alerts us to the constructions which the film is

performing. In this sense, he is aware that sexuality itself is comprised of languages as well as of nature. For Foucault, as for Worton and Still, sexuality is, like textuality, permeated by the discourses within which it is situated. Sexuality and sexual repression in society are, for Foucault, informed by a multiplicity of discourses: 'il s'agit moins d'un discours sur le sexe que d'une multiplicité de discours produits par toute une série d'appareillages fonctionnant dans des institutions différentes'.³² Definitions of masculine and feminine are the result of biological, social and aesthetic forces: a woman always is and is not a woman, a man always is and is not a man.³³

For the purposes of our analysis of sadoerotic violence in Robbe-Grillet, this instability of female and male categories must be considered, but as we shall demonstrate in more detail below, it is an instability which Robbe-Grillet reacts against, as the female protagonists are consistently placed in the role of victim and thus given a fixed position in regard to the male. We would also state that the filmic text can, due to its visual proof, exploit the biological aspect of the gender terms outlined above; represented physically on screen, each sex is most often immediately identifiable as either male or female. The filmic representation of gender is then less manipulable, more prone to fixity, and thus to reinforcing the other variable terms within the construction of sexuality (the social and the aesthetic), than is the literary text. The evidence of the body means that the filmic representation is more prone to petrifying gender relations.

The affect of violence might also depend on the way in which the violent narrative engages, or disengages the reader-viewer's subjectivity. Barr claims that distancing from violence in film is de-sensitizing, due to the absence of emotional involvement with the violence invoked by the narrative.³⁴ Such a view implicates the ironic portrayal of violence within a process of desensitization. As we shall see later on, such a process is instigated by Robbe-Grillet in his depiction of the sadoerotic.

Therefore, theories which hold that the link between violence and sexuality is not inherent but fabricated, deny in turn a sexually violent essence within human experience, claiming that if such impulses exist then this is because they are manufactured by society's texts. The notion that all representation is implicated within the production of a sexually

and fictionally violent nature, in turn implies that if filmic or literary forms are violent or erotic then this is because they are created as such. While this may be the case, the analysis of media (like the analysis of narrative) has only narratives themselves on which to base formulations about the media. While a revision of forms is hypothetically always possible, evidence suggests that there is a violence which the filmic form is defined by and which in turn influences the nature of filmic narrative. Evidence also suggests that formal violence in the literary media - which need not extend to violent subject matter - may also generate an innovation or renewal of forms.

Only a more specific analysis will further illuminate the relation between violence and eroticism on the one hand, and filmic and literary media on the other. For this reason we will focus on the contradictory responses which Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic portrayal of sadoeroticism has provoked, before proposing a detailed textual analysis of his work.

III. Robbe-Grillet and his Critics on Violence and Eroticism

The critical debate operates within a dichotomy. On the one hand Robbe-Grillet's sadoerotic is seen as liberating, and on the other, his insistent choice of the sadoerotic image is considered a process of naturalisation or glorification of the male-female power relations which this choice sets in place. In this sense, the specific debate over Robbe-Grillet mirrors the more general debate above.

For Robbe-Grillet, as for many of his critics, the sadoerotic is stressed as an intrinsic part of the mythologies of Western society. Its place in the text becomes an ironic reflection upon the conscious and unconscious worlds in which we live. It is then a mythical nature, self-consciously revealed as such and thus exposed to the possibility of reinvention. Robbe-Grillet himself stresses that the erotic fantasies presented in his texts are not the hidden fantasies of the pre-Freudian period, but are those that have been revealed and analysed by Freud, and which have therefore formed part of popular culture, appearing in advertising and mass-market literature. Robbe-Grillet aims to

present these fantasy-images as a series of flattened surfaces, and this would then be an authentic way of reflecting on them as part of reality.³⁵

Yet the individual and recurrent choice of certain stereotypes or myths equally underlies what Robbe-Grillet sees as the creation of a self in aesthetic terms, and the constitution of a personal thematics.³⁶ This in turn implies the artist's intimate relation to the images of sadoeroticism, and his absorption within them. More recently in his 'auto-fiction' Robbe-Grillet claims that his own sexual nature is defined by perversion: 'je dois désormais accepter cette évidence: seules des mises en scène (ou des imaginations) « perverses » excitent mon désir, ce qui va d'autant moins sans problèmes que je suis attiré surtout par les très jeunes filles' (p. 44, *Le Miroir Qui Revient*).

The sadoerotic is then lent a depth, an unconscious inevitability, and a nature outside the artist's control, which no amount of aesthetic catharsis may neutralise. The sadoerotic becomes the core of the Robbe-Grilletian 'réel', namely, that part of experience which remains outside the semantic order, and outside the conscious structures which are made up of and make up language:

Le langage « articulé », j'insiste à nouveau là-dessus, est structuré comme notre conscience claire, ce qui revient à dire : selon les lois du sens. Il se trouve ainsi, par voie d'immédiate conséquence, incapable de rendre compte, à la fois d'un monde extérieur qui précisément n'est pas nous, et des spectres qui s'agitent à l'intérieur de notre corps. Mais, en même temps, il me faut bien utiliser ce matériau-là, le langage, si inadapté soit-il, puisque c'est cette conscience claire - et rien d'autre - qui se plaint du non-sens et du manque.

(p. 41, *Le Miroir Qui Revient*, our italics).

Seen in this light, the sado-sexual urge cannot be accounted for; it can only be expressed through the inadequate linguistic means at its disposal. The literary medium would then be at odds with it. As unconscious impulse, the sadoerotic diametrically opposes the

conscious textual ordering process. In this sense, the sadoerotic theme becomes the focus of ambivalence and crisis. Incorporating it within the structures of the text will itself be a violent process, as the Robbe-Grilletian artist is only authentic and free, when s/he confronts the 'réel' with the structures of meaning, and watches both implode and transform in the attempt.

Yet our critique of Robbe-Grillet is dealing precisely with such textual representations of the sadoerotic. As stated above, the sadoerotic, and the 'réel' itself, are equally structured by language. Robbe-Grillet's shift from a claim of control over the sadoerotic, to an abdication of control over such obsessions, therefore does not significantly change our approach to them. It merely alerts us to their predominance. From the standpoint of a comparison between media, we would however claim that Robbe-Grillet's doubt about verbal language's ability to accommodate the unconscious world in which the sadoerotic is implicated, suggests that the filmic medium is more capable of giving such a theme aesthetic expression.

Echoing Robbe-Grillet's own view (as do many critics) Morrissette equates the sadoerotic elements of *Projet* with archetypes taken from popular literature and comic strips, but his analysis of the sadoerotic stops there.³⁷ Reiterating Robbe-Grillet's introduction to *Glissements'* ciné-roman, Morrissette later stresses that the significance of elements taken by Robbe-Grillet from pornographic fiction and incorporated within his texts, resides in their status as part of the (Saussurian) 'parole' of society, which Robbe-Grillet reduces to the status of a 'langue', and uses as raw material from which to create his own 'parole'.³⁸ The self-conscious manipulation of such elements becomes a subversive dramatisation of invention in which the reader-spectator is invited to participate.

Vareille and Stoltzfus are also of this view. Vareille's Freudian, psycho-analytical readings emphasize the dreamlike elements of the literary texts, whose words are an alibi for the inescapable demons which haunt them, such demons arising textually in the form of the 'enfer du sadisme'. Vareille interprets the play of opposites and the violation of taboos as liberating, attainable only through the process of writing; obsession and myth

also constitute components within the subversive enterprise.³⁹ Stoltzfus stresses the shock-value of images in films such as *Le Jeu avec le Feu*. For him, as for Vareille, the woman's body is used by Robbe-Grillet as a metaphor for language. Stoltzfus claims that Robbe-Grillet's sadoeroticism is not an assault on women, but a violation of the repressive orders of society and its 'langue', enacted textually.⁴⁰

Gardies subscribes to Robbe-Grillet's own view of the provocative, victimised female as subversive element within the patriarchal order.⁴¹ She is both manipulated element within the raw material of the filmic text, and manipulator of the viewer's preconceptions. For Matthews also, the sadoerotic comprises part of society's mythologies, which are degraded in the literary texts, this process thematically reflected by sadism.⁴² The models used for the texts' combinations are hollowed out, parodied, and hence disempowered. As one of these stereotypes, the cover-girl embodies a victory over time's disintegrating power. Yet the sadoerotic is also for Matthews the site of a profound obsession which is Robbe-Grillet's own; Matthews suggests that beyond the formal games there is an absorption in the sadoerotic from which the author himself cannot escape.

Jefferson, following Barthes, suggests the literary text is inherently erotic due to the Eros of language, intensified by a narrative of the erotic, but rendered euphoric by a narrative of narrative. The self-conscious highlighting of fiction-making becomes an eroticised 'imaging of narrative'.⁴³ The struggle between metatextual distancing from, and textual absorption within, the illusion-making of the verbal text would then be a dramatisation of this Eros. Yet we would suggest that such a conflict is equally staged within the filmic (i.e. non-verbal) text which displays an equally unsettling alternation between text and metatext, often effected via the non-verbal form of the visual image (postcard, painted picture, etc.). Jefferson's inherently erotic 'nature' of the verbal structure as played out by self-reflexive slippage, while interesting, is thus problematic and could be developed further in relation to both media (the links between sadoeroticism and metatext are examined in detail below). While the Robbe-Grilletian layering of fiction within fiction replicates a possibly sexualised inter-penetration, we

would nonetheless stress the sadoerotic nature of such textual practices, which enact a crucially violent eroticism in their constant (self-)destruction. Such a violence may be carried out through filmic as well as literary techniques.

The most eloquent assertion of the problematic nature of Robbe-Grillet's sadoerotics is provided by Ramsay. For her scientific argument, the 'réel' begins where dialectical structures are undermined by the fascinating monsters of complementarity.⁴⁴ The violent interplay between masculine and feminine is equally a complementary structure, yet the question as to whether the text itself is masculine or feminine still arises. For Ramsay, the deconstructing impulse at work in Robbe-Grillet's texts (seen in his subversion of narrative conventions, for example) is problematised by the choice of material. The indisputable and inevitable recurrence of the female as other, and as threat to the male order who must therefore be violently destroyed, implies a fundamental absence of control over the fantasies which the text attempts to combine ironically.⁴⁵ In this sense, the sadoerotic, itself selected by the writer's imagination, undercuts the texts' claim to liberation.

Thus we conclude that sadoeroticism for Robbe-Grillet, Morrissette, Stoltzfus et al. has two contradictory meanings. On the one hand, sexual violence is a stereotype which characterises society and which the work of art manipulates playfully. On the other, the sadoerotic is a subversion of all stereotypes, as a metaphor for the violation of the fixed, ordered images of a repressed society. Such a contradiction is at the heart of the critique of the sadoerotic element as ironised, manipulable myth. This renders the sadoerotic to an extent self-subverting, and proof of a manifest 'double jeu'.

Equally, the notion that the sadoerotic is innocuous as it does not refer to real women is inapplicable, as Robbe-Grillet himself acknowledges the trace of referentiality within verbal language (see Chapter One, VI). The stereotypes are chosen precisely because they feature in society and its languages, therefore they enjoy a certain equivalence with their referent. Moreover, Robbe-Grillet's use of the sadoerotic image in the filmic medium exploits that image's visual correspondence with the stereotype it would attempt to undermine, and in replicating it, cannot but reinforce it:

Similarly, the analogy made between the female body and the body of language (both of which the Robbe-Grillet text tortures and distorts) operates, as a metaphorical equivalence, exactly the same arbitrary procedure that the 'langue' operates in its systemisation of code. To claim that the violation of the female body is purely a metatextual representation of the violation of the body of the text is then, whilst undoubtedly a potent analogy, an illusory one. For, such an interpretation assumes a rejection of equivalence between text and referent in order to work, yet why should this particular arbitrary metaphor (text / language = woman) apply instead? The critique which promotes woman as language or text cannot avoid subverting itself, as it implies that Robbe-Grillet's texts, far from subverting society's 'parole' by reducing it to the status of 'langue', choose instead to fix the process of arbitrary relations around which the system of 'langue' itself operates, via the establishment of a recurrent metaphorical relation between the sexual and the textual, which eventually reinforces what the texts purport to undermine.

Robbe-Grillet's claim that his texts create their own 'parole' by reducing the parole of society to the status of a 'langue' is notably made in the introduction to a cinéroman. It is then proof of his use of one medium to subvert another. For even though he rejects Metz's 'grande syntagmatique', Robbe-Grillet would not reject Metz's claim that film has no 'langue'. The borrowing of the 'langue-parole' relationship to propound his theories is then undermined by its context in the introduction to *Glissements*, which is primarily a filmic text. In this way Robbe-Grillet sets literary and filmic media against each other, in accordance with our statements in Chapter One, VI.

Now that we have examined the views of Robbe-Grillet and his critics on sadoeroticism in his work, we propose a detailed interdisciplinary textual analysis of violence and eroticism. This will focus our comparison between media on specific practice, via an exploration of the relationship between Robbe-Grillet's formal strategies and the sadoerotic theme.

IV. Interdisciplinary Textual Analysis

This subsection focuses on the structural implications of the sadoerotic theme and its role within the comparison of filmic and literary media. It is here that the assessment of violence and eroticism may move beyond the considerations of the phallogocentric discourse in which Robbe-Grillet's sadoeroticism otherwise remains trapped. Despite our doubt voiced above about the metaphorical relation between woman and text, we nonetheless encounter a constant interplay between the sadoerotic and the metatextual, which if ignored renders the texts incomprehensible. On the one hand this highlights the metaphorical and potentially subversive role played by the sadoerotic theme, which displaces meaning and counters mimesis. Yet such a link equally demonstrates the degree to which Robbe-Grillet's later work is absorbed within the sadoerotic, as this theme informs the very structure of his textual activity. We begin by locating an opposition in the early texts between sadism and structure. This reflects upon and is reflected through a conflict between the disorders of the 'réel' and the orders of narrative. In later texts the interpenetration of sadoerotic and structure becomes indicative of a far greater imbrication of aesthetic creation within sadoeroticism.

(i) Unerasable Traces: Sadoerotic versus Structure

(Les Gommages, TEE, Un Régicide)

Les Gommages dramatises the act of violence primarily through the intertextual collision between thriller plot and Oedipus myth. Wallas's assumption of the role of the killer, in accordance with Sophocles' text, dynamically erodes the investigative plot just as the latter is coming to a climax, causing an effacement of the two structures. Intertextual violence then becomes a literary expression of the violent theme.

However, the real drama of *Les Gommages* consists not in the farcical exchange between thriller and tragedy; these are but literary mannequins, bound for Robbe-

Grilletian torture.⁴⁶ Wallas's activities are hilariously meaningless; he cannot prevent himself resembling the killer that he is investigating and whom he will eventually replace; he cannot orientate himself within the topography he is examining for clues; his interrogations of possible witnesses lead nowhere, because they are invariably coded within other irrelevant questions to conceal their purpose. Similarly, the Oedipus myth is never anything more than a trace, derided as the drunkard's 'devinette' (p. 234, *Les Gommés*). Wallas may or may not be Daniel Dupont's son; we are never told. Therefore Wallas's actions may have nothing to do with Oedipus whatsoever. '« di »' (p. 132, *Les Gommés*), the letters on the rubber comprising a word Wallas attempts to reconstruct, may merely denote the chance element that could lead the text anywhere - 'di' as 'dé', as in *Na Pris les Dés*. The text debunks not only the Oedipus text, but also what Barthes terms the Oedipal pleasure of knowing both origin and end, hence the workings of all narratives and their truths.⁴⁷

For there is a sadosexual subtext discernible in *Les Gommés* which points to an underlying obsession this early novel represses, but which gains a consequent status as 'réel' insofar as it remains outside the text's self-erasing structures ('« di »' as 'id'). The first time the motif of the murdered woman appears is in the prologue, drifting into the mind of the 'patron' of the Café des Alliés. The use of a prologue and epilogue, exclusive to *Les Gommés*, while intertextually borrowed from the Oedipus text, asserts the autonomy of the sadistic text over and above the narrative stereotypes the rest of the text undermines. Like the 'générique', the prologue is a generator (see Chapter Two, I, i).

La douce Pauline, morte d'étrange façon, il y a bien longtemps. Etrange?

Le patron se penche vers la glace. Que voyez-vous donc là d'étrange?

Une contraction malveillante déforme progressivement son visage. La

mort n'est-elle pas toujours étrange? (...) N'est-ce pas la chose la plus

naturelle de toutes? Voyez ce Dupont, comme il est beaucoup plus étrange

qu'il ne soit pas mort.

(pp. 15-16, *Les Gommés*)

The Robbe-Grilletian text's nature is rooted in sadistic death. What is far more strange, for the 'patron', is the fact there has not yet been a death in *Les Gommès*; Wallas's entire textual project fails because of this fact, as it enables him to become the murderer. Moreover, the patron's imagination generates sadistic craving when he imagines the laugh of a young woman, which in turn conjures up his desire for her damnation and a cannibalistic sadoerotic communion. These connote the theme of vampirism that haunts *La Belle Captive*, and the menstrual blood which permeates *Glissements* :

Tout à coup, dans le silence soudain retombé, le rire clair d'une jeune femme.

- Au diable!

Le patron s'est retourné, tiré du cauchemar par son propre cri. Il n'y a là, bien sur, ni Pauline ni les autres. Il promène un regard fatigué sur la salle qui paisiblement attend ceux qui vont venir, les chaises où s'assoieront les meurtriers et leurs victimes, les tables où la communion leur sera servie.

(p. 16, *Les Gommès*)

This vision of Pauline recurs on page 126, in a scene which almost repeats the prologue. Again, the patron is asked about Wallas's whereabouts, as on page 14. The repeat is however not identical to the opening of *Les Gommès*, yet is similar enough to appear to be a flashback. Its uncertain status reveals the appearance of Pauline in the text as a disruptive influence, undermining the text's order, whether chronological or semantic. Finally, the textual fixation with the death of young women will bring the narrative to climax and crisis in the closing passages of the epilogue. The desperate appeal of the narrative which ironises all authority, is intimately connected with sadism, conveyed in garbled words: ' - Le patron, c'est moi! - C'est bien. Je voudrais largement fils, il y a bien longtemps, *prétendu jeune morte d'étrange façon...* - Le patron, c'est moi. Le patron c'est moi. (...)' (p. 263, *Les Gommès*, our italics). The nonsensical, staggered dialogue of the text's penultimate page marks the abdication of order, which is usurped

by the sadoerotic, epilogue echoing prologue to form a sadoerotic frame. The recurrence of the unsolved crime - the real enigma of the text - of which Pauline was victim, asserts this baffling puzzle over the self-erasing plots played out between Wallas and Dupont.

Such sadism equally aggresses the intertextual levels of *Les Gommés*, via the theme of the sacrifice. The curtains of the shop window, on the one hand a parodic nod to the Oedipus myth, offer an image of a human sacrifice which echoes the patron's desire for a sadoerotic communion: 'bergers recueillant un enfant abandonné, ou quelque chose dans ce genre-là. Une crèmerie, une épicerie, une charcuterie, une autre épicerie (...)' (p. 50, *Les Gommés*). The row of grocers' implicate the depiction of the child as another edible element within the text's canvas.

As *TEE* will demonstrate below, the set-pieces which do not fit within the thriller or Oedipus plots provide the text's real clues. The text's meaning is shifted to the insignificant, as sadoerotic disorder is revealed as the truly real. The most obvious clues are the erasers Wallas buys, notably from women. The rubbers have no relevance to Wallas's investigation, and are self-erasy, in that they are themselves rubbed out. The descriptions of the cashiers in the shops are far more significant. The first is from a 'très jeune fille', whose description fits perfectly within the recurrent Robbe-Grilletian mould: 'Elle a un joli visage un peu boudeur et les cheveux blonds. (...) Sa coiffure relevée sur la nuque lui donne, de dos, l'air plus âgé' (p. 65, *Les Gommés*). She has a sexually suggestive expression ('lèvres charnues légèrement entrouvertes'), and, crucially for the text's fantasy, she is neither woman nor girl (p. 66). The rubber is not what the text really craves; it is a fetish. The 'gomme' as title of the book becomes a symbol overloaded with meanings, connoting the erasure of former narrative conventions, etcetera.⁴⁸ Seen within the wider context of Robbe-Grillet's work, the elimination of the rubber connotes the sadistic destruction of the female. 'Elle était gentille cette fille... Avec le pouce il use un peu le bout de la gomme. Ce n'est pas du tout ça qu'il cherche' (p. 66, *Les Gommés*).

Other encounters with women conjure up sexually charged visions in Wallas's or the text's mind. The visit to Mme Bax (linguistically related to Carolina de Saxe of *Le Jeu avec le Feu*), generates Wallas's view of the curved ironwork on the outside of

Daniel Dupont's residence, which absorbs Wallas to such an extent that Mme Bax's testimony becomes irrelevant (p. 114, *Les Gommés*). This ironwork recurs in *L'Immortelle*, connoting the prisons in which female slaves are kept, and points to the opening of *Projet*, when the narrator invents the figure of a nude woman from the curved patterns on the window frame.

Juard, 'ce docteur Juard, dont la réputation - soit dit en passant - n'est pas tellement bonne' (p. 74, *Les Gommés*) embodies the dissolution of categories which characterises the 'réel', and, more specifically, the sado-sexual fantasies that the text barely suppresses. Significantly, J(o)u(e)ard represents duplicity and criminality. He is the only character in *Les Gommés* successfully to play the 'double jeu', as both friend of the threatened Daniel Dupont and doctor for the gang which is trying to kill him. As gynaecologist, Juard is a prototype Dr Morgan, both of these characters bespectacled, and both running sinister clinics. Juard's activities are never clear but always in question. It is implied that '11, rue de Corinthe' is a brothel of sorts: the address, in honour of Robbe-Grillet's alter-ego Henri de Corinthe (cf. *Les Derniers Jours de Corinthe*), is a strong indicator that the clinic's treatment consists of sado-sexual activity. Juard is 'ce faiseur d'anges' (p. 92), a back-street abortionist whose title implies not just an involvement in the making of angels by killing babies, but also his role as pimp. Juard's nurse, with her recurrent taunt of '« Tous les mêmes! »' (p. 85), suggests most men go to Juard for very different reasons than those Wallas innocently suspects.

But the true nature of Juard's game is suppressed from the text. As threshold to the Robbe-Grilletian sadoerotic 'réel', it has no place in the cliché-strewn circular plots proposed. Like Elias's sexual violence, the text's structure cannot accommodate it. Hence, in conversation with Daniel Dupont's former wife ('la trop charnelle épouse' - p. 187) about Juard's operation on Dupont before his (fake) death, Wallas brings up his plan to talk to Juard. However, where Dupont's former wife tells Wallas the secret about Juard, the text leaves a blank:

- Tiens... C'est lui qui a fait l'opération?
- Oui.
- Ah... C'est drôle.
- Ce n'est pas un bon chirurgien?
- Oh! si... Je pense.
- Vous le connaissez?
- De nom seulement... Je croyais qu'il était gynécologue.

- Et il y a longtemps que cela s'est passé?
- On a commencé à en parler dans la ville un peu avant le début de...

(p. 184, *Les Gommés*)

The explanation about Juard's past peters out. The implication is of gynaecological malpractice, linking Juard to Pauline's murder and thus making him the real criminal.

The insidious use of the sadoerotic in *Les Gommés* then becomes a disruptive force which hints at a sub-text which the rational order of the narrative cannot accommodate. The implicit nature of the sadoerotic in *Les Gommés* moreover denies its role as stereotype; in this text, the stereotypes are the intertexts which inform it, not the more troubling sadistic fantasies. The literary text proves itself most effective in the incorporation of offstage voices which retain a powerful influence in the subversion of the explicit textual activity. Such a double structure which opposes disruption with apparent design finds more intense and all-pervasive verbal form in *Le Voyeur*, as we shall later illustrate.

A filmic equivalent for the insidious subversion of the explicit narrative design by the sadoerotic is found in *TEE*. In this film sadoeroticism is but one of the conflicting narratives within the network. Nonetheless it plays a major role in derailing the forces of rational order. The filmic medium with its superficially and visually distinct protagonists becomes an ideal means of undermining their specific narrative designs.

The author Jean's vain attempt to suppress the sexual sadism of Elias points to an overriding narrative which, within the wider scheme of Robbe-Grillet's work, could be said to dominate. The examination of the text's structure locates a subliminal and inevitable narrative which all other narratives seek to repress, and which aligns itself with the force of the id, in Freud's terminology. In *TEE* this ineluctable force is symbolised by the train and its relentless movement. The division of *TEE* into clearly defined narrative tracks, as outlined in Chapter Two (II, iii), may therefore be re-examined, for the tracks only exist in order for the train to keep rolling. The textual network of narratives becomes a series of di-versions from an eventual goal, represented by, in this work, the fulfilment of perverse sexual desire, and death. The underlying sense conveyed by *TEE* is that man's (pre-)destiny is to follow a narrative he can never invent, and that this is the only reality.

The dynamic relation between Elias and Jean highlights the fantasy of control, the illusions this fantasy perpetrates, and the violence which eventually engulfs the initial hierarchy between these figures. For Jean and Elias are, at the start of the film, opposites. One is author, the other character; one is controller, the other object of control. The gradual and total erosion of these initially clearly defined roles becomes a means by which a common nature or essence is created, which both Jean and Elias (and by implication every other man) share. The parallels between the two men soon become apparent. Structurally, Jean's desire to control Elias is analogous to Elias's desire to tie up and murder women; these comprise the narrative projects of the two figures and therefore align Jean and Elias in a shared aim to attain authority. Moreover, Elias is Jean. Firstly, Elias gives his name as 'Jean' to Eva when she asks his name, and so within the provisional world of the text Elias has as equal a right to be called 'Jean' as Jean himself has. Secondly, Elias is referred to as 'Trintignant' when he first enters the train compartment where Jean, Marc and Lucette are seated. Trintignant's real first name is Jean (-Louis). Thirdly, the fact that Robbe-Grillet himself, the actual author of the film, plays the author, renders his name 'Jean' even more token: it is Alain

Robbe-Grillet really. Thus the identities of the two are gradually interconnected and confused.

Similarly, a direct parallel may be established between the relationship between Jean and Lucette, and that between Elias and Eva. Both involve dominance, invention and conflict. Moreover, Jean and Lucette invent their story on the train; when Elias makes love to Eva he imagines himself as a train with Eva tied to the train tracks. The pervasiveness of train sound effects, of disused trains, of trains passing by Eva's window, unite Jean and Elias further through thematic association. And just as Jean's status as author is constantly undermined by the other authorities that determine the nature of the action, so too Elias's job as character in the film is endlessly parodied; his rendez-vous are meaningless, his drug-trafficking is a rehearsal; he constantly mistakes gangsters for policemen and vice-versa. Most significantly, Jean begins as a character outside the film, and ends up inside it, arriving still in character at Anvers, whereas Elias starts out inside the narrative and finishes outside it, as he embraces Marie-France Pisier in the very last shot of the film, alive and well as Trintignant. The effacement of opposites shatters the illusion of control which Jean had initially presented, as hierarchies are inverted, as differences become similarities, and as the forces which try to separate fantasy from reality are themselves repressed. *TEE* becomes a narrative about nature, and about the nature of narrative, where nature is sexually violent and driven by a death instinct, and narrative is a hypothetical and non-existent control over this nature.

The dynamic oppositions between author and character, between real and fictional persona, and between intention and reality are exploited textually in order to erode distinctions in a manner which is intrinsically and effectively filmic. The use of montage to juxtapose versions, and to dissolve the boundaries between topographies, and the use of sound effects associated with one diegetic realm to disrupt a different context are authentic filmic means by which narrative authority is set up and displaced. Yet it is above all the sadoerotic which thematically enables such narrative self-subversion; as unspeakable, it gains maximum force when spoken, and silences the ordering forces of the text.

Like *Les Gommages* and *TEE*, *Un Régicide* dramatises the dissolution of the hierarchy through violence. This text moreover introduces the metatextual functioning of the sadoerotic in its association of linguistic play with murder. *Un Régicide's* violent act, the killing of the king, is at first sight involuntary, motiveless and lacking in origin. Hence the way in which the idea of the assassination is planted in Boris's head; the command comes from a babble of voices at an inconsequential gathering, and the speaker is not identified (p. 52, *Un Régicide*). The act itself is moreover established as politically ineffective. Soon afterwards, Boris overhears that a student called Red has died, either liquidated by the police for being a foreign spy, or the victim of a 'crime passionnel'. That the regicide will serve to avenge Red's death is then ruled out, as Red's elimination may not have been politically motivated in the first place. On the contrary, *Un Régicide's* violence is linguistically generated. It is the inscription on (what may be) Red's gravestone that anagrammatically creates the command, and hence the title of the text itself: '*Ci-gît Red*' becomes '*Régicide*' (p. 58). The significance of this process of re-ordering lies in its emphasis on linguistic play as generative of a violent subversion of the hierarchy, implicating social order as linguistically constructed, and hence destructible via textual intervention. Moreover, in its suggestion of the arbitrary way in which the title and hence the text itself has been created, the anagram signals a self-destructive violence played out within the text's structure.

Yet the regicide is also, crucially, colour-motivated. First seen in the sadistically violent painting on Boris's wall (see Chapter Four, V, i), red connotes female menstrual blood, as in *Projet* or *Glissements*. Rather than incurring sadoerotic violence on the female body, in this novel the aggression is performed on the symbol of patriarchal order and the Law, the king. The sadistic craving depicted in Boris's picture is therefore implicated, along with the anagram, in the killing. The photographic reproduction of the king also invites violence. This patriarch's status as an abstract figure makes his nature a textual one, and this in turn provokes a sadistic regicide on the actual photograph itself (pp. 103-104, *Un Régicide*). Not only does his image stare out at Boris as if into the barrel of a gun, but the colour-photo of the king demands the death of its analogue, self-

reflexively pointing to the text's call for its own destruction through the blue insignia of 'Les Editions de Minuit': 'Dans le bas du cliché, en très petits caractères bleus, on lisait le mot « Exécution » suivi d'une étoile' (p. 98).

The eventual killing of the king is itself unreal, and thus imbricated within the textual constructions that highlight its artifice. The relation between this textual murder and the sadoerotic theme, which in turn establishes a link between metatextuality and sadoeroticism, arises when *Un Régicide*'s first killing of the king generates the imminent arrival of the mermaids, those 'sirènes' which recur throughout Robbe-Grillet's work: 'Je les entends, j'entends leur chant (...) Elles ne sont pas encore là, mais dans deux ou trois jours, demain peut-être, je les verrai ' (p. 128, *Un Régicide*).

Thus in both literary and filmic text aesthetic creation is dramatised as a violent process which is destructive of order and hence destructive of itself. The sadoerotic theme arises as a disruptive force which opposes narrative linearity, and is thus an essential component within the textual activity as practised by Robbe-Grillet, which confronts order and meaning. The literary text exploits anagrams, blanks and elliptical sub-texts which are suited to its verbal form in the expression of the sadoerotic theme and its association with metatextual process, whereas the filmic text dramatises and distorts narrative hierarchy.

The following subsection concentrates on the way in which the sadoerotic is incorporated more openly and more intensely within filmic and literary narration. The metatextual role of the sadoerotic theme emerges as far more pronounced, in an analysis which establishes a vital differentiation between media.

(ii) Film's Narration of the Obsession, versus Literature's Obsessive Narrator

(L'HQM, L'Eden, Le Voyeur, La Jalousie)

The sadoerotic is portrayed textually either as a fixed, narrated event or as a narrator's fixation. The former is most often the filmic method, the latter the literary. The

following analysis illustrates the implications of such a differentiation on the comparison of media via a specific discussion of Robbe-Grillet's filmic and literary practices.

The nearest the filmic medium comes to actually capturing a sadoerotic protagonist-narrator in the process of observing his prey might be the technique employed by Michael Powell in *Peeping Tom*. In this film, the scopophilia of the psychopathic killer is relayed via the view through his camera (part of his killing apparatus), with stark black lines slicing the screen into quarters as the victim is fixed in frame. Such a device both expresses the subjective tunnel vision of the psychopath, and shows what is arousing him. Robbe-Grillet's filmic portrayal of sexual obsession lays less emphasis on the actual process of perceiving. Instead, he employs montage and visual texture to convey the power of the sadoerotic theme. In his filmic texts, the sense of imminent threat and disruption is contained within the scene of sadoeroticism itself, and is communicated via the abruptness and violence with which the sadoerotic scene is edited into the series of images.

This is seen in *L'HQM*, when at the start of the film, images of Laura, Sylvia and Maria playing blind man's buff suddenly invade Boris's attempt at narration. It is unclear whether he is actually perceiving them at all. Nonetheless, they throw his linear account off course, and later find their place as sexual objects within his world when he makes love to each one of the women with varying degrees of success. Similarly in *L'Eden* it is through montage and brutal shots of sadoerotic violence that the theme is presented. When Violette first takes the white powder in the café, she witnesses the tortured women of Dutchman's harem subjectively as if in hallucination, during a rapid montage sequence. Later these same images are used as objective events taking place in Djerba, when Violette herself is one of the girls in the harem. In both films, the images are therefore exploited as both subjective and objective, and this is possible because of the way in which they are shot. Unlike Powell's exclusively subjective device of the perceiver looking through the camera, Robbe-Grillet employs visual texture and editing to achieve his double effect.

It is in the literary texts that this subjective act of perception is lent the sadoerotic nature of a threatening tunnel vision. Moreover, in the work of Robbe-Grillet it is the literary rather than the filmic text which concerns itself with the problematics of perception. While his films do exploit the ambiguous status of their images as both objectively there and subjectively perceived, such a duality is not the central drama of any one film. For, the act of perception itself is characterised by an underlying sexual violence. The seeing eye which invents the world brings with it the warping lens of its own provisionality.

La Jalousie's very narration is characterised by violent fragmentation and sado-sexual obsession. The act of seeing as a process of aggressive invention is dramatised within a text whose objectivity and/or subjectivity, while of central importance to an assessment of the text, cannot fully explain this narrative's machinations.⁴⁹ For, the topographies of sadism in *La Jalousie* are crucial in the generation of the text, informing it on both structural and thematic levels. *Jalousie* as 'jealous' or 'venetian blind' is eclipsed by a third meaning, explicable through the expression 'être jaloux de', 'to be eager for' or 'intent upon'. The text becomes a testimony to sadoerotic craving. The issue of whether or not the text is attributable to an intradiegetic narrator becomes secondary to an assessment of the workings of the text's language; everything in the text is perceived and/or narrated, and it is the language which dynamically creates the perceiver/narrator. It is the language then which the comparison with filmic text must focus on.

The 'jalousie' itself is the most obvious symbol for perception as dismemberment. The slats, or 'lames' (p. 171, *La Jalousie*), through which the view is seen, connote the laceration of truth by partiality. Seen through the blind, A... is dismembered, her silhouette 'découpée en lamelles horizontales' (p. 41). The blind crucially recurs on the window of the train compartment in *TEE*, from which Jean the author attempts unsuccessfully to maintain control over his story. In *La Jalousie*, the effacement of vision by the venetian blind relates to textual narration, through the 'lame de rasoir' (p. 131) used to erase words on A... 's type-script; equally, the 'gomme' works intertextually to

posit the Robbe-Grillet text in general (cf. *Les Gommages*) as violent and destructive against itself.

La Jalousie aligns sexual and textual violence through the framing of A... as both linguistically and sadistically threatened. The book becomes a body of words which enacts a self-torture, using the body of A... as an image for the text as both torturer and victim. *La Jalousie* establishes an arsenal of devices which bring this sadistic literary activity into play and through to its violent climax. A... is linguistically dismembered first and foremost through her name. She is the start of the alphabetical series, fatally severed from the rest of it, her meaning a perpetual point of suspension; she is equally a sliver of the author, connoting the violence enacted on the text by itself: A...lain. Corroborating this sense of threat in his fascinating analysis, Vidal names A... 'la presque nommée, la presque capturée par ce silence où gît son maître'.⁵⁰ As capital 'A', she is equilateral triangle, violently displaced on one of its sides, mapping nonetheless onto the Robbe-Grilletian image for the female genitals, the recurrent 'triangle (d'or)', dismembered from the rest of the female body. As 'a', she is the unobtainable focus of possession, part of 'avoir' but divorced from its pronoun. As 'à', she is conjunction cut off from the syntactic adjuncts which would enable sense through a phrase or sentence. A(h) is a cry of pain or ecstasy. As a name, then, A... is a fragment.

A... becomes an object of textual and sexual sadism through her association with the machine. Ricardou defines *La Jalousie* as 'une machine opérant l'actualisation des possibles'.⁵¹ All of Robbe-Grillet's characters behave mechanically, and A... is no exception. As self-conscious textual construction A... is an automaton, lacking in emotion, unreadable. Her physicality is lent the status of a machine whether through 'l'étroite fermeture métallique de la robe' (p. 15) or through her hair, which, when adjusted by A...'s fingers produces an effect as if both were 'entraînés par le même mécanisme' (p. 44). The hair in turn has its own machine-like infrastructure with its 'épingles cachées' (p. 45); these are also weapons of sadistic torture, as in *Projet*, where, in a shop window of the subway, needles stuck in a dismembered breast provide a surreal pin-cushion; they connote the recurring syringe-injections in *Souvenirs* and in the film *Le*

Jeu avec le Feu which enable abduction. The text's code for Franck's possible sexual involvement with A... is conveyed through comments like '« (...) Mais vous n'êtes pas un mécanicien bien étonnant, n'est-ce pas? »' (p. 85). And this machinery is of course to be dismembered. The faulty engine provides a motive for Franck's trip to town and hence for his possible night of sex with A.... The dismantling of the truck therefore becomes a metaphorical enactment of the taking apart, sadosexually, of A... .

This sadistic dismemberment is a linguistic exercise, a metatextual process of a writing aware of its status as construction and, hence, destructible. For this reason, the machine is equally the text itself. The words used to describe A...'s hair, 'mécanisme' (p. 44), 'souple' (p. 103), its movement 'sans à-coup' (p. 103, p. 213), and the fingers as they move through it, 'l'un à l'autre d'une manière continue' (p. 44) echo almost verbatim the self-reflective opening of *Projet*: 'Les mots, les gestes se succèdent à présent d'une manière souple, continue, s'enchaînent sans à-coup les uns aux autres, comme les éléments nécessaires d'une *machinerie* bien huilée' (p. 7, *Projet*, our italics). The hair is the text's fantasy, and as fantasy, is irredeemably text. Franck's role as a poor mechanic denotes not just his sexual, but also his textual power; when he and A... discuss the book they are both reading (in a passage which could also be a description of his and A...'s adulterous trip), Franck comes up with repeats, never novelties, again echoing *Projet's* opening (see p. 85, *La Jalousie*).

It is for this same reason that A... is caught up in the text's sadistic fantasies, almost courting them. The lingering of her fingers on the flaking scales of paint conjures up the blade of a saw, which the zig-zagging opposition of wood and paint resembles (p. 28). The saw connotes the chopping down of the trees in the plantation, positing the exterior topography as sadistic. For Vareille, the broken line of trees is 'un viol', and the balustrade is connotative of sadism, the 'signe d'une vision passionnée et obsessionnelle'.⁵² The saw is also the grotesque method of torture used in *Projet* for the climax of the narrator's sadistic onslaught on Joan Robeson, during which she is placed astride a saw blade with long teeth, and slowly torn apart (p. 181, *Projet*). Equally, the nails on the arm of the chair connote the text's yearning for the crucifixion of the female

explicitly shown in *L'Eden* and *Le Jeu avec le Feu*. The nails traditionally spear the hands to the cross: in *La Jalousie*, A...'s hands caress these nails suggestively (p. 191, *La Jalousie*).

The text is full of sadistically self-generating replays. The notorious 'mille-pattes' is the most obvious of these. As linguistic sign, it is the 'point d'interrogation', inexplicable through language, as it represents sadistic desire, which, as in *TEE*, the text's structure cannot accommodate. The 'mille-pattes' is also the text's favourite torturer, and is constantly conjured up and re-introduced for purely sadistic reasons. Robbe-Grillet has himself stressed the male nature of the scutigera and its variants, authenticating the creature's sadistic role.⁵³ Like the scorpion with which Violette is tortured when in captivity in Djerba in *L'Eden*, or the black widow spider which fatally attacks Sarah Goldstücker in *Projet*, the '« mille-pattes-araignée »' (p. 128, *La Jalousie*) or 'crabe de terre' (p. 145, *La Jalousie*) is a mutated crustacean, its hard exoskeleton thematising it as a metatextual symbol for the self-reflective text whose structure is outside its body. This creature may or may not be a poisonous kind, and may or may not be dead: this is because it is a figure of the text's sadistic fantasy and is therefore unfixable. It is, moreover, an object of terror and sexual arousal for A..., eventually bringing her to orgasm. Hence the changing description of A... each time the millipede appears. First, A...'s hand clutches her knife, then she grasps the white table-cloth. When the creature is killed for the last time, this has become a bed-sheet, her hand convulsed in sexual climax, as dinner scene becomes bedroom scene, briefly but excitingly glimpsed (pp. 63, 97 and 166, *La Jalousie*). The shifts in location for the ritualised killing of the scutigera, coupled with the creature's own uncertain nature, dislodge the certainty that the creature is being destroyed, enabling the text to suggest that it is A... who is in fact being sadoerotically aggressed. The crackling sound emitted by the 'mille-pattes', notably also that of A...'s hair being combed (p. 165's 'grésillement') then becomes the sound of fire, a recurrent sadistic motif in Robbe-Grillet, featuring in *Le Voyeur*, *Projet* and *Le Jeu avec le Feu* as a method of sexual torture. Immolation is then played out in the car accident in which A... and Franck are engulfed by flames. The act of sex, the torture by the 'mille-pattes'

and the thematics of the textual machinery come together in this climactic moment, in which sadoerotic violence triumphs over rational explicability (p. 167, *La Jalousie*). Franck and A...'s reappearance unharmed affirms the episode as another stage in the sadistic process.

Other motifs of torture are the ship, the Saint-Jean, depicted in the calendar in A...'s room, and its circling vulture which eventually invades the room (p. 167, *La Jalousie*). Saint-Jean connotes Saint Joan (Jeanne d'Arc), burnt at the stake for suspected witchcraft. Alice will be imprisoned for the same reason in *Glissements*, and 'Joan' Robeson is set fire to in *Projet* (p. 180). This sadism is echoed by the beasts outside the house, which move nearer as the text proceeds, finally joining the vulture when their sounds seem to come from A...'s room itself, suggestive of a bestial sadistic communion (p. 209, *La Jalousie*).

The geometrically calibrated descriptions of the plantation thematise the act of laceration. Every symmetry or angle that is detailed becomes another fracture in the body of the text, the intense and eventually meaningless detail a form of self-torture. For, the level of description is taken to such an extreme that it destroys the illusion of reality the literary text would conventionally create. For Ricardou, the banana plantation represents 'un fantasme de la description précise', engendering a conflict between dynamic narration and static description.⁵⁴ The effect of the prose derives from its sadistic undercurrents and rhythms, not from its insane inventories and delineations.

Temporality is also cut up, as events seem to repeat themselves yet are never quite the same, the text abandoning linear chronology and the teleological narrative model. Indeed, the recurrence of certain details of conversation or description in slightly altered contexts, has the effect of reducing the text into dismembered pieces, the body of the text a series of disjointed yet still twitching limbs. This of course acts metatextually to affirm language's autonomy and lack of connection to the reality it is supposed to describe. While Ricardou sees the ending of *La Jalousie* as primarily self-destructive (p. 111, *Problèmes du Nouveau Roman*) we argue such self-destruction runs throughout the text. As importantly, *La Jalousie* thematises sadism through effects of structure.

Scenes are juxtaposed to destroy causal linkage, staggering the development of the narrative. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the presentation of a sequence of quasi-photographic stills of A... (pp. 120-122, *La Jalousie*). These may be compared to similarly intercut shots that recur in *L'Immortelle* depicting L in various poses and locations one after the other, as if generated by N's fantasy. In the literary text of *La Jalousie*, such a structural device adds to the thematics of sadism: structure becomes violently disruptive through the rapid juxtaposition of discontinuous scenes.

Whereas *La Jalousie* suffuses its narration with sadism, rendering it both a subjective vision obsessed with the sadoerotic and a metatextual process of self-destruction, *Le Voyeur* employs 'style indirect libre' to relay its protagonist's sadistic obsession and what may be an act of sadistic murder. As in *La Jalousie*, the perceptions - this time of an explicitly intradiegetic protagonist - are conveyed through obsessive narration which the objective narration attempts to accommodate. It is here that the second level of violence operates. For the voice describing Mathias cannot represent him. In narrative terms, the novel dramatises the conflict between the sadoerotic 'réel' and the orders of language, played out through the detached narration's inability to describe what is really happening. *Le Voyeur* becomes particularly fruitful to our comparison of media, through the means by which this conflict is expressed. For the literary text shows itself to be exclusively conducive to the creation of double worlds, via an ambivalence of language and of images. This linguistic ambiguity is exploited through the creation of subliminal rhythms and patterns of repetition.

We moreover argue that it is precisely and specifically the theme of sadoerotic violence which generates the double nature of verbal language in this literary text. The extremes of brutality hinted at (the torture and murder of a young girl, the use of cigarettes to burn her, etc.) draw the reader into intrigues which the text both suggests and denies. *Le Voyeur* sets the shocking (unconventional) theme against the conventions of language and thus achieves its subversion; without this dialectic, the text would not achieve its hiatus. Thus while this is a text which aims to subvert language's mimetic function, it may only do so via a representation of sexual violence. Such a theme would

then be indissociable from the metatextual operations the text employs. The gradual disclosure of the unspeakable crime makes this text both representation of violence and violent representation.

Le Voyeur illustrates the literary text's unique ability to present narrative action as ambivalently suggestive with its first statement:

C'était comme si personne n'avait entendu.

La sirène émit un second sifflement, aigu et prolongé, suivi de trois coups rapides, d'une violence à crever les tympans - violence sans objet, qui demeura sans résultat.

(p. 9, *Le Voyeur*)

Removed from the opening of the book and printed on page 88, these words would provide the answer to *Le Voyeur's* mystery. For they are as much about the arrival of the boat, as they are a description of Mathias's motiveless, sadistic act of violence ('sans objet') against a woman ('sirène') which will remain unsolved ('sans résultat'). As such, this opening plays a generative role, analogous to that of the credit sequence (see Chapter Two, I, i).

Such an ambivalence effected within the literary medium in the expression of the sadoerotic theme equally characterises narrative description. The string with which Mathias is fixated, offers what Ricardou has termed a 'structural metaphor', which organises the text, and thereby connotes an implicit meaning behind the superficially innocent nature of description; such a meaning in *Le Voyeur* is 'sadisme figuré'.⁵⁵

Il rejetait aussi les fragments trop courts pour pouvoir jamais servir à *quoi que ce soit d'intéressant*.

Celui-ci aurait à coup sûr fait *l'affaire*. C'était une fine cordelette de chanvre, en parfait état, soigneusement roulée en forme de huit, avec quelques spires supplémentaires *serrées à l'étranglement*. (...) Quelqu'un

l'avait sans doute laissé tomber là par mégarde, après l'avoir mise en pelote en vue de l'utilisation future - ou bien *d'une collection*.

(p. 10, *Le Voyeur*, our italics.)

The sexual implications of 'l'affaire' become connotations of strangling and abduction in 'l'étranglement' and 'collection'. Moreover, the string informs what follows, imbricating the ensuing narration within the sadoerotic scheme. After Mathias has picked up the string, a young girl appears before him, as if generated by it. She courts the enactment of some sado-masochistic ritual, hands ready to be tied (p. 22, *Le Voyeur*). Mathias's attempts at orientating himself, lead him to the imprint made by an iron ring attached to the sea-wall, which in turn leads back to the string, via the rope once attached to the ring (p. 17). A flashback to his childhood describes Mathias drawing a seagull, but this also culminates in the image of the string, as it recalls the shoe-box in which he kept his string as a child (p. 20). The string accordingly refers us back to the boat; then the flashback is repeated, only to dissolve again into the present. Instead of holding a pencil, Mathias is holding, yes, the piece of string.

This image, which would conventionally comprise part of a static description, gains a structural role as implement designed for the enactment of sadistic activities. For the string is the oversignificatory object which will be used to tie up Mathias's victim. Moreover, it becomes a means by which temporality and topography are reorganised, as chronology is disrupted and bound together by this recurrent image. As sadistic symbol, the string's narrative power signals the domination of the sadoerotic 'réel' over textual causality, and hence over the linguistic order. The structural role of the sadoerotic motif further links narrativity to sadoeroticism, and is employed with more regularity and sophistication in *Maison* (see subsection iv, below). In *Le Voyeur*, the stuttering narration which attempts objectivity, cannot rationally explain the string; the language is at odds with sadoeroticism, where in later novels it will be fully interwoven within textual structure. When Mathias no longer has the string, the text feigns ignorance;

the real use he has put it to is suppressed: 'Mais n'y trouvant pas la pelote, il s'était alors souvenu... Il s'était souvenu qu'il ne l'avait plus sur lui' (p. 159, *Le Voyeur*).

The blue packet of cigarettes is also intimately bound up with the thematics of sadism, and produces similar unexplained chronological jumps. Employed as a method of torture in *Le Jeu avec le Feu* and as a drug to facilitate abduction in *Souvenirs*, the cigarette appears within a flashback to Mathias's departure that morning, then eliding temporality and topography as the young girl appears before him on the boat, generated by the sadoeroticism inherent in the cigarette motif (p. 29). Later, Mathias will suddenly remember three cigarettes left on the cliff-top; their sadistic role is, like that of the string, repressed.

Le Voyeur uses linguistic echoes to create a narrative of obsession which is permeated with sexual violence without actually expressing it. In this way, the Robbe-Grilletian sadoerotic is encapsulated indirectly within linguistic structures. Mathias's savage physical attribute, his overgrown, pointed fingernails ('ongles', 'pointue' - p. 11), are described using the same terms as the text's crustaceans which litter the quay: 'pattes anguleuses - ou de morceaux de pattes - un, deux ou trois articles, terminés par un *ongle trop long, légèrement courbe, acéré*' (p. 53, *Le Voyeur*, our italics). Like the 'mille-pattes', the crustacean connotes sadism. Both fingernails and crabs interlock, when Jean Robin tears apart his 'crabe-araignée' at dinner (pp. 137-138, *Le Voyeur*). The splatter of juice from Robin's crab stains his wife's cheek, then transforms into a wound on her neck, significantly 'à la base du cou' (p. 145, *Le Voyeur*). This, and the fragility of the dismembered crustaceans, are echoed in the depiction of the barmaid at Café 'A l'Espérance', as she serves drinks: 'offrant sa nuque *courbée*, où saillait faiblement la *pointe d'une vertèbre, à la base du cou*' (p. 58, *Le Voyeur*, our italics). Mathias's drawing of the seagull, supposedly an escape from the subjective obsession as it belongs to 'innocent' childhood, cannot but replicate these curved, pointed physicalities: 'Il avait reproduit non seulement les contours de son corps, l'aile grise repliée, l'unique *patte* (...) et la tête blanche avec son oeil rond, mais aussi la commissure sinueuse du bec et sa *pointe recourbée*' (p. 19, *Le Voyeur*, our italics).

Thus in the literary medium, the sadoerotic theme is a source of crisis within the textual process of representation. In *La Jalousie* the sadistic narrator-perceiver of events could be said to wish to remain anonymous because of his sadistic fantasies, where in *Le Voyeur* it is a tangible obsession and event which will not be admitted. Either way, the obsessive narration of the sadoerotic is, in literary terms, shown at this stage to be at odds with language, and therefore becomes a potent thematic source for metatextual subversion and a multiplicity of meaning, as the text enacts a violence against itself. The sadoerotic theme in the filmic text is equally a disruptive element within an attempt at linear and causal narration, but as Robbe-Grillet's practice illustrates, it is not embedded within the protagonist's vision, but is used confrontationally through montage.

We will now demonstrate the extent to which the later texts employ the sadoerotic theme more audaciously to permeate the generative process, exploiting the metatextual implications of this theme to the full both literarily and filmically. The sadoerotic becomes an effective means of placing the illusion of the text in a constant state of crisis.

(iii) The Sadoerotic as Metatext

(Glissements, Projet, Marienbad)

The text which subverts naturalism and refuses recuperation as a record of recognisable events, inevitably tends towards a status as metatext. The abandonment of 'vraisemblance' erodes the suspension of disbelief and renders the text a contrived process; this may or may not be exploited ironically as intentional, but even if it is not, the illusion-making will still be manifestly illusory and will not be able to avoid talking about itself as text. In his later filmic and literary work, Robbe-Grillet exploits the sadoerotic theme in order to lend the world of the text an obsessive, non-naturalistic nature. The excess of such sadoeroticism aligns itself with the metatextual process. The alignment is moreover particularly acute as sadoeroticism becomes explicitly playful and

self-conscious, itself reflecting on the play of meaning which, as Chapter Two illustrates, is formally dramatised throughout Robbe-Grillet's work.

Indeed, the filmic image which pushes towards unacceptability (non-naturalistic/unnatural) achieves a paradoxical authenticity as image, as its very artifice, or horror (in the case of manufactured horrific images) forces an acknowledgement of it as unreal. The image that really shocks forces the reaction: 'it's only a film!'; in this way, the brutality the film stages becomes the brutalising of an ideology which attempts to stifle film itself within a realist or representational straitjacket. Images of torture can become deliberate and self-conscious shock-tactics which assert the freedom of film to represent whatever it wants, the image of a supposed reality remaining an image and nothing more significant, even if the iconic similarity between filmed object and profilmic is to an extent respected.

The use of the sadoerotic as a textual generator achieves, in *Glissements*, a debunking of violence and other significations that attach themselves to the image, through the interplay of associations of colour and texture. While a strong sadoerotic current runs throughout this work, nonetheless, the 'glissements du sens' engendered by Alice's refusal to play along with the forces of male, hierarchical Order embodied by policeman, magistrate and priest, is further explored through the film's visual composition and structure, such that represented reality is transformed into a play of line and colour. In this way the sadoerotic is portrayed as unnatural, and so may only approximately be referred to real sexual violence. Instead the sadoerotic is recruited to reflect upon the process of creation.

The human reality that the filmic text proposes is unrealistic from the very start of *Glissements*. Nora is a woman-doll, undressed by Alice as a doll is undressed, and suggestive of a clothes model or statue to Robbe-Grillet: 'Nora est debout, telle un mannequin dans une vitrine, mais enveloppée de voiles comme une statue le jour de son inauguration' (p. 30, *Glissements*). She is then, as an image, as plastic as any other manipulated and manipulable aspect of the film. And it is as a doll that she is inserted as a component into the various self-conscious tableaux which the film generates. The scene

of the crime is the first of these set-ups. First, Alice paints red flower petals on Nora's bare breast. Then Alice screams as if seeing an attacker approach offscreen, and the next time Nora is shown, she is dead. One wrist roped to the bed-head and a pair of scissors stuck in her breast, Nora's expression when dead is exactly as it was when she was alive. Emotion, drama and suspense are all completely lacking as the killing occurs - or does not occur, as we do not see it happen. The death itself becomes subsidiary to the visual effect that is created: blood, a sadoerotic pose, and the stark contrast of red on the white of the bed. The absence of realism forces a conception of the image as coloured surface. The act of painting that takes place just before the murder is, according to the visual evidence, equally probable as a cause of death.

Colour and association inspire the images of eroticism and violence that follow. The magistrate interviews Alice about the crime, and a reconstruction or flashback of the scene takes place. Nora is suddenly no longer dead, even though the magistrate is in the shot with the two women. In this revision Alice is again painting Nora, this time more extensively. The blood of the murder has now reverted back to the basic colour red; the increase in the quantity of paint on Nora's body suggests she may even be bleeding paint (which is, of course, all stage blood is, in reality). This image in turn generates the erotic ritual of the client who approaches Alice when she is posing as a prostitute in the street (after Robbe-Grillet himself has sauntered through the shot, the author himself as prospective 'trick'). Once in Alice's apartment, the client smashes open a bottle of red syrup, which he pours over Alice's naked body and then licks off. Just as Nora did prior to the murder, Alice plays dead while this love-game is performed; but directly after it is over, it is the client who lies (again unrealistically) dead on the floor, his face covered in what now looks like blood. As the script states: 'on dirait vaguement qu'il est mort' (p. 75, *Glissements*). Syrup becomes blood through a slippage of association due to colour's potentially multiple signification within the two-dimensional image-surface of the film. Colour itself has therefore gained an autonomy outside the parameters of realism. Within the image, the redness of red is the only meaning that red possesses. Any other significance attributed to it is an imagined one, and it is this that *Glissements*

highlights. A mobility of the parameters of the possible and realistically plausible is then effected by the dictates of colour as colour and nothing more.

This is further illustrated in the scene in which Alice cracks raw eggs onto Nora's naked and living body, and covers them in red syrup. As at the start of the film, Nora is a canvas for Alice's creativity. When the male client applied it, the syrup connoted a sex-game; now it is a symbol of menstrual blood. The two meanings efface each other through their proliferation, such that the syrup becomes merely a source of colour, contrasting vividly with the yellow of the yolk. It is in a naive, childlike manner that Alice performs the task, and while undertones of lesbianism are clearly present, they are not realistic, and no sexual excitement may be read from either character's features. The erotic is, if anything, debunked by this parody of a sex-game; the climax shows Alice sticking her toe into Nora's vagina, an infantile penetration, like dipping a brush in paint. The image of Nora playing dead, covered in a blend of red and yellow, proposes another mutated image of the murder, the reality of which is then further weakened through its imbrication within the thematics of the game.

The colour red is used to signify sexual guilt when it appears as a red hand print, planted on the breast of a nun's white robe by Alice. It is a cultural and intertextual reference when it emerges as the two dots of a vampire bite on Maître David's neck. The colour red returns to its status as paint, or medium of the artist, when Alice paints her naked body and prints it on the white walls of her cell.

The play of colour is equally a play of form. The mannequin found on the beach offers an image for Nora's naked body, both of them appearing lifeless, both attached to a bed, and both of them mutilated in a sadoerotic manner. The mannequin bleeds, in imitation of Nora, fake-blood further eroding the realism of Nora's fatal wounds. And this mannequin - this Nora - is equally Maître David, the lawyer, also played by Olga Georges-Picot. Moreover, Alice is at certain points a double for Nora, as when, without any explanation, Alice appears standing in the street as a prostitute, dressed in the same blue shoes that we have seen Nora wearing moments earlier, as if the two of them have somehow swapped identities. The pasteur initially mistakes the lawyer for Alice when he

first enters Alice's cell, and Alice is convinced, when she first sees Maître David, that the latter is Nora. In this way, the female form itself, like the colour red, is divested of its meanings through its polymorphous nature within the world of the image.

Thus the filmic medium exploits its intrinsic properties of colour, physical association and the play of identity to represent sadoeroticism and/as metatextuality, both intimately linked through the manipulation of illusion and role-play. The filmic text - and *Glissements* in particular - presents a visual sadoerotic spectacle which subverts its naturalism through shock and self-conscious artificiality, while constantly tempting the viewer to become absorbed in its tableaux via the display of nudity. Comparable to this dynamic relation between absorption and distancing in the filmic medium is a similar literary imbrication of the sadoerotic theme within the metatextual process, exemplified by *Projet*.

Projet is a text in which the metatextual role of sadoeroticism is highly sophisticated and playful. The verbal games are frequently tied to the sadoerotic theme, such that the two become indissociable. As with *Glissements*, the text which constantly alerts the reader to its status as text, sadistically undercuts the illusion of reality it suggests, sadoeroticism thematising the workings of the self-reflective narrative, which both creates and destroys itself as it proceeds to climax. If the text's sole reality is as organisation of words and phrases, then the sadistic text gains authenticity through its own evisceration. The sadoerotic image becomes a metatextual indicator, an extreme form of self-consciousness.

Sadoeroticism is further linked to the narrative act through the analogy between utterance, and the death of the individual subject as his/her inner 'réel' is revealed to be at odds with the linguistic structures which create it and with which it is obliged to create. Robbe-Grillet's work dramatises this very process to an extreme degree. In *Projet*, both narrators and characters are constructed by language to such an extent, that they can only possess language's own killing propensity. The character truly aware of his/her status as language is both dead (wo-)man and murderer. The text's only freedom within the linguistic world of the dead, in which authors may only distribute dismembered word-

realities, is to convert such a process into a game. Robbe-Grillet's narrative attempts to overcome the constrictions of language, by transforming them into grotesque images of bondage and torture.

Projet's sadoeroticism is then as unnatural, and non-naturalistic as that of *Glissements*. On the one hand it is fantasy, generated by a subjective consciousness; this is borne out by the manner in which the sadoerotic is narrated. When the nude, bound woman first appears, she is created out of the patterns on a wooden door, which in turn renders all subsequent visions of sadoeroticism imaginary (p. 8, *Projet*). Yet such an obsession simultaneously invades the supposedly external topography, rendering the world of the text a sadoerotic mindscape. The people in the subway are characterised by decomposition which threatens the text's progression with *rigor mortis*, or 'l'arrêt total et définitif' (p. 32). The masks in the shop-window provide images of sadism which are equally metatextual figures, reflecting on the constructions of the text, as images of carnage such as dismembered women's hands give way to bleeding heads from the mythologies of both America and the text itself (pp. 54-55). The sadoerotic texture of *Projet* becomes more intensified and all-pervasive than that of *Le Voyeur*, the latter's sadoerotic motifs such as the pattern of dolls on the inside of Mathias's case becoming more violent in *Projet*. Sadoeroticism invades the dialogue of characters who are all implicated within the text's obsession, as when JR asks Laura: 'A quoi rêvent les jeunes filles?' and Laura replies 'Au couteau... et au sang!' (p. 71, *Projet*).

The act of torture is thematically linked to the act of writing through the administering of the truth drug to create narrative by forcing the victim to speak. Dr. Morgan's 'sérum de vérité' (recurring in *Souvenirs*) becomes a catalyst of textual production, and of textual essence, connoting the French 'je serai' and Latin 'sum'. Names in *Projet* also play a metatextual role, Ben 'Saïd' announcing his verbal status, and linking the textual process with that of sa(i)dism. The hooligan on the underground train, W (double vé) becomes a *reductio ad absurdum* of what he is meant to represent: mimetic character as 'double vie'.

In *Projet*, descriptions are tailored to cut up, rather than to clothe. The neck of JR, for example, gains a predestiny as focus for sadistic expression, when it is actually compared to the blade which will eventually kill her. 'La chair nue de son cou, blanc et rond, brille comme un couteau quand elle passe dans la lumière directe du réverbère' (p. 75, *Projet*). Read metatextually, the 'réverbère' is the 'verbe' - in narrative terms the only means of illuminating anything. If *Projet* is the projection of a sadistic consciousness, then anything narrated comes through a lens warped by its obsession with torture; the reality described therefore becomes its own destruction as it is uttered. Hence, the neck is a knife, as that is what the female neck means, in the flickering light of this text's fantasy. The simile, conventionally a term which expands the essence of the reality described, is here a termination. And naturally (for this narrator) JR is soon envisioned dead: 'L'idée m'a traversé, en même temps, de la belle morte qu'on pourrait composer avec cette splendide chair blanche' (p. 75, *Projet*).

Literary sadoeroticism becomes a torturer of language itself. The word is put on the rack, and either forced into giving a stream of contradictory meanings - like a victim who will say anything to make the torturer stop - or spliced into simple letters. This creates textual ambiguity, but more importantly it posits language as a terminus where the author may still live and flourish. Sadoeroticism becomes metatextual through the text's obsession with geometry, initials, and word as line or trace. Identities meld and split, so that 'M.A.G', 'Dr. Morgan' and 'un certain docteur M.' (p. 190, *Projet*) are all similar yet separate narrative entities, easily mapping onto each other. Initials are used to designate names (JR, W, and M.A.G.), but also become terms of description, as if reality in the text were becoming pure letter. This is the case with the sadoerotic images, which explicitly link linguistic fragmentation with corporeal dismemberment. Vareille's feminisation of the letter 'S', while interesting, overdetermines the linguistic process within the text in its insistence on gender association, and is thus reductive.⁵⁶ In fact, many other initials are associated with the feminine, denying a fixed scheme. Hence: 'les deux lames aiguës, ouvertes en V, brillent dans la lumière' (p. 79, *Projet*); 'Quand le corps a été bien tendu en forme d'X' (p. 208); and:

J'aurais été quand même en droit, il me semble, de dire au moins comment elles avaient toutes fini crucifiées d'une façon différente: la plus jeune exposée de dos, la tête en bas, clouée par la plante des deux pieds et les paumes de mains à un poteau en forme d'Y.

(p. 188, *Projet*).

The three initials used, V, X, and Y are, significantly, all triangular in shape, and slip associatively onto the image of the female genitals. This is in turn conjured up by triangular objects in the text, such as the clothes-iron, which burns a hole on the groin of JR's dress (p. 82). The fire-escape, 'des Z superposés', completes the series. Significantly, it is the end of the alphabet which provides these letters: initial becomes terminal through the sadoerotic act of writing.

The recurrent words 'Reprise' and 'Coupure' become paradigms of the text's metatextual, sadoerotic terminology, connoting both the text's staggered progress ('Coupure' designating the end of each paragraph for the last eleven pages of the book), and the actual acts of taking and cutting a woman, '(re)prendre' and 'couper'. Linguistic slippage is associated with rape, and hence loss of control, indicating language's instability when charged with obsession: '[Morgan:] - (...) Où en étions-nous? [Laura:] - La scène du *viol*. [Morgan:] - Ah oui... Pourquoi as-tu besoin de *voler* (...)?' (pp. 157-158, *Projet*, our italics). 'Viol' becomes 'voler', the linguistic structure threatened with dissolution by the delirium of sexual violence.

This is also effected by phrases in separate passages of the novel, which are linguistically close enough to become associated and therefore semantically linked, such that the textual process becomes one of transgressing conventional definitions. After the locksmith has deflowered a dead girl, we read: 'il enlève le masque *chauve de serrurier*' (p. 198, *Projet*, our italics). Underneath the mask, the locksmith is Ben Saïd. But these words recall the Black Widow spider, which was used to torture the girl, described as: 'cet animal au corps de *chauve-souris* revêtu d'un pelage noir à *reflets violets*' (p. 195, *Projet*, our italics). The spider, in turn, refers linguistically back to the girl's hair, namely:

'la chevelure abondante, longue, lisse et brillante, qui est d'un noir d'encre aux *reflets violets*' (p. 192, *Projet*, our italics). The sadoerotic obsession is accommodated by a pseudo-unconscious self-reflection between passages in the text: hair generates poisonous spider, which in turn generates necrophiliac rapist, as if all such elements comprise a subliminal causal network. The black ink ('noir d'encre') roots the whole interlinking sequence within the process of textual production, which has brought about the sadistic fantasy. Therefore on the one hand the text is dramatising its own craving for sadoeroticism, generating torturer from victim, as if the latter cannot but create the former within the Robbe-Grilletian narrator's 'reflets viole(n)ts'. Simultaneously, however, the text creates linguistic openness or reversibility, thus proposing a liberation of language from semantic fixity.

The violation of the reader is achieved in *Projet* in a manner analogous to the 'glissements du sens' produced filmically through colour-slippage outlined above in the case of *Glissements*. For, the reading of *Projet* demands a constant reappraisal of textual events. If the reader accepts everything within the text, which is consistently contradictory and baffling, a different effect is achieved, namely one of transgression. For the reader realises that what s/he reads will soon be disproved, then reauthenticated, in a dynamic process which is sustained throughout the reading. The reader becomes a willing victim of multiple textual rape. The interpenetration of diegetic realms renders the process of reading analogous to sexual penetration through the creation of text as vagina, imagination as invagination. The analogy is not arbitrary; sexual penetration is simulated by the text's manipulation of reader-expectation, which dramatises the recurring cycles of desire that are produced and expended during intercourse. The narrative, rooted in the concept of utterance (the new born baby's cry - 'vagir'), duplicates itself yet shifts its texture simultaneously in a movement which parallels the changing emotional and physical intensity of the sex act. The reading which keeps finding echoes of itself in altered topographies, or slippages of narrative agent within the same topography, generates a paradoxical state of novel familiarity, a circle which is also a

spiral, proceeding to a new depth. The image for text as vagina comes on page 67, as Laura listens to the tape-recording by herself:

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 courants sournois, noyés 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 cambrier de torsions soudaines, violentes, prêt à s'ouvrir en une bouche molle et avide aux replis compliqués, précis, multiformes, remodelés sans cesse par de nouvelles excroissances ou invaginations, mais qui conservent en dépit de leurs sinuosités changeantes une constante symétrie bilatérale.

(p. 67, *Projet*)

Yet such a self-violation characterises Robbe-Grillet's texts. *Maison* culminates in self-mutilation, as the narrative throws out possible versions of the final scene, in an aggressive yet self-doubting way, finishing with the desperate cry 'Quelle importance, tout cela? Quelle importance?' (pp. 209-210, *Maison*). Similarly *Dans le Labyrinthe* offers what Morrissette terms a dialectic of disappearance and emergence, effecting a 'dédoublement' analogous to the introduction of a black hole into the narrative.⁵⁷ This also climaxes in a negation of the text itself, with the words 'Non. Non. Non.' (p. 96, *Dans le Labyrinthe*).

The analogy of text with vagina is double-faced, for it is crucially metatextual. All sexual organs within *Projet* are textual organisations. Just as the sadoerotic in *Glissements* asserts film's potentially non-representational role, so too in *Projet*, sadistic description pushes towards unacceptability in order to assert the essentially un-real

nature of textual construction. The descriptions in *Projet* seem gratuitous and remain to an extent artificial as they are unmotivated and at times absurd in their cruelty. Hence, when describing its torturer, *Projet* asserts: 'Tout, dans ses traits comme dans sa stature, a l'air stéréotypé, sans vie réelle, sans expression humaine' (p. 89).

The recurrent game of 'Nim' in *Marienbad* presents an image for text as vagina which in turn ties the sadoerotic to the metatextual. The enigmatic equilateral triangle with its series 7,5,3,1, is consistently effaced by X in his vain but irrepressible desire to win. The disappearance of the cards, dominoes or matchsticks connotes the destruction of the female genitals eventually dramatised in the rape scene. M's victory in the game parallels his dominion over A until the final stages of the action, when X at last gains provisional control over her. The game is equally the text. M's refrain, 'Je peux perdre. Mais je gagne toujours', points to the workings of the film in its creation of an illusion of reality always threatened by inconsistency and narrative breakdown, but nonetheless retaining its hold over the viewer's perceptions and desire to play along with the narrative tricks. The numerical series will notably be echoed in the hotel room-numbers, with their corresponding keys: 'VOIX DE X: (...) *Clefs pendues à leurs anneaux, à leur place réservée, alignées en rangs successifs, clefs numérotées des portes. 309, 307, 305, 303, lustres*' (p. 66, *Marienbad*). The hotel itself then becomes a model for the clinic of *Le Jeu avec le Feu* in which these keys reappear along with photographs of the girls to be found in each room, each 'chambre imaginaire' the generating cell for sexual and textual desire.

The literary text then stages its own process as a violent contestation of structure and hence of itself via the sadoerotic theme which permeates the imagery and language of *Projet* and is emergent in earlier texts. The Robbe-Grilletian use of media exploits qualities intrinsic to them to dramatisé the textual creation and subversion of its own structures, as filmic text manipulates visual resemblance and colour, and as literary texts exploit verbal slippage, contradiction and linguistic fragmentation.

The final subsection of this chapter illustrates the central structural role played by sadoeroticism within certain of Robbe-Grillet's texts. Most notably in regard to the

literary text, this melding of sadoeroticism to structure points to a textual absorption within the sadoerotic theme which denies the formal distanciation from the sadoerotic stereotype claimed by many critics and by Robbe-Grillet himself (discussed in section III above).

(iv) Sadoeroticism as Structure

(*Maison, Marienbad, Topologie*)

In narrative, structure is order and hierarchy, employed for the construction of text into meaning. In certain of Robbe-Grillet's texts, structure becomes dysfunctional, through the thematisation of structural device as sadoerotic vice. Whereas in *Projet*, sadoeroticism plays a largely metatextual role, *Maison* exploits the sadoerotic for structural purposes, in turn invalidating the very idea of structure. This becomes a feature notably of the literary text, and in turn implies a conclusive divergence between the dramatisation of the sadoerotic in filmic and literary media.

Critics have often remarked on the interplay between animation and fixity, or between narration and description which characterises *Maison*. Morrissette sees one of this novel's principal structural devices as 'the transition from a fixed image, or pose (a frozen theatrical scene, an illustration, a store dummy, a painting) to its animation and incorporation into the action of the work'. For Ramsay, such shifts mark the 'metaleptic sliding of the text or image between diegesis and metatext'. Ricardou terms these shifts, in regard to *Projet* 'coupures non cicatrisées'.⁵⁸ Yet the crucial sadoeroticisation of these structural points in *Maison* has not been sufficiently noted. The murder of Edouard Manneret is told by many different narrators within the text, none of whom may clearly be identified. The different yet similar explanations of why and how he died, told in overlapping yet distinctly separate ways, form the body of the text. It is sadoeroticism which both separates and connects these possible versions. The division of the text into

ordered events becomes impossible, as order itself is revealed as incapable of dealing with the realities the text explores.

As in the opening of *Projet*, the first sentence of *Maison* implies that the events of the book are generated by a sexually obsessed narrator (p. 11, *Maison*). Structurally, such an opening renders every subsequent image of a woman as suspect fantasy; any attempt at reading *Maison* as an ordered description of realistic events is therefore impossible. As a result of this, innocent objects and motifs gain a double meaning, and in turn connote the narrator's fantasies, as Morrissettian objective correlatives and as structural symbols which themselves take on an organising role. The sadoerotic symbol becomes a punctuation point in the narrative, puncturing the carefully delineated interpretation of the text. Indeed, it is the sadoerotic structural device which replaces the absent syntax that Jefferson suggests would in conventional writing subordinate narrative to description and vice-versa, and in turn renders the Robbe-Grillet text a site of unresolved conflict.⁵⁹

The 'coupe de champagne' of pages 18 and 20 is a clear example of the workings of such punctuation points. At the buffet at Villa Bleue, one man tells another a story, as he is served a glass of champagne. This story is reconstructed by the narrator: an American Communist agent trafficking drugs to cover up his activities, is busted when police arrive at Villa Bleue during a party. The narrator's description of the party ends up focusing on three men, and culminates in the serving of a glass of champagne. Suddenly the text is back where it started. Through the repetition of the 'coupe de champagne', the initial teller of the story - 'Le gros homme au teint rouge' - has inadvertently moved inside the story he was telling, and is told. The bizarre Communist/drugs plot, which may or may not relate to Edouard Manneret's death, becomes irrelevant. What remains is the 'coupe de champagne', which has structurally effected a slippage from objective narration (narrator describing man telling a story), to indirect speech (contents of the story man is telling), to an interpenetration of the two (narrator and man telling a story about themselves). Similarly, on page 28, the sculpture representing 'la jeune fille liée à l'arbre', about to be devoured by a tiger, suddenly becomes a conversation taking place back in

the Villa Bleue: '« Si vous n'avez pas vu cela, vous n'avez rien vu », dit à son sujet le gros homme en reposant sa coupe de champagne, vide, sur la nappe blanche (...) ' (p. 29, *Maison*).

Later on, when Manneret's death is described, the champagne-glass reveals its several sadoerotic functions. It is firstly a possible container for poison, with which Manneret may be trying to kill a policeman. But broken, the glass becomes the weapon with which Manneret himself may be killed:

Les éclats qui étincellent au milieu du liquide répandu, les éclaboussures projetées dans toutes les directions autour d'une flaque centrale étoilée, le pied du verre demeuré presque intact et ne portant plus, à la place de la coupe, qu'un triangle de cristal recourbé, pointu comme un poignard, tout cela est connu depuis longtemps.

(p. 171, *Maison*)

And again (as on page 20), directly after this description, the narrative slips. From an apparently objective description of Manneret's encounter with the policeman, the text becomes a reported conversation between the narrator and Lady Ava: 'Mais je demande à Lady Ava pourquoi (...) ' (p. 171).

Structurally, then, the 'coupe de champagne' plays a significant role, as an interface between the text's narrative realms. The appearance of the champagne-glass in the text produces narrative reorientation. The reasons for this are complex. The glass is a sadoerotic symbol: 'coupe' connotes 'couper' (cf. *Projet's* 'Coupure'); when broken, the crucial triangle left on the stem of the glass is a shape consistently employed by Robbe-Grillet to connote the female sexual organs. Shattering glass is a recurrent sadoerotic motif in Robbe-Grillet's work, as in *L'Eden*, when Dutchman breaks two empty bottles together and orders one of the female students to pick up the pieces, or in *Na Pris les Dés* when the male students watch delighted, as a girl walks slowly with bare feet across a bed of glass shards. But this shattering is equally a metatextual symbol for the

fracturing of mimesis. Thus the 'coupe de champagne' is incriminated within the thematics of sadoeroticism and metatextual fragmentation, becoming a structural link within the text.

Moreover, *Maison's* narrative slips abruptly from one topography to another, or from one narrator to another, whenever the sadoerotic theme appears in the text. The role of Lady Ava's 'servante' is ambivalently also that of a sex-slave. Thus when the servante participates in events of a possibly sexual nature, the narrative cannot decide what it is narrating. This is seen when the servante collects a young Japanese girl, to add the latter to Lady Ava's sexual staff. The text shifts from pseudo-realism, through sadoeroticism, to theatre:

Ils sont maintenant tous les trois sur le trottoir au dallage luisant, près de l'entrée de plus en plus obscure: la servante en robe collante à fente latérale, la petite Japonaise (...) et le grand chien qui s'approche de la nouvelle venue pour la sentir longuement en levant le museau. Ce fragment de scène, en tout cas, ne laisse aucun doute: la gueule du chien qui flaire l'adolescente saisie de peur, acculée au mur, contre lequel elle doit subir les frôlements du mufle inquiétant depuis les cuisses jusqu'au ventre, et la servante qui regarde la jeune fille d'un oeil froid, tout en laissant assez de jeu à la tresse de cuir pour permettre à la bête de libres mouvements de la tête et du cou, etc.

Je crois avoir dit que Lady Ava donnait des représentations pour amateurs sur la scène du petit théâtre privé de la Villa Bleue. C'est sans doute de cette scène qu'il s'agit ici.

(pp. 40-41, *Maison*)

Then on page 69, the words 'des rêves splendides et sanglants' shift the text's topography. The first half of the page takes place at the Villa Bleue, and consists of a description of one of Lady Ava's servants. The text focuses on how the servant ignores the arrival of the English Police at the reception:

Paraissant ignorer l'incident, elle est, selon son habitude, attentive et absente, toute en sombres pensées peut-être derrière ses yeux droits et francs, présente au moindre signe, efficace, impersonnelle, transparente, perdue tout le jour aussi bien dans des rêves splendides et sanglants. Mais, lorsqu'elle regarde quelque chose ou quelqu'un, c'est toujours en se plaçant de face et les yeux grands ouverts; et, quand elle marche, c'est sans tourner la tête à droite ni à gauche, vers le décor aux ornements baroques qui l'entoure, vers les hôtes qu'elle croise et dont pourtant elle connaît la plupart depuis plusieurs années, ou plusieurs mois, vers les visages des passants anonymes, vers les petites boutiques aux étalages bariolés de fruits ou de poissons (...).

(p. 69, *Maison*).

By the end of the sentence, the 'servante' is out on the street, and then visiting Edouard Manneret (now alive again), whose death had motivated the arrival of the police pages earlier. The sadoeroticism explicit in the splendid, bloody dreams becomes a structural bridge across topographies and temporalities.

The ring as link in the sadistic chain, becomes a generator of the text, when it appears on the finger of the 'gros homme', at the reception at Villa Bleue. The stone set in his ring depicts a sexually suggestive scene which then takes over the text, becoming the text: 'A ce doigt, gras et court comme tous les autres, il porte une grosse bague chinoise en pierre dure, dont le chaton, taillé avec art et minutie, représente une jeune femme à demi étendue sur le bord d'un sofa (...)' (p. 75, *Maison*). At the end of the description of what the stone in the ring represents, which is far too long and detailed to be plausible, the figure on the ring has become Kim, one of Lady Ava's servants, now in Edouard Manneret's home. As before, sadoeroticism symbolised by the ring (as link in the chain restraining the slave) determines the direction of the narrative. Such direction becomes narrative indirection, or stasis, when Lauren is described adjusting her shoe. Significantly, it is another ring, or 'une petite boucle' (p. 82, *Maison*), which attaches the two straps of the shoe together. The description generated by this vision becomes a kind

of rhythmic ejaculation, repeating itself in stabbing verbal spurts, culminating in post-coital inactivity:

Dans l'attention que Lauren porte à cette opération délicate, la chevelure blonde renversée se déplace et découvre davantage la nuque qui se courbe et la chair fragile, au duvet plus pâle encore que la chevelure blonde, qui se déplace et découvre davantage la nuque qui se courbe et la chair fragile au duvet plus pâle que le reste de la nuque qui se courbe et la chair fragile qui se courbe davantage et la chair...

On dirait que tout s'est arrêté.

(p. 82, *Maison*)

Later in *Maison*, Kim's visit to Manneret becomes an attempted rape, but the text, as above, switches its narrative topography, slipping from this scene at Manneret's apartment to Johnson's journey through the town, the moment the workings of sadism become too intense:

Il [Manneret] va la tuer, la torturer, la découper au rasoir... Kim essaie de hurler, mais, comme chaque fois, aucun son ne sort de sa gorge.

A cet instant du récit, Johnson s'arrête: il croit avoir entendu un cri, assez proche, dans le silence de la nuit. C'est à pied qu'il est revenu jusqu'à l'embarcadère (...)

(pp. 126-127, *Maison*).

Such slippage also operates in *Marienbad*. In a conversation between guests at the hotel about Franck's possibly sexually violent activities the year before (which preempt those of X), the film-shot changes significantly on the word 'pénétrer': '(L'image a glissé et l'on ne voit déjà plus le groupe ni le personnage qui parle et dont on continue d'entendre la voix.)' (p. 43, *Marienbad*). Furthermore, corresponding to *Maison*'s 'coupe

de champagne', breaking glass becomes the pivoting motif between narrative realms. After the film has cut from bar to bedroom, and back again, connoting the drama of desire that X puts into play, A drops a glass in the bedroom. But the glass actually breaks between shots, for the film cuts 'juste sur l'éclatement' (p. 95, *Marienbad*). Back in the bar, A stares at the broken shards. The violent desire the text contains, fractures the film's provisional chronology and unites different topographies. The sadoerotic motif becomes a thematic link, or a threshold, dissolving or informing structure.

The sadoerotic theme also serves as a primary generator of the text, and is then evidence of an imbrication of aesthetic production within the sadoerotic obsession. The 'cellule génératrice' of *Topologie* locates the sadoerotic image at its heart, imaging creativity as inherently sadoerotic. In the 'Incipit', it is the mirror which transforms the scene into one of sexual slaughter, when one girl sees the image of her double, the latter flayed only when reflected (pp. 12-13, *Topologie*). The nude female prisoners are both self-consciously aesthetic constructions, and artists, indicating the extent to which the text's own aesthetic production cannot escape its sexual obsession. One girl is painted, while others play cards; another group are involved in a sexual experiment in which two girls probe another with a phallic object while she is tied down. The scene cannot escape its aesthetic status: not only is the victim's pudenda visibly a drawing, but its colour, in juxtaposition to the hair on her head, continues the black-white symmetry of the chess-board, as if requiring red in order to correspond with the text's colour-determinism (p. 23, *Topologie*). The generating cell is later situated as a theatrical performance, on the stage of the town theatre. The missing fourth wall, where the audience is located, in turn becomes a vaginal opening, aligning the act of spectating with sexual voyeurism. As in the film of *La Belle Captive*, the red theatrical curtains bring with them connotations of the female labia.

The image of a woman brandishing a rod or wand is reproduced through a series of textual echoes and representations: the female on the Tarot card holding a wand; the woman guide outside the prison with her baton; the artist-prisoner carrying out her engraving with a steel styllet. These in turn correspond to the figure of the

hermaphrodite, David, who embodies the dissolution of sexual difference, and hence a possible solution to the text's sadistic violence: 'Ce David, on le sait, était le double masculin de Vanadé, divinité hermaphrodite du plaisir. Il regnait en maître sur ce peuple de filles, ayant lui-même un corps de femme mais pourvu par surcroît d'un sexe mâle' (pp. 44-45, *Topologie*). Does *Topologie* then promote such hermaphroditism as an ideal state, thus exploring an escape-route from the Robbe-Grilletian sadoerotic topography? This is doubtful. For the hermaphrodite's origins are located within a sado-sexual bloodbath; David is born of a woman gang-raped by soldiers, after she has swum in the sea, which is still red from the massacre of her many female companions. Moreover, the process of creation of the topographical setting of the text is itself heavily tainted with sadoerotic symbols. The 'cité fantôme' itself derives from the disaster that occurred when the ancient city of Vanadium was destroyed by a volcanic eruption; a pointed stone (the phallus) was projected by the crater, piercing the triangular centre (female genitals) of the town, and the city and its inhabitants were engulfed by fire (p. 40), both of these processes of violent penetration and immolation aligning themselves with recurrent Robbe-Grilletian sadoerotic treatment.

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As a brief conclusion to this chapter, we would state that violence and eroticism in conscious or unconscious experience are intimately linked with violence and eroticism in literary or filmic texts, as experience and texts are constructive of each other. To talk about one is, therefore, to talk about the other. Yet a division between filmic and literary media may be made, in regard to violent and erotic themes. Interdisciplinary analysis demonstrates that the filmic portrayal of the sadoerotic theme cannot escape the objectification of what it represents - in Robbe-Grillet's case, women - due to the visual evidence of the iconic image. While filmic and literary texts are both formal constructs, the filmic text is inherently more mimetic. For this reason, sadoerotic filmic images in themselves do not maintain a subversive capability within the textual construction, but

remain predominantly suffused with brute violence. While the organisation of such images through montage may disrupt linearity and meaning as *Glissements* demonstrates, nonetheless the profilmic remains divisible from the organising structure into which it is placed, and the viewer is predominantly struck by the immediacy of the literally horrific image. In this sense, while the sadoerotic does play a metatextual role in Robbe-Grillet's films, the theme is separate from structure, and is thus not in itself subversive.

In literary texts however, the mimetic aspect of the sadoerotic is less stable. The theme becomes more firmly and more problematically embedded within formal structures, and may therefore become displaced, losing its literal meaning when inscribed within a disorientating formal network, or gaining new meanings. As we have seen in our analysis of *La Jalousie* in which sadism is embedded in the very act of perception, or in *Maison* where narrative chronology and topography are disorientated by the emergence of the sadoerotic theme, literary sadoeroticism in Robbe-Grillet's work is a potent means by which narrative structure is contested.

Admittedly, the interdependence between literary sadoeroticism and textual slippage asserts the theme itself as a motivator for the supposedly ironising structure that the texts employ to distance the reader from the mythologies of the sadoerotic. Such a prevalence of sadoeroticism as structure means that there is no escape from it, revealing the invalidity of many critics' views (see section III above). Irony is not attained; indeed, the absorption of the very fabric of the literary textual structure in the thematics of sadoeroticism denies a distanced treatment of this theme in Robbe-Grillet, as obsessive dissolution and hierarchised structure are superimposed. Nevertheless, the theme of sadoeroticism gains the power of contestation, as it becomes a means of subverting narrative structure.

Interdisciplinary comparison has shown that for the film to portray sadoerotic violence, it must show it in the form of an image, in other words, the film must be literal. And while the literary text too may present mimetic representations of sadoerotic violence in a literal way, the literary text achieves a far greater violence or erotic interpenetration when it is, to use Ricardou's term, 'littéral', in other words, when it

destabilises or even destroys its illusion of reality or representational process. The filmic text with its visual evidence inevitably dramatises the sadoerotic theme via incidences of exhibitionism, whereas the literary text may be far more violent or sadoerotic when threatening itself, through the metatextual subversion of its own modes of operation.

And while montage and sound generate formal violence in the filmic process, the literary text may more successfully bind the sadoerotic to its very structuration, exploiting this theme to reflect upon its creation and upon the inevitability of its destruction. While the sadoerotic in film is often more provocative and deemed more 'explicit', its implications are in fact less far-reaching in relation to the medium and the medium's narrative conventions. Even if Robbe-Grillet reveals his literary writing to be absorbed within, rather than distanced from the sexual violence which it depicts, nonetheless such a binding-up of sadoeroticism with metatextuality in the literary medium generates an intense and highly provocative work on the very forms in which the text is conceived, incurring an irreparable damage to the autonomy of textual and linguistic structure.

We will now explore the contestation effected in Robbe-Grillet's work by intertextuality. The confrontations of narrative which we have hitherto explored find their continuation in the work of the text on its intertexts, as intertextuality operates across media divisions and implicates works from film, literature and pictorial art.

Notes to Chapter Three.

I. Textual Evidence of the Sadoerotic Theme

1. Morrissette, *Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet* (1963), pp. 105 and 146.
2. Raylene L. Ramsay, *Robbe-Grillet and Modernity: Science, Sexuality, and Subversion* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1992), p. 196.

II. Filmic and Literary Theories on Violence and Eroticism

3. Georges Bataille, *L'Erotisme* (Paris: Minuit, 1957), pp. 23 and 32.
4. Bataille, *L'Erotisme*, p. 61.
5. Roland Barthes, 'Le Message Photographique', *Communications*, 1 (1961), 127-138.
6. Roland Barthes, 'Rhétorique de l'Image', *Communications*, 4 (1964), 40-51 (p.44).
7. Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), p. 185.
8. Susan Sontag, 'The Pornographic Imagination', in *A Susan Sontag Reader* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), pp. 205-233 (pp. 209-219).
9. Sigmund Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', in *A Case of Hysteria; Three Essays on Sexuality; and Other Works*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953), pp. 123-245 (p. 159). Sontag, 'The Pornographic Imagination', pp. 221-222.
10. Roland Barthes, *Le Degré Zéro de l'écriture suivi de Eléments de Sémiologie* (Paris: Editions Gonthier, 1965), pp. 19 and 66.
11. Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du Texte* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973), p. 49.
12. Barthes, *Le Plaisir du Texte*, pp. 25-26.
13. Maurice Blanchot, *L'Espace Littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), pp. 20-22.
14. Blanchot, *L'Espace Littéraire*, pp. 21 and 25.
15. Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, p. 114.
16. Christian Metz, *Le Signifiant Imaginaire: Psychanalyse et Cinéma* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1977), p. 63.
17. Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, p. 123.
18. Metz, *Le Signifiant Imaginaire*, p. 82. For Freud's exploration of the role of the visual drive within libidinal excitation, see 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality'.
19. Noël Burch, *Une Praxis du Cinéma*, rev. edn. (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), pp. 180-181.
20. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. by James Strachey (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 339.
21. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966) p. 104.
22. Sergei Eisenstein, 'Beyond the Shot' (1929) in *S.M. Eisenstein: Selected Works Volume I: Writings, 1922-34*, ed. by Richard Taylor (London: BFI Publishing, 1988), pp. 138-150 (pp. 145-146). These techniques are reiterated in 'The Dramaturgy of Film Form: (The Dialectical Approach to Film Form)' (1929), in the same volume (pp. 161-180). Then again in the later essay, 'Montage 1937' (1937), in *S.M. Eisenstein: Selected Works Volume II: Towards a Theory of Montage*, ed. by Michael Glenny and Richard Taylor (London: BFI Publishing, 1991), pp. 11-58.

23. John Orr, 'Peter Weir's version: *The Year of Living Dangerously*', in *Cinema and Fiction: New Modes of Adapting, 1950-1990*, ed. by John Orr and Colin Nicholson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), pp. 54-65 (p.54).
24. Alain Robbe-Grillet in interview, in: André Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1972), p. 104.
25. Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), p. 38.
26. de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't*, p. 140.
27. Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16, No. 3 (1975), 6-18.
28. Susanne Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), pp. 50-51.
29. Laura Lederer, 'Introduction', in *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, ed. by Laura Lederer (London: Bantam Books, 1982), pp. 1-6 (p. 5).
30. Susan Griffin, 'Sadism and Catharsis: The Treatment is the Disease', in *Take Back the Night*, pp. 133-140 (pp. 135-137).
31. Susan Lurie, 'Pornography and the Dread of Women: The Male Sexual Dilemma', in *Take Back the Night*, pp. 152-167 (p. 152).
32. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la Sexualité 1: La Volonté de Savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 46.
33. Judith Still and Michael Worton, 'Introduction', in *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices*, ed. by Judith Still and Michael Worton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 1-68 (p. 7).
34. Charles Barr, 'Straw Dogs, A Clockwork Orange and the Critics', *Screen*, 13, No.2 (1972), 17-31.

III. Robbe-Grillet and his Critics on Violence and Eroticism

35. Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'Discussion', in *Nouveau Roman: Hier, Aujourd'hui*, II, pp. 135-155 (p. 141).
36. Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'Discussion', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy*, I, pp. 409-443 (p. 415).
37. Morrisette, *The Novels of Robbe-Grillet*, rev. edn. (1975), p. 279.
38. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Glissements*, pp. 13-14. Bruce Morrisette, *Intertextual Assemblage in Robbe-Grillet from Topologie to the Golden Triangle* (Fredericton: York Press, 1979), pp. 12-13.
39. Jean Claude Vareille, *Alain Robbe-Grillet L'Etrange* (Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1981), pp. 18 and 32.
40. Ben Stoltzfus, *Alain Robbe-Grillet: Life, Work, and Criticism* (Fredericton: York Press, 1987), pp. 24, 32, 37-38. Also: Ben Stoltzfus, *Alain Robbe-Grillet: The Body of the Text* (U.S.A.: Associated University Presses, 1985), p. 67.
41. André Gardies, 'L'Erotuelle', in *Obliques*, No. 16-17, pp. 112-119.
42. Franklin J. Matthews, 'Un écrivain non réconcilié', in *Obliques*, No. 16-17, pp. 121-131.
43. Ann Jefferson, *The Nouveau Roman and the Poetics of Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 50-53.
44. Ramsay, *Robbe-Grillet and Modernity*, p. 42.
45. Ramsay, *Robbe-Grillet and Modernity*, pp. 70-71.

IV. Interdisciplinary Textual Analysis

46. References to the Oedipus text in *Les Gommages*, which for Morrissette make the novel 'une version moderne de la tragédie d'OEdipe' (*Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet* [1963], p. 53), Heath terms 'derisively mocking' (*The Nouveau Roman: A Study in the Practice of Writing*, p. 81). For Jefferson, the role of both the myth and allusions to the detective genre are primarily metatextual (*The Nouveau Roman and the Poetics of Fiction*, pp. 22-27).
47. Barthes, *Le Plaisir du Texte*, p. 20.
48. For Jefferson, the erasers 'draw attention [...] to the novel as a *construction*' (*The Nouveau Roman and the Poetics of Fiction*, p. 22).
49. Critics such as Jefferson convincingly maintain *La Jalousie*'s ambivalence as both subjective and objective (*The Nouveau Roman and the Poetics of Fiction*, pp. 133-140).
50. Jean-Pierre Vidal, 'Le Souverain S'Avarie: Lecture de L'onomastique R-G au rusé Ulysse', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy*, I, pp. 273-309 (p. 308)
51. Ricardou, *Problèmes du Nouveau Roman*, p. 38.
52. Vareille, *Alain Robbe-Grillet L'Etrange*, pp. 96-97.
53. Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'Discussion', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy*, I, pp. 310-333 (p. 312).
54. Ricardou, *Pour une Théorie du Nouveau Roman*, p. 229.
55. Ricardou, *Problèmes du Nouveau Roman*, pp. 152-153.
56. Vareille, *Alain Robbe-Grillet L'Etrange*, p. 61.
57. Bruce Morrissette, 'Robbe-Grillet N° 1, 2 ... X', in *Nouveau Roman: Hier, Aujourd'hui*, II, pp. 119-133 (pp. 126-127).
58. Morrissette, *The Novels of Robbe-Grillet*, rev. edn. (1975), p. 243. Ramsay, *Robbe-Grillet and Modernity*, p. 113. Ricardou, *Pour une Théorie du Nouveau Roman*, p. 231.
59. Jefferson, *The Nouveau Roman and the Poetics of Fiction*, p. 49.

CHAPTER FOUR - A TOPOLOGY OF INTERTEXTS AND MEDIA

In the preceding chapters, we have compared works from separate media in terms of theme and mode of narration. The comparative exercise has been structured by our own strategic analysis, and if the study of texts and media has been fruitfully driven by such a confrontational approach, nonetheless, the juxtapositions have been motivated by our own theoretical design, namely: to move dynamically between theories and texts of separate media, in order to define all of these more clearly. Interdisciplinary study has revealed links between media; it has moreover revealed the thematic continuities within Robbe-Grillet's work in the form most notably of the dramatisation of the textual process, and of the sadoerotic theme and its role within textual production.

If the preceding chapters have revealed interdisciplinary analysis to be useful, this chapter will demonstrate the extent to which interdisciplinary analysis of Robbe-Grillet is indispensable. We will show how Robbe-Grillet's art is fundamentally informed by a deliberate contamination of medium by medium, and therefore, how the assessment of the relation between media is essential to a comprehension of Robbe-Grillet's insistent interpenetration of these two disciplines. The interplay of forms in our analysis, which has thus far reflected Robbe-Grillet's contestation of form by form, now becomes a contestation of narrative by narrative, and of medium by medium, via the subversive work of interdisciplinary intertextuality.

In a sense therefore, this chapter is the centre of the thesis, as it incontestably validates the interdisciplinary approach. In accordance with Robbe-Grillet's decentering of structural hierarchy, its position as the last chapter rather than as the centre-piece fittingly reflects Robbe-Grillet's textual process.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: in section I, we seek a relation between filmic and literary intertextuality, through an examination of theories on intertextuality and the ways in which these might be applied to both a filmic and literary practice. This is essential if an intertextual movement between media is to be developed.

Section II illustrates the extent to which the Robbe-Grilletian aesthetic is founded upon and fuelled by such intertextuality. Sections III, IV and V employ detailed interdisciplinary textual analysis to highlight the interdependence of filmic, literary and pictorial media in Robbe-Grillet's work, due to his consistent use of intertextuality between disciplines to structure his filmic and literary texts. This in turn demonstrates the continuity in his aesthetic, which as a confrontation with forms of narration, finds its most innovative expression via the interpenetration of forms and narratives from separate disciplines. Comparative textual analysis moreover enables us to explore the way in which the specific work, deliberately constructed either intertextually or across media, may challenge or redefine the conventional definitions of the filmic and the literary.

Intertextuality between art forms, whether filmic and literary, filmic and pictorial, or literary and pictorial, exposes the fault planes on which the media themselves are based. Like Robbe-Grillet's *Cité Fantôme*, erected both on the threshold between real and imaginary realms, and at the interface of visual and verbal art forms, our topology charts the penetration of ontology by topography, insofar as it strives to maintain the distinctive geometric properties of the media, while manifesting how these may be deformed by the dimensions of the individual text.

I. Towards an Interdisciplinary Intertextuality

(i) Theories of Intertextuality

Intertextuality within, or between media acknowledges influence and accommodates it, while searching for its source. Its purpose is, like that of Balázs, 'to investigate and outline that sphere of the development of human sensibility which developed in mutual interaction with the evolution of the art of the film', in conjunction with (to extend Balázs) an assessment of the extent to which the filmic medium has evolved in mutual interaction with the medium of literature.¹ The inevitable reciprocity

between forms and texts, as between texts and reader-spectators, both within and across media, demands a definition of filmic and literary intertextuality, of their action and their interaction.

There is always, already, text. Whether filmic, literary, photographic, pictorial or auditory, the individual work is a text comprised of other texts, read or viewed through the texts already read and viewed by the reader-spectator. There is a universal residue, left by the experience of the text, which transforms the reader-spectator, and which is in turn transformed by the reader-spectator's intertextual response. Like the literary work, the filmic work may equally be shot through with both filmic and literary references, quotations and influences, as every filmmaker is first a spectator of films and reader of literature. And like the reader of the literary text, the spectator's viewing experience is cross-fertilized by all the filmic and literary texts which s/he brings to the film.² The intertextual approach is then both validated and enriched by an interdisciplinary analysis which emphasizes *a priori* the influence not only of texts, but of media upon each other, as both text and medium form and deform each other through an inevitable interdependence.

The inherent, ontological intertextuality of the development of the filmic medium is assessed in Chapter One, section II, where the relation between filmic and literary technique and narrative is explored. Yet while the creation and reading/ spectating of both literary and filmic texts are inherently intertextual, they are intertextual in contrasting ways. We posit a reciprocity operating between media which takes as granted film's status as an autonomous art form, even if the latter is to an extent defined via its relation to the literary form, a link which we forefront and which structures our interdisciplinary analysis. The operation of intertextuality in filmic and literary media is then best highlighted by an assessment both of similarity and of difference.

While the work of Metz emphasizes the operation of codes within filmic texts, and affirms a narrative nature at the centre of filmic production (see Chapter One, III, iv), the assessment of filmic, as well as literary work in terms of intertextuality moves analysis away from a conception of film as narrative towards a penetration of the

multiple narratives at work within film. If Metz acknowledges the importance of viewing film and culture in general as coded, intertextual analysis extends his work. Moreover, rather than conceiving film as a Bazinian photographic record of some amorphous context or reality, an intertextual approach to film, as Stam (et al.) stress, becomes a debate over the way in which film is structured by other representations within culture.³ And if filmic production is particularly prone to intertextuality, then such an approach is invaluable.

The demand for an intertextual approach to film is further motivated by the link between technology and filmic production, and the implications of such links on the nature of film. Beja argues convincingly that the closer connection in films than in literature between the art and the technology that produces it, means that sweeping technological advances have enabled each generation to give film a new look. This explains why film tends towards the remake of classic films, or towards the new version of a picture-book.⁴ Film's dependence on the technology which produces it then increases the intertextual nature of many filmic texts.

The conscious intertextual layering of works of film and literature demands an intertextual approach to each. This is particularly true of so-called post-modern texts. The self-conscious play of the intertext in works of literature might be compared with the visual stylistic excess of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, which, as Rick Instrell indicates, is comprised of a paste-up of references, on which the spectator may exercise his/her cultural competence.⁵ The tendency towards pastiche requires an intertextual reading or viewing for some texts, which, as our analysis of Robbe-Grillet will demonstrate, best operates across media.

Modes of creation generate modes of reading/viewing. Yet reading and viewing remain separate in vital ways, and this in turn dictates the contrasting formal methods by which filmic and literary intertextual reference may be made. While the basic theoretical motivation for, and the work of, intertextuality might be aligned in both filmic and literary text, the nature of film as potentially a combination of image, dialogue, sound, music and written word on the screen, means that the allusion may be made via any one

of these five channels of expression, where in literature, the verbal channel is the only one explicitly operable.

Techniques by which an intertext may be conjured up and transformed in the literary work, proliferate in the filmic medium as they may take visual, verbal or auditory form. Admittedly, the words of a literary text may describe any one of the five channels of expression exploited by the film; for example, musical allusions may infuse the literary text when a piece of music is mentioned or lyrically described. In the filmic text, however, the music is actually heard on the soundtrack, and transformed by the context in which it emerges. Similarly, a pictorial reference may become apparent in the verbal text via description, where in the film it actually appears on the screen, as part of the decor in Robbe-Grillet's films, as we shall illustrate. Perhaps the most challenging recent exploration of the way in which intertextuality may be embodied visually within the filmic text is proposed by Jan Svankmajer's *Faust*, where the three verbal intertexts are those of Goethe, Marlowe and Gounod, reflected visually by the mixed means of live action, animation and marionettes. On the auditory level, the film is equally pioneering, with all the voices done by one actor, in a play of dubbing and doubling, as intertextuality is plastically brought to life. Filmic intertextuality is potentially more direct and less elusive than literary intertextuality, due to the multiple means within the filmic medium by which reference may be made.

We shall now move towards a theory which encompasses the interdisciplinary comparison between literature and film. Stam (et al.) have noted the usefulness of Genette's theories on intertextuality to film analysis, and we acknowledge this while hoping to further such an interpenetration of theory between media later on with our specific textual analysis.⁶ Just as Genette stresses the universality of the phenomenon within the literary the medium with his words 'toutes les oeuvres sont hypertextuelles',⁷ so too our analysis emphasizes the inevitability of intertextual reference across, as well as within different media. 'Hypertextuality', a term which our analysis adopts, is defined by Genette as follows: 'J'entends par là toute relation unissant un texte B (que j'appellerai *hypertexte*) à un texte antérieur A (que j'appellerai, bien sûr *hypotexte*) sur lequel il se

greffe d'une manière qui n'est pas celle du commentaire' (pp. 11-12, *Palimpsestes*). The 'hypertext - hypotext' relation is one which we shall also incorporate, as it clearly differentiates text from the intertext to which the text alludes, or which it quotes or plagiarises.

As Stam (et al.) suggest, Genette's term 'paratextuality', which refers to the text proper and its relation to its paratext, namely such material as the text's titles and prefaces, might equally be used to describe the filmic text's relation to its process of creation and reception. Full understanding of the film is therefore attained via a consideration of paratexts such as the original variant versions of the film (in the case of a remake), the versions of its original screenplay or literary text, and prefatory remarks made by the director about the film.⁸ We shall illustrate the importance of such paratextuality to filmic analysis via our study of Robbe-Grillet.

It is Riffaterre however who offers the most helpful theoretical model for our interdisciplinary analysis of Robbe-Grillet. The Riffaterrian concept of 'indirection' specifically produced by the poem in his analysis, may be related to the process of displacement, distortion or creation of meaning (which define indirection) generated by the filmic text.⁹ For, just as literary indirection threatens mimesis, so too the filmic text may alter its representation in a manner inconsistent with verisimilitude or with what the context leads the spectator to expect. Evidently, in the absence of a film grammar, we may not strictly speak, as Riffaterre does, of 'ungrammaticality', yet we may nonetheless formulate a type of filmic 'catachresis' insofar as the medium has conventions which may be disrupted. Given the essential difference between verbal and filmic texts, we acknowledge that catachresis is a figurative term; as our study will show, it is nonetheless helpful. This in turn means that the filmic like the literary text may, in its own way and on its own terms, create semiosis, namely, that other system of meaning, outside the mimetic message, triggered by the moment of catachresis.

Admittedly we must be careful when adopting terms which are specifically and carefully chosen for a theory designed for linguistically constructed texts. And if we use such terms, we keep such a caveat firmly in mind. Nonetheless, as films are - like poems

or other literary works - texts which operate intertextually, it is highly fruitful to exploit the suggestive implications of such terms within an interdisciplinary analysis.

Filmic competence (familiarity with filmic texts), like literary competence, enables the isolation of incomplete depictions, allusions, or quotations within the filmic text, during a filmic heuristic reading, in the Riffaterrian sense. This in turn enables the location of an absent structural matrix, during the retroactive hermeneutic reading. Obstacles within the filmic text which threaten meaning when seen in isolation, provide a reliable guideline to semiosis. Indeed, it is precisely the exploitation of such disruptive meanings not integrated within the linear coherence of the filmic text which motivates Robbe-Grillet's filmic intertextuality. The absent structural matrix is formed via a network of texts outside the text itself, a network which is itself thematically unified, and which threatens to usurp the position of the text by creating a new hierarchy of words or filmic images which in turn generates instability and erodes the representational aspect of language or filmic text.

Riffaterre's 'connectives', which direct the reader of the literary text to an intertext, belonging equally to text and intertext, apply to both filmic and literary text. These indices form a new semiotic system and liberate the text from existing conventions, while at the same time subordinating the narrative to a new signifying strategy.¹⁰ The intertextual operation becomes disruptive, even destructive, as the hypertext (Genette's term which we retain despite additional borrowing from Riffaterre) is opened, doubled, and undercut. The nature of intertextuality as a dialectical conflict both between reader and text, and between text and intertext, are aspects which Robbe-Grillet exploits.

We will now assess the practice of filmic intertextuality using examples from Robbe-Grillet's cinema, to illustrate the way in which these theories may be applied.

(ii) Towards a Filmic 'Catachresis'

A Riffaterrian catachresis is operated filmically by the use of bizarre or disruptive techniques which disturb viewing and highlight the allusion to a hypotext. This may be achieved within the visual, verbal, or auditory elements of the filmic text, or via the unlikely juxtaposition of visual and verbal, or verbal and musical, etcetera. In the films of Robbe-Grillet, sound is employed intertextually to refer to his own previous works. As Gardies states, this is more prevalent in the later works, as it is dependent on the existence of previous sounds and associations to refer to, within Robbe-Grillet's cinematic past.¹¹

We would argue that it is the more extraordinary sounds that suit intertextual citation in the filmic medium, such as the sound of *L'HQM's* (manufactured) woodpecker which we hear at the start of *Glissements*, when Trintignant (playing the police inspector) asks Alice (the woman accused of murder): 'Vous connaissez un certain Boris?' (p. 36, *Glissements*). Just as the woodpecker noise is completely out of place in Alice's apartment, so too the reference to Boris is highly suspect. For Boris is the character Trintignant played in the earlier film. Such a question jars therefore with the supposedly official investigation of the murder of Nora; dialogue in conjunction with sound-effect renders the scene abnormal, alerting us to the intertextual reference, in a similar process to that outlined by Riffaterre.

The transformation which such a reference effects is determinable via a knowledge of both films. In *Glissements*, Trintignant is the morally good policeman, representative of the established order, but in *L'HQM* he is the lying imposter, who introduces disorder into the infrastructure of the community. The hypotext brings the thematics of imposture into the hypertext, subverting the authority and credibility of the policeman's role, and hence threatening the textual hierarchy.

Visually, ham-acting by characters and the manipulation (or parody) of filmic technique also serve to disturb the context, introducing other specifically filmic forms of catachresis. Both of these interact in the film *La Belle Captive*, when Walter returns to

the deserted Villa Seconde, the morning after his tempestuous night of love with Marie-Ange. She has vanished, and he is desperate to find her, his only hope of doing so to go back to the place where they first indulged their passion. Walter rings the bell at the now padlocked gates. In sync with what should be a melodious chime, we hear the tinkling of a bicycle bell. On the bike is a young man, who tells Walter the villa has been empty for years. Inexplicably, the young man flips the handlebars of his bike through 180 degrees several times during the conversation, and speaks in staccato tones. Before driving off, he says 'allez, salut!' and then performs a circle, before adding: 'et bonne chance'. He is subsequently nearly run over offscreen. But just as Walter is about to enter the neighbouring house, there is a sudden flashback to the youth on the bike, and a repeat of the dialogue, before the film resumes its course.

Throughout the scene, the acting is humorous and bizarre, and disrupts the tortured mood of Walter's inquiries. The doubling of the youth's dialogue parodies the filmic convention of the flashback, as it is ludicrously repeated, far too soon after the original scene to be necessary or even coherent. As filmic catachresis, then, this instance marks a play on both acting and filmic technique, to alert us to the allusion (via the recurrent bicycle) to *Le Voyeur*, and via the near car-crash, to *L'Immortelle*. The allusion to *Le Voyeur* alerts us to the more sinister side of Walter's leanings, eroding his innocence in the sadosexual crime which recurs throughout the film. N's death at the wheel of his car in *L'Immortelle* connoted by the reference to this film, preempts Walter's own predicted destruction.

(iii) Figures of Filmic Intertextuality: The Star and the Profilmic

Comparable to the filmic catachresis effected via the manipulation of technique in the filmic text is the exploitation of the film star. For the actor provides an associative link between filmic texts, and as such offers potential for the subversion of textual boundaries, or the contamination of one text by another. The star is a shifting memory.

Stam (et al.) coin the term 'celebrity intertextuality' to encapsulate such a process.¹² As Reader stresses, particularly in regard to Hollywood cinema but equally applicable to other films, the very concept of a film star is an intertextual one, relying on correspondences of similarity and difference from one film to the next, or on resemblances between on- and off-screen personae.¹³ This in turn means that the star's history establishes a norm which may be maintained or subverted instituting a further variation on literary catachresis.

The intertextuality of the star consists of a complex network of forces. Firstly, the star is the intertextual vehicle for all the previous films in which s/he has featured, which are alluded to by the star's very presence. Equally, the star's previous films are transformed with each new performance, as textual history is rewritten in the light of each new film. Thirdly, the screen persona brings to the filmic text a reality from outside the diegesis, from life, and from that life's peripheral texts such as its representation in the journalistic media; significantly in Surrealist films, the real names of actors are used for the characters, instead of fictional names, in order to unsettle boundaries between art and life. Fourthly, in the case of a picture-book (an adaptation of a novel) of which the spectator has prior knowledge, the star's appropriateness to a role may be measured intertextually, the image of filmic and literary versions irrevocably trans-figured; Ellis argues that an actor's suitability for a role may efface the penumbra of earlier performances in an intertextual erasure.¹⁴ Lastly, the screen persona puts into play a code of human behaviour. Operating dialectically along with this is the viewer's (absent, partial or complete) knowledge of all of the above, an intrinsic part of his/her filmic competence, which enables the intertextual significance of the star to be gauged.

Actors in the films of Robbe-Grillet are predominantly exploited to subvert such codes. For Gardies, the intertextual associations brought to the film by the screen persona create the primary illusion of realism, perhaps the result of performances in previous naturalistic films, which the Robbe-Grillet text counters. Two strategies therefore present themselves: the first is to use unknown actors, which the film is then at

liberty to invent in its own (potentially non-realist) image; the second is to use famous actors, on the condition that their intertextual ties be severed as soon as possible.¹⁵

For example, the recognition of Trintignant as Trintignant by the filmmakers Jean, Marc and Lucette in the train, early on in *TEE*, serves to shed the associations that Trintignant's screen hero connotes, his persona undercut by the definition of him within the diegesis as the actor behind the image. Similarly, as Van Wert points out, female characters may be counteracted, Marie-France Pisier's prostitute in *TEE* working against her real life intellectual image.¹⁶ The Robbe-Grillet film tends towards extremes, choosing either anonymity (the student cast of *L'Eden*) or superstardom (Trintignant in his many roles, Noiret in *Le Jeu avec le Feu*): the former is initially blank and may be created by the film, and the latter is overloaded and so well suited to parody. Clearly the objectification of the young and beautiful female in the later films marks an exception to such subversive activity, yet the use of Sylvia Kristel and Christine Boisson from Just Jaekin's *Emmanuelle* does ironise certain evident links between Robbe-Grillet's work and more overtly erotic films.

Trintignant's intertextual significance is particularly strong due to his history in the fetishist 'polar' (along with Delon and Belmondo), which as Forbes suggests, lends his screen-presence the force of an American-style star.¹⁷ His role in *TEE* becomes a double subversion, both of the American genres this film and others (such as *Alphaville*) debunk, and of the French naturalisations of this genre that became current at the end of the Sixties, exemplified by Melville's *Le Samourai*. Trintignant will never quite shed the metonymic object - the raincoat - which threatens to usurp his identity with its associations, returning as it does in *Glissements* and *Le Jeu avec le Feu*, neither of which have any real resemblance to the 'série noire' genre *TEE* parodies so openly. In *La Belle Captive* the raincoat returns again, but it has changed its actor.

The figure of the actor works self-referentially to undermine the divisions between protagonists, contaminating identities from text to text. Just as Trintignant reappears from film to film, as criminal in *TEE*, then policeman in *Glissements*, then as a double-character in *Le Jeu avec le Feu* where he is both kidnapper and protector of

Carolina, so too Jacques Doniol-Valcroze crops up as a baffled Commissaire Laurent in *Le Jeu avec le Feu*, his inability to solve the 'kidnappings' humorously mimicking his confusion as 'N' in *L'Immortelle*. Minor characters also reappear again and again. The gangster Franck in *TEE* is later a kidnapper in *Le Jeu avec le Feu*; the stills photographer in *Glissements* reemerges taking pictures of Sylvia Kristel in *Le Jeu avec le Feu*, just after she is threatened with being burnt alive. The recurrent actor whose role shifts becomes a means of accommodating paradox in Robbe-Grillet's work, and of filmically depicting recurrent obsessions which eventually form a self in aesthetic terms.

The work of the Robbe-Grillet film on the persona of the actor is doubled by the work of the filmic plot on the protagonist. N and L in *L'Immortelle* act like robots, and as such undermine codes of human behaviour as represented by the events within the diegesis. Violette and Duchemin in *L'Eden* tend towards stereotypes.

Yet it is not just the human element within the film which may be exploited intertextually. The inanimate profilmic may also trigger off references to other filmic texts which have made use of a similar set or location. Animate and inanimate aspects of the filmic text then comprise possible sources for a reflection upon a hypotext. This is because, in contrast to the imaginary space which structures the literary text, it is above all a physical reality which determines the filmic text's form, and which may be the origin of the textual production.¹⁸

(iv) Literature as Prop

Even though both filmic and literary text operate intertextually, referring to texts from their own and other media, it must be acknowledged that the filmic medium is far younger than the literary medium. Reference to a filmic hypotext is therefore less probable within a filmic or literary hypertext, as there is simply less of a filmic bedrock to allude to. Yet film borrows from itself constantly in generic terms, referring to itself architextually as the literary text does.¹⁹ Architextual parallels between films may then be

combined with intertextual relations to the literary medium, as in certain genres of cinematic adaptation of works of literature. It is most likely the case that the adapted literary texts themselves will also be architextually linked.

Yet the intertextual relation between filmic and literary media may in itself be a complex network which comments on the nature of the media, via the use of intertextuality to create an antagonism between media. Filmic intertextuality may be effected via the appearance of a book as a prop, or as a subject discussed in a film's dialogue. Kline talks of the omnipresence of the book in, specifically, New Wave cinema as provoking allusions that institute a complex and highly mobile configuration of meanings, memories and associations, analogous to the operations of intertextuality within literature.²⁰ One thinks of the false book *Tranese* in *TEE* which plays on the New Wave's use of the book for parodic value through a simultaneous satire on thrillers, or of the picto-roman *La Belle Captive* which appears in the film of that name, and which initiates self-reference rather than an intertextual relationship with a different author (except of course with Magritte, who operated in a different medium altogether, as we shall see).

For Kline, the New Wave film often represses literature from itself, in order to react against the cinematic tradition of literary adaptations, and to complicate textual meaning. The texts screened come to function as Freudian screens, or memories behind which a submerged text is hidden. In this sense the literary text as prop in the filmic text denotes the effacement of literary medium as prop to the filmic medium. This ambivalent relation between filmmaker and tradition affects the role of the intertext, which is used against the authority of the literary medium, in order to assert film as an autonomous art.

(v) The Creative Process as a Problem for Intertextuality

Issues of authorship are crucial to the comparison of filmic and literary text as they highlight the differences between the nature of production and hence of

interpretation of works from each medium. They equally offer insight into the complex workings of intertextuality in the filmic medium. For Reader, the 'auteur' theory is a theory of intertextuality, insofar as a body of films is required for an author to be located as their salient feature, forcing reference from one film to another for the theory to operate.²¹ Wollen sees film authorship as comprised of a multiplicity of factors, of which the contribution of the director is only one, though perhaps the one which carries the most weight (for a wider exploration of filmic and literary authorship, see Chapter One, III, i).²²

This presents a problem for the theorist of film, whose judgment will be provisional in proportion to what Wollen terms the 'noise' of producer, cameraman or actors, and even if we approach film authorship via a focus on the director as creator of the film, considering other authorial influences as secondary, it is nonetheless precisely the so-called secondary dimension which differentiates filmic from literary authorship. It is for this reason that the collective creation of the film may be exploited, as it is by Robbe-Grillet, in order to trouble the notion of a unity of authorship, and to problematise the location of the hypotext.

The contrasts between processes of creation, and between the nature of authorship in works from each medium result in divergent possibilities for the incorporation and identification of influences or allusions in the work. The use of authorship as an indicator for the location of the hypotext, is problematised when the work is collectively created. The dual, dialectical operation whereby reader-viewer on the one hand brings his/her other texts to the text, and on the other is confronted by the artist's intertextual history presented by allusion within the hypertext, becomes, in the case of shared authorship, a multiple process. The isolation of the hypotext is therefore problematised as its seeds are scattered; the explosion of an authorial unity behind the text then affirms the importance of what the reader-viewer brings to the text over and above the authorial intertextual contribution. In this sense, intertextually, openness of creation engenders openness of reception.

For whereas the literary text is often a single-authored work, the filmic text may have multiple creators, and may be created in multiple phases. The collectively created work becomes an exercise in controlled intertextuality, as, instead of literary influences incorporated within the literary work, the film includes creative influences of the collaborators, as if each member of the team were texts, each with a separate history which may affect the creation of the film in a process parallel to that of intertextual assemblage (discussed below). As Wollen claims, the director is the acknowledged controller of this process, but the degree of such control is, for the theorist of film, rarely measurable.

The disagreement over whether or not Robbe-Grillet's films are 'open' illustrates the complexity of this issue; to an extent, the quality of the filmic text is affected by the process employed. Armes stresses an increased fluency and richness of substance as the result of Robbe-Grillet's openness from *TEE* onwards to the chance occurrences of shooting and the contributions of key collaborators, yet concludes that Robbe-Grillet has always retained the traditional authority of the film director, and kept a tight control over improvisation.²³ Gardies chooses on the contrary to assert Robbe-Grillet's relinquishing of absolute control, in favour of a collective dynamic.²⁴ *Na Pris les Dés* exemplifies the extent to which filmic authorship may be problematised. As Robbe-Grillet himself states: 'almost the entire second part of the film was completed by Bob Wade [the editor]. In any case, Bob is good at doing Robbe-Grillet; I could practically entrust a whole film to him'.²⁵

Such authorship should not be confused with narration within the filmic text. If the authors orchestrate the order and texture of the filmic images via directing, writing, editing and so on, the film may still have intradiegetic narrators which seem to be narrating the events of the text, or around whom events evolve. More often than not, the central protagonist in Robbe-Grillet's films, such as N in *L'Immortelle*, or Violette in *L'Eden*, fulfills such an intradiegetic narrative role. Collective authorship, whereby the actors contribute to the script, may therefore mean that the division between narrator-protagonist and author is undermined.

Furthermore, the filmic text may be created in several phases. Again, a kind of intertextuality operates, between each phase of creation. The final montage draws intertextually on the material which is initially shot, often introducing other, unforeseen elements from archives, or footage shot by other crews for other filmic texts. This is the case at the opening of *Glissements*. For the shots of the police car arriving at the scene of the crime, Robbe-Grillet proposes 'des stock-shots', namely, 'Images dont les prises de vue ont été réalisées pour d'autres films' (p. 28, *Glissements*). Similarly, the shooting of the film may operate intertextually in relation to the originally written script, altering it or adding to it, and hence forcing the theorist to consider a difference between script and finished filmic text, a difference which may only be explained via an intertextual analysis between the two texts.

Robbe-Grillet's work is testament to the multiple stages of creating a film: 'For me, at the present, there are three phases of creation when making a film: when I imagine the film, when I shoot it, and when I give it its final consistency - the montage and sound' (p. 32, *The Erotic Dream Machine*). Apart from published ciné-romans for *Marienbad*, *L'Immortelle* and *Glissements*, no complete scripts of his filmic work are readily available. The ciné-roman, in any case, is not a key to how the images of the film were generated; it merely offers a description of the film shot by shot, in the case of *Glissements* also providing a breakdown of the montage. The ciné-roman of *Marienbad* differs from the finished filmic text in certain crucial respects, and hence problematises the unity of the filmic work. Certain of Robbe-Grillet's films never had a full script at all; *TEE*, *L'HQM* and *Le Jeu avec le Feu* constantly re-invented themselves during the process of shooting. The availability of certain scripts as ciné-romans implies that greater knowledge may be gleaned via a movement between texts, through the reading-viewing of both written script and finished film, undermining the autonomy of each text as unified works of art, and demanding a double, inter-textual assessment.

The open film is accessible only through a consideration of these separate yet interacting phases and influences. Factors such as the use of external locations, a large crew, even the incorporation of real scenes within the fiction, assert the crucial role that

the process of filming plays in the creation of the text. Such factors may or may not be discernible in the final text; either way, a paradoxical situation is established by the openness of the work, namely: the more open the process of creation, the more mystified the final work may in fact be for the spectator who ignores the role played by the process of creation.

Equally, authorship is rendered more fragile, the more authentic the profilmic action becomes. The element of chance in filmmaking may provide a generator for some scenes of the final text. As Robbe-Grillet points out, the funeral of a Turkish general threatened to disrupt one shot of *L'Immortelle*, so Robbe-Grillet filmed it spontaneously, and this real funeral scene now has a symbolic fictional role within the film (pp. 31-32, *The Erotic Dream Machine*). *TEE* was even more unpredicted, as Robbe-Grillet claims: 'In the exterior shots, there are an enormous number of elements that are not foreseen. We filmed what was occurring' (p. 38, *The Erotic Dream Machine*). The filmmaker who records a scene over which s/he has no control cannot remain the author of that scene, or if s/he does claim to be the author, a redefinition of authorship is demanded.

While the openness of the process of creation often strives for thematic representation within the film, as is the case with *L'Eden* which aims to reflect the sometimes collective, sometimes accidental nature of the filming, such openness is nonetheless largely contingent on the author's own commentary on the process of filming, provided by interviews or written metatexts about the work. Hence the existence of a metatextual genre of filmic documentary often entitled 'The Making Of ...', which, unless itself filmed, still conceals something of the process of (its own) creation.

The 'snuff' movie illustrates the extent to which the line between fiction and reality may be blurred, thus indicating an essential difference between filmic and literary text. This in turn highlights the importance of intertextuality in a retroactive creation of the nature of the film, via a metatextual commentary by the filmmakers on the process of filming. In the snuff film, death is death. This points to a central defining ambiguity at the heart of filmic production in fiction films, such that depicted events are always also really happening, to varying degrees of artifice which do not always apply. While the literary

account may contain descriptions of reality within it, it can never so effectively maintain a double status. It is this double status which may mystify film, and which thereby requires an explanation by its creators.

While the phenomenon of 'snuff' has now itself become an urban myth, LaBelle's account of the original *Snuff* sheds light on the complex relation between fiction and reality which informs all filmic creation. As LaBelle states, *Snuff* (the film from which the seedy genre took its name) purported in 1975 to show the actual murder and dismemberment of a young woman, which took place in the final five minutes of the film.²⁶ This text is then both fictional and real, becoming real through a self-reflexive technique: after the fictional events of the film are over, the camera pulls back to show the production crew of the film. The camera keeps rolling while a female member of the crew is then really murdered. The absence of credits at the end of the film would seem to confirm the authenticity of the killing; the actuality of the event incurs the erasure of any author. But this factor is not enough to dispel ambiguity: the film's distributors, when interrogated, denied that a real woman had ever been killed.

The most comprehensive approach to the filmic text and to its process is then an inherently intertextual one, as the fullest knowledge of a filmic text may only be arrived at firstly via a full consideration of the finished film, secondly through an analysis of the details of the script which are available, and thirdly through an assessment of any metatextual commentary on the creation of the filmic text by creators, cast or crew. Such an approach is particularly important to a study of Robbe-Grillet's films, as the process of creation, both of and within the film, is central to his thematics (see Chapter Two). Textual analysis will later illustrate the extent to which the intertextual reading may operate within one text, namely *L'Eden* (see III, i).

(vi) Autobiography in Film and Literature and its Relation to Intertextuality

The issue of autobiography points to central differences both in the conventions of literary and filmic production, and in the relation of each medium to intertextuality. The interdisciplinary analysis assesses the role of autobiography within each medium, and determines the extent to which autobiography may operate intertextually.

In general, autobiography is a personalised form of literary non-fiction. Its association with the literary form would then imply that the literary medium is more inherently personal, and more honest. The filmic documentary, as a comparable non-fictional genre, is by contrast supposedly objective or impersonal, and is rarely employed autobiographically by the filmmaker, who is conventionally behind, rather than before the camera. And while techniques exist which might be employed to adapt the literary autobiographical account to the screen, such as the author narrating in 'Voix Off' as images depict people and places significant to his/her past, or the use of actors to play the author when young, such techniques are, in comparison to the literary account, inadequate or artificial. There would then be an opposition between filmic and literary media as exemplified by their contrasting relation to autobiography.

Yet the film may contain autobiographical elements which problematise such a distinction. First authentic events which take place during filming are equally autobiographical, becoming fictional simultaneously when incorporated into the work, as discussed in subsection (v) in relation to the open film. We might even see the adventure of filming as both real and fictional, as what is filmed does happen, whether staged or for real before the camera, becoming an episode in the autobiography of those taking part. Moreover, we will now gauge the measure to which the ambivalent relation developed by Robbe-Grillet between literary fiction and autobiography further develops film's potentially autobiographical role.

That the title of Robbe-Grillet's first literary autobiographical volume should be not only a metatextual commentary on the (novel) representational status of the work, but also a prospective title for someone else's life story, namely that of Henri de

Corinthe, provides a warning of the hazards of any Robbe-Grilletian autobiography. The mirror, a mimetic symbol, appears to Corinthe reflecting from the waves on page 91 of *Le Miroir qui Revient*: anecdotally it has little connection with Robbe-Grillet's own experience. The title of the final volume of the trilogy, *Les Derniers Jours de Corinthe*, announces Corinthe's, rather than Robbe-Grillet's twilight years.

The assertion that there is little difference between fiction and autobiography highlights the problematic nature both of a retrospective work that attempts to divorce life from text, and of theoretical analysis which isolates creation from creator. The autobiography becomes intertextual in three ways outlined by Jefferson: as a 'sister-text', it maintains a generic parallel to the novel form in its imaginary passages; as metatext, it comments on previous works; as hypertext, it transforms elements initially occurring in previous texts, which recur in the autobiography and which are hence rewritten by it.²⁷ There is a reinterpretation of the literary corpus enacted by the autobiography which lends the generating cells of the fiction a dually autobiographical and imaginary origin, in the process of creating art and/as artist.

The coexistence of fiction and autobiography is personified by Robbe-Grillet's progenitors, namely, his biological father and the imaginary father-figure Henri de Corinthe. The existences of these two are inextricably linked, as each has saved the other's life. In this way Robbe-Grillet's own origins are rooted in both the real and the imaginary. The Robbe-Grilletian autobiography explores the life of Corinthe, filling in the absence left by the loss of Corinthe's own textual life-story, and suggesting many parallels between this and events within Robbe-Grillet's own life and/or fiction. The intersection between identities and texts of Robbe-Grillet and Corinthe within *Angélique* is also effected on a formal level when the narrator becomes Corinthe himself on page 139, writing as 'Je'.

Robbe-Grillet's sadoeroticism is similarly constructed textually and biologically; it is rooted not only in his natural tendencies, but also in cultural influences. The discovery, aged twelve, of a sadistic image in 'un ouvrage pseudo-historique traitant des peines capitales en Turquie pendant la période ottomane' (p. 53, *Angélique*) becomes a possible

source for later aesthetic reproductions. Sadism is also inherited from, or shared with the figure of Corinthe, with his predilection for 'le sang répandu et les chairs mortifiées' (p. 157, *Angélique*).

Just as supposedly real events inspire aesthetic concerns, so too recurrent motifs from Robbe-Grillet's art overcome autobiographical detail, increasing the interpenetrability of the two realms. This is most clearly seen when Robbe-Grillet begins to talk about his relations with his wife. Beginning with sentimentality, he relates instances of tenderness between them, culminating in the breaking of glass, a sadistic obsession of his filmic and literary work (see Chapter Three, IV, iv), which Catherine responds to with a submissiveness characteristic of Robbe-Grillet's fictional female protagonists: 'elle se baisse avec lenteur et ramasse doucement quelques-uns des plus larges fragments aux pointes acérées, d'une minceur de rêve' (p. 188, *Le Miroir Qui Revient*).

While we will, along with Jefferson, respect generic differences as an effect of reading, we do so in the awareness that it is precisely such genre determinations Robbe-Grillet subverts.²⁸ Robbe-Grillet has consistently brought authentic detail from his own life into his fiction, such as lending Wallas his own facial traits in *Les Gommages*, and setting *La Jalousie* in a house he actually lived in (pp. 68-69, *Angélique*). The role of autobiographical experience as a generator of fiction aligns itself with, and hence contaminates the role of the intertext. Potentially indefinite, even infinite sources for the fiction are opened up, as hypotext, real experience, and invented passages invade the text and are fused with each other.

Moreover, the refusal to distinguish between hypotext and real experience, and the alignment of the two as equally constituting the artist's self, introduce a new problem for the intertextual analysis. For, just as the Robbe-Grillet text (whether novel, or autobiography) is always both fiction and autobiography, so too by extension are the intertexts which constitute much of his work. The theorist in search of the intertextual origins of the fiction is invited by Robbe-Grillet to assign equal importance to the fiction and/as autobiography of all the authors of the intertexts within his work, in an unending

process which complicates the attempt to situate a semiotic coherence in the matrix which generates the hypotext. Such a hypotext may in fact itself consist of the autobiography of its writer, displacing the attempt at Riffaterrian semiosis. The dissolution of boundaries between text and life thus presents a significant problem for intertextual literary analysis.

From an interdisciplinary view point, such a radical invalidation of the conventional autobiographical enterprise in literature opens up a possibility for the filmic text as a new autobiographical-fictional exercise. Robbe-Grillet stresses that fiction and autobiography have the same impossible goal: to seek a definition of the living, writing subject, and to interpret that subject's experience within the world. These are structural issues, and their solution does not reside in some fixed, external significance which may be fitted into a linear, causal and chronologically ordered model. Equally, anything written by that subject, whether *récit* or 'recherche autobiographique', has the same provisional status. Both texts strive to accommodate the fantasy of self within language; both are doomed to failure, or at least, compromise, as is implied by Ramsay's claim that the return in Robbe-Grillet's theory to a position of subjective reality is as close to individual mental life as it is to linguistic structures.²⁹ Yet the essentially structural, and provisional nature of such an accommodation means that not only linguistic, but also filmic structures may attempt this exercise.

We would maintain that the filmic form may equally strive to capture something of the artist's self-image, especially as the linear form of the traditional literary autobiography has proved, in Robbe-Grillet's terms at least, to be unworkable. Moreover, Robbe-Grillet's claim that all fiction is autobiographical ('Je n'ai jamais parlé d'autre chose que de moi', p. 10, *Le Miroir Qui Revient*) equally implicates filmic fiction within such an autobiographical production. The subversion of conventional literary autobiography therefore points to a new role for the filmic medium within the realm of autofiction.

Before our detailed textual analysis, which will illustrate the workings of intertextuality across media, we shall assess the significance of intertextuality to Robbe-Grillet and the extent to which it permeates his creative approach.

II. Robbe-Grillet and Intertextuality : Inter-media

(i) Robbe-Grillet on Intertextuality

J'ai vécu de la littérature. [...] Non seulement des textes, mais des objets d'art: peintures, photographies, monuments, sculptures, etcetera.

L'art accomplit et ruine ce qu'il touche.

(Both statements by Alain Robbe-Grillet, London, May 1994.)³⁰

In a recent colloquium on intertextuality, Robbe-Grillet characterised his attitude to texts of the past as paradoxically one of homage and of destruction. The erasure of texts of the past is seen by him as necessarily parricidal, yet this erasure glorifies such texts by the very fact that they are worth destroying. The activity of hypertext on hypotext is then violently erosive but this very factor is motivated by passionate celebration of the hypotext. Such a contradiction is explained by Robbe-Grillet as akin to a Hegelian 'Aufhebung', and contains within it notions of overtaking, uplifting, and annihilating the texts of the past.

The inevitability of intertextuality in his work, and the justification for fictionalising sections of his autobiography, are grounded in Robbe-Grillet's view of his own essence as comprised of the texts of the past, whether literary or iconic, texts moreover from potentially every medium. The Robbe-Grilletian 'moi' is therefore to a great extent constructed by texts, of film, literature, and all media, such that the creative self may only express itself through an inherent intertextuality which spans all media. If

this intertextuality is revealed, an authenticity of creation is attained, as all creation and all subjectivity are largely constituted by text. Intertextuality is then paramount to any comprehension of the work of this artist, and must be considered across media divisions.

(ii) Literary Intertextuality and The Critics

Yet critics have rarely analysed the process of intertextuality between media which characterizes Robbe-Grillet's work, except as the self-conscious intertextual process which led to the picto- and photo-novels. Critical work on the transformative function of intertextuality in his filmic texts is particularly sparse, and we aim to rectify this omission later in the chapter (sections III and IV). Armes contents himself with a brief paragraph on Robbe-Grillet's self-reference with little analysis and a cursory list of other intertexts used in the films which in no way enlightens us as to their functioning.³¹ The hypotexts themselves are often alluded to by Robbe-Grillet himself in interview.

It is our belief that such a failure to explore the transformative effect of hypertextuality in Robbe-Grillet's work is due to the initial break with the past which his early theory and literary fiction represent, which has in turn discouraged an intertextual approach to his work. Indeed, more often than transforming the hypotext, Robbe-Grillet's literature aims at a radical reinvention of novelistic form, and an attempted erasure of the influences of the literature of the past. This is in accordance with *PUNR*, with its polemical attack on what Robbe-Grillet sees as an ideology of realism.

There is an apparent lack of hypertextuality in his literature, apart from occasional, sometimes obvious, allusions. Among these are references to Kafka's *The Trial* in *Un Régicide*, after Boris's ambiguous crime when two uniformed policemen come to arrest him, only to abandon him later when the case dissolves (p. 200, and pp. 208-209, *Un Régicide*). Then, there are the frequently discussed references to Sophocles' *OEdipe Roi* (see Chapter Three, IV, i) or to Kafka's *The Castle* in the name

'rue des Arpenteurs' (p. 18) in *Les Gommés*. Roland observes the intertextual parallel between *Dans le Labyrinthe* and Grecian myth.³²

One could also cite Mathias's newspaper clipping with its account of the sadistic murder of a young girl in *Le Voyeur* (pp. 75-76, *Le Voyeur*) which recalls Meursault's discovery of a similarly macabre item when in prison in Camus's *L'Étranger*.³³ Brock argues convincingly that there is a strong intertextual relationship firstly between *Les Gommés* and Graham Greene's *A Gun for Sale*, and secondly between *Le Voyeur* and *Brighton Rock*.³⁴ We would add that the recurrent black and white checkerboard floor, appearing most strikingly as *Projet's* sadoerotic chessboard on which Joan Robeson is tortured (p. 176, *Projet*), alludes to Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*.

There are perhaps many other examples of literary hypertextuality waiting to be discovered, but one thing is clear: it is intertextual self-reference (allusions to works within Robbe-Grillet's corpus) which is more prevalent in the literary texts, a phenomenon which Ricardou has termed 'l'intertextualité restreinte'.³⁵ We would emphasize moreover that it is predominantly Robbe-Grillet's filmic texts which operate a clear hypertextuality by alluding to work by other artists, and notably to literary hypotexts. Furthermore, pictorial art, opera and theatrical drama offer hypotexts which his filmic work reflects upon and distorts, just as the work from pictorial and photographic media by other artists is exploited in a self-conscious, controlled intertextuality. Intertextuality across media becomes a means of destruction and destabilisation, which only the interdisciplinary analysis may attempt to define.

Equally, intertextuality which deliberately works across media has not been adequately assessed by critics because of Robbe-Grillet's insistence that literature and film are not linked. While Chapter One (section VI) explores this formal issue in more detail, it is certainly true that Robbe-Grillet, unlike Duras, has never adapted his literary texts into films or vice-versa, and has therefore implied an incompatibility between media. Film adaptations of Robbe-Grillet's novels and short texts have, however, been undertaken by other directors, a factor which reduces Robbe-Grillet's claims of a hiatus

between film and literature to a personal aesthetic opinion.³⁶ While references from one work to another are made, such self-reference is by no means consistent with the cinematic adaptation as a genre. In his avoidance of the adaptation, Robbe-Grillet has attempted to bypass film's inherent intertextuality, or what Kline terms cinema's literary nature, due to film's early adoption not only of literature's technique of narrative, but also its narrative techniques, and even its specific plots.³⁷ However, Robbe-Grillet's use of literary hypotexts in his films works against such a division.

(iii) Intertextuality Between Media Within the Corpus

Critics have been helpful on the role that intertextual self-reference plays within Robbe-Grillet's filmic and literary work. Rybalka identifies a specific phase in Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic production as that of intertextual assemblage starting in 1971.³⁸ In his early criticism, Morrissette lists the instances of literary self-reference in *Maison* and in *Projet*, but does not analyse the reasons for such autocitation. He points merely to the generative role such stock images play, such that an allusion to one text may trigger off other references to it.³⁹

Ricardou will characteristically emphasize the self-conscious aspects, claiming that self-reference, via the reappearance of the same characters from text to text, serves to double the text with preceding ones, therefore enhancing the autorepresentational effect of the writing and subverting the novel's traditionally mimetic role.⁴⁰ Later Ricardou will see self-reference as the deliberate effacement of a fixed origin for texts and their generators, and as an affirmation that there is always text before the text is produced, rendering any creation merely a work on preceding texts.⁴¹

Stoltzfus also sees self-reference as a form of *mise en abyme*, which extends reflection from one book or film to another. Thematically, self-reference intra-textually (double identities, repetitions) as well as intertextually, resolves self and other within the

work(s) of art, and establishes then subverts a dialectic between the subjective vision of the artist/reader/spectator and the objective world in which s/he moves.⁴²

Vareille and Ramsay stress the capacity of intertextual self-reference to create the artist's own language, beyond the verbal structures of the literary text. For Vareille, self-reference establishes inevitable associations and obsessions from work to work, which he affirms as sadosexual.⁴³ Ramsay suggests that the immemorial stories, phrases and motifs within Robbe-Grillet's works produce a unity or constant which recurs despite the fragmentation of meaning the texts effect. Such elements align themselves with the mythologies and texts of Western society, sharing a status with the ready-mades of Duchamp and Pop Art.⁴⁴ Ramsay then points to the work on the concept of intertextuality in Robbe-Grillet. The language of the text which may equate object, or visual representation with story through their shared status as recurrent construction, explodes a notion of intertextuality as merely a literary (or linguistic) phenomenon, and forces the visual medium into the same realm, even if the effect of this is disruptive.

While he does not attempt much of a critical reading, this stress on the possibility of intertextual self-reference across media is explored in Morrissette's later work. Indeed, Morrissette's 'Constructional Appendix' is vital to any interdisciplinary analysis in its indispensable list of incidences of assemblage in *Topologie*, *Souvenirs*, the picto-novels and the photo-novels; the appendix is found on pages 79-81 of *Intertextual Assemblage in Robbe-Grillet: From Topologie to the Golden Triangle*.

For Morrissette, there are two types of intertextuality in Robbe-Grillet: the integrated, rewritten reuse of short elements from one work to another, whether filmic, literary, picto-literary or photo-literary, and the verbatim reinsertion of previous texts subjected to generative reorganization. What Morrissette's distinction highlights is that an image may be re-formed while retaining its identity, as it moves from one medium to another. Pictures are incorporated into films; verbal text is recontextualised next to pictures; film is re-edited in a new order from work to work; characters and allusions reappear in works from different media; plots are referred to or repeated with slight

variants. The purpose of generative assemblage is, for Morrissette, to dissolve the notion of a unified, unique work of art.⁴⁵

The link between media is not just obtained via the recurrent theme or mythology from filmic to literary text; it is also a formal affinity between creative processes. Morrissette points to the affinity between intertextual reassemblage and filmic montage, due to the discrepancy between the order of the finished written text and the creative order of composition.⁴⁶

The verbal text which is generated via a dialogue, such as that between Rauschenberg and Robbe-Grillet in the case of *Traces Suspectes en Surface*, is later isolated from the visual textual elements to create the novels *Topologie* and *Souvenirs* (in which pieces of the picto-novel are reused). The purely verbal text which was originally in a different order (the order generated by the images of, say, Rauschenberg within the picto-novel), is, for the purely verbal novel, divided up and reorganised, with each verbal subsection maintained verbatim but divorced from its visual referent. The verbal text, when organised into a novel, therefore gains a new order, sometimes due to chance relationships, and in turn a new continuity is produced retroactively, which stems from pseudo-causal relationships between verbal parts within the work which appear through the new juxtaposition in the novel.

Such a process might be compared with the process of filming and juxtapositions of montage, the latter capable of reordering the former and recreating it in a variety of ways. The use of montage to create texts in the later pictorial-verbal work of Robbe-Grillet becomes the most prevalent form of creation. Texts are then most authentically considered when seen at an intersection of media, as literary writing becomes a self-conscious exercise in recombining old footage.

Intertextual self-reference and hypertextuality alert us to the necessity of an interdisciplinary analysis which traces the passage of recurrent motifs from literary to filmic to pictorial texts. Whole scenes are re-presented and transformed from one medium to another, altering the meaning of hypotext as much as hypertext. Such a transformation effected intertextually between media is obtained when the abduction of

Laura as she leaves the train on page 146 of *Projet*, is reproduced at the opening of *Le Jeu avec le Feu*, when the kidnappers' first victim is snatched and stashed away in a wicker basket bearing the words 'Animal Vivant'. Such a recurrence introduces the thematics of sadoerotic fantasy, and instantly implicates the (as yet) innocent Georges de Saxe in the abduction even though he does not visibly participate in it. This is because his narratorial role in the filmic text cannot but be associated with the sadistic and unstable narrator(s) of the hypotext, *Projet*, and his/their flamboyant activities, both narrating agencies intertextually linked.

Potentially, intertextuality spans texts from all media, such that even music may generate the text. Narratively, generation is derived from opera. As Robbe-Grillet states, *Glissements'* motif of the drinking of a magic liquid stems from Wagner's *Tristan* as much as from Michelet's *La Sorcière*, connoting as it does Tristan's philtre. *Le Jeu avec le Feu* is equally structured by Verdi's opera *Il Trovatore*, the Brazilian song *Carolina* and the German military march *Erika* (pp. 78 and 83, *The Erotic Dream Machine*).

The intertextual operations between media subvert the conventional hierarchy attributed to each medium. The move towards a heterogeneity of forms includes within it a substitution of one medium for another, and a subsequent emphasis on plurality. Such an openness of one medium to another is a continuation, and not a reaction against the collapse of the tradition and of the institution both of medium and of author. Yet one could argue that such heterogeneity effects a paradoxical inflation of the importance of the signifier of the author within the textual production, whether literary, filmic or pictorial. For, the more diverse the media or the forms, the more essential is the author in a codification of the work. To claim that heterogeneity within media further dissolves notions of authorship is then problematic. Diversification can result in an intensified focus on the Name as sole fixed signifier, an outcome which directly opposes the plurality of media and its dissolution of hierarchical definitions.

We posit a continuity within the filmic and literary work of Robbe-Grillet from the initial intertextual reference in *Les Gommages*, through to the generative techniques exploited in the creation of *Projet* and the film *L'Eden*, culminating in the intertextual

movement across media that characterises his later filmic, literary and picto/photo-literary work. Intertextual self-reference works retroactively to transform preceding texts, as the repetition of previously used elements in new contexts forces their initial use to be assessed differently. In other words, a destruction of the original meaning of such elements is produced by intertextual self-reference which parallels the comments on intertextuality made by Robbe-Grillet in 1994, quoted above. Intertextuality becomes a means of destabilising former works, and of demanding a constant re-reading/viewing.

In conclusion to this section, we would stress the following: the significance of such intertextuality, both within our interdisciplinary analysis and to a full comprehension of Robbe-Grillet's work, resides in its deliberate operation across media divisions. As we shall see, literary hypotexts invade and collide within the filmic text; pictorial hypotexts penetrate and disorientate the novel. It is this use of intertextuality to challenge media definitions which signals the most innovative aspect of Robbe-Grillet's use of intertextuality and of media.

III. Topography of Texts Versus Ontology of Media :

Interdisciplinary Intertextual Analysis of Film and Literature

This section employs interdisciplinary intertextual analysis to determine the extent to which Robbe-Grillet achieves a contestation of forms via interpenetration, which in turn challenges divisions between texts and between media. First we explore the way in which self-referentiality within the corpus transforms hyper- and hypotext, and serves as a commentary on the process of creation. Second we assess the extent to which works from one medium invade and distort works from a separate medium, by focusing on the work of filmic hypertext on literary hypotext(s); this will be followed, in sections IV and V, by analysis of the function of pictorial hypotext(s) in film, then in literature.

In many cases, an assessment of the thematics of the artist responsible for the hypotext is provided as an extension of our consideration of the hypotext itself, in order

to explain the aesthetic motives for and transformative effect of the allusion. The movement between filmic, literary, pictorial and photographic texts becomes characteristic of a textual production which aims to contest the parameters of the media through intertextual contamination.

(i) Filmic and Literary Paratextuality, Seriality and Self-reference:

Intertextual Transformation Within and Between Texts

(L'Eden, Na Pris les Dés, Maison, Projet,

Marienbad, TEE, and L'HQM)

Genette's literary paratextuality contains within its definition the intertextual relationship between finished work and first draft(s).⁴⁷ Filmic paratextuality, in which we would include the relation of the finished text to its process of creation, is less easily defined due to the often ambiguous relation between creative process and text. Literary paratextuality between 'brouillon' and final text does not undermine the status of the finished text as the signed, definitive and more complete version. Moreover, the finished literary text will most probably contain the trace of the written rough draft within it, as both versions remain within the verbal medium and hence will share some of the same words; without this shared element, or in the event that the finished literary text excludes the draft, the two versions would become separate works, and would no longer enjoy a paratextual relationship. If they did, it could only be hypothetical.

It is then the specific and idiosyncratic property of the filmic medium to include texts which are generated by a potentially absent core, and which maintain a paratextual relationship with a structural scaffolding that is completely omitted in the final version. The notion of a final text is then itself problematised, as, assessing this phenomenon in literary terms, draft (or process) and finished text become autonomous works, with their own separate structures.

The generation of film from script might explain such a potential transcendence. The verbal and visual elements within the filmic medium enable it to introduce aspects completely absent from the exclusively verbal script. As explained above (section I, v), the different stages of creation of the film make it potentially not a work of unity, but a unity of separate works: the work of the script, the work of the shooting and the work of the montage, all of these phases related by paratextuality. The filmic text becomes, paradoxically, both a united and a fragmented text, bound together by an intertextual movement.

In contrast to *L'Immortelle*, the script of *L'Eden* was for the most part unwritten at the start of shooting. Gardies sees the abandonment of a completed script after *L'Immortelle* as a subversion of cinema's dependence on the literary form, and an assertion of cinematic autonomy.⁴⁸ It might be more accurate to see such a shift as the division of the unified text into separate phases of work, each differentiated from the other by a sustained process of creation and destruction, which necessitates an intertextual reading between these phases for full comprehension.

For, *L'Eden's* creation is a fine example of the extent to which the final filmic text offered to the spectator accounts for only part of the work of art. In interview with Jost, Robbe-Grillet asserts that before the shooting, there were only seven initial themes; five more were generated by the process of filming.⁴⁹ Prior to shooting, all Robbe-Grillet had prepared were the following: a vague synopsis; a declaration of his intentions regarding the serial structure; a diagram in which the initial seven themes were set out in a different order for each of the five first series; and a fragment of dialogue to start off the shooting. The finalised, written combination of the twelve themes in their different series is indicative of the importance of the creative process of filming, as the latter has added significantly to the essence of the revised table of themes.⁵⁰

The second phase - the shooting - therefore works on the first written phase, transforming it. The changes effected by the shooting may be attributed both to Robbe-Grillet and to the members of the creative team. As Robbe-Grillet explains: 'Along with Catherine Jourdan, [...] Igor Luther, the cinematographer, collaborated extensively in the

making of the film' (p. 58, *The Erotic Dream Machine*). The third and final stage - the montage - now works on the previous two, transforming them in turn, to produce the final text.

What is so extraordinarily significant about the final state of *L'Eden* is its difference from, even destruction of the written outline with which it was begun. For, while traces of the themes from the serial plan for *L'Eden* may be glimpsed in the finished text, even Robbe-Grillet himself confesses to being unable to recognise the twelve themes in their serial structure when he sees *L'Eden* now (p. 56, *The Erotic Dream Machine*). Yet those themes brought the film into existence; they are its essence, its absent centre. Robbe-Grillet's willingness to exhibit the themes by allowing them to be published, denies that *L'Eden's* exclusion of its structural scaffolding incurs aesthetic closure. What it affirms is the crucial nature of the three stages which generated the work, of which the screened version is but one. Further eroding the unity of *L'Eden* is its subsequent intertextual generation of the later film *N a Pris les Dés*, which employs enough of the first film's elements to imply that it is a continuation, without however resembling *L'Eden* in any consistent or definite way, and hence marking a further destruction of the initial work.

The finalised filmic text of *L'Eden* maintains a particularly tense intertextual relationship with the written table of themes, due to the fact that the generative themes are themselves ambivalent, often interconnecting with each other. As Gardies emphasizes, while 'sang', 'eau' and 'tableau' are distinct themes which may be clearly discerned, 'matière visqueuse' is also 'sperme', and 'l'érotisme' maps inevitably onto 'aggression mâle'.⁵¹

Gardies's perceptive analysis points to, but does not enounce, the real significance of this ambivalence. The explosion of one theme into another signals the dissolution of meaning attained by the text on a thematic level, in contrast and in proportion to the superficial construction of anecdote. As the themes are juxtaposed to form a story, the themes themselves are evacuated.

Such a process is vital when considered in the light of Robbe-Grillet's other works, whether filmic or literary, in which each enunciation contests or destroys itself as it is created. Lotringer analyses serial composition in Robbe-Grillet's literary texts, notably *La Jalousie* and *Projet*, highlighting a parallel process to that operated by *L'Eden*'s structure, whereby variations on scenes break down sign-referent relations, so that signs relate to other signs, in an ongoing process which dissolves origins and meanings.⁵² If each element of the serial composition comprises *L'Eden*'s semantic framework or code, then the subversion by the text of these initially distinct thematic units must be viewed as a dramatisation of the destruction of (semantic) order by liberty and invention. For, just as at the end of *L'Eden*, Violette is back where she started and nothing has happened (as Djerba horizon dissolves into the wall of her room back in Bratislava), so too thematically nothing has signified. Only now is the text complete. And only via an intertextual reading between finished text and written plan may such transformative work of text on itself be ascertained and comprehended.

Crucially, *L'Eden* is serial and *N a Pris les Dés* is aleatory. But whereas *L'Eden* was generated in a serial manner, and this disappears when the final text is seen (the result of chance), the opposite is true of *N a Pris les Dés*, which was not generated in an aleatory way (the finished film's structure is clearly intended to provide contrasts with that of *L'Eden*, which are too neat to be arrived at by chance) but which poses as aleatory, with N throwing the die on screen to produce the events which we see.

There is then an inversion from one film to the next in terms of the process of creation and the finalised thematic content. For *L'Eden* was generated serially but its theme is not serial; *N a Pris les Dés* was not generated in an aleatory fashion but its theme is the aleatory. In this way, the hiatus between process of creation and created text is further highlighted via a dynamic intertextual reading both within and between the two filmic texts. Indeed, given the contrived nature of *N a Pris les Dés* and its use of film shots which are not in *L'Eden et Après*, we would suggest a less misleading title, such as the imperfect anagram which connotes N's artificial creation by Robbe-Grillet who really holds the die in the film: *N Après les Dés*.

We will now investigate the intertextual construction of *N a Pris les Dés* from *L'Eden*, in order to demonstrate the implications of such intertextuality on the nature of the filmic medium.

The pseudo-anagrammatical reconstruction of *L'Eden et Après* as *N a Pris les Dés* has significant implications vis-à-vis the nature of the image and its relation to representation. Rarely discussed by critics, this most innovative achievement in cinematic terms deserves far more attention than it has so far received. Armes dismisses *N a Pris les Dés* as a 'virtually unknown work'.⁵³ For, the dynamic reworking of *L'Eden's* themes, characters and events within *N a Pris les Dés* which shares much of the visual text of the first film, produces an erasure of the meanings implicit or explicit in *L'Eden*, as verbal language, re-editing and re-dubbed sound effects become agents which remould the film's images. Most importantly, then, the visual element in the filmic text, which for many theorists constitutes film's realistic component, is divested of its original significance.

Of primary importance to any comparison of the two films is the often ignored fact that *N a Pris les Dés* contains many images that are absent from *L'Eden*. Robbe-Grillet states of *N a Pris les Dés* that while he did use some of *L'Eden's* images, he combined them differently and gave them a new sound. He also used the second takes - which, for Robbe-Grillet, are different and are always variants - plus the unused heads and tails of *L'Eden's* shots. The only shots taken after the original shooting of *L'Eden* are those of Richard Leduc as N (p. 64, *The Erotic Dream Machine*).

N a Pris les Dés is not therefore a copy of *L'Eden*, or an in-joke, but a separate and autonomous text which may only in part be referred to its predecessor. If it could easily be mapped onto the earlier film, the two texts would enact a process of absolute intertextual reference which belies the essence of Robbe-Grillet's work, as they would promote a reciprocity concurrent with ideas of continuity, causality and symmetry which his texts undermine. The most obviously original textual pieces within *N a Pris les Dés*, which lend the film its own autonomous structural framework, are the opening scenes, in which N (called Marc-Antoine in *L'Eden*) addresses the camera, and introduces certain

elements of the text as his fantasy, and others as his reality. The text is thereby personalised and aligned with a character's experience of the world, distancing *N a Pris les Dés* from a status as clever trick or effect.

Robbe-Grillet's own views as an artist are voiced in N's introduction to events in the film, rendering *N a Pris les Dés* self-reflexive as well as intertextually self-referential. N propounds Robbe-Grillet's own views on the distorting powers of a simplistic ideology of realism, but, as the film was scheduled to be shown on television, such comments are primarily aimed at the medium of television itself. Unlike *L'Eden*, *N a Pris les Dés* is then in part a theoretical work, aligning itself with *PUNR* via N's verbal frame:

N (V.O.): Ce qui m'a toujours paru étonnant quand on me raconte une histoire à la télévision par exemple, dans ce qu'ils appellent une dramatique, c'est que les choses s'y enchaînent du début jusqu'à la fin de façon logique, bien sage, bien continue. (...) Quand il se passe de vraies choses autour de vous, vous l'avez remarqué, c'est tout-à-fait différent.

(*N a Pris les Dés*)

Nonetheless, the relation between *N a Pris les Dés* and *L'Eden* provides a fruitful focus for the analysis of Robbe-Grillet's conception of the cinematic medium. The recontextualisation of a significant number of *L'Eden*'s images within *N a Pris les Dés* becomes a process of decontextualising the filmic text from the realism frequently assigned to it. For, visual repeats in *N a Pris les Dés* refer to *L'Eden* only insofar as they look the same; their meaning in the second film is different, and more often the complete opposite. For example, Dutchman of *L'Eden* reappears in *N a Pris les Dés* as a villain, and the once evil Frantz as an ally. Where visual elements are common to both films, they constitute a constant, within an equation comprised of other, crucial variables. The transformed significance of the unchanged image posits image as text, and not as reality. Moreover, this recontextualisation indicates that what the filmic text represents depends not on its visual appearance at all, but rather on its visual aspect within an organised

structure, comprised of editing, verbal frame and sound, all of which may recreate the shot in their own image.

The Ricardoulien notion that *Projet* is autorepresentational in its self-generation from its own linguistic elements provides a fruitful parallel for the filmic (inter)textual generation of *L'Eden* and *N a Pris les Dés*. For Ricardou, the opening of *Projet* is a description of the reading of the text; it is then initiatory, anticipating the alternation between the 'lisible' and rupture that will structure what follows.⁵⁴ Yet the same passage is equally an uncanny intertextual echo of the end of *Maison*. The beginning of *Projet* therefore exists as part of this (hypo-)text, such that the generation of *Projet* in fact takes place within *Maison*:

La première scène se déroule très vite. On sent qu'elle a déjà été répétée plusieurs fois: chacun connaît son rôle par cœur. Les mots, les gestes se succèdent à présent d'une manière souple, continue, s'enchaînent sans à-coup les uns aux autres, comme les éléments nécessaires d'une machinerie bien huilée.

(p. 7, *Projet*)

Le scénario se déroule ensuite d'une façon mécanique, comme une machine bien huilée, bien rodée, chacun connaissant désormais son rôle avec exactitude et pouvant le jouer sans se tromper d'une seconde, sans un à-coup (...).

(p. 205, *Maison*)

Moreover, certain pieces of these passages also appear in other, earlier texts. The 'machinerie bien huilée' is equally the escalator in *Instantanés*' short piece, 'Dans les Couloirs du Métropolitain' (p. 77, *Instantanés*), and is connoted in *La Jalousie* by the description of A...'s movements (pp. 44, 103, 213 of *La Jalousie*). Such intertextual self-reference renders the source for the literary text unfixable. Ricardou's claim that *Projet* constitutes itself from certain 'mots du jeu' such as 'rouge', and certain actions such as

penetration, is therefore countered by such an intertextual functioning.⁵⁵ Textual generation works both ways, not just in the construction of text, but in the retroactive rewriting, or degeneration of one text by another via intertextual reciprocity.

The filmic text also reflects on and refracts itself intertextually. *TEE* is contained in microcosmic form within *L'HQM*; this unsettles the unity of both works. The hypotext (*TEE*) is conjured up, when Boris invents a version of how Jean Robin was captured by the enemy. As Boris explains to Maria, Jean was betrayed by a girl named Eva, who was later found strangled. This is precisely what happens in *TEE* to Eva the prostitute, when Elias discovers her 'double jeu'. Just as in *L'HQM* Trintignant is trying to adopt the identity of 'Jean' (Robin) so too in *TEE* he gave his name as Jean to Eva. This correspondence means, paradoxically, that Boris is talking (intertextually) about himself in a former incarnation in *TEE*, as well as about Jean Robin in *L'HQM*. It is also an acknowledgement that Jean-Louis Trintignant played both roles. The use of intertextual self-reference therefore further fragments the uncertain unity of textual identity.

Both literary and filmic texts employ self-reference metatextually. In the literary text this comes in the form of a critique of Robbe-Grillet; in the filmic text, as a critique by Robbe-Grillet, both featuring within the work itself. The former is effected when the critic's statement is incorporated into the work. Intertextually, this signals the reflection of the text on the texts which reflect upon it. Such an activity is not just playful; Morrissette has contributed, with his many critical pronouncements, to the creation of Robbe-Grillet, via the reader's intertextual assessment of Robbe-Grillet through Morrissette's books. Morrissette of course, as a Robbe-Grillet specialist, is equally created by Robbe-Grillet.

This interplay of influence is acknowledged and parodied through the internalisation of Morrissette's own comments on *Projet* within *Projet*. As Morrissette has himself claimed, after reading an early draft, he questioned the realism of Robbe-Grillet's projected New York, and notably the dubious existence of 'Madison' subway station.⁵⁶ This led to Morrissette's unwitting participation on page 189 of *Projet* with the quibble addressed to the narrator : 'n'importe quel Américain dirait «le Village» et

«Madison Avenue». In fact, as Morrissette himself states, 'Madison Avenue' station does not exist either; Robbe-Grillet has then rendered Morrissette himself imaginary (alluding to him more subtly, perhaps, in the figure of M 'le Vampire').

Robbe-Grillet's critique of his own collaborated work comes in *TEE*'s intertextual work on *Marienbad*. The author Jean's desire to suppress Elias's sadoerotic killing of Eva marks a direct allusion to Resnais's repression of the planned rape scene, left in the ciné-roman of *Marienbad* as testament to Robbe-Grillet's commitment to the idea (pp. 156-157, *Marienbad*). Resnais's censoring of the sexual violence inherent in the Robbe-Grilletian 'réel' becomes, through the lens offered by *TEE*, a constricting preoccupation with the rational, and an abdication (in this instance) of *Marienbad*'s pretensions to represent the imaginary.

The most radical work of hypertextuality is performed through its operation across media divisions. We will now demonstrate this key phenomenon, as exemplified by the filmic and literary texts of Robbe-Grillet.

(ii) Filmic Hypertext, Filmic Versus Literary Hypotext : Intertextual Erasure

(*TEE*)

Strictly filmic hypertextuality rarely occurs within the work of Robbe-Grillet. Critics have noted filmic hypotexts in, for example, *L'HQM*, both Gardies and Jost observing a reference to Fritz Lang's *M* in the scene in the underground cellar, when Boris is brought to judgment by a tribunal led by Jean Robin.⁵⁷ Interestingly, Wagner notes a reference to this same film in *Le Voyeur*, when Mathias peers through a shop-window recalling *M*'s child-killer as he stares at a shop display, his face framed by knives while a girl victim is reflected walking past behind him.⁵⁸ However, reference to filmic texts in the work of Robbe-Grillet operates significantly in conjunction with simultaneous transformative intertextual allusion to works from other media. It is the combination of filmic and literary hypotexts which works most effectively to disrupt and revise hypertext

and hypotext, and it is for this reason that our interdisciplinary analysis focuses on hypertextuality across as well as within specific media.

We might compare the intertextual clash between detective genre and Oedipus text in *Les Gommés*, with the interaction between Hitchcockian and Biblical hypotexts in *TEE*. This film contains many allusions to Hitchcock's films, most notably *Strangers on a Train*, which dynamically erode the Biblical references within the film. The hypertext becomes a work on both hypotexts, performed significantly via intertextual allusion across media.

As Armes states, without developing this point, intertextual reference to the Bible is most explicitly made via the names of the protagonists. Jean, Luc(ette), Marc and Mathieu uncannily echo the names of Christ's apostles.⁵⁹ The first three are the filmmakers on the train, who generate a substantial part of Elias's story; the last is the young boy whom Elias meets in Antwerp and to whom he brings a comic book, which becomes one of the motives for Elias's return to Antwerp in the latter part of the film.

However, already *TEE* works against the biblical hypotext. For whereas the narrators of The Gospel in *The New Testament* are driven by a common purpose, each in turn recounting 'The Coming of Christ' (see *The New English Bible: The New Testament*), in the text according to Robbe-Grillet no such correspondence between narratives is attained. Jean, Marc and Lucette eventually lose track of Elias's story entirely, and Mathieu will even be narrated to, so ignorant is he of the text's events. Furthermore, the presence of other narrators in the hypertext (Franck, Lorentz) who remain outside the hypotext further undermines the biblical narrative monopoly. The collapse of authority among the narrators in the hypertext therefore works against the assertion of absolute truth in the biblical hypotext, itself compared to *TEE*'s network of self-cancelling histories. This in turn draws attention to the Good Book's status as text, as written and hence re-writable.

Other references to the Bible may be found in the more comical elements within the film. Franck's choice of a church for his meeting-place with Elias, and the drug-dealers' password with its constant mention of 'l'Abbé petit-Jean', imply the gangster's

eagerness to attain the rank of an apostle enjoyed by the other narrators. The blind postcard salesman who is later inexplicably cured could have undergone a parodied miracle. The smuggled 'sucre en poudre', which resolutely remains sugar instead of turning into cocaine, wittily subverts Christ's transformation of water into a comparable if more innocuous intoxicant. The psychopathic killing of Eva, her arms spread out in the manner of Christ on the cross as she is tied to the bedhead in sadoerotic role-play, further degrades the biblical hypotext.

The dénouement at 'Cabaret Eve', seen intertextually, marks a return to Genesis and hence a cancelling out of the hypotext, New Testament undercut by a return to the beginning of the Old. Significantly in this scene, the film also alludes to its own genesis via the sound-track, which blends the bizarre noise of the Cabaret display with the sound of the train departing, as heard at the beginning of the film. Hypertext and hypotext are thus equated in terms of narrative authority, and mutually effaced. The filmic medium moreover chooses to target a text from the literary medium for its intertextual reworking, denoting a deliberate contamination enacted across media divisions.

The biblical, literary hypotext in turn collides with the filmic Hitchcockian hypotext within *TEE*. The interpenetration of biblical and filmic references marks the corruption of the literary medium by the filmic and vice-versa. Intertextual allusions to Hitchcock have often been mentioned by critics. Armes observes that the hollowed-out book *Transes* in which Elias hides his revolver is in fact *Marnie* (as can of course be read from the tops of the pages as Elias flicks through the book) but Armes does not discuss the significance of this reference, remarking instead on the sexual connotations of the express train, as exploited by Hitchcock in *North by Northwest*, which Robbe-Grillet parodies.⁶⁰

Kline suggests that *Marnie* is an Americanised correction of *Marienbad*, the Hitchcockian victim of childhood trauma cured through social and sexual conformity in marriage, where in *Marienbad* no such solution to L's possible incest/rape trauma is found.⁶¹ We might deduce from Kline's suggestion that the violence performed on the written pages of *Marnie* in *TEE* denotes Robbe-Grillet's counter-attack on Hitchcock's

palliative. Sean Connery, star of *Marnie*, also figures as James Bond on the poster for *From Russia With Love* on Mathieu's bedroom wall, in a pose which Elias imitates. Michalczyk moreover states that this posing itself is an imitation of Belmondo, standing before a poster of Bogart in Godard's *A Bout de Souffle*; we would add that Belmondo himself also appears in a poster on Mathieu's wall in *TEE*.⁶² That Elias is a floundering criminal and not a superhuman hero subverts Connery's force as an icon, further eroding the Hitchcock text in which he acts.

Yet the most significant filmic hypotext within *TEE* is *Strangers on a Train*, and it is through reference to this text that hypertextuality attains its transformative effect. Both films are about narration. But whereas Robbe-Grillet's film celebrates invention by making it the focus of the text, while highlighting both the provisionality of the narrative and of a moral or social order, Hitchcock's film portrays narration as a perverse menace to that order, and as worthy of punishment by death.

For the drama of *TEE* is generated by the hiatus between narratives and the ironic interplay between failed attempts at control. The author within the film is but one of the narrative agents, and his inability to master events subverts any claim to omnipotence. Crucially Jean survives his ordeal. The same cannot be said for the narrator within the Hitchcock hypotext. In *Strangers on a Train*, the narrator within the film is the psychopath Bruno Anthony, who explicitly scripts the murderous plot which he hopes will fulfill his Oedipal desires to kill his father, and so destroy the patriarchal system via narration. Such an aspiration leads to his own violent death. In this way the Hitchcock text asserts a rigid patriarchal order over that of liberty and invention.

Parallels between the two films are most evident in the recurrent train setting with its venetian blind and view onto criss-crossing tracks, the chance encounter between central protagonists, the psychopathic strangulation of women, the self-conscious plotting which takes place between characters, and the presence of the filmmakers themselves within the action. Indeed, while Hitchcock's trademark is to appear, God-like, in his own films (in this text as one of the strangers on the train), Robbe-Grillet plays the

tin-pot dictator throughout, taking Hitchcock's authorial arrogance to a deliberately derisory extreme.

In the Hitchcock hypotext, psychopath Bruno Anthony (played by Robert Walker) first meets the famous tennis player Guy Haines (Farley Granger) on a train, and instantly recognises him. It is this meeting which triggers off an implausibly coherent narrative which Bruno masterminds: Bruno will kill Guy's clinging wife, enabling Guy to marry into power, if Guy will kill Bruno's hated father, enabling Bruno to inherit. Both murders will apparently have no motive, as Guy will have a watertight alibi while his murder is performed, and Bruno likewise.

In the hypertext, psychopath Elias (Trintignant) enters Jean's (Robbe-Grillet's) train compartment as if mimicking the Hitchcock film, but the two protagonists fail to recognise each other (JEAN: 'Il est dingue, celui-là. Qu'est-ce qu'il cherche?'). It could be argued that this failure of mimesis derails what should follow, as *TEE* disrupts the Hitchcockian coherence, and plays relentlessly with the conventions Hitchcock employs respectfully, culminating in a distortion of hypotext by hypertext, attained via the intertextual comparison of the two films.

For, while in the hypotext Bruno performs his killing by strangulation (his psychopathic enjoyment implicit and so mystified) and then pressures Guy to follow the plot they had both set up in a text overloaded with motive, in the hypertext, Trintignant's strangulation of Eva (blatantly stated as his obsession, hence ironised) has no place whatsoever in Jean's narrative, and no motive. Equally, whereas in *Strangers on a Train*, the author (Bruno) also plays a part in the events he narrates implying causality and coherence between narration and action, in the hypertext an ironic and often misleading distance is maintained between Jean and Elias's narratives. While *Strangers on a Train* pits narration (within the film) against the social and moral order, and culminates in a reinstatement of this order through the death of the narrator, *TEE* pits narration against narration, and culminates in dissolution when Elias is killed, and both Jean and the spectator no longer know whether this is truth or fiction.

A Riffaterrian catachresis may be said to operate in *TEE* which sparks off a perception of hypertextuality between the two films (that is, if the other parallels have gone unnoticed). In Elias's first train journey to Antwerp, he encounters a woman in large spectacles, who makes eyes at him suggestively, but who fulfills no comprehensible role in the plot. This moment is an 'ungrammaticality' (MARC: 'Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette fille à lunettes?'), until the spectator remembers the crucial role of glasses in *Strangers on a Train*. In the hypotext, not only is the murder itself filmed as a reflection in the victim's glasses which have fallen to the ground in her struggle to escape, but it is these spectacles which later incriminate Bruno Anthony as, after the murder, whenever he sees a woman in glasses he has a delirious psychopathic attack which eventually gives him away. In *TEE* therefore, the glasses act as filmic catachresis in their illogicality within the explicit plot(s) of the film, pointing to Robbe-Grillet's hypertextual commentary on and subversion of Hitchcock's film.

The cigarette lighter which serves as 'McGuffin' in *Strangers on a Train*, extends the intertextual network between authors and across media.⁶³ For, on Hitchcock's lighter are Robbe-Grillet's own initials: 'A to G', engraved as a dedication to Guy Haines ('G') from the woman he loves. These letters trigger off the perception of hypertextuality between the Hitchcock film and a literary text, namely *Le Voyeur*. For these are also the two letters omitted from the title of *Le Voyeur*, which incriminate the Voy-ag-eur (and the author) in the text's psychopathic subtext (indeed, Hitchcock's A, as 'A', or 'A...', also potentially incriminates both *Marienbad* and *La Jalousie* within this intertextual network). The clear links between *TEE* and *Strangers on a Train* then equally interact with hypertextuality between the filmic and literary texts.

And, significantly, in both the filmic hypotext and the now literary hypertext (*Le Voyeur*), cigarettes are associated with killing. The engraved lighter threatens to incriminate Guy Haines when left at the scene of the crime in a set-up by Bruno Anthony. Cigarettes left by the cliff-top are evidence of Mathias's sadosexual activities with the young Violette/Jacqueline. Again, where Robbe-Grillet's literary hypertext

leaves the crime unsolved and unwritten, subverting the linguistic narrative order, Hitchcock provides resolution.

Thus an intertextual network is established by *TEE* which refers to and subverts works from both filmic and literary media. The hypotexts collide through the figure of Elias, who as Christ when situated within the biblical model, becomes a stereotypical psychopath in the Hitchcock context, these two corroding each other such that each hypotext is destabilised by the work of the hypertext.

We will now assess the transformation achieved via a multiple hypotextual framework. And while the example of *TEE* demonstrates the extent to which media may intersect intertextually, the next section places more emphasis on the contamination of one medium by another, through the multiple intertextual invasion of the filmic medium by the literary. For, apart from *TEE*, Robbe-Grillet's filmic work is predominantly informed by literary and pictorial hypotexts.

(iii) Filmic Hypertext, Literary Hypotexts: Collision of Texts and Media

*(L'Immortelle, Marienbad, Glissements,
Le Jeu avec le Feu and L'HQM)*

The literary intertext permeates Robbe-Grillet's filmic production. As influence, literature is paramount within the filmic texts, and along with the pictorial art to which he alludes, it far outreaches any filmic intertextual references within the corpus. This could be interpreted as the result of a bias in favour of the literary within Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic. Yet as explained above, such literary intertextuality is hardly paramount within his literature. We can only conclude from this that the proliferation of literary intertexts within the filmic work serves as a contamination of each intertext by the other, and more significantly, that such a literary intertextual invasion aims to contaminate both the filmic medium and the literary via a process of mutual corruption through interpenetration.

Hypertextuality between film and literature becomes a work on media via specific texts, which seeks the disruption of a unity of forms.

(iv) *L'Immortelle* and *Marienbad*

From *L'Immortelle* and *Marienbad* onwards, the literary text plays a striking intertextual role within Robbe-Grillet's films. As Robbe-Grillet has indicated, in *L'Immortelle* the literary hypotext is provided by the exotic books of Pierre Loti, which constitute the stereotypical view of the Orient that characterises N's subjectivity (p. 27, *The Erotic Dream Machine*). Loti's *Suprêmes Visions d'Orient: Fragment de Journal Intime* presents a first-person account of his travels, which is descriptive, self-assured and objective in style, purporting to be an authentic journal. In *L'Immortelle* by contrast, N's loss of bearings, his bizarre, subjectively perceived visions and his failure to attain the object of his desire, indicate an ironic manipulation of Loti by Robbe-Grillet.

The work on the literary hypotext in *Marienbad* is not so easily explained, as there is controversy over whether Resnais or Robbe-Grillet included it. 'Rosmer', the title given to the play performed at the beginning and end of *Marienbad*, is Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*. *Rosmersholm* is not specified in Robbe-Grillet's ciné-roman (page 26 of *Marienbad* announces only 'un titre étranger, sans signification'); for Kline, this makes the introduction of the hypotext - as Resnais's contribution - a significant departure from Robbe-Grillet's conception of the film, in its depiction of a woman's involvement in Norwegian politics, and in its emphasis on Rebecca West as potentially revolutionary in her transformation of Rosmer's view of the world.⁶⁴

Resnais's repression of the rape scene would then reinforce this view, the hypotext itself becoming a focus of struggle between the filmmakers, signalling Resnais's counter-attack on Robbe-Grillet's possible misogyny. If Robbe-Grillet as writer of *Marienbad* opposed *Rosmersholm* as hypotext, and Resnais as director chose to

introduce it, filmic intertextuality is problematised due to the multiple participants in the process of creation (in accordance with our statements in section I, v).

Yet the reader-spectator of *Marienbad* may make the ultimate decision on the work of its hypertextuality. Our view acknowledges Kline, but we would add that the incestuous father-daughter relationship of which Rebecca West may have been victim, and which ultimately incurs her downfall, may be aligned with Robbe-Grillet's own thematics. Father-daughter incest is celebrated in *Le Jeu avec le Feu*; seen within the wider intertextual network of Robbe-Grillet's own production, Robbe-Grillet might as well have included *Rosmersholm* in the ciné-roman's specification in order to subvert the hypotext, by countering Ibsen's view of incest as taboo.

For, *Marienbad*'s work on *Rosmersholm* is to transform Ibsen's bleak view of the ultimate triumph of patriarchal tradition exemplified by Rebecca's admission before her suicide: 'Now I feel crushed by a tradition quite foreign to me',⁶⁵ into a self-consciously stilted performance within the film, rendering any possible allusions to Ibsen within *Marienbad* ultimately parodic. The refusal of *Marienbad* to resolve itself diegetically in turn works against *Rosmersholm*'s reinstatement of patrilineality.

(v) *Glissements*

Glissements is permeated with literary references, the most evident being to Michelet's *La Sorcière*, and to Barthes's reading of Michelet in *Michelet: Par Lui-même*, both of these texts emphasized by Robbe-Grillet as formative intertextual generators for the film (p. 70, *The Erotic Dream Machine*). Robbe-Grillet's filmic text dramatises Michelet's thematics, such as 'l'opposition sexuée de la Grâce femelle et du Juste viril', which characterises, in Barthes's terms, Michelet's historical outlook, played out between Alice and the forces of order, personified by magistrate, policeman and priest.⁶⁶ The association of the devil with freedom and with the witch, is encapsulated in the figure of Alice, who like Michelet's 'sorcière' embodies both male and female power.

Yet as Roland affirms, Robbe-Grillet's aim in *Glissements* is to demonstrate how Michelet's sorceress was burned at the stake not so much because she practised witchcraft, but because she was an incarnation of the revolutionary spirit.⁶⁷ It is moreover the two possible fates traditionally met with by witches, namely trial by fire and by water, which, as represented by Robbe-Grillet propose a clear commentary on the hypotexts offered by Michelet and Barthes, and which may merely be a nuancing of what already exists in these texts.⁶⁸

The witch's destruction by the elements becomes, in *Glissements*, particularly subversive. For, in the hypertext, fire is heavily sexualised after Alice's confession of lesbian activities to the flailing priest. Her demand for exorcism through torture and immolation cripples him because both crime and punishment are his sexual fantasy, neither process, and neither figure maintaining their traditional relation to good or evil. The priest is therefore powerless to punish Alice, and the image of her delivered to the fire becomes that of a cover-girl, enticing, erotic and empowering (p. 137, *Glissements*).

The trial by water is similarly subverted during the scene at the water's edge, when Alice and Nora drag a mannequin - Robbe-Grillet's synthetic witch - from the sea and torture it (pp. 79-83, *Glissements*). Alice's own performance of a ritual of which she herself should be the victim, recreates it as nothing more than an erotic child's game, over which Alice herself has control.

It is menstrual blood, fascinating for both Michelet and Robbe-Grillet, which confirms the nature of the intertextual relation between the two (or three, including Barthes) writers. For Michelet, blood on the one hand defines and dictates the imperfect linearity and lineality of History, and on the other it offers a source of intense sexual excitement as it is always associated with woman, and with her cyclical and triumphant unity with Nature.⁶⁹

For Robbe-Grillet, blood is a source of sadosexual pleasure, and is inextricably linked to his textual generation. We might therefore see Robbe-Grillet's hypertext as to a great extent celebrating, rather than corroding Michelet's thematics. Yet at the same time the hypertext emphasizes diegetically the inevitable contamination of the linear by the

cyclical, as the case of the patriarchy against Alice finally collapses and the crime is repeated. *Glissements* moreover crucially underlines the erotic absorption which subverts the objective distance of the historian, rendering him a writer of histories inevitably generated from his own sexual or textual obsessions.

Glissements' intertextual relation to de Sade's work is equally ambivalent. Robbe-Grillet differs from de Sade in his view of sexual violence; whereas de Sade considers it a communion with nature through the cruelty which both share, Robbe-Grillet, a confessed sado-masochist, considers sado-masochism a system of stereotypes to be used (pp. 81-82, *The Erotic Dream Machine*).

Glissements alludes to de Sade clearly through the Alice-Nora duality which parallels de Sade's initial opposition between Juliette and Justine in *Justine, ou les Malheurs de la Vertu*. Commentary on the Sadean hypotext takes place through the blatant and playful subversion of this vice-virtue duality via the double nature of Alice, as both evil murderer, and good victim of salacious ministers of justice, and also via the double role played by Nora, as both evil lesbian prostitute and good lawyer, Maître David.

Georges Bataille is explicitly alluded to on page 77 of *Glissements'* ciné-roman, when Alice indulges in childish sex-games with Nora, cracking raw eggs onto the latter's vagina in a scene overtly reminiscent of *Histoire de l'OEil*. Robbe-Grillet's commentary is made via the gold cross which Nora wears, which playfully alerts us to Bataille's particular association of religion with perverse eroticism.

The clearest reference to Lewis Carroll is the name of *Glissements'* heroine. The work of hypertext on Carroll's *Alice* stories (collected in *The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll*) is performed through Robbe-Grillet's deliberate eroticisation of Alice's childlike nature, so that she behaves with both naivety and pseudo-diabolic corruption. Robbe-Grillet invites us to reread Carroll with these new traits in mind, and therefore corrodes the apparent innocence of Carroll's texts.

In the hypotext, Alice goes on a bizarre dream-like journey, narrated by Carroll as if he is innocently accompanying her to bed. In the hypertext, Alice projects herself

from her cell, which connotes the 'cellule génératrice' of *Topologie* and *Souvenirs*, by her own narration, as flashbacks or visions transport her to the clifftop, to the water's edge, and to the cellars of the prison. While Robbe-Grillet is evidently the extradiegetic author of *Glissements*, his Alice is nonetheless empowered by her assumption of the intradiegetic narrative role, which has significant implications on the eroticism within *Glissements*.

For, one might compare the locations to which Alice is transported in the film with Carroll's depiction of Wonderland, as both realms are enmeshed within and generated by the subjectivity of the female protagonists. In the film, Alice performs sadoerotic lesbian activities at each location; in Carroll's literary text, Alice goes through various supposedly childish ordeals.

Yet where Carroll narrates a tale often overloaded with hidden sadism, exemplified by Alice's smashing of glass with her body, the giant dog which may be about to eat Alice, and the Duchess who wishes to decapitate Alice, over which Carroll himself as narrator remains master, Robbe-Grillet explicitly reveals his sadism and self-consciously saturates it with the erotic, handing the narration over to Alice.⁷⁰ Considered intertextually from a reading of *Glissements*, Carroll's tale suddenly has a hidden agenda, and Robbe-Grillet's is more open and authentic. The filmic hypertext therefore problematises the hypotext, incriminating the latter within its own, more openly declared, sadoerotic thematics.

(vi) *Le Jeu avec le Feu*

Such a nuancing of hypotext via the eroticism of the hypertext is also effected by *Le Jeu avec le Feu*. While this film contains parodic allusions to Shakespeare's *Othello*, when Georges de Saxe comes dressed as the Moor to visit one of the women at the clinic/brothel, the intertextual work in this film is performed on the literary hypotext of Queneau's *Zazie dans le Métro*. Yet the hypertext does not merely emphasize a latent

eroticism in the hypotext; *Le Jeu avec le Feu* works equally to exaggerate and demystify the erotic theme which lurks in Louis Malle's film of Queneau's work. There is then a network of hypertextuality in operation across media, between Robbe-Grillet and Malle, Robbe-Grillet and Queneau, and Malle and Queneau.

The original literary text of *Zazie dans le Métro* is patently erotic. In the opening pages of the book, Zazie's own mother portrays the young girl as deliberately provoking rape; Uncle Gabriel is only entrusted with Zazie because he has no designs on her, as he may be homosexual; Zazie's flirtation with the false policeman/sex pervert Trouzcaillon is evident, as she recounts how her father felt her up, and how after the father's decapitation by the mother, Zazie was then molested by her mother's boyfriend, the butcher Georges.⁷¹

Le Jeu avec le Feu adopts the name of the perverted butcher for Philippe Noiret's character 'Georges' de Saxe, Noiret significantly also playing Uncle Gabriel in Malle's *Zazie dans le Métro*. Georges de Saxe's clear sexual obsession with his young daughter Carolina in Robbe-Grillet's film therefore intertextually brings out Queneau's theme of perversion, as Noiret's innocence as Gabriel in the hypotext is corrupted by his new name in the hypertext, in an intertextual transformation effected via the figure of the film star. Moreover, whereas in the literary hypotext, Trouzcaillon may be a policeman or a sex maniac, but does not successfully molest Zazie, in *Le Jeu avec le Feu*, Noiret (as Georges de Saxe) plays both Carolina's father and her kidnapper, mimicking this double role, yet highlighting the moral ambiguity behind it, as de Saxe features in explicitly sexual scenes in the bizarre clinic as if he is a client, and his daughter a prostitute.

Malle's film points to the sexual theme in Queneau's book metaphorically in the Eiffel Tower sequence, when Zazie and Gabriel climb to the top, and then descend clutching weather balloons. Robbe-Grillet's film will parody this overtly phallic journey when he replaces the Eiffel Tower with the Arc de Triomphe in *Le Jeu avec le Feu*, where Georges de Saxe meets Carolina's kidnapper. The phallic metaphor is then undercut, as the arch is not a phallus, but an opening; Robbe-Grillet rejects Malle's

stereotypical metaphor in order more overtly to indicate the sexual elements of Queneau's text.

A Riffaterrian catachresis triggers off the perception of this intertextual network, which also alludes to *TEE*: observing Georges de Saxe from the street is Franz (Trintignant), looking through a tourist's telescope which is identical to the one he uses while drug-trafficking as Elias in Antwerp. The bizarre, deliberately contrived positioning of the telescope instantly alerts us to the operations of intertextuality, as both perceiver and perceived, hyper- and hypotext are incriminated within the thematics of criminality and sadoeroticism.

(vii) *L'HQM*

While the film *La Belle Captive* both alludes to Goethe's poem *Die Braut von Korinth* via the theme of vampirism, and intersects with its picto-literary namesake (*La Belle Captive* is discussed below in sections IV, viii [film]; and V, iv [picto-novel]), it is *L'HQM* which frames the most eclectic and challenging range of literary intertexts, and which therefore marks the most radical contamination of the filmic by the literary medium and vice-versa.⁷² For, *L'HQM* alludes to and works on the following: Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* (adapted into an opera by Mussorgsky), Mozart and da Ponte's *Don Giovanni* (from the legend of *Don Juan*), Kafka's *The Castle*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Céline's *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*, and the Bible.

Robbe-Grillet himself has explained reference to *Don Giovanni* in *L'HQM* as motivated by the parallel that may be drawn between Don Giovanni's narrative project and that of the modern writer, both of whom choose their own word against that of God. Such a strategy leads to the inevitable usurpation of the position of God, and a consequent invalidation of such a position, which links the *Don Giovanni* hypotext to Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*. The latter tale, based on historical fact, charts the downfall of

the false Czar Boris, who assassinated the last son of Ivan the Terrible in order to reign in his place (pp. 42-43, *The Erotic Dream Machine*).

Critics have found instances of intertextual allusion to these and other works in *L'HQM*, Gardies mentioning the biblical intertext, Armes cursorily noting references to Shakespeare, Pushkin and *Don Giovanni*.⁷³ Yet the work of hypertext on hypotexts has not received the critical attention it undoubtedly merits. The following analysis aims to illustrate the corruption of these texts which the process of interdisciplinary intertextuality puts into effect. For Robbe-Grillet does not merely allude to these intertexts, but he transforms them. Where Pushkin punishes his usurper, Robbe-Grillet rewards his, and where Mozart's seducer is engulfed by the flames of hell, Robbe-Grillet's continues, unscathed, with the dissemination of his narrative 'parole'.

The double allusion made by *L'HQM* to the major intertexts of *Boris Godunov* and *Don Giovanni* is made initially via the ambivalent name of the central protagonist. He first gives his name as 'Jean Robin', then as 'Boris', claiming that he was also once known as 'l'Ukrainien', adding, 'Je n'ai jamais su pourquoi'. The three names undermine each other in their proliferation, and invite us to question their significance. Boris's failure to comprehend his bizarre nickname, 'l'Ukrainien', draws our attention to an authorial intention behind its formulation; as such, it marks an instance of filmic catachresis, alerting us to the Russian hypotext.

Clear parallels may be perceived between events which follow in the filmic text, and those of *Don Giovanni* and *Boris Godunov*. For, immediately, three female figures appear on the screen who will become the objects of Boris Varissa's desire, just as they are for Don Giovanni in the form of Anna, Elvira and Zerlina. In order to win both women and the place of the absent master, Boris must don his mask, claiming that he is both a messenger for Jean, and that he is Jean, with the opening speech to Sylvia: 'Je viens de la part de Jean'. This echoes Don Giovanni in his playing of many roles, as nobleman when seducing Zerlina, and as servant (dressed as Leporello) when beguiling Elvira's maid, in a work characterised by dissimulation and the wearing of masks. It also corresponds to *Boris Godunov*, a work of double-imposture, in which the false Czar

Boris is himself usurped by another masquerading opportunist, Gregory Otrepiev, the unfrocked monk who assumes the identity of Ivan the Terrible's dead son Dimitry.

Other parallels between hyper- and hypotexts are the death of the father, as when Jean Robin's father falls from the balcony in *L'HQM*, in an allusion to the killing of the Commendatore (Donna Anna's father) at the opening of *Don Giovanni*; in the hypertext this enables Boris's seduction of Laura and assumption of the master's role: BORIS: 'Maintenant c'est moi qui commande'. This in turn parallels Gregory Otrepiev's conquest of the Governor of Sambor's daughter, Marina (cf. 'Maria'), once he has adopted Dimitry's identity and his future reign looks certain.

Both Robbe-Grillet's and Pushkin's texts play on biblical associations, Boris Varissa imitating Christ in a direct allusion to *Boris Godunov*. In the latter work, the grave of the real (dead) Dimitry becomes a site of divine miracles, implying Gregory Otrepiev is Dimitry, resurrected from the dead like the Messiah. As the Patriarch informs the faltering Czar Boris: 'Many sufferers had found likewise / Deliverance at the grave of the tsarevich'.⁷⁴

Yet the hypertext subverts the discourses of the hypotexts, celebrating ambiguity and narrative play, where *Boris Godunov* and *Don Giovanni* merely hint at such themes, and finally assert conformism and moralism over the drive for creative freedom. *Don Giovanni*'s closing moments are testament to this hypotext's message, as the philanderer is engulfed by hellish flames. In *L'HQM* on the contrary, Don Giovanni's most terrible crime, the killing of the Commendatore (symbol of patriarchal order) becomes an unpunished exercise in free narration.

Jean Robin's father catches Boris Varissa making love to Maria, and orders him out of the house. This is followed immediately by Boris's premonition of the death of the father, as the balcony on which the old man stands is suddenly no longer straight, as if about to come away from the outer wall. After this, Boris has a vision of the father lying dead on a table, as he narrates to the barmaid at the inn: 'Le Père est couché. Il est malade. Il va bientôt mourir'. Later on, we will hear the balcony collapse, then see the father dead on the ground beneath, as if Boris has narrated this accident well in advance.

While the lack of realism which characterises the father's demise is a crucial factor in alerting us to the reference to *Don Giovanni*, it also emphasizes this episode as an assertion of Boris's creative freedom.

The ghost which appears to Boris towards the end of *L'HQM* is not that of the father, but that of Jean Robin, and so marks a subversion of *Don Giovanni's* vengeful patriarch: BORIS: 'Que me veux-tu? Que me veux-tu encore? Ne m'as tu pas encore assez persecuté?(...) Va-t'en, Jean Robin!' The scene is parodic, and the ghost is not seen. When Laura assures Boris that there is no one there, Boris admits 'J'étais en train de jouer de la comédie', reducing the episode to an intertextual joke self-consciously borrowed from past fiction.

The Pushkin hypertext is more morally ambiguous than *Don Giovanni*, insofar as neither Boris Godunov nor Gregory Otrepiev are truly entitled to rule, yet no resolution is offered to this dilemma. Nonetheless, Boris Godunov is punished for his act of usurpation, as he is reviled by his people despite his good deeds as ruler, finally to die from remorse when he realises his position is no longer tenable. The Pushkin text ends before Gregory Otrepiev usurps Boris Godunov's place, and so does not approve this second act of imposture. However, by invalidating Boris's reign, Gregory's future rule is revealed as potentially equally cursed.

Robbe-Grillet's hypertext sheds such ominous implications. Boris Varissa's lying is also truth, both categories equally valid in their creation of a narrative project which exemplifies man's experience in the world, whether king or usurper. Boris Varissa is moreover self-consciously theatrical in his creation of contrasting roles and (in)versions, and this is the essence of his freedom. Robbe-Grillet's text then transforms its two major hypotexts by affirming inventive masquerade as the only authentic human strategy, and by replacing the closure of divine moral judgment with an open suggestion that it is the individual's essential right to make subjective, contradictory judgments on one's own inherently unstable identity.

References to Pushkin and *Don Giovanni* interact with significant allusions to Kafka's book, *The Castle*. Boris's originless emergence from the forest and subsequent

desire to gain a place in the Robin household, parallel K.'s lack of past, and persistent attempt to penetrate the bureaucracy of the Castle. The provincial, deserted villages with their Church Tower tie hyper- and hypotexts in terms of setting. Boris's arrival at the inn at the opening of *L'HQM*, the hostility of the landlord and peasant customers, the compliance of the barmaid and the sexual overtones of Boris's relation to all the women in the film, equally connote the Kafka hypotext.

The invasion of dreamlike elements into the real diegetic world characterises both texts, such as the suggestion of homosexuality underlying certain scenes, as when Maria erotically caresses and kisses Sylvia as the latter takes a bath in *L'HQM*, comparable to Pepi's habit of sleeping in the same bed as Frieda.⁷⁵ One could even compare the use of sound in both literary and filmic texts, as *L'HQM* takes up and elaborates on *The Castle's* bizarre and conflicting subliminal noises: 'There was a tapping on the kitchen-hatch. The assistants had unfastened it and were shouting that they were hungry. [...] One could even hear a subdued song being chanted by several voices' (p. 87, *The Castle*).

Yet the consistent trauma and failure associated with the Castle in the Kafka work is transformed in the hypertext to a series of (albeit provisional) conquests, which celebrate invention and sexuality as solutions to the Kafkan wilderness. The work on the Kafka hypotext by Robbe-Grillet may be discerned from the opening of the film. For whereas in *The Castle*, K.'s arrival at the inn is immediately followed by the verification of his identity by the Under-Castellan's son, Schwarzer (pp. 10-12), in *L'HQM* it is Jean Robin's identity which is traced out by the comments of the peasants, setting up this role for Boris to adopt of his own free will. Robbe-Grillet's text then formulates identity as something to be constructed via a narrative project, rather than something preestablished which external forces control as in Kafka. Whereas K. depends on the bureaucracy for his validation and definition, Boris validates himself through his own words.

Similarly, in the opening scene of *The Castle*, there is a portrait of the Castellan on the wall of the inn (p. 14), just as photos of Jean Robin recur throughout *L'HQM*, as models for the protagonist to emulate. But whereas K. will failingly try to advance through the hierarchy (in his adoption of Klamm's mistress Frieda for example, p. 43)

and has no hope of usurping the Castellan's position, Boris immediately positions himself in Jean Robin's place through self-conscious role-play. The parallels between the Boris-Jean relationship and that between K. and his assistants, or between K. and Barnabas, are clear in the part played by these supposedly separate characters within the constitution of a single narrative subjectivity. Yet in *L'HQM*, Boris manipulates Jean as a component within his own stories, whereas in the Kafka text, K. is manipulated by the other characters, leaning helplessly on Barnabas (the ineffectual, dubious messenger for the Castle) as if both physically and emotionally unable to support himself (p. 34), where in *L'HQM* it is Boris who supports Jean when the latter is escaping through the forest.

The Céline and Defoe hypotexts, which themselves link intertextually, are alluded to primarily by the name 'Robin'. In *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*, 'Robin-son Léon' is Bardamu the narrator's double, a personification of Bardamu's consciousness. The two men first meet when yearning to desert from the Front, where both are struggling to remain alive; Robinson Léon is one step ahead of the game, preempting Bardamu's own desires.⁷⁶ *L'HQM* recreates the war, which opens both filmic hypertext and the literary hypotext, when Boris is shot at as he runs through the forest. Following this opening episode in the film, Boris echoes the opening sentence of *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit* with his words in 'Voix Off': 'Ça a commencé dans une forêt', which recall Céline's narrator's first words 'Ça a débuté comme ça' (p. 15, *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*). The theme of the double is equally incorporated into Robbe-Grillet's work, via the Boris Varissa-Jean Robin alternation as each play the other's role. And just as Robinson Léon is both hero and coward, on the one hand intelligently hating the war, and on the other going against traditional patriotism, so too is Jean Robin first hero, then traitor to his cause.

The work performed on the Céline hypotext comes in Robbe-Grillet's subjectivisation of Boris's experience, and in the emphasis on the film's events as generated by Boris's narration. For whereas Céline writes a quasi-Expressionist text in which external reality is haunted by paranoia and grotesque brutality yet remains recuperable as realism, *L'HQM* proposes a self-consciously generated series of events over which Boris maintains partial narrative control, Robbe-Grillet's text fracturing the

illusion of realism via formal manipulation and a refusal to follow filmic conventions. Robbe-Grillet's war at the start of *L'HQM* is then openly imaginary, where Céline's is (perhaps reluctantly) realistic. In the hypertext, Boris and the soldiers never appear in shot at the same time, lending the film's first sequence the quality of a subjective projection, produced by Boris's imagination. Equally, several alternative versions of events within the film are proposed. Robbe-Grillet then reveals and emphasizes the essentially subjective quality of Céline's obsessive vision. In this way, the Céline work may be reread through the hypertext as predominantly subjective and non-realist.

The relation between hypertext's 'Robin' and Defoe's hero 'Robinson Crusoe' is equally revelatory when considered intertextually. 'Robin-son', corrupted by Robbe-Grillet to 'Robin', marks a denial of the son, and hence an erasure of the father. The fact that Defoe's Robinson is so called because Robinson is his mother's maiden name denotes, in its adoption and adaptation by Robbe-Grillet, a further effacement of the name of the father, in accordance with the recurrent parricide within Robbe-Grillet's thematics. Robbe-Grillet rejects 'Crusoe' with good reason. For Crusoe is, as Defoe tells us, 'Kreutznaer', which gives us the German 'Kreuz' (cross or crucifix) and 'Narr' (fool or jester).⁷⁷ Taken together, these could imply: 'he who makes fun of God' or 'he who for God is a fool'.

Robinson Crusoe is true to what his name dictates. After denying the word of his own father and that of God, he must serve his time in purgatory on the island before eventually turning to Christianity, only then to find salvation and prosperity. Defoe offers us a moral fable, germinated from his protagonist's name, which Robbe-Grillet works against. For, the hypertext not only mutilates the name so that it is no longer predetermining: 'Robin' is as near to 'Robbe-Grillet' as it is to its hypotextual origin. *L'HQM* also transforms *Robinson Crusoe*, retaining certain elements of Defoe's paradigm of the man who invents his own universe (as Crusoe has to on the island) in order to dramatise the process of free invention as untainted by imminent punishment by the patriarchy, whether religious or familial.

Boris invents the film, in a text which celebrates contradiction and amorality. Robbe-Grillet retains the shreds of Defoe's text in order to rewrite it as a voyage through self-cancelling histories which in turn undercut, intertextually, the social and moral conformism which underlie the hypotext. Indeed, the intertextual chain is potentially infinite. A contemporary avant-garde writer Patrick Deville has adopted the name 'Jean Robin' for one of his sexual psychopaths, in the 1995 novel, *La Femme Parfaite*, in turn working on Robbe-Grillet intertextually.

L'HQM's allusions to Shakespeare are problematic due to the collaborative nature of the filming process which generated the hypertext. References to *Hamlet* and to *Romeo and Juliet* are attributed to Trintignant's creative role in the film, yet given Robbe-Grillet's directorial role we may assume, unlike in the case of *Marienbad* and *Rosmersholm*, that Robbe-Grillet approved their inclusion.⁷⁸ Allusions to *Macbeth* are then more probably Robbe-Grillet's. That all three plays are tragedies might explain the motivation for Robbe-Grillet's use of them, and for the transformation of them by intertextuality, in a work consistent with *PUNR's* essay 'Nature, humanisme, tragédie', which vociferously invalidates the tragification of existence by literature (pp. 45-67, *PUNR*).

All three tragedies are primarily subverted through *L'HQM's* theme of play-acting, which self-consciously undercuts the closure of the hypotexts and manipulates elements within them as reinventable components in an ongoing process of creation. *Romeo and Juliet* is alluded to most evidently towards the end of the film, when Boris addresses Sylvia as 'Ma Juliette'. His dramatic monologues to Sylvia (and later to Laura), which parody those of a lovestruck Romeo, are intercut with shots of Laura and Maria as if they too are part of the scene, subverting the notion of a tragic and exclusive love which must culminate in self-destruction.

Boris's meeting in the graveyard with Sylvia may equally be viewed as a reversal of Shakespeare, for whereas in *Romeo and Juliet* the two lovers are united only when dead in the graveyard, Robbe-Grillet's Boris is both dead and alive, his own name ostentatiously painted on the grave that he leans against. And whereas Romeo purchases

poison from the Apothecary in order to end his own life and hence bring the mechanics of the hypotext to a halt, in *L'HQM* Boris finds at the Pharmacist's not an agent of textual destruction, but of generation, in the form of the Codex, which (as explained in Chapter Two, section I, iv) is the *mise en abyme* in which photographs from the filmic text itself are self-consciously included. Moreover, at the Pharmacist's, Boris Varissa buys a bottle of mercurochrome, which he uses for a mock-death when with Maria (the third Juliet in the film), only to come to life again immediately afterwards. Similarly, whereas Romeo's exile, after his killing of Tybalt in Act III, signals a purgatorial anticipation of death, *L'HQM* takes exile as its starting point, in the no-man's-land of the film's opening, and uses this as a purgatorial anticipation of creation, both of Boris and of the film itself. All these inversions and inventions work against the tragic fatalism of the hypotext.

The theme of the usurper which links *L'HQM* with *Boris Godunov* also motivates intertextual allusions to *Hamlet*. After killing the King (Hamlet's father), Hamlet's Uncle - Claudius - marries Queen Gertrude and assumes the throne, in a manoeuvre we might compare with that of Pushkin's anti-heroes Boris and Gregory, and as we shall see, also aligned with the strategy of Macbeth. The drama of *Hamlet* is generated by the Prince of Denmark's justified yet doomed desire to resolve this perverse situation, by avenging the double crime of fratricide and regicide. In the hypertext, Boris's role as both usurper and central actor in the text marks a fusion of what in Shakespeare are initially contrary narrative roles. As potentially both a Claudius and a Hamlet, Boris embodies an effacement of the very concept of the usurper and of the real heir, hence of the notion of a true or false origin.

A further playful and distorting allusion to Shakespeare is made via the figure of the Ghost. In *Hamlet*, the ghost is the patriarch himself, the murdered king and father, who calls on Hamlet to reinstate the status quo. In *L'HQM*, the ghost pursues Boris himself as if to destroy him, as it is Boris who has disrupted the status quo, and killed the father (of Jean Robin). On the one hand then the intertextual allusion to *Hamlet's* Ghost transforms hierarchies in its emphasis on every man, including Hamlet himself, as open to

the charge of usurpation due to the lack of real origins and due to the inevitable masquerades of inventive creativity.

A rereading of the hypotext however reveals *L'HQM* as perhaps merely nuancing the Shakespeare play, which itself throws doubt over the nature of the hierarchy between father and son, king and subject. For we might infer from the hypotext that Hamlet's (like Boris's) project is a subjective one, the Ghost nothing more than Hamlet's own double, inducing an ambivalence which in turn effaces the structure of the patriarchy. The original text at first offers no verification of the Ghost's identity, who may then be not Hamlet's father, but Hamlet himself after all, as Hamlet himself addresses the apparition: 'I'll call thee Hamlet, / King, father, royal Dane' (*Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 4, lines 44-45).

In conjunction with the theme of the usurper, we would also suggest an intertextual allusion in *L'HQM* to *Macbeth* in the figures of the three women, Laura, Sylvia, and Maria, who recall the three Witches in Shakespeare's play. The shots of the three women which suddenly fragment Boris's monologue at the start of the film, and their subsequent importance within his self-creation, might be compared with the emergence of the three Witches at the very opening of the hypotext in Act I, scene 1, and the role they play in the creation of Macbeth.

Yet there is an essential difference between the focus of narrative authority within hypo- and hypertexts. For while Boris and Macbeth are both usurpers, and while Boris's accounts of Jean Robin and of himself portray each as hero and traitor by turn, in a manner analogous to Shakespeare's account of Macbeth as first a hero, 'brave Macbeth' (Act I, Sc.2, line 16) then a villainous usurper, nonetheless Boris invents his own narrative, whereas Macbeth's is invented for him. Unlike Boris's generation of words and images from his own consciousness, Macbeth is clearly under the influence of other narrative agents, namely the three Witches and Lady Macbeth. Thus narrative authority in Robbe-Grillet's filmic text is firmly rooted in the protagonist's subjectivity.

The judgment of Maria scene, in which her decapitation is mimed to a roll on the drums, recalls the roll on the drums which accompanies the three Witches' spell, as Macbeth first visits them, and they hail him as Thane of Cawdor, and future King (Act I,

Sc.3). Read intertextually, the lesbian sadomasochistic role play in *L'HQM* becomes a tainted prediction of Boris's assumption of Jean Robin's place. Yet unlike Macbeth, Boris is not decapitated for his usurpation of the seat of power, despite the imagery of execution explicit in the judgment of Maria scene, with its axe and chopping block. Robbe-Grillet's protagonist survives the text, disappearing back into the woods at the end of the film after Jean Robin's return.

Thus where Macbeth is outwitted by a narrative that he does not understand, as the supernatural predictions misleadingly tell him to fear 'none of woman born' and reassure him that he shall not be conquered until 'Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill / Shall come against him' (Act IV, Sc 1, lines 93-94), Boris outmanoeuvres other forces within the text with his network of self-cancelling narratives, eventually moving on to another life in another text.

Finally, an evident allusion to the Bible comes on the occasion of Boris's first supper. Boris's demand for bread and wine on arrival at the inn, comes directly after the image text and verbal narration have contradicted each other blatantly (Boris claims that the inn is empty, when it is teeming with people). This casts him in the role of a liar, right at the moment when he is mimicking Christ, with the words: 'Je voudrais un verre de vin, et aussi une tranche de pain, s'il vous plaît'. The bizarre intonation he employs points to a further instance of catachresis alerting us to the suspect nature of the words. The gradual establishment of each lie as a provisional narrative truth in turn invites a reassessment of the Biblical narrative, as in *TEE*.

The peasants at the inn discuss Robin as if he is the Messiah, scheduled to return after a long absence, like Christ: 'Moi, je crois qu'il arrivera un beau matin, sans prévenir' and 'Et tout d'un coup il sera là', both imply the peasants' anticipation of an imminent divine visitation. But Boris is merely playing Christ. Later the landlord's demand to know whether Boris is leaving or staying, confirms that, despite Boris's arrival, the village is still waiting for their Messiah (PROPRIETAIRE: 'On attend peut-être quelqu'un').

The degradation of the demand for bread and wine into a demand for mercurochrome imply the farcical nature of Boris's performance and in turn corrupt

Biblical lore, as Blood of Christ becomes stage blood. Boris's first words to the Robin women, 'Je viens de la part de Jean', invert the Biblical order, as it was John (the Baptist, namer of men) who initially came on behalf of Christ. That the figure of Jean himself later arrives, effacing Boris at the end of the film, is a further twist, which works against the biblical hypotext, implying that the order of John the Baptist and Christ is arbitrary.

(viii) The Work of Literary Intertextual Proliferation in Film

Thus the analysis of Robbe-Grillet's filmic texts, and most notably *L'HQM*, via an assessment of intertextuality between media, illustrates the extent to which the filmic text may transform and distort the literary works to which it alludes. While interdisciplinary intertextuality is prevalent in the other films, *L'HQM* offers the best example of the reciprocal disruption induced by the work of hypertextuality. For not only is Robbe-Grillet's text fragmented by the recurrent eclectic allusions, which efface the notion of the hypertext as original; equally, the original works are rewritten via the proliferation of the allusions. *L'HQM* both highlights features common to each hypotext, thereby implying a self-cancelling similitude between them, and also this filmic text evacuates central aspects of the discourse of the hypotexts via ironic and playful recontextualisation. The hypotexts flatten each other out, as Boris Varissa is created from the conflicting fragments of a macho Don Juan and an impotent K., and as he imitates both Messiah and usurper, each of these superimposed, and deposed.

The operation of interdisciplinary intertextuality points to a central defining feature of Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic approach. The allusion produces a fissure, which generates mobility both within and between texts as between media. The textual component which is shared between works belongs to neither and so loses its origin; the allusion becomes unfixable, hollowing out the text and the intertext, and turning each inside out. Vision incurs revision, as both hyper- and hypotexts are opened to the necessity of a rereading and/or reviewing.

Robbe-Grillet's thematics are moreover dynamically expressed via the hiatus between hyper- and hypotexts. The ironic allusion produces a lacuna in the continuity or plausibility of the text and intertext, leading the reader-viewer to determine the concept within the work only via a movement outside the work, through an assessment of the *difference* between text and intertext, a difference which is often a negation or a contestation. The text and its intertext interact to produce a provisional and often self-destructive meaning through a process of complementarity.

The proliferation of literary texts within filmic work is then a vital formal vehicle for the creation of such openness, mobility and subversion. Intertextuality which is interdisciplinary distorts not only text, but also medium into a fragmented and threatened state, menacing the unity of both work and medium in an essentially parallel process. The contamination of the filmic medium with multiple works from the literary medium operates reciprocally to disrupt notions of literary or filmic autonomy, forcing an interchangeability between the specific forms hitherto considered unique to each.

Indeed, the filmic medium as manipulated by Robbe-Grillet becomes saturated with diverse literary associations, such that its status as filmic is distorted, as it inevitably tends towards the literature to which it alludes. The two-way movement between texts as between media presents filmic text as hybrid, while also dislodging literary production from a fixed source or framework. Interdisciplinary intertextuality becomes the scene of a parricide enacted on one medium by another, as the filmic work, a newer art form initially deemed derivative (in its narratives) of literature, reverses the established order, through its deliberate contamination of literary texts by celebrated and traditionally respected authors such as Pushkin and Shakespeare.

The next section assesses the comparable corrosion of the filmic medium by pictorial art. A similar construction and interpretation across media exposes the mechanics of such an interrelation. And as before, the invasion of one medium by another is revealed to be a central formal strategy within the work of Robbe-Grillet, which refuses the closure inherent in a restrictive autonomy of forms.

IV. Interdisciplinary Intertextual Analysis: Film and Pictorial Art

(i) Filmic Hypertext, Pictorial Hypotexts : Picture as Frame

*(L'Eden, Glissements, Le Jeu avec le Feu,
La Belle Captive)*

Just as the literary hypotext plays a constructive and disruptive role within the filmic hypertext, so too pictorial art provides a rich source of allusion within Robbe-Grillet's filmic work. Yet there is a major difference between the work of literary and pictorial hypotexts within film, which has radical implications on the functioning of pictorial texts within the filmic medium, namely, whereas allusion to a literary hypotext in film incurs the inevitable fragmentation of that literary text, on the contrary the pictorial hypotext may potentially be reproduced in its entirety within the filmic shot.

Metz aligns the filmic medium with other art forms which rely on the image, among these, painting, claiming that both share visual iconicity as their material of expression, and both are structured by the plastics of the image, such as the spatial organisation of iconic elements, and the fact of the frame as a form of finitude limiting the iconic representation.⁷⁹ And while the role of the frame in pictorial and filmic media is different and will be assessed below, nonetheless there is a homogeneity between filmic and pictorial forms insofar as the pictorial intertext is only discernible through its visual resemblance to the filmic shot, these two fused in an often barely perceptible double exposure.

The result of this is an alliance, rather than an antagonism between the pictorial and the filmic, which in turn affects the diegetic and thematic roles of the pictorial hypotext within the filmic hypertext. Evidently, this apparent homogeneity of forms stems from the filmic medium's visual aspect, aligned as it is to the primarily visual nature of pictorial art. And while the verbal nature of dialogue means that literary language may be replicated or alluded to within film, such allusions will be - due to the disparities between the volumes of words which may constitute each art form - fragmentary from

the outset. The allusion to the pictorial hypotext becomes a process of replication rather than of dismemberment (although alteration is always possible), therefore constituting a less violent and less parricidal form of hypertextuality.

Yet as we shall see from textual analysis, the pictorial like the literary intertext may also be significantly tampered with and transformed by the filmic work, via contrasting and complex filmic procedures. On the one hand such transformation stems from contrasting formal properties. For Bazin, the filmic incorporation of the pictorial work will be fundamentally transformative, as the very reproduction of the painting through the photographic process alters the latter's colours. Moreover, the screen destroys pictorial space. For whereas the frame around the picture separates the latter from the rest of reality, opening onto an interior space which preserves the painting as a microcosm in a centripetal movement, the film screen masks the reality towards which the filmic action tends centrifugally. The film screen then operates in a manner which is opposed to the pictorial frame, containing a mobile display which projects itself indefinitely into the universe. The filmic incorporation of the painting therefore contaminates the centripetal action of the pictorial frame, by reversing its process.⁸⁰

The debate also extends to narrativity. Chatman argues that pictorial works such as painting and sculpture are non-narrative, and therefore contrast with literary and filmic texts, as they do not regulate the temporal flow or spatial direction of the audience's perception.⁸¹ We will demonstrate how precisely such an atemporality is exploited by Robbe-Grillet to disrupt the linear progression of the narrative. The conception of literary or filmic narrative as governed by a chrono-logic is then deliberately set against the stasis of the pictorial work within the texts.

Nonetheless, a visual compatibility subsists. This becomes the starting point for a process of transformation consistent with the literary intertextuality within the filmic medium examined above. The transformative work engendered by intertextuality between media is moreover reciprocal; the pictorial hypotext may operate disruptively within the filmic hypertext, distorting the latter in turn. The role of the pictorial hypotext within the filmic hypertext is then discernible via a detailed analysis both of the filmic

texts themselves, and of the pictorial works alluded to, as a similar dynamic tension is exploited by this second form of interdisciplinary intertextuality.

For, in the work of Robbe-Grillet, the role of the pictorial hypotext within the filmic medium is far from stable. Whereas the literary allusion contaminates the thematic or diegetic structure of the filmic text through the introduction of plot or character associations derived from the intertext, the pictorial allusion relies for its existence on visual similarities between picture and filmic shot, such as correspondences in colour scheme, photographic perspective, design or plastic form. The pictorial allusion within the filmic text may in turn produce a variety of effects. It may work self-reflexively to highlight filmic composition as aesthetically generated. It may induce narrative stasis as filmic shot becomes the equivalent of an un-moving picture. It may resemble a dreamlike vision within a protagonist's subjectivity. It may on the other hand be subtly integrated within the profilmic scheme as if natural, whether taking the form of an object within the shot, or intercut as an actual filmed and animated episode.

The significance of the introduction of pictorial tableaux within the filmic text for our comparison between filmic and literary media lies firstly in the potential of such a technique to promote a non-verbal structure for the film in the form of a purely visual generative scaffolding. Secondly this inter-pictoriality provides a vital means of illustrating the extent to which intertextuality implicates texts from all media.

In the work of Robbe-Grillet, pictorial art as intertext both generates ideas within the film and is itself meditated upon by the film. An examination of some of Robbe-Grillet's more prominent pictorial references, and their diegetic and thematic implications sheds light therefore both on the pictures themselves and on Robbe-Grillet's own aesthetic preoccupations. Throughout the following analysis, we highlight hiatus as much as similitude between the aesthetics of the artists, in order to illustrate the extent to which tensions, as well as shared thematics, are exploited intertextually in the works. Moreover, as Robbe-Grillet's pictorial allusions themselves constitute the texture of his own influences and process of creation, such an analysis is an authentic means of exploring his own textual production. The two-way movement of our analysis from

Robbe-Grillet to the other artists within the intertextual network is equally the only way completely to comprehend the work of and on these artists within Robbe-Grillet's filmic work.

L'Eden, *Le Jeu avec le Feu* and *La Belle Captive* are characterised by their use of pictorial rather than literary intertexts, and as such mark a shift away from the literary reference of *L'HQM*. While *Glissements* and *La Belle Captive* maintain an intertextual relation to literary hypotexts (as stated above), what is striking in the colour films is the predominant role that painting plays within the filmic frame. For, in these films, the moving picture advertises its artistic generative process through the movement of the painted picture within the text, from point of origin to place of destiny, or as shifting source of obsession. The painted work of art provides at once the visual texture of the frame, and the narrative structuring framework.

The visual texture of the later films is therefore highlighted over and above the literary, as narrative force is derived from colour and visual scheme, rather than from dialogue or first-person narration, which retain a minor role. Whereas in *L'HQM*, which is shot in black and white, the sound-track and literary intertextual fabric convey complex semantic messages which interconnect with image and dialogue tracks, in the later, colour films, the visual texture predominates, colour-motivated narration co-existing with but often usurping the place of verbal narration and sound-track. The comparison between literary and filmic media may then focus on the extra levels of narration available to the film due to its visual properties, using the example of Robbe-Grillet to illustrate colour's vital role.

(ii) *L'Eden* and its Intertextual Transformations: Mondrian as Hypotext

The decor of the café 'Eden', where the first half of *L'Eden* is set, itself mimicks the painting of Mondrian, and in particular the pictures entitled *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue* in which black lines divide squares and rectangles of colour.⁸² Robbe-

Grillet's scheme exploits Mondrian's for generative purposes, the painter's design of the three primary colours, red, yellow and blue, and the three primary non-colours, white, grey and black, offering a pictorial basis for the visual tableaux of the filmic text. Mondrian's use of right-angles as the only line within the paintings provides a basic geometry for the more complex play of lines within the filmic image, affirming the visual tracings within the filmic image as variations on this line, thus stressing film's two-dimensional and unrealistic nature. At once, then, the visual world of the film is underlined as artificial, and aesthetic. The use of painting within the fabric of the decor itself, as if it is natural, signals a subversion of Bazin's stress on the ontology of the photographic image (as against that of the painting) as consisting in objectivity.⁸³

Moreover, interspersed within the panels of colour which comprise the decor of the café, are panes of glass and mirrors, through which the characters themselves are viewed or reflected as they perform on the set. In this way, the images of the characters gain a status as components within the aesthetic fabric of the decor, which in turn undermines the filmed human form as real.

Advertisements and photographs which are placed among the colours of the walls in profilmic collage, equally inform (and are informed by) both the painting of the café and the themes of the film. In particular, a red, white and blue sign for Cinzano Bianco, and a red and white sign for Coca Cola, preempt, with their words 'bianco' and 'coca', the cocaine-like white powder that Dutchman feeds Violette. This drug causes a hallucination in which many shots of the subsequent events of the film appear to her, in their first stage of generation, as if each narrative component has its source in the colour-generator initiated by Mondrian.

A tourist poster for Djerba announces the location for the second half of the film, along with an advertisement for Camel cigarettes conjuring up the desert which will play a key role. On another panel of the café's wall, a red and white sign saying 'Sang = Vie' offers on the one hand an appeal to give blood, while at the same time commenting on the theme of menstrual blood that recurs in films such as *Glissements*, as the subversive force aligned with Alice's narration against the hierarchical order. Later on in the film,

another poster in a similar style contains the words 'Buvez du Sang', shifting the theme of blood towards the vampire theme of *La Belle Captive*.

The clothes worn by characters are also suffused with the same colours, of red, blue, yellow, black and white. And the activities that characters perform also involve the same blends of colour: for example, a black and white dice and domino set; a black revolver and a red blindfold on the girl who shoots; red wine, or blood, on white broken glass; lipstick, or blood, on white skin.

The film's colour scheme becomes the equivalent of a painter's palet, generating everything within the frame, such that even action is colour-motivated. The colour scheme provided by the pictorial allusion to Mondrian then forms an interdependence with Robbe-Grillet's own thematics and diegetics, and triggers an intratextual and intertextual correspondence.

Yet *L'Eden* plays with Mondrian, and the allusion to his work within the filmic hypertext significantly transforms it. So far we have subjugated filmic hypertext to the pictorial hypotext, by locating the painting as source. Given the crucially reciprocal operation of intertextuality, and the work of hypertext on hypotext, we would emphasize the extent to which the filmic allusion to the painting recontextualises and recreates the latter in turn. For, the incorporation of Mondrian's *Composition* within the playful, erotic and violent world of *L'Eden* de-generates the pictorial work, and highlights the repression which characterises Mondrian's geometry, as the filmic text invests this abstractionism with a threatening and enigmatic physicality.

'Abstract art, that of Mondrian in particular, is really an art I do not like. It gives me the impression that the establishment has won' (Alain Robbe-Grillet).⁸⁴ This comment on Mondrian reminds us that intertextuality is never innocent. While the views of the two artists may to an extent be aligned in theoretical terms, the use of Mondrian in *L'Eden* manifests the antagonistic aspects of the relationship between their work. On the one hand, Mondrian and Robbe-Grillet share a conception of art as autonomous, and of the reader-viewer's role as actively imaginative. While Mondrian's theosophy clearly differentiates him from Robbe-Grillet (in theosophical terms, the red, blue and yellow

represent material, intellectual and spiritual forces respectively), the former's creation of art 'which stressed technique at the expense of image, asserting that painting was an object in itself',⁸⁵ echoes in such a formulation those pronouncements in *PUNR*'s essay, 'Sur Quelques Notions Périmées' which reject the imposition of an exterior message on the work (pp. 25-44, *PUNR*).

Another similarity between the work of the two artists is the preoccupation with forms, Mondrian's *Composition* paintings dramatising a conflict between structures, even if in an aesthetically abstract way. Indeed, the Neo-Plasticism of the 1920s is primarily an art of formal relationships. For Milner, *Composition with Red, Yellow, Blue and Black* (1921) exemplifies this, the lines, colours and their proportions all suggesting movement within the limited space of the canvas. They are interrelated and resolved into the dynamic balance of opposing forces, such that the relationships no longer correspond to an underlying grid but are evolved by the eye, operating efficiently on the visual level.⁸⁶ The dynamism of such works therefore derives from interdependence within the frame: vertical balances horizontal in both line and plane, and colour balances non-colour. In this sense it is the eye which creates the picture's unity, by juxtaposing and resolving the forms within the work. Such a process of visualisation as creation parallels the active experience of reading or watching Robbe-Grillet's work.

Moreover, both artists manipulate and displace the concept of the frame. Each line within the Mondrian composition comprises an internalised mini-frame, such that the work itself becomes a network of frames, enclosing squares of colour, each one an internalised picture within the picture, analogous to Robbe-Grillet's self-reflexive techniques in film and literature. The frame's status as division between art and reality is therefore subverted, or, as Gardies would have it, the frame is no longer a castration of reality, and becomes instead a space within which the movement of the writing of the painting may be experienced.⁸⁷

This displacement of the pictorial frame has implications on the status of the frame in cinema; if the latter is displaced, then the social and moral dimensions of the cinematic frame are disrupted. Heath points to the corrective, centring activity practised

by the frame around the shot, which in turn frames the viewer, fixing the place of image and subject, and hence creating a moral attitude, or a correct position.⁸⁸ Robbe-Grillet and Mondrian exploit the frame in order to undermine such a process.

Yet while Mondrian and Robbe-Grillet may be aligned in terms of their formal concerns, they may be differentiated in their respective composition of abstract and figurative work. For while Mondrian's *Composition* paintings in no way account for all of his production, they nonetheless exemplify a rejection of any 'effet de réel', which in turn connotes an aesthetic abdication of the representation of human experience.

Admittedly Robbe-Grillet tends towards abstraction, but the tension in his work always derives from the interplay between such abstraction and an inevitably figurative element. *L'Eden's* geometrical, Mondrian-inspired grid encapsulates abstractionism; as pictorial hypotext, it represses the 'réel' from its structures, as if art itself had given up the endeavour to express human experience within those structures.

It is then in the contamination of *L'Eden's* decor that Robbe-Grillet's work on the hypotext may be discerned. *L'Eden's* introduction of mirrors, of cultural stereotypes such as advertising posters, and of human figures into Mondrian's scheme brings a crucially mimetic dimension to the set which Mondrian rejects. The hypertext's transformation consists in the animation of the abstract pictorial hypotext by rendering it figurative. Equally, the generative use to which the hypotext is put, such that it cannot but initiate violent games, events and adventures, reasserts the drama of human experience over Mondrian's play of form.

(iii) Malevich as Hypotext

The pictorial hypotexts within *L'Eden* do not however merely function as visual texture. The picture which hangs on Violette's wall plays a crucial role in the diegetic generation of the film, providing the motive force for the action itself, insofar as the plot may in conventional terms be described as the search for a stolen painting. It is the

disappearance of the blue and white artwork, described by Marc-Antoine as 'Cette croûte qui vaut une fortune', left to Violette by her uncle, that sparks off the trip to Tunisia and the events of the second half of the film.

Like the café decor, this picture triggers off a hypertextual relationship between Robbe-Grillet's work and that of the artist of the painting. And while this work is not as recognisable as the Mondrian hypotext which forms the film's set, its provenance is indicated, as it is referred to by Violette as 'Composition numéro 234', connoting the Mondrian titles, and by Marc-Antoine as 'Carré Bleu, numéro 234', connoting Malevich. It is Robbe-Grillet who confirms the identity of the artist he intended to reflect with this concocted work: 'C'est un tableau abstrait, plutôt un Malévitch qu'un Mondrian ou un Klee'.⁸⁹

The picture generates many concepts and themes. Firstly, in its design, the contour of the white section represents a human backside, providing therefore a self-conscious commentary on the film's use of sexual imagery, most notably that connected with Dutchman and his artistic activities in Tunisia. The blue and white composition moreover advertises the female form of Violette herself, which throughout the film is either partly or wholly exposed. A connection is therefore made through this simple picture between creativity and sexuality, and the ambiguous nature of fantasy.

Secondly, the blue and white abstract composition provides the model for the postcard that Violette finds in Dutchman's jacket pocket, when he dies for the first time by the canal in Bratislava. On the card is a photograph of a blue and white Tunisian house, which in its very colours and outline replicates the abstract, painted work. It is this house as much as the abstract painting that Violette searches for, once she arrives in Djerba. In the photograph on the postcard, the other colours of the film's Mondrian-inspired central scheme are discovered: as well as the blue of the sky and the white walls of the house, we now perceive the yellow of the sand in the foreground, and on the back, next to the black writing, are specks of red, which could be Dutchman's blood.

The abstract work of art is therefore a blueprint for the external reality of Djerba, as a Djerban house is photographically reproduced on the postcard. Furthermore, as a

real place, Djerba mimics through its predominance of blue and white the colours generated by *L'Eden's* colour-scheme, and so gains a status as both a physical and an abstract domain. The conventional conception of reality as source for art is, in *L'Eden*, reversed, as the visual reality of Djerba springs from the film's colour-generator. In this way, the film highlights an ambiguity at the heart of distinctions between categories of the real and the aesthetic.

In a discussion about the use of colour in *L'Eden*, Robbe-Grillet emphasizes that as a real place, Djerba was already characterised by an abstract appearance before it was photographed, due to the architectural construction of the houses, the rigid colour schemes of the buildings, and the force of the sunlight:

En dehors de l'absence de vert, quelque chose était remarquable dans ce paysage du sud de la Tunisie: l'écrasement des volumes par une lumière trop forte, une lumière telle qu'elle a l'air de venir de tous les côtés à la fois; bien que cet ensemble de maisons comporte divers cubes à diverses profondeurs, des coupoles, il est complètement écrasé par la lumière, il donne l'impression de surfaces peintes à plat.

(p. 45, *Alain Robbe-Grillet: Oeuvres Cinématographiques*)

The film then chooses a profilmic reality which is already apparently unrealistic. This two-dimensional landscape aligns itself with the two-dimensional nature of film; nature's play of light, of sun on stone, becomes as distorting as that of the projector on the screen. Both of these in turn refer to the pictorial hypotext which is designated as a generative core for texts of reality and of film.

As with Mondrian, the filmic hypertext works on the pictorial intertext. Such transformative work is explained by the diegetic role to which the painting is put, and also by a brief comparison between artists of hyper- and hypotext.

Malevich, whose Suprematist art provides the model for Violette's painting, offers a theory and ^a practice of aesthetic production which to an extent parallel those of

Robbe-Grillet. Both artists view the consciously perceived external world as an image, rather than as an essence. Their art rejects ideologies of representational realism and focuses on the crucial role of form within aesthetic production. Malevich shares Robbe-Grillet's distrust of the conventions which form the conscious, illusory world of the day-to-day.

For Malevich, Suprematism reflects a realm beyond finite human ideas or culture, which are themselves provisional images or reflections, which the work of art may push beyond. The components within the work then gain their own autonomous reality, no longer dependent on any particular art form. As Charlotte Douglas indicates, Malevich conceived Suprematist paintings as contemplative images, or as aids to attaining the 'zaum' state. Suprematist images were for him images of a supreme reality, which transcended divisions between media: 'Malevich further realized that the individual elements of Suprematism might be regarded as "units" in a new formal "system" that would work within every medium'.⁹⁰

Indeed, the notion of a supreme reality may be compared with the Robbe-Grilletian 'réel', which exists in both conscious and unconscious minds, both inside and outside artistic forms. Malevich, like Robbe-Grillet, sees such a reality as the site of the dissolution of distinctions and duality. The link between artistic production and the psychic state of the artist brings, as in Robbe-Grillet, a reworking of existing components, analogous to a mind creatively re-combining its stereotypes. Some of Malevich's first Suprematist works were moreover composed as slices of earlier paintings. The Museum of Modern Art's *Suprematist Composition* (c.1917) is made up of geometrical sections of the Stedelijk Museum's earlier *Woodcutter* (c.1913).⁹¹

As in *L'Eden* (and as in *Glissements*, as Chapter Three, IV, iii, illustrates), so too in Malevich's art before 1917, colour is manipulated as autonomous from nature and from fixed symbolic associations; it becomes a medium for a shifting psychological relation to the world. Colour as malleable material existing outside structure then acts for both Malevich and Robbe-Grillet as a vital autonomous tool beyond languages of representation. For Malevich, such colour is energy, exploited for its dynamism.

Yet there are essential differences between the aesthetics of the two artists. Firstly, a discrepancy is found in Malevich's aim to create a harmony with nature. While this does parallel Robbe-Grillet's use of art to express a 'réel' that formal structures cannot fully account for, nonetheless the acts of disruption which Robbe-Grillet's art perpetrates differentiate him from Malevich, who sought resolution, between matter and spirit, material and energy. Secondly, while Malevich strives to depict an inner, non-objectivist state, sometimes employing self-referential methods, his work, like that of Mondrian, does at times abandon the 'effet de réel'.

Violette's painting, initially purely abstract, cannot prevent itself (as a Robbe-Grillet) from becoming figurative. As indicated above, it first generates the postcard with its photographic depiction, and then it leads Violette to the Tunisian location, a site of erotic conflict and adventure. If then Robbe-Grillet's own art moves to the brink of 'non-objectivism' through ambivalence and strategies of dislocation, it nonetheless generates a vision of the relation between human perception and the forms within which such perception must exist, and, crucially, it depends upon a figurative representation to reach such ends. This signals a departure from Malevich's abstractionism. For while Malevich's *Black Suprematist Square* (1914-15), as pictorial degree zero, offers a neat inverted image for *Le Voyeur's* blank page (p. 88, *Le Voyeur*), the Malevich (as visual manifesto) will always require an ideology to explain it, where the Robbe-Grillet text explains itself, even if only between the lines.⁹²

The pictorial allusions to Mondrian and Malevich in *L'Eden* moreover point to a central difference between pictorial and filmic media. For, the filmic text, unlike the picture, is almost always both figurative and narrative. Thus the stolen Malevich becomes a narrative component, and the Mondrian-style decor cannot but become a reflection, its abstractionism subverted by panels of mirror in which the actors are seen. As Heath suggests, the filmic frame threatens the ordinary laws of pictorial composition, due to the inevitable prioritising of moving human figures in film which capture attention against all else.⁹³ While Robbe-Grillet's pictorial references exploit precisely such a tension by highlighting the affinity, as well as the opposition, between filmic and pictorial

media, nonetheless such narrative predominance incurred by the focus on the human figure within the film sharply divides the two media.

(iv) Duchamp, Delvaux, and Pop Art as Hypotexts

The continuation of the series, from Mondrian and Malevich, to Duchamp and then Pop Art, renders *L'Eden* an account of the history of modern art. Allusions to abstract pictorial hypotexts analysed above become references to the more explicitly figurative work of Duchamp, Delvaux, Rosenquist and Rauschenberg.

The filmic dramatisation of this later pictorial work might then be viewed less as a transformation than as a celebration, as pictorial hypotexts are animated within the filmic texture. Nonetheless, the introduction of these hypotexts does provide a radical means by which their thematics may be transformed, while proposing a method by which divisions between pictorial and filmic media may be problematised, the uncertain formal nature of each highlighted via reference across media.

L'Eden's play on Dutchman's name - Dutchman, Duchemin, Duchamp - triggers the perception of the film's allusions to this painter. Duchamp's work is most evidently alluded to by the Robbe-Grilletian version of the *Nude Descending the Staircase*. Like Duchamp, who employed real, fragile objects to make art, Dutchman models real women and commercial or exotic components to create erotic pseudo-realities.

L'Eden's 'tableaux vivants' implicate other artists within the filmic intertextual fabric. The work of Delvaux and Rauschenberg is connoted in the shot of a nude coming through several doors simultaneously; Rosenquist and Rauschenberg are conjured up by the nude aiming a revolver in her mouth, surrounded by painted car-parts. Car doors may be found in Rosenquist's two pictures, *Air Hammer* (1962) and *Roll Down* (1965-1966).⁹⁴

Shared components within pictorial and filmic frames would therefore indicate interdependence rather than antagonism between the filmic text and the pictures to which

it alludes. Indeed, as well as referring to Duchamp, the Robbe-Grilletian 'tableau vivant' may equally find inspiration in Rauschenberg's constructions. The alliance of art and technology which characterises the cinematic medium is here brought into play as a sculpture comprised of ready-mades, exemplified by Rauschenberg's *Oracle* (1965). This work consists of five mobile pieces on wheels: a car door attached to a typewriter table; a window sash; a curved air vent that resembles a saxophone; three ascending steps from which a tire hangs like a noose; and a makeshift bathtub into which a T-shaped vent sends a continuous spray of water.⁹⁵ Radios inside each movable item broadcast a continually changing stream of real-world sound; each spectator-listener will see and hear the construction in a different way.

Interestingly, this piece is constructed from components also encountered in *L'Eden*, notably the bath-tub in which one of Dutchman's women will shoot herself in Djerba; the window-sash which appears in *L'Eden* as a series of doorways; finally, the car-parts suggestive of death which surround the suicidal nude, which, as Morrisette states, are characteristic of Pop Art, notably the work of Rauschenberg, James Dine and John Chamberlain, but equally of Robbe-Grillet's work, namely *La Jalousie* and *L'Immortelle*.⁹⁶

References to Rauschenberg are suggested in other filmic texts, instituting an intertextual self-reference through the figure of Rauschenberg within the Robbe-Grilletian oeuvre. The first scene of Rauschenberg's *Spring Training* (1965), contains elements which correspond uncannily with scenes from *Glissements*. This complex performance piece is described by Elizabeth Novick in *Studio International* thus: 'Robert Rauschenberg in shirt and short cotton draws, barefoot and barelegged, stands in the center of the auditorium and begins to mop up the eggs that drop from the rafters'.⁹⁷ Such a scene could have inspired Alice's covering of Nora with raw eggs and red syrup in *Glissements*, which as a reference to Georges Bataille, combines literary and performance art as intertext.

There is moreover a thematic alignment between Robbe-Grillet's work and that of Rosenquist, in terms of sadoeroticism. Indeed, Rosenquist's personal vocabulary

includes, for Constance Glenn, female hands and fingernails; male-trousered legs and feet; automobile tires, fragments, and window sections; glamorous lips, gleaming teeth, and exotic eyes.⁹⁸ While these are picked up in the 'tableaux vivants' of *L'Eden*, such elements might equally be compared to images of dismemberment in *Projet*.

Rosenquist's *I Love You With My Ford* (1961) is exemplary. In it, he creates a trifocal view by dividing the canvas horizontally into three. The top section depicts the front of a Ford car, the middle segment shows a reclining female face, and beneath both of these is a mess of spaghetti. The first two sections are grey and white; the spaghetti is a livid orange. The process suggested - car crushing woman into spaghetti - is undoubtedly also Robbe-Grilletian. The image even actually appears in *Le Jeu avec le Feu*, in which a naked woman is served up on ^a bed of spaghetti at the sinister clinic, implying a direct intertextual alliance between the work of these two artists.

And like Robbe-Grillet, Rosenquist has created his own Duchamp, *L'Eden's* reference to Duchamp becoming an amalgamation of the two in the picture, *Dog Descending a Staircase* (1980-1982):

Rosenquist's own *Nude Descending a Staircase* (first a fractured rainbow undulating down the stairs in *Derrière L'Etoile*) was now a dog descending, coupled with enigmatic snippets of Rosenquist fictions - a shiny machine form of factory-cut metal and a banal doll's face.⁹⁹

Yet *L'Eden's* intertextual reference does nevertheless enact thematic and formal transformations of its pictorial hypotexts. This in turn renders the film antagonistic towards its intertexts, while enabling an interplay between media which reflects upon notions of pictoriality and of the filmic.

For, allusions to Duchamp and to Rauschenberg are characterised by a sadoerotic corruption which in turn signals a work by hypertext on pictorial hypotext. Dutchman's ready-mades are fashioned according to Robbe-Grillet's sadoerotic thematics, the nude woman repeatedly featuring in the art-work on the brink of (self-)destruction, either by

shooting or evisceration, as one woman poses with a gun, another in front of a ploughshare at the foot of Duchamp's staircase, a third writhing on a bed of spikes.

Moreover, whereas Rauschenberg himself participates in his mixed means theatre, Robbe-Grillet's pictorial allusions and references to performance art include only the female 'victim'. Rauschenberg's constructions with machines such as *Oracle* become, in *L'Eden*, sadoerotic scenes depicting violent machines on the verge of, or in the process of torturing the female. The achievement of Rauschenberg, to create a space for the individual's imaginative involvement within the construction, becomes wholly erotic in Robbe-Grillet's film, offering primarily a subjective space for the sadistically inclined, heterosexual male. The transformation enacted by Robbe-Grillet on his pictorial/performance-based hypotexts is then to sadoeroticise them, and to victimise women.

Moreover, while Robbe-Grillet's method of assemblage might be aligned with that of Rauschenberg and other Pop Artists, insofar as all these artists combine 'objets familiers' in order to promote a restructuring of the commonplace through the transformation of popular materials into a new 'parole' (as Morrissette points out),¹⁰⁰ nonetheless, the disparity between Rauschenberg and Robbe-Grillet is exemplified by Rauschenberg's commitment to political and social issues, as is illustrated by the latter's silk-screen montage *Signs* (1970).

In *Signs*, images show Senator Robert Kennedy reaching out to soldiers in Vietnam, and a wounded black man appealing for help over the body of Dr. Martin Luther King, who lies in his burial casket.¹⁰¹ Robbe-Grillet's work refers to such aspects only through parody or subversion. There is a hiatus between the thematic preoccupations between these two artists, which, as Morrissette notes, made their collaboration on *Traces Suspectes en Surface* 'most improbable'.¹⁰²

We argue that precisely such a hiatus between the aesthetics of the painter and Robbe-Grillet appeals to the latter's subversive intentions, the intertextual citation of Rauschenberg's work in *L'Eden* becoming a staged conflict between the aesthetic mythologies of each artist, which must remain unresolved.

Hypertextuality between filmic and pictorial art also offers a commentary on the nature of the process of filmic production. The stasis of pictorial art contrasts with filmic mobility within the image, and this tension is brought out via intertextual reference. For, the self-conscious tableaux of the latter half of *L'Eden* are also visibly moving, and as such they exist on the threshold between the pictorial and the filmic, signalling a disruption of one medium by the other. Obvious, jarring jump-cuts for the Duchamp allusion mean that the nude climbs down the steps over and over again in a deliberately artificial manner. This forefronts the film's own processes of manipulation, as the cuts reflect upon the montage which is generating the pictorial scene. Filmic mobility, or linearity, then collides with pictorial stasis.

Such a self-consciously presented tension between media is further explored through the ambivalent relationship between the 'tableaux vivants' and the other diegetic events of the film. Violette, a real figure within the filmic panorama, herself becomes an aesthetic element within Dutchman's vision. The unsettling of the division between tableau and filmic reality, first suggested by the jump-cutting, is more fully affirmed when the nude model within the pictorial hypotext becomes Violette herself. For, Violette eventually takes over as a central nude component within Dutchman's process of creation in the film's sex scenes, which are, as Robbe-Grillet himself has pointed out, equally 'des scènes de sculpture'.¹⁰³ The process of pictorial composition, primarily connoted by the presence of the pictorial allusions, here contaminates the realism of the filmic events, as the figure of Violette herself is self-consciously created within the frame, which is now positioned as both filmic and pictorial.

Furthermore, the 'tableaux vivants' which do propose pictorial allusion are accompanied by other, non-intertextual scenes which mimic the recognisable allusions, eroding the latter's pictorial autonomy, and hence their status as exclusively pictorial. For, as well as its stolen paintings, *L'Eden* displays its own sadoerotic tableaux, such as some of the images of torture and violence. These appear initially as Violette's obsessions when first glimpsed during the hallucination sequence after she ingests the white powder, only later reappearing as Dutchman's works of art, as the frames are shown again in the

new Djerban context. This adds to the contamination of the pictorial by the filmic and vice-versa.

The double exposure of pictorial and filmic scenes becomes a multiple exposure when these two merge with filmed performance art, as when the human figure is inserted within an aesthetically organised set. This further erodes the realism of the filmic representation and contaminates the medium, as dance, theatre and pictorial art combine within the shot. As we shall see in our analysis of *Le Jeu avec le Feu* below (subsection vii), the tendency of the Robbe-Grillet film to verge on the staged performance is structurally disruptive. Yet it also marks a breakdown of barriers between different art forms and hence between media.

Thus *L'Eden* plays on the filmic image's similarity to painting, by staging conflicts between abstractionism and figurative scenes, between stasis and the drive towards narrative activity, between colour and physical human form. The proliferation of pictorial intertextual references tends towards a dissolution of filmic autonomy due to the constant association of set, scheme and narrative component with pictorial texts and associations. In this way the film unsettles media divisions, suggesting interconnections as well as exploiting discrepancies.

The tension between filmic and pictorial art forms is encapsulated by *L'Eden's* diegetic form, which produces, ultimately, an atemporality. For, by the end of the film, Violette and the spectator are back where they started, as sea-shore dissolves into the blue wall of Violette's bedroom in a cancellation of the text's events. Like painting, this film is finally a space without time.

(v) *Glissements, Le Jeu avec le Feu and La Belle Captive* :

The Integration of the Pictorial Allusion

From *Glissements* onwards, pictorial art in Robbe-Grillet's films is incorporated more explicitly within the protagonist's subjective process of perception. Pictorial

textures are integrated within a dream-state, or a creative activity, in which the protagonist is actively involved. While pictorial allusions are still used self-consciously to reflect upon the filmic illusion-making process, the accommodation of the allusion within perception or experience incurs an increasing homogeneity of forms, as the pictorial medium is exploited less for its antagonistic potential.

This movement away from the fragmentations and tensions of *L'Eden* moreover points to an increasingly subjective aesthetic preoccupation in Robbe-Grillet, played out in literary terms in the 'auto-fictions'. The use of intertextuality within the later filmic texts is moreover less violent and disruptive in its recontextualisation of the hypotext.

(vi) *Glissements* and Yves Klein

The female as victimised component within a sadoerotic 'tableau vivant' is, in *Glissements*, countered by Alice's autoerotic self-portraiture. Intertextually, this denotes an empowerment. For, while Alice's body-printing on the white wall of her cell might on the one hand be viewed as yet another voyeuristic objectification of the naked, helpless female, the fact that Alice herself performs this body art inverts the power-relations inherent in the hypotext.

The body-printing in *Glissements* alludes to the *Anthropométries* of Yves Klein. The composition of Klein's prints involved nude women covering their bodies with paint, in order to print themselves onto a background. Klein's *Anthropométrie Sans Titre* depicts five nude prints of the same woman's body, in a row, coloured blue on a white background.¹⁰⁴ *People Begin to Fly* (1961) is more adventurous, with the nude women floating in the air, the bodies at angles to each other. *Vampire* (1960) - a title related to Robbe-Grillet's thematics - blends pink with blue, this time showing a single woman, printed naked and splayed. The most explicit of all is *Suaire Sans Titre* (1960), which is simply female genitals, in pink and black.

In all of these pictures by Klein, the nature of the artistic process incurs dismemberment. For the very action of printing of this kind means that only the most prominent parts of the model will leave their mark; in the final art works, these parts appear to be severed, and ultimately violated. The active role of the women themselves is erased.

Admittedly *Glissements'* dramatisation of Klein's method falls prey to a similar charge, as the prints Alice makes of herself are similarly fragmented in appearance. Equally, the use of 'Robbe-Grillet red' instead of 'Klein blue' connotes the obsession with female blood which recurs throughout Robbe-Grillet's work. Yet Alice is actively involved in the creation of these images of herself, and this active role is preserved by the film. For this reason, this pictorial allusion transforms the Kleinian hypotexts in its positioning of Alice in the role of artist, in contrast to *L'Eden*, where Dutchman retains the aesthetically creative role. The pictorial allusion becomes a means by which the (female) protagonist's narrative creativity may be celebrated, through a pastiche of Klein.

(vii) *Le Jeu avec le Feu* and Narrative Structure

Where *Glissements* uses the pictorial hypotext to comment on the process of creativity in which the central protagonist is involved, *Le Jeu avec le Feu* employs the pictorial tableau structurally to suggest an oneiric, hallucinatory reality within the film, with its source in the mind of the central protagonists.

In this film, the image moves towards the status, and stasis, of the painted work. And while the film's underlying ambiguity as both fantasy and reality - in terms of the events it portrays - is equally a structural ambivalence, with implications about the nature of the filmic medium and its relation to pictorial art, nonetheless this film's tendency towards stasis, due to its absorption within the oneiric tableaux, forces concentration onto the visual composition of the frame. The parodic action alternates with exaggerated immobility such that the narrative is splintered into a series of separate visual events. The

unrealistic nature of the acting and funny, often absurd plot create a narrative that undermines itself, forefronting the visual tableaux as the primary experience of the film.

The self-subverting quality of *Le Jeu avec le Feu's* narrative plot stems primarily from the dual nature of any interpretation of events on the one hand as a series of almost plausible happenings, and on the other as the representation of a sequence of fantasies. In this way, the illusion of realism is created and broken down in a dynamic movement such that plausibility is almost simultaneously adhered to and effaced.

Within the categories of fantasy and reality, further ambiguities are found. If the film is a fantasy, then whose fantasy is it? It is the perverted daydream of Georges de Saxe, whose incestuous cravings for his daughter lead him to imagine her abduction and role as his sex-slave. However, it is equally the sadomasochistic fantasy of his daughter, who herself writes the fake ransom note before she is kidnapped, just to please a handsome stranger (Frantz, played by Trintignant) whom she meets in a traffic jam.

And if the film is a representation of reality, which reality? Set in decor that is at times recognisably real and realistic, *Le Jeu avec le Feu* projects at the same time a series of caricatures borrowed from the world of cinema and pictorial art in general, such as the arch villain in his wheelchair and the hilarious final car-chase. Furthermore, it proposes an intertextual level, referring to both literary and filmic hypotexts, which emphasize Noiret's persona as both good father and pervert due to his ambivalent role in *Zazie dans le Métro*, and Trintignant as both policeman and drug trafficker through reference to *TEE* (as outlined earlier in the chapter, in section III, vi).

The narrative is therefore deliberately self-cancelling. The result of this is an enhancement of the pictorial design within the frame, which is visually forefronted. It is inside the clinic, where Carolina de Saxe is ambiguously both imprisoned by her father and hidden safely from her imaginary kidnappers, that quasi-pictorial compositions structure the shot. As Fragola puts it, temporal continuity is employed (rather than the often fragmentary editing of, say, *TEE*), which lowers the energy during the transitions from one room to the next (p. 88, *The Erotic Dream Machine*).

As Carolina peeps into each chamber of the clinic, she witnesses what are at once sadoerotic set-ups and theatrical sets, as if the clinic were hospital, brothel, theatre and dreamscape, with lavish sexual role-play as the only treatment. Each time Carolina enters a chamber, the activity she witnesses is in the middle of being performed, as if autonomous from her. Moreover, no attention is paid to Carolina's presence by the participants in the fantasy, as if Carolina were in a dream of her own in which events were acted out specifically for her while remaining completely beyond her rational control. To complicate matters further, the characters participating in the activities in each chamber also take part in events outside the world of the clinic, lending them as real a status as Carolina herself. In this way any recuperation of the chamber scenes as dream and the rest of the film as reality is problematised. The subversion of the narrative source of such tableaux cannot but emphasize their presence.

These tableaux are moreover visually rich and striking. They are at once civilised and base, the product of a cultured yet savage male or female mind. In the first chamber are three figures: a wealthy looking man who brandishes a riding crop, while a second man holds a woman still. Clad like a prostitute, she wears an elaborate set of suspenders, but her backside is bare, and the man with the crop gently taps her naked flesh, before bargaining for her, then throwing a handful of banknotes onto the floor with an absurdly theatrical gesture.

In the second chamber, Carolina watches as a woman who was abducted earlier in a forest outside the clinic, is stripped by a man dressed as a butler, while Mathias, de Saxe's butler, observes. Mathias is now in the role of proprietor, the hierarchy of the de Saxe residence having shifted in a dreamlike way, and he sits beside a table laden with food, arranged as if for a traditional banquet. 'Vous me la servirez avec une sauce rouge, et flambée au cognac', he commands, adding 'Faites-lui cependant une piqûre pour qu'elle soit molle à souhait'. This generates the Rosenquist allusion discussed above (IV, iv), as the female victim is later served up on a bed of spaghetti, in imitation of *I Love You With My Ford*.

The third chamber Carolina enters is a huge theatrical auditorium. Opera music echoes across to her although there is neither audience nor orchestra, and on the stage, a single woman stands and sings. The curved bank of seats and balconies stretches high up from the stage to where Carolina watches, and along the backs of each balcony are row upon row of doors, identical to the one Carolina has come through, as if dozens of other clinics open out onto this same auditorium. The deep, blood red of the walls, and the bright gold of the balconies which cross the chamber like ribs, create the opera theatre as the inside of an abdomen, into which we peer.

The world of the clinic may then be seen as possibly a series of imagined scenes that obsess Carolina and comprise therefore her inner reality. Yet similar sadoerotic set-ups invade the other worlds of the film denying this interpretation. Each separate abduction by the parodic kidnappers is imbricated within the erotic framework of the clinic's chambers, such that the supposedly deranged world of the clinic is equally the outside world.

For example, the girl Mathias orders to be injected is also given an injection in the forest when first captured, or seduced, by Frantz. Even when Carolina is at home at the de Saxe residence, the scenes between herself and her father are almost overtly sexual and bizarre. When Carolina dresses up in Frantz's suit and moustache so as to escape to the clinic unnoticed, the scene is as much an erotic, theatrical set-up as those Carolina witnesses at the clinic: she is semi-nude, dressing up as a man in a way that is hardly realistic, obeying the request of Frantz who is at once a kidnapper and the man who will at the end of the film run away with her, as her lover. The suit could have been made for her, Frantz says, as if it were a theatrical costume.

In *Le Jeu avec le Feu* therefore, a world of almost static tableaux is created within the clinic which permeates the rest of the action, such that all events move towards the status of a self-conscious staged performance, or framed picture. These set-ups in turn gain an ambivalent quality as both the fantasy of an individual character and as the film's physical reality, annihilating narrative coherence and highlighting the visual texture of the shot as the only tangible aspect within the text. The filmic image

characterised by self-consciously aesthetic composition becomes a means by which the filmic text's reality can remain suspended between a real and an imagined status, with its source in the shifting subjectivity of protagonists within the film.

(viii) *La Belle Captive* (Film) : Magritte, Manet

The film *La Belle Captive* (described in synopsis form in Appendix II) also thematises pictorial art as a threshold between realms of the real and the imaginary, between the lived and the dreamt. The erosion of the frame around the picture which obsesses Walter, the film's hero, becomes an important analogy for the merging of these categories. And like *L'Eden*, *La Belle Captive* employs the pictorial hypotext as a generative device within the narrative, as it determines the course of the action.

Yet unlike *L'Eden*, Walter's subjective relation to the pictorial works which recur throughout the film is intense and traumatic; the works of art are no longer violently transformed in their new context, but maintain a coercive power over Walter and over the text itself. Magritte and Manet, whose works play a vital role within *La Belle Captive*, become indissociable from Walter's reality, incriminating and ultimately imprisoning him. The citation in this later film is more unified, as intertexts mainly comprise the work of one artist, namely Magritte, where in *L'Eden* a violence is generated from the heterogeneous series of artists alluded to.

It is Magritte's picture *La Belle Captive* which provides the film's most prominent pictorial hypotext.¹⁰⁵ Already, both in the shared name of the painting and the filmic work, and reiterated in Robbe-Grillet's compilation of Magritte's pictures in the book of the same name, an alignment and an integration are implied between hyper- and hypotext. While resemblances are of course exploited to create disruption, there is, overall, a co-incidence of the thematics of the two artists, which we shall explore in more detail in our analysis of the picto-roman below (section V, iv). Moreover, within the film *La Belle Captive* there are clear allusions to other works by Magritte, which add to the

homogeneity between text and intertextual series. The film verges on a dramatisation of the Robbe-Grillet-Magritte collaboration, further affirming intertextual integration.

The film *La Belle Captive* stages its generation from its pictorial namesake. As stated in Chapter Two (section I, i), the picture frame is first seen during the credit sequence. The frame is not yet recognisable as Magritte's, but it institutes an intertextual dynamic which will be played out throughout the film. The Magritte picture is about a misplaced frame, and Robbe-Grillet presents the latter without its canvas in the first moments of the film, the frame standing mysteriously on a deserted beach. Due to its prominence right at the start of *La Belle Captive*, this frame could be seen as creating the subsequent action.

For, the 'Voix Off' begins only after this, accompanying Walter's scene at the nightclub. The 'Voix Off' narrates in the past tense, implying a retrospective distance and control over events. This is however gradually eroded, as the picture returns in its various startling mutations, both inside and outside what the film suggests is the hero's internal subjective reality.

The shot of the empty picture frame on the deserted beach next appears when Walter is making love to Marie-Ange for the first time at 'Villa Seconde'. In this way, the picture frame is associated in the viewer's mind with Walter's loss of control; it becomes an expression of Walter's desire, of his Unconscious or inner reality, awakened by a passion unleashed. Yet in this second appearance, the picture frame has been tampered with. Whereas in the credit sequence, a coloured photographic filter was in the place of the canvas, now just inside the frame are red velvet curtains, bordering the frame on the left, the right, and across the top, like theatrical curtains that frame a stage. What began as a symbol for some inner truth of Walter's, is now a self-conscious image for the film as framed theatrical performance, and a clear allusion to the Magritte work which has its own framed curtains.

Intercut with the shot of the picture frame, are Walter and Marie-Ange making love, then we are back on the deserted beach, and this time the camera advances through the frame to the crashing waves beyond. But as the frame disappears behind the camera,

we see that the velvet curtains are not joined to the frame or part of the picture, but stand alone. They comprise an autonomous structure, or second frame, also standing on the beach, that is nearer to the waves and only seemed attached to the frame through a play of perspective.

After this shot, a real painted picture fills the screen, that hangs above the bed at Villa Seconde, which is a variation on the image of the frame on the deserted beach that we have just seen. Entitled '*La Belle Captive*, d'après René Magritte' (a derivation, not a duplication of Magritte's original picture of the same name) this work of art also depicts a deserted beach, and in the foreground there is a picture on an easel that is in the process of being painted, of the deserted beach. The canvas on the easel has no frame, and through the play of perspective, both picture and reality merge, such that one cannot see where sea ends and painted sea begins.

The movement of the film camera through the frames denotes therefore a filmic dramatisation of the pictorial scene, displacing the frame both within the works, and between the works. Walter screams: on his neck are two bloody holes, as if the pictorial representation of what was initially his own internal vision, has sucked away his life blood. Whereas in *L'Eden*, it is the picture that is stolen, in *La Belle Captive*, the picture is the thief.

Yet this is only the beginning of the intertextual invasion which subjugates Walter to its process. As in *L'Eden*, components of the vision of the picture frame and red curtains on the beach invade the decor of the film, becoming Walter's inescapable physical and psychological reality. However, if these elements do simultaneously highlight the filmic text's self-generative processes through their visual thematisation of aesthetic production, they are nonetheless integrated to a greater extent within Walter's subjectivity than in the earlier film *L'Eden*.

The next instance of the dissemination of the pictorial hypotext occurs when Walter awakens, and red velvet curtains now hang on the windows of the room in which he slept the night. Sand, seawater and seaweed have appeared all over the ground floor of the Villa Seconde, and have been carefully arranged in circles, almost artistically, as if

the world of '*La Belle Captive*, d'après René Magritte' has literally swept with the force of a hurricane through the set of '*La Belle Captive* d'après Alain Robbe-Grillet'.

When Walter enters the 'Clinique' next door, the window has been painted over with a false blue sky, recalling the Magritte picture *La Belle Captive*, in which sky is prominent on the canvas within the canvas, as well as *Les Valeurs Personnelles*, in which blue cloud-flecked sky covers the inside of a bedroom wall, and *Le Faux Miroir*, where sky covers the blue of an eye. Empty picture frames, representing the absent frame in the version of the Magritte, appear in subsequent scenes in which Walter features, most notably in the room where the Comte de Corinthe lies dead: appropriately, on the wall, hangs an empty black frame. Elements from Magritte's work which texture the film *La Belle Captive*, while evidently triggering the perception of the hypotext, point at the same time to Walter's subordination to the intertextual framework.

As in *L'Eden*, such a generation of text by hypotext is further played out by the pictorial allusion's role as a narrative goad. For, Walter's actions are to an extent dictated by the pictorial intertexts within the film. It is at the Comte de Corinthe's that Walter finds, lying on a table, a pile of photographs of himself, and among these, a postcard representing the picture entitled '*La Belle Captive*, d'après René Magritte'. Walter pockets the postcard, as it represents a link with his lost night of love with Marie-Ange. However, he is then handed a stack of the very same postcards by Inspector Francis, in return for Marie-Ange's shoe which Walter is carrying around in his pocket, and which Francis requires as evidence. By handing the shoe to Francis, Walter betrays a connection to Marie-Ange, whose disappearance is now under investigation.

Moreover, Walter's obsession with the picture on the postcard becomes proof of his guilt. For his recognition of the Magritte version as the one over the bed at Villa Seconde gives away the fact that he was there with Marie-Ange, incriminating him as the last person to see her alive. The picture's status as fantasy (for it was as Walter's fantasy that the picture first appeared), doubles with that of real clue within the filmic plot, as the pictorial intertext erodes the frame between the imaginary and criminality, narratively ensnaring Walter.

Walter is later violated by the work of Magritte when he is wired up to a television monitor, during Dr Morgan and Professor Van der Reeves's experiment. As Walter struggles, unconscious, with electrodes attached to his head, his thoughts are shown on the TV screen as a visualisation and animation of Magritte's painting, *Le Mois des Vendanges*. The men in black advance as if towards him, terrifyingly alive.

Walter's increasing guilt in the sex crime of which Marie-Ange has possibly been victim is thus dramatised through intertextual reference. The title of the picture in turn offers a commentary on the filmic action, further betraying Walter in its connotation that Walter craves sadoeroticism, and that he is defined by it, the self - 'le moi' - generated by the selling of angels, implicit in 'vendre' and 'anges', Marie-Ange initially recognised as a sex-slave on arrival at Villa Seconde. The black-suited men from the Magritte picture later assume human form at the end of the film, when Walter is dragged away by men in uniform and shot by a firing squad, first commandeered by Inspector Francis, then by Sara Zeitgeist. In this way, the intertext is narratively generative.

Yet the denouement is also preempted by the other central pictorial hypotext within the film *La Belle Captive*, namely, Manet's *L'Exécution de Maximilien*.¹⁰⁶ This large reproduction, depicting a man shot by firing squad, hangs in the stairwell of Villa Seconde when Walter visits the place for the last time. The Manet hypotext is therefore equally a narrative generator insofar as it too anticipates the closing moments of the film.

Both the Magritte and Manet hypotexts also reflect and enhance the themes of the film *La Belle Captive*. For just as Magritte's work connotes the interpenetration of supposedly separate worlds, whether of the conscious and the Unconscious, or of the aesthetic and the real, so too Manet's painting and the story it depicts may be aligned with the recurrent Robbe-Grilletian theme of the imposter. *L'Exécution de Maximilien* depicts the death of the Habsburg prince, a puppet ruler whom Napoleon III had persuaded to attempt to conquer Mexico. He was, however, executed by the Mexicans on June 19, 1867. Like Boris Varissa in *L'HQM*, Maximilien was a usurper. The historical basis for the picture is however played with in Robbe-Grillet's filmic text, as Walter, like Boris, is (ambivalently) still alive at the end of *La Belle Captive*.

In this sense Robbe-Grillet reads the Manet picture through Bataille. For Bataille claims that Manet's execution is characterised by its negation of eloquence, by its fundamentally modern suppression of the subject of the work, and by its all-engulfing numbness.¹⁰⁷ Robbe-Grillet's filmic incorporation of *L'Exécution de Maximilien* into his film becomes an attempt at resolving the debate over Manet's work. For Robbe-Grillet pays tribute to Bataille's Manet, in the fictionalisation of the painting through the substitution of Walter - a puppet within the film's constructions - for the historically authentic Maximilien. Yet at the same time, the Manet is strikingly brought to life and given human form in its role within the film, unsettling Bataille's claims of anti-narrativity.

(ix) Film and Pictorial Art: Metatext

As in *L'Eden* therefore, the pictorial hypotexts act as generators in both thematic and narrative terms. Yet unlike this earlier work, *La Belle Captive* integrates its pictorial intertexts within the subjective experience of its central character, shifting the role of intertextuality between filmic and pictorial texts, from one of violent subversion and transformation, to one of haunting disorientation and obsessive affirmation. Overall, *La Belle Captive* accommodates rather than unsettles its pictorial hypotexts, and this in turn creates an affinity of forms between filmic and pictorial media in this later work.

Nonetheless as *L'Eden* and *Le Jeu avec le Feu* demonstrate, pictorial art may be used within the filmic text to trouble filmic conventions, to explode the illusion of reality within the film, and to stagger narrative linearity. This in turn offers an important parallel between the role of the pictorial allusion in the filmic text and the role of the self-reflexive technique in the literary text.

For the movement of the filmic text towards the stasis of pictorial art is motivated by a conception of text as object for contemplation rather than as narrative. The process at work in Robbe-Grillet's films may therefore be compared with techniques

employed in his literary texts which constantly remind the reader of their status as text, as invented structure, thereby destroying the reader's absorption in the narrative (as discussed fully in Chapter Two). The narrative becomes, in its most extreme form of stasis, a blank; this stage is quite literally reached in *Le Voyeur*, when the words on the page themselves actually disappear, as on the renowned page 88, or equally on page 253. The literary text as series of words and nothing more becomes, in the filmic text, the moving picture as series of pictures and nothing more, a concept most clearly illustrated when the film actually becomes a static, painted picture.

The viewer's submission to the film's narrative structures and ideology is then undermined, as narrative device is exposed as device, as textual infrastructure is revealed and foregrounded in its very process of construction. The pictorial tableaux therefore become the visual equivalent of the metatext, which forces an acknowledgement of filmic text as text.

V. Pictorial Generators for the Literary Medium :

Reassembling the Hypotexts

The later literary work of Robbe-Grillet is often constructed via a process of self-conscious intertextuality which employs pictorial, photographic or sculptural works to generate verbal narrative. The kinship between Robbe-Grillet's early novels and aspects of modern art has already to an extent been hinted at. However, Jaffé-Freem's *Alain Robbe-Grillet et la Peinture Cubiste*, while pointing to undoubted parallels between the early novels and the painting of artists such as Braque, is not a study of intertextuality, and in no way addresses the theoretical problems of an interpenetration of the arts. It does moreover provide nothing on the role of painting in Robbe-Grillet's films.

Robbe-Grillet's picto-literary work deliberately chooses iconic texts of different artists to inspire its diegetic and thematic content, in turn commenting on and transforming these texts in a reciprocal process. The collaborative work unsettles notions

of authorship, erected as it is on the site of conflict between different artists' formal materials and thematic mythologies. Intertextuality between authors and across media becomes an inherent and inevitable part of reading and/as viewing, and therefore disrupts the standard literary reading.

The picto-novels, photo-novels and other collaborations offer therefore the most striking and fruitful examples of the way in which the Robbe-Grillet text, constructed across media, must in turn be analysed between disciplines. Only then may the full implications of the work be grasped, and only then may the interdisciplinary analysis reach the heart of Robbe-Grillet's intertextuality which, as we shall see, proposes a means of destabilising sign-referent relations, as word first resembles, then dissembles what it supposedly signifies.

Moreover, like the filmic work which refers intertextually to literature, the literary text which alludes to pictorial art is contaminated by that art. The literary work in turn corrupts the pictorial representation. However, it is not just the individual work which is implicated in this process. Literary and pictorial media are themselves mutually corroded by the collaborative enterprise, as texts bring to each other the associations of their own medium, in an interpenetration and cross-fertilisation which eventually erodes media autonomy.

The movement between media is consistent with other disruptive strategies in Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic production. Indeed, given the subversion of the supposedly innocent operations of the traditional or realist text which characterises Robbe-Grillet's work in literature and cinema, it is hardly surprising he should set about undermining the divisions between media, forcing literary and photographic/pictorial texts to corrode each other. Media are after all defined to a great extent not by nature but by convention; it is in Robbe-Grillet's nature to highlight the conventions of the media as such.

Indeed, the use of intertextuality across media divisions is an extension of the allusive play which we have analysed above in the filmic and literary processes of generative composition and intertextual reference. As before, the Robbe-Grilletian aesthetic process operates across texts and media in the continued adoption of

stereotypes as raw material, which are reassembled and contaminated as they are refracted in a new text or new medium. Such stereotypes may be pictorial (the images of Magritte), photographic (the photographs of Hamilton), or literary (the intertexts analysed above); they may equally be impersonal, banal objects or images from popular mythology. All of these collude as a stock of components which are potentially intertextually generative of the verbal text.

And consistent with the intertextuality we have examined above, the verbal-pictorial dialogue marks a movement towards authenticity of authorship, via a destruction of concepts of authorial unity, and via an acknowledgment that all texts are made up from the texts already experienced by the artist. The process of collaboration between complementary (or conflicting) artists becomes an deliberate confrontation with and exhibition of an inescapable intertextuality, which, if concealed in a supposedly unified/single-authored work smothers the text before it is even begun.

The collaborative text is a network which admits that it can only be a work of, and on, other texts. In this way it is an authentic reflection upon the interaction between texts which both creation and human experience are in essence. Affirming that his/her language and culture are not his/her own, the artist situates the source for the text outside him-/herself, as well as within his/her cultural or linguistic source. Racevskis affirms that the collaboration is justified on Lacanian grounds, due to the fragmentation of the authorial consciousness, as the subject is found (or lost) at the intersection of three orders: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The artist becomes an authorial instance, his/her art no longer pointing back towards the determinisms of a subjective essence, and no longer the pretext for reconstituting a consciousness or an Unconscious that was its source. His/her art is rather the effect of a generative process, aiming at an impossible origin and an exteriority of infinite possibilities.¹⁰⁸ This in turn means that the intertextual work opens out onto a potentially infinite network of texts, from all media, which only the interdisciplinary analysis may accommodate.

Nonetheless, the verbal-visual dynamic which informs Robbe-Grillet's later literary work distinguishes itself from the pictorial or literary intertextuality examined

above, and as such illuminates the difference between filmic and literary incorporations of the iconic reference into the work and hence highlights the discrepancy between filmic and literary intertextual operations. As discussed above, allusions to pictorial art (and to literature) in the filmic text may potentially disrupt continuity and narrative autonomy. While filmic visuality enables the pictorial allusion to be integrated within the shot so that it need not destabilise the narrative, filmic mobility means that the pictorial allusion may be subversive due to its stasis as well as its borrowed status.

On the one hand, the iconic-verbal collaborations with Magritte, Hamilton and others indicate a similar conception of pictorial art as equally violent in its disruption of literary narrative coherence. For just as the static tableau within the film erodes linear progression, so too a similar conflict is staged between mobile verbal narrative and still picture, as when verbal narrative is employed to corrode the pictorial or photographic surface of the image.

Yet unlike in film, there are two ways in which the iconic reference may enter the literary text. Either the picture, sculpture or photograph may be verbally described, or these may be iconically reproduced on pages within the book itself, sometimes juxtaposed with words. While the verbal description of the pictorial work is potentially highly disorientating as we shall see below, the pictorial/photographic reproduction of the work of art on the pages of the book might be said to preserve the viewer's process of contemplation. The static reproductions within the picto-novel may be observed at the viewer's own speed, like the original paintings, and in this sense the literary contextualisation of pictorial art is truer to the original pictorial form than is the filmic.

Robbe-Grillet subtitles the Magritte collaboration *La Belle Captive* 'roman', implying that literary generic categories are also preserved intact. However, such a homogeneity implied by this all too innocent subtitle is denied by the radically new engagement demanded of the reader-viewer by the collaborative work, an engagement which is fragmented and subject to endless revision and rereading, even instituting intertextual cross-reference to works from other media, outside the collaboration itself.

The iconic-verbal interchange which characterises Robbe-Grillet's later work proposes an innovatory method by which the process of creation of, and system of meaning within a text may be forefronted and destabilised. Robbe-Grillet reveals the interplay of iconic and verbal texts to be motivated by a strategy of subversion. It is the disparity between word and visual image that is interesting to him, which points in turn to an essential difference between verbal and a visual representations. As he states of the picto- and photo-novels:

The work that contains both an image and the text is going to be not an illustrated text, but an ensemble of contradictions in which the text and the images are going to play antagonistic roles. In short, the role of the text is to put the image in a state of crisis.

(p. 39, 'Images and Texts: A Dialogue, in *Generative Literature and Generative Art*).

However, such a crisis may only be attained via a break in correspondence, which itself depends on correspondence to begin with. The iconic and verbal elements are exploited precisely because of an initial system of equivalence which the construction across disciplines sets in place, then unsettles, even explodes. Verbal and iconic elements are conjoined to establish a code of resemblances, which is then undermined, in a deliberate, strategic operation. As our interdisciplinary textual analysis will illustrate, this process marks a dramatisation of the interplay between sign and referent. The iconic-verbal distortion reveals the relation between these two terms to be structured by convention, and therefore potentially subject to reinvention.

(i) The Verbal Picture: The Role of Painting in the Early Novels

(Un Régicide, Les Gommages, Le Voyeur,

Dans le Labyrinthe)

Pictorial art has played a role in Robbe-Grillet's literary texts from the beginning of his artistic production. And while the invasion of the early texts by painting is achieved verbally, it nonetheless has striking implications on the thematic and diegetic status of the text.

The verbal depiction of the pictorial work fulfills two main functions, which are aligned with the role played by pictorial art in the filmic medium. First pictorial art provides a threshold between real and imaginary realms within the literary text, offering an inner window through which the obsession may be beheld. Second it self-consciously fractures the realism of the text, by forefronting description as aesthetically produced by confusing the text's picture of reality with a picture within the text. In its proposal of a work of art within the work, the verbal description of the visual text preempts the iconic-verbal exchange which characterises the later picto-novels.

Un Régicide's oil painting, introduced early on in the novel, provides an intensified vision of Boris's sadistic preoccupations, which are played out diegetically in his killing of the king. As in the film *La Belle Captive*, the painting becomes a threshold between the realms of dream and consciousness. Described as a 'témoin', the picture is examined routinely by Boris after waking up, as if it is a reflection upon the more oneiric world narrated in the first person. The painting was moreover composed in three or four months of fever, further implying that it is a key to the irrational realm (p. 17, *Un Régicide*). The most striking aspect of the painting is however its violence.

Une importante *masse rouge* attirait d'abord l'oeil, *oblongue* et teintée de nuances diverses allant du *corail au brunâtre*, avec une sorte d'*incision* longitudinale au milieu et des végétations presque noires, aux contours *déchiquetés*, tout autour; vers l'autre bord de la toile, des formes étirées,

colonnes ou *aiguilles*, se multipliaient dans l'ombre, devenant plus colorées en approchant du centre et traversant la chose rouge de trois *pointes* bleues inégales.

(p. 18, *Un Régicide*, our italics.)

The image is of a pudenda undergoing sadistic torture. The red, pink and brown mass with its central incision denote the female sex organs; the needles penetrate it in the shadows of its pubic growth. The sadism suggested by the picture is enhanced by Boris's act of shaving with a blade, which the text has previously dwelt over. Immediately after this, thoughts of Laura enter Boris's mind, sparked off by the picture, thus lending it a role as a sadoerotic generator.

As in the filmic texts, *Les Gommés* and *Le Voyeur* manipulate the pictorial representation within the text as a *mise en abyme*, in order to reflect upon the text's process of creation. Preempting the course of the action, such visual images must also be seen as generative of the text, as in the films *L'Eden* and *La Belle Captive*.

While *Le Voyeur*'s painting in Mme Robin's room above the cafe 'A l'Espérance' is an admittedly problematic visual version of the text's own obsession, with its image of a submissive female (p. 68, *Le Voyeur*; see Chapter Two, I, iv, above), *Les Gommés*' two pictorial displays in stationery shop-windows together comprise a *mise en abyme* which sheds light on the invention and inversion which this novel performs. In the 'papeterie Victor Hugo', a mannequin - an image for Wallas himself, who erroneously believes himself to be the author of his actions - paints the ancient city of Thebes, while using as his model, incongruously, a photograph of the building in which Daniel Dupont was shot (p. 131, *Les Gommés*).

When later on Wallas sees a similar window display in another stationer's, the figure of the painter is inside the picture of Thebes, and while the ancient town is his model, he now produces instead of a painting, a photograph of the same building, in which Dupont will later be killed (pp. 177-178, *Les Gommés*). The artist's movement inside the picture signifies loss of authority and participation in the work he had initially

controlled: seen in juxtaposition, the two displays form a *mise en abyme* reflecting the course the story will take.

As Morrissette suggests, the changing picture on the staircase at Daniel Dupont's house plays a similarly self-reflexive and preemptive role.¹⁰⁹ Initially, the picture thematises the textual game, as a representation of a Tarot card; later it depicts the death of King Laius (p. 243, *Les Gommés*). Taken together, the two representations work metatextually, and doubly intertextually. For they depict Wallas and the eventually defeated Daniel Dupont, while also providing an image for Oedipus and his murdered father, or alternatively, Boris and the assassinated king from *Un Régicide*.

While Morrissette points to the generative role of the picture 'La Défaite de Reichenfels' in *Dans le Labyrinthe*, we would assert its disruptive function, which counters the verbal process of sense-making by undercutting it and revealing it to be illusory. Even if the novel is interpreted as the expression of a subjectively perceiving consciousness, such that the animation of the picture becomes a means by which the narrator invents the story using the objects around him,¹¹⁰ nonetheless the predominant work which the picture performs when verbally described is to double, and trouble the text as representation in its replication and obfuscation of the café scene (as is fully explored in Chapter Two, I, v, above). While the organizing role of the picture might be compared to the generative role of pictorial art in the film *L'Eden*, nonetheless the incorporation of the visual text within verbal structures produces hiatus and disorientation which look towards the subversions of the picto-novels.

If the early literary texts internalise pictorial art in order to disorientate the linguistic illusion of reality, the later novels contain iconic art as an absence at their centre. While they are rewritten or restructured as picto- and photo-novels (as examined in due course), *Topologie* and *Souvenirs* are themselves literary texts, and only an assessment of them without their iconic generators may illustrate the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to a comprehension of them.

(ii) Reading *Topologie* and *Souvenirs* :
The Hazards of the Single-medium Approach

The insistence on a linear reading of Robbe-Grillet's later novels, which confines itself to the texts' purely verbal texture, has led to reductive statements by critics. Yet it is our view that while *Topologie* and *Souvenirs* may in some senses deserve charges of incoherence or closure, only such an incoherence played out verbally will generate the necessity to assess the texts intertextually and across artistic disciplines.

For, these texts deliberately set up an equation of which they are but one, verbal, part. To insist that they stand alone, autonomous and self-enclosed, is to attempt to encase them in an opaque and fragile shell, which denies their role within an intertextual germination.

Both *Topologie* and *Souvenirs* are non-mimetic, their events and descriptions subject to an often abstruse generative logic as obsessive patterns recur, fuse, and confuse. These literary texts are deliberately elusive, often imaginary or dreamlike, bypassing realism and hence concepts of universality and conventionality. Episodes and motivations are cryptic, the narrative is at times inexplicable, and at others self-consciously artificial and self-subverting.

In *Souvenirs*, this is effected by the unstable and multiple identity of the narrator who uproots the origins of the narrative in a consistent play of contradiction. One might locate a tendency towards closure within the verbal structures of these texts. This is reflected in *Souvenirs* by the immobility which opens the work, exemplified by the first line, 'Impression, déjà, que les choses se rétrécissent' (p. 7), implying as it does a pervasive clausturation. Such a reluctance to narrate equally characterises diegetic events, as both the police interrogation, and the account of the crime are threatened with dissolution.

It is this apparent textual shut-down which has provoked stricture, most notably from critics constricted to exclusively verbal channels. For Leenhardt, the rejection of mimesis or referentiality within Robbe-Grillet's work connotes textual closure. He argues

that while *La Jalousie* and *Dans le Labyrinthe* are at once self-reflexive and referable to external contingencies, such as the colonial relation between France and Africa or the war, *Topologie* employs only the initial catastrophe as a partial mimetic support for the text, a catastrophe which is divorced from external motivations. In its internalisation of its structures of meaning, *Topologie* becomes a linguistic exercise which has broken its links with an exterior universe.¹¹¹

Nelson's approach to *Souvenirs* encapsulates the provisionality of the exclusively literary reading. His view of Robbe-Grillet's text as mental-representation fiction limited to the purely imaginary mode results in an inventory of negations, as the following are deemed absent from the text: the identity of the narrator, the concept of character, the notion of fictional reality, the concept of time, notions of predictability and explicability, and the use of traditional narrative units. The text is finally dismissed as meaningless.¹¹²

Such critiques are useful insofar as they illustrate the dangers of isolating *Topologie* and *Souvenirs* within an exclusively literary frame of reference. For both novels become causally explicable (if not in the way Nelson would like) via their imbrication within a network which is not only verbal but also iconic.

We would even reinterpret such criticisms as affirmations of the success of the Robbe-Grillettian intertextual and interdisciplinary exercise. For the closure which menaces *Topologie* and *Souvenirs* in diegetic or thematic terms is transcended by the multiple intertextual references, between verbal and visual texts, which the words generate and which in turn generate the words. The thematics of closure within these novels becomes a *necessary restriction* which is deliberately imposed in order to energise the interdisciplinary reading-viewing.

For the referential operation becomes a promiscuous exchange between texts and between artists. This in turn incurs an inevitable accentuation of the subjective or imaginary nature of the works within the dialogue, as these works are defined no longer as autonomous but in their relation to and difference from work by other individuated artists. This explains the increasingly imaginary nature of the later novels.

And if the process of referentiality is reduced, its dynamic is nevertheless preserved, as the very process of reference between word and iconic text becomes the subject of the network. As our interdisciplinary reading-viewing will show, the Robbe-Grilletian verbal text becomes a single element within a controlled experiment which seeks to demonstrate how meaning is produced. Only a movement between media sheds light on this reciprocity which reintroduces concepts of referentiality dramatically into the centre of the intertextual exchange.

(iii) The Picto- and Photo-novels: Interdisciplinary Construction and Textual Analysis

(Topologie, Souvenirs, La Belle Captive: Roman, Construction d'un Temple en Ruine à la Déesse Vanadé, Traces Suspectes en Surface, Invasion Blanche, Temple aux Miroirs, Rêves de Jeunes Filles, Les Demoiselles d'Hamilton)

Topologie and *Souvenirs* gain authenticity and openness of both conception and execution from their provisional and vital role in an intertextual operation across disciplines. These literary texts are opened up and penetrated by works from other media, and are thus contaminated by the mythologies and associations of these media.

The literary text which retains the trace of iconic generators in turn overcomes the linguistic scheme which superficially structures it. The words become merely an 'ébauche', finding their colour, their context and their conflict from works outside themselves. The collaboration becomes both a triumphant self-violation, and an orgasmic cross-fertilisation, both of texts and of the media to which those texts belong.

The extent to which *Topologie* and *Souvenirs* are literary, pictorial and photographic adventures may be ascertained from Morrissette's indispensable 'Constructional Appendix' (pp. 79-81, *Intertextual Assemblage in Robbe-Grillet From Topologie to the Golden Triangle*), in which page references designate the specific areas

of overlap between these literary texts and the picto-/photo-literary collaborative work which reproduces and recontextualises passages from *Topologie* and *Souvenirs*.

Yet the degree of intersection between these verbal texts and their verbal-iconic counterparts is more effectively appreciated from a reading-viewing of the verbal-visual texts in which sections of *Topologie* and *Souvenirs* also appear. For the text of the latter novels is reproduced in a new order in the following works: *La Belle Captive: Roman* which juxtaposes the pictures of Magritte with verbal text by Robbe-Grillet; *Construction d'un Temple en Ruine à la Déesse Vanadé* in which etchings by Delvaux are joined with written passages by Robbe-Grillet; *Traces Suspectes en Surface* which combines the lithographs of Rauschenberg with verbal text by Robbe-Grillet; *Rêves de Jeunes Filles* and *Les Demoiselles d'Hamilton*, each of which contain verbal text by Robbe-Grillet and photographs by David Hamilton; *Temple aux Miroirs* in which photographs by Irina Ionesco are combined with text by Robbe-Grillet.

Moreover, *Souvenirs* contains a section which was generated by Robbe-Grillet's perception of the work of Jasper Johns; this verbal piece is reproduced in a catalogue of Johns's work under the heading 'La Cible, en Hommage à Jasper Johns'.¹¹³ Both *Topologie* and *Souvenirs* contain small sections which are not reproduced in any of the above mentioned collaborative works. Since *Topologie* and *Souvenirs*, Robbe-Grillet has worked with other artists, notably contributing an imaginative written preface to George Segal's exhibition of sculpture, entitled *Invasion Blanche*.¹¹⁴

Our analysis will focus on the process of creation and of interpretation of these works, via an assessment between artists as between disciplines. Limited space restricts our detailed analysis to only some of the specific works; for this reason we analyse the more readily available of the collaborative works in order to maximise relevance and potential readability/viewability.

The intertextual construction of the collaborative work is a multiple origination. An assessment of the actual process of creation illustrates the implications of such cross-fertilisation on notions of textual origin and originality. The single-authored work which is informed by intertextuality may posit the hypotext as original source for certain

elements of the hypertext. Yet this hypotext may in turn intertextually refer to other preceding works in a further displacement of origins. The single-authored work is then denied an origin by the very process with which it attempts to disclose its intertextual source. The collaborative work bridges this void by self-consciously acknowledging its intertextuality through its formal structuration. As such it attempts to preempt the hypertext-hypotext hierarchy by engendering an interpenetration of these two terms by each other.

The degree to which the Magritte-Robbe-Grillet text *La Belle Captive* may be termed a dialogue is ambivalent. When Robbe-Grillet assembled the work, Magritte was already dead (and therefore did not die, as Robbe-Grillet has himself acknowledged, as a result of the dialogue). Superficially, Magritte had no aesthetic control over the text except that displayed by the pictures when seen as autonomous works; Robbe-Grillet doubly writes the work, both via his verbal descriptions and via his syntagmatic placing of the pictures in an order which he decides.

Such a writing after the composition of the images implies a far greater degree of control over the material for Robbe-Grillet, than in the collaborations with Delvaux and Rauschenberg. *Traces Suspectes en Surface* was generated in an ongoing exchange, with Robbe-Grillet sending Rauschenberg three pages of written text, which Rauschenberg used to inspire his own three pages of lithographs, duly sent back to Robbe-Grillet in a dynamic process repeated over a period of four years, before the final book was put together by the two of them.

Yet the picto-novel *La Belle Captive* must also be seen as a reflection upon the extent to which Magritte has co-authored Robbe-Grillet's work. The verbal text often forefronts its similarity to the paintings, and this very process acknowledges a lack of Robbe-Grilletian authority over certain aspects of the text, as the paintings existed first.

The authority of both artists is moreover placed in doubt by an unconscious or accidental intersection between visual and verbal elements. Morrissette stresses the coincidental nature of Robbe-Grillet's use of imagery in works which precede the Magritte picto-novel but which correspond with it.¹¹⁵ More significantly, the verbal text

of section 2 (pp. 41-98) of *La Belle Captive* was written by Robbe-Grillet before he planned to use Magritte images or titles, and so was not generated by them in any direct sense.¹¹⁶ While Robbe-Grillet was familiar with Magritte's work, such an intimate yet unintentional interpenetration of image and word, and of one artist by another, threatens to dissolve all notions of originality.

Thus even the supposedly controlled intertextuality of *La Belle Captive* incurs a displacement of the artistic source. While Robbe-Grillet will introduce elements which have nothing to do with Magritte through an association the pictures inspire, some themes are common to both artists and by extension are testament to an absence of an individuated aesthetics. This has as its corollary the inevitability of an intertextual relation between texts as between artists even when the work of one is unknown to the other. Intertextual links between works may then have nothing to do with influence, and everything to do with chance, or with a universal 'réel' common to different artists which is evidenced in accidentally equivalent aesthetic motifs. The aleatory hypertext-hypotext reciprocity disrupts chronology and denies a hierarchy of development from intertext to text.

(iv) *La Belle Captive: Roman* : Textual Analysis

The reading-viewing of the picto-novel is an involvement within a violent process of correspondence and hiatus. This is generated by the shifting degree of intratextual referentiality between iconic and verbal elements, and by the varying level of intertextual referentiality between texts. Such threatened referentiality informs the hierarchy in which the reader-viewer becomes involved, and which the reader-viewer is invited to invent, by his/her own perception of coincidence or conflict. Both intratextual and intertextual interplay form a dynamic dramatisation of the extent to which verbal or visual elements might claim to represent reality.

Critics of the picto-novels attempt to determine the nature of the intratextual and intertextual hierarchies. Intratextually, if one aspect within the picto-novel is deemed to predominate, then it is affirmed as more immediately representative of reality. Where Stoltzfus formulates a 'synthesis and a transcendence' enabling a unity of visual image and word (completely invalidated by our reading below), Raillard claims that the visual attacks the verbal text of the book *La Belle Captive*, the picture's impact remaining with the reader-viewer, while the fluid structure of the written word avoids fixity in the memory.¹¹⁷ The visual-verbal juxtaposition becomes a denial of the written medium as representative of a reality outside itself.

Others maintain an irresolution between verbal and visual elements, Morrissette's interesting analysis of the cryptic picture-title illustrating a suggested yet threatened referentiality between word and picture.¹¹⁸ From an intertextual viewpoint, Ramsay proposes that the use of one creative work to generate another, as when literary work intersects with picto-literary work, does not imply a referentiality from one work to another. These literary texts never represent an original, and are not constrained to respect the generating text, whether picture, photograph, or verbal text.¹¹⁹

We argue along with Vidal that Robbe-Grillet's texts are always mobile and displaced, the movement between media, both intra- and intertextually, generating openings and incompleteness.¹²⁰ Just as the visual both traces and effaces the verbal and vice-versa, so too text both replicates and displaces intertext in an unpredictable and energised performance. Resemblances between verbal and visual become snares which enable the disruption of one by the other, as referentiality is first implied, then fractured. Verbal language's inherent trace of referentiality enables correspondence and tension, as allusion becomes ellipsis, or eclipse.

The intratextual relation between iconic and verbal elements within the book *La Belle Captive* is both evident and unstable. On the one hand, both verbal and iconic elements are joined by a shared thematics, exemplified by the recurrence of erotic depictions of women, of self-conscious representations, of chess pieces, and of oneiric, suggestive juxtapositions. Both the verbal and the iconic are moreover characterised by

their bizarre nature and might therefore be aligned in their difference from conventional methods of depiction. Just as Robbe-Grillet's narrative is sometimes opaque, inexplicable and non-mimetic, so too is Magritte's painting, such that both pictorial and verbal narrative coincide in their very refusal to return easily decodable messages to the reader-viewer.

Often however, there is a clear contradiction between the written text and the visual image. This may be due to details or events which do not correspond from word to image; it may equally stem from a delay in correspondence which causes the reader-viewer to refer back in memory or by rereading/reviewing.

Such a tension is created most evidently by the sadoerotic murder with which the written text opens, accompanied by the seemingly irrelevant picture, *Le Chateau des Pyrénées*, which shows a boulder falling into the sea, with a tiny castle sculpted into the top. The sadoerotic murder is not visually shown until Magritte's fourth picture on page 15, in *L'Assassin Menacé*. Initially therefore, the writing is a reading-in, a hypothesis, the very provisionality of which is created by the picture's denial.

And even after the visual text catches up with the verbal, a discrepancy between them is again played out by conflicting details. For Magritte's victim lies on a red chaise-longue, Robbe-Grillet's on a white lacquered table. The opening verbal narration thus invites the reader-viewer to imagine what may be coming next, and is then unsettled as adjustments are made iconically. The equivalence between word and visual image is thereby revealed as imaginary, and subject to revision, or rewriting. In this way the production of meaning is itself dramatised as reinventable, as supposedly correspondent terms add up only within a variable equation.

The ambivalence of the iconic representation in interaction with the verbal message further affirms the construction of significance as open to multiple possibility. The verbal text interprets the visual text, offering a clever, unexpected commentary which reorientates the reader-viewer's conception of its meaning.

Magritte's *L'Eloge de la Dialectique* shows the facade of a house with its window open, inside of which an identical house-facade may be seen as if one house is

inside the room of the other. Robbe-Grillet's narration suggests that this inner facade is in fact a mirror, reflecting the house opposite; the latter would then be situated where the reader-viewer is, facing the picture itself (p. 38, *La Belle Captive*).

The picture also self-consciously reflects upon the verbal narration, dislodging its authority and unsettling its meaning. This is most evident when Magritte's *Lectrice Agitée*, with its image of a shocked woman holding a volume of literature, is presented as an image for the reader-viewer's possible reaction when confronted with Robbe-Grillet's sadoerotic text (p. 91).

Intertextually, a comparable network of correspondence and displacement is developed which extends to works by Robbe-Grillet from other media and to works by other artists. The picto-novel *La Belle Captive* is most obviously intertextually linked to Robbe-Grillet's literary texts, *Topologie* and *Souvenirs*. The opening section of *La Belle Captive* (pp. 9-38) also forms Subsection V, 'Un autel à double-fond' pages 181-96 of *Topologie*; Chapter 2 of *La Belle Captive* (pp. 41-98) comprises pages 38-65 of *Souvenirs*; Chapters 3 and 4 of *La Belle Captive* (pp. 101-150) also form pages 65-89 of *Souvenirs*.¹²¹

Yet evidently the mapping of *La Belle Captive* onto the two novels is problematic, as these novels may in turn be mapped onto other works with which they intersect, containing as they do passages from *Construction d'un Temple en Ruine à la Déesse Vanadé* and from *Traces Suspectes en Surface*, as well as from the three photo-novels. This very network corrodes the autonomy of pictorial, verbal and photographic media, as each is intimately associated with, and retraced through the other, in an interdisciplinary corrosion.

At the same time, the verbal-iconic works do not map easily or completely onto the literary works *Topologie* and *Souvenirs*, as certain sections within these novels cannot be found in the verbal-iconic work at all. Such instances of an absence of correspondence indicate an asymmetry and dislocation between works as between media.

Sometimes in these literary texts, the same motifs reappear both in verbal sections for which there is an iconic referent (in a verbal-iconic text), and again in verbal

sections for which there is no iconic referent. This creates a sense of potentially infinite serial generation of motifs from text to text, and denies a specifically iconic, or specifically verbal origin for the motif. For example, pages 181-96 of *Topologie* form the opening section of the Magritte book *La Belle Captive*, but elements from this intersection recur in *Topologie*'s 'Coda' which is not reproduced in any verbal-iconic text. The woman's shoe (p. 199) refers to the 'soulier de femme' of page 191, opening the final, non-intertextual section of *Topologie* onto *La Belle Captive* but equally opening *La Belle Captive* onto a section of verbal narrative which this verbal-iconic text should not refer to. The origin of the text is therefore neither exclusively linguistic, nor exclusively visual: the interplay performed by the picto-novel roots the motif between language and visual image.

The words shared by literary, and verbal-pictorial texts also significantly refer intertextually to other works by Robbe-Grillet and in turn to works by other artists altogether. This opens all the texts implicated onto a potentially infinite intertextual network across media, producing a mutual contamination of filmic, literary, pictorial and photographic texts.

For the supposedly finite world of the pictorial representation may be exploded by the verbal text, when a new and indefinite source for the picture is suggested. This occurs when the book *La Belle Captive* makes intertextual reference to works other than *Topologie* and *Souvenirs*.

The stabbed mannequin which both verbal and visual elements depict in the picto-novel, is described as if its origin is in *Glissements*, as the verbal narration of the picto-novel relates a scene from that film with uncanny exactitude: 'Le corps transpercé du mannequin a été trouvé sur la plage à la limite des vaguelettes mourantes, entièrement dévêtu, écartelé par des chaînes aux barreaux d'un lit de fortune (d'infortune)' (p. 14, *La Belle Captive*). This corresponds with the scene in which Nora and Alice torture a clothes dummy at the water's edge (pp. 79-83, *Glissements*). This background to the events of the book *La Belle Captive* is not however represented in the Magritte pictures. It is intertextually motivated, opening out both the verbal and the visual text onto

Glissements by locating the origin of a scene represented in the image and the words, within that filmic text.

The intertextual allusion across media continues when seen in the context of *Glissements*. For as we have seen above, *Glissements* itself is a very intertextual work. The establishment of a link between the picto-novel and *Glissements*, institutes a reciprocal movement between Magritte and Robbe-Grillet on the one hand, and Robbe-Grillet, Michelet, Barthes, Lewis Carroll, Yves Klein and Georges Bataille on the other, as these artists are all either implicitly or explicitly alluded to in *Glissements*. This in turn denotes a contamination by Robbe-Grillet's use of interdisciplinary intertextuality of their work and of media.

Such an intertextual network across media is again established by the picto-novel when the cry of the murdered woman/mannequin is explained as a recording: 'ils écoutent le cri de la victime, enregistré sur le cylindre de cire qui en reproduit parfaitement toutes les modulations' (p. 17, *La Belle Captive*). This again marks a reference to *Glissements*, when Alice listens to a recording of sadoerotic whipping and groaning when alone in her cell (pp. 59-60, *Glissements*), but is equally a reference to *Projet* (as analysed in Chapter Two, section I, vi), connoting Laura's account of how she is forced to listen to a tape-recording of sadoerotic activities (pp. 63-69, *Projet*). Similarly, the picto-roman's verbal description of 'l'odeur d'algue violente qui règne dans tout l'hôtel' (p. 24, *La Belle Captive*) recalls, or preempts the seaweed which covers the Villa Seconde after Walter's night of love with Marie-Ange, in the film *La Belle Captive*, instituting a further allusion across media.

Magritte's painting *La Belle Captive* depicts a deserted beach, where Robbe-Grillet's verbal narrative pictures a girl playing ball provocatively at the water's edge (p. 56, *La Belle Captive*). This sadoeroticisation of the Magritte work subsequently generates the abduction of a girl student by the suddenly sinister narrator.

On the one hand, the abduction triggers a literary reference, as it is reflected visually by Magritte's picture *L'Etat de Grâce*, in which a burning cigar and bicycle are juxtaposed. Intratextually, the cigar illustrates the poisoned cigarette with which the

narrator dupes and dopes the female student, while intertextually we recall *Le Voyeur*, in which Mathias, a bicycle-rider, uses cigarettes to torture his female victim.

On the other hand, the abduction sparks off a series of filmic references which in turn implicate works from other media. For the abduction constitutes the confusing mystery of the film *La Belle Captive*, as Marie-Ange is ambivalently the object of sadoerotic criminal activities; in this sense the Magritte picture generates its filmic namesake. The kidnapping might equally be referred intertextually to *Le Jeu avec le Feu* with its recurrent kidnappings. A reciprocal allusion is thereby set up between the films themselves, by the pictorial-verbal text in which the Magritte picture is rewritten. Moreover, *Le Jeu avec le Feu* in turn makes intertextual allusions to Queneau's text *Zazie Dans le Métro*, just as the film *La Belle Captive* is intertextually informed by the work of Manet and Goethe, as stated above. All of these intertexts from different disciplines are therefore implicated in the network of texts and media through a multiple process of association and allusion.

It is not only Robbe-Grillet's verbal narrative in the picto-novel which develops this intertextual interdisciplinary network. The Magritte pictures and their titles are themselves often intertextual. The painting entitled *Les Fleurs du Mal* with its explicit link between the rose and sexual fantasy, connotes Baudelaire's poems and nuances them. Morrissette notes that *La Reproduction Interdite* shows a volume of Poe's *Aventures d'Arthur Gordon Pym* lying on its mantelpiece.¹²² Such references in turn leave their trace on Robbe-Grillet's narrative and equally contaminate the other works which intersect with the picto-novel.

As Morrissette states, Delvaux himself paints in a self-consciously intertextual way, his pictures imitating the poses given to figures in paintings by the old masters. Similarly, 'Le Navire à sacrifices' of pages 43-53 of *Topologie* refers to an established literary and pictorial symbol, fusing Magritte and Delvaux; while the sacrificial boat is illustrated by Delvaux in *Construction d'un Temple en Ruine à la Déesse Vanadé*, it is also depicted in the series of paintings entitled *La Traversée Difficile*, partly used in *La*

Belle Captive.¹²³ All pictorial and verbal texts within the network thus become multiply intertextual through the interdisciplinary collaboration.

The picto-novel is therefore central to the interdisciplinary intertextual operation within Robbe-Grillet's work as it proposes the most fruitful matrix for the fertilisation of one medium by the other, due to its collaborative and verbal-pictorial nature. A potentially infinite series of allusions across media is instituted by the formal and thematic conflicts and alignments which affirm both verbal language and visual image as equally important within a textual reflection of experience.

(v) Robbe-Grillet and Johns: *La Cible*

Like the picto-novel *La Belle Captive*, Robbe-Grillet's use of the work of Jasper Johns as a diegetic launcher for his verbal narrative offers an example of controlled intertextuality across media, and involves the reader-viewer in the process of creation, as visual art forms or is transformed by verbal narrative.

The way in which Johns's pictorial and sculptural work is accommodated within verbal structures, and the conflict such interaction provokes, open up the construction of textual meaning and thereby underline meaning itself as textually reconstructible. And just as the book *La Belle Captive* triggers multiple allusions to works outside the picto-novel, the Robbe-Grillet-Johns collaboration is also eclectically allusive.

Unlike *La Belle Captive*, the dialogue between Robbe-Grillet and Johns may not be read as such a clear juxtaposition of verbal narrative and visual work, as the verbal text is not presented alongside pictures or sculptures as in the Magritte book. Instead, Robbe-Grillet's text exists as a more autonomous piece, either as the text 'La Cible', which comprises pages 8-13 of *Jasper Johns* (published by Centre Georges Pompidou, 1978), a book of the Beaubourg exhibition of Johns's work in 1978, or as pages 130-150 *Souvenirs*, its relation to Johns's work more indirect and suggestive. The intratextual interplay between iconic and verbal elements coexistent on the same page is therefore not

the central drama of this interdisciplinary dialogue, as similarities in detail become secondary to a more general perception of thematic and formal comparisons.

Johns and Robbe-Grillet intersect thematically in several ways. The verbal text exploits thematics common to Robbe-Grillet's and to Johns's work taken as a whole, while playing on difference and hiatus between media. Like Robbe-Grillet, Johns conceives his pictorial art as figurative yet highly self-conscious; for Crichton, Johns slips in between Duchamp and Pollock, between the found object and the created abstraction.¹²⁴ And like Robbe-Grillet's work, Johns's work is, for Pontus Hulten, characterised by a thematics of fragmentation and of the banal, by the problematics of representation and of referentiality, forefronting the painting itself as object.¹²⁵ The interplay between the work of these two artists, and its functioning across verbal and iconic forms, is best illustrated by the distortion and dramatisation of the Johns works which 'La Cible' puts into play.

The verbal-visual dialogue is primarily concerned with the process of creation. Johns's work offers components which the Robbe-Grillet text takes up and transforms, generating a scheme and a scene with its own structural logic. *Souvenir* and *Souvenir 2* (both 1964) are two works by Johns which the title of Robbe-Grillet's novel *Souvenirs du Triangle d'Or* evokes.¹²⁶ These two paintings point to the uncertain nature of authorship in their depiction of Johns himself on a cheap souvenir plate illuminated indirectly by the light of a torch. *Souvenir 2* has a second canvas stuck to the main picture, its reverse side facing us, indicating that Johns's work is about the unconscious, the movement beneath the surface, and the process by which the invisible, as well as the visible, become visible to us. Robbe-Grillet's generative text *Souvenirs du Triangle d'Or* manifests its affinity with these issues clearly in its self-conscious and oneiric process.

Johns's works representing targets, to which the title of Robbe-Grillet's piece 'La Cible' refers, contain sadistic elements which may be aligned with Robbe-Grillet's sadoerotics. In the Johns painting, *Target With Plaster Casts* (1955), the collage target with its red, yellow and blue concentric circles, is topped by a row of nine compartments. Each of these contain a plaster cast of a dismembered and differently coloured body part,

such as a hand, an ear, a penis. Crichton states that the row of compartments might be compared to a watercolour set with its dishes of paint, an association made explicit by *Target* (1960), which includes paints and a brush beneath the concentric circles. *Target with Four Faces* (1955) contains plaster casts of a woman's face.¹²⁷ Johns's comment on the sadoerotic element within artistic production parallels Robbe-Grillet's textual creation.

Crichton points to the way Johns plays on the confusion of hand-made and ready-made objects, with the sculptures of flashlights and lightbulbs which Johns first began to make in 1958.¹²⁸ Robbe-Grillet's dialogue with Johns might therefore be viewed as a logical continuation from *L'Eden's* references to Duchamp outlined above, as Johns himself is evidently influenced by Duchamp. *Flashlight I* (1958), Johns's first, is sculpt-metal over an actual store-bought flashlight, whereas later on flashlights were made from papier-mâché, and plaster. Such a confusion of materials might be compared with Robbe-Grillet's consistent corrosion of the divisions between the aesthetic and the real, the lived and the dreamt. More significantly, Robbe-Grillet's contamination intertextually of one aesthetic medium by the other finds its correlative in Johns's mixed means approach to creation, which combines real objects with manufactured copies, and which blends pictorial art with sculpture in unsettling hybrid works.

The Robbe-Grillet narrative manipulates and is formed by elements from recognisable Johns pieces, while incorporating these within its own thematic and diegetic process. Beginning in the generating cell, the Robbe-Grillet text forms a narrative collage from first the light-bulb, presented to the narrator by a male arm (perhaps that of Johns himself) on page 131 of *Souvenirs*. This alludes to Johns's many works which feature lightbulbs, such as the bronze sculpture *Light Bulb* (1960). It is the light bulb which then generates the image of the target. For, the narrator imagines that when the bulb shatters, it will form nine concentric circles on the ground where it falls, like a pebble falling into water: 'On dirait la cible à neuf cercles' (p. 132, *Souvenirs*). Each of the projected circles now generate the series of objects which follow, as these elements which enter the

narrator's world correspond with each number in the numerical series, counting down from 9.

The tangible elements within the Robbe-Grillet text are therefore rooted in the Johnsian scheme, even though the nine circles of Robbe-Grillet's target denote a distortion of Johns, whose *Target with Plaster Casts* has only five concentric circles. It should be added however that numerical figures recur throughout Johns's work, most evidently in the *0 Through 9* series of oil paintings done in 1961.

Each numerical generator is linked on the one hand to Robbe-Grillet's production, intratextually to the plot of *Souvenirs* itself, or intertextually to other works within his corpus. On the other hand, these generators relate to the work of Johns.

The figure 9 is formed in Robbe-Grillet's verbal text by the design on the ale can which lies on the floor of the cell, which in turn corresponds to Johns's work, *Painted Bronze* (1960), a sculpture of two Ballantine beer cans. The figure 8 takes its shape intertextually from Robbe-Grillet's former work: as *Souvenirs* specifies, it is represented 'par le bout de corde avachi, dit « du voyeur » dans le rapport' (p. 133, *Souvenirs*), instituting an allusion to this early novel.

The figure 7 is generated by the coat-hanger in Robbe-Grillet's text, shaped like a seven, and appearing mutilated in Johns's work *According to What* (1964). The figure 6 is formed by a spoon in the Robbe-Grillet narrative, which in turn appears in Johns's *In Memory of My Feelings - Frank O'Hara* (1961), in which a real fork and spoon hang on a wire, suspended from the canvas.

The 5 is produced by a hand-print, termed 'l'empreinte d'une forte main d'homme' in the Robbe-Grillet text (p. 134, *Souvenirs*), recurring in Johns's *Handprint* (1954), then in *Diver* (1963) and *Land's End* (1963). This image recalls, for Roland, Alice's printing of her hand in red paint on the white robe of the nun Sister Maria in *Glissements*, triggering further intertextual reference, this time across media.¹²⁹ The 4 is formed by an upturned chair in Robbe-Grillet's text, literally appearing suspended in Johns's works *Watchman* (1964) and *According to What* (1964). The 3 is reflected in the shape of a half eaten apple, the two bites taken from it making it resemble this number seen in

silhouette. The narrative source in *Souvenirs* for the apple is uncertain, as the text explains (p. 136), but it leads swiftly on to the figure 2.

This penultimate number in the series is important as it becomes the focus of an intertextual struggle between Robbe-Grillet and Johns. Initially, the figure 2 is formed by the bright blue woman's shoe which comprises one of the pieces of evidence against the narrator. But then the narrator changes his mind; this woman's shoe would make a better figure 7; in any case, it was first located on the seventh concentric circle of a round iron grille (another image for the target) in the street, earlier on in *Souvenirs*. The shoe is subsequently combined, or sculpted by the words, into a Johnsian shoe: although the shoe is Robbe-Grilletian in its femininity and blue colour, recurring in similar form in *Glissements* and in the film *La Belle Captive*, it is now specified as also possessing a round mirror on its upper, like Johns's man's shoe in his sculpture *High School Days* (1964). As *Souvenirs* tells us, the shoe's only distinguishing characteristic is its 'miroir rond, large comme une pièce de demi-dollar, qui se trouve enchâssé dans le cuir' (p. 137, *Souvenirs*).

The shoe signals a site of conflict between the work of the two artists, accommodated by the amalgamation of features from each artist's work. Such a conflict is reflected in the Robbe-Grillet text by a rupture and rewriting. For, if the Robbe-Grilletian-Johnsian shoe is to assume the place of the figure 7 in the numerical series, the coat-hanger must be moved from its initial position at this numerical place. Hence, the narrative swaps the shoe for the coat-hanger, reordering the textual elements: 'Quant au fil de fer tordu, il constituera en réalité un 2 bien meilleur que ce 7 dont on l'avait auparavant chargé' (p. 138, *Souvenirs*).

The final element introduced into the cell by the male arm is a Johnsian flashlight. This corresponds to the figure 1 in shape, and enables the eventual continuation of the Robbe-Grilletian récit. For the initial light-bulb has, via the numerical series, generated the torch, a useful source of light in its new battery-powered form, which enables *Souvenirs*' narrator to find his way through the darkness when the intertextual dialogue is

over. In this way the numerical series works intertextually to reflect the shared thematics of both artists, while remaining generative of the diegesis of *Souvenirs*.

(vi) The Photo-novels and Other Collaborations

The importance of the photo-novels lies in their contribution to the heterogeneity of the generative sources for Robbe-Grillet's work. While they may not themselves propose generative interplay as their creative experience, nonetheless Robbe-Grillet's collaborations with Hamilton and Irina Ionesco contaminate the verbal structures of *Topologie* and *Souvenirs* by opening the latter texts to photographic as well as pictorial-sculptural associations. The décalage between verbal narrative and photographic image which the three photo-novels engineer further develops the processes of conflict and coincidence between verbal and visual, hence between sign and referent, outlined above.

The extension of the intertextual network to photographic texts imbricates these within the general intertextual process, implying that they are as valid a generative source for the Robbe-Grilletian narrative as pictorial or sculptural works. The fact that, for example, pages 97-115 of *Souvenirs du Triangle d'Or* enjoy a close intertextual relationship with photographs from *Temple aux Miroirs* effects a corrosion of hierarchies between art forms, as works from pictorial and photographic disciplines interpenetrate through their intertextual role within the Robbe-Grilletian network.

Such an interpenetration also serves as a commentary on the similarities between photographic and pictorial media. For, on the one hand, the photographic texts would be more objective or realistic than the non-naturalistic pictorial or sculptural intertexts by Magritte and Johns which inform *Topologie* and *Souvenirs*. Yet precisely the same process of conflict and coincidence between verbal and visual elements is put into play in the photo-novels as in both the picto-novels and the Robbe-Grillet-Johns dialogue. The photographic images of the photo-novels, particularly those of *Temple aux Miroirs* which Morrissette terms 'stylised',¹³⁰ are far from innocent, as they display a strong

sadoerotic and lesbian thematic content, and are aesthetically designed in an often self-consciously artificial manner.

Whereas in *Les Demoiselles d'Hamilton* and *Rêves de Jeunes Filles*, the short passages of verbal text are separated in their lay-out from the longer sections of photographs, and hence are less suggestive of a correspondence between the two, *Temple Aux Miroirs* presents the verbal text on each page alongside the photographic image, like a series of titles or subtitles. This dual presentation of word and image in *Temple* courts comparisons which are revealing for our analysis of the relation between image and written text.

In *Temple*, the words which accompany the visual text connote and at times correspond faithfully to the photos, but the words are by no means always a reproduction of their content, or a pre-scription of what they show. Furthermore, the photographs create their own interrelationships, which are in some cases conveyed independently from the verbal text, hinting in turn at a visual autonomy within the photo-novel.

This is most clearly seen when the prepubescent girl, 'Temple', mimics the pose of an older, more jaded-looking woman, implying that the young girl wishes to be initiated into the rites of sadoerotic prostitution in which the older woman seems to be implicated, conveying a disturbing and immediate sense which the verbal text does not enounce directly.

Contradiction between visual and verbal is best exemplified when Franck V. Francis appears in the verbal text but remains absent from the photographs. At other times, a semi-correspondence is established, as when the written text talks about 'la nouvelle élue' within the brothel and describes the leather dog-leash worn by this new member. Yet the photograph which accompanies this written passage shows not Temple, but another woman wearing the lead, thereby unsettling the link between the photograph and words. This in turn highlights the potential of each artistic discipline to create its own ambivalent and impressionistic meaning, independent of conventional representation and description.

More recently, sculpture acts as a generator for Robbe-Grillet's literary work. While it is not included in his novels, the written preface of *Invasion Blanche*, a brochure for an exhibition by George Segal at Beaubourg in 1990, further extends the intertextual generative process which informs Robbe-Grillet's production across media.

A reciprocity is moreover set up by the sculptures themselves which refer back to Robbe-Grillet's earlier texts, Segal's sculpture *Girl Looking Through a Doorway* (1976/1987) recalling the 'tableau vivant' of *L'Eden* which depicts a nude coming through several door-frames at once. This suggests in turn that Segal's work was initially intertextually generated by Robbe-Grillet's, which, as illustrated above, is itself intertextually informed by the work of other visual artists.

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Thus the literary texts of *Topologie* and *Souvenirs*, when read as autonomous and non-intertextual, tend towards opacity. Read across media via an assessment of the pictorial, sculptural, photographic and filmic intertexts which inform them, these novels gain accessibility as imaginatively challenging generative games. The intertextual allusions to works from other media within Robbe-Grillet's corpus in turn demand that the late novels, as well as the picto- and photo-novels, and indeed Robbe-Grillet's work as a whole, be assessed across disciplines.

The analysis of the creative interdisciplinary dialogue as a process of visual-verbal intertextual interchange reveals the extent to which the process of invention is itself dramatised within the texts. For, as we have seen, words refer to, then adjust their relation to visual works of art, in turn highlighting the system of verbal-visual equivalence as mobile, and illuminating the relation between sign and referent as unstable and potentially reinventable.

We now propose a concluding section to our study, which will relate the

conceptions of the media revealed by this thesis to Robbe-Grillet's artistic practice. The conclusion will clarify the wider implications of his choice of media, and isolate what we see as the major characteristics of Robbe-Grillet's aesthetics.

Notes to Chapter 4.

I. Towards an Interdisciplinary Intertextuality

1. Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, p. 33.
2. The model for literary intertextuality is provided by Worton and Still: 'Introduction', in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, ed. by Michael Worton and Judith Still (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 1-44 (pp. 1 and 2).
3. Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-structuralism and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 205.
4. Beja, *Film and Literature*, pp. 68-69.
5. Rick Instrell, 'Blade Runner: The economic shaping of a film', in *Cinema and Fiction*, pp. 160-170 (p. 168).
6. Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics*, pp. 206-209.
7. Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La Littérature au Second Degré* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982), p. 16. We use the terms 'hypotext/hypertext' in the Genettian sense, and not in the 'I.T.' / 'C.D.Rom' sense, where this denotes the integration of footnotes into the text, to be accessed interactively by the user.
8. Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics*, pp. 207-208.
9. For full definitions of Riffaterre's terms, see: Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (London: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 1-19.
10. Michael Riffaterre, 'Compulsory reader response: the intertextual drive', in *Intertextuality*, pp. 56-78 (p. 58).
11. André Gardies, 'Récit et Matériau Filmique', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy*, II, pp. 85-110 (p. 90).
12. Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics*, p. 207.
13. Keith Reader, 'Literature / cinema / television: intertextuality in Jean Renoir's *Le Testament du docteur Cordelier*', in *Intertextuality*, pp. 176-189 (p. 176).
14. J. B. Ellis, 'Nineteen Eighty-Four and 1984', in *Cinema and Fiction*, pp. 66-74 (p. 73).
15. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 36.
16. Van Wert, *The Film Career of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 14-15.
17. Jill Forbes, *The Cinema in France: After the New Wave* (London: Macmillan Press, 1992), pp. 53-54.
18. Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'Discussion', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy*, II, pp. 68-84 (p. 71).
19. Genette's term is defined in *Palimpsestes*, p. 11.
20. T. Jefferson Kline, *Screening the Text: Intertextuality in New Wave French Cinema* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 4.
21. Reader, 'Literature / cinema / television: intertextuality in Jean Renoir's *Le Testament du docteur Cordelier*', p. 177.
22. Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, p. 104.
23. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 68 and 152.
24. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 58-59.
25. Alain Robbe-Grillet in interview, in *The Erotic Dream Machine*, p. 65.

26. Beverly LaBelle 'Snuff - The Ultimate in Woman-Hating', in *Take Back the Night*, pp. 272-278 (pp. 272-276).
27. Ann Jefferson, 'Autobiography as intertext: Barthes, Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet', in *Intertextuality*, pp. 108-129 (p. 111).
28. Jefferson, 'Autobiography as intertext: Barthes, Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet', p. 109.
29. Ramsay, *Robbe-Grillet and Modernity: Science, Sexuality, and Subversion*, pp. 228-229.

II. Robbe-Grillet and Intertextuality: Inter-media

30. The two quotations are taken from a talk by Alain Robbe-Grillet, entitled: 'Du Nouveau Roman à la Nouvelle Autobiographie', which was given at the 'Colloque International: *Texte(s) et Intertexte(s)*', organised by the Institut Français du Royaume Uni, and the University of Swansea; and held at the I.F.R.U. in London, on 20-21 May 1994.
31. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 72.
32. Lillian Dunmars Roland, *Women in Robbe-Grillet: A Study in Thematics and Diegetics* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1993), p. 12.
33. Albert Camus, *L'Étranger* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), pp. 113-114.
34. Robert R. Brock, *Lire, Enfin, Robbe-Grillet* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1991), pp. 4 and 39. Brock refers to *A Gun for Sale* as *This Gun for Hire*.
35. Jean Ricardou, 'Terrorisme Théorie', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy, I*, pp. 10-33 (p. 23).
36. *In The Labyrinth* (1962), 12 minutes, by Robert Lrikala (distributor: Filmmakers Cooperative, New York); *Les Gommages* (1969), 90 minutes, directed by Lucien Deroisy, screenplay René Micha (Franco-Belgian Coproduction); *La Jalousie* (1972) by Klaus Kieschner (for German TV); *Les deux chambres distantes et / ou les deux chambres discrètes* (1975), adaptation of *La Chambre Secrète*, and *La Plage à Distance* (1977), adaptation of *La Plage*, both directed by K.Nakagawa (Japan); *La Chambre Secrète* (1978), directed by J.F. Urrusti (London International Film School). This information is provided by Stoltzfus, in *Alain Robbe-Grillet: Life, Work, and Criticism*, pp. 19-20.
37. Kline, *Screening the Text*, p. 2.
38. Michel Rybalka, 'Alain Robbe-Grillet: At Play with Criticism', in *Three Decades of the French New Novel*, ed. by Lois Oppenheim (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 31-43 (p. 36).
39. Bruce Morrisette, *The Novels of Robbe-Grillet*, rev. edn. (1975), pp. 250-251 and 279-281.
40. Ricardou, *Pour une Théorie du Nouveau Roman*, p. 240.
41. Ricardou, in 'Discussion', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy, I*, pp. 85-107 (p. 96).
42. Stoltzfus, *Alain Robbe-Grillet: The Body of the Text*, pp. 100-101.
43. Vareille, *Alain Robbe-Grillet L'Étrange*, p. 100.
44. Ramsay, *Robbe-Grillet and Modernity*, pp. 27-28.
45. Bruce Morrisette, *Intertextual Assemblage in Robbe-Grillet from Topologie to the Golden Triangle* (Fredericton: York Press, 1979), p. 10.
46. Morrisette, *Intertextual Assemblage*, p. 16.

III. Topography of Texts Versus Ontology of Media: Interdisciplinary Textual Analysis of Film and Literature

47. Genette, *Palimpsestes*, p. 9.
48. André Gardies, 'Nouveau Roman et Cinéma: Une Expérience Décisive', in *Nouveau Roman: Hier, Aujourd'hui*, I, pp. 185-199 (p. 194).
49. *Obliques*, No.16-17, pp. 2 and 152.
50. For a full comparison of the themes before and after shooting, see the diagram of the initial seven themes in their series, *Obliques*, No.16-17, p. 194, and the 'Tableau Final des séries et des thèmes', *Obliques*, No.16-17, p. 197.
51. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 85. Stoltzfus also points to the way *L'Eden's* themes overlap, stressing the role of the individual's 'reading', *Alain Robbe-Grillet: The Body of the Text*, p. 50.
52. Sylvère Lotringer, 'Le Texte en Fuite', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy*, I, pp. 214-237 (p. 220)
53. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 136.
54. Ricardou, *Pour une Théorie du Nouveau Roman*, pp. 213-214.
55. Ricardou, *Pour une Théorie du Nouveau Roman*, pp. 222-225.
56. Morrissette, *The Novels of Robbe-Grillet*, rev. edn. (1975), p. 283.
57. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 96; Jost, 'Les Téléstructures dans l'OEuvre d'Alain Robbe-Grillet', in *Robbe-Grillet: Colloque de Cerisy*, II, pp. 223-246 (p. 242).
58. Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema*, p. 129.
59. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 69.
60. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 69.
61. Kline, *Screening the Text*, p. 223.
62. John J. Michalczyk, *The French Literary Filmmakers* (London: Associated University Presses, 1980), p. 109.
63. McGuffin is Hitchcock's term for the device or plot element which catches the viewer's attention or drives the logic of the plot in suspense films (Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, p. 415).
64. Kline, *Screening the Text*, pp. 72-73.
65. Henrik Ibsen, *Rosmersholm*, in *An Enemy of the People, The Wild Duck, Rosmersholm*, ed. by James McFarlane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 297.
66. Roland Barthes, *Michelet: Par Lui-même* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965), p. 52.
67. Roland, *Women in Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 98-99.
68. Barthes, *Michelet: Par Lui-même*, p. 67.
69. Barthes, *Michelet: Par Lui-même*, pp. 105-130.
70. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in *The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll* (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1939), pp. 42, 46, 61.
71. Raymond Queneau, *Zazie dans le Métro* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1959), pp. 12 and 71-74.
72. Goethe's poem, with English translation, may be found in: *Goethe: Selected Verse*, ed. by David Luke (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981), pp. 159-168.
73. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 62. Armes, *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 94 and 107.
74. Alexander Sergyeyevich Pushkin, *Boris Godunov: A Drama in Verse*, ed. by C. Nabokoff (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1918), p. 85.
75. Franz Kafka, *The Castle* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 99.
76. Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 49.

77. Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, ed. by J. Donald Crowley (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 1.
78. For an assessment of Trintignant's contribution to *L'HQM* and *TEE*, see Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 56-58.

IV. Interdisciplinary Intertextual Analysis: Film and Pictorial Art

79. Metz, *Langage et Cinéma*, pp. 171-172.
80. Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le Cinéma?*, p. 188.
81. Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, p. 7.
82. *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue* (1921), and the 1927, 1928, 1932 and 1937 paintings of the same name, may be found in: John Milner, *Mondrian* (London: Phaidon Press, 1992).
83. Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le Cinéma?*, p. 13.
84. Alain Robbe-Grillet in interview: 'Images and Texts: A Dialogue', in *Generative Literature and Generative Art: New Essays*, ed. by David Leach (Fredericton: York Press, 1983), pp. 38-47 (p. 46).
85. Milner, *Mondrian*, p. 93.
86. Milner, *Mondrian*, p. 161. *Composition with Red, Yellow, Blue and Black* may also be found in this volume.
87. Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 22.
88. Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, p. 11.
89. *Alain Robbe-Grillet: Oeuvres Cinématographiques: Edition Vidéographique Critique*, ed. by Pascal-Emmanuel Gallet (Paris: Ministère des Relations Extérieures, 1982), p. 45.
90. Charlotte Douglas, 'Biographical Outline', in: Evgeniya Petrova and others, *Malevich: Artist and Theoretician* (Paris: Flammarion, 1990), pp. 8-26 (p. 12).
91. *Malevich: Artist and Theoretician*, p. 59. *Woodcutter* (1913) can be found in this volume.
92. *Black Suprematist Square* (1914-1915) may be found in *Malevich: Artist and Theoretician*.
93. Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, p. 10.
94. Both of these pictures are in: Constance W. Glenn, *Time Dust: James Rosenquist: Complete Graphics 1962-1992* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1993).
95. Mary Lynn Kotz, *Rauschenberg: Art and Life* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), p. 134. A photograph of *Oracle* (1965) may be found in this volume.
96. Morrissette, *Intertextual Assemblage*, p. 25.
97. Kotz, *Rauschenberg: Art and Life*, p. 123.
98. Glenn, *Time Dust: James Rosenquist*, p. 22.
99. Glenn, *Time Dust: James Rosenquist*, p. 92. *I Love You With My Ford* (1961), *Dog Descending a Staircase* (1980-1982) and *Derrière L'Etoile* (1977) may be found in this volume.
100. Morrissette, *Intertextual Assemblage*, p. 63.
101. This screen-print may be found in: Kotz, *Rauschenberg: Art and Life*.
102. Morrissette, *Intertextual Assemblage*, p. 29.
103. *Alain Robbe-Grillet: Oeuvres Cinématographiques: Edition Vidéographique Critique*, p. 46.

104. All of the Klein pictures discussed here may be found in: *Yves Klein: 3 mars - 23 mai 1983* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1983).
105. The Magritte works referred to in Robbe-Grillet's film may be found in: Alain Robbe-Grillet and René Magritte, *La Belle Captive: Roman* (Paris: La Bibliothèque des Arts, 1975).
106. This picture may be found in the English edition: Georges Bataille, *Manet* (London: Macmillan, 1983).
107. Georges Bataille, *Manet*, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, Vol.IX (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), pp. 132-134.

V. Pictorial Generators for the Literary Medium: Reassembling the Hypotexts

108. Karlis Racevskis, 'The Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real: Nexus for the Authorial Subject', in *Generative Literature and Generative Art: New Essays*, pp. 35-37.
109. Morrissette, *Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet* (1963), pp. 59-61.
110. Morrissette, *Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet* (1963), pp. 161-163.
111. Jacques Leenhardt, 'Pages d'écriture sur fond de ruines', in *Obliques*, No. 16-17, pp. 133-140.
112. Roy Jay Nelson, *Causality and Narrative in French Fiction from Zola to Robbe-Grillet* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1990), pp. 199-203.
113. 'La Cible, en Hommage à Jasper Johns', in *Jasper Johns: 19 avril - 4 juin 1978* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1978), pp. 8-13.
114. George Segal and Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Invasion Blanche* (Paris: Editions de la Différence, Galerie Beaubourg, 1990).
115. Bruce Morrissette, 'Generative Techniques in Robbe-Grillet and Ricardou', in *Generative Literature and Generative Art: New Essays*, pp. 25-34 (p. 33).
116. Morrissette, *Intertextual Assemblage*, p. 45.
117. Stoltzfus, *Alain Robbe-Grillet: Life, Work, and Criticism*, p. 25. Georges Raillard, 'Mots de passe: Quelques notes prises au cours d'une traversée difficile: La Belle Captive', in *Obliques*, No. 16-17, pp. 203-212.
118. Morrissette, *Intertextual Assemblage*, pp. 35-36.
119. Ramsay, *Robbe-Grillet and Modernity*, p. 98.
120. Jean-Pierre Vidal, 'Remise à jour d'un polyptyque insoupçonné de Magritte: La Belle Captive', in *Obliques*, No. 16-17, pp. 213-224.
121. This and other details of intertextual correspondence are provided by Morrissette, *Intertextual Assemblage*, pp. 79-81.
122. Morrissette, *Intertextual Assemblage*, p. 43.
123. Morrissette, *Intertextual Assemblage*, pp. 19-21.
124. Michael Crichton, *Jasper Johns* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p. 80.
125. *Jasper Johns: 19 avril - 4 juin 1978*, p. 7.
126. The Johns works mentioned here may be found either in: *Jasper Johns: 19 avril - 4 juin 1978*, or in: Crichton, *Jasper Johns*.
127. Crichton, *Jasper Johns*, p. 30.
128. Crichton, *Jasper Johns*, p. 42.
129. Roland, *Women in Robbe-Grillet*, p. 151.
130. Morrissette, *Intertextual Assemblage*, p. 59.

CONCLUSION - ROBBE-GRILLET'S AESTHETICS OF CONTEST

The very interdependence of media which we have identified and illustrated in this thesis points to an inevitable and constant mobility of forms. Reciprocal influence never equates one medium with the other, as the media are always ultimately separate. Instead, their interplay guarantees a process of infinite mobilisation within each art form, as filmic aspects suffuse the literary, which shifts, in turn reciprocally infusing the filmic medium, which is transformed, and so on. This perpetual contest between media reveals their essence: they are defined by attraction and antagonism, and by intersection and displacement in relation to each other. This in turn suggests an ontology: we have proved the necessity of considering the media in terms of their interplay, since they are, to return to our epigraph, 'two separate and immanent dynamisms related by no system of synchronisation'.¹

Such an ontology has been most fruitfully developed by the conceptual mobility of the interdisciplinary analysis. As a theory, this mode has not aimed to establish a system of synchronisation between the forms, but has found its very energy in their dynamic interaction and conflict. The interdisciplinary approach has moreover proved to be an insatiable form of contestation in its own right - with its *own* autonomous mobility - which has illuminated valid aspects of the texts and media under discussion in this thesis.

Moreover, our method of interdisciplinary study, as conceived and tested in relation to Robbe-Grillet, may potentially be applied to other writer-filmmakers, or, indeed, to artists operating across any media which may themselves be traced via dynamic juxtaposition. Such future interdisciplinary analysis would form productive and challenging research, and would develop fruitfully from procedures originating in this thesis.

We would nonetheless reaffirm the particular usefulness of such a mode to an analysis of Robbe-Grillet's work. As an artist, Robbe-Grillet has deliberately alternated between disciplines. This alternation in itself has undermined a conception of literary, filmic or even of pictorial art forms as either unified or as hierarchically fixed in relation to each other. It has established indubitable links between media, while destroying their autonomy. The contest which Robbe-Grillet has staged between the art forms which he exploits, has revealed itself to be a contestation of medium by medium. The confrontation between forms has been motivated by a strategic subversion of the art form as a fixed convention, or as a naturalised, monolithic structure.

The contestation of medium by medium, of intertext by text, of form by form, and of theme by form, does moreover comprise the essence of Robbe-Grillet's aesthetics. Such a contestation generates itself out of the collapse of ideological systems, and out of the provisionality of truths. Such contestation, which characterises his work, is Robbe-Grillet's only option. For rather than imposing one unified and recuperable view, within one unified and recuperable medium, Robbe-Grillet has found that the only strategy within artistic production is to contest any and every position, and to use every means and medium at his disposal in order to do this.

The reaction against Sartrean 'engagement', and the rebellion against what Robbe-Grillet sees as a Balzacian ideology of realism - both of these (a)political and aesthetic contestations polemically expressed in *PUNR* - find their indisputable continuation in Robbe-Grillet's aesthetics of contest. For once these 'notions périmées' have been rejected by his theory and artistically undermined in the early novels, what remains for the artist to combat? Precisely the forms and media of art itself.

The attack on fixity of meaning, on the coherence of linguistic structures, on a referentiality between 'réel' and construct; the subversion of chronological order, of topographical certainty, of psychological explicability; the erosion of the division between conscious and unconscious realms, of the boundaries between fantasy, reality, dream and memory have all been achieved effectively and innovatively via a contestation within and between media throughout the course of Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic production.

And such an aesthetics of contest is not expressed in works of theory by Robbe-Grillet himself. Indeed, theory has proliferated to such an extent that Robbe-Grillet has reacted against it as an Order unto itself. It is only within the *works* that Robbe-Grillet's theory may be found. The flesh of text and the kernel of metatext are inextricably joined, and fertilise each other's development through the consistent uprooting of preexisting conceptions of aesthetic process. It is therefore only by experiencing the texts of Robbe-Grillet in and across each medium that his theory may be penetrated.

Furthermore, Robbe-Grillet's aesthetics of contest is most significant when gauged via interdisciplinary study. For only by moving confrontationally between media have we been able to analyse his aesthetics at work. The media themselves, as the sum of narrative possibilities of art forms, have been consistently contested by Robbe-Grillet, and never more effectively than via the reciprocal contamination of one medium by another, as aspects deemed intrinsic to one discipline - even that discipline's texts - invade the other discipline in the interests of violent disruption.

Starting with Robbe-Grillet's proclamations of an antagonism between media, we have seen how he subsequently incorporates techniques of composition and exposition from one medium into the other. Robbe-Grillet has exploited the inherent instability of filmic authorship by incorporating the influences of collaborators into his films, then turning to collaboration in his literary work with the 'picto-romans' in order to destabilise fixity in literary authorship.

He has reacted against the conventional view of literature as better equipped to express the contents of inner consciousness than film, by using film to convey imaginary or dream-like events. This has in turn challenged what has been seen as film's objective nature, by theorists such as Bazin and Mitry. Robbe-Grillet has forefronted formal intervention in his films as in his literature, suffusing both with a sense of creation in process, eroding the sense of film as 'reality'. The contest within the early literary works between objectivity and subjectivity has therefore equally been played out within the filmic texts.

Literary self-generation and the notion that the text creates its own meaning have been adopted by Robbe-Grillet for filmic composition in the use of the credit sequence as a generator. This has in turn denied claims by literary theorists such as Ricardou that literary language is non-referential, as the inevitable filmic mimesis, due to filmic iconicity, combined with such self-generation, reintroduces referentiality into the generative process itself. This in turn corrupts the closure of self-referential literary theories.

Robbe-Grillet has conceived his films in antithesis to the drive towards a language of film espoused by Metz, as he sees Metz's 'grande syntagmatique' as subjugating film to a linguistic model and so imposing an invalid hierarchy. The exploitation of Eisensteinian montage has energised Robbe-Grillet's disruptions, as such montage has been recruited largely to fragment narrative causality, coherence and linearity. Such montage has subsequently informed and structured his literature, most notably in the network of literary, picto-literary and photo-literary texts, which are heavily influenced by the process of filmic montage.

The drive against metaphor articulated in *PUNR* as a means of combating anthropomorphism has found form in his filmic texts in their insistent invention of their own semantic associations. The interplay between sound and image has proved an innovative means of subverting associations between the visual and the auditory. This in turn has been picked up in his literary-pictorial work, via the contestation of word by image.

The interplay within his work between stasis and mobility has also been motivated by a contamination between media. The use of filmic close-up, or freeze-frame within his literary texts has fractured the illusion of realism in literary description. Robbe-Grillet has also employed such an interplay to contest filmic narrative, via the conflictual relation between fixed profilmic and mobile camera. The static pictorial image has moreover destroyed linearity in both filmic and literary texts, relating Robbe-Grillet's procedures in each medium through his incorporation of a third art form within the structures of the other two.

The contestation of the source of narration, inaugurated in the early literary texts, is developed by Robbe-Grillet through self-reflexive devices. Robbe-Grillet's adaptation of such techniques to his filmic production demonstrates that such methods are less adequate to subvert narrative sources in film because such sources are less stable to begin with. The inevitable effacement of the narrative source from the filmic text means that this source can be less the subject of the text's formal investigation than it is in the literary process. Nonetheless, Robbe-Grillet's exploitation of conflicting point of view in literary narration finds its filmic variant in the struggle between narrative forces, played out by the conflict between intradiegetic narrator-protagonists, by the contest between verbal and visual texts within the film and by the disruptions of montage.

Yet Robbe-Grillet has incorporated precisely such an instability of filmic narration into his literary production. The multiplicity of narrative voice in the later literary texts from *Maison* to *Souvenirs*, such that a fixed narrator is less and less identifiable, is influenced by Robbe-Grillet's work in the cinema. However, this influence is in turn contested by an increasing stress in the later films on the visual image as a generator of narrative, as verbal language is effaced from filmic diegetic production.

Robbe-Grillet's use of the sadoerotic theme as a fantasy image or dream-like set-up in the filmic texts may in turn be seen as having influenced his literature from *Maison* onwards, which is increasingly explicit. Yet the subversiveness of such a theme in film is denied by the latter's mimetic or iconic aspect, which works against such images as structurally disruptive. Robbe-Grillet's literary adoption of the sadoerotic image becomes a radical means of contesting literary conventions, as this theme is bound to the novel's very structuration, and may be exploited to reflect upon textual creation and upon the inevitability of textual destruction.

It is the strategic exploitation of interdisciplinary intertextuality in Robbe-Grillet's work which has most clearly illustrated the disruptive energy produced by the contest between media. One art form is violently aggressed by its multiple collision with intertexts from other media. This in turn corrodes media autonomy and rewrites the intertext through recontextualisation. The text exploits interdisciplinary intertextuality to

expose fractures in the fault planes of the media themselves which, as predominantly comprised of conventions, are perpetually contested in an ongoing process of subversion.

It is in accordance with Robbe-Grillet's aesthetics of contest that we invoke Metz for our concluding statement, as he is a theorist whom Robbe-Grillet confronts head-on. In this way, we finish not with a conclusion, which would denote closure and fixity, but rather with an incitement to further contest.

Né de l'union de plusieurs formes d'expression préexistantes qui ne perdent pas entièrement leurs lois propres (l'image, la parole, la musique, les bruits même), le cinéma, d'emblée, est obligé de *composer*, à tous les sens du mot. Il est d'entrée de jeu un art, sous peine de n'être rien du tout. ²

The intertextual nature of film which Metz's statement points to (first referred to in Chapter One), contains within it a warning that such intertextuality threatens film with destruction. Admittedly, both filmic and literary texts are either consciously or unconsciously textured with allusions to works from both media; equally, the processes of spectating and reading are inherently intertextual due to the texts the reader-spectator brings to the work. Nonetheless, the nature of the media means that each maintains a contrasting relationship to intertextuality. This has vital implications on the role of narrative within the two media, and in particular on the role of narrative in Robbe-Grillet's filmic work.

Whereas the literary text may allude to an intertext through the single means of verbal expression, the filmic text may do so via a variety of methods owing to the film's visual, auditory and verbal constituents. Furthermore, while the literary medium has been influenced by film, the filmic medium must be seen as potentially more dependent on the literary model, due to the intertextual operations at the heart of filmic construction, as images are frequently derived from literary texts whether novels or scripts, as outlined in Chapter One.

We will finish by stating that it is precisely film's dependence on the concept of intertextuality which - unlike within the literary medium - generates an antagonism within the filmic art form itself. It is just such an *inner* antagonism which renders the filmic form more dependent on *narrative*. For the tendency of film to become everything, and nothing - 'rien du tout' - creates an imbalance which only narrative can counter.

Indeed, Robbe-Grillet's filmic intertextuality - which exploits film's essence as a collation of forms - celebrates film's intertextual infrastructure and hence this inner antagonism. Robbe-Grillet's intertextuality in film opens the text to texts from all media. In so doing it subverts textual hierarchy. It displaces the origin of the utterance, by attributing the latter to an intertext. It erodes the chronology of text and intertext, by instituting a rereading or reviewing. It corrodes the unity of the author, by implying plagiarism or derivation. Such a disorder destabilises Robbe-Grillet's films because, in its exploitation of intertextuality, it suggests that film, as hybrid, is everything and nothing.

In order to be something, the filmic medium must react with work of its own. Such work is performed through narrative coherence. However, the antagonism within the medium due to an intertextual essence, exploited by Robbe-Grillet to create filmic texts which consistently contest themselves, is not countered by a strength of narrative in these texts. Indeed, while Robbe-Grillet exploits the disruptive force of intertextuality in his films, he neglects the narrative aspects which would enable cohesion. Admittedly this is in accordance with his deliberate subversion of coherence and linearity. But we argue that this can work against Robbe-Grillet's films, by effecting their self-erasure *as films*.

As a final contestation, we would suggest that our exploration of interdisciplinary intertextuality in Robbe-Grillet's filmic texts - texts which do produce a radical and valuable work on conceptions of the filmic medium itself - nonetheless reveals that he is, problematically, in contestation with himself, as a filmmaker.

* * *

Notes to the Conclusion.

1. Samuel Beckett, *Proust and Three Dialogues*, with Georges Duthuit (London: John Calder, 1987), p. 17.
 2. Christian Metz, 'Le cinéma: langue ou langage?', in *Essais sur la Signification au Cinéma*, 2 vols (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1975), I, pp. 39-93 (p. 64).
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APPENDIX I

A Guide to Viewing Robbe-Grillet's Films

Robbe-Grillet's films are not shown regularly in cinemas in England; screenings of them are more likely to be found in Paris. Neither in France nor in England are the films readily available on video, the exception to this being *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* which is on general video release, in the Connoisseur Video series, from Argos Films and the British Film Institute.

La Belle Captive is the hardest to view, and is most likely to be seen at film festivals of Robbe-Grillet's work in Paris. For this reason, my own synopsis of the film is provided in Appendix II.

Published scripts exist as 'ciné-romans' only for *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, *L'Immortelle* and *Glissements Progressifs du Plaisir*.

The following information is a guide to viewing the films in England and France. It is not conclusive. Moreover, institutions listed below should be contacted first in order to check that their stocks have not changed; most also require notice before screenings can be organised.

There is a video edition of five of Robbe-Grillet's films, which is temporarily unavailable, entitled: *Alain Robbe-Grillet: OEuvres Cinématographiques: Edition Vidéographique Critique*. The set was compiled in 1982 by Pascal-Emmanuel Gallet, of the Cellule d'Animation Culturelle, at the Ministère des Relations Extérieures in Paris. The following films are available in this video edition, along with documentaries about the films consisting of interviews with Robbe-Grillet himself, and a booklet of transcripts: *L'Immortelle*, *Trans-Europ-Express*, *L'Homme Qui Ment*, *L'Eden et Après*, *Glissements Progressifs du Plaisir*.

Le Jeu Avec le Feu is also available on video, from: U.G.C. Vidéo, 5 Avenue Vélasquez, 75008 Paris.

The following films are available for viewing at the British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL: *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, *Trans-Europ-Express*.

The following films are available from the video library at the Institut Français du Royaume-Uni, 17 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2DT: *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, *Le Jeu Avec le Feu*.

The following films are available for viewing at the Centre National de la Cinématographie, Service des Archives du Film, 7 bis, rue Alexandre Turpault, 78390 Bois d'Arcy, France: *L'Immortelle*, *Trans-Europ-Express*, *L'Homme Qui Ment*, *L'Eden et Après*, *N a Pris les Dés*.

The following films are available for viewing at the Cinémathèque Française, 29 Rue du Colisée, 75008 Paris: *L'Eden et Après*.

None of Robbe-Grillet's films may be seen at the Vidéotheque de Paris, Les Halles, as they were not shot in Paris. However, the five documentaries recorded as part of the elusive *Edition Vidéographique Critique* may be viewed there.

APPENDIX II

Synopsis of *La Belle Captive*

The following synopsis was made during and after multiple viewings of La Belle Captive at a film festival in Paris. As such, it consists mainly of description but also contains my own subjective comments on the action, often in parentheses. The sense of the dialogue is accurate, but quotations may not be taken as exact; occasionally, English is used where only the basic meaning of the words was captured. 'EXT' and 'INT' denote 'exterior' and 'interior', and are borrowed from screenwriting jargon.

EXT - ROAD - NIGHT (PRECREDITS)

A brunette in sunglasses and a leather biker's suit rides on a Hells Angels motorbike. The sound of the engine is eerily distant, and the image fades almost to black, then reappears, as if flickering inside a consciousness. Wind slightly ruffles her hair.

The woman is SARA ZEITGEIST.

EXT - DESERTED BEACH - DAY (CREDITS)

A simple wooden picture frame on an easel, on a deserted beach, in front of the rolling waves of the sea. But where the canvas should be, there is an orange rectangle of photographic filter, through which the sea can be seen.

The credits appear within this frame, on the orange background. The sea, sand and sky in turn frame the frame.

INT - MATCHU NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

WALTER stands at the bar. He is in his twenties, good-looking and well-dressed. He watches the other clients, as they listen to jazzy music. In the background, the sinister barman hovers.

The 'Voix Off' narration starts, with the words: 'Une nuit perdue'. The voice, which is deeper than Walter's and yet claims to be his own, describes his situation as empty and useless. He works for 'l'Organisation', which has not however given him a job to do, possibly out of mistrust for him.

Walter watches a blond woman on the dance-floor, who moves in a near-embrace with another customer.

This is MARIE-ANGE.

She has a child-like face but tall, sexy body and long curly hair. Instantly she is real girl and *cover girl*, in the way she behaves and in the way she is shot. (Throughout the film she pouts, smiles provocatively, filmed in something approaching soft-focus, and only appears in scenes involving Walter, in dialogue with him or in his 'dreams', therefore only existent in association with him.)

Walter orders a 'vodka tomate', which the barman rephrases for him: 'une marie sanglante?'

Moments later, Walter is dancing with Marie-Ange in an intimate embrace. The music is much more sexy, a kind of stripper's theme. Shots are intercut of Marie-Ange dancing on her own and beckoning to Walter (or to the viewer). She performs a quasi-striptease, her shoulder-strap slipping off her shoulder, as smoke envelops her from behind as if she is a fantasy, or a parody of a fantasy. Then back to Walter and Marie-Ange dancing together.

Marie-Ange claims: 'Je n'ai pas de nom. Je suis désolée, je l'ai perdu', adding that she has no telephone number either, that she has been disconnected, and that there is no way of contacting her. All this, before Walter has even tried to chat her up. She adds: 'Le temps pour moi, ça n'existe pas', and writhes around in his arms.

The barman informs Walter that he is required on the phone. It is Sara Zeitgeist, whom Walter addresses as 'Chef', giving her monosyllabic answers as he takes his orders from her.

The 'Voix Off' narration explains that one of the requirements for working for the Organisation was having no attachments, and being able to drop everything to start on a job immediately.

As Walter says goodbye, there is a shot of Sara on her motorbike as before: she glances casually at the camera.

When Walter turns back to the dance-floor, Marie-Ange has disappeared. The 'Voix Off' informs us that he did not care, as he had another rendez-vous. (Here, as elsewhere in the film, the presence of Sara Zeitgeist displaces that of Marie-Ange onscreen, as if they are in contest within Walter's fantasy).

Walter knocks back his drink - now apparently red wine - and leaves, passing the sign which says 'Matchu Club'.

EXT - CAR - NIGHT

Walter drives in his gangster-style trilby and raincoat, in a convertible car, facing the camera in a parody of a movie driving-shot, with a back projection of the road disappearing behind. This is intercut with Walter's point of view, which shows trees lining the road ahead, illuminated by the yellow of the headlamps. The night is smoky and dark.

As he drives, there are flashbacks of himself dancing with Marie-Ange, as in the previous scene.

EXT - GRAVE-STONES - NIGHT

Walter faces Sara Zeitgeist, who sits on her now stationary motorbike, still in her black leather. Behind them is a series of tomb-stones, from a graveyard in the background. On one of the lower stone monuments is a brass candelabra, of the kind seen in vampire films. They pay it no attention.

Sara tells Walter to deliver a message, which she pulls from the white frilly shirt she wears incongruously under her black leather, also apparently from a vampire set.

Walter takes the envelope; on it are the words 'Henri de Corinthe'. Walter asks if she means the politician, and Sara replies, 'de l'ancienne majorité'. Walter should get the message to him at all costs.

Walter claims that someone may be in danger, and Sara agrees. Walter asks if she expects a reply, and Sara asserts that it would be better for Corinthe if he replied.

EXT - CAR - NIGHT

Back in the car, Walter puts on the stereo, and a Schubert Quartet (presumably *Death and the Maiden*) starts to play. (Michel Fano is not credited. The Schubert recurs throughout the film.)

Suddenly, up ahead, a body lies in the car's path. Walter halts, and rushes over to it. It is Marie-Ange, in a black dress made from shiny material. The blackness is in part dissolved in the darkness of the night, lending her white skin a fragmented, dismembered appearance. The dress looks oddly like seaweed.

Marie-Ange is lifeless. She has a large bleeding wound on her inner thigh, and must have been run over, or thrown from another vehicle. One of her high-heeled shoes has come off, and lies nearby.

Walter asks if she is okay, and tries to rouse her, to no avail. He lifts her to her feet, and eventually she begins to move expressionlessly as if in a coma. Her hands are tied behind her back with a bright gold chain, made of tiny links. This piece of jewelry looks barely strong enough to restrain her. (A similar chain is an object of fascination for Georges de Saxe and the kidnappers in *Le Jeu avec le Feu*.)

Walter is horrified. He drapes his coat around her shoulders, gets her into the car and drives off with Marie-Ange's head leaning against him.

There is a brief shot of Sara Zeitgeist on her motorbike, as before.

EXT / INT - VILLA SECONDE - NIGHT

The car pulls up outside high wrought iron gates. Walter dashes up to them crying to the security guard to be let in, as he must use the telephone. The gates creak open, and the car passes the sign saying 'Villa Seconde'.

Walter guides Marie-Ange into the ballroom, which is at the centre of this eerie mansion. There are white translucent screens instead of windows, which are latticed by black, complicated frames. Thunder booms in the distance.

Inside, the ballroom is a circular chamber. The bar is a smaller circle in the centre. Around this is a further circular pattern on the floor. This pattern consists of a mosaic of crabs, scorpions and other bizarre (Robbe-Grilletian) creatures.

The room contains only men, in black tie, who creep out of the shadows as Walter and Marie-Ange approach.

Walter demands use of the telephone. The barman ignores him, and the clients merely show fascination at Marie-Ange's condition. The twenty or so men close in threateningly. They are all perverse-looking, yet affluent.

One is DOCTOR MORGAN, and another has a strikingly bald head. The atmosphere is of a private club, devoted to sinister activities. Outside, the storm begins.

Each man in turn comments on Marie-Ange.

'Idée plaisante de l'avoir emmenée ici', one affirms.

Another adds, 'la plus belle des captives offertes ce soir'.

One man inquires whether Walter has found a buyer for her yet. Another debates with himself about a possible price.

(The implication is that Marie-Ange will be a human sacrifice, in accordance with Goethe's *Die Braut von Korinth*. The bride herself was a 'Menschenopfer' and then became a vampire).

Marie-Ange senses danger, but her reaction is rather odd: she stares fixedly at a glass of bloody mary that stands on the bar, and pouts at it, like a mute animal with a craving.

One of the men holds up the glass, and Marie-Ange sucks the fluid from it greedily. Walter screams in anger at the inappropriateness of this action. Walter grabs the glass, and hurls it to the floor.

There is a shot of the broken glass, and red liquid (a recurrent image in ARG's films and literature).

Marie-Ange now has a trickle of liquid dribbling from one corner of her mouth. Her expression is carnal.

Walter desperately implores the company to allow him to use the phone. A man steps forward and announces himself as Doctor Morgan. He escorts them upstairs, alone.

On the black-banistered stairway, there is the candelabra from the scene at the grave-yard; Walter notices nothing.

There are no pictures hanging in the stairwell.

INT / EXT - BEDROOM / DESERTED BEACH - NIGHT / DAY

Once Morgan has shown them into a bedroom, he leaves them alone. Walter asks for something with which to undo the chains binding Marie-Ange's wrists. Morgan merely locks the two of them in. Walter rattles the handle, in vain.

Marie-Ange calls out to Walter: 'Aide-moi Walter! Viens à mon secours!'

She is writhing on the bed, no longer hurt in any way. Suddenly she is completely naked. Walter goes over to her, and they kiss passionately.

Shot of Sara Zeitgeist on her motorbike, as before.

Then Marie-Ange is on the bed, her hands chained once again. Then she is naked, kissing Walter, and he lies back submissively, as if he is the one being ravished. She concentrates on his neck, on the left hand side, as if giving him a love-bite.

Cut to: the deserted beach, as in the credit sequence.

But this time, there is a frame on the easel, and inside the frame are red velvet curtains, framing the waves which continue to crash down in the background. The cawing of gulls.

Cut back to the bedroom, where Walter and Marie-Ange continue to make love.

Then back to the frame with the curtains, on the beach, and this time, the camera advances through the frame. Now we see that the red velvet curtains stand alone, upright, as a separate structure, and that only the perspective of the shot made them look as if they were joined. The curtains stand like a surreal apparition.

It is now that the pictorial reference is confirmed.

We cut to a picture, based on Magritte, a derivation, not a duplication of *La Belle Captive*. The picture hangs above Walter and Marie-Ange, in the bedroom, a duplication of the 'real' scene on the beach. The inscription beneath the picture announces: '*La Belle Captive*, d'après René Magritte'.

In this picture, the sea and sky in the background merge with the sea and sky that are being painted in the picture (within the picture) in the foreground, destroying all divisions between foreground and background, reality and reproduction.

Walter screams.

On his neck are two bloody holes, where Marie-Ange has bitten him. At the foot of the bed, naked as far as we can tell, Marie-Ange glances at him from between the glinting gold bars of the bed-head. Walter is unconscious again.

INT - BEDROOM AT VILLA SECONDE - DAY

The next day, or so it would seem, Walter rises to find Marie-Ange gone.

The room is wrecked. Newspaper is stuck to the floor and walls. Daylight outside makes the room look as if it is on the ground floor. The foliage by the window is very green, making the garden seem level with the room. In fact, we remember the room is on the first floor.

Walter picks up an empty champagne glass from the floor, of the type that the bloody mary was in. (Glasses in this film are all of this exact same shape and size, as in Robbe-Grillet's other works, notably *Maison*.)

The French windows are noticeably adorned with heavy red velvet curtains, as in the beach shots.

The windows are shut, and when Walter tries to open them, the handle comes off in his hand.

Walter inspects the picture above the bed. It is still there, and the camera focuses on the brass plaque on which the inscription is written, which is of a similar style to the gold name plate attached to Marie-Ange's wrist-chain.

Walter locates the chain, discarded, and reads its inscription: 'Marie-Ange Van der Reeves'.

Walter leaves the bedroom through the main door, which is now unlocked.

The sound of glass smashing.

Walter enters the bathroom. There is sea-weed in the white bath-tub, and strewn all over the place. The mirrors are tarnished and smudged. Walter tries the taps, but they have been unscrewed. No water comes from them.

In one of the tarnished mirrors, Walter notices that his neck is still bloody. He dabs at it, wincing. The holes do not look realistic at all.

INT - VILLA SECONDE, BALLROOM - DAY

In the deserted ballroom, Walter discovers newspaper all over the walls, and seaweed in circles all over the floor. Where the bar was, there is now a circular pool of seawater, with weed and sand all around it.

Nearby is an easel, bearing a canvas. On it is painted blue sky, flecked with clouds.

Flashback shot of *La Belle Captive*, the picture. The sky pattern seems to be the same.

The 'Voix Off' tells us that it was as though an ocean had swept through the building.

As Walter exits onto the drive, the 'Voix Off' continues to tell us that the inner damage must have been due to the storm of the night before, which has broken branches off trees in the garden. Or maybe Walter just drank too much. (In fact, the deposits of seaweed inside the house are far more serious than any damage done outside the villa.)

The 'Voix Off' suddenly remembers the message which Sara Zeitgeist had ordered Walter to deliver. Walter drives off.

EXT - SUBURBAN ROAD - DAY

The roads are recognisably suburban, and the buildings and signs jar with the mystery of previous scenes due to their banality. Walter plays the Schubert Quartet on the stereo, but passes a Renault factory, the name clearly displayed, which seems highly out of place.

Eventually he arrives at a bar, which is improbably located among a row of residential houses, all of which seem deserted. The 'Voix Off' tells us that the bar looked as lost as Walter was.

INT - BAR - DAY

As he walks into the bar, Walter snatches up a newspaper from a stack conveniently, if implausibly, placed near to the entrance.

Serving at the bar is a girl who looks very like Marie-Ange. To further this impression, she holds a hair-grip between her teeth, which resembles the trickle of bloody mary which dribbled from Marie-Ange's mouth the night before.

Walter glances at the paper, and on the front cover there is a picture of Marie-Ange, with the headline: 'Enlevée la veille de son mariage'.

The barmaid reads the paper over Walter's shoulder with cloying interest, and provides more details of the story, explaining that the Comte Henri de Corinthe was due to marry Marie-Ange this morning, but when asked by police, de Corinthe could not even remember her name. The barmaid suggests that de Corinthe must be involved in drugs or something similar.

EXT - VILLA SECONDE - DAY

When Walter arrives at the gates of Villa Seconde, he finds them locked with a chain. This time, there is no guard at the gates.

Yet the words 'Villa Seconde' are still there as before. Walter shouts: 'Il y a quelqu'un?!'

He tries the bell, which is set in stone by the gates, and the button nearly comes off in his hand.

In sync with the moment when the bell should chime, there is the sound of a bicycle bell. Walter turns to see a youth on his bike - possibly some sort of voyeur.

The youth tells Walter that the villa has been deserted for years ('on n'entre pas'). The boy claims that he passes the villa twice a day, so he should know. The youth flips the handlebars through 180 degrees, and back round again quickly, in childish playfulness. Or madness.

Walter could try the neighbours, the youth suggests ('demandez plutôt aux voisins'). The youth cries: 'allez, salut!', cycles off, but then drives in a circle around Walter, then stopping before him in exactly the same position, and adding, 'et bonne chance'. The youth cycles off again.

We hear the screech of car-brakes off screen as the youth gets to the road, then the tinkling of the cycle bell to indicate that he has not been run over. The car engine speeds away, off screen.

After the youth has gone, Walter picks up one of Marie-Ange's high-heeled shoes which lies, blood-stained, by a champagne glass in the leafy rubble at his feet. Walter puts the shoe in his pocket. As he does so, a dog barks loudly nearby (no dog is seen in *this* film).

Walter walks to the neighbouring door. As he opens it, this time without trying to ring the doorbell, there is a flashback of the youth performing his circle on his bike, repeating the words: 'demandez plutôt aux voisins'. Then we see Walter again as he enters the neighbour's house. Then the flashback itself is repeated, this time continuing the youth's words, with, 'et bonne chance'.

The flashbacks significantly occur as Walter picks up the shoe.

INT - CLINIQUE MORGAN - DAY

Walter treads past the plaque by the door which announces the 'Clinique Morgan', and finds the place deserted.

He enters a room, with an old and traditional feel to it, rather like Villa Seconde. At the far end of the room, completely covering the wall, are windows.

But instead of glass, a bright blue sky flecked with cloud has been painted, preventing a view outside. The sky is identical to that found in the picture which Walter saw in the ballroom at Villa Seconde a few scenes earlier.

Off screen, we hear three notes, extremely high, sung by a female opera singer in the form of an arpeggio. The arpeggio then dissolves into chuckling laughter, and after this it becomes an operatic arpeggio again.

A figure propels herself into the room, in a wheelchair, laughing, and repeating the arpeggio bizarrely. In the wheelchair is a beautiful blond woman (played by Arielle Dombasle, but unnamed in the film). She is straitjacketed, but her shoulder is bare on one side. She gazes at Walter with a mixture of madness and amusement.

Walter demands information about next door. The mad woman replies: 'mais elle n'existe pas, la maison d'à côté, ce sont des fous. Quelquefois on les entend crier, des cris de femmes hystériques, ou elles se battent, ou bien ce sont des chiens perdus'.

The mad woman begins to have a fit, as if imagining what she describes. Doctor Morgan strides into the room.

Initially Morgan is very angry with Walter, and demands to be told who let him in, stating that there are sick people at the clinic whose condition should be respected. Walter asks hotly about the house next door. Morgan insists that next door has been uninhabited for ten years.

Then however, Walter recognises Morgan, a little too late for it to be realistic, as the man who locked him and Marie-Ange in the bedroom, the night before at the Villa Seconde. Morgan denies everything, saying: 'la nuit, monsieur, je dors!'

Walter almost seems to accept this. Then Morgan sees the two bloody holes on Walter's neck. Morgan's face fills with sinister concern. Morgan insists on helping

Walter, who is hurt. Walter accompanies Morgan upstairs, as at Villa Seconde, into a bedroom.

Now we have a series of flashbacks.

The red velvet curtains stand alone on the beach, framing the sea.

Then Walter is on the bed at the Villa Seconde, kissing a naked Marie-Ange passionately.

Then we see the blue sky flecked with cloud on the canvas, on the easel.

Then Marie-Ange in a semi-transparent white dress, standing at the edge of the sea on the beach, seen through an orange filter.

Then Marie-Ange lying lifeless on the deserted beach, her hands tied behind her back, her mouth bloody.

Walter now lies on his back, like an invalid, on Morgan's bed. He is fed a golden brown liquid out of a champagne glass.

Cut to: Walter driving out in the street.

Cut to: Walter back at Morgan's, as Morgan repeats a line that he has said before in flashback.

EXT - ROAD - DAY

Suddenly Walter is driving the car again, as if the narrative were continuing out of the series of flashbacks/fantasies, uninterrupted. Walter behaves as if he is remembering the whole episode at Morgan's.

The 'Voix Off' informs us that he was troubled by a vision of the sea.

There is a flash of Sara Zeitgeist on her motorbike.

Walter arrives in his car outside de Corinthe's villa, as the 'Voix Off' tells us that only de Corinthe may provide the clue to Walter's own story. Besides, Walter has a message to deliver.

INT - HENRI DE CORINTHE'S HOUSE - DAY

When Walter enters the room, a butler meets him, in a black suit. On one side of the room is a picture frame, with no canvas, wrapped in paper and sitting on an easel. On the wall hangs a large black frame also with no picture in it.

Walter asks for the Comte de Corinthe, and the butler informs him that Corinthe is dead.

On the floor of the room, we see a man lying on his back, with a crowd of men around him, one of whom is Dr. Morgan, who is monitoring the Count's fading heartbeats with some complicated apparatus, attached to a TV monitor on which snow is seen. 'Crise cardiaque', proclaims Dr. Morgan, glancing sinisterly at Walter.

Indeed, the dying Count bears striking resemblance to Walter, and probably is him (the same actor), with a false moustache. Next to the count is a small pile of sand. On de Corinthe's neck are two vampire bite holes.

When Walter sees these, he reaches for his own neck, then draws his hand away. The apparatus beeps with each faint heart beat.

The butler believes that Walter is de Corinthe's cousin.

On the table nearby are several different photographs of Walter, or of the Count, when he was younger, along with some more recent snaps. Walter looks through them in wonder. Among them is a postcard of the Magritte painting (or version of it) which we saw earlier, *La Belle Captive*. Walter pockets the postcard.

A bald, sinister man with a perverse, creepy voice then enters the room; this is INSPECTOR FRANCIS (significantly played by the same actor as one of the two false policemen in *TEE*, who interrogate Elias and then mysteriously disappear).

'Vous êtes Monsieur "collectionneur de cartes postales" ...' whines Francis.

Walter does not acknowledge the theft. Francis says that Walter is de Corinthe's cousin. Walter denies this.

Francis asks if Walter has ever seen the missing girl before, and Walter denies this too, saying that the first time he saw her was when he caught sight of her picture in the newspaper.

Francis now explains that the picture in the paper was a mistake, and that it is not in fact of the real missing girl.

We hear breaking glass off screen.

Francis demands to see the object which is deforming Walter's right pocket, wondering aloud if it is a revolver. Walter produces the woman's shoe, that belonged to Marie-Ange, which has a blood-stained inner-sole.

'Vous êtes fétichiste, comme tout le monde', Francis sneers.

Walter retorts that he was merely taking the shoe to the mender's, to have the stains removed.

'Du sang', announces Francis, with perverse glee. Francis reaches into his pocket and produces a specimen bag, which contains an identical shoe, found by police near to the scene of the crime. Francis says that this is the shoe of the real victim.

Francis then confiscates Walter's high-heeled shoe, and gives him, in return, a stack of postcards, 'pour votre collection'. They are all identical, and all show the same reproduction of the painting *La Belle Captive*. De Corinthe had a whole pile of them, Francis says, and leaves.

Now the shoe itself can be seen within the postcard itself, lying on the beach that is depicted, in the foreground (this shoe is not in Magritte's original).

Cut to: Marie-Ange naked, then a shot of Sara Zeitgeist on her motorbike.

Walter opens the message from Sara to de Corinthe, which he was told to deliver scenes earlier.

Inside is a *photograph*. It is of the black high-heeled shoe itself, stained with blood, lying on some sand. Walter turns over the card and reads it: 'Mon cher Comte, ça ne vous rappelle rien? Sara'.

Now there is a false flash-back (a variation, not a repeat), of Francis's hand holding out the stack of cards, and Walter holding out the shoe.

INT - SARA ZEITGEIST'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sara Z. sits on her four-poster bed, which is partly framed by large red velvet curtains. Walter stands before her. By the bed, are two motorbikes, with their headlights on.

Sara asks angrily why Walter read the message. Walter makes up excuses, ham-acting. Walter claims not to be at ease, and Sara echoes Morgan, as she expresses false concern for his well-being.

We hear the sound of a man being shot, and in the background, the sound of waves and seagulls.

Then Walter is in a darkened chamber. Marie-Ange appears to him in her white transparent dress. We see her on the beach, then she is standing on the sand, framed by the red velvet curtains. 'Me voici, Walter' she murmurs seductively.

There is a shot of Walter, back in Sara Z.'s room, then Marie-Ange is in the room with him, and Marie-Ange is advancing towards him saying: 'On dirait que tu as peur de moi, ta fiancée', then 'ne sens-tu pas comme je brûle?' (echoing Alice in *Glissements*).

Walter screams back at her: 'pour quel crime ancien me poursuis-tu?!' But Marie-Ange is already tearing off his clothes, on the bed.

There is a crash of thunder and lightning.

Then Marie-Ange is on the beach again, framed by the red velvet curtains.

Six figures, all of them men in black, advance from behind the sand towards Marie-Ange.

Walter is back on the bed, kissing Marie-Ange.

Cut to: Marie-Ange on the beach, framed by the curtains, and the six frightening men in black surrounding her, all of them now inside the red velvet frame on the beach. The distant sound of soldiers marching.

This scene is repeated - the men closing in on Marie-Ange - intercut with the door in Sara Z.'s room being rattled from the outside, as someone tries to enter.

With a violent climax, Sara bursts into the room.

Walter is lying alone on her bed. Sara demands to know why he locked the door, and he claims to be in a bad way. Sara says 'on dirait que tu as peur de moi'.

Walter replies nervously that he thought he was being suffocated. He is still ham-acting, putting on a forced manner in front of Sara.

She tells him that his mission is terminated.

INT - MATCHU CLUB - DAY

The 'Voix Off' narration informs us that Walter now saw that his only hope was to find Marie-Ange.

On entering the deserted nightclub, Walter sees the bizarre barman, cleaning glasses. Nervously, Walter asks the barman if he remembers the blond girl that Walter danced with the other night; maybe she is a regular? The barman, without considering the question, instantly denies seeing Walter with the blond, and adds that there were a lot of people there that night.

When Walter pulls out the newspaper picture of Marie-Ange, the barman instantly remembers her.

The barman explains that she died last night, and that she was involved with a man who performed experiments.

The barman then hypothesizes that the girl was killed on a deserted beach by a fishing harpoon.

There is a flashback/fantasy of Marie-Ange lying on the road, injured as before, and then a shot of her lying lifeless on the deserted beach.

Walter finds another high-heeled shoe like the others lying near the bar. He asks if the barman can explain its presence. The barman replies that he has just been asked the same question by one of Walter's colleagues.

Whereupon Inspector Francis, sinister as ever, appears. He informs Walter that he now has three shoes for the same pair. He explains that Walter is now the main suspect in the investigation. He says that Walter must know Doctor 'Morgantod' (bizarrely adding a syllable and a meaning to Morgan's name).

Francis first admonishes Walter for attempting to solve the crime on his own. Then he recommends Professor van der Reeves as a man likely to have information, as

Marie-Ange was his granddaughter. To save Walter the trouble, Francis has managed to procure the address for Walter.

INT - VAN DER REEVES'S HOUSE - DAY / NIGHT

Van der Reeves is another dream-like character who lives in the set of a vampire movie, or verging on it.

Throughout this scene, the sound of glasses ringing can be heard, in other words, the monotone that one gets when one rubs a wettened finger around the rim of a glass.

Near to Van der Reeves is a pyramid of empty champagne glasses. The room has the same black pillars that were in the Villa Seconde.

Van der Reeves announces that he is not surprised Walter believes he has danced with Marie-Ange. When Van der Reeves himself was at the cinema, he once thought he was sitting next to Marcel Proust. The latter had not changed in appearance, despite his illness. Van der Reeves claims that Proust was with his grandma; that the majority of the people one sees in the road are dead.

Walter suddenly feels inexplicably drowsy. Van der Reeves explains that he has 'une chambre vide', which is waiting just for Walter.

In the bedroom, a picture of Marie-Ange is framed on an easel. Her white dress hangs on the bedroom wall. The gold chain with which her hands were tied sits pinned carefully within a glass case, as if in memory of her. At the centre of the chain, the nameplate can be read.

The picture in the frame - a photograph - now comes to life. Walter watches it become static again. The figure in the photograph stands before red velvet curtains.

Walter reaches out to touch the white dress, then withdraws his hand fearfully. He undresses. The picture of Marie-Ange comes to life again.

Then in the corner of the room, the ghostly figure of Marie-Ange appears, clad in the white fabric, half-veiled by it.

There is a shot of Marie-Ange lying on the bed in her black dress, a patch of blood on the sheets at her groin.

Then there is a shot of her the sea-edge, dreamily moving in her transparent white dress.

Then back to Van der Reeves's bedroom, where Marie-Ange appears again, veiled in the corner. She murmurs: 'C'est toi, Walter, qui vient passer la nuit dans ma demeure?'

Walter opens a cupboard in the room, and finds two more bloody shoes like the other three, along with some empty champagne glasses, and a copy of the Robbe-Grillet-Magritte collaborative 'picto-novel', *La Belle Captive*. (Walter attempts no interdisciplinary textual analysis.)

'Comme tu es loin de moi!' cries Marie-Ange.

Walter approaches the bed, and Marie-Ange is there again in her black dress, but the red patch by her groin has disappeared. She starts to kiss Walter on the neck.

Cut to: the beach, where Marie-Ange is framed by the red velvet curtains. The six men in black close in around her.

Cut to: Walter being dragged out of the room by policemen/soldiers in black, as he tries to break free.

Cut to: Marie-Ange on the beach again, as before, with the sound of waves, then Walter being manhandled, and dragged away by the men in black.

Cut to: Walter staring down at Marie-Ange dead in her white dress, and then Walter being dragged to a stake that stands on the deserted beach.

INT - EXPERIMENT ROOM - DAY

Suddenly Walter is in a different room, and Marie-Ange is nowhere to be seen.

Instead, Dr. Morgan, and Professor van der Reeves are at his bedside. Walter has electrodes attached to his head, and these are connected to a TV monitor, on which the images of his visions now appear.

The TV screen takes up the whole frame. It shows fuzzy reproductions of the scenes we have just seen. Then there is interference.

Walter is on the bed, unconscious, observed by the two sinister men.

The next sequence is fascinating, and very rapid. On the screen, we see Walter being dragged to the stake on the beach as before, and then, men in black bowler hats advance towards us, in an animation of Magritte's picture, *Le Mois des Vendanges*. The figures on the TV screen recall the men in black who are aggressing Walter.

Morgan and Van der Reeves discuss what they are watching. They believe they have reached 'la scène finale'...

Then, on the TV screen, we see the men in black forming a firing squad. The animation has stopped and real figures face Walter attached to the stake on the beach. They do not fire.

'He seems to be resisting the execution', Morgan says.

Cut to: Sara Zeitgeist on her motorbike.

Cut to: Morgan adjusting the TV set. The picture has gone now, as if Sara Z.'s image has displaced the others, as Walter struggles for familiar images to combat the Magritte invasion.

Then there is the sound of a motorbike roaring past outside. Morgan turns his head as if he can hear it.

EXT - GRAVE-STONES - DAY

Walter and Sara Zeitgeist meet by the tombs as before, but this time in daylight. Walter informs her: 'j'ai l'impression de repasser toujours par les mêmes lieux'. He adds that he spent the night at a madman's house.

Then he asks why Sara Z. sent de Corinthe the photograph of the bloodstained shoe. Sara Z. replies that she believes de Corinthe killed his fiancée, then tried to make it look like an accident.

Sara tells Walter to go and rest.

EXT / INT - VILLA SECONDE / CLINIQUE MORGAN - DAY

Walter tries the gates of the Villa Seconde in vain. He enters Morgan's clinic, and finds the wheelchair which previously held Arielle Dombasle discarded in the middle of the

room. (The implication is that she was a drugged captive which Morgan has now taken off for his own perverse practices.)

The blue sky flecked with cloud still covers one wall, where the windows should be.

Walter goes through the building and finds a darkened passageway, where stairs descend to a flooded ditch and then ascend again on the other side. Walter wades through the murky pool and follows the passage.

It leads into the tatty, seaweed strewn bedroom of Villa Seconde, where he originally spent the night with Marie-Ange.

Clinique Morgan and Villa Seconde were, therefore, joined together by this secret route all along, enabling Morgan's furtive movement from one to the other (and turning the name 'Villa Seconde' into a joke: it is Morgan's second home).

Rags hang from the ceiling of the bedroom at Villa Seconde; the damage now looks different, in some inexplicable way.

Walter continues down the stairs to the ballroom. Red velvet curtains now adorn the stairs. Seaweed decorates the floor as before. There is a brass candlestick by the red curtains. On the floor among the debris, Walter sees his crumpled trilby. He dusts it down.

Walter glances up at a picture which has now appeared on the wall of the stairway.

It is Manet's *L'Exécution de Maximilien*, and depicts a firing squad at the very moment of their execution of the puppet ruler.

Walter enters the bedroom where he spent the night with Marie-Ange, but this time, six men in black advance towards him.

We recognise Inspector Francis among them. He claims to have predicted Walter's return to the Villa.

Francis raises a hand authoritatively, and the men stride towards Walter (and towards the camera), just as they did during the beach vision earlier in which Marie-Ange was surrounded by the same men. Walter struggles helplessly.

EXT - DESERTED BEACH - DAY

Still protesting (in continuation of the earlier scene), Walter is dragged to a stake that stands in the middle of the sand. The men in black attach him there and back away. Suddenly Walter is in a white shirt exactly like Maximilien in the Manet picture.

Cut to: Sara Zeitgeist saying: 'Votre mission est terminée'.

The men in black raise their rifles. Just as they pull the trigger, Walter screams and his hands fly to his neck, to where the vampire bite once was.

There is no bang.

INT - SUBURBAN APARTMENT - DAY

Walter wakes up with a start.

He lies in a normal bedroom in a banal apartment, and discovers it is morning.

Next to him is Sara Zeitgeist, as if she is his wife.

Around the room, objects are packed up as if the couple have just moved in, or are soon to move out...

Walter tells Sara his dream. He paces about the room in his underwear, bare chested.

'C'était au bord de la mer, une fois de plus' Walter claims (involuntarily echoing the first line of Robbe-Grillet's first novel, *Un Régicide*).

Sara listens blankly as Walter describes the nightmare, giving an account of everything we have seen, except, of course, any mention of Marie-Ange. This is still his guilty secret.

Walter claims that some men were experimenting with his mind. The nightmare is most realistic as a nightmare, full of the perversities of dreams.

There are flashbacks of Marie-Ange's body, and of other scenes we have seen.

Sara Z. suggests that Walter is ill, echoing their conversation in her bedroom earlier on. Walter sums it all up: 'J'ai assez mal dormi'.

It is then that we observe something uncanny: leaning up against the wall, wrapped in brown packing paper, is an empty picture frame. And, draped over a chair by the bed are, yes, some red velvet curtains.

Walter now states that he dreamt Sara rode on a motorbike.

We hear the sound of a motorbike down on the street. Walter approaches the window and hypothesizes that the whole dream may have been provoked by the noises of the road.

Walter has by now buttoned up his shirt, but he has missed a button, and the whole row are out of sync.

Walter leaves the bedroom, adding that he will call her from the office, and have his coffee in the bar on the corner. He is now a commuter departing for work.

But when Walter arrives in the kitchen and tries to open a window, the handle comes off in his hand. By the sink is a stack of champagne glasses, and when Walter tries to fill himself a glass of water, no liquid comes out.

Walter glances at himself optimistically in the mirror.

There are two bloody holes on his neck.

Walter glances at the camera.

He picks up a postcard that has come with the mail. On it is the Magritte reproduction - *La Belle Captive*. On the back are the words 'Bons souvenirs de Corinthe'.

Walter seems past caring. He strolls out of the apartment building, past the sign saying 'Appartement Témoin'.

Walter climbs in a car - a conventional model different from the one he has had throughout the film - and speeds off.

EXT - SUBURBAN ROAD - DAY

As Walter veers round a corner, in an average suburban street, a body appears on the tarmac ahead.

Walter screeches to a halt. It is Marie-Ange, lifeless.

At that very moment, a landrover motors towards him coming from the other direction. Sara Zeitgeist is at the wheel.

Five men in black leap out, and surround Walter.

The large bloody wound is there on Marie-Ange's thigh.

Sara Zeitgeist climbs out and stares reproachfully at Walter. Then she laughs at him.

Walter screams a blood-curdling scream. He bites the back of his hand in a cartoon gesture of terror, eyes wide.

Cut to: Sara Zeitgeist on her motorbike, as before, in sunglasses.

The 'Voix Off' tells us with characteristic cool, that the whole plot was the work of 'l'ange de la mort', adding 'lorsqu'on trouve ce qui se cache derrière, il est déjà trop tard....'

(END CREDITS.)

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Filmic Texts

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- Emmanuelle*, directed by Just Jaekin (1974)
- Faust*, directed by Jan Svankmajer (1994)
- From Russia with Love*, directed by Terence Young (1963)
- M*, directed by Fritz Lang (1931)
- Marnie*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock (1964)
- North by Northwest*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock (1959)
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