

FOR
ALIENATION AND THE SEARCH FOR SELF
IN THE "NOUVEAU ROMAN" OF FRANCE AND OF QUEBEC

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the problem of the individual and his relationship to society as revealed in the works of six writers. All these authors utilize the form of the "nouveau roman" to express the thought patterns of the individual in a medium and style they consider relevant to the subject matter.

The protagonist's problem is that of twentieth century Man. His alienation from himself and from others, his feelings of anguish, despair and confusion are those of Man in a society in which the individual is often at a loss to find any point of reference as to his own existence and where he reaches the point of questioning his own worth as a human being.

Living in a situation where he is in close physical contact with thousands, the next problem facing the individual, but closely connected to his other problem is that of achieving some form of communication with another person. Aware of his own solitude and need for others as well as the reciprocal needs of other people, he is also aware of the opposites to these conditions and rejects others for their lack of awareness. His present state of being is the antithesis of a desired one and this desired state of being where he knows himself and others forms the basis for the quest of the "nouveau roman" protagonist. His quest is the subject of this thesis.

Starting with readings of the background critical works and proceeding through studies of the texts themselves the

original concept of Man as an important element of the "nouveau roman" was crystallized and narrowed down to a treatment of the problem of the individual and his relationship to society. After examination of relevant critical material of the particular works and discussion of the novels with five of the six authors involved¹ theories and ideas formulated in the preparatory stages were able to be put into practice.

Apart from these studies, it is necessary in a thesis of this nature to relate the theme to a wider field of literature, philosophy and culture. This is achieved mainly in the introduction and first chapter. The reasons for doing this lie in the fact that these authors are all using their protagonists to express one side of their own particular philosophies on Man in general.

The importance of the content rather than merely the form of the "nouveau roman" has been brought out and fully discussed in novels by six authors whose works can be considered as representative of the "nouveau roman" and of modern literature in two francophonic but differing cultures. Although both groups reveal the same anguish and despair as to the present condition of Man, the resolution of their problems, though not actualized in either group, nevertheless points out the differences between the two cultures. The French "nouveau roman" presents an intel-

1. Ducharme was not available at the time.

lectualized version of the problem together with an idealized philosophy. The French Canadian novel on the other hand is very closely allied to the actual problems of French Canadian society. Despair and anguish are not philosophical questions but reality to these dispossessed people and any resolution for the latter group will have to be a total resolution of their society.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Ce que propose l'art d'aujourd'hui au lecteur, au spectateur, c'est, en tout cas, une façon de vivre dans le monde présent, et de participer à la création permanente du monde de demain."¹

The above quotation indicates the importance of the "nouveau roman" and of modern art in all its forms. The form of the "nouveau roman", like that of much of modern art, is pertinent to the present--indeed it is the only style that the authors in question consider suitable to convey ideas they present. Although not "engagé" in a narrow sense, such novels tend to relate to a much wider universal field centered on an attempt to explain, and perhaps also resolve the condition of Man. They are part of "an entire generation of writers bent on evoking man's direct experience of a world bounded by his own horizon".²

Ever since the appearance of the "nouveau roman" in modern literature, stress has been placed on its style, rather than on its content. Most critics of the new novel neglected, until recently, the fact, stressed time and again by the more far-sighted as well as by the authors themselves, that the two are an inseparable combination. It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the content of the "nouveau roman" and more specifically the problem of alienation.

Although the theme of alienation is not new, it seems

more relevant to the twentieth century than to other ages. Man in this era has no foundation of religion on which to base a failing optimism in his own condition and must look elsewhere. In an examination of this literature, the writer's particular style, shown by his interpretation of events through the mind's eye of the protagonist, lends itself to consideration of problems situated within the mind of all men. This very personal style is the expression of the alienated mind in search of itself in past, present and future. The seeming incoherence of the written form is the inconsistency of the individual attempting to piece together his own existence.

It is contended that the "nouveau roman" presents one of the more valid means of discussing this problem. The authors' concern with form relates to their efforts to accurately portray the consciousness of the individual. The purpose of this study is to present and analyze the problem and its resolution as it occurs in the literatures of the cultures of France and of Québec. From each of these cultures three authors have been chosen. Sarraute, Butor and Robbe-Grillet are representative of the "nouveau roman" in France. The three Québécois authors chosen are Bessette, Basile and Ducharme. The choice of three authors permits not only of comparison between the two cultures but of a closer intra-cultural examination of parallel and divergent aspects within the two

cultures. This choice is moreover determined by the fact that each of the three authors uses as his point of reference past, present or future. These three different divisions of time, occurring within each group, bring into relief the differences in attitudes between the two cultures.

Since for each of the French authors, a Québécois author can be presented in relevant comparison, it would seem appropriate to use such a structure to investigate parallel attitudes in both literatures. Age of the writers and the generation they addressed themselves to when initiating their writing careers impose an additional structural consideration. It should also be indicated that alienation is not necessarily linked with nationalism as far as the Québécois authors are concerned. Of the three French Canadian authors chosen, one is very nationalistic, one less so, and the third, Bessette, reveals no real tendencies to nationalism at all. Hence the choice of the three authors reveals that alienation, which to the French authors is to a certain extent an intellectualized problem, is to all three French Canadians a very personal problem, whether this problem is transformed into one of nationalism in extreme form, as it is by Ducharme, in a lesser form, as in Basile's novels, or scarcely at all, as is the case with Bessette. The struggle for identity in all three French Canadian authors is one revealed in the form of their novels as well as in the content. The development

or transformation of the need for a personal identity into that of a nation's identity becomes far more interesting when it is understood that the nationalism of the Québécois is only one form of the alienation they feel and attempt to express in their novels.

It must also be stressed that although there are many chronological parallels, it is the differences and similarities between all six authors that make the abstractions of a central theme difficult but worthwhile. Nathalie Sarraute and Gérard Bessette both have a biological concept of Man. However contrasted details are of particular interest. Michel Butor and Jean Basile differ in depiction of their respective protagonists, yet in both cases these same protagonists attempt to realize, through art, the solution to their search for self. In the case of both, there is a stress on the past as a reference point for living in the present. Alain Robbe-Grillet and Réjean Ducharme enact worlds of fantasy, imagination and madness which belong to neither past nor present but perhaps to a necessarily imaginary future.

In so far as a comparison of the literatures of France and Québec is in order, that of France, by the fact of its provision of an origination for the "nouveau roman", seems a logical point for initiating the comparison. Beyond this the relationship of the sociological and historical perspective in the two literatures with respect to present political

circumstances adds an additional dimension of interest.

Success and failure in resolution of conflicts within the protagonists and in society in general, in a world where Man is essentially alone, will be analysed in each novel. The authors are attempting to portray the world as they see it, feeling the necessity of expression in what to them is a new world. This expression takes the form of the "nouveau roman". Thus in treating the subject matter of the "nouveau roman" rather than its form, dismissing that form as self-evident, except in so far as treatment of form is pertinent to details of the content, the thesis topic as a study on the individual finds justification in a society which is constantly trying to find an answer.

The majority of terms used in this study are taken from the vocabulary of existentialism, which has played a large part not only in forming the philosophical background of the "nouveau roman", but in much of Western Twentieth Century thought. To the student of modern literature, such terms as "alienation" and "despair" or, in French, "authenticité", "lâche" and "le mal" are all familiar. Where the French terms are used, it is because they are more often associated with the ideas inherent in Sartrian existentialism and hence are more suited to the particular problems being discussed. The idea of the "search for self" as an answer to alienation comes from the title of a book written by Wylie Sypher,³ a title

which accurately expresses Man's paradoxical searching for himself and a meaning to his own existence in a world where he feels alone, and yet, by his condition, a man amongst men cannot be so.

The second chapter introduces the authors' own arguments in support of the relevance of the content of their novels as well as an examination of individual concepts of the artistic process, and of Man and society in general. This is preceded by a short historical and sociological background placing the "nouveau roman" in perspective to the rest of modern literature. It begins with the development of twentieth century philosophical thought up to and including the "nouveau roman" where this is relevant to the thesis subject. Form and style are shown as being pertinent to the subject matter of the novels, a factor stressed by the authors. Subsequently the notion of "Man" is discussed, relating the problem more specifically to the individual within the "nouveau roman". This brings up the question of Man and society, which is the basic problem treated in the thesis. A discussion follows of the particular concepts of Man within society as revealed by the six authors.

In between the sections on the French and the French Canadian authors' concepts of Man and society there is an introduction to the Québécois authors, bringing into relief

the differences in approach to the subject matter of the thesis and emphasizing the fact that the alienation, somewhat intellectualized on the French side, is a far more personal experience for the French Canadian authors, nationalistically inclined or otherwise.

The third chapter is concerned with the individual's struggle for self within society. At this stage the protagonist is still hopeful of attaining the authenticity he is seeking either within society or outside it. If he hopes to attain it within society he attempts this through other individuals like himself. When this proves fruitless or too difficult to persevere in, he will turn his search to the outside. The attempts at recovery of the authentic self take many and varied forms. Within society they can be nonviolent (Sarraute) or violent (Robbe-Grillet). If that society is then rejected as without values, there are subsequent efforts to find the lost values elsewhere, in childhood and adolescence for Ducharme and Basile, or sometimes, as particularly the case with Butor, in some form of art. A rejection of present society implies either a recreation of that society or a creation of a totally new one, total despair (as in the case of Bessette), or a separate existence based on a past, real or imaginary. In all six authors, all these elements are, to a certain extent, interwoven, although, as indicated, certain tendencies assume priority according to the individual author.

The need of the protagonist for others, his desire to establish some form of communication and his attempts at finding in others the necessary elements to help him in his quest for authenticity are fundamental in these "nouveaux romans" and the starting point to which all other themes are connected.

Where there is a linear development in thought the works are treated chronologically. When, however, they are best examined as a structural unit, then they are treated as such.

The final chapter in the development of the thesis handles the resolution of the problems facing the protagonists, which in turn becomes a possible resolution for Man in general with respect to overall concepts developed within the thesis.

Throughout the French authors there is a suggestion of optimism. Although there is no immediate resolution, there is nevertheless a belief in the basic nature of Man being fundamentally worthy of attainment. This basic authentic self, although at present hidden, may be uncovered in the future. The effort necessary to do this is worthwhile. For the Québécois authors, however, whatever authenticity existed did so in the past and is henceforth irretrievable. Their lack of a resolution arises from deep personal pessimism, cynicism and despair, completely counteracting the ascending optimism of the French authors. This makes the comparison between the two literatures all the more interesting.

The discussion and conclusions of the final sections bring together the vast quantity of material within the thesis. The central theme of alienation and desire for communication is nevertheless the nucleus on which all the other themes and ideas are dependent. Nationalism or the lack of it, love, art, sadism, cynicism, optimism and despair are all expressions of the individual's basic alienation from himself and others and of his simultaneous desire and need for others and for his self. All these themes are again presented in summary form in the concluding pages as they appear throughout the six novelists' works, revealing that with the seeming disparities of these six authors there are nevertheless bases for comparison which go beyond a mere comparison of style.

FOOTNOTE REFERENCES

1. A. Robbe-Grillet, "Du réalisme à la réalité", Pour un Nouveau Roman, (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1963), page 143.
2. Victor Brombert, The Intellectual Hero: Studies in the French Novel, (New York, Lippincott, 1960), page 208.
3. Wylie Sypher, Loss of the Self in Modern Literature and Art, (New York, Random House, 1962).

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM OF ALIENATION

I. PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

The "nouveau roman" represents one of the latest stages in the development of both literature and philosophy in the twentieth century. It is an expression of art which is far more closely allied to the workings of the human mind than were novels of preceding generations. What the "nouveaux romanciers" are seeking to set down in written form are the thought patterns of the individual. This outlook on literature is mainly influenced by two concepts on which are based not only the "nouveau roman", but the whole of Western thought. These are, first, the philosophical ideas of Hegel, developed later by Husserl, and, secondly, the time and consciousness theories or discoveries of Henri Bergson. Time and space are judged by the human mind and not by clock or map: "Et ce temps mental est bien celui qui nous intéresse, avec ses étrangetés, ses trous, ses obsessions, ses régions obscures, puisqu'il est celui de nos passions, celui de notre vie".¹ These new "ways of thinking" did not influence just the subject matter of literature, but the form itself, which is why there is difficulty in separating form and content in all forms of modern art. "Phenomenologically" speaking the two are self-completing. Thus, what the "nouveaux romanciers" reflect in their work is the world they live in.

Hegel's phenomenology, with the inherent idea that all things imply an opposite and that any conception of synthesis is only able to exist as a whole containing both the thesis and antithesis, is basic to the conception of the "nouveau roman" and in particular that of Butor and Robbe-Grillet. It is the function of the human mind to put together information in order to arrive at some meaning and to find the unity potential in diversity.² In this way the "nouveau roman" serves the same purpose as would Hegel's human mind, since it does depict a world where an object (the "story") is described by a subject (the main character). The "nouveau roman" is the perpetual approximation of "subject" and "object". Butor's novels, for example, aim at reconstructing an experience retained by the memory and at arriving at the significance of this experience by describing it as fully as possible--the process itself taking time and effort (L'Emploi du temps, La Modification). Similarly, Robbe-Grillet, by evoking the same object or incident repeatedly, strives to arrive at its meaning to the mind of the individual. To Butor the novel is the "domaine phénoménologique par excellence".³ Not reliant on an external truth to support it, as does an article in a newspaper, it exists in itself and yet is the ideal place to study reality as it appears or can appear. The phenomenological approach has been used throughout the century, consciously or unconsciously (Sartre popularized it to a large extent in Europe), with its

main concept of depicting the world as it is but illuminated by consciousness--that of Man--and depicting consciousness itself in the act of perceiving and interpreting the world. This study is an attempt at giving a meaning to the world the protagonist lives in but from which he feels alienated.

Since consciousness and time are two of the main elements of the "nouveau roman", Henri Bergson's⁴ ideas are of great importance because of their obvious influence on modern French literature, as well as on the whole modern concept of time. Like the "nouveaux romanciers", Bergson was not concerned so much with Man's quest for freedom as with Man's difficulty in finding where the authentic self resides. This immediately brings Sartre and the existentialists to mind. Indeed the "nouveaux romanciers" are all disciples of Sartre, but without his more limited form of "engagement". To find this authentic self, Bergson realized one had to be aware of its existence in time, within the flow of time, and enduring through or within change. Therefore it is the hidden, buried life, inaccessible to reason, a consciousness almost unconscious in the Freudian sense, with no evident identity but only direction or duration, in which is to be found the "authentic self". Sartre's concept of the existential "être", ironically and paradoxically complete only at the end of its being, fits in with this interpretation of Man. Thus the real self must be sought in the shifting currents of our most

immediate consciousness. In other words, as Wylie Sypher says, "The contemporary writer must of necessity present the significance of what is utterly habitual".⁵ Bergson, in Matière et mémoire,⁶ points out that for Man, matter is half-way between its actual reality and the representation we make of it. It is an image--but one that exists of and in itself. This whole conception of what things and reality are, is best illustrated by Robbe-Grillet and brought out in his collection of essays entitled Pour un Nouveau Roman: "Or le monde n'est ni signifiant, ni absurde. Il EST tout simplement...Autour de nous, défiant la meute de nos adjectifs animistes ou ménagers, les choses SONT LÀ".⁷ As for memory, Bergson notes that it is practically inseparable from perception, bringing the past into the present. It is from memory and imagination that the "nouveaux romanciers" try to construct the self:

Pour évoquer le passé sous forme d'image, il faut savoir attacher du prix à l'inutile, il faut vouloir rêver. L'homme seul est capable d'un effort de ce genre.⁸

The "nouveau roman" with its attention to detail, its often dream-like quality, and its use of memory, all emphasizing Man and his search for self, reflect the desire common to all men, where to recover possession of oneself is the ultimate goal.

II. MONOLOGUE INTERIEUR

The ideal form in which to express these concepts of

mind and consciousness is the "stream of consciousness" or "interior monologue". In English literature there is a subtle difference between the two terms. The former came to the attention of the reading public in the 1920's with the tormented novels of Virginia Woolf, where there is a literal streaming of images from deep in the subconscious or in the unconscious, sometimes giving the impression of a mind that is not completely in control.⁹ In contrast, although the "interior monologue" form of writing was most in vogue around World War II, one of the earliest examples of it is found in Edouard Dujardin's Les Lauriers sont coupés (1887). Dujardin's definition of the interior monologue is helpful in distinguishing it from stream of consciousness writing:

Le discours sans auditeur et non prononcé, par lequel un personnage exprime sa pensée la plus intime, la plus proche de l'inconscient, antérieurement à toute organisation logique, c'est-à-dire, en son état naissant, par le moyen de phrases directes, réduit au minimum syntaxial, de façon à donner l'impression du tout-venant.¹⁰

Hence the "interior monologue" is a monologue in the true sense. In James Joyce's Ulysses, both forms are found. Stephen's talking to himself fits into the category of "monologue intérieur" while the images and thoughts which come rushing from Molly's unconscious are best described as "stream of consciousness". In French literature, however, both are usually referred to as "monologue intérieur". Generally, the "interior monologue" in the "nouveau roman" refers to a stream

of consciousness state of mind, which demands its own formal patterns in order to create the impression it does--an impression often hypnotic, sometimes intentionally (Butor's La Modification), sometimes not. The minute descriptions of sensations and impressions, the simultaneity effect and use of mirage-like images approximating the mental processes in written form, are the necessary supports for this "monologue intérieur" mechanism.¹¹

In the "monologue intérieur" used by the "nouveaux romanciers" there is another element not to be found in writers such as Dujardin or even Proust. This is the element of brutal realism inherited directly from the U.S.A. The interior monologue was for Faulkner and Dos Passos, as was the dialogue for Caldwell, Hemingway, and Steinbeck, the only legitimate form in which to present, as realistically as possible, the brutality of the world of Man in the twentieth century. On the other hand, to the majority of European writers of that era it was more a "recherche esthétique".

In the works of Nathalie Sarraute, the "first" of the "nouveaux romanciers", chronological time gives way to an almost spatialized time where past, present, and even future lose their boundaries. This continuous present is that of the human consciousness expressed in the interior monologue/stream of consciousness form. This is referred to by Sarraute as "sous-conversation"--a term most suitable to express what

the author describes as:

Un foisonnement innombrable de sensations, d'images, de sentiments, de souvenirs, d'impulsions, de petits actes larvés qu'aucun langage intérieur n'exprime, qui se bousculent aux portes de la conscience, s'assemblent en groupes compacts et surgissent, tout à coup, se défont aussitôt, se combinent autrement et réapparaissent sous une nouvelle forme, tandis que continue à se dérouler en nous, pareil au ruban qui s'échappe en crépitant de la fente d'un téléscripteur, le flot ininterrompu des mots.¹²

Although the interior monologue in a particular form is also part of Butor's novels, he realizes that this particular pattern of writing is self-limiting. He believes a notion like that of "sous-conversation" is a little better in that it justifies departure from the eternal present of the older forms of interior monologue, but is still not the ideal. Speaking of Kierkegaard's Etapas sur le chemin de la vie, Butor explains to a large extent his own form of narrative: "La narration n'est plus une ligne, mais une surface dans laquelle nous isolons un certain nombre de lignes, de points, ou de groupements remarquables".¹³ To express this in words his own novels are quite structurally unique, each in turn more complicated, until in the last one--Degrés--like the dying teacher one may ask who is really speaking. Butor, becoming too involved in the complications of the mammoth task he set himself, has recently forsaken the novel and returned to his first interest--poetry.

III MAN AND THE MODERN WORLD

In modern literature, the classical notion of "Man" with its idea of a fixed integral personality, is abandoned by most novelists as is the naturalistic concept of "Man" ruled only by impulses and instincts (see footnote 11). Instead of centering on a man, the modern novel tends to record the metaphysical quest of Man--Man in search of himself, his own identity. Whether this man is a true "artist" or an "outsider" he is usually of bourgeois origin, but unable to adapt to the world he lives in. Senancour's Obermann (reminiscent of Shaw's Superman) is a sensitive anti-hero, not the romantic hero, but a man in search of his own identity, just as is Harry Haller, the Steppenwolf of Hermann Hesse (1927). In fact, Harry Haller is in many ways the exemplification of modern man--a "lost creature in a world of machines and distrust". In him Hesse shows "the whole despair of a thinker, of one who knows the full worth and meaning of Man's life", or whose "sickness of the soul...is not the eccentricity of a single individual but the sickness of the times themselves".¹⁴

Just as Harry Haller expresses the spiritual and moral distress coupled with the extreme loneliness of a man or Man in what Hesse considers a declining culture, so Robert Musil in Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften,¹⁵ first known in France in 1957, presents the true anti-hero, a man without any particular

qualities, as the title indicates, or properties, who lives not in an active condition of revolt but rather in "le refus". The world is presented in an "anti-romanesque" optic. Like Camus' Meursault, Musil's character lives through "romanesque" moments without even realizing it.

The romantic artist of the nineteenth century therefore becomes the modern outsider whose personal quest makes of his life his work. This quest has inherent in it the concept of a mythology of Man, and the mythological element is found time and again in the "nouveau roman", either openly so or vaguely hinted at. Robbe-Grillet goes to great lengths to develop the Oedipus myth in Les Gommès.¹⁶ The Theseus myth appears openly in Butor's L'Emploi du temps.¹⁷ less obviously in Robbe-Grillet's Dans le labyrinthe.¹⁸ Symbolism such as that of Tarot is also to be found in particular throughout the novels of Robbe-Grillet, but this only serves to reinforce the idea of all being dependent on the mind of Man for its interpretation.

The "refus" of these protagonists is a refusal of deceit. As pointed out by Jean Bloch-Michel, the novelists who present this "refus" write in the present of the indicative, uncertain of what will be: "Le nouveau roman est le contraire de l'imposture littéraire: il est la littérature de l'imposture".¹⁹ This point is reinforced in Sarraute's L'Ere du Soupçon .

Like her, these writers "soupçonnent que tout est faux, la justice, notre connaissance psychologique des êtres, le pouvoir du langage".²⁰ Up till the "nouveau roman" the real world had not coincided with the fables of literature, but for these "fables" the modern novel and in particular the "nouveau roman" substitute "le monde de la contestation, du refus, de la négation".²¹ What the novelists refuse is not meaning but pre-determined meaning. This new form of art is art in its deepest sense--for Man's sake. Instead of psychological analysis, a "story", and other entertainment devices, these novelists seek reality and an understanding of their own situation in the world.

Le roman est redevenu une éducation et peut-être plus que jamais, est-il maintenant vivant et nécessaire puisque c'est à travers lui qu'un homme essaie de retrouver le monde, un moraliste, un sens, et tout écrivain la littérature.²²

Before continuing with the authors' own ideas on their works, the following schematic chronology of works discussed in this background to the second chapter is presented to aid in summarizing the various influences as to form and theme in the new novel. The diagram itself is adapted and modified from one given by R. M. Albérès in Métamorphoses du roman (Paris, 1966).

FORM AND THEME IN THE NOVEL

USE OF INTERIOR MONOLOGUE*

1804: Senancour, Obermann
1864: Dostoyevsky, Crime

and Punishment

- 1895: Gide, Paludes
- 1913-22: Proust, A la Recherche du temps perdu
- 1922: Joyce, Ulysses
- 1925: Gide, Les Faux-monnayeurs
- 1927: Hesse, Steppenwolf
- 1928: Aldous Huxley, Counterpoint
- 1930-32: Musil, first part of Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften
- 1933: French Translation of Kafka's Der Prozess (Le Procès)
- 1936: Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza
- 1954: Butor, Passage de Milan**
- 1959: Robbe-Grillet, Dans le labyrinthe**, ***
- 1960: Bessette, Le Libraire**
- 1963: Sarraute, Les Fruits d'or**
- 1965: Robbe-Grillet, La Maison de Rendez-vous**, ***
- 1887: Dujardin, Les Lauriers sont coupés
- 1912: Kafka, Der Bau (and other short stories)
- 1922: Joyce, Ulysses
- 1925: Dos Passos, Manhattan Transfer
- 1925: V. Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway
- 1929: Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury
- 1930-36: Dos Passos, 42nd Parallel, 1919, etc.
- 1931: V. Woolf, The Waves
- 1938: Sarraute, Tropismes**
- 1938: Beckett, Murphy
- 1942: Camus, L'Etranger
- 1945: Sartre, Le Sursis
- 1948: Sarraute, Portrait d'un inconnu**
- 1951: Beckett, Molloy
- 1953: Robbe-Grillet, Les Gommes**
- 1957: Robbe-Grillet, La Jalousie**
- 1957: Butor, La Modification**
- 1959: Robbe-Grillet, Dans le labyrinthe
- 1959: Sarraute, Le Planétarium**
- 1960: Butor, Degrés**
- 1964: Basile, La Jument des Mongols** (Canada)
- 1965: Bessette, L'Incubation** (Canada)

- 1966: Ducharme, L'Avalée des avalés** (Canada)
1967: Ducharme, Le Nez qui vogue** (Canada)
1968: Ducharme, L'Océantume**
1970: Robbe-Grillet, Projet pour une révolution à New York**, ***
1970: Basile, Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk** (Canada)
1971: Bessette, Le Cycle** (Canada)

*As well as basic theme, these works also used interior monologue form.

**Refers to works analysed in this thesis.

***Depends upon actual interpretation. These could be seen as mere "stories" or, on the other hand, can be treated as the depiction of what the mind of a protagonist sees.

IV. THE PROBLEM IN GENERAL AS PRESENTED BY THE AUTHORS

The problem of the individual within society, and, in particular, within the society of the twentieth century, is based on Man's alienation from himself and from others. He is unable to go beyond the subjective self in order to see what reality is, and alternately or simultaneously needs and rejects others as they in turn need and reject him, all obviously sharing the same "angoisse" to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their own state of authenticity.

As was mentioned in the introduction, it is often stated that the form of the "nouveau roman" is more important than its content. In all three of the French authors' theoretical writings,²³ there is an insistence on the form of their writing being the expression of today, as much as is the content. At this point a closer look at what these authors do say is appro-

priate, since they are talking not just about their own novels but about the "nouveau roman" in general. In her collection of essays published under the title of L'Ere du soupçon, Nathalie Sarraute states, "La plupart des idées exprimées dans ces articles constituent certaines bases essentielles de ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui le 'nouveau roman'".²⁴ As in the other authors the form used has been developed as a vehicle for the ideas expressed.

Sarraute's own style is eminently suited to expressing the fleeting movements difficult to discern and which she designates as "tropismes", and which underlie all the actions of the individuals she presents to us in her novels and "portraits". She allows herself to dream of a technique which would permit the reader to be more aware of what is hidden beneath the surface of what he is reading at the same time bestowing on the reader the ability to do the same thing in real life. This he would do by rejecting the traditional forms of psychological analysis which succeed only in clouding the truth, by wanting to force her reader to experience a new order of sensations, in the same way as do the other new novelists. The ideal author of Nathalie Sarraute is a realist in the true sense of the word, one who tries in all honesty and sincerity to grasp and portray what he sees as reality. To this author/realist, style is an instrument having no other value than that of revealing this portion of reality:

"le style ne pouvant être beau qu'à la façon dont est beau le geste de l'athlète: d'autant plus beau qu'il est mieux adapté à sa fin".²⁵ The aim is to grasp an aspect of reality not yet envisaged by others and to find the form best suited to convey it.

As for Michel Butor, in his essays collected under Répertoire I and II, as well as in various interviews and lectures he has given, the reality described is once more that suited to the form the novel takes. He puts forth the same arguments on form as those of Sarraute and Robbe-Grillet: "L'invention formelle dans le roman, bien loin de s'opposer au réalisme comme l' imagine trop souvent une critique à courte vue est la condition sine qua non d'un réalisme plus poussé".²⁶ Realism, formalism and symbolism are all indissolubly united in the novel. With the use of a new form a new means of attack is found to force the real to reveal itself.

Robbe-Grillet, although renowned for his apparent contradictions in what he has to say on his own novels and other works, consistently affirms the same basic argument: that the style or form used is merely an instrument to convey what the writer is expressing. He refuses older forms in a world where these are no longer appropriate, so that consequently in his "nouveau roman",

Il y a donc d'abord refus du vocabulaire analogique et de l'humanisme traditionnel, refus en même temps de l'idée de tragédie, et de toute

autre idée conduisant à la croyance en une nature profonde et supérieure, de l'homme ou des choses (et des deux ensemble), refus enfin de tout ordre préétabli.²⁷

The "nouveau roman" is the expression of this in both form and content, its purpose to form or create a new relationship between Man and the world. Thus the novelist is also creating a new Man.

For the reader and for the author, who should ideally not be "engagé" in any narrow sense, politically or otherwise, the purpose of this writing is not to give him a world self-sufficient and ready made, but to allow him to participate in the creation of the world and perhaps his own life. He has the "possibilité de servir un jour peut-être à quelque chose--peut-être même à la révolution".²⁸ The world is in need of re-invention--this world where the individual has become a number in a machine, where the hero or anti-hero, of the more recent writers, as of Kafka, has little in common with the Balzacian hero. Flaubert's stable coherent universe has also disappeared: "Notre monde, aujourd'hui, est moins sûr de lui-même, plus modeste peut-être puisqu'il regarde au-delà".²⁹ Thus the world they describe is not an objective neuter one, but the exact opposite.

With the passing of the traditional concept of Man and the traditional form goes also the certainty and innocence inherent in the simple "story", impossible in the world of

today. The only reason a reader has difficulty with the form of the "nouveau roman" is that he has been conditioned to reading traditional novels. Also, since these authors are depicting the world as it is, they are describing a world in which Man has difficulty finding himself, because all the old constructions and norms have disappeared. As far as Robbe-Grillet is concerned, these novels are written with the words and sentences of anybody of today.

Although the criticism frequently made of the "nouveau roman" and in particular of that of Robbe-Grillet, is that it neglects Man, this can be easily dismissed. Quotations from Robbe-Grillet lend personal strength to this refutation. It is not so important to stress this element in Sarraute's work, since her whole theory of Man as a being reacting with varying tropistic movements lies at the base of her writings, nor in Butor for whom the mythological quest of one man becomes that of all men, and hence of society. Society is as limited or unlimited as the individual protagonist's mind allows. For Robbe-Grillet, literature simply exposes the situation of Man and the universe with which he is in contact: "Le nouveau roman ne s'intéresse qu'à l'homme et à sa situation dans le monde".³⁰ As for so-called objectivity, Robbe-Grillet's best criticism of this is found in his first published novel, Les Gommes, where he says, "On sait que l'auteur ne rapporte tous ces discours oiseux que par souci d'objecti-

vit  : et malgr   le souci qu'il prend de la pr  senter avec un   gal d  tachement il est clair que la suite, au contraire, lui tient au c  ur".³¹ Man has, as Robbe-Grillet insists, been given first place, and the subjective role of the reader has become greater than it ever was in the past:

Dans nos livres, au contraire, c'est un HOMME qui voit, qui sent, qui imagine, un homme situ   dans l'espace et le temps, conditionn   par ses passions, un homme comme vous et moi. Et le livre ne rapporte rien d'autre que son exp  rience, limit  e, incertaine. C'est un homme d'ici, un homme de maintenant, qui est son propre narrateur enfin.³²

Therefore when this author talks of "objectivit  " he is not talking of the opposite to subjectivity, but of a state of mind turned onto the object or focused on it. The new novel is aiming at total subjectivity, and his novels are, he says, more subjective than those of Balzac. Indeed he states that this subjectivity is in fact the essential characteristic of the "nouveau roman".

Nathalie Sarraute's characters are, for the most part, anonymous, since as she herself explains anonymity is the best way of presenting the particular movements which are present in everybody and are able to occur at any moment. Some of Robbe-Grillet's characters have names, while others are anonymous in the same way most people in a street are anonymous to us. These are after all novels depicting the mind of individuals. Just as we know almost nothing about the hundreds of people we see, so, in the "nouveau roman", most of the

characters are without name or past, only existing by the bonds created through their gestures, voices, and their own imagination.

V THE AUTHORS' CONCEPT OF MAN AND SOCIETY

Nathalie Sarraute:

Situationally, in both style and content, Sarraute's works lie between the novels of Proust and those of the other "nouveaux romanciers".

In her essays on the novel in L'Ere du Soupçon, she presents the ideas exemplified in her works. One of the most important of these is that of "tropismes"--a biologically acceptable term for varied reactions to external or internal stimuli--and their effects upon individuals in general, or in particular, upon those individuals who are aware of these movements in both themselves, and others. Aptly enough, her first work has for its title Tropismes, both theme and content of her work. She has continued to develop this concept throughout her other works.

To explain what these "tropismes" are at this point is important to the later discussion of the individual in her novels. These movements are an expression of the reality they exist in and are part of: "Ce sont des mouvements indéfinissables, qui glissent très rapidement aux limites de

notre conscience; ils sont à l'origine de nos gestes, de nos paroles, des sentiments que nous manifestons, que nous croyons éprouver et qu'il est possible de définir. Ils me paraissaient et me paraissent encore constituer la source secrète de notre existence".³³ When she began writing Tropismes in 1932, she was attempting to express what she had already felt in reading Dostoyevsky, and what had been merely touched upon by Proust as far as the inner life of Man was concerned.

Thus the reality described by Nathalie Sarraute is basically biological, but Man, with his conscience and language being not an ordinary animal, the tropisms described are more subtle and complex than those perceptible in other beings. As is the case in the simpler animal world, tropisms themselves are dependent on their ecological environment--constituting in the Sarraute novels, the social milieu or on other beings, to create the stimulus necessary to provoke the reaction. Therefore from the first, Man, as such, is dependent on both things and other men for his very existence. He cannot exist alone. As a biological being that is scientifically impossible. If Man with his imagination is unable to find himself a real partner in the interplay dramas so necessary to his existence, then he invents one, taking this partner either from his past experience or from his dreams.

To find the authentic self is to find what lies beneath the surface of Man. To do this one must accept that all men

are basically the same. If the individual is intent enough on doing this, he should succeed.

It is particularly in the daily communication or non-communication that are revealed the hidden truths the protagonists seek. Thus there is a constant play between the superficial and those underlying elements which, if they come to the surface, could destroy everything superficial and with it the false security protecting so many in society. Conveyed by words more than by actions, these things are themselves dangerous when used in games played by the members of the established society.

Since people are basically the same, they are able to cause reactions in each other and sometimes to see the authentic self hidden behind the façade of day to day action and conversation. Once again the paradox of Man is brought out. As the authentic outsider is needed by and needs inauthentic society, so daily inauthentic conversation is the means by which the authentic can be guessed at. To really see others is the ability to go beyond the self into a veritable communication. Thus, beyond mere Man is the rest of existence and basically the relationship Man establishes with respect to "things", reveals the inner psychology of Man. As is the case with the other new novelists, Nathalie Sarraute would like to see Man free from ties he has created himself, to the objects around him. These ties result from Man's fear of the

unknown. Wishing to make the unknown world a safer place, more secure, he destroys its reality, making of things, in his "pananthropique" relationship to them, mere reflections of his own mind, refusing to face what he is fearfully avoiding and thus creating his own prison.

"Angoisse" in the Sartrian sense is part of this relationship, with the refusal of the majority of people to see their own situation as a mere link in an infinite chain. When the person feels he has no grasp on the external world, like Roquentin does when he is overcome by nausea, so the Sarrautian character has this "impression de fluidité, de vertige qui accompagne la sensation presque physique que tout vous échappe" for "le mouvement représente tout ce sur quoi l'homme n'a pas de prise, l'immobilité est ce qui résiste à l'influence humaine, faisant obstacle".³⁴ The first sensation is illustrated in Portrait d'un inconnu when the narrator is talking about the so-called dangerous moments where one gets an impression of falling or giddiness and one becomes aware of "le frôlement anonyme et froid du temps, la chute incessante des instants".³⁵ With nothing to grasp hold of at these moments, people search and feel about them haphazardly trying to find something to grasp onto, something which will give them some certainty and security. As does Alain's aunt in Le Planétarium,³⁶ they find in the objects they take hold of, the necessary protection against a strange and menacing universe. These objects act

as a protective screen. In their belief that control over the material world will give them power they feel lacking, people lose this very power by binding themselves so closely to objects that they themselves become doll-like, quasi-objects. Seen through the eyes of others they appear dominated and passive. Those who from the very fear of becoming nothing, have sought in things the security and solidity they are unable to find in themselves, in their refusal to see or even look beyond the clichés and platitudes of their daily lives, by using external objects as receptacles for their own emotions, have contributed to the vicious circle which dehumanizes Man and takes away from things their very reality.

In the same way as a control over the material world represents security to the individual, so the process of becoming an object oneself, is a loss not only of control but is in some sense death. It is not only his own security which is constantly menaced, but that of what he created or leaves behind as a testimonial of his own essence and creative powers: hence the importance of the work of art as an entity in itself in Nathalie Sarraute's works,³⁷ yet at the same time reflecting the same paradox of existence as Man. This attitude to the creative product is also seen in Butor and in Basile.

Again as will be shown in Robbe-Grillet, the ideal relationship between Man and objects would be to feel there are

no emotional ties, and, again, to be able to use or manipulate things at will. Instead the majority of characters have a completely subjective impression of the object under consideration. Objects obtain a sort of magic power. Becoming ends in themselves, "ils correspondent à une saisie émotionnelle du réel".³⁸ With objects thus "humanized", the individual can become ensnared in this trap of his own making. This need to find security through objects is reflected in the desperation if this object is found to have a flaw or "faillie". Just as the Robbe-Grillet protagonists see their mental or physical flaw reflected in the flaws they search for to the point of obsession, finding them in the external world, so the desire of the Sarraute characters to obliterate any such flaw expresses their own fear of death and inner flaws. The old man in Portrait d'un inconnu is so obsessed by the flaw he finds in the bathroom that he becomes almost maniacal in his desire to obliterate it. The aunt in Le Planétarium, reacts in the same way to a flaw in the wood of the painfully acquired door she prizes. Like the woman constantly trying to repair her makeup everything must be in order.

In Portrait d'un inconnu, as in the later novels of both Sarraute and the other "new" novelists, the search for meaning, authenticity, and communication in the society and world of which the protagonist is a part, resembles the minute introspection typical of the "roman policier". The central style of the "nouveau roman" bears many resemblances to the detec-

tive novel--ironically, in that the actual search though revealing many clues, ends in as much confusion or more, as it began with. This is particularly striking in the Robbe-Grillet novels where it assumes the proportion of a game. His first--Les Gommès--is almost a parody of the "roman policier", whilst all his novels, to a greater or lesser extent, provide seemingly logical explanations of events, which, however, the reader cannot accept. Butor goes so far as to explain what the "roman policier" is in L'Emploi du temps: "le récit est fait à contre-courant puisqu'il commence par le crime, aboutissement de tous les drames que le détective doit retrouver peu à peu, ce qui est à bien des égards plus naturel que de raconter sans jamais revenir en arrière, d'abord le premier jour de l'histoire, puis le second, et seulement après les jours suivants dans l'ordre du calendrier".³⁹ In the same way Revel, the protagonist of this Butor novel, tries to unravel the mystery of his days in Bleston in the form of the diary he keeps. Butor takes his search and finding of clues even further in that he has his detective-like protagonist uncover the whole mythological past of mankind.

Michel Butor:

More lyrical and a little more conventional--at first reading--in form than the other new novelists, in theme and content, with the possible exception of his first novel Passage de Milan, Butor expresses from a slightly different angle the

same general theme of modern man's alienation from the world around him, from others and, more tragically, from himself.

For Butor, the creative act itself not only expresses reality, but is indeed another segment of reality. The novel, for him, like a dream, points the way to answers to questions posed by everyday reality. At the same time, becoming ever more involved, from a merely conventional and fairly contrived space/time relationship in the first novel, Butor will finally proceed to the complicated description of the space/time/ knowledge (or content) relationships in his last novel Degrés.⁴⁰

However the main purpose of the author's writing is the same as it is for the characters in his novels: "pour me débarrasser de ces régions de la conscience qui me troublent, qui m'inquiètent, qui m'empêchent de dormir, qui frappent à la porte de ma tête".⁴¹ He is not writing novels to sell them but to give a meaning to his life and thereby, he hopes, to others'. Political in the widest sense and not in any narrow sense, since they deal with Man and society (the basis for any political conception of Man) with the aim of arriving at a possible answer to the problems facing the individual in society their function is also social. In its ability to apprehend reality, the novel permits the reader and writer to attain a certain stability in a turbulent world. By a curious, surrealist juxtaposition of the banalities and commonplace incidents of daily life, which ordinarily pass by unno-

ticed, the novel makes one aware of the fullness of this life. The purpose of writing is to reveal as in a diary, written for oneself, what has been formerly hidden. It is by means of the novel, that Butor believes as do Robbe-Grillet and Basile that reality as a whole can become conscious of itself and from this criticise and transform itself--Man being necessarily part of this total reality. Although not explicitly stating this except in the case of Jean Basile through his protagonist Jonathon whose whole life is given over to the creative process for this very purpose, the Québécois writers hold the same views in their works. To Butor, who began with poetry and has since returned to it, the novelist and poet are often one and the same. The poet's inspiration is also the world he lives in, with the poet himself a privileged moment able to express in words the changing world. As with these novels, poetry is variously interpretable. Yet, paradoxically, he who devotes his life to art, and in this instance, writing, must suffer certain consequences.

Robbe-Grillet:

In his essays collected in Pour un Nouveau Roman, Robbe-Grillet sets out ideas on the possibilities facing modern man. These ideas are far more realistic in their approach to a solution to Man's alienation than were those of Sarraute and Butor. Yet though these ideas are so clearly and logically

presented in the essays, it is the unreality awakened by the mind of the protagonist which overshadows all else in Robbe-Grillet's novels. The author may state optimistically and humourously that his purpose in presenting the eroticism in his novels (in particular his latest one, Projet pour une révolution à New York⁴²) and films, is to free Man of his obsession with this very aspect of human life. Nevertheless this sado-masochism distorting the mind and reality of the individual suffering under it is a theme constant in his works. "Le thème de la leçon du jour paraît être 'la couleur rouge' envisagé comme solution radicale à l'irréductible antagonisme entre le noir et le blanc".⁴³

In the first novels, the emphasis is on Man and his relationship to external objects, in so far as these have a bearing on his own obsessions. Finding a support for his emotions or obsessions in the objects around him, as do the Sarrautian characters, the Robbe-Grillet protagonist makes use of the world external to himself to alleviate his own 'sickness of the soul' projecting onto things, feelings and attributes they do not possess and which are in fact his own. In the world objects exist. The ideal is for Man to put these 'things' in their correct perspective. If Man is no longer bound by things or by their pre-determined meaning: "poser les objets comme purement extérieurs et superficiels, ce n'est pas comme on l'a dit--nier l'homme; mais c'est repousser

l'idée 'pananthropique' contenue dans l'humanisme traditionnel, comme probablement dans tout humanisme. Ce n'est, en fin de compte, que conduire dans ses conséquences logiques la revendication de ma liberté".⁴⁴

With this outlook, to consider the idea of tragedy as existing in the external world is to accept its existence, which is exactly what Robbe-Grillet wants Man to avoid. If one does not seek refuge in objects then one is free of dependency on them as support for emotion. The ideally free man who has no such 'metaphysical pact' with things and the external world--a pact made for him by others who preceded him--realizes he can thus escape servitude and fear, or will be able to one day.

Thus with the same basic attitude as Nathalie Sarraute to Man's servitude to objects, and with the idea of breaking these metaphorical chains, Robbe-Grillet goes one step further in the possible future liberation of Man. This author never loses sight of Man's relationship to things and people. Like Sarraute's tropistically activated people, Man for Robbe-Grillet is a series of reactions to the various stimuli, but with the possibility of controlling his own reactions to free himself. On the other hand, however, he is not refusing all contact with the world exterior to himself. He must simply learn to use it for mere material ends. It is perhaps as the converted scientist that Robbe-Grillet is so well-suited to

see man's relationship to a world where there is neither God nor other external refuge. As Jean Alter states in "La Vision du monde d'Alain Robbe-Grillet",⁴⁵ the scientist is one of the few able to describe objects without imposing external values on them, without interpreting them.

Hence it is in the presence of the world that its reality lies, not in its "signification", and the best way of looking at the world is "optically" as this is the least likely way to misinterpret what is registered. Therefore Robbe-Grillet denies giving properties to things, since this would create a bond making Man dependent on things. He also rejects the idea of the 'absurd' which, according to him, leads to tragedy through its implication of lack of communion, again implying a will on the part of things. If things simply exist and Man is free to use them at will, then Man is free.

Although his obsessed protagonists are the opposite to the ideally free man, they are on the way to achieving this freedom through a mental catharsis. This is best understood by what the author says in Projet pour une révolution à New York, as well as in various interviews he has given on this novel ("La lecture est une catharsis, le spectacle une purification").⁴⁶ The theme of the novel itself is violence, treated to an extent not often encountered in his other works. It is the author's expressed hope of removing the mythical meaning attached to such until now: "Le crime est indispensable à la

révolution"... "le viol, l'assassinat, l'incendie sont les trois actes métaphoriques qui libéreront les nègres, les prolétariats en loques et les travailleurs intellectuels de leur esclavage, en même temps la bourgeoisie de ses complexes secrets".⁴⁷ Since Man of today is afraid, according to Robbe-Grillet, to dispel this fear it is necessary to face it--to take it to the point where the elements of this fear become a game. Unlike the other two French novelists, Robbe-Grillet's novels and in particular this last one, are tinged with a black humour. This humour is also found in the Québécois writers. The 'jeu' aspect is more serious than it might seem at first glance, with its property of stimulating the imagination. For Robbe-Grillet it is not just the humour which is important, but the naked light it throws on human myths, which rids Man of the unspeakable and secret within himself. Without any moralizing masks, this brings his own fears into the open, preventing him from being destroyed by myths of his own making.

Robbe-Grillet seems to be echoing to a large extent Butor's protagonists when he says that the best way to dominate the 'angoisse' and 'despair' felt by Man in the world is through writing about them and, in particular, about those elements which are the most frightening. Such a treatment can create distance between the man and what he feels. The ways of creating this distance are numerous. To do this Robbe-Grillet is looking for a new way "de parler ce monde, qui me permette d'y

vivre autrement qu'en aliéné".⁴⁸ He is at this point very close to the 'parler' of the Québécois Réjean Ducharme, with the 'new' world it also represents. As Robbe-Grillet says "l'organisation de ces images reste l'espace où s'exerce toujours ma liberté".⁴⁹

Thus his original intention of forcing Man to face reality as it IS is still pertinent. What he had to say in Pour un Nouveau Roman is merely developed further in Projet pour une révolution à New York. Reality for him is here and now. It is not the hidden significance that is important but the solid concrete and material presence of the world, and beyond what Man sees or can perceive with his senses nothing else exists. At this stage of his affirmation of existence there is a strong resemblance to Meursault's recognition of what reality is. Any explanation of things is superfluous, or, worse, leads to tragedy. There is nothing inside things. Man the spectator is the only witness. There is not God-- just the "voyeur". Man's aim should be to avoid communion with the world and for this reason metaphorical descriptions are also to be avoided, implying as they do response and feeling in things where there is in reality nothing.

Hence far from being novels about things, the Robbe-Grillet novels present the description of things or events as interpreted by a certain individual. Each individual is, in the Robbe-Grillet sense, a "voyeur". It is through this indi-

vidual and what he sees, or believes he sees, or imagines he sees that the reader must interpret these novels: "L'homme y est present à chaque page, à chaque ligne, à chaque mot. Même si l'on y trouve beaucoup d'objets et décrits avec minutie, il y a toujours d'abord le regard qui les voit, la pensée qui les revoit, la passion qui les déforme".⁵⁰

This world of imagination is a deeply personal and individual one, many aspects of which resemble the tortured novels of Franz Kafka, from whom Robbe-Grillet's characters have inherited a great deal. The relationship of the Kafka protagonist with the world is direct and immediate. Thus the world of Kafka and of Robbe-Grillet is the same "tel que l'orienté MON POINT DE VUE; je n'en connaîtrai jamais d'autre. La subjectivité relative de mon regard me sert précisément à DÉFINIR MA SITUATION DANS LE MONDE. J'évite simplement de concourir moi-même, à faire de cette situation une servitude".⁵¹

VI INTRODUCTION TO THE NOUVEAU ROMAN

IN FRENCH CANADA (QUEBEC)

"Que l'échec est fréquent au Québec! Que le suicide est fréquent dans nos lettres!"⁵²

Less able to look at their situation 'objectively' in the sense of extending what they are writing about beyond the immediate context of their personal involvement, the Québécois writers, as was mentioned are closely tied to the past

and present of their nation and situation. Yet obviously what they describe, since it is again a description of Man, goes beyond the immediate context of Québec, as is implied in the quotation referring to Bessette, but equally applicable to the other two Québécois writers: "L'originalité de Bessette, c'est de savoir isoler ce fond essentiel de notre subconscient collectif de façon à nous faire revivre dans ses romans une abstraction de nous-mêmes".⁵³

In order to understand a little the differences which exist between the "nouveau roman" of French Canada and that of France as well as the reason for these differences, it is necessary to discuss the present temper of this part of Canada and its people, in so far as it has a bearing on the authors treated in this thesis, as well as comparing the authors of the two cultures.

Bessette, first of all, not merely in age, but also because of his biological outlook, as well as in the depiction of his protagonist in age and social situation, fits in with Sarraute and Butor.

Although Basile's protagonists seem to belong to a younger generation than those of Butor, there are several bases for comparison with Butor's individuals. Both novelists' protagonists live in the past while believing their lives are fully 'present'. Since Basile's three 'J's' are unable to come to

terms with the present, relying upon the artistic creation of Jonathan for their immortality and self-justification, they must face the same consequences of substituting 'art' for life, as do Butor's protagonists.

Finally, the youngest writer, Réjean Ducharme, is closest to Robbe-Grillet⁵⁴ in depiction of characters. In their IMAGINATION, if not in reality, they are outside society as it exists. Like Robbe-Grillet's characters, schizophrenic, obsessed and paranoiac individuals, the Ducharme creations live in a totally alien world. To the Robbe-Grillet and Ducharme protagonists there seems no clear line of demarcation between reality and imagination. Their mind fantasies are such that the two are inseparable. The only final difference is that the Ducharme children are children facing adulthood while the Robbe-Grillet protagonists await something beyond the present society.

In general the modern French Canadian novel expresses the alienation and search for self expressed in the new novels in France. These two themes are, by their nature, to a large extent even more applicable to the French Canadians who are basically a dispossessed people. With their feelings of guilt and inferiority, as well as their deep desire to assert themselves, they need the art form to release, show, and attempt to find, a solution to their own anguish.

Structurally, the French Canadian new novel obviously owes

a great deal to its French predecessors, and in particular to Robbe-Grillet and Butor. However both Bessette and Basile tend to emphasize their being influenced by American authors, such as Dos Passos in the case of Bessette, Faulkner for Basile. Basile rather ferociously disclaims all French influence --at least direct--a consequence of the desire to escape French models and assert his own independence. This is a feeling shared by many of the Québécois, who practice a counter-rejection of the mother culture which often fails to recognize the merits of its Canadian offspring. On the other hand there is an obvious affinity of mind with the ever present American civilization, whose economic superiority lends even more force to the already existing bilingualism and dependency. The American influence is far greater on the French Canadians than it could be on the French, for whom it has been diffused across continents by the individual American authors of the first half of the century. For the Québécois it is part of their own time and continent.

As there is, to an extent, a refusal of the French influence on their works, so it can be seen that in their novels, the English Canadian factor is almost non-existent. For the most part it is ignored, whether the main action takes place in a French province where there is still a large sector of English-speaking Canadians, or elsewhere as in L'Incubation⁵⁵ of Bessette or in the novels of Réjean Ducharme. It is as if

in their desire to assert themselves, they refuse to see the obvious, living in an hermetically sealed world populated only by themselves and their like. Just as unreal is their almost fairy-tale-like avoidance of violence, in contrast to the actual violence within Québec itself. These same traits are seen in the French "nouveau roman". Any violence that does occur is a very personal one. Not only is there no socio-political 'engagement' in the narrow sense of one nation's politics or sociology, but actual events external to the private world of the individual, not directly affecting him, have no place in the mind-world of the novels, apart from a vague mention here and there of such events as the Vietnam war which might occur in the mind of any individual in his day-to-day life. This is not to say that death and tragedy are not present, but it is a tragedy of the individual and of the self. Indeed, unlike the characters of the French "nouveau roman", those of the French Canadian novel treated do not seem representative of a group, and rather than forming a homogenous whole--a society--seem together to be a conglomeration of different individuals. In the same way the family unit does not exist as it does in Sarraute's or Butor's novels, and there is in these French Canadian new novels no real criticism--as there was in earlier French Canadian novels --of the family as a unit...in fact in most of the novels the characters seem to be members of a very atypical family, actual orphans, or 'orphans' on their own choosing. The ex-

ceptions to this are Bessette's two novels. In L'Incubation this criticising the family unit is not in the foreground. In his latest published novel however, the family is criticised, but more as a unit of society fatalistically determined by Man of the past and from which Man of the present is unable to escape. Brought up in a Church-dominated society, with the consequent socio-economic implications, where the priest not only represents the Church on earth, but also fulfills the position of the spiritual father in the rather ambiguous French Canadian family where the real father is usually absent or of relative unimportance, and where the mother is both all-powerful as matriarch and the suffering martyr victim in the role forced on her by that very Church, the rejection of Church and family leads to the 'orphan' situation. Thus there is no "crise de foi" in the consequent break-away from the Church, since the latter's importance is less religious than social. Neither is there any revolution, but rather a revolt against the existing institutions, this revolt being expressed in the form of refusal or rejection. This same attitude is characteristic of the "nouveau roman" of France. However in the French "new novels", with the exception of Projet pour une révolution à New York, the revolt is that of the individual against his own milieu and the impossibility of his reconciling his individuality with the mores and demands of the society of which he is a part. In the Québécois novel on the other hand, this revolt reflects the

the basic anguish of a minority group with its own set of values within a larger group almost totally incomprehending of the smaller group's needs.

Obviously in a society based on the individual's acceptance of his own guilt, due to his religious, political and economical situation, a new set of values must be found and a new code of morality set up in order to rid him of this guilt and find and assert the real self. In the French new novel, the majority of the protagonists are actually 'outsiders' in a society foreign to them, giving them the possibility of a new perspective, of seeing themselves as alien, whereas the French Canadian protagonists are tragically 'outsiders' within their own society.

One of the first reactions to their situation is found in the desire to escape, to get away from all existing influences and start afresh somewhere else. This theme is constantly present--has indeed permeated all of French Canadian literature--whether it is escape in space to another country, or in time expressed in the nostalgic desire to become once again an 'ancien Canadien'. This latter is particularly evident when the individuals are faced with the isolating loneliness of the metropolis they live in. However they are constantly frustrated by the knowledge that flight is not enough. Deeply patriotic, they realize that to find themselves, they must reconstitute themselves by accepting

their birthright, modifying it if possible, or living within it without being affected by it and thus to a certain extent rejecting it. Sometimes the only resolution is that of the young intellectual hero typical of the new novel in French Canada, who refuses the pseudo-intellectuality of young political revolutionaries to work for the future of his own writings. The idea is not too far removed from that of the French new novelists. Usually a journalist and/or writer of novels, this artist outsider incarnates the ambition for social emancipation. It is indeed by the act of writing--as exemplified by the word coined by Godbout in Salut Galarneau--'vécrire', that this young or not so young hero can destroy and reconstruct the society he lives in. Without any political 'engagement' he is nevertheless a constant demonstrator and contestant. Again his involvement is that of the other new novelists. If it is not political in the narrow sense, it is so in a much wider one.

Hence this literature is one of real despair and dispossession. Filled with a strange pessimism, it is marked quite often by a bitter, black humour seen only in Robbe-Grillet on the French side. Not only is this dispossession reflected in the denial of past bonds, but also in the inability of the French Canadian to really communicate with his fellow beings. This desire to communicate has resulted in the establishment within the French Canadian society itself of an hermetic language--joual--based, unfortunately, on the two languages

spoken in Québec and thus, to a large extent, self-defeating. On the other hand this same tendency is seen in the young writer Ducharme⁵⁶ with his beautiful, poetic and quite extraordinary neologisms, manifesting a new self-possession not found in older writers whose very style seems cramped by their limitations based on their own fear of disapproval.

By far the most important form of communication is love and its expression, whether physical or otherwise. Love between man and woman is an important theme in the modern novel in Québec. Strangely enough the erotic sadistic imaginings of Robbe-Grillet reflect dramatically the other side of the alienation felt by modern man and particularly in this instance, the French Canadian. Psychologically, the subjugated, guilt-ridden individual is incapable of loving either himself or, by extension, others. "Love", when it does exist in these novels, consists either of brutal physical contact with no real 'communication', or of a love relationship developed with a foreigner, not a member of the actual society. This relationship usually occurs as the result of a voyage--in other words away from the influence that make of the individual what he is and more often than not, like the voyage which must end, results in tragedy.

Similarly in the French new novel of Butor, the inability of the individual to know and live in reality is reflected in his failure in love. However the attempt is there as is the

attempt at repossession not only of oneself but of one's world --a quest that is not one individual's or one nation's, but the quest of Man in general. It is here that the French Canadian novel has reached its maturity.

Bessette:

As is the case with the other Québécois authors of the "nouveau roman" and unlike the French authors, Bessette has published no real theoretical plan or explanation for his work, (although he is well-known as a critic himself), perhaps because it is to such a large extent a form of self-expression. However, together with the French novelists, he insists on the oneness of the author/individual. Like Butor he leaves the interpretation of his works to the reader and critic.

To Bessette, it is not merely the one alienated individual who is tragic, but all mankind. In this way, like Sarraute, all men have a common 'fond' and again, like the French writer, Bessette presents a basically biological concept of Man. According to Bessette, Man should never, as he puts it, have 'verticalized' himself. As a consequence he is constantly trying to reattain the 'horizontal'. Sleep and the sexual act, expressed in the purely physical gratification of Jodoin and his landlady in Le Libraire,⁵⁷ or in the more complex relationship of Gordon and Nêa in L'Incubation, can be interpreted at one level as the same basic desire in Man to get

back to the horizontal position "un mâle une femelle cherchant à fraterniser à s'unir s'imaginant parce qu'ils sont des bipèdes des verticaux parce que leur ancêtres au cours d'une fantaisie d'une mauvaise plaisanterie de l'évolution ont peu à peu déplacé leur axe vertébral".⁵⁸

This Bessettian attitude to Man and to the pathos of human destiny is reflected in a total lack of enthusiasm for Nature or the physical world. More particularly, it is revealed as disgust for the nature of Man who, by his very civilization, has become not only physically repulsive but also inadapted to the life he must lead.

The desire for the horizontal has another side to it--a desire for escape and oblivion. The physical aspect of love represents the same desire. The latter is coupled with the search for communication with another being. In fact, love is treated in this novel as another element in the fatal forces that control the life of Man. But the relationship portrayed seems very often a blend of love and hate. In Le Cycle the quest for love turns quickly to hatred and despair. The love portrayed in this novel, if not simply a physical union necessary to produce offspring, a necessary ingredient of all that 'ménage' represents, is too contaminated by past experiences to free the individual and allow him to gain what he seeks--the relationships he establishes with others. In a society where the capital sin is that of the

'flesh', this love/hate sentiment is prominent in the same way as in the novels of Robbe-Grillet with their portrayal of the obsessed mind. The desperate drive felt by Robbe-Grillet's basically schizoid people to establish contact with another being and their resultant sadism/masochism simultaneously separating them from the society they cannot be part of while offering them hope of something elsewhere, seems strangely coherent in the French Canadian world of guilt and suffocation.

Bessette uses the form of the "nouveau roman" to express the alcoholic rambling with its mixed up chronology and extraordinary word creations, of a cultivated but confused mind in an anything but artificial way. As will also be seen in the works of Ducharme and Basile, once more the form is ideally suited to and inseparable from the content. In Le Cycle* the form again is pertinent to the content. Le Cycle travels through the mind of five French Canadians whose amblings and obsessions more than adequately portray the pettiness and despair of their lives. Social criticism is very strong. Apart from criticism of such human catastrophes with all their inherent stupidity and illogicality as war, strong criticism is levelled against the small, narrow-minded provincial towns of Canada,⁵⁹ and Canada itself with its attempts at bilingualism, which, to Bessette--as to the "Sé-

*not fully treated in this thesis due to the impossibility of integrating it completely at this date.

paratistes"--is a fraud by its very nature. In the same way he criticizes so many Canadians, French or English, with their sheep-like tendencies and fear of committing themselves, so well exemplified in Maggie's family in L'Incubation: "raisonnablement bilinguistes biculturalistes prudemment anti-américains précautionneusement à l'arrière-garde de l'avant-garde tragiquement écartelés entre l'ENSIGN et la feuille".⁶⁰

Thus in L'Incubation and in Le Cycle the basic theme of the outsider in society is more widely applied to all individuals in a given society and their alienation to themselves and each other. Once again it is impossible to separate reality from imagination. Since all in the first novel is seen through the mind of Lagarde--inebriated, confused, yet frighteningly lucid--one must accept the interpretation of this narrator. Basically his mind is the same tortured mind of the dispossessed Sarrautian, Butor, or Robbe-Grillet character.

Jean Basile:

"Nous sommes des créateurs de mondes et des inventeurs de mythes qu'un jour nous détruirons nous-mêmes dans un moment de lassitude ou de rage; nous épuisons à vivre comme nous le faisons notre réserve de grands sentiments; nous sommes fondamentalement des êtres religieux et nous ne pourrions vivre sans dogmes et sans rites; sous les apparences de la futilité, qui peut prétendre que nous ne sommes pas sérieux".⁶¹

Born in 1932 of Russian parents, raised as was Bessette

by the Jesuits, though not in Canada, Jean Basile considers himself one hundred percent Canadian. As such, he rejects the notion that his novels are 'French', insisting that they are rather part of the total North American culture, both the bad and good aspects of which appear in his books. They are essential elements in the lives and milieu of the young--though not too young--French Canadians he portrays.

Again, as with Bessette, in a manner typical of current American literature and cinema, tragedy and comedy are closely linked, often with no noticeable transition between the two. Whether this comic element, as seen for example in Le Grand Khan⁶² takes the form of Jonathan's black humour in his pornographic description of Montreal⁶³ with its inadequate mayor, or his actual picking-up and subsequent beating of a girl,⁶⁴ his mocking of himself or his fellow Canadians, this type of humour is a feature of modern French Canadian literature. Such mocking at others, as for example at the typical French Canadian housewife, who dreams of winning a trip to a far-off warm climate,⁶⁵ or Judith's mocking description of the young⁶⁶ workhorse French Canadians who, like young savages, copy the fashion dictates of other countries to ridiculous extremes, reveals a desire on the part of these young protagonists to depart from the norms of their society, to gain for themselves a dignity their fellow country-men lack, and to create rather than imitate.

There is also the cynicism and sarcasm in scenes such as the one following Jonathan's arrest after his mock battle with Judith, in which he noted that people such as Adolphe, one of Judith's young lovers, who is plotting against king and country, should be arrested, rather than he, Jonathan, essentially innocent. The incomprehension of society in general is reflected in characters typified by Jérémie's secretary, Anne, with her complete misinterpretation of events, or indeed in Jérémie himself, who at moments of tragic import is unable to cast aside his narcissism and to feel for others. Within these novels, humour is never anything but superficially amusing, serving to hide far deeper feelings of frustration and condemnation of self and others.

Any theoretical ideas regarding his own novels apart from his seemingly deliberately contradictory avertissement in his first "nouveau roman", La Jument des Mongols, are to be found in the second novel in the trilogy, Le Grand Khan. This novel-within-the-novel revelation, also used by Robbe-Grillet, contains a distorted mirror image of Basile's own work. The book is also variously interpreted by Jérémie and Judith. Their comments on it reveal insight into themselves. With its "nouveau roman" style, long sentences, seemingly anodine details in reality full of significance, and the lack of importance given to big events, as Jérémie says: "soit pudeur devant le tragique, soit indifférence, même le plus grave te

laisse froid et occasionne à ses personnages des réactions curieuses",⁶⁷ it represents an 'apology' for Basile's work. Jérémie continues his analysis and criticism stating that he considers the best quality in the book to be: "Une certaine façon de nous émouvoir par des choses qui ne sont pas tristes en elles-mêmes, mais qui supposent un certain caractère chez tes héros".⁶⁸

His novels are supposed to form part of a four-part structure, each of which deals in turn with one of the four main themes of life: love, creation (in the artistic sense), childhood and death. In actuality all these themes are interwoven in the three novels completed, with love and artistic creation being the principal themes throughout, while the original conception of four novels has been condensed into three. As Basile insists, the novels are self-sufficient, yet they are more easily discussed as a unit. La Jument des Mongols recounts the story of Armande's pregnancy, her attempt at abortion and her subsequent death. Le Grand Khan tells of Jonathan's efforts to write and publish his novel, while the third Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk⁶⁹ is a hallucinatory 'trip' where all three are attempting to gain what has been lost in the unreal world they have created for themselves. These are, however, only superficial divisions, since the themes run continuously throughout all three novels. What does divide them more distinctly is the point of view from which they are nar-

rated. Each of the three protagonists seem to be three sides of a complex personality. Thus the first novel is related by Jérémie, the second by Jonathan and the third and last by Judith. This technique is interesting in that it allows the variations of interpretations of events according to the person interpreting.

Although various themes and events are therefore developed or modified throughout the books, the characters themselves, with their interrelationships and the relationship to the society they live in and remain outside of are the most important element, as they are in all the "nouveaux romans".

Réjean Ducharme:

"Un livre est un monde, un monde fait, un monde avec un commencement et une fin. Chaque page d'un livre est une ville. Chaque ligne est une rue. Chaque mot est une demeure"... "Tout ce que je demande à un livre, c'est de m'inspirer ainsi de l'énergie et du courage, de me dire ainsi qu'il y a plus de vie que je peux en prendre, de me rappeler ainsi l'urgence d'agir".⁷⁰

The language used by Ducharme is notable for its extraordinary vocabulary, a great deal of which is scientific and, more specifically, biological, but even more so for the neologisms, either compounds of already existing words or pure inventions. Whether these are the 'bérénicien' of Bérénice Einberg⁷¹ or those particular languages invented by the other protagonists, all, however, have the same intention of isolating their inventors from those around them, to make them

self-sufficient. There are other deliberately alienating acts such as stealing and kidnapping used by the protagonists for this same purpose and as an act of defiance. This language invention also takes the form of inventing names for themselves, again forming their own hermetic world-- that of Tate for Mille Milles and Chateaugu  (again not their real names), Cherchell for Iode, and Asie Azothe, and a number for B r n ce and Constance Clore. This bestowing of special names on each other resembles the relationship of the little prince and the fox in St-Exup ry's Le Petit Prince in which meaning is given to the individual in a world where that individual has become a mere number. Reason being the language of adults, this non-logical, hermetic language is eminently suited to the children protagonists. It has many elements in common with the 'j  al' of the young Qu b cois. Yet even words, the only means by which any expression is really possible are at the same time that which brings on despair. According to Ducharme words themselves are superfluous but necessary, sometimes giving themselves an illusory importance making us think things have changed when nothing really does. These days the word is taken too often for the thing. They are mirages which act as 'images'.⁷² Like La Joconde they are not the real thing, and are merely a tool-- something forgotten by many people. Thus words like things, meant for Man's use, have gradually gained power over Man. What counts is what one means to say, not the words used to

say it. This self-created world of their own language or of silence is one opposed to the world of those who are 'achetés',⁷³ and in Canada, it is a refusal of domination by the U.S. or by any other force, either in culture or language, a refusal which includes France, the country which betrayed its own people in their time of need, and a scorn for those French Canadians who, forgetting this, attempt to emulate France and the French.

Ducharme's tirade is directed against Man's destruction of Nature, symbolized as in Basile's novels by the caged and denatured trees of Montreal, fitting in with denatured modern Man. Nature in general and trees in particular are free from the dissatisfaction felt by Man, who is a parasite lacking in everything to make him self-sufficient. Unlike Man, a tree is self-sufficient and hence does not suffer. In a passage reminiscent of Robbe-Grillet, Mille Milles says "Les choses ne sont ni belles ni laides; il n'y a rien de beau, rien de laid. On projette ses sentiments sur les choses et elles nous les renvoient à la façon de miroirs".⁷⁴ Things feel no hatred. Their eyes are turned inwards where all is beautiful, not asking for satisfaction as does Man. Man has also created inequality. Faire Faire tells Iode "Les droits d'un seul devraient être égaux à ceux de mille; car il n'en vit et n'en meurt qu'un par corps"... "Quand quatre mille enfants à la fois perdent la vie ou l'orgueil, un seul perd vraiment

la vie ou l'orgueil"... "il n'y a qu'une vraie supériorité: la supériorité de celui qu'on est sur tous les autres, la supériorité de ce qu'on est sur ce qu'on n'est pas, la supériorité de ce qui est sur ce qui n'est pas".⁷⁵

One is alone in the world, a situation that leads to pessimism, and yet out of this can be created a philosophy of optimism, as is attempted by the Ducharme protagonists, even if it does seem a desperate optimism. Iode tells her brother that if one is alone, instead of complicating one's existence through fearing anybody or anything, one need not be afraid of anybody. Solitude is a state brought out in people's eyes. One can see others' souls in their eyes and it is only through eyes that one can really choose whom to love or hate. It is eyes that have brought Man out of the darkness, allowed him to see other men and even to imagine he is not alone, and yet he has also seen other men die. Without eyes Man would be better off. One sees oneself in others' eyes as if in a deforming mirror. If one cannot look elsewhere one has to look inside oneself, since "LES YEUX ONT FAIM FOLLEMENT SANS CESSÉ. QUAND ILS NE TROUVENT RIEN DE BON À MANGER DEHORS, ILS SE TOURNENT VERS L'INTÉRIEUR ET SE METTENT À MANGER L'ÂME".⁷⁶

Solitude, in turn, brings on the fear of becoming dependent on others and then losing them. This in the Ducharme individual results in a wish for the death of the loved

one in order to control that loss. The deaths that occur in the novels (real or imaginary) are directly or indirectly caused in part by the protagonist. As Iode says "Je marche devant la mort, je la précède comme l'éclair le tonnerre. Quand ce qui fait pleurer viendra, mes yeux seront secs"... "Tenir seule, avec rien. J'ai hâte que Asie Azothe meure pour être seule, seule comme on est dans la nuit quand on est couché seul dans sa chambre".⁷⁷ In the same way she only likes sad fairy stories, particularly sad love stories, since they warm and feed the feelings she already has in her. If the tragedy is there there is an end to the possibility of suffering. Suicide is also a way to victory, as is destruction of beauty a way of controlling that very beauty. Physical pain overcome is the same thing, reflected in a seemingly deliberate masochism. Yet, as the Ducharme protagonists point out, Man is the only animal capable of putting the axe to his own motor. Recognizing that he cannot live completely alone, nor remain in the state of child purity he feels is the only authentic form of existence, Mille Milles decides suicide is the only solution for himself and Chateauguë. Yet at the same time he recognizes this is the end and is afraid to die before 'understanding' is attained. The death thus chosen is an imperative one willed by himself. If one chooses death then one goes beyond death and becomes free-- an approach somewhat like Meursault's acceptance of death. Thus dignity is attained, an attribute Man does not otherwise

have. Nature, embodied in such as the ocean, has it, but unlike Man, things, in Nature, cannot choose to destroy themselves. Conversely Mille Milles realizes death is nothing but an end to boredom and platitude and anything that does happen, necessarily happens before death.

The victory thus gained by the Ducharme protagonist is one against what they call the 'Titan'⁷⁹--"L'univers, lui, est commandé par un titan qui essaie de me faire avoir peur, qui veut que je me soumette à lui" and this deity or force is a cruel one. "Il y a quelqu'un qui s'amuse à me torturer, quelqu'un qui ne me donne quelquefois la main que pour m'entraîner plus profondément dans les ténèbres et le froid. Chaque fois que l'éblouissement d'espoir est fini, le monde que je traverse est plus froid, plus noir".⁸⁰ At other times the protagonist rejects the idea of such a great all-powerful Jupiter, guilty of all Man's misfortunes: "Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait de grand coupable. Je crois qu'il n'y a que des volontaires, des volontaires plus ou moins conscients"... "Il y a beaucoup d'appelés et beaucoup d'élus. Peu refusent carrément d'être volontaires (peu se suicident) et peu sont volontairement volontaires".⁸¹

Torn between the desire for self-sufficiency and the need for others they also realize any person is the interpretation you give of them. The person you love is in reality several people, the idea you have of that person conceived and incar-

nated within your own soul. Bérénice in L'Avalée des Avalés feels her brother Christian does not 'exist'. She has created him and she like everybody is irremediably alone. There are as many Christians as there are people who invent him. Christian himself is alone in the "pays appelé Christian",⁸² and thus she herself is also alone. From this she proceeds to an extraordinary positivism. If she is completely alone and there is no one or nothing other than what she invents under the sun then she is of necessity the creator and possessor of the sun and of the universe. Therefore from a deep pessimism comes an affirmation of self and the power of that self to create, through the imagination, its own world. Even this, however, is regarded by the protagonist with pessimism at times. A world created by oneself is devoid of surprises and, in a search for the self within such a world, one can only arrive at zero. On the other hand the Ducharme protagonist has only contempt for the ordinary dry philosopher who does not experience "le délire",⁸³ the feeling which is a resolution of solitude and fear, provoked by will and imagination and leading to deliverance and conquest. Since nothing is sure, certainty can only be reached with the help of the imagination. Thus the protagonist invents his own world. "Le seul moyen de s'appartenir est de comprendre. Les seules mains capable de saisir la vie sont à l'intérieur de la tête."⁸⁴ Rejecting the influence of people over them, things still have a power over the protagonist, but things are "aimables"⁸⁵

and one should not let things pass by. In a philosophy again reminiscent of Le Petit Prince of Saint-Exupéry, Bérénice asserts that you must take things as they present themselves to you, make them yours because only if you need something are you alive.

A form of comprehension of Man's state is reached by the Ducharme individual, but it is one of Man's solitude and despair as it is for Bessette. From feelings of his own solitude, he proceeds to that of "ennui" and of "le mal". This "mal" is above all a condition of "adulterie" and of the modern age. It is a sickness of the soul for which there is only one remedy: "seuls les êtres humains qui ont renoncé une fois pour toutes à vivre dans le doux noir des yeux fermés pourront s'adapter quand, la terre étant devenu surpeuplée, il faudra aller vivre dans la lumière"⁸⁶ accepting the "néant" as their only assurance and means of rest. For this "lumière" is the only element that is not poisonous to Man. As Mille Milles says "mon mal est à base de manque de lumière, de manque d'intelligence du monde, à base de confusion et d'obscurité".⁸⁷ Most people are unaware of the existence of this atmosphere of "mal" just as fish do not see the water they swim in. Mille Milles sees his "mal" in the form of a captured eagle housed in his own entrails or sees himself as this eagle lodged in the intestines of the world. This "mal" is not the sin of the Church but the "mal" of modern Man,

found in the despair echoing throughout modern literature, a sickness which prevents people loving one another or themselves in their preoccupation with it. To become an adult is to enter this kingdom of "le mal". Everything is futile when faced with it. The adult defends himself from it with hatred and nostalgia. Children with sad faces are "victimes du mal à retardement".⁸⁸ The worst aspect of it is the realisation that it is a universal malady, that you are not alone in suffering it and that it is not a merely temporary state. The protagonists in the fight against it resent any distraction, yet these very distractions are symptoms of encroaching adulthood and of this sickness. To rid themselves of it men need the help of other men and yet it is a product of Man himself. Man is alone and his very aggressiveness arises from this solitude and reinforces it. No communication is possible between men. Each wants to be understood but wants to know nothing, yet Man alone in the void is a total impossibility. The world is made up of things and men, and men cannot exist without other men. Therefore Man is a reaction to Man and not a void. The despair of the Ducharme protagonist expresses the despair of the total paradox of Man in the universe. "Vous ne savez pas ce que vous manquez, ô hommes, si vous n'avez pas la vulgarité des hommes, l'avarice d'âme des hommes, la petite cruauté des hommes, la grossière sensualité des hommes, le grand ennui et l'ingrate solitude des hommes."⁸⁹

Against this "mal", there rises up within the Ducharme child, the eagle-like free soul not recognized by those of lesser merit. This free soul realizes or convinces himself that he is stronger than others, but has to prove it to those others. This deep inner being reveals itself to the protagonist at moments of utter solitude. The protagonist tells him or herself that in the void inhabited by the protagonist at these moments lies the "eagles'" true domain where once entered invulnerability is attained. This inner "eagle" which cannot get out, creates within the protagonist internal turmoil. This eagle demands courage and purity. Mille Milles suggests that in fact all men would prefer to follow the right paths--those of courage and purity--even if they are the most difficult, in preference to being cowards. "Le pire c'est d'être lâche devant soi, d'être lâche seul dans sa chambre"... "Qui n'aimerait pas mourir jeune, en pleine vigueur et en pleine pureté".⁹⁰ The suffocating imprisoned being needs to be released and the most obvious means to this is through suicide, a means of regaining the firm air of purity. Unlike those who have within them "carrots" and "onions" which take root, he with the eagle can only suffer since eagles do not take root but take to the sky. They are a soul too big for the chest they inhabit and they are first felt by the protagonist as a strange weight, an inexplicable, unbearable, pressure within.

To give their eagle the air necessary to breathe, the protagonists feel they must conquer and dominate, and this they must do before adulthood reaches them and makes them arrogant and impiously forgetful of their true place in the universe. Thus they work at forming themselves now, since once one has formed oneself one knows oneself, making oneself responsible for each of one's own acts, living against what one's nature has condemned one to be. External happiness and sadness means nothing because both alternate in life anyway. The battle once begun, all risks must be taken since victory is too dear not to do so, its outcome too clear. Easy things are not worth the trouble. Though one has only one face one can choose many different grimaces. The natural thing for humans is to surpass themselves. With the desire to conquer comes also the wish to destroy for it is only through destruction that one can prove one really possesses something--another reason also for willing the death of those they love.

To be understood by others is not their concern. All they want is to remain pure, a child while this childhood is fast slipping away. Life itself is not yet made. One must live as one would like to live, not give in, and above all fight. "On naît livré au hasard et c'est en se créant qu'on se délivre, en créant sa vie",⁹¹ like a sculptor from nothing. Everything Mille Milles has he has torn from others, from the fog in which others drift around. Taking, again, is an affirmation of self. In the same way Mille Milles believes one

should take one's joy anywhere, no matter what form it takes. Even if humiliated this too can be turned to joy. This for the Ducharme protagonist is the only way to live in the world without suffering, to keep one's pride and dignity no matter what, but this joy is "à base de force de violence".⁹²

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23. Generally speaking the Québécois writers have no such theoretical writings. What they say must therefore be inferred by remarks within the novels.
24. op. cit., page 12.
25. "Ce que voient les oiseaux", L'Ere du Soupçon, page 169.
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28. "Sur Quelques notions périmées", Ibid., page 39.
29. Ibid., page 28.
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31. Les Gommages, page 200.
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79. L'Avalée des avalés, page 154.
80. Le Nez qui voque, pages 247-248.
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CHAPTER III

THE INDIVIDUAL'S STRUGGLE FOR SELF WITHIN SOCIETY

Rejecting the other members of society and most conventional relationships, the protagonist nevertheless must achieve some form of communication with another person, real or imaginary. If he is unable to do this and is faced with solitude and no means of conveying what he believes exists to others, his quest is useless. Therefore the search for authenticity involving the discovery or rediscovery of the lost self, also involves the search for another able and willing to communicate with the protagonist. This communication takes on various forms throughout the different authors. In Sarraute's novels it is a desire to know this other person expressed in various furtive tropistic movements towards and away from that other person depending upon that person's positive or negative reactions. The other extreme is seen in the novels of Robbe-Grillet and Ducharme where it is the basis on which sado-masochistic relationships are formed. A close examination follows of how these relationships are developed, and how they are connected to the central theme of alienation.

Proceeding from their basic concepts of Man in general, the six authors depict the problems of a particular individual within a particular society. This society prevents these individuals from attaining the state of authenticity and freedom they desire. The protagonist brings into relief the pro-

blems of the individual who is, or feels he is an outsider to the society he finds himself in. Basically a struggle of Man against himself, this struggle undergone to free themselves from what Man has, in essence, created, takes on the form of a 'quest' in the Percival sense. There is a 'refus' common to all the protagonists, of the society they are in, whether this 'refus' be passive, as in the case of Sarraute and Butor in France, or Bessette in French Canada, or more active as in the case of Robbe-Grillet in France and of Ducharme and to a lesser extent, Basile in Québec.

Whether the protagonists are in fact that much different from other members of society is at times somewhat doubtful. In Nathalie Sarraute's novels the catalyst individual in the first few novels and in Tropismes, seemingly so hypersensitive to the feelings of others is gradually revealed as in Sarraute's novels projecting his own feelings onto others. Although less obvious, all the other protagonists are guilty of the same limitation. On the French side, Robbe-Grillet's protagonists are the most deviant from the 'norm', although what they do and see is quite possibly never realized in actuality. In Québec, the French Canadian protagonists seem to represent the situation of their own minority culture in their struggle to be themselves. Yet all the protagonists of these novels have one trait distinguishing them to a lesser or greater extent from others they come in contact with, who have

either lost this if they ever had it, or refuse to allow its intrusion into their well-ordered lives. This is the ability on the part of the protagonist to create in his imagination--to dream either of a future or of a past that seems to hold more for him than what the present has to offer him. This dreamed of state of being represents authenticity as compared to the inauthenticity in the Sartrean sense that they are fighting to avoid. It is all around them in people who are not really alive, who seek to instil some meaning in their lives through possession of physical objects and avoidance of facing reality.

Nathalie Sarraute:

Nathalie Sarraute's protagonists are all searching for what they hope and believe is the authentic self hidden under the clichés of existing society. The individual chosen by the author to exemplify this search is a narrator catalysor who sets off reactions to stimuli around him. Whatever happens does so because of this narrator or through him, because of what he is, and also, obviously enough, because all events in the novel are seen through the mind's eye of the narrator. He is such that he is or feels himself to be, an outsider in the society in which he lives. Even his interpretations of people and of events is a reaction to the world apart from him. More sensitive than those around him to what goes on beneath the surface of people and things, able, so he believes, to reveal this to other men, yet not wishing to become a part

of the society he can see through, this Sarrautian character is a being alienated within a world, which, paradoxically, he seems more capable of understanding than do those who feel secure within it. By virtue of that very knowledge they do not have or have lost, the latter group needs this sensitive outsider in a relationship that can best be described as symbiotic. It is he who "nourrit et renouvelle à chaque instant notre stock d'expériences. C'est lui--le catalyseur par excellence, l'excitant grâce auquel ces mouvements se déclenchent, l'obstacle qui leur donne de la cohésion, qui les empêche de s'amollir dans la facilité et la gratuité ou de tourner en rond dans la pauvreté monotone de la manie. Il est la menace, le danger réel et aussi la proie qui développe leur vivacité et leur souplesse".¹

Thus the two-faceted quality of being a menace to the society of which he is necessarily a member, and the inevitable prey for this society, since he upsets the existing order, is coupled with his desire for his own individuality and his simultaneous need for others. Agression and complicity, as in the Dostoyevsky victim/assassin complicity, are inherent in the outsider's need for others and for contact. The existential philosophy of Sartre emphasizes that it is only through others that the individual exists and knows himself. Referring to Katherine Mansfield writing of the "terrible desire to establish contact" and discussing the same need expressed in the works of Dostoyevsky, Nathalie Sarraute goes on to describe

this almost maniacal, frantic and continual need of her own protagonists to establish some form of contact with others. They are drawn as if into a vortex, attempting to open themselves to others and simultaneously to penetrate the innermost secret being of others. Hypersensitive beings are the best suited to seeing what is in others: "Sous les paroles, les gestes, les attitudes, il décèle la moindre saute d'humeur, la pulsation la plus cachée, l'écho le plus feutré, tout mouvement de l'atmosphère psychique qui l'entoure"... "Il devient aussi le réceptacle de plusieurs intériorités auxquelles il colle le plus fidèlement qu'il peut".²

These individuals are victims of the society they live in, used by that society for its own ends, but not allowed to exploit their ability to see beneath the façade of everyday clichés. If they could they would simply point out the inauthenticity inherent in the lives of those who are afraid to find some meaning in life, preferring physical possessions to the self-possession so needed by the Sarrautian 'hypersensible'. Thus those who victimize them are, in turn, victims of their own inauthenticity. They refuse the hypersensitive individual the right to be different from others and thus to reveal to them the life they are losing.

As an aware reader of the Sarrautian novel will be able to discern the 'movements' that lie hidden behind normal, harmless appearance, daily conversations, banal gestures, and the

platitudes of every-day life, revealed from time to time in the interior monologue of the person experiencing these movements, so in the daily conversation of those with whom he comes in contact, the 'hypersensible' will attempt to experience the 'sous-conversation' concealed beneath the clichés and platitudes of everyday words. This 'sous-conversation' had been depicted in the 'petits bourgeois' of Paris, the more well-to-do of Passy, or the intellectual élite of Les Fruits d'or and Entre la vie et la mort. Unlike cruder actions, words are like minute safety valves which from time to time secrete unhealthy emissions. Words therefore have the ability to bring out into the light of day those very subterranean movements, which keep themselves hidden like little grey animals in damp holes "Ils sont honteux et prudents: le moindre regard les fait fuir. Ils ont besoin pour s'épanouir, d'anonymat et d'impunité".³

Although people are basically all the same, having a common 'fond', according to Sarraute there are differences which though slight are nevertheless important in a society made up of individuals. Most live 'inauthentically' in the Sartrian sense, and it's the 'outsider' alone who is capable of revealing to others that part of reality they have chosen to ignore or have not yet discovered. For this reason the outsider should be tolerated, for it is through him that the others will gain a deeper, more complex, and clearer knowledge of what they are and what their condition and life may be.

Tropismes:

In Tropismes, criticism against these 'others' is very strong. The state of inauthenticity they represent is intensified by their milieu--the city. As with Robbe-Grillet, Butor and Ducharme, the city has a stultifying effect on the individual, taking away from him the innocence and purity of his original state. Indeed if the poor, pale, city people have any conception of freedom, any memories of childhood, of another existence, or any notion of life itself, they prefer not to see it, lest they might also become aware of their present state.

These very people, pitiful as individuals, taken as a group, become formidable and menacing to the outsider, who sees them for what they really are. Living their lives of platitudes, they are all alike in their insecurity and need for approval. Within this larger group, i.e., society, exists the smaller unit, that of the family 'cellule', which is a mere reflection of the larger unit. As such it is looked upon by Sarraute in Mauriac type fashion as "la famille, chacun caché dans son antre, solitaire, hargneux, épuisé".⁵

Within this family unit, women, in particular, come in for a great deal of criticism as the inauthentic beings. Busy with nothing, they object to what they consider the negligence of others. They hide the inauthenticity of their own lives in the banality of what they make important. Power to them is

represented more often than not by their control over things. The woman who is actually afraid of others and of their disapproval, or of being repulsed by them, will in turn use her power over things against those she fears, revenge for their outside lives, when she herself has none. In moments of frightening solitude she cannot help but see, trying to understand the reason for this, that all she has is really nothing, revealing her own 'vide'. Thus she turns the things she believes she has--physical objects or illusory control over others--against those, who, unlike herself, seems to lead lives of meaning: "Les choses, les objets, les coups de sonnette. Les choses qu'il ne fallait pas négliger. Les gens qu'il ne fallait pas faire attendre. Elle s'en servait comme d'une meute de chiens qu'elle sifflait à chaque instant sur eux".⁶

In the daily interchanges of everyday life women make of the platitudes of conversation an end in themselves. This 'gossiping' is their domain. Well brought up and properly trained, they are lifeless under their makeup, which is again a mask they take to be reality, hiding themselves not only from others, but from themselves. Seeing nothing, their eyes flicker over things, their look fastens on nothing. Refusing to go beyond the surface of things or people, surfaces are all they are able to reach and these they soil with their touch: "roulant sans cesse entre leurs doigts cette matière ingrate et pauvre qu'elles avaient extraite de leur vie (ce

qu'elles appelaient 'la vie', leur domaine), la pétrissant, l'étirant, la roulant jusqu'à ce qu'elle ne forme plus entre leurs doigts qu'un petit tas, une petite boulette grise".⁷

Another type of female of the species who also comes under the author's attack, is the 'bas bleu', seemingly more authentic, but who is, in reality, merely a more sophisticated version of the 'housewife', using her would-be intellectual prowess for control and domination, and to prove to herself and others the value of her worthless life. This type of woman is seen, in an older version, in Germaine Lemaire (Le Planétarium), snake-like in her ability to fascinate and hold others like trapped birds. These in turn do anything to appease her, while she desperately needs her followers to give her the admiration and security she needs. Younger versions are generally 'filles sages', usually dressed in black, pious, and seeking above all the same security in admiration. These young girls or older pseudo-intellectuals, merciless and ravenous parasites preying on anything they believe can supply them with what they think of as 'l'intellectualité', sought for in the darkest and most secret corners of life, become in turn --particularly the young ones--the playthings of the true intellectuals, such as the old man in Portrait d'un inconnu or the young narrator of Martereau,⁸ who find these women a source of amusement.

The other group singled out for criticism are 'les vieux',

who like the grown-ups in Ducharme's novels in Québec, regretting their own lost innocence, are constantly seeking to obtain control over that which is farthest from them--the young, and small children in particular. Unable to leave these latter their innocence, the old people will try to impose on their young captives their own lessons of life and death. The desire to gain control over the young is translated in the tight physical grasp with which they hold children's hands, producing in the latter feelings of nausea as if forced to swallow some vile medicine, the medicine of good common sense which teaches that: "il ne fallait rien attendre, rien demander, c'était ainsi, il n'y avait rien de plus, c'était cela 'la vie' .

Rien d'autre, rien de plus, ici ou là, ils le savaient maintenant.

Il ne fallait pas se révolter, rêver, attendre, faire des efforts, s'enfuir, il fallait juste choisir attentivement" ... "en acceptant modestement de vivre--ici ou là et de laisser passer le temps".⁹ Their ghastly resignation, faced with death and their own worthlessness, is what they force upon the children, trying to instil in them their own non-values based on their 'common-sense'. The old take away from the children that which could be not only their salvation but that of all society. Yet is that salvation possible? As the Ducharme children are threatened by ever-encroaching adulthood, so

these children themselves are gradually overcome by the same inertia of the adults around them. These adults destroy their future hopes in their need to possess children as they do things, to show their power over them and to prevent themselves losing their vital grasp on what they imagine to be life.

Amongst children, who are more authentic than the adult, there are some individuals who resist longer this outside pressure than others. Their revolt is apparent even in childhood. These hypersensitive children are aware of the two-faceted aspect of human life revealed in conversation and everyday living "comme on se ronge les ongles, comme on arrache par morceaux sa peau quand on pèle"... "pour se faire plaisir et pour se faire souffrir".¹⁰ They are aware of the explosive undercurrents lying beneath the banalities of the simple clichés of conversation, knowing that as catalysts they are capable of producing that explosion which could reveal to others their inauthenticity but are afraid the others would destroy them first for their own self-preservation.

These outsiders, children or adults, are the only ones even vaguely aware of what the external world is and what life is. They know that "la suprême compréhension que la véritable intelligence, c'était cela, ne rien entreprendre, remuer le moins possible, ne rien faire".¹¹ By accepting this motionless state in which comprehension of reality is possible

they can also arrive at a state of timelessness impossible to others. Yet though able to see reality as it is, they nevertheless have misgivings and look to others for security when faced with the unknown: like the child at night, who, not knowing exactly what it is he is afraid of, calls out to his parents for reassurance. There is also the fear of becoming a thing in this state of motionlessness necessary to comprehension, for this very motionlessness seems like another form of lifelessness. The outsider is afraid to let himself go to this point, to lose his own identity, not realizing that to completely understand existence, individuality must be lost.

Portrait d'un Inconnu:

In Nathalie Sarraute's first actual novel, Portrait d'un inconnu, which is basically the attempt of the narrator to "sonder l'être distinct et authentique" of the father/daughter couple who fascinate him, the reader, as is the case with all the works studied, only succeeds in knowing the other characters, and in particular this father and daughter, through the narrator's own mind.

The atmosphere and characters are those of Tropismes. The basic family cell is represented not only by a father and daughter unit, but also by the relationship between the narrator and his own parents. These latter, apprehensive of their son's 'abnormality', do everything, including sending him to a psychiatrist (member of a profession greatly under attack by

the author) to cure him of his hypersensitivity. At the same time the narrator, aware of his own shortcomings, and, in particular, of his fear of solitude, allows the others to exorcize the demon in him, to draw him back to their calm, clearly-bounded universe, and away from what they consider the unhealthy obsession he has with the father and his daughter. In actuality his obsession with this couple is a desire on the part of the narrator to find the authenticity he is seeking.

Sent away by his parents in their effort to keep him 'healthy', the voyage has exactly the opposite effect. Once away from the influence of those who have raised him, and from the society in which he has grown up, like Gide's immoralist, he is opened to other influences. In this case it is the 'Portrait of the unknown', which he comes upon unexpected in a small gallery in the place he is visiting. As he himself, alien in a place foreign to him, sees things under a new light, he discovers that this strange nameless picture reveals to him "l'autre aspect"¹² of things. Nameless and lifeless in its features, the face contains within its eyes concentrated life and intensity: "l'appel qu'ils lançaient, pathétique, insistant, faisait sentir d'une manière étrange et rendait tragique son silence".¹³ These eyes seem to be addressing themselves to the narrator alone until in an almost psychic communion "une note timide, un son d'autrefois, presque oublié"¹⁴ is awakened in him and awareness comes again of what reality is. This

reality which he finds in a portrait, to a large extent the antithesis of reality--a mirror-image as it were--he seeks elsewhere and in particular in the father daughter unit which draws him so strongly.

Constantly torn between his desire to find 'authenticity', the unknown lying beneath the surface, the real authentic self, and his 'angoisse' when he realizes there is nothing there as he comes to discover with the old man and his daughter, the narrator is again the 'hypersensible' catalyst exerting on others his strange influence, provoking in them unsuspected currents and agitated movements. The action of catalysing, and property of being the catalyst are obviously indissolubly part of he who in any way disturbs the surface of things or people, causing reactions positive or negative to this disturbance. The catalyst is also dependent upon others for his own reactions. Just as perhaps others react to him or seem to in the way he desires, to the extent that reality and imagination become difficultly separable, so he, too, is, in return, suggestible and able to be influenced by others, even to the point of becoming in spite of himself exactly the way they see him.

In order to fully understand, the narrator has to examine his own motivations for his interest in the father and daughter. What he is seeking he believes he has a chance of releasing or revealing in this couple. Secondly their love/hate relationship

intrigues him, reflecting as it does his own relationship to society around him. In many ways he resembles the daughter caught in the web her father has spun. Their total relationship reveals his own inner torments, so that the reader must question the authenticity of the narrator's interpretation of events. (In the same way, in L'Emploi du temps, Butor reveals the falsity of interpretation his hero, Léon Delmont, has made, in giving two of his fellow passengers a life which is not theirs but part of his own past.)

The father is constantly depicted as a monstrous spider secure in the web he has constructed, attracting all to him like so many flies. The daughter, a typical 'fille sage', formed by other women and afraid of their disapproval is beauty and gargoyle simultaneously to the narrator. In this parent child relationship, resentment is felt on both sides. The old man is resentful of the "marrains maléfiques"¹⁵ whom he feels took control of his daughter from the moment she was born, turning her into an "instrument, comme une sonde qu'elles cherchaient à introduire en lui doucement".¹⁶ Attached to him like a leech, neither she nor the father like this attachment and yet are unable to do anything about it. Indeed they are unable to do without it. They continue to wear their reciprocal masks, until the moment when, like two enormous insects, in a scene depicted in the narrator's imagination, they will stand face to face in a life and death struggle, where old scabs are ripped off, protective shells break open and masks

fall away. Both together letting everything go--committing the crime heinous to society of "La Désinvolture"¹⁷--they will attain the state of being dreamt of by the narrator, where everything is allowed and there is no longer any need to hide anything.

Martereau:

The young hypersensitive narrator of Martereau is also attempting to find drama in everyday banalities: "les tempêtes dans les verres d'eau, c'est ma grande spécialité". The title Martereau refers to the curious figure who forms the chief interest of this narrator. "Martereau" combines the attributes of both 'martyr' and 'marteau'. This figure is in many ways reminiscent of the young narrator in Portrait d'un inconnu, who bore the same initial, and of the young 'hypersensible' in the actual story.

The narrator again acts as a catalysor, for whom people play out games revealing their inner selves. The relationship he has to his uncle resembles that of his relationship to society in general, as did the father daughter relationship in Portrait d'un inconnu. Unlike his uncle, with whom he alternately feels alliance and desires contact and who says he loves solid realities and facts, having no taste for "nuances", the young narrator is never sure of anything or anybody. He is all too aware of all the undercurrents or tropisms, which he perceives in others, believing at moments of despair that

they are merely emanating from himself. At these times he feels he is merely chasing after his own shadow. To his uncle and to other 'common-sense' people, the young man has a "sensibilité"... "de femme hystérique" combined with "les sentiments morbides de la culpabilité".¹⁹

In spite of society's judgement of him, like all the other hypersensitive 'narrators', he is more aware of the true nature of things. Other members of society resemble obedient servants who do not attempt to find the reason behind their actions.²⁰ Yet he realizes that to know people, to sound their depths, is the task most deserving of his efforts. Aware of the undercurrents of tropistic movements, which he recognizes as difficult to grasp, he becomes like a parasite clinging to people, or a dog sniffing out the odors he hopes to discover. At the same time aware of the inauthenticity of those around him he is led to reject time and again the very security they offer him and the society he needs.

Causing dramas where there were none, filled with feelings of guilt, shame and paranoia, he projects these same feelings onto the figure he makes larger than life--Martereau. An almost supernatural belief in fatality leads him to believe that not only does Martereau represent everything that he, the narrator, is trying to attain, but that this same figure may be able to help in saving others such as his, the narrator's, aunt, uncle, and cousin. Whether Martereau is a very clever confidence

man or merely old, tired and hen-pecked, the narrator is unable to decide. There is in fact an extraordinary series of variations of the same scene,²¹ following the departure of the narrator and his family from the Martereau's house, where Martereau and his wife, alternately depicted as a typical wife of a 'petit bourgeois' with all the shortcomings of such, or as a companion worthy of her husband, helping him in his stand against others and conformity, are imagined in their various reactions to the visit. This reveals the doubt and confusion in the narrator's own mind. As he says, he always sees several different pictures of the same object at the same time.

The family as the basic unit of society is again under heavy criticism, with the need of the various members to exert their control over the other members, to keep that unit as it is. Comprising in this instance his uncle, aunt and cousin, the narrator feels at times moments of close communication with the youngest member of this trio, his cousin,²² who is in many ways a replica of her mother and other women. She is, as are all children, the most powerful arm in the constant battle within the family unit, just as the Ducharme children become the weapons used by the parents against one another. When the narrator's aunt feels she is losing control over her daughter she is not adverse to using the nephew to regain that control. The narrator of course allows himself to be used since he has the insatiable need to know, to become acquainted with

what these others are looking for, to achieve a look behind their façades and to find what he feels is there, confirmed.

The family forms a system of "vases communicants"²³ an image also used by Basile to express his trio relationship in his trilogy, with the alternate rising and falling of levels, like the narrator himself in his need for security and approval, alternately drawn to his uncle and Martereau, two father figures. In the same way Alain Guimiez in Le Planétarium is torn between the need for approval from Germaine Lemaire, his intellectual 'mother', and from his own father. Both sets of figures represent the two extremes of the narrators' own character in their search for what they believe to be authenticity as opposed to the security offered by the self-satisfied attitude of most of those in society.

Le Planétarium:

"Le Planétarium ce n'est pas le ciel vrai mais un ciel artificiel."²⁴

If one lives in a planetarium, unless one suspects the true nature of things, one accepts as real the artificial sky under which one exists. In this third novel, the young narrator, though with certain characteristics of the other young protagonists, is closer to the other members of society--even possessing a name, Alain Guimiez--less alienated, yet still searching or so he would like to believe, for what lies behind the artificial façade of his life. He is again a young 'névrosé'.

and others recognize in him oddities that he himself acknowledges. Mythomaniac according to his mother-in-law, he is different from others of his age. He has the same feelings of guilt as does the nameless narrator of Martereau. Even his aunt who spoilt him as a child and who, according to Alain's father helped make him what he is, sees in him "Cette avidité dans son oeil luisant et fixe de jeune loup"... "C'était irrésistible chez lui, comme une crise d'épilepsie"²⁵...le moindre obstacle exaspère son désir au point de lui faire perdre la tête"... "C'est le lâche, le honteux besoin de l'ivrogne, de l'intoxiqué".²⁶ Once he has his mind set on something, Alain will go to almost any lengths to obtain it. Desiring his aunt's apartment, he will, with extreme cruelty and thoughtlessness, threaten her with eviction.

The asocial attitude he seems to portray in many ways is very closely allied to attitudes of those within society. Although rejecting the bourgeois Passy life of the aunt and his in-laws, his aunt's almost maniacal attachment to things and her desire for perfection in her apartment are reflected in Alain's refusal to accept what he considers 'bourgeois' and his overwhelming attachment to obtaining the 'bergère Louis XV'. Rejecting the generosity of his mother-in-law as a desire to dominate, he forces her to wear a mask she would not otherwise wear. Gisèle herself, Alain's young wife, realizes that her husband puts people into contours that are very precise, giving

her a security she otherwise lacks "sans lui, autrefois, le monde était un peu inerte, gris, informe, indifférent, qu'elle-même n'était rien qu'attente, suspens..."²⁷ In this case it is Gisèle who is able to see further than her husband who nevertheless believes himself to be the one who is different. The very factor of his putting people into the little compartments he has made for them shows his limitations, but these limitations represent security for Gisèle who like the child frightened at night by the glimpse of what the dark holds, has been faced with the vastness and incomprehensibility of the world outside the safe confines of society. Alain therefore allows her to slip back behind the clichés of this false security, which she chooses rather than face the solitude and fear of the reality behind it. When a child, her abilities and her exceptional character were refused by her father who thus revealed his own inadequacy and insecurity, but he taught his lesson well. Gisèle who "fait penser à un renardeau, à un jeune loup" with the intensity and purity of "un petit animal sauvage qui guette sa proie"²⁸ able to cajole others into doing what she wants, uses this ability to see beyond the superficial to her own ends and has married a husband who gives her the security in society she otherwise lacks.

As for the other characters in the book, they bring up the recurrent themes in Nathalie Sarraute's works. One example of this is old Tante Berthe, who, in her loneliness, her need

for order and harmony and her fear of 'taches', coupled with her only being able to really look at and love those things she feels she fully possesses, is typical of both the majority of women and old people, in Nathalie Sarraute. She is the "prêtresse d'une religion"²⁹ that the outsider detests--in this case the outsider is her brother, Alain's father, an older and in many ways more far-seeing version of his son.

Les Fruits d'or:

From false sky to false but beautiful fruits, the title of Les Fruits d'or reveals the inauthenticity of the world taken for the real one, in this case in the notion of golden fruit beautiful to look at, unreal and impossible to eat, thus non-nourishing. "Les amateurs dévorent les ouvrages comme s'ils étaient la plus succulente des nourritures."³⁰ In this unreal world of literature which is another aspect and reflection of the whole of society there are, as in the outside world, the weak and the strong. The weak need to be led, to have their world, literary or otherwise, explained for them by the strong. They are all afraid and want to be sure they are put on the right path. They can be molded in any way but they demand absolutely a well-constructed world "où ils puissent se couler"... "qu'on leur donne"... "bien sûr, pas le trésor entier que les forts ont su trouver, non, juste une parcelle, mais dure, solide"... "Qu'on ait pour eux un peu de bonté... juste un seul geste généreux... Qu'on leur montre, qu'on leur explique le livre en main".³¹ What they want

above all else is peace and security.

In comparison with these others, huddled tightly together, there is of course the outsider individual made of another substance. This individual is again torn between the desire to establish contact with others and his knowledge of what the world is.

Essentially a novel about a work of art and its rise and fall, the usual recurrent themes are present. Also since artistic creation is to Nathalie Sarraute the essence of life itself, this book will be treated--though somewhat briefly--in its connection with the theme of the individual and society.

The society represented, one of would-be intellectuals, is a closed one. Refusing at first to accept what is new, they end by accepting it wholeheartedly. The same rules apply to the members of this society as to those in any other society, which allows of no infiltration by foreign bodies. Within the limits of this society there is no real contact. Here each member keeps his distance from the others. They are in a 'good' society where "les vraies valeurs triomphent. Les honnêtes gens peuvent respirer"... "L'ordre règne enfin". As for those who revolt against this society, the outsiders, "Maintenant on apprendra à tous les paresseux, les ignorants, les enfants de la nature, les forts tempéraments, à marcher droit. À respecter les règles du savoir-vivre, de la bienséance. On

leur apprendra"... "que la littérature est un lieu sacre fermé, où seul un humble apprentissage, l'étude patiente des maîtres peut donner le droit à quelques rare élus de pénétrer".³²

This society itself is only one part of a complex social system. These are the ruling classes, needing, and needed by, those they dictate to, who are too afraid to look beyond the edicts of this élite, Académie Française-type group, to search for truth. Within this world, barricaded in on themselves, this élite becomes ever more inaccessible. But it is they who teach the "menu peuple" what they wish to have them taught. As for the "menu peuple", they form in their turn a solid group, lifeless and doll-like, like the lifeless figures seen in Robbe-Grillet's novels, needing to be led by those they consider more courageous and superior.

Entre la vie et la mort:

Nathalie Sarraute mentioned in an interview³³ that this novel at least, has a universal significance--this in answer to the criticism raised against her novels as being somewhat limited in scope. The society is again that of the intellectual élite, but since all societies have basically the same structure there obviously are no limitations.

In her Preface to the work she says: "Ici, comme dans la plupart des romans, le vécu, le virtuel, le seulement possible, l'entièrement imaginé se fondent, se confondent au

point qu'il serait malaisé pour l'auteur lui-même de les séparer",³⁴ which is an apology not only for this "nouveau roman" but for all of the "nouveaux romans", with their constant interplay between real and imaginary.

This novel is a depiction of life as art. The survival of a work of art and its value as such is a reflection on the state of the individual and of Man in general. The theme is fundamental: "Une lutte acharnée à l'issue toujours incertaine sur un des terrains où la vie et la mort s'affrontent avec la plus de dissimulation, celui où une oeuvre littéraire s'enracine, grandit ou meurt".³⁵ Since Nathalie Sarraute regards the work of art as the essence of life itself, it is the obvious and inevitable extension of this philosophy that words have the ability to reveal to us many aspects of life. Words "pénètrent en nous à notre insu, s'implantent en nous profondément, et puis parfois longtemps après ils se dressent en nous brusquement et nous forcent à nous arrêter tout à coup au milieu de la rue, ou nous font sursauter la nuit et nous asseoir, inquiets sur notre lit". This is taken from Portrait d'un inconnu³⁶ but is repeated over and over in Entre la vie et la mort. Words are capable of revealing danger and people reveal themselves through their words. Certain words repel and horrify the outsider artist in this novel with what they reveal. Oddly enough, while this revelatory power of words is the more positive side of language for Sarraute, in the case

of Robbe-Grillet and Ducharme existing words have lost a great deal of this ability and Man must invent a new language to regain this ability. Butor on the other hand presents a negative aspect of words, exemplified in his protagonists whose interest in writing becomes greater than their interest in life.

Art as another form or side of life, is governed by the same rules as those governing the rest of life. If there is nothing there then that work is dead like so many of the living dead. It may follow all the rules but have no life, and will be forgotten tomorrow. It is through the outsider artist that the possibility of seeing beyond the immediate lies: "Il est une terre propice où cela pousse, s'épanouit, exhale des relents, des vapeurs"... "qu'ils le soulagent, qu'ils s'ouvrent à cela, qu'en eux aussi cela se répande... Il en est gorgé jusqu'à la nausée, jusqu'à une sorte de douloureuse jouissance... une étrange joie... C'est une drogue dont il ne peut se passer... qu'ils en absorbent un peu, juste quelques gouttes, et ils verront...".³⁷

Thus the Sarrautian individual is searching to uncover what he believes is the authentic reality underneath the cli- chés of society. The hope he has that this is possible is extended to a hope in other people being able to see as he does and also in a hope that with these others he can arrive at a communication going beyond the façade put up in daily con-

versation. Hence his almost desperate attempt to find another being with whom he can open up these channels of communication.

In Michel Butor, the novels are again an expression of the mind of the protagonist, and everything is seen through the distorting mirror of this mind with its interpretation, false or otherwise, of the facts presented to it, in an attempt to bring meaning to a world in which the protagonist is again aware of the need to arrive at the 'authentic' hidden somewhere beneath society as it exists. In Butor's case however, instead of seeking this only in the present, although still with the idea of it as a truth common to all men, the individual will, through an explanation of the past, arrive at the same concept of this truth linking all men. To discover this however the Butor individual will be obliged to go beyond the mere confines of his present situation in both time and space. This way Butor will arrive at the expression of society as a whole, through these individuals, since to the author the individual mind is an expression of society of which it too is a segment. For this reason, the mythological aspect of Man is stressed--important since it binds past and present in the individual who in turn is representative of all men. Each society or city is linked to a past binding all societies and cities, and the individual who feels himself an outsider in one city will find existing connections he was not even aware of. This was also the case with the young protagonist in

Sarraute's Portrait d'un inconnu who found in the strange eyes of the portrait the necessary impetus to keep him to his quest.

The Butor protagonists themselves, though of bourgeois origin and milieu--simple, everyday, contemporary beings such as Jacques Revel, translator/clerk, Léon Delmont, sales representative, and Pierre Vernier, school teacher--share a common feeling of 'dépaysement', of being 'étrangers' as did the Sarrautian individuals, feeling themselves outside the society they are necessarily part of. Each in turn believing he has failed in reality, experiences the need to reconstitute his otherwise lost life in art. In the case of Revel and Delmont, the actual 'dépaysement' is real. In a strange city, again like the Sarrautian protagonist of Portrait d'un inconnu, the individual "est tout seul, il est perdu, il est privé de tous les objets extérieurs, de tout cet entourage qui lui était indispensable; il est comme un poisson hors de l'eau, n'est-ce pas, il en meurt".³⁸ This occurs because cities themselves are monuments in men's lives, myths of which Man is a part. Changing cities therefore necessitates the learning of a new myth.

This individual in search of himself is merely one facet of society. Sometimes he will discover in his search that the mythology he is a part of goes beyond one mere city, can be, in fact, a much larger part of the history of Man himself. The novel is the ideal vehicle to really express this. "Il est

indispensable que le récit saisisse l'ensemble de la société non point de l'extérieur comme une foule que l'on considère avec le regard d'un individu isolé mais de l'intérieur comme quelque chose à quoi l'on appartient et dont les individus, si originaux, si éminents qu'ils soient, ne sauraient jamais se détacher complètement".³⁹ In the same way that each individual act in the existential sense determines a modification of the world, so through the consciousness of one individual, the novelist attempts to seize the 'inconscience massive' of society as a whole, as was the case for the Sarrautian protagonists.

Passage de Milan:⁴⁰

This novel is reminiscent of Balzac in its description of the inhabitants of a Parisian 'immeuble', with its obvious Egyptian influence exemplified in the pyramid-like structural juxtaposition of the different levels connected and transversed by the staircase. The inhabitants of the building passing and sometimes communicating with one another on this staircase symbolize temporal and social connections. The title itself, like those of most of the "nouveaux romans", is interpretable in several ways. First, of course, could be the straightforward reference to the passage-way in which the building is situated. Then there is the direct association with the passing-by of the milan (Kite), a cruel and rapacious bird of prey originating in Egypt. In fact, mention is made several times of birds as cruel, with

round impenetrable eyes, used by diviners as in ancient Egypt. This not only brings out the occult and mythological aspect of these animals but again links past to present. It is interesting to compare this with the description of birds in Le Voyeur of Alain Robbe-Grillet (page 84).

In Passage de Milan, Butor has introduced the idea of death and confrontation. As in an intricate game the various pieces are placed in various situations until the climax with the death of the young girl--Angèle Vertigues--is reached. The theme of the individual in society is not so easily applicable to this novel. It is indeed rather a cross-section view of Parisian society, or in more general terms a cross-section of society as a whole.

The actual narrative is unanimitist in form, as is Butor's whole philosophy of the individual in society. It takes place from seven in the evening to seven in the morning, the twelve hours reflected in the twelve chapters, portraying in turn various moments in the lives of the inhabitants of the building--themselves a rather carefully chosen mixture of races and creeds and classes, ranging from infidel to priest. It is here that the novel connects up with the following novels in that it also expresses the idea of a small segment of a society having underlying connections with a larger mythological past. As the Jews passed over Egypt, able to control the seas of that alien land, so Samuel Léonard, much-travelled Jew and hence

eternal 'outsider', with his young Egyptian protégée, is the only one able to fully understand and communicate with others such as the unfortunate young murderer. At the same time it is he who seems more in control of his own situation than do the others theirs.

The family unit again comes in for criticism. The individuals forming it are really 'solitaires' and as in Sarraute and in Ducharme, the family is likened to a battleground.

L'Emploi du temps:

Although Robbe-Grillet's works are discussed next, it is of interest at this point to compare Les Gommès of this author with Butor's L'Emploi du temps written four years later, since they have many points in common.

While sharing the obvious similarities of theme--in both cases a Frenchman in an English industrial city with the complete mythical Oedipus/Theseus background--the symbolism in the two is at first appearance quite different. In Les Gommès, even though the Oedipus story is referred to again and again, it is almost Freudian in its complete dependence on the mind of Wallas. In L'Emploi du temps, the author treats it more 'objectively' and although Jacques Revel makes it part of his life, the Theseus theme together with that of the Biblical Cain (and to a lesser extent of Oedipus), seem an integral part of the city's own history. Of the two cities, that of Les Gommès has its depressing effect on Wallas largely because

of his own mental make-up, whereas, in that of Butor's novel, Bleston (in actuality Manchester) is personified to such an extent that it seems to have an almost autonomous existence (although obviously again relying on the attitude taken by Revel).

Jacques Revel, to defend himself against the city, to understand his own recent past, and the present in terms of that past, is forced to reconstitute this past in order to make of his life a total experience. Like Vernier in Degrés,⁴¹ he has set himself an enormous task, which, starting with a knowledge of his own past, leads him to a knowledge of the dying city and all he has come into contact with--each individual being a part of several groups--to a final knowledge of history itself. This in turn reveals to him the action of time passing followed by his own resistance to this passing of time. Past and present are an integral unit, the explanation of the one dependent on the other, but as in a detective novel--the structure of which is all-important to both Butor and Robbe-Grillet--other interpretations are always possible. Oblivion itself is a form of death and in order to be alive again after living in a city which almost succeeded in destroying him, Revel must remember.

Thus as with Nathalie Sarraute, the protagonist, to find what he is searching for, even in a foreign city, is dependent on others and on society itself. Yet this search itself sep-

arates him from the society on which he is dependent, removes him from this society.

Jacques Revel begins his reconstitution of his past year in Bleston with his arrival in that city. Writing in May, he describes his October arrival when his mind was not yet obscured, while in the frustrations and setbacks he then suffered seems to be symbolized his whole sojourn in the city. Unable to obtain any relief or indeed to communicate, he is overwhelmed by the atmosphere of the city 'amer, acide, char-bonneux, lourde'⁴² which forces him into a state of 'engourdissement'⁴³ similar to the state of mind experienced by Wallas in Les Gommes in the same situation, and which he will not be able to shake off for seven months. The fear he feels is reflected in his desire to go back, and in his feeling of being separated from all that is known and familiar even to the point where (again like the schizoid personalities of Robbe-Grillet) he is unable to recognize himself in a mirror.⁴⁴ Gradually becoming aware of the unreal aspect of the city with its dead windows, he comes to believe someone or something is playing with him.

Arriving at Matthews and Sons where he is to work for the coming year, he is again unable to understand or make himself understood--ironically since he has been hired as a translator. The only person with whom he will establish any contact is James Jenkins whom he will later suspect of murder and who

will take from him one of the sisters he believes he loves (Ann). As for the others he meets, he feels they never sought to make him speak or attempted to find out if he could understand the few words they uttered, even though it was painfully obvious that he was really trying to understand and make himself understood. The only friends he will make in this city are those who, like himself, are to a greater or lesser extent, 'étrangers'. The two Bailey sisters, Ann (Ariadne) and Rose (Phaedra)--the latter a student in French and one of the few people with whom he can really talk--Lucien Blaise, a Frenchman like himself, but who, not having imposed upon himself such a task as that of Revel, is able to save Rose from Bleston and take her from Jacques Revel--"cette Rose que j'ai laissée échapper, cette Rose que je n'ai pas pu aimer, que je n'ai pas eu le courage d'arracher à Bleston"⁴⁵--are some of the few he is befriended by. Of the two sisters, the red-haired Ann, with the quiet still smile from whom he bought his original map of Bleston--she like Ariadne supplying him with a thread to find his way in the city labyrinth when he was completely lost--seems more real to him than the other half-dead and unhappy inhabitants of the city. James Jenkins on the other hand is alternately friend and foe. The Jenkins' home is the first he visits in Bleston, and it is there he meets the strange Madame Jenkins "qui possède, sous sa douceur, comme une volonté très farouche, sous son calme, comme une passion capable de faire sauter n'importe quelle barrière".⁴⁶ Mother of James,

she is linked to the all-important cathedral not merely by the ring she wears in which is contained a fly similar to those carved in the cathedral and reminiscent of the flies associated with the city and which (as do those of Sartre's Les Mouches) buzz around the head of the tormented Revel/Oedipus, but also by her relationship of niece to the sculptor of the statues in the New Cathedral. While she reminds Revel of the status of the Virgin in the cathedral, he realizes however that since that statue is older than she is, it is she who has fashioned herself after the statue as the other citizens of Bleston have taken on the features of the city itself.

As was the case with the map which allowed him for the first time to embrace the city as a whole at one glance and which he futilely and symbolically burned, the book Le Meurtre de Bleston with its ambiguous title doubly gratifying to him, will be his means of vengeance against the city, allowing him, so he believes, to discover the real Bleston. The author is, in attitude, an outsider to the city, who under the pseudonym of J. C. Hamilton (his real name is George Burton) revealed the darker, murderous side of the city, and in whom Jacques Revel finds "un complice contre la ville, un sorcier habitué à ce genre de périls".⁴⁷ By means of his book Revel learns for the first time of 'the window of the murderer'.

Finally there is Horace Buck, the negro, with his sarcastic, biting laugh revealing his deep-seated sadness and lone-

liness, who symbolically gives Revel tea as black and bitter as the city and his (Horace Buck's) own soul. It is he who bids Revel welcome to the magnificent city of Bleston but with whom Revel will avoid contact, since the Negro is in an even worse situation than he is, except in his moments of utter loneliness and depression. Revel feels Horace Buck wants to make him a "témoin de son malheur".⁴⁸ His command of English is even worse than Revel's, so the latter is able to understand, be understood, and feel superior, but is nevertheless ill at ease in his company. He is even afraid that the Negro's hatred is contagious. He gives him a false address, feeling that this "incarnation de mon propre malheur"⁴⁹ is too easily aware of his, Revel's feelings. This parallelism between blacks and the outsider protagonist is also seen in Projet pour une révolution à New York and in Ducharme's Le Nez qui voque. When the blacks are the only 'real' people, the rest of society has reason to be afraid of them. They have not learnt to be easily handled. The parallelism between the two goes even further. Just as Jacques Revel loses the two Bailey sisters, so Horace Buck loses his Mary. Just as Revel burns Bleston in effigy, so Horace Buck lights real fires throughout the city. It is the Negro who finds him a new room--ironically with a landlady who hates 'blacks', and it is this black who delivers him from the hotel appropriately named "L'Ecrou" (jail entry). A darker spiritual father or brother, he will be mistaken for George Burton when he, Revel and Lucien Blaise

are at the fair-grounds. These fair-grounds like the cinema which again can be compared to many such elements in Robbe-Grillet's novels, duplicate in an almost caricature-like way what happens in Bleston itself.

These then are Revel's allies. All struggle against the city which is reflected in its own water: "une eau épaisse, noire et mousseuse, une sueur de tourbe"⁵⁰ and where time itself is not the same as elsewhere. From the beginning, Revel feels the need to defend himself against Bleston, but the insidious sorcery of the city overcomes him and leads him far astray. Lost to himself, he begins to lose courage in the labyrinthine streets, becomes tired and confused as do Robbe-Grillet's protagonists in the same situations. Unable to escape by walking in a straight line, he realizes that Bleston itself is in actuality the centre of an enormous halo which reaches out to touch those of other cities both in space and time. He will discover that this city was part of the barbarous contagion, the rotting centre of which was Rome--a discovery also made in La Modification.⁵¹

Faced with this city of deception and overcome by its power, he does what he can to resist and save himself. So he writes not only to recreate the moments of beauty of the city, but in order to find his own honour and to prevent the loss of a past otherwise worthless. He begins this task at the moment he feels the most alienated from himself, contam-

inated by the overbearing atmosphere of the city, with its streets which emanate fear, frightening the very inhabitants. He realizes that the past year is like a spectroscope--the dark shadows of oblivion lit now and again by fragments of memories.

In his attempt to discover Bleston, he is particularly fascinated by the stained-glass window depicting Cain in the Old Cathedral. This window seems the very heart of Bleston. Illustrating the killing of Abel by his brother, it is reminiscent of Theseus slaying the Minotaur in the museum tapestry, thus again leading to the conception of Rome with its two-faceted personality, Christian and pagan. The cathedral window is dedicated to Cain's descendants, Cain being claimed father of the arts. (The connections with Revel are obvious.) The window itself brings out the inherent ambiguity in the Bible. From the Old Cathedral the 'trail' leads Revel to the New Cathedral and at each step he becomes more confused. Theseus, son of the king, kills the Minotaur, Oedipus kills his father and Cain his brother. In the same way Revel will betray and 'kill' his spiritual father/brother and unravel the mystery of the city. The detective is the offspring of the murderer and must kill his father, and this last murder is necessary to purify and cleanse the original stain, just as Theseus must destroy the Minotaur. Like Oedipus and Theseus "ces deux enfants trompés sur leur naissance et sur leur race, élevés

loin de leur ville natale, tous deux tuant les monstres qui en infestaient les abords, tous deux résolvant des énigmes, libérant la voie, tous deux meurtres de leurs pères (Thésée, non par le fer mais par la négligence)."⁵² Jacques Revel will follow their trails, using the book he is writing, like Ariadne's thread, to find his way in the labyrinth of his time spent in Bleston, a labyrinth more deformed than that of Crete, existing in both time and space.

La Modification:

The voyage image is the one best suited to express spatialisation of time. As Butor says fiction itself can be described as a voyage stretched out in the mind: "pour pouvoir étudier le temps dans sa continuité, donc pouvoir mettre en évidence les lacunes, il est nécessaire de l'appliquer sur un espace, de le considérer comme un parcours, un trajet".⁵³

This novel relates the voyage in time and space of Léon Delmont. It is not merely however modification of mind and attitude of this middle-aged sales representative that takes place, but modification which can be associated with nearly every aspect and event of this novel. The simple spatial material movement, the modification of his love for Cécile transfigured by the prestigious presence of Rome to the final modification of his own decisions and his attempt to recuperate time in duration through art are all some form of modification. Making use of the 'vous' form as if witness to his

own life or talking to himself in a dream, becoming more intensely 'tu' near the end, the novel traces Delmont's inner soliloquy through layers and layers of consciousness, from his own subjective experience to the immemorial and mythical past of Rome itself. The long slow journey from the banal superficial consciousness to the deep-lying self evoked by the two great civilizations symbolized and embodied in Paris and Rome, both incarnated for him by a woman, again takes the form of a search for self and in Delmont's case, for rejuvenation with the possibility of attaining a totality of being which has so far eluded him.

The actual journey undertaken is by train as in L'Emploi du temps--third class for reasons of sentimentality and economy. Léon Delmont is balding, middle-class and middle-aged. Like Revel, seeing a reflected image of himself he does not recognize it as such. Alienated from what he imagines to be his true self, he is unhappy in his job as representative in Paris for the Roman firm of Scabelli, a job which gives him no spare time, and in which he is treated more or less like an ordinary employee. Though adequately paid (not extremely well) he feels his existence is empty and meaningless. In his private life he is a 'lâche' in the Sartrian sense. His wife Henriette knows this and his mistress, Cécile, suspects it, while he himself dreams of being free and sincere. He does not have the courage to go after his own happiness or authentic self. One

reason Cécile refuses to visit the Vatican with him is her belief that this centre of Christianity, resisted on all sides by ancient pagan Rome, would merely encourage his 'lâcheté', since having married in the Church Delmont is still dominated by the past and the system under which he lives. Yet as with the Sarrautian protagonists, his own belief in himself and in his potential, leads him not only to see in others a reflection of what he would like to see in himself--to the extent of his confusing his illusions with reality, but also to feel at the beginning of his journey that even at this late stage of his existence a modification is possible.

Leaving sombre Paris for the bright sunshine of Rome, he is full of hope. In his fellow passengers he sees the incarnation of his own life and attributes to them the feelings he is experiencing or has experienced in the past. The young couple he associates with a younger version of himself and his wife, full of optimism while he now feels only 'ennui' and loneliness. He is almost compelled to warn the young husband and wife of what their future will probably be. Ironically at the end he discovers they are not going to Rome as he believes for their honeymoon as did he and Henriette, but to Syracuse. He thinks of his love for Cécile and her surprise at his impending arrival in Rome. He has found her a job in Paris, but it is gradually revealed that he has done this to prove to her and to himself his own sincerity, having already

failed her several times in the past. At this stage of the journey he thinks of Cécile, to him "messager des régions heureuses et claires"⁵⁴ as the opposite of his wife, Henriette, with her sickly look, her fear of what others will say, her sadness and reproaches and who "tenait toujours à ces dérisoires cérémonies familiales"⁵⁵ giving him a birthday out of habit, a sense of duty, and to remind him that he should be "un homme âgé, rangé, dompté".⁵⁶

His children seem to him to be in league with their mother against him, despising him and mocking him. To a certain extent, he feels Cécile does this as well. Opposed to this typically bourgeois life, what he seeks in Rome is escape, the freedom and rejuvenation he has found with Cécile. To him the love he experiences is the only success he has. Time itself changes as it did for Revel in Bleston "vous subissez un autre horaire, non, cela fait partie de vos décisions, c'est le mécanisme que vous avez remonté vous-même qui commence à se dérouler presque à votre insu".⁵⁷ Cécile herself is of both French and Italian extraction, but it is as the guide to Rome that he thinks of her. A widow, her husband killed in an accident, it is through her Delmont will learn to know Rome and become obsessed with the city to the point of seeking out Roman elements existing in Paris, thus again connecting two cities through the past.

Continuing the journey, becoming more and more weary, he

tries not to think of the future with Cécile. As is the case with the characters of Robbe-Grillet, when most upset, Delmont fixes his attention on objects and more specifically in this instance on the 'tapis de fer chauffant' with its accumulated debris of the journey, to prevent himself from thinking. Yet in his insecurity, experiencing the child-like fear of the Sarrautian children alone at night in their rooms, he too is afraid of things in the dark in their primitive state, of reality as it is. He tries to rid himself of all memories and thoughts "afin de mettre un terme à ce remuement intérieur, à ce dangereux brassage et remâchage de souvenirs".⁵⁸ He is even afraid to read the as yet unopened novel he has with him, knowing that if it interests him it is only in the extent to which the story resembles his life and his own final decisions are not yet made. Gradually overcome by fatigue, his thoughts are invaded by the legend of the 'grand veneur'--brought to mind by the train passing the forest of Fontainebleau--originally told him by Henriette. The legend is one of a giant huntsman riding his horse through the forest, calling out to those who may listen: "Qui êtes-vous? Qu'attendez-vous?" seeming to symbolize his own quest. Nightmarishly Delmont becomes involved in the legend, which becomes ever more confused in his tired mind. Lost, he wanders through the forest, pursued by the huntsman until he comes upon an old woman, who, with a mocking smile, tells him "tu vas à la recherche de ton père afin qu'il t'enseigne l'avenir de ta race,"⁵⁹ again reminiscent

of the Oedipus/Theseus legend. His only desire is to retrace his steps but instead he comes to a Styx-like river where an eyeless boatman rows him in a metal boat to the other side. The parallelism with the train journey and metaphysical journey is obvious. In his dream his own hands drip with oil and blood. As Revel was accompanied by flies, symbolizing his corruption, he is surrounded by raven-like birds. On the other shore he is told by a two-faced figure that he can never go back. He is asked where he is, what he is doing and what he wants, and the answer is the beginning of his own answer: "Je suis à la recherche de ce livre que j'ai perdu parce que je ne savais même pas qu'il était en ma possession".⁶⁰ Led by a she-wolf (reminiscent of the founding of Rome) he wanders into a semi-awakened state where dreams and thoughts are "toute bouleversées dans cette réorganisation de l'image de vous-même et de votre vie qui est en train de s'accomplir",⁶¹ indicating to Delmont that to regain possession of himself he must accept his past and present in society as a whole, that the escape beyond the confines of conventional society is not the answer.

Degrés:

Far more an exercise in form and intellectual play, this novel does, however, treat the main theme of the individual seeking to reach others and give a meaning to his own life. The protagonist is again middle-class, alone (this time with no family), and having no real satisfaction in his own life.

sets himself a goal of writing a book originally meant to describe one hour of one of the classes in which his own nephew is a student. This nephew, Pierre Eller, because of his cooperation with his uncle in the gigantic task this work becomes, will be regarded as a traitor by his fellow students, just as the outsider protagonists of all the novels of these authors, though often working to make life comprehensible for themselves and others, are rejected for this by their fellow members of society. In this case the nephew agreed to collaborate with his uncle, not merely to gain some hold over his uncle but also for the possible prestige he might attain with his friends. Pierre Eller will reject his uncle who as a teacher has become an almost alien being to him, preferring the security of 'inauthenticity', and will only forgive his uncle for making of him an outcast, without yet knowing the reason for the collaboration, when his uncle is near death.

The work itself is dedicated to the nephew and written for him to celebrate his fifteenth birthday. It is not destined to the nephew of the present, but to the future Pierre who will probably have forgotten his past, which in the present he cannot grasp, having no reference point in the past (compare Jacques Revel), "de telle sorte qu'en toi pourra naître une nouvelle conscience".⁶² Like Butor, Nathalie Sarraute and Robbe-Grillet also use their outsider protagonists to awaken the unconsciousness of society as a whole. Yet once again, he who tries to do the awakening--almost divine and

Christ-like in the belief he has in his own ability to see further than others--seems doomed by that society and by the task he has set himself. The book Pierre Eller attempts to write is done so to grasp the enormous mass of information "qui glisse sur toi, qui se gâche, se perd, et se contredit, qui glisse sur nous tous, sur tous les camarades et tous les maîtres qui s'ignorent mutuellement,"⁶³ to help him find out what he was, from whence he came and thus in what direction he is going.

Robbe-Grillet:

From Man's self-imposed misinterpretation of the world around him to his imposing upon himself the myths which now dominate him, Robbe-Grillet's novels present protagonists who are struggling to rid themselves of their obsessions, and thus of their servitude. The Robbe-Grillet protagonist is 'le moins neutre, le moins impartial des hommes'...'engagé'...'toujours dans une aventure passionnelle des plus obsédantes, au point de déformer souvent sa vision et de produire chez lui des imaginations proches du délire'.⁶⁴ This character who constantly invents the things around him and then sees those inventions as reality, has not yet achieved the humanistic ideal set forth by Robbe-Grillet, of wanting to construct a new life for Man.

As was the case with the protagonists of Sarraute and Butor, the world and events of the Robbe-Grillet characters are those stemming from their own mind and imagination, but

to a degree equalled only by the French Canadian author, Ducharme, whose world of fantasy and sadism is very close to that of Robbe-Grillet. This protagonist who usually does not express himself orally is far harder to recognize than are the protagonists of Butor and Sarraute. This is because he IS, or rather, his MIND is the content of these novels. He sees and registers what he sees in these works fittingly categorized under the "Ecole du Regard". To an even greater extent than in the two preceding authors, to try to analyze reality versus imagination is to destroy these novels. Written usually in the 'présent de l'indicatif',⁶⁵ they are the expression of a mind, for as Robbe-Grillet says:

Une imagination, si elle est assez vive, est toujours au présent. Les souvenirs que l'on 'revoit', les régions lointaines, les rencontres à venir, ou même les épisodes passés que chacun arrange dans sa tête en modifiant le cours tout à loisir, il y a comme un film intérieur qui se déroule continuellement en nous-mêmes, dès que nous cessons de prêter attention à ce qui se passe autour de nous. Mais à d'autres moments, nous enregistrons au contraire, par tous nos sens, ce monde extérieur qui se trouve bel et bien sous nos yeux. Ainsi le film total de notre esprit admet à la fois tour à tour et au même titre les fragments réels proposés à l'instant par la vue et l'ouïe des fragments passés ou lointains, ou futurs, ou totalement fantasmagoriques.⁶⁶

Les Gommès:

The world of Les Gommès is a closed circle. Like a fish in an aquarium, the cycle repeats itself and turns back upon itself:

Dans l'eau trouble de l'aquarium, des ombres passent furtives..Autour de lui les spectres familiers

dansent la valse, comme des phalènes qui se cognent en rond contre un abat-jour, comme de la poussière dans le soleil, comme les petits bateaux perdus sur la mer, qui bercent au gré de la houle leur cargaison fragile, les vieux tonneaux les poissons morts, les poulies et les cordages, le bouées, le pain rassis, les couteaux et les hommes.⁶⁷

Only at the last page is the cycle complete. Then all the elements are present as in a detective story. Les Gommes, like L'Emploi du temps of Butor, is almost a parody of a 'roman policier'.

The awareness of the truth causes the realization that Fate or Time has proved the master. Fatality in this novel is superficially that of the Greek tragedy of Oedipus, as in Butor's novel it was that of Theseus. In the Butor novel, the reader is left with the impression that the mythological aspect is a reality, which, above and beyond the mind of the individual, is part of all society. Although this mythology is present in the Robbe-Grillet novel, it is seen as a threat to Man's liberty and one which must be overcome rather than a common bond uniting all men and something to fall back on when the individual fails in himself, as is the case with Butor. The five chapters like five acts, the loud-speaker oracle, incomprehensible and frightening, the various scenes representing the life and childhood of Oedipus in view in the stationery shop where the (possibly) former wife of the yet to be murdered (possible) father of Wallas, the detective murderer, works, the eraser Wallas/Oedipus so desperately needs

of which he remembers only that it bears a name the two central letters of which are 'di' (Oedipe?), the drunkard whose riddle should tell Wallas, who he, Wallas, really is: "inceste à midi, parricide le soir et qui boîte le matin"⁶⁸ all these elements are all too obviously those of Sophocles' tragedy, even to an introductory quote from the Greek: "Le temps qui veille à tout, a donné la solution malgré toi". However, as in all his works, the most logically worked out conclusion is the farthest from the actual truth, if such even exists. As Robbe-Grillet repeats innumerable times in his novels, things are never definitely in order.

External fatality or internal obsession, this novel of human consciousness has yet another level--that of the particular symbolism closest to the working of the human mind, whose symbolism is an inherent part of Western civilization, and present in society since before the Middle Ages. In this, his first novel, Robbe-Grillet lays out the twenty-one cards of the Tarot pack completed by the fool. These are the stairs in the house of Daniel Dupont. Above the sixteenth step is Key sixteen, the lightening struck tower, with its meaning of dissolution and conflict, and the levelling of all at death. These stairs with the fool's head appear again in La Maison de rendez-vous,⁶⁹ while other Tarot symbolism is present in all his novels.⁷⁰ One of the more obvious Tarot symbols present, and also repeated in La Maison de rendez-vous, is to be found

in Le Voyeur.⁷¹ This is the image of a hand, all fingers closed except for the index finger and thumb pointing at a watch dial. Apart from the obvious erotic symbolism, in Tarot this indicates (Key 5--the Hierophant or Pope) that what is seen is not all there is to know. The watch face, a circle, is the symbol of cosmic consciousness, and is indicative of both Wallas and Mathias (Le Voyeur) and their inability to grasp reality: "On s'acharne quelquefois à découvrir un meurtrier..." "On s'acharne à découvrir le meurtrier, et le crime n'a pas été commis. On s'acharne à le découvrir"... "bien loin de soi alors qu'on n'a qu'à tendre la main vers sa propre poitrine".⁷² This could just as easily be interpreted as all being in the mind of Man. Tarot itself is based to a large extent on the individual's interpretation of what the cards mean. Of themselves they have no meaning but are entirely dependent on the mind which creates their signification. Once again reality and imagination are one in the mind of Man.

As was the case with Jacques Revel, though the protagonist in Les Gommes is a stranger to the city in which he finds himself, he is haunted by feelings of 'déjà vu'. In this superficially alien society, Wallas' mind and memory are constantly stimulated by puzzling familiarity, causing him to wonder if all this happened before in the past, in another time or perhaps in a dream. He reaches the stage of asking himself if there is any real difference between the 'present state' of

things and what existed before. As for the city it resembles to a striking degree the Manchester-like city of L'Emploi du temps, with its cold, labyrinthine streets all alike, and where the atmosphere is that of constant twilight. The city in Butor's novel became personified to an almost monster-like creature while that of Les Gommès however is machine-like in its alienating atmosphere and hence closer to the cities depicted by Sarraute, and Ducharme in Québec. Both Robbe-Grillet's and Butor's cities do however have the same strange mythical quality about them: "Ainsi parfois en advient-il de cités perdues, pétrifiées pour des siècles, par quelque cataclysme--ou seulement pour quelques secondes avant l'écroulement, un clignement comme d'hésitation entre la vie et ce qui déjà porte un autre nom. Après, avant, l'éternité".⁷³

In the ever more confused mind of Wallas, under the influence of what Robbe-Grillet calls 'ancient laws', which could be as easily psychological as mythical, he becomes aware of the fact that he has allowed himself to be caught in a trap, a trap within the city or within the labyrinth of his own mind. In this city, in his new existence as a detective, Wallas feels threatened in his very being, as did Jacques Revel in Bleston. Even time is capricious. His watch stops at seven thirty (the hour at which the original murder was supposed to take place) and starts up again twenty-four hours later, if indeed the intervening time is not merely within Wallas' own tormented mind. Wallas is incapable of realizing

what is happening external to himself: "Il n'est jamais trop tard. L'acte manqué revient de lui-même à son point de départ pour la seconde échéance...un tour de cadran et le condamné recommence son geste théâtral, désignant à nouveau sa poitrine ...etc.". ⁷⁴ Already in his first novel the impression is one of an actor playing out a part. This actor, however, like all of Robbe-Grillet's protagonists, is obsessed with himself and, in particular, a flaw in his physical make-up indicative of an internal flaw. As with the original crime itself which failed through 'la plus petite faille' by 'deux millimètres carrés de rêve', ⁷⁵ Wallas is short by that same two millimeters in forehead height to be the ideal detective. Freudian-like, objects hold his attention when they too have a small 'faille'. He chooses a tomato, which though at first appearance of the same perfection as the other tomatoes has at closer inspection a tiny almost invisible flaw, a small piece of skin peeling off of about two millimeters again.

As with Butor's protagonists and also with Kafka's characters, fatigue, illness, or some stimulant such as wine or drugs (opium in La Maison de rendez-vous) usually precede a state of mind bordering on delirium, indicated by furious mental, usually mathematical, calculations, or by an almost deliberate externalized, geometrical description of an object or objects. As this dissolves into confusion the hidden object of the protagonist's attention gradually comes to the foreground. In

Les Gommes, the Freudian implications in Wallas' staring fixedly at the glaucous canal water, "l'eau du sommeil sans fond, l'eau glauque remontée de la mer et pourrie de monstres invisibles",⁷⁶ are obvious, just as is his staring at the children playing with the mutilated corpse of a butterfly. In Le Voyeur Mathias is fascinated by the corpse of the frog, open-thighed and arms crossed. But the obsessed mind, as Bernard Dort suggests⁷⁷ needs to 'tout effacer', so Mathias searches for the mysterious 'gommes' he remembers from his childhood and which of course he cannot find. These erasers should have the form of a yellowish cube--obsessed by this he goes so far as to cut his meal into cubes--and furthermore should be "de deux ou trois centimètres de côté, avec les angles légèrement arrondis--peut-être par l'usure".⁷⁸ These are in turn a weaker version of the stone with its murderous corners which is on the desk of the study belonging to his possible father, Daniel Dupont, just as (again suggested by Bernard Dort) Wallas is a weaker version of the father he does not know. Thus what he seeks is his own identity in this city where everything is "un double, une copie, un simple exemplaire d'un événement dont l'original et la clef sont ailleurs".⁷⁹

As in Joyce's Ulysses and Kafka's novels where the protagonists wandered lost through labyrinthine streets, so does Wallas, to cite just one of Robbe-Grillet's protagonists, and so did Jacques Revel in L'Emploi du temps. Robbe-Grillet

likens this wandering to that of a nightmare as is the case in Kafka's novels, suggesting that the possibility of Wallas awakening into everyday normality is not impossible. This implies that a large part of Wallas' experiences are a product of his own mind. In the action of walking, Wallas finds it is he himself who regulates his cadence but there is also a false impression of continuity, of walking voluntarily towards an inevitable and perfect future, and away from the circles of impotency and doubt in which he has been aimlessly turning.

Le Voyeur:

Like Robbe-Grillet's other protagonists, again 'étranger', taller than average (at least in their own mind's eye), having or having had a moustache like their creator himself, unsuccessful in any material undertaking, the chief character of this novel, Mathias, arrives, or imagines he does, on an island. At the end of the novel he will again think of his impending arrival at the island and like a drama played out in this travelling salesman's tormented mind, he is afraid of having to reinvent the whole scene from beginning to end.

Seemingly a total outsider, in the island he lands at, this island could in fact be the one where he was born. Mathias has come to the island in "l'espoir d'un marché exceptionnel".⁸⁰ Like Wallas, Mathias is totally alone, with no memories of youth, of friendships to attract him, and yet, as with Wallas, Mathias "recevrait une récompense sans commune mesure".⁸¹

Sadism in Le Voyeur plays a major rôle, as it does in the following works of this author. Sadism is "doublement significatif de l'impuissance qui se nie et la liberté délirante--comme Sade lui-même". Like Sade the Robbe-Grillet protagonist seems above average in intelligence, if only by his escaping the consequences of his acts, real or imaginary and is also "éternel prisonnier et rêveur totalement libre".⁸² The sadistic purpose is brought out fully in Projet pour une révolution à New York⁸² where violence as a means of freedom is shown as an end in itself. In this novel--Le Voyeur--the principal form of contact for this outsider is through a sado-masochistic relationship formed with an accomplice victim. Another form of contact is established through the eyes of a 'Doppelgänger' 'voyeur' reminiscent of the eyes of the portrait in Portrait d'un inconnu (Sarraute). It is through the 'regard' of the other--creature or man--that the protagonist sees himself. Whether this 'voyeur' 'Doppelgänger' is a mirror-image unrecognized as such, a creation of his own mind, or, again, as was the case with Sarraute's protagonists, an unconscious seeing of oneself in others, this is another constant theme in the "nouveau roman" stemming from the conception of only knowing oneself through others.

In Le Voyeur this 'Doppelgänger' effect is achieved through the cold upside down figure eight expression of the seagulls which fascinated him as a child with their round, inexpressible and fixed gaze and in the person of an adolescent with a child-

like mind. This latter is young Julien Marek, seemingly not in full possession of his wits, thin, palefaced and a little frightening, with his almost inhuman voice, devoid of any feeling, and his lack of expression. Looking at Julien Marek, feeling he knows everything, and not comprehending his complicity: "Julien ne quittait pas le voyageur des yeux, l'obligeant ainsi à parler, à parler vite, le plus vite possible",⁸⁴ seeing his thin smile and not understanding his telling lies for him, Mathias is overcome by a violent headache. The hypnotic gaze of this young voyeur produces paranoia in Mathias. Although Julien does not squint, there is something strange about his eyes reminding Mathias of the absence of expression he encountered in his own deprived childhood. "Il proclamait son pouvoir sur Mathias"..."Julien avait 'vu'...le nier ne servait plus à rien. Seules les images enregistrées par ces yeux, pour toujours leur conféraient désormais cette fixité insupportable".⁸⁵ Yet they seem very ordinary gray eyes, cold and rigid, apart from this strange something giving them a look of blindness or even madness. In an attempt to appease them he offers Julien a present, as he would have liked to tame the frightening gulls of his childhood.

These eyes are not the same as those of the others who live on the island with whom there is no possible communication. The other inhabitants all have an identical look, immobile expressions, somewhat like statues. The eyes of the young victim with her quiet and serious expression are not

the same either. The protagonists themselves are like a camera lens through which the world of the particular novel is reflected. The lens of a camera is after all the material expression of what Man sees. These protagonists are able to 'stop' the action in camera-like fashion,⁸⁶ a materializing of internal obsession, or they can turn their gaze inwards to reflect the unreality of the mind rather than external reality. To decide what is reality is again unimportant. "Le succès paraissait surtout, aujourd'hui une affaire d'imagination."⁸⁷ In this novel all the islands are alike. Whether the one Mathias visits is or is not the one he may or may not have spent his early childhood on does not matter. Wallas, who had no father, went in search of him and destroyed him. Mathias, whose mother's existence and whereabouts are unknown, sadistically tortures and rapes the young girl Jacqueline/Violette (in French, 'little rape') whether or not in reality does not matter. The mythical element is again present, the protagonist becoming the fatalistically determined executor/executioner. Whether myth or imagination, like Wallas, Mathias "de couloirs obscurs en portes closes, d'escaliers étroits en échecs, il se perdit de nouveau au milieu de ses fantômes".⁸⁸

La Jalousie:⁸⁹

"Sans doute est-ce toujours le même poème qui se continue. Si parfois les thèmes s'estompent, c'est pour revenir un peu plus tard, affermis, a peu de choses près identiques. Cependant ces répétitions, ces infimes variantes, ces retours en arrière,

peuvent donner lieu à des modifications--bien qu'à peine sensibles--entraînant à la longue fort loin du point de départ."⁹⁰

This is almost an apology for all Robbe-Grillet's works, together or separately. Reality and imagination are again confused in the mind of the jealous husband. In his tormented mind the same events are played over with slight differences in interpretation each time, just as in the novel read by his wife A..... and her 'lover' Franck, there are endless variations upon variations of the central themes. The novel read is a 'dédoublement' or another variant of La Jalousie. The sound of the crickets "un bruit continu, sans variations, étourdissant, ou il n'y a rien à entendre"⁹¹ expressing nothing as it is also 'le cri des cigales' which provokes in the young hypersensitive girl of Tropismes her understanding of the external world.⁹² This alien and alienating sound present in both L'Immortelle⁹³ and La Maison de rendez-vous is "comme un écho" of the natives'⁹⁴ song or chant. To the jealous husband both are as incomprehensible as the conversation between A..... and Franck or indeed the world he lives in. Like La Jalousie, the native's song seems to have no logical beginning or end.

In this enclosed world where he feels no security and has no comprehension, like the sick man watching the moths around the lamp in Dans le labyrinthe⁹⁵ or the aquarium image of Les Gommès, the husband seems to seek some form of

stability: "une certaine permanence d'ensemble s'établit au sein de laquelle les crises locales, les arrivées, les départs, les permutations, n'entrent pas en ligne de compte"⁹⁶ but again as the insects "s'emmêlant en un écheveau de plus en plus brouillé où aucune courbe autonome ne demeure identifiable"⁹⁷ until finally we are once again back to the infinite circle: "la ronde des insectes est toujours exactement la même".⁹⁸

The three protagonists in this novel--the husband, A....., and Franck, are all foreigners in this tropical climate, but like L. in Robbe-Grillet's film L'Immortelle,⁹⁹ and in contrast to the alienation experienced by the others, the woman A..... is able to control the external environment without any difficulty--at least in her husband's eyes. As is the case with both A..... in L'Année dernière à Marienbad and L. she has the ability to walk without looking at the ground, however rough or uneven it may be. With her voluptuous black hair she resembles the "belle et lointaine" with her "grands yeux très ouverts au regard vide" her "lointain sourire, un peu tendre, un peu dangereux"¹⁰⁰ in L'Immortelle who is able to understand Turkish and yet is still not native to the environment she inhabits, as A..... is able to understand and control the natives on the plantation. Both, as indeed all the female protagonists in Robbe-Grillet, seem to offer not only a challenge to the male protagonist. They have "toujours le même sourire où se lit, aussi bien, la dérision que la confiance, ou l'absence

totale de sentiments",¹⁰¹ and their eyes--usually green or grey, are seemingly never closed, held in an unreal almost doll-like fashion. They also appear to represent a possibility of evasion through sadism and sexual violence. It is as if, belonging to neither world, although in appearance within one that is 'un monde clos', the possibility of communication and salvation exists in their complicity.

Thus A..... herself is perfect--physically and in other ways--at least in her husbands eyes. Timeless she lives in her own world, a dream world where she seems unaware of time passing, but the disruptive element from the outside--in the person of Franck--is all too present, although Franck himself is doomed to failure by "un défaut insignifiant de la surface".¹⁰²

Dans le labyrinthe:

The narrator again lives in a closed world upon the elements of which he attempts to put a significance which they do not have in themselves. This closed world is alternately that of the room in which the (sick) narrator lies or the cold snow/rain covered streets of the city where the tired soldier wanders, whichever world it is does not matter--the one contains all the elements of the other. 'Dédoublement' within 'dédoublement', the reflection of the moth turning around the lamp is reflected in the soldier turning round in aimless desperate circles in a labyrinth of streets, not knowing where he is going, nor in what city he is. The wallpaper

in the room becomes the snowflakes outside, which fall slowly and hypnotically until they finally settle like the fallen dust within the room. The picture of the defeat of Reichenfels in the room, depicting the cafe with the three soldiers,¹⁰³ all very alike, and the civilians, will reoccur as the refuge where the soldier, as did Mathias and Wallas, hopes to establish some contact.

Whether the narrator is the soldier lying sick and dying, recounting this story to himself, changing the scenes in his mind, with his 'non' and his 'etc...', the doctor who comes to visit the delirious soldier, or simply another unknown unidentified individual confined to the room and more specifically to the bed--since everything in the room is described from that angle--is not important. The work stands as it is and "le lecteur est donc invité à n'y voir que les choses, gestes, paroles, événements qui lui sont rapportées, sans chercher à leur donner ni plus ni moins de signification que dans sa propre vie, ou sa propre mort".¹⁰⁴ Again it is "un espace et un temps purement mentaux--ceux du rêve peut-être ou de la mémoire, ceux de toute vie affective".¹⁰⁵

La Maison de rendez-vous:

As the name suggests, this novel of Robbe-Grillet is the meeting-place for all his other works, being at the same time a 'monde clos' complete in itself. To an even greater extent than in the preceding novels--perhaps in this way it is closer

to his 'ciné-romans', L'Année dernière à Marienbad and L'Immortelle--theatrical and cinematic elements pervade the whole novel in the labyrinthine play within a play structure. Again the elements of dream-like fatality are all present, as if "hommes et choses sont également victimes de quelque enchantement, comme dans ces rêves . . . l'on se sent guidé par une ordonnance fatale, dont il serait aussi vain de prétendre modifier le plus petit détail que de chercher à s'enfuir",¹⁰⁶ elements of all the preceding works are present. From the first page, the narrator reveals himself as obsessed by the physical aspect of women which he states has always taken up a great deal of his dreams. Certain elements of sadism are reminiscent of the short story La Chambre secrète,¹⁰⁷ with all the complicit masochism of the strange and beautiful captive girl. Everything is revealed through the mind of the narrator, who like the old mad king Boris of the novel--who may or may not be a king--"cherche quelque chose dans ses souvenirs, quelque chose de solide et il ne sait pas quoi".¹⁰⁸ Whether the narrator invents the incidents recounted, whether they are told him by Lady Ava/Eva/Eve, or whether they belong to the past memories of the mistress of the Villa Bleue, is again unimportant. In two separate prefaces the author seems to delight in contradicting himself as to the authenticity of the story itself.

In this world of a Hong Kong of the imagination and of reality, like the Turkey of L'Immortelle, there are again two

worlds. Firstly there is a mysterious and yet home-away-from-home-like atmosphere of the Villa Bleue, which in its construction is reminiscent of the artificial "jardin à la française" of L'Année dernière à Marienbad.¹⁰⁹ Like the novel "le décor n'est visible que d'une façon partielle"... "les objets situés à proximité immédiate, si bien qu'on ne distingue pas un ensemble, mais seulement des fragments sans lien".¹¹⁰ In the park of the villa envelopped in its mysterious blue halo with its impenetrable forest resembling those of childhood's fairy tales surrounding the house, the "parfum violent, douceâtre, légèrement pourri",¹¹¹ and the ground which leaves no footprints, the impression is unreal and nightmarish. The total effect is reflected in the dance of Loraine/Lauren: "comme si tout cela se passait à l'autre bout du monde; emportée toujours dans un même rythme lent mais irrésistible, bien trop puissant".¹¹² In the obsessed mind of the narrator her dancing becomes the frenzied twisting of sadistic violence in a scene which is almost a replica of one in L'Immortelle,¹¹⁵ while the music she dances to resembles the native's chant in La Jalousie. This is again reminiscent of the alien sound of the insects in the park, or that of the crickets in La Jalousie (cf. pp 86-87). All these sounds are alien, repititious, with no apparent beginning or end, and no variation of intensity or loudness, hence, frightening and nightmarish to the uninitiated listener.

Statues have played a major part in the 'dédoublement' of Robbe-Grillet's other works to quite a large extent as has already been mentioned. In this novel, however, the statues in the garden of the villa are first and foremost representative of his other works. They "retracent les épisodes les plus fameux de l'existence imaginaire de la Princesse Azy: 'Les Chiens', 'L'Esclave', 'La Promesse', 'La Reine', 'L'Enlèvement', 'Le Chasseur', 'La Mise à Mort',¹¹⁴ presumably representing in the same order: L'Immortelle, La Chambre secrète, Dans le labyrinthe, La Jalousie, L'Année dernière à Marienbad, Le Voyeur and finally Les Gommès. The sculptors of these statues, Johnson and Marchand, are two of the main protagonists. Within the villa small dramatic pieces are acted out which reflect the events in former novels: there is a scene of a young girl attached to the trunk of a tree in the attitude of Jacqueline/Violette faced by the 'chasseur' who holds the 'guidon' of a bicycle rather than a gun, as well as various scenes of perversion and sadism.

Outside the villa--if indeed the villa exists--there is 'dédoublement' of what exists within the villa. In the gutter of the Hong Kong streets lies a magazine, which shows pictures of the café and three soldiers in Dans le labyrinthe, and later shows scenes of destruction through opium which this time is the stimulant, not absinth or other alcohol as in previous novels.

Hong Kong with its all-pervasive atmosphere of 'chaleur étouffante' is alienating and incomprehensible to the narrator as it is to the other protagonists.

The city is the meeting place of East and West and it is Kim the Eurasian's closed world. Her features are "aussi figés que ceux d'un mannequin"... "on dirait qu'elle ne voit rien de tout cela, comme une somnambule; elle n'a pas non plus besoin de regarder à ses pieds pour éviter les obstacles" (as A..... in La Jalousie) "ceux-ci paraissent s'écarter d'eux-mêmes pour lui laisser le chemin libre".¹¹⁵ The Chinese around her who seem mechanical and unreal to the Europeans and Kim with her impassive Oriental smile, which is in reality not a smile, seem to have the rigid body and waxen face of a doll or dummy. Like the other female protagonists she seems attentive and yet distant. Although her eyes are open and frank she has about her the air of being constantly lost in splendid bloody dreams.

The other principal female protagonist is the beautiful, blonde Lauren/Lorraine who offers a paradoxical invitation with her eyes. In these eyes can be seen revolt, submission, fear, pleasure, or nothing at all depending upon the interpretation of the narrator. She seems in fact "la déesse de l'illusion".¹¹⁶ As with the other women accomplice victims by her look in which there is not a little madness, she seems to be someone who wants to obtain "un instant d'attention ou qui demande un dernier sursis, ou qui tente d'interrompre un acte

irrévocable".¹¹⁷

Projet pour une révolution à New York:

From the rather confused group of characters in La Maison de rendez-vous, the emphasis is changed to confusion of events with simplification of characters in this latest novel of Alain Robbe-Grillet.

According to the author, all the revolutionaries, at least in America, are supposed to be foreigners. Thus the narrator, if he exists, in this novel, perhaps in the person of Ben Said, is the extreme example of the 'outsider'.

Robbe-Grillet states that he himself is afraid as is everyone in this world. Like his own protagonists who search for and find flaws in the world external to themselves, he talks of a house he has in the country with its beams rotting away: "J'ai toujours l'impression de vivre dans un monde miné, menacé par un cataclysme, prêt à s'écrouler".¹¹⁸

The U.S.A., with its concentration of fear and violence of the sixties and seventies, is the ideal setting for the playing-out of his games and what better place than the New York subway: "Le monde souterrain par excellence, l'underground, le labyrinthe de la peur, de la démence et de la mort".¹¹⁹ This same setting with its claustrophobic atmosphere and myth-like qualities of fear and violence is used by Bessette in L'Incubation in the London of wartime.

As with La Maison de rendez-vous, this novel has all the elements of the preceding novels, slyly put in here and there, making the reader aware of the author's presence. Yet all elements are possible and explicable by the books read by the young girl Laura, since it is from these books she gleans the life she experiences. "Ce qui m'a toujours fait supposer que Laura lisait tous ces livres en même temps et qu'elle en mélangeait ainsi de pièce en pièce, selon ses propres déplacements, les péripéties policières savamment calculées par l'auteur, modifiant donc sans cesse l'ordonnance de chaque volume, sautant de surcroît cent fois par jour d'un ouvrage à l'autre, ne craignant pas de revenir à plusieurs reprises sur le même passage pourtant dépourvu de tout intérêt visible, alors qu'elle délaisse au contraire totalement le chapitre essentiel qui contient le noeud d'une enquête, et donne par conséquent sa signification à l'ensemble de l'intrigue".¹²⁰ This could easily be an apology of this or any of the author's works.

The narrator/revolutionary/voyeur--if indeed he exists and is not another figment of Laura's extraordinary imagination--regards Laura in much the same way as did the husband in La Jalousie. For him she exists in a dream-like world, far removed from everyday reality. The life she lives is as isolated from the rest of society as is that of the other female protagonists of the Robbe-Grillet works, and she too exerts a strange dominion over the narrator. Enclosed within a house, strangely resembling the abandoned house of Ducharme's two

children in Le Nez qui vogue, there is no possible future for her. She has had no communication with the outside world and what she comes into contact with is through the books she reads. Yet, as with all the young Robbe-Grillet women protagonists, there is a hint of strange violence in her past, linking her through her experience with the narrator voyeur who is superficially her guardian. When she speaks, at least to the narrator, there is no coherence in what she says, even though the tone she uses would imply logicity. As if in a Kafkaesque nightmare, she wanders through endless corridors whose closed doors conceal mysterious rooms from which blood flows and tortured sounds issue. In the play of the school children below her window she sees sadistic and ritualistic games. When she catches sight of herself in the mirror, like the other Robbe-Grillet protagonists, she does not even see herself. She seems again to exist in a timeless state, refusing to have any watch or clock near her, and yet she is obsessed by the tardiness of others. Thus avoiding what she fears, it is brought to the fore. Again physical flaws or 'failles' fascinate and repel her, revealing to her the very insecurity of her hermetic world. It is she with her mysterious ring, who, by accident, cracks the window leading to the outside world.

From the Sarrautian individual seeking to uncover and reveal to all men what he is convinced lies behind their daily actions and conversations in present society, to the Butor

protagonist who, setting out in search of himself, in an apparently alien society, discovers not only himself but bonds linking all society, the transition is made in the works of Robbe-Grillet, who already recognizes these common myths of Mankind, to an attempt to rid Man of these very myths. These myths, which take at times the form of fears and obsessions, haunt all of modern society to a greater or lesser extent depending upon the individual.

In general the Robbe-Grillet protagonist represents the extreme point of these obsessions whether he be the victim or executioner. As in a catharsis this extreme point must be reached before purgation is possible. Also as pointed out in Projet pour une révolution à New York, and as already brought out in Sarraute's and in Butor's novels, it is he who is the most alienated from the society he finds himself in who is the most capable of seeing its problems, and in the Robbe-Grillet novels, of revolution. Yet in the Robbe-Grillet novels these individuals have not yet reached the point of overcoming their own obsessions.

Again outsiders, they have the same feelings or experience of 'déjà vu' as do the preceding two authors. Not completely aware of what does link them to the places or situations they find themselves in, they again seek, through communication with another, an answer to their problems, in this case an alleviation from their obsessions. In the Robbe-Grillet novels, it

is the women or young girl victims who seem to hold the key to this. (In the films it is often a man who seems to offer escape to the female protagonist through violence that she is afraid of accepting.) These women like Gisèle in Sarraute's Le Planétarium and like the women in Butor's novels seem to have a control of the society they exist in not held by the male protagonist who recognizes in them qualities of 'étrangeté' akin to his own. Thus, once again, a form of communication represents a possibility of salvation.

Québec:

On the French Canadian side, it is interesting to note that a total society rather than a single individual seems to be in search of self. The outsider individual of the French "nouveau roman" becomes the outsider member of a group like himself seeking to find not just his own identity but the identity of the group he belongs to. Unlike the total solitude experienced by the French "nouveau roman" protagonists, these French Canadian ones all align themselves to a greater or lesser extent with a group to which they feel affinity. Bessette's narrator is able to place his own attitude on those characters he studies, since to him all men are equally ill-fated and alien to themselves. Basile's three characters form together a group within a larger one, to which they realize nevertheless they are tied, while Ducharme's protagonists exist in their own child world with others like them. These enclave groups

of the two latter authors, Basile and Ducharme, are constantly threatened from the outside but nevertheless there is an inner group security not present in the French novels.

Bessette:

Like himself, Bessette's main characters are usually involved with books or teaching, whether it be Jodoin in an earlier novel Le Libraire (1961) or any of the main characters in L'Incubation. This latter novel presents many elements close to the author's own life. His bleakly humorous descriptions of life in a smalltown university, where the people exist in a kind of limbo unaware of the rest of the world, bring the whole North American system under heavy criticism, with the small university's desire to gain for itself the prestige necessary in a country which, although not part of the United States cannot but feel "l'écrasante générosité américaine".¹²¹

Although strictly speaking, L'Incubation is Bessette's contribution to the "nouveau roman",¹²² as far as this thesis is concerned, the theme and content of his preceding novel, Le Libraire, are important in that they are basically the same as those of the later novel. Jodoin is typical of the anti-hero of the 'new novel' in French Canada, alone with his black humour, lacking in 'ideals', a more or less detached observer of human actions and weaknesses, living from day to day very much like Camus' Meursault--and Bessette's characters have a

lot of Meursault about them--in a state of almost total resignation to the fate of Mankind. These characters are essentially schizoid as are Robbe-Grillet's characters, but with the difference that in the case of the French writer this schizophrenia is linked to the desperate desire for detachment and oblivion on the part of the obsessed mind, whereas the Bessettian character has become schizoid through reaction to the world, by his self-imposed detachment, often marked by the same precise geometrical descriptions found in Robbe-Grillet, following an almost total resignation to the point of regarding his fellow men as mere objects.

L'Incubation:

"des fourmis des rats, deux d'entre eux se croisant s'aheurtant fuyant ensemble se palpant les antennes, le museau, fuyant ensemble ayant l'illusion malgré tout de penser entraînés talonnés par leurs instincts par la peur la panique"... "s'imaginant qu'ils pensent qu'ils sont maîtres comme on dit de leur destinée n'ayant au fond appris qu'une chose (à savoir qu'ils doivent mourir) en attendant circulant à la surface du sol dans un demi-rêve un demi-sommeil".¹²³

Seen through the semi-detached eyes of a narrator, whose own solitude is reflected in those he observes, the story itself is basically simple and, as in Robbe-Grillet's La Jalousie, is the description of a state of mind or of several minds interpreted through that of the narrator, Lagarde.

Superficially incoherent, the narrator weaves his monologue through the love of Gordon and Antinéa in London to the arrival

of Néa in Narcotown some years later and her eventual suicide. In the horror and holocaust of London during the war, Antinéa by her very name seems to symbolize the quest for something when faced with the dangers and threat of annihilation in war, whereas, when placed in the empty meaningless society of Narcotown, with all its inherent symbolism of a state of half-sleep, Antinéa becomes mere Néa with death the only answer. She has found the very 'néant' of which many years ago she was the antonym. During her stay in Narcotown she has managed to affect several people including the narrator himself, but this effect is merely one of emphasizing the absurdity of their own existence, their impotency coupled with their feelings of guilt and despair when faced with this impotency.

The actual events related take place variously in London, Montréal, Narcotown, and in modes of transportation in between the latter two. As with the novels of Robbe-Grillet, by fairly careful observation one can ascertain the whereabouts of the action and even the geographical direction taken. Transitions in space and time come almost imperceptibly, the transition taking place through direct mind associations.

London during the war is like a caricature of life itself. Since Bessette had a fever while in that city, it seems only appropriate that he should portray in this novel the feverish intensity of life in London at the time when the heightened emotions people experience in the face of imminent danger are

reflected in attitudes different from the norm. The atmosphere is somewhat reminiscent of Camus' La Peste, and like Camus' characters, in a situation where women lose their inhibitions in the face of constant danger, one is freed. Indeed Gordon feels himself liberated of "certains tabous ou de certains refoulements".¹²⁴ Because life itself in this case is desperate, it is lived intensely. In a strange situation, love, particularly with a stranger, with the simultaneous search for oblivion, annihilation, loss of self, and some form of communication, is also intense, as is the case in the novels of Robbe-Grillet.

In the London underground, which by its atmosphere of horror, fear and desperation is akin to the Robbe-Grillet New York subway of Projet pour une révolution à New York with all its inherent violence and terror, the Londoners themselves-- "trogloodytes métropolitains"¹²⁵--after fleeing through the web-like labyrinthine London streets to attain a horizontal displacement in the underground corridors, seek a collective security which is delusory and derisory. Pseudo-travellers, they wait for a never-coming train, escaping death from the heavens --man-made--which can destroy in one moment what it has taken so long to build.

In this atmosphere of fear and destruction of all traditional values, Gordon and Antinéa, both 'étrangers' in that society, "solitaires et souffrant d'être solitaires"¹²⁶ believe they have found one another. Gordon is a stranger, a

Canadian who feels a strange patriotism for Great Britain and yet whose job there is a mockery. Antinéa, representing perhaps all women to Gordon, is a motherless child, brought up in a boarding school, mocked at by the other pupils, treated more as a servant, and visited rarely by an almost uncaring father. Married to a man without knowing whether or not she loves him and whom, she believes, married her to 'have' her, she alternately despises her husband and feels guilty for this feeling and for her betrayal. In Gordon she finds a kindred soul and together they create for themselves an existence of intense danger as if in compensation for the lack of actual danger in Gordon's job and the comparative danger experienced by Jack, Antinéa's husband. The latter's perfectionism and military zeal seem in return a sublimation of other emotions, bringing to the fore Bessette's "(mais qu'est-ce que ça veut dire le subconscient)".¹²⁷ Gordon's and Antinéa's quest for excitement and danger extends to their taking no precautions in their love-making. Although Gordon is unsure of Antinéa's motivation for this, she is almost drawn to pregnancy as a means of giving her something solid in a world that is the opposite, just as Judith in Basile's novels expresses the same wish for a child. (Neither of these unhappy women will succeed in this.) As for Antinéa, she is completely unsure of her own feelings towards Gordon or Jack, of their feeling towards her or indeed of anyone or of anything.

In between London and Narcotown is Montréal, represented

by the greyish "salle des pas perdus",¹²⁸ bilingual taxi-drivers, and the lonely hotel room reminiscent of the half-larva life Antinéa/Néa has been leading in the years between the war and her visit to Canada. It is a city of bored blasé employees in cages, of those who, like the waiter in the bar Gordon and the narrator have gone to, have sold their souls in servility, and it is the place where conversation is represented by soliloquies expressed aloud. This atmosphere--almost a spatialisation of the years she has lived after Gordon's departure--can only add to Néa's despair and solitude.

Though not French Canadian, Néa is very much an outsider within her own society, a member of another form of 'minority group' in her feelings of guilt and fear coupled with her desire for death. This 'death wish' and simultaneous fear of death is brought out by her seeking danger on the one hand and her horror of blood on the other, exemplified in her job with the Red Cross in London. Néa had a paper job like Gordon, a mockery of the real situation, but also for Néa a way to avoid and simultaneously be part of what fascinates her so much. In the same way her feelings of guilt and horror are even more pronounced when she receives notification of her husband's wound. Her whole affair with Gordon in London is one which brings to the fore all her mixed feelings: "se jeter se blottir se désintégrer se retrouver se perdre dans les bras de Gordon".¹²⁹ Unable to know her own feelings, in turn hating and loving Gor-

don and Jack and herself, when the subconsciously desired disappearance of Jack becomes a certainty, her feelings of guilt and horror, together with hysterical crises which terrify Gordon result in an attempted suicide. But she asks nothing of anyone, least of all pity, in her horror at ressembling her sympathy-seeking husband, recognizing that this emotion is repulsive to others as it was to her. Like the other characters in this novel, "Néa nageant comme nous tous entre deux eaux comme nous tous traversée par des courants (venus d'où) attaquée par des serpents marins sous-marins rongée par des ténias les digérant plus ou moins essayant de les digérer, comme nous tous plus ou moins digérée par eux".¹³⁰

A 'lâche',¹³¹ according to Néa, Gordon lives in a state of inauthenticity and self-oblivion from which there is no way out, just as his eternal turning over of reminiscences of the past seems endless. Why Gordon desires Néa's presence in Narcotown, the narrator can only guess at--Gordon himself is unsure of his own motives--honour? moral obligation?. It seems more obviously a desire to find again the life he discovered in London and which he has since lost. Doubting that he ever really loved her, afraid of gossip, it is only when she becomes unattainable, that, as in London--and again the circle repeats itself--he wants her.

Although not apparently central to the action, the faceless, almost nameless narrator sponge-like absorbs and emits

the information he obtains from the lives of others with whom he comes in contact. It could be said he resembles a computer, but for all his superficial coldness stemming from a resignation he has forced upon himself as a protection against involvement, he nevertheless emerges as a sympathetic human being in his portrayal of others. Schizoid, the life he avoids he also feels obliged to assume. Whether it be afternoon tea with Maggie or deliberately accidental meetings with the lonely German, the solace he provides to others is the attention he gives them. He too has feelings of guilt and betrayal--in talking to Néa he feels he is betraying Maggie and vice versa--and sometimes his dread of silence forces him to speak, often saying what he later regrets, so that he too errs through inauthenticity. Like the other protagonists of the "nouveaux romans" treated in this thesis he often finds himself in a state of half-sleep or semi-intoxication. Since everything is interpreted through and by this one narrator, the state of the others is in part a reflection of his own mind as is the case with the other novels. Once again the reader has to limit himself to this one vision of a lonely and cynical narrator whose existence emphasizes the paradoxical situation of the individual in society.

In many ways Lagarde resembles the older and wiser versions of the young Sarrautian individuals. He sees in others the struggle for self, their desperate attempts at establishing

some form of communication with others, and at finding some meaning in a meaningless life that were all part of the search of the French protagonists. He is only too well aware of their cowardice, inauthenticity and of their dreams of finding something to give their lives a value they lack beyond their present state, but again seeing the same basic properties in all men, (without the seeming 'naïveté' of the French protagonists), the narrator appears at times an almost scientific observer of his own race, unable to help them and reduced to cynicism and despair.

Jean Basile:

In the three novels of Jean Basile depicting three characters, Jean Basile presents the same themes as those of the preceding authors. All his protagonists share, although not to the extreme of Lagarde, the cynicism and despair of Bessette's character.

His novels deal with three youngish Montréalais--the three 'J's'--"Judith brune à reflets rouges, Jérémie blond" and finally Jonathan "tout noir"¹³² a gambler whose interest lies not in winning fortune, but in seeing the laws of probability broken. Clinging to a past and a mythical father figure, Victor, whose maxims they recall or invent at will, the sudden return and death of this Victor before the very eyes of Jérémie seems symbolic of their own death. Each be-

comes variously involved with people whose names all begin with 'A': Jonathan with Armande and Adelaide, Jérémie with Armande and Anne, and Judith with the young would-be revolutionary Adolphe, and the would-be artist (Victor) - Axel.

In the first novel, Jérémie with his face halfway between a boxer and angel,¹³³ reveals his own narcissism, his obsession with the passing of his youth and beauty, his preoccupation with the shortness of life and his fears of the future which to him is like a black veil, always in retreat, never tearing to allow him a glimpse at what may be. Indeed, as he bitterly remarks, if one discounts the first and last fifteen years of life, there remain approximately thirty good years, of which for him ten have already gone. His own life is to him a serious matter, but he cannot become involved in that of others. Dying Chinese cannot interest him for, as he says, "seule la vie que je vis m'apparaît comme infiniment grave, aimable et uniquement par rapport à moi, parce que je suis né et je dois mourir, et que personne ni aimé ni haï et moins encore l'indifférent ne pourra jamais me tirer du chemin où je suis qui me mène au terme".¹³⁴ His cry resembles that of Meursault, less an indifference to others than a desperate attempt at affirming his own existence. Neither to Jérémie nor to the other two, is outside 'engagement' believable or relevant. They mock at the young students like Adolphe who whistle Bob Dylan tunes, but would really like to live like

Frank Sinatra, or the young musicians who are so involved in their playing that they seem to lack inner 'engagement' and are unable to express themselves normally. To Jérémie, Jonathan and Judith, who believe 's'engager' is 'se diminuer',¹³⁵ these people are inauthentic in the Sartrean sense. Jérémie believes the three 'J's' are more authentic since, as he says to Anne in *Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk*,¹³⁶ "nous vivons comme tout le monde, ma chérie, seulement nous, on le sait et on le dit". Yet he also wonders if they too, he, Jonathan and Judith are not playing games with themselves as well as with others.

Jérémie cannot bear to lose a moment of the life he has. Believing liberty does not exist, the only recourse left to them is to invent it a little. He feels that in one life there is sufficient time only to touch on the things that matter, time lost such as that by Armande's sulking, is to him inexcusable, and yet when the world seems to be closing in on him he resorts to the womb-like security of his bed for hours or even days at a time. As others' lives do not really interest him, nor does Nature, except in rare moments.¹³⁷ Even then it seems more a romantic game than the real love of Nature experienced by Jonathan and Judith. His narcissistic obsession with his own life is reflected in the horror mirrors hold for him. The fact that his body grows old while his 'soul' remains young, revolts him. Experiencing an intense desire to reaffirm his life through some feeling, he wants to keep his

eyes open, observing every new wrinkle and suffering from it. When young, time was immeasurable. Now he realizes it lies in wait like an old Sioux. He is afraid of death but believes he will be able to accept it when it comes. Just as he is unable to destroy his own deformed child, begging Jonathan to do it for him, he does not really believe the mother of his first aborted child will die or is actually dead. To avoid death in his apartment, he leaves and reaffirms life, embracing stones and houses, making love to a girl he picks up: "j'aime vivre, j'aime vivre ainsi petit, amoureux de toutes choses, au milieu de la ville et des hommes, aucune extravagance ne m'effraie, je voudrais être fou de joie, me mêler, me marier pour toujours à cette foule en fête".¹³⁸ However death haunts him in the blood red of the cherry tart he eats, and eventually he has to return to the dying Armande. What strikes him as most terrible about her death, is that she was still essentially a child and youth and beauty should not be allowed to die as far as Jérémie is concerned. Youth, particularly when associated with beauty, is an élite to which he belongs and from which he does not wish to dissociate himself. For this reason the final transition to becoming one of the 'beautiful people' and his idea of founding a commune of those like himself seems quite natural. His world is an unreal one, so his final discovery of the world of drugs, itself an escape from reality and hence from death is the logical result. A poetic dreamer with no possibility of realizing his dreams, when not

in a romantic (in the poetic sense) mood, Jérémie regards his own personality rather cynically: "causeur charmant, ami sincère, camarade serviable en tout temps".¹³⁹ Love is to him a necessity. Unsure about the depth of his own feelings about anyone or anything, he nevertheless feels capable of taking on the responsibility of others, believing as was the case with Armande, that he can allow them complete freedom at the same time, yet he cannot abide what he feels is abuse of this freedom. In Armande, he states with romantic foresight, he sees "l'aboutissement personnel d'une longue et subtile préparation à la maladie de l'amour".¹⁴⁰ He loves women in general but in particular those to whom he can give pleasure. From outward appearances a dreamer, Jérémie analyzes himself in reality as selfish, calculating and possessive. Whether his love for Armande is for the gallery, as Jonathan puts it, or is merely self-affirmation, her lightness is the complement to Jérémie's solidity as is her beauty to Jonathan's intelligence.

Jérémie is a hopeless and helpless romantic incapable of living in the real world. The romantic love he wants to feel and express is not bound by sex, whether it be for the ten-years-gone Victor, who "à l'époque dans notre souvenir il était le plus vrai, le plus vivant de tous les adultes que nous connaissions,"¹⁴¹ supplying the link to their adolescent happiness together in the city of "Roma-Amor" with its climate of eternal youth and beauty without which no love is possible in Jérémie's

mind, or for Jonathan with whom he remembers having a D.H. Lawrence-type hand to hand combat with all the sexual over-tone implicit in that physical contact, or again with Judith, with whom any physical love would seem incestuous. Jérémie sees the world through a romantic's eyes. The words he utters to Judith expressing the love he feels for her reveal even more strongly how his love for others is merely another form of narcissism.¹⁴² He regards himself and Judith as the positive/negative aspects of the same image. On page 36 of La Jument des Mongols he says nothing counts for him in life but love. Unable to accept it with one woman, he goes in search night after night as if it were the Holy Grail. Victor understood Jérémie when he said that under his blond, beautiful, calm and stable looking exterior, Jérémie is in reality like mercury 'fuyant' and 'nocif' and full of contradictions. Jérémie often feels he is losing himself within himself in true narcissistic fashion. When love involvement becomes difficult, forcing him to look at others, he avoids feeling. The one woman he seems to love in a normal relationship is destroyed by the relationship he has with Jonathan and Judith. Of the three of them, Jérémie believes he is the best suited to living with a woman, and Armande is for him that woman with her beauty, charm, youth and deceptive gentleness: "nos armes étaient égales et nous prenions tant de plaisir à la lutte",¹⁴³ in their relationship of love, hate, and mistrust. Again however the narcissistic element enters. He was for her her youth

and loves her "d'avoir cru et de croire que je suis le pionnier du bonheur".¹⁴⁴ However the illusory freedom he gives her in return for his own is that of a mare put out to pasture, her liberty describing a big circle regulated by the three Mongols. To Judith she is more like a pet dog on a leash and Judith accuses Jérémie of not loving nor of ever having loved anyone. She accuses Jérémie of keeping herself and Jonathan as necessary to his health. Yet Jérémie believes, or tries to, in his love. He claims not to like vague things; even his dreams are concrete and palpable and so for him is love.

Jérémie's affirmation of love also reveals his desire for domination of others: "Oh! Judith, si nous pouvions asservir le monde, le plier à notre volonté, être soi-même la puissance, si je pouvais cela, que le monde serait beau".¹⁴⁵ At times he feels almost god-like. Reaffirming the existence of Love he states that it must be taken as a toreador a bull--although he would like to experience it in Tristan/Iseult fashion. Wishing that he and Armande could be disembodied spirits pure in their love, he yet realizes that one "se grise encore plus d'idées que de mots"¹⁴⁶ and that having reached the age of thirty, Love is no longer a beautiful young Venus but rather a haggard old witch to be fought and overcome.¹⁴⁷ Jonathan's statement that life should be a tragedy,¹⁴⁸ not with cries and tears, but in aiming for purity is reflected in Jérémie's desire for a "belle catastrophe" as in his desire to feel real

suffering, Victor and Judith experiencing the same desire for a tragedy to give meaning to their lives. Like the other two he tries to convince himself he is above the ordinary, one of the three "mages"¹⁴⁹ though admitting he is the humblest, a "fils du soleil"¹⁵⁰ Unlike Armande, who rushes into strangers' arms, he avoids contact with those in the streets as do Judith and Jonathan, even disliking intruders in his apartment, because to him what is his is like a vestal temple and the touch of others is sacrilegious, for each of his possessions "garde en lui le feu que j'y ai mis par mes sourires et par mes larmes"¹⁵¹ He mocks his romantic self playing a double game, yet often the games he plays hide forebodings of truth or reality as e.g. when he calls his secretary Anne "le visage de la mort".¹⁵²

Jérémie's romantic escapes into the past are ones of despair before the present: "passé, passé, mon doux passé, il faudrait vivre à l'imparfait, ne plus avoir que des tas de souvenirs".¹⁵³ Jérémie's desire to escape sometimes becomes as it does for Jonathan, a wish to be above it all, literally speaking: "planer longtemps, longtemps au-dessus de la forme ronde de la terre"¹⁵⁴ leaving beneath him Armande and the city of Montréal ugly but, as it is to the others, an integral part of his life. The real escape for Jérémie, as Victor had noted, is in his bed, in his ability to go to sleep. His bed is his refuge, oblivion from the present. Sleep to him is the image of life and not death as it is to Jonathan, and is a form of

escape as is the Robbe-Grillet-like contemplation of objects he indulges in at times of stress.¹⁵⁵ In bed he wants things to just go by: "que le temps passe, que je passe moi-même tout doucement sans trop m'en apercevoir pourvu que cela soit sans douleur et sans cris".¹⁵⁶ But in the present real suffering is there in the face of Armande framed by the "glaïeul" flower of death¹⁵⁷ with its implicit poetic reference to "Mal-larmé" mentioned by Basile in the Avertissement (page 8). Not as strong as Jonathan or even Judith in his romanticism, he is unable to envisage failure. Even when he must finally leave his room he seeks refuge in the company of the other two.

Together the three form a closely-knit family, with Victor as their spiritual father, who to Armande and even Jonathan in moments of doubt, seems rather "un fichu extravagant".¹⁵⁸ There is no mention of any other real family except a reference to the death of Judith's father, from which she was curiously kept apart through her mother's desire to spare her pain but which left Judith with feelings of inadequacy and alienation.

What they feel themselves as individuals, they transpose onto the other two, again reinforcing their interdependency. Jérémie, lonely and abandoned after Armande's departure, thinks of Jonathan as lonelier than himself and comforts himself with the thought that he can rely on Jonathan to sing Armande's praises in the future also alleviating his own guilt by convincing himself that Jonathan will be less deceitful than he,

Jérémie, is, and what Jonathan has to say will be more enduring than anything Jérémie can offer.

Both Jérémie and Judith are relying on Jonathan for their future. It is "de lui que nous tirerons les parfums qui nous rappelleront notre jeunesse".¹⁵⁹ Believing that he will be the most beautiful of the three of them in the future by what he creates, Jérémie and Judith endure a great deal from the black-humoured Jonathan.

There are times when each as an individual tries to reject the other two and become self-sufficient. Jérémie in his mad gallop through the grounds of McGill University, narcissistically wondering if he looks crazy, rejects Jonathan as a 'cancre prétentieux', Judith as a 'détraquée nymphomane', Armande as a 'pauvre fille' and Victor as 'voyeur' into their very souls.¹⁶⁰ Once this rejection desire is formulated in his mind, Jérémie tells himself he can live a new life without them, bringing order into the disorder that reigns in his present life¹⁶¹ and at the same time "reprendre possession de ma ville".¹⁶² To this end he returns to his apartment, washes, shaves and cleans himself in truly symbolic fashion.¹⁶³

All three have a certain ability to see themselves from the exterior--seeing themselves e.g. as three statues in a museum¹⁶⁴ but nevertheless with the conviction that they form an 'élite'--one that ends necessarily in death. To this end

they all experience at one time or another the desire to end their lives. In spite of their child-like games of oblivion this death wish disappears whenever they are faced with the actual reality of death. In Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk Jonathan says that his books are "une façon de se tuer" while for Judith it is "les garçons".¹⁶⁵ Their death wish seems rather a desire to escape, to attain what they cannot in this life. Judith asks of Jonathan: "Pourquoi tuons-nous toujours ceux qu'on aime?" to which Jonathan bitterly replies: "parce que ceux qui nous aiment ne nous tuent pas assez vite".¹⁶⁶

In the threesome, Jonathan is the late-comer. Having grown up together, Judith and Jérémie have a special brother sister relationship. Jérémie does not really understand the relationship that exists between Jonathan and Judith, interpreting it only as hatred. In Judith, Jérémie sees what she often attempts to conceal from others--her sensitivity and romanticism. She tends to make fun of Jérémie's narcissism, but together they both tend to seek in basically the same way, some form of meaning in their lives, in particular through 'love'. Jérémie tells Judith there are two sorts of beings as far as love is concerned; those who are and those who do and "dans la détermination à forcer la main du monde, toi qui fais tu ne supportes que ceux qui font, voulant doubler par là le potentiel des vibrations. Mais résisteras-tu à la violence de cette double rotation?"¹⁶⁷ Yet this tendency on her part

to self-destruction in matters of love applies equally to him, since he is completely unable to reconcile his fairy-tale concept of romantic love with reality.

Judith and Jérémie wander through the seamier parts of Montréal attempting to 'live' until they are exhausted. The old quarter with its rather sordid night-life--La Main--is what they call their 'dimension tragique'.¹⁶⁸ They go there as they attempt to explain to Jonathan, who cannot understand why they frequent this area, "Parce qu'ainsi nous prenons mieux la ville aux tripes et que les tripes, dans l'animal, c'est ce qu'il y a de plus intéressant".¹⁶⁹

Jérémie has chosen Judith over Jonathan when faced with the choice, because he believes Jonathan is beset with an inferiority complex, too tense and nervous, whereas Judith represents to him everything tender and gentle. When Jérémie wants to avoid the problems posed by Armande, and although at times he does not feel comfortable in the 'dives' Judith frequents, it is Judith he chooses as companion. Both of them, seeking in corruption the feeling they cannot find in their lives, realize what they want most is to return to the purity and goodness of their childhood, where they would be as Judith says of herself "ouverts sur le monde, en confiance, réceptive"¹⁷⁰ and not to enclose themselves in a protective carapace as Jonathan has done. In moments of pessimism they decide they are 'salauds'....'lâches'....'des faux poètes, nous affabulons'.¹⁷¹

They discuss Love in general and their particular affairs, but as Judith notes, "Il faut se méfier des nuits douces et de ses amis. Ils vous tirent du coeur des cris et des pleurs qui n'y sont pas, qui n'y sont pas tout à fait".¹⁷²

Jonathan is seen through the mind's eye of Jérémie in La Jument des Mongols, of Judith in Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk and revealed by himself in his capacity as narrator in Le Grand Khan. Jonathan and Jérémie seem at times to be two facets of a multi-facet personality. As Jérémie says "Jonathan sera un peu moi, un moi à qui la nature aurait accordé quelque don artistique".¹⁷³ Without Jérémie's outer beauty, Jonathan has transcended his physical self in the two birds tattooed on his chest. This very act of tattooing, demoniacal in the Faustian sense, divine in its connotations of rebirth as a higher being, will mark him to his grave. Jonathan is not the romantic Jérémie is, removing himself from the real world. Thus he Jonathan is more suited to the writing of a 'modern' novel. Though he would like to write of the 'cosmos', of great deeds and great men, with the philosophical outlook of the "nouveau romancier" he realizes that it is the banalities of everyday existence that are most real to him. He feels he lacks the imagination necessary to a poet and dreams of travelling to some far-off land where there is still purity and perhaps the material for his creative mind.

Like the other two, Jonathan does not believe in 'outside'

engagement. He says heroes only bring about catastrophes, and says, like Jérémie, that outer involvement is "pour se désengager vis-à-vis de soi-même".¹⁷⁴ Jonathan realizes that the two others are waiting for him to abandon the inner involvement he has committed himself to, that of the future novel. Jérémie accuses Jonathan of speaking to say nothing and of using his fine theories to justify his laziness, but as long as the possibility of the novel exists, Jérémie does not dare to call Jonathan's bluff. Jonathan is aware of the others' misgivings, but knows they also are dependent on him. He has chosen to write because, as he says, it is the most difficult choice for him. Just as he desired Armande because he could not have her, so Jonathan likes to have to fight for things in life. He says it is harder to be poor, to have to hold out one's hand, and above all to close it, particularly if one is as proud as he is.

Jonathan envies Armande and Jérémie their romantic stories: "Je voudrais aussi vivre au jour le jour heureux quand il se peut, malheureux à mon tour mais farci d'espoir, de tous les espoirs et que la vie me soit douce et aimable dans son long et tendre écoulement".¹⁷⁵ He feels that if he were rich and handsome he probably would not be able to see the real world nor be one of "des êtres de feu dont je suis et dont je veux être...",¹⁷⁶ and would lose the 'lumière' he now has. With the resultant tribunal following the news of Armande's pregnancy and the possibility of Jonathan being the father,

Jérémie, rejecting the idea of abortion on aesthetic grounds, asks Jonathan why he will not marry Armande. Although he considers her 'bête',¹⁷⁷ Jonathan later glorifies her after her death and thinks he probably even loved her, but alive she is a real threat to his creative work, and he will not marry her. The goal he has set himself is all-important, no matter if it causes a rupture between himself and the others. Jonathan himself does not like quarrels. He finds "elles nous éprouvent et nous diminuent",¹⁷⁸ but alleviates any guilt he has by having the others pass judgement on him. When the death itself occurs, he blames it on Armande saying she did not have to do what she did and the reason for her doing it was to have them take notice of her. While she is dying Jonathan is the only one of the three to seem really aware of the fact that she is dying, but although symbolically avoiding death in the sulphurous smell of the match, he is essentially a spectator of the tragedy. Like a member of an audience experiencing the catharsis in a play, reality becomes unreal and he is able to use the event for his own edification. From this point on Armande becomes the representative of their disappearing youth, and it is Jonathan who eulogizes her as such:

"seule comptera
sur le grand livre du temps futur
sa fidélité à un idéal de jeunesse".¹⁷⁹

In Le Grand Khan, Jonathan introduces himself in his bed, "un drôle de tombe".¹⁸⁰ Sleep for him is not a return to child-

hood but a form a death since, unlike Jérémie, Jonathan lives far more in the real world. This world and Man in it he can only regard with cynicism and black humour "quelle blague de se croire vivant sur une sphère unique"¹⁸¹ and describes Man in Sarraute/Bessette-type terms "des animalcules dans un bouillon de culture qui s'appelle l'existence",¹⁸² going on to describe himself whom he regards as basically stoic "replié sur moi-même comme un calimaçon"¹⁸³ easily inclined to fascism by dint of the life he and those in the same society, live. Like Jérémie he too would like to escape "j'aime fuir, mais j'irai malgré tout lentement"... "je serai, tout est silence, le prince de ma steppe et de ma chambre de la rue Prince Arthur, le Grand Khan", but recognizes that his domain is here and now. Silence is paradise to him and his work becomes "cet antre d'oubli où ma vie se résorbe en un travail journalistique".¹⁸⁵

Within the work he creates Jonathan will not only give meaning to their own lives, but also hopes to give to the city they live in the soul it lacks. The difficulty he has in beginning his work--a difficulty experienced also by Victor with his painting--is alleviated by his wandering through the city streets, which he feels will belong to him when he reigns supreme through his creation, which he pictures as his own bloody heart left palpitating in the hands of his kinsmen. Frustrated by his own inability to being his novel "ce n'est pas si difficile, dans le fond, de s'amuser avec les mouettes de son océ-

ane mémoire",¹⁸⁶ he plays games where the imaginary and real coincide. He thinks of other writers, condemning the older conventional French-Canadian writers, wondering if he himself is as mad as the young Réjean Ducharme,¹⁸⁷ Nelligan and Rimbaud, and feeling affinity with these latter. As Ducharme's writing to Jonathan is a deeply personal cry so his own work will be "le sang de mon encre noir".¹⁸⁸ The publication of his book, for which he says he will do anything, with the obvious practical benefits which will give him the liberty he does not have and which is to him a necessity, involve a great sacrifice on his part: "Ecrire pourquoi et pourquoi donc payer tout le prix demandé par ce Vulcain terrible, m'enfermer, moi qui aime les fruits, dans un cratère d'un volcan d'acier et de métal, en larve qui me brûle, tout sacrifier et faire de ma vie, de Judith et de Jérémie une vivisection ambulante alors qu'il serait agréable de ne rien dire et de ne rien vouloir".¹⁸⁹

Desiring escape fervently in the form of departure, once he attains the means to do this, though still wishing it, he realizes his universe is the street corner in the city he is tied to, by a strange bond of love and hate. He regards the city itself though generally somber, under certain lights as having a beauty of its own. Familiar and yet again at times completely strange "Montréal est toujours ce grand corps qui reste; dans cette lutte entre elle et moi, il y a bien des moments de grâce".¹⁹⁰ It is at night that the city becomes most alive to him when the rest of his life seems a desert. Torn

between thoughts of escape the city herself with her cold 'nuit nordique',¹⁹¹ in which Jonathan feels imprisoned in spite of the filial feelings that attach him to Montréal, which has never changed and he fears never will, represents for him a place where "du moins je puis m'engloutir et me perdre, objet peut-être foetus dans sa mère".¹⁹² Yet the Montréal he sees is one seen through his eyes. He recognizes the fact that each person sees Montréal differently, but for all it is still an immense optical illusion,¹⁹³ distorted according to the eye of the beholder to the point that nothing of the real Montréal exists. The 'ennui' which is Jonathan's greatest enemy, he sees reflected in the buildings of McGill, and yet these buildings like Montréal itself, obsess him "j'entends si bien leur chanson".¹⁹⁴ He likes to assimilate himself to the things he loves, would like to fly like a god over the city, without the city's knowledge, to observe her and know her, but he is too often overcome with cynicism and despair. He sees this city a port without any sea, wrinkled and old before her time like himself, her trees and plants fighting bravely for air in the asphyxiating dust. "Je ne suis pas encore"¹⁹⁵ is Jonathan's cry re-echoing what he feels for Montréal, both having experienced too many revolts, dreams and love without direction. Torn in two he says "il ne faut pas vivre avec moi-même comme avec moi-même, autrement énoncé; partir et rester, être prisonnier, s'évader, se construire comme un monde linéaire et oblique, non pas s'élancer tout droit"¹⁹⁶ He hides himself in the streets

of Montréal which in their carefully planned order are the opposite of the disorder he lives in. He regards the people who roam those streets as dying, but finds it easier to remain with these people than to escape into the fantasy world of the cinema where having experienced the life on film he must then come out and face the 'ratés' of Murray's¹⁹⁷ and the like. Jonathan feels not only he but Judith and Jérémie are lost in the 'taïga citadine'.¹⁹⁸ As Adolphe, Judith's young lover, says, it is the world that is dispossessed of them, they are not the dispossessed. The solitude Jonathan feels is not around him but inside him, while Montréal is outside him, vilified but necessary. Jonathan feels lost like a child in a disneyland for adults,¹⁹⁹ yet all the city and all the small people in it are part of his life and caught up in his memory. Although he finds Victor's advice to live in one's own time ridiculous and redundant--how else can one live--with Mallarmé's despair he has nowhere to flee to, revolt is useless, and he would like to explode into the blue of the sky "l'azur, l'azur, l'azur, l'azur".²⁰⁰

Love for Jonathan is even further away than it is for Judith or Jérémie, both of whose erotic adventures he experiences vicariously and for his own edification. He cannot even explain how he could love the others more than he loves himself. Because he feels himself incapable of grasping the heart of things or people he is afraid he will end by denying the existence of

such a thing as a heart. Reflecting also his fear of responsibility and what it means to his work, he does not like to be loved. The only women he loves are beautiful and hence, he feels, unattainable. Once attained he rejects them as he did with Armande. Although he cannot imagine himself making love to anyone who from years of dissecting bodies sees only excrement in her fellow beings, his relationship with the medical student Adelaide, exists partly because it is a fairly comfortable relationship, but also because she gives him encouragement for his future novel. Like Jérémie, love for him has no sex barriers. The feelings he had for Victor, who now seems to him more like a Kellogg's cornflakes product, his own masochistic tendencies and the sadistic joy of the others he is only now fully aware of. His relationship with Judith is basically the same as that of Jérémie's--that of children who grew up together and still practise their childhood games. Yet like Jérémie he also feels regretfully that there have never really been any moments of true intimacy between them.

Not so obsessed by the passing of time and loss of youth, perhaps partly because what he has is not physical, nevertheless it does torment Jonathan to some extent. The deception he experiences rises more from disillusion, the fact of having "déplaisamment joué un rôle pour rien,"²⁰¹ and disappointment rather than the fear of change the others feel. As he says bitterly, if the present is "d'ores et déjà une histoire qui s'est passée en vain, rien ne me donne l'impression un matin

d'avoir plus ou moins vécu ardemment dans un autre monde".²⁰²
Feeling that in the roles they play, the three of them are, so to speak, depositaries of a part of what is called beauty, he nevertheless, like Jérémie, feels life is too short to more than touch on mysteries such as that of beauty. To compensate he tells himself "la puissance est le signe que nous donne la vie pour nous prévenir que l'on est en train de vieillir".²⁰³

Judith does not seem to love Jonathan in the same way she has loved Jérémie and Victor. Victor was in actuality her first lover and that at a very early age, disappointingly so, awakening bitterness and cynicism within her. As she says, laughter replaced tenderness in her life at the age of fourteen. "Ce qu'il y a de pire, c'est de découvrir la faille dans ce qu'on admire."²⁰⁴ She and Jonathan play intellectualized child-like games directed at the overly mechanized and Americanized culture in which they live. While this child-like escape from the modern age is the most important theme in Réjean Ducharme's novels, Basile's characters also have a great deal of the child about them. Jonathan's and Judith's mock battle resulting in Jonathan's arrest and subsequent reaffirmation of his liberty when released, reveal their ability to laugh at themselves and at their sentiments. When Judith attempts suicide and in spite of saying she did not call any one person in particular, she telephones Jonathan for help, perhaps feeling Jérémie is further away from them than he was before his marriage. It is

Jonathan too who seems the most concerned for Judith in her relations with men. He warns her of those relationships he considers useless, but covers his concern with his usual humour. "Je ne tiens pas à ce qu'il me la détruise, ma Judith, on ne sait jamais, tu vois, tu peux encore servir et je ne crois pas que la voie de la sainteté soit faite expressément pour ma Judith."²⁰⁵

Basically the same in the three books where she is depicted as a rather boyish young woman, depressed by her own wealth, driving her small car beyond safety limits, searching for a way to be 'à deux' and hoping to find it in the rather doubtful young men she picks up, subtle differences of character are nevertheless revealed from novel to novel. This is perhaps due to the fact that she is seen first through the eyes of Jonathan and Jérémie, then presented by herself but also because, like anyone, she tends to adapt to the person she is with. Thus she seems to reflect Jérémie's own narcissism and Jonathan's darkly cynical despair. In the atmosphere of the sordid nightclubs which she feels should revolt her, she feels very much at home amongst the 'petites gens'.²⁰⁶ She regards herself as a 'dévoyée',²⁰⁷ and fears if she continues in the way she is going she will no longer be fit for that which she wants to find most--Love. To her love represents an almost mystical quest, although she recognizes that if there is enchantment, it is she who must enchant herself. Recognizing that she is inventing the love she seeks and finds, she asks

herself "dans quel but".²⁰⁸ It is not the number of men that counts for her "mais le prix payé, la trouvaille, la rareté pour le coût du banal".²⁰⁹ Again this is a religious type quest, a search for purity, and a return to a lost youth which is in turn a form of escape, even a possibility of complete oblivion and perhaps another form of death: "il s'agit non pas de se retrouver dans les bras d'un garçon, mais de sentir au-delà de son corps quelque chose comme le monde et s'y perdre comme on s'égare dans une forêt, comme on se noie dans un étang".²¹⁰ The idea of losing oneself in the forest is very romantically Canadian, an escape not only through a romantic death but also into a romantic past. All three are attempting to lose themselves through sensation, artistic creation or dreams. Love for Judith allows her to find her own solitude beyond the mere physical body of the person she is with as Jérémie finds it in his 'ether'.

Lying to herself and to others, Judith is not playing with vice for vice's sake. The young men for whom she buys drinks think they are selling her their youth and beauty, while she believes all she is buying is a memory of the past. Like the other two, she also wonders if she is not a little mad. She realizes she always loves the one "qui ne marche pas".²¹¹

Odious in public, she is obviously far more gentle and sensitive than she would have others believe. She tells Jérémie if she had the opportunity she would like to die in love,

explaining that at that moment one feels "un délire, un véritable délire, une sorte de plénitude, quelque chose de plutôt flou, imprécis, impalpable"²¹² with a consequent loss of guilt, shame, cares and desire, transporting one back into a state resembling childhood. She likes to see herself as a mysterious and mystical sorceress and initiator into extraordinary rites, although Jonathan sees her more as a little mother, particularly in her love relationships. Like Jérémie, she is a better 'romancière' than Jonathan is, because she makes the desert they all live in, habitable with her fertile imagination.

In her relationship with Adolphe, once Judith admits to herself that it is over, she reacts by escaping first in her playing at being hostess in the dinner she holds for Jonathan's editor-to-be where she dresses and makes up like a film star, reminiscent of Jérémie's careful washing and shaving, and then takes physical flight to Québec City where she seeks the love she feels she has lost in the arms of a Montréalais, like herself, a stranger to Québec. (On a previous visit to New York she had had a brief romantic relationship with a Negro,²¹³ an outsider by his very nature.) Québec does nothing but add to her depression with its smallness and dust.

Although at the time of her affair with him, Adolphe represents to her her last chance of obtaining what she is searching for in this novel, to Jonathan and Jérémie he is nothing

more than a vulgar egotistical child unable to separate his personal torments from his political aspirations. In the same way the young 'voyous' Judith frequents, seemingly dangerous, are to Judith, who says one must know how to take them, far gentler than other people, she tells Jonathan and Jérémie the only danger is from herself "mon assassinat inévitable, ne se perpétuera que par moi sur moi-même".²¹⁴ The most influenced by her religious background, she claims she loves everybody, that she knows the meaning of real happiness, that it can be perfect, but that it lasts only a second, haunted by the thought of death, and talking constantly about suicide. Love for her is something immense, she does not feel that Jérémie or Jonathan know what it is. She recognizes her own suffering is not caused so much by Adolphe, but by her own conception of Love. In fact his presence prevents her believing in eternal love, as does the presence of her other lovers.

All three of the Basile protagonists are seeking the same elusive element in their lives sought for by all the preceding protagonists, with the exception of Lagarde in Bessette's L'Incubation, who has lost all hope and no longer even dreams. In the Basile trilogy the three 'J's' are attempting in the present to bring meaning to their lives by clinging to a past that no longer exists, by making of what they found worthwhile in that past, their own present separate from the outside world. Beyond themselves they will from time to time attempt to find in others this same elusive quality that haunts them.

The alienation depicted by all three Québécois authors is either actively and consciously combatted or merely passively accepted. The older protagonists of both Bessette's "nouveaux romans" accept their condition without any real indication of revolt. The dull acceptance of the older individuals causes any revolt of the young to seem useless. They resemble pitiful animals trapped by the irreversible press of their past conditioning. Basile's protagonists on the other hand are constantly torn between their optimism and belief in themselves and their deception with the alternate realization that for them also revolt and evasion are perhaps mere illusion. Yet unlike the Bessettian individual whose lost authentic self is bound to a past occurring before modern civilization, the Basilian protagonist finds authenticity and optimism in his own adolescence as the Ducharme children find it in their childhood. As an extension of this both Basile and Ducharme regard the childhood and adolescence of their own country as having had the same authenticity. Their lost selves are therefore not so completely irretrievable as is the lost authentic self of Bessette. This is reflected in the moderate nationalism of Basile, the fiercer more energetic separatism of Ducharme, while Bessette's cynicism allows of no such nationalistic sentiment.

Réjean Ducharme:

Thus the older and wiser, and hence more tragic because of his defeat, Bessette's narrator has given way to the matur-

ing yet youngish individuals of Basile who still hope to find what they are lacking in the present through reference to their past. These in turn are followed by the Ducharme 'children' with their terrible and at times violent attachment to a childhood which to them is all purity in comparison to the world of adults, where all can be bought and sold. As the Basilian protagonists' youth is disappearing under a veil of beginning cynicism and despair, so the childhood of the Ducharme child is fast approaching adolescence and the beginning of adulthood with all its inherent evils, this childhood seeming to go beyond the mere childhood of the individual to a childhood of their culture or indeed of Mankind.

With its depiction of children brought up in freezing Québec winters, in areas typically Québécois, unmistakably Canadian, these works reflect the actual isolation felt and desired by the protagonists, which is that of the French Canadians themselves: "Ayez pitié d'un coeur meurtri. Permettez-moi d'être des vôtres"... "Ici c'est le Canada"... "C'est comme si vous m'exiliez de mon propre pays".²¹⁵

Symbolically reflected in their childhood dwelling places-- islands or in L'Océantume,²¹⁶ a boat like that of 'Christophe Colomb' (an old steamer situated on a river very like the Saint Laurent)--the actual homes they have are vaguely feudal aristocratic and at the same time other worldly in all senses. From the 'abbaye' of Bérénice's parents²¹⁷ to the abandoned

steamer of L'Océantume or the bedroom of Mille-Milles and Chateaugué, later exchanged for a strange womb-like and yet also cathedral-like room with no windows, resembling the windowless 'chaufferie' where Iode's brother also seeks escape from the world. these places are all self-contained worlds, inhabited by a minority group in the society they live in. Theirs is the tragedy of the French Canadians. Ironically they feel themselves 'étranger' in their own land. Mille-Milles working in a Greek restaurant feels himself more a foreigner than do those Greeks who have invaded his country. The German Jew Einberg with his Polish Catholic wife, Chateaugué/Iviguvic, Eskimo in reality or not, and her soulbrother Mille-Milles, Iode Ssouvie and her Cretan family (with the inherent idea of Cretan pride) together with her pale blonde friend Asie Azothe and her brothers from Finland, are all as foreign to the people who live around them as is Québec to the rest of Canada or to the United States.

There is however a double lack of identity, the second occurring within their own families where their own solitude is never apparent, their parents not recognizing their children's torments and feelings of not being loved as they would like to be. In Bérénice's situation the family is totally divided by the parents, although the children do not want this division. If for some reason, the Ducharme children leave their families and go elsewhere they remain outsiders in the new situation. When Bérénice is sent to a city by her

father, she is overcome with its immensity creating in her feelings of 'angoisse' and weariness. Staying with her Jewish cousins she is still the outsider, with her young friend Constance Chlore, real or imaginary, as her sole comfort. (The hell of the city and its depraved adults is depicted again in Le Nez qui voque.) Even when she goes to Israel, since she is a Jewess, where she should feel she has her country and, in fact, briefly imagines she does, there is only deception at realizing that even there she is considered an 'étranger', just as Iode finds that those in the asylum where she is sent are just as alien to her. The only place that could really offer these lost children a home is their mother's womb.

As for the city, totally alienating to these children, their reaction against it is also one against the age they live in, "en ce siècle pourri, en cette société galeuse, on ne peut pas se permettre d'avoir la bouche noire sans se faire remarquer",²¹⁸ and against the moral as well as physical pollution surrounding them. But above all it is against the 'others', 'la Milliarde' who "traitent comme des chiens ceux qui cessent d'être fidèles comme des chiens. Au fond, ils dédaignent ceux qui se donnent à eux"... "Ils n'ont de respect que pour ceux qui arrachent, qui les traitent comme des chiens".²¹⁹ The protagonists wish only to be hated and feared by these adults whom they despise and their society of 'adulterie' with the aging, death, solitude and 'néant' which

accompanies it. These others all have the same faces, anonymous and repulsive. They represent the pure 'vacherie', and they wish to destroy those who really live, knowing these latter hate them and what they have done. "En prenant sa vie, on prend toute la vie, que quelqu'un qui fuit avec sa vie, fuit en même temps avec la vie de tous les autres."²²⁰ Adults are soft and weak, and full of hatred for those who are not like them--the young children, strong and hard. Children must avoid being contaminated by them, and avoid playing their dishonorable games. These adults have built cities to give themselves roots and eternity, but these cities outlast them as individuals. However as these Ducharme children gradually approach adulthood themselves, they begin to realize that it is not so much that they are against adults but against the mediocrity represented by the majority of adults, symbolized in their eternal expression of boredom.

The refusal of the banal adult world, and the desire to be hated by this world, is also a refusal to be taught anything by it. This is brought out in the attitudes the Ducharme protagonists show to the schools they are sent to, where all that is beautiful becomes corrupted. Even the poetry of Emile Nelligan, who appeals to these protagonists as an expression of their own feelings, is corrupted. The school also represents the plagiarism and repetition so despised by the protagonists, who recognize the inability to think of those who practise this form of learning. Repetition itself is seen

as an end to innocence and originality. It is in fact a form of death, an indication of approaching adulthood. Slowness and patience are other adult traits looked down upon, together with lying, deceit, and attempts at showing oneself to be better than others. The extreme of corrupted adults is found, as in Sarraute's novels, in the old, faced with aging and final involuntary death. These old people inspire absolute horror in the Ducharme children. Again it is the fact that they force children to see what death is, as did the Sarrautian 'vieux' that makes them so evil. To the Ducharme child, murder is not the most criminal act, but the taking away of the individual's liberty, intelligence, and allocating to the individual a pertinent part of the earth decided upon by adults.

These children, symbolic in their childhood and desire to retain their own purity, are ageless in their wisdom and knowledge. They are part of "une certaine enfance, tragiquement privilégiée, et toute entière ou non soumise au pouvoir occulte de la Folle du Logis".²²¹ The reality they exist in is "comme si elles rêvaient et à rêver comme si elles vivaient".²²² They are constantly torn between opposing needs, best expressed in the term of 'avalement' (act of swallowing or of being swallowed) or of suffocation. In order not to suffer, not to be 'avalé', the real world must be transformed. By reducing the actual world to zero, with the only world being that in one's head, there is nothing but there is also everything, and they

are the ones in control. The outside world seems to suffocate them, producing in them a fear of becoming emeshed in the same trap adults are caught in. This feeling of being swallowed up by the world and by others is necessary to the protagonist to build up their strength: "J'aime que la vie me déborde, m'investisse, me prenne jusqu'à la suffocation. Je veux une milliarde, un monde offensif, agressif, méchant; je rendrai le monde tel s'il ne l'est pas. Je ne veux pas d'une ambiance"... "où je m'étiolerais de facilité, de tiédeur, d'ennui".²²³ Sometimes to avoid this indifference the protagonists will go so far as to impose feelings on things where there is in reality nothing. What they must do is become vast enough to swallow everything. Being soft and gentle is no good. Doing something is the only answer.

Their major combat is one against the feeling of tenderness either in themselves or in others towards them. The need for others, whether they be mother, brother, soul-sister or other, is constantly opposed to their desire for freedom, and yet it is through love alone that they really can feel. This love is based on a mutual relationship, often sadomasochistic, but above all reflecting the desire for close communication with another. It is tinged with a despair at the conviction that these others can really do nothing to dispel the solitude of the protagonist. The physical desire can be satisfied but their actual solitude is such that they arouse the

hatred of others, even their own brothers'. Eyes shut, one is most aware of one's own solitude. In an almost tragic attempt at self-security, Bérénice affirms her solitude to be her palace, feeling herself exiled when she is with others and feels she should destroy these others for her own peace of mind. "Mon palais est trop fragile pour que je puisse y recevoir des amis".²⁴⁴ Recognizing her fears--one of which is that of solitude--she realizes that she must conquer them since that is the only way to be alone with them. She feels that those who approach her usually want something from her. She needs nothing from others or if by any chance she does, she resolves to tear it from them and smile in their faces after taking it.

She believes her father regards her as a possession to be used against her mother. Like the Nathalie Sarraute adults with children, he holds tightly onto her hand as he takes her to the synagogue. To Bérénice, her mother is like a beautiful flower or butterfly, working on Bérénice and causing her despair, since she does not want to be swallowed by anything and realizes her mother is capable of reaching her loneliness. Bérénice hates needing anyone and the best way of avoiding this is to strike everyone from her life. Like the Basilian protagonists she wishes to fly so high above others that she can reach into the 'azur'. Although she does not want to suffer, she considers it necessary in order to learn how not to suffer. She wants to take others as if in a battle that must be won.

The only way not to suffer is by not knowing people--only their faces. She needs hatred. It refreshes her certainty that she commands the whole of creation, no matter how ugly she is. She can make the darkness any colour she likes. Sometimes, though she would prefer to hate someone, she finds she can neither hate nor like this person. She does not leave herself open to contact, since once open like a crack the opening can widen. However, her actual suffering is twofold--suffering because others hurt her, or because they have no effect on her. If the latter happens she feels she has probably made a mistake herself in her judgement of them. Most of those whom the protagonists love have a double effect on the protagonists, leaving them at times supremely indifferent to them as Mille-Milles is to Chateaugué, or--particularly in the absence of those they love--suffering in their love for them. They need to have others submit to them, after all what human does not prefer to dominate rather than be dominated, but how many dare? Also if one is alone one is not forced to see oneself through others' eyes. What Bérénice feels she feels alone. She is most alone after the death of Constance Chlore, feeling it would be a betrayal to let anyone else into her heart. In Le Nez qui voque, Mille-Milles finally does equivocate while Chateaugué refuses. He alternately desires Chateaugué's presence and is bored by her. His need for others he translates into a sexual desire which he rejects just as strongly feeling it to be a loss of purity. The peculiar at-

traction, tinged at times with revulsion, that he feels for the matronly Questa seems to him vaguely incestuous. Questa calls Mille-Milles 'Chimo', Eskimo for 'are you friendly', is to him sometimes like a sister, despite their age difference, and he finds it easier to be with her than with Chateaugué, since he feels he can more easily be himself. As with the other 'mother' figures of the Ducharme novel it seems God made her grow old to stop her laughter. She, like the others, resembles an older version of the young protagonists. Like Mille-Mille's love for Questa, that of Bérénice for her mother has strongly sexual overtones. Yet they reject these mothers by refusing to believe that they owe their birth to anyone other than themselves. Again this rejection of the mother is a reaction to their own feelings of being rejected. The fathers on the other hand inspire no such feelings. Iode's father's name, like that of most of the Ducharme characters, expresses his personality--Van der Laine. Rejected by their mothers, the Ducharme children voluntarily become orphans. Iode, feeling her mother blames her and her brother for their sister's death, rejects her mother and becomes a mother to her brother who has, as a result of his mother's rejection, lapsed into madness. Their mother's love has turned to hatred, her hope to despair, she is like her name "Ina Ssouvie".

Bérénice's hatred/love for her mother is based on the belief that she is a mere pawn to her parents. All her mother

figures are in turn actual orphans, whether it be Bérénice's Polish mother 'saved' by her father when a mere child, or a mother figure such as Faire-Faire Desmains in L'Océantume whom Iode meets when she is sent to the asylum. Like the other mother figures she is constantly affirming the fact that she is desired by one and all. In the relationship the two establish as in the relationships of all the Ducharme protagonists, there are hints of lesbianism. Iode's own cry is echoed in the words of Faire-Faire: "Un jour, moi, je serai émerveillée jusqu'à la panique, ce jour-là, je tirerai, tuerai, me rendrai criminelle aux yeux des autres hommes. J'attends ce jour depuis toujours".²²⁵ Faire-Faire tells Iode that she, Faire-Faire, is a child once and for all and that she recognizes no-one's right to tell her what to do. She says that when one declares war on all the others, one has all the rights. Though others might kill her they will not conquer her. She owes them nothing. She is a parasite in their intestines. She takes Iode with her on a trip to France, whether real or imagined is of no importance. Bérénice's mother travels around the world in a similar attempt to gain possession of her son. Although Iode is very unsure of what Faire-Faire wants of her she does suspect her, guessing the former wants Iode to love her, attempting to gain this love through self-sacrifice in a society with a religion based on love and the sacrificing of self.

Bérénice's mother is like a bird to her. She does not

believe her mother has enough room in her heart to love her child. Whereas when younger she used to seek her mother's love, she decides to completely reject it. The Siamese cats so brutally killed by Bérénice, as Iode kills a cat given her by a teacher seeking her affection, seem to symbolize her mother to her. They only come when they want to and otherwise ignore her. She bestows the name Chamomor on her mother as an open declaration of war and reciprocal rejection. Her mother's eyes seem to her like those of a haggard falcon. She is like an empty house where no-one lives anymore. Like Iode's mother and Questa, Chamomor loses herself in alcohol, yet their escape, actual or not, from reality is admired by their children, who look upon them as soul-mates at these moments. Although Bérénice says she hates her mother, she is fascinated by her as if by a bird, and she is aware of her own desire to imitate her mother but feels this is a charm to be broken. These women, like the female Robbe-Grillet protagonists, seem to only belong in part to this world. As Bérénice says to her mother "on dirait qu'elle passe ailleurs, qu'elle se promène dans un autre siècle"²²⁶ seeing her as part of a romantic, chivalric past, rather than in the age of machines. She believes in a romantic love which is obviously not the kind she lives. Bérénice is afraid her mother will enflame her soul like a powerful sun as she has done to Christian. Bérénice is afraid to appear weak before her. More proud than her mother, Bérénice knows her mother cries often and believes

does not have to cry if one does not want to. At her thirtieth birthday, Chamomor seems "une proie faite pour la mort"²²⁷ with nowhere to go.

Both children and mothers have the same desire to dominate. The children would like their mothers all to themselves. Bérénice accuses her mother of being an egotistical solitary black jungle cat, deaf and blind to others with only herself for love, reason and pride. Chamomor regards her daughter as a grimacing, ugly and bad-tempered little monkey. The protagonists do regard themselves as ugly, and their mothers as beautiful, blond aquatic-eyed beings reflected in miniature in the special pale young friends of the protagonists. Bérénice feels her mother is merely playing at loving her. When Chamomor reaches out her hand to Bérénice it is palm down. Yet when she feels she has her mother's love she is afraid to sleep, lest she awake to the dullness of her former existence. She will suddenly turn the love she feels for her mother to hatred when she thinks she is being used by the latter to impress friends and as a weapon against her father. Later, when Chamomor is sick and Bérénice is forced to go and see her, she does not want to, since she does not want to see her ugly. To their husbands all these women are unbalanced, not adapted to the world they live in. When she is near Chamomor, Bérénice feels close to tears and believes if she allows herself to listen to her mother she will be conquered, which would be

death to all her resolutions. Bérénice tells her neither she nor Christian need her for anything, forcing the mother to ask what use she is, and in her despair she reminds Bérénice of a dog who has lost a fight. Bérénice is constantly suppressing the desire to embrace her mother. Anything that turns her from the resolutions she has taken is rejected. If she had her way she would forbid anything that amounts to letting herself go --dreams, orgasms--since this is a way to being conquered.

The search for a sister/brother soul covers an undercurrent of sexuality. First the search is concentrated on real blood-brothers on the part of Bérénice and Iode. When these prove unsatisfactory, they turn elsewhere. They are hoping to find the company they need, in their self-imposed solitude, in these companions. The brothers of Iode and Bérénice have too many tendencies to mediocrity, to becoming part of 'la milliarde' so despised by the protagonists. Their shallowness is indicated by their devotion to the purely physical world of competitive sports. To begin with, though, these brothers show signs of qualities that endear them to their sisters. Christian's gentleness with insects and animals disarms Bérénice. She would like to own him completely. As is the case with all the protagonists as regards those they love, she is alternately torn by the desire to be with him and deception when he is there. The sadomasochistic relationship she has with her brother with its physical displays of violence, is seen again in her relationship with Graham Rosenkreutz, the

only one in the kibbutz in Israel to recognize her need for others and the sensitivity he says is like his own. She only wants difficult relationships. She would like Christian to despise her so that her final victory in winning him would be more complete. Although the childhood they spend together on the island is idyllic in its enchantment, Bérénice, as does Iode, suffers violently from jealousy. The beautiful and exotic Mingrélie who conquers her brother's heart in the same way as Asie Azothe does that of Iode's, seems heartless to Bérénice who sees in her a being of a superior race, like her own mother, where the rule is "du Règne des papillons, des arbres et des étoiles, du règne du beau".²²⁸ Christian's abasement of himself before Mingrélie angers Bérénice who considers him without pride, a coward, soft, inconsistent and a born parasite of those stronger than himself. On the other hand Bérénice is waiting until she becomes strong, for she wants to possess her own human being, and that human is Christian. The most difficult thing to do is to 'have' another human. Although the ideal would obviously be to have a savage beauty such as Mingrélie, such beings are not to be had, so Bérénice will content herself with one like Christian or Constance Chlore. Although they are not that much they are better than a dog or a monkey. Once again she has managed to turn her own need into a deliberately necessary conquest to be made.

When Christian is defeated, Bérénice loves him even more

in his need. She is willing to be the person he needs when no-one else is. As is the case with Iode, Bérénice wants her brother to run away with her. In Le Nez qui voque, the relationship is reversed, seen from the 'brother's' point of view. Like Chateaugué in this novel, Bérénice wears a white pseudo-wedding dress for her brother. Like the other protagonists she feels her brother neither understands her nor wants to, when she tells him they have the power to do anything they like "Tout prendre, nous saisir de tout. Tout nous appartient: il suffit de le croire"... "Nous volerons et tuerons"²²⁹ and there is no reason to wait. Even though she thinks of herself as a mere girl, Bérénice feels she has more heart than her brother. When Christian goes through a religious crisis brought about by his relationship with Mingrélie, Bérénice regards his whole performance as ridiculous. She tends to deliberately antagonize her parents in the sexual games she plays with Christian, but even Christian is unaware of her real motivations and begins to fear her. He knows she is not completely natural and realizes she is forcing herself to love him. As time goes by, Bérénice loses more and more respect for Christian. She regards him as a dog of whom one can make what one likes, although at the same time since he is her brother, she cannot abandon her love for him "le mot frère est le plus beau mot du monde"²³⁰ and what she desires above all else in the world is to be his sister. Sent away finally first to New York and then to Israel and adulthood she will feel great nos-

talgia for her home and Canada, as Iode and Mille-Milles feel lost in the alien cities they are exiled to.

In Le Nez qui vogue, it is the frail young blonde Chateaugué who seems the more sincere of the two in her desire to keep her childhood purity--if it is not merely stupidity on her part as Mille-Milles suggests. Chateaugué is an orphan as are the other frail blonde children loved by the protagonists. Like Bérénice, when younger, in the country where they used to live, far from the corruption of the city where Mille-Milles has led her as Bérénice led Constance Chlore, Chateaugué used to follow Mille-Milles around like a small dog, taking every abuse and offering everything for his affection. To her death is nothing because, as Mille-Milles would like to believe, she is like a child playing with a toy. Yet both she and the younger Bérénice of the island do seem aware of what death really is. As Bérénice says "Pour avoir envie de mourir, il faut sentir qu'on vit".²³¹ It is Chateaugué who invents for the two of them the word 'Tate' and insists they paint their mouths black, designating themselves as outcasts, whereas Mille-Milles is aware he is cheating at staying young and does not know if Chateaugué is or not. The sometimes almost psychic relationship they have is doomed, in part through Mille-Mille's own despair. Whereas to him Chateaugué is all purity, he feels himself soiled. Sex interests him so that he cannot stop thinking of it, and, masturbating, he despises

himself, looking upon himself as ugly and corrupt, while Chateaugué is all paleness and innocence like a young 'communicante'. When she wants to mutilate her face with a razor to show her contempt for the adult world (compare Iode's and Bérénice's carelessness of physical disfiguration when young), Mille-Milles will not permit it. He says anyone can die ugly and old but they must die beautiful and young. Wanting to make their death extraordinary, he decides they must have their own world for suicide, 'branlebasser'. It is Chateaugué who reminds him that they can be kings and masters. Brought up in a convent, under much the same conditions as Antinéa in Bes-sette's L'Incubation, she is stubborn and proud. She performed incredible feats to prove her capabilities in comparison with her elders. Although Mille-Milles hates all people who to him are 'pourris', he recognizes there is an élite, "les chastes, les doux, les vrais orgueilleux"²³² of which Chateaugué is a member. He therefore feels she does not really see him, since she is part of another world. Yet Chateaugué is timid in the way Asie Azothe and Constance Chlore are, afraid of ugliness and corruption. For this reason, Mille-Milles feels if she were able to see his real face she would be frightened. He tells her in his mind to be contented with him, simply being his sister, not belonging to him, as Bérénice and Iode wish to belong completely to those they love.

In L'Océantume the protagonist constantly attacks the

frail young Asie Azothe, who though obviously weak and tired seems invincible. Iode will finally stop hurting her, recognizing in her "quelque chose d'aussi terrible que moi-même" ... "Je suis vaincue, et je me laisse envahir de curiosité et de désir".²³³ The friendship between the two will be essentially the same as that between Bérénice and Constance Chlore, and Mille-Milles and Chateaugué. Like the other two protagonists, Iode is also torn by jealousy, in this instance of the friendship between her mad brother and Asie Azothe. Iode wants both her brother and Asie Azothe to need only her. She tells Asie Azothe that Inachos is her brother, and that she is the only one who can understand him. As Bérénice said of Christian "C'est moi sa femme et la mère de ses enfants",²³⁴ accusing all of trying to take him from her. She actually prefers him weak, helpless and mad as Bérénice preferred Christian defeated. Torn by conflicting emotions as are Bérénice and Mille-Milles, she cannot understand her own wickedness and fury. "Pourquoi faut-il que je haisse tant? Pourquoi ces envies de vengeance, de faire mal, que j'ai? De qui, de quoi de quel crime faut-il que je me venge s'il faut pour ne pas devenir folle que je me venge?"²³⁵ As did Bérénice, Iode affirms her right to take rather than simply do, but like the others she cannot do it alone. The oxen they help seem to symbolize the whole essence of the wild domain beyond Man. Although Asie Azothe is naively pleased when the oxen follow them, Iode realizes that they follow them simply because they

really mean nothing to the oxen, and cannot harm them. The destruction of the oxen by Man seems again a death of innocence and purity.

Iode's relationship to Asie Azothe is similar to the relationships of the other protagonists in that sometimes she refuses Asie Azothe's presence in order to once again affirm her own solitude. When her friend is with her she becomes like Iode and is against all the others. When Asie Azothe is not with her, Iode suffers from her absence, and yet deliberately restrains her emotions in her presence. They too have an almost 'psychic' relationship "Asie Azothe répand elle-même, et, comme la lumière du soleil, cela emplît le ciel, baigne tout, entre par ma bouche, mes yeux, toute ma peau. Etre avec elle, c'est être dans quelque chose".²³⁶ Asie Azothe lives through Iode. Whatever she says or invents for her becomes truth and the real world. To Iode she is her fatal (in the Greek sense) sister 'soeur filandière',²³⁷ and yet though she would like to believe in this ultimate joy, Iode is unable to escape her cynicism. Her desire for solitude is constantly opposed to her feelings for Asie Azothe. Like Bérénice with Constance Chlore and Christian, Iode feels that there is something lacking in Asie Azothe: "Il n'y a pas en Asie Azothe, comme en moi, des roues qui tournent dans le vide et qui sont faites pour s'engrener au sol des sentiers non battus. Qu'elles me font souffrir ces hélices que j'ai

qui ne font pas avancer des bateaux! Je suis une locomotive enterrée vivante".²³⁸ Asie Azothe tells Iode not to be sad, that it is easy to be happy, as Mille-Milles tried to explain joy to Chateaugué. She tells Iode it is easy to obey one's destiny.

When Asie Azothe is away at camp she writes letters to Iode which the latter finds obscene because Iode is giving too much of herself to others. Iode feels she must go and rescue her friend, since there are too many others in Asie Azothe's heart now and Iode is afraid she is not big enough for her now even though Asie Azothe seems to be as lonely as she, Iode, is. Her joy at their reunion turns again to cynicism, when she questions how Asie Azothe can possibly love anyone as ugly as her. At the same time she questions any definition of ugliness, putting it down as a lack of generosity on the part of the definer.

Returning home from the camp, in the forests, they feel all hatred leaving them as if in a pure communion of being with Nature. Doubt is however always present for the tormented Iode. As Bérénice says, they both need terribly to believe in something, to have a path to follow. Yet they feel their doubt is far superior to the complete assurance of those who really cannot see. All the protagonists reject such people completely, sometimes going so far, as does Bérénice with her uncle, Zio, as to will them out of existence, going beyond the stage of

active revolt into one where they believe these others have no power. Unlike adults, children according to Ducharme, as well as those few adults who really see, accept an idea and its opposite as soon as it occurs. Most 'civilized' people make a choice, revolting against one or the other of these ideas, thus limiting themselves and their minds. These children on the other hand prefer to follow the truth until it destroys them, not wanting to accept compromises of security. Understanding everything necessitates a great deal of blindness, since the stronger one idea is so is its opposite. In the same way the desires to live and die are equally strong, hence the constant tendency to suicide and destruction. Even though it is difficult to understand anything the important thing is to try to. "Qu'importe si on ne comprend pas pourquoi on vit, pourquoi on passe son temps à souffrir et à s'ennuyer."²³⁹

The confusion and inconsistency of their own minds is what is most difficult for them, Mille-Milles expresses the thought that he would like to be like Sherlock Holmes "de tout comprendre, de pouvoir embrasser, d'un seul regard de son intelligence, toute l'étendue du problème. Pour comprendre tout à fait une seule chose, il faut tout comprendre",²⁴⁰ or, as he says later, he would like to be like Joan of Arc, with the inherent contempt expressed also by Jérémie in Basile's Le Jument des Mongols for the Saint's form of self-ass-

urance. "Je n'ai pas de tâche à remplir; dis-moi que j'en ai une. Je ne possède rien de ce qu'il faudrait qu'un homme possède."²⁴¹ Joan of Arc with her 'truth' felt herself capable of passing judgement. With the duty given her she was able to be a soldier. With God she had 'le droit'. Mille-Milles has nothing. She had everything. Here there is nothing. "Les autres voix sont trop obscures pour qu'on puisse y obéir sans risquer de tomber dans un piège, sans risquer de jouer le jeu des hypocrites et des paranoïaques, sans risquer de suivre le sentier des écoeurés de champagne plus cyniques et égarés que soi."²⁴² Rather than trust those who set themselves up as leaders, Mille-Milles and Berenice would trust writers of pornography. Mille-Milles believes no-one is happier than the man who has nothing, understands nothing and of whom nobody has need. Deliberately distorting a Nelligan line he says "Oh si gai parce que je sais que tôt ou tard je devrai pleurer"²⁴³

Evasion is the other reaction against the all-pervasive 'mal' already seen in the Basile novels. There is the evasion through sleep just as that practiced by Jérémie "Comme il m'est agréable de sombrer, molle, les yeux ouverts dans le noir, jusqu'à la démolition totale de mon déguisement, et, rendue là, de me reprendre, d'embrasser, telle qu'elle est (nauséabonde) Iode chérie. Qu'il m'est agréable d'être engloutie, comme dans des neiges fluides et chaudes, jusqu'au plus vrai de ma solitude, d'explorer les silences sous-marins,

où l'Iode chérie fausse a quitté ce matin l'Iode chérie seule, où l'Iode chérie seule attend toujours l'Iode chérie fausse".²⁴⁴

Through intensive studying of geographical texts and names, to actual voicing of the desire to leave, all the protagonists express this same wish. "Je suis de ceux qui brûlent de se répandre sous toute l'étendue du ciel, comme l'azur. Lors que je serai grande, je battrai les campagnes de tous les pays et j'en rabattrai tous les lions de l'ennui."²⁴⁵ But they must leave before it is too late. Above all, leaving represents wanting something. This is necessary to feel really alive. When this goes it means the end of spontaneity. "Devant, tout reste à découvrir"... "Où personne n'est encore passé, ne se peut-il pas qu'on trouve des ailes d'anges, des auréoles, des branches d'étoiles, ou quelques-uns de ces oeufs donnant naissance aux fleurs et aux lacs?"²⁴⁶

The usual places imagined are far-off lands with warm sands away from the freezing cold of Canada. Yet once there, there is only a bitter deception as in the case of Bérénice in Israel, or Iode about to leave for the West Coast of Canada. Indeed once away, like Jérémie in Basile's novels, they are assailed by fond memories of Canada and their life in the almost wild natural domain they inhabited in their early childhood, with memories of the freezing purity of the cold North. Yet leaving represents a necessity. All doors are open which,

if they remain, stay closed. They must leave if only to find out that leaving is no different from staying "Quand on part tout redevient possible, même l'amitié et la fraternité: tout renaît".²⁴⁷ Or as Faire-Faire says "Je pars parce que je veux être de quantité supérieure. Rester c'est s'immoler, c'est donner à son âme tout le temps qu'il lui faudra pour féconder le seul arbre et la seule maison qu'on a. Partir c'est se déculper, c'est embrasser chaque âme qui fécondera en soi chacun des millions de maisons dans lesquelles on entrera".²⁴⁸

In all six authors' works, the protagonists are therefore attempting to regain possession of themselves in a world that is increasingly alienating to the individual. It is a technical society where the individual has become a mere number. The increasing population of the overcrowded cities is particularly inducive to this feeling of alienation, yet there are still those who, for some reason or another are not completely part of this system, and are still able, or believe themselves able, to see what may lie behind the façades of civilisation. The recognition of this state of being which may have been one belonging to the past more than to the present, where the individual self is not lost in the all-embracing oneness of society is one of the principal themes of the "nouveau roman" and of modern literature. In the novels treated the protagonists react in various ways to the society they are in, but all reveal a common 'refus'. There is rejection violent or other-

wise, contempt and pity for that society, or even revolution against it. Quite often there is also a simultaneous desire to seek elsewhere in time or in space the different existence they are certain can be found. All the protagonists also feel the necessity of awakening or uncovering in others these same feelings and convictions of authentic reality, as distinguished from the living death they see in those around them. Whether these individuals are successful or not in their quest for the desired lost self and for communication seen as a solution to the alienation they experience within society is the subject of the next chapter.

FOOTNOTE REFERENCES

1. "Conversation et sous-conversation", pages 118-119.
2. Jacques Dubois, "Avatars du monologue intérieur", R.L.M., #1, (1964), 20.
3. "Conversation et sous-conversation", page 121.
5. Tropismes, (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1957, first published, 1938), page 15.
6. Ibid., page 41.
7. Ibid., page 64.
8. (Paris, Gallimard, 1953).
9. Tropismes, page 100.
10. Ibid., pages 16-17.
11. Ibid., page 35.
12. Portrait d'un inconnu, page 30.
13. Ibid., page 84.
14. Ibid., page 85.
15. Ibid., page 164.
16. Ibid., page 165.
17. Ibid., page 179.
18. Martereau, page 134.
19. Ibid., page 93.
20. Compare Ducharme's analysis of 'others', *ibid.*, pages 126-128.
21. Ibid., pages 207-237.
22. In a scene reminiscent of the father/daughter scene in Portrait d'un inconnu (see page 89), page 241.
23. Ibid., page 167.
24. Quoted in Cranaki and Belaval from interview with Nathalie Sarraute and François Bondy. In 'dialogues' at end of Nathalie Sarraute (Paris, Gallimard, 1965).

25. Compare the almost epileptical state of mind of Robbe-Grillet's protagonists.
26. Le Planétarium, page 224.
27. Ibid., page 59.
28. Ibid., page 107.
29. Ibid., page 107.
30. "Ce que voient les oiseaux", L'Ere du soupçon, pages 154-155.
31. Les Fruits d'or, page 88-89.
32. Ibid., page 45.
33. June 1969 in Paris.
34. Entre la vie et la mort.
35. Preface.
36. Page 90.
37. Page 81.
38. Interview with Léonce Paillard in Biblio Livres de France, (juin-juillet, 1963).
39. Michel Butor quoted by L. Janvier, Une Parole exigeante: le nouveau roman, (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1963), page 148.
40. (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1954).
41. (Paris, Gallimard, 1960).
42. L'Emploi du temps, page 10.
43. Ibid., page 10.
44. Ibid., page 15.
45. Ibid., page 188.
46. Ibid., page 56.
47. Ibid., page 171.
48. Ibid., page 31.

49. Ibid., page 95.
50. Ibid., page 24.
51. (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 10/18, 1957).
52. L'Emploi du temps, pages 173-174.
53. "Recherches sur la Technique du roman", op. cit., page 97.
54. L'Emploi du temps, page 42.
55. Ibid., page 37.
56. Ibid., page 38.
57. Ibid., page 23.
58. Ibid., page 157.
59. Ibid., page 214.
60. Ibid., page 229.
61. Ibid., page 235.
62. Page 82.
63. Ibid.
64. "Nouveau roman, homme nouveau", page 116.
65. Le Présent de l'indicatif, (Paris, Gallimard, 1963).
66. L'Année dernière à Marienbad, Introduction, page 16.
67. Les Gommes, page 264.
68. Ibid., page 234.
69. (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1965).
70. See also Bruce Morrisette Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet. Probably one of the most perceptive studies done on Robbe-Grillet. Morrisette discusses Tarot symbolism in Les Gommes.
71. (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1955).
72. Les Gommes, page 206 and page 261.

73. Ibid., page 101.
74. Ibid., page 103.
75. Ibid., page 260.
76. Ibid., page 49.
77. "Epreuves du roman: Le Temps des Choses", Cahiers du sud, (January 1954), pages 300-307.
78. Les Gommages, page 132.
79. Ibid., page 206.
80. Le Voyeur, page 25.
81. Ibid.
82. Lucien Goldmann, "Le nouveau roman et réalité", Pour une Sociologie du roman, (Paris, Gallimard, 1964), pages 183-229.
83. (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1970).
84. Le Voyeur, page 197.
85. Ibid., page 214.
86. Alain Robbe-Grillet, Instantanés, a collection of short stories like snapshots, (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1962).
87. Le Voyeur, page 32.
88. Ibid., page 73.
89. (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1957).
90. Ibid., page 101.
91. Ibid., page 17.
92. Nathalie Sarraute, Tropismes (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1957, first published, 1938), page 33.
93. (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1963).
94. La Jalousie, op. cit., page 31.
95. (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1959).
96. La Jalousie, op. cit., page 149.

97. Op. Cit., pages 153-154.
98. Op. Cit., page 150
99. (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1963).
100. L'Immortelle, op. cit., pages 14-15.
101. La Jalousie, page 42.
102. Op. Cit., page 131.
103. The number three is found throughout Robbe-Grillet's work with almost always the three objects being nearly if not completely identical. As a mathematician, the 'rule of three' is pertinent to Robbe-Grillet's symbolism, where three components of a public are present while the fourth (in his case perhaps the protagonist himself) is lacking.
104. Dans le labyrinthe, Preface.
105. L'Année dernière à Marienbad, pages 9-10.
106. Introduction to L'Année dernière à Marienbad, op. cit., page 13.
107. "La Chambre Secrète", Instantanés, (Paris, Eds de Minuit, 1962), page 97.
108. La Maison de rendez-vous, page 32.
109. L'Année dernière à Marienbad, op. cit., page 172.
110. La Maison de rendez-vous, page 192.
111. Ibid., page 52.
112. Ibid., pages 66-67.
113. L'Immortelle, page 77.
114. La Maison de rendez-vous, page 57.
115. Ibid., pages 34-35.
116. Ibid., page 85.
117. Ibid., page 53.
118. Guy Dumur, "Le Sadisme contre la peur", Le Nouvel Observateur, (Mon. 19 Oct., 1970), page 49.

119. Ibid., page 48.
120. Projet pour une révolution à New York, page 85.
121. L'Incubation, page 22.
122. Bessette's latest novel, published while this thesis was in its final stages, expresses the same bitter pessimism of its predecessors. It is however closer in theme to the works of the other five authors in that the theme of alienation is revealed through the inner mind's monologue of each of the characters. The novel itself in form bears resemblances to Sarraute's Tropismes and Butor's Degrés in that it is firstly, as is Sarraute's work, a series of sketches of individuals. On the other hand it is tied together and like Degrés of Butor or like Basile's trilogy as well as like the later Robbe-Grillet works, is events seen and interpreted by five different individuals all part of the same family.
123. L'Incubation, pages 150-151.
124. Ibid., page 11.
125. Ibid., page 11.
126. Ibid., page 22.
127. Ibid., page 10.
128. Ibid., page 19.
129. Ibid., page 37.
130. Ibid., pages 170-171.
131. Ibid., page 86.
132. Le Grand Khan, (Canada, Estérel, 1967), page 247.
133. Ibid., page 12.
134. La Jument des Mongols, page 20.
135. Ibid., page 182.
136. (Montréal, H.M.H., 1971), page 81.
137. "Il est des soirs où l'âme plus que le corps a besoin de se sentir entourée d'arbres", La Juments des Mongols, page 185.

138. Ibid., pages 207-208.
139. Ibid., page 36.
140. Ibid., page 22.
141. La Jument des Mongols, page 19.
142. "Si je pouvais aimer, si je pouvais sentir le moindrement du monde un émoi, le plus petit émoi, pour quelqu'un que je connaisse comme toi, si je pouvais imaginer une seule seconde me prendre moi-même contre moi, ou quelqu'un qui me ressemble"... "ce serait toi.", pages 145-146.
143. Ibid., page 159.
144. Ibid., page 129.
145. Ibid., page 80.
146. Ibid., page 116.
147. Ibid., page 123.
148. Ibid., page 192.
149. Ibid., page 35.
150. Ibid., page 92.
151. Ibid., page 187.
152. Ibid., page 59.
153. Ibid., page 139.
154. Ibid., page 117.
155. In one scene Jérémie detachedly watches a mosquito feeding on his blood, then in a movement of repulsion kills it, contemplating the corpse in a scene reminiscent of the centipede in La Jalousie. Jonathan also regards his own chest hairs as parasites just as he is accused of being the parasite in the relationship between the three of them, then comes to the conclusion both relationships are symbiotic. Le Grand Khan, page 66.
156. La Jument des Mongols, page 111.
157. Ibid., page 122.

158. Ibid., page 150.
159. Ibid., page 163.
160. Ibid., page 165.
161. Symbolized in the streets being repaired, *ibid.*, page 170.
162. Ibid., page 170.
163. Ibid., pages 171-172.
164. Ibid., page 166, also Le Grand Khan, page 121.
165. Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk, page 82.
166. Ibid., page 82.
167. Ibid., page 45.
168. La Jument des Mongols, page 15.
169. Ibid., page 15.
170. Ibid., page 76.
171. Ibid., page 76.
172. Ibid., page 101.
173. Ibid., page 29.
174. Ibid., page 39.
175. Ibid., page 95.
176. Ibid., page 96.
177. Ibid., page 133.
178. Ibid., page 167.
179. Ibid., page 219.
180. Le Grand Khan, page 11.
181. Ibid., pages 11-12.
182. Ibid., pages 18-19.
183. Ibid., page 12.

184. Ibid., page 13.
185. Ibid., page 16.
186. Ibid., page 15.
187. Ibid., page 172.
188. Ibid., page 197-198.
189. Ibid., page 274.
190. Ibid., page 15.
191. Ibid., page 61.
192. Ibid., page 82.
193. Ibid., page 40.
194. Ibid., page 48.
195. Ibid., page 130.
196. Ibid., page 121.
197. Ibid., page 102.
198. Ibid., page 62.
199. "objet d'une tristesse indicible, cherchant ici et là quelque chose à quoi je pourrais me raccrocher, mais ne décelant rien aux alentours qu'une sorte de ville morte, qui peut-être n'a jamais connu la vie, ses masques et ses fifres, ses vertus, ses vices; tout est laid". Ibid., page 35.
200. Ibid., page 283.
201. Ibid., page 74.
202. Ibid., page 74.
203. Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk, page 146.
204. Ibid., page 233.
205. Ibid., page 149.
206. La Jument des Mongols, page 64.
207. Ibid., page 65.

- 208. Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk, page 74.
- 209. Ibid., page 87.
- 210. Ibid., page 113.
- 211. Le Grand Khan, page 17.
- 212. La Jument des Mongols, page 68.
- 213. Pages 214-218. Also compare Jacques Revel's relationship with Horace Buck in L'Emploi du temps, by Butor.
- 214. Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk, page 126.
- 215. Le Nez qui voque, (Paris, Gallimard, 1967), page 221.
- 216. L'Océantume, (Paris, Gallimard, 1968)...
- 217. L'Avalée des avalés, (Paris, Gallimard, 1966).
- 218. Le Nez qui voque, page 37.
- 219. Ibid., page 27.
- 220. L'Avalée des avalés, page 13.
- 221. Frontis piece to L'Océantume.
- 222. Ibid.
- 223. Ibid., page 78.
- 224. L'Avalée des avalés, page 13.
- 225. L'Océantume, page 90.
- 226. L'Avalée des avalés, page 23.
- 227. Ibid., page 23.
- 228. Ibid., page 45.
- 229. Ibid., page 87.
- 230. Ibid., page 232.
- 231. Ibid., page 116.
- 232. Le Nez qui voque, page 127.

- 233. L'Océantume, page 17.
- 234. Ibid., page 47.
- 235. Ibid., page 47.
- 236. Ibid., page 109.
- 237. Ibid., page 112.
- 238. Ibid., page 119.
- 239. Le Nez qui voque, page 142.
- 240. Ibid., page 223.
- 241. Ibid., pages 257-258.
- 242. Ibid., pages 257-258.
- 243. Ibid., page 260.
- 244. L'Océantume, page 75.
- 245. L'Avalée des Avalés, page 52.
- 246. L'Océantume, page 55.
- 247. Ibid., page 158.
- 248. Ibid., page 188.

CHAPTER IV

RESOLUTION

If the individual is not destroyed by society, the problems outlined in the preceding chapter regarding the individual's search for authenticity must be resolved in one of two ways. He will either capitulate abandoning his quest for authenticity, or, refusing to give in, will attempt to reform society by violent or non-violent means. The protagonists in the novels treated in this thesis range between the two extremes of surrender and revolution. The resolution of their problems and their reactions to the alienation they all experience give further insight into the individual philosophies of the authors. Moreover general conclusions arrived at from the comparison of differences and similarities in approach to the dilemma facing modern Man can be drawn from this thesis.

Nathalie Sarraute:

As the individual protagonist is increasingly beset with doubt as to whether he will ever find another or others like himself, he finally doubts his own judgement of what others are, and even more tragically, of what authenticity is. As two of the titles suggest, illusions are too frequently accepted as reality (Le Planétarium, Les Fruits d'or). Living under a false sky in a false world or taking a book ironic in its title, Les Fruits d'or, as the most succulent of food,

when in itself it is all that is artificial, is indicative of the deceptiveness of the world the protagonist lives in.

This protagonist seemed the only one capable of looking at people and things as they really are, thus able to free himself and others from the inauthenticity of the world they live in. Gradually and tragically he will be confronted with the loss of this ability--if indeed it ever existed. Yet at least to begin with, before acceptance of this and of others' inauthenticity as well as his own, arrives, this individual protagonist does attempt desperately to find what is 'authentic' in the world he is in. In order to be able to really see, he must stand at a distance from others--an irreconcilable impossibility for Man who is a social animal.

First, even that which he seeks to uncover and hence reveal to others, becomes tinged with uncertainty as he finally comes to doubt himself. In Martereau the protagonist will reach the point of realizing that those he believes so superior, making him in turn aware of his own inferiority and guilt at not being able to attain their level, are in actuality not as they seem to him. The emotions of doubt and fear he feels in their presence are not necessarily his own, but could in fact be emanating from those people he admires as free of such feelings. Their fear is "de sentir qu'il ne peut manquer, cet oeil réprobateur, de voir combien ils sont différents du modèle parfait déposé en chacun de nous et im-

posé par l'univers entier. Ils s'efforcent de vous tromper en vous présentant une imitation aussi ressemblante que possible: un peu forcée"... "Peut-être s'efforcent-ils de se tromper eux-mêmes, de se rassurer".¹ In Portrait d'un inconnu just when the narrator has imagined the father and daughter who so fascinate him in the communion he desires them to reach, and to reach himself, the same deception occurs. The two 'superior' beings will put back their masks of clichés, if they ever indeed abandoned them. The narrator, again left without hope, exclaims "Quand l'ai-je donc éprouvé déjà, ce même sentiment déchirant de contraste entre l'indifférence satisfaite de tous ces visages étrangers et ma propre détresse, mon abandon".²

In Le Planétarium, Alain's ability to put people into clichés prevents him from really seeing these people. He refuses to regard the writer Germaine Lemaire in any light other than an admiring one. Even though the reader from the very beginning is aware of her shortcomings, to Alain she represents to him authenticity outside society. He does not realize that her retinue acts not only as 'salutary bacteria' to protect her and filter out adverse criticism, but also fulfills her need to be admired. Alain's wife and father are aware of this, for Germaine Lemaire has an unappeased hunger, an actual need for adulation. Fearful himself of her approval or disapproval, Alain does not realize this fear is reciprocal.

The 'désinvolture' he admires in her works is rather insensitivity. Hoping to see himself reflected in her eyes as a young Rimbaud, he even finds her beautiful. It is only after the disastrous meeting with her when he is with his father, in many respects an older version of Alain himself, that the latter begins to be receptive to other opinions about her. His father has become the necessary instrument of fatality.

The final revelation comes after the conversation with the old artist who is bored by Germaine Lemaire. At this point "tout sombre, tout coule".³ All that is bourgeois meets with Germaine Lemaire's approval until nothing but total disenchantment remains. The state of communion Alain has sought with Germaine Lemaire believing she is an authentic person is not possible. His final revelation is that the sky and stars are false--a mere planetarium, and yet to the end there is almost a refusal to accept this, for, once accepted, it means the end of hope, relaying him to the rank of others in the society he despises.

It is the older versions of the younger protagonists, more or less adapted to the society of which they are necessarily a part, who point out to these younger counterparts the latters' inability to really see. In Martereau, it is the younger protagonist's uncle who seems to be showing him what Martereau actually is, while in the Planétarium it is Alain's father who reveals to his son the real Germaine Lemaire.

In Martereau there is nevertheless a doubt as to whether the uncle is not deliberately forcing another viewpoint on his young nephew for his--the uncle's--own ends, to force him to conform. On the other hand, in Le Planétarium, it is the father who seems the more sincere of the two, but who yet, like Anouilh's Créon, has had to learn to live with slightly soiled hands.

If he has not come totally to terms with the society in which he lives, Alain's father has at least learned to accept it. He alternately hates and pities his sister, Tante Berthe, who symbolizes all he despises in this society. He would like to establish contact with her but is repelled by her constant reminders of age, death, the past, and her bourgeois philosophy: "Il faut que l'ordre règne, que le bien triomphe, que l'effort, le travail soient récompensés, que tous les resquilleurs soient punis".⁴ He is even afraid of her in the jousting games they play together when he can feel she "le conduira doucement, d'un pas faible et branlant, là où elle veut l'attirer, sur le terrain où elle règne, où enfin il sera à sa merci, acceptant d'abandonner ses divagations de vieil 'idéaliste', d'inadapté, et de se soumettre comme elle aux lois du bon sens, de la bonne et solide réalité, de marcher droit, de rentrer dans le rang".⁵ With her gleaming magpie eyes, she has deliberately cut herself off from life, while her brother, Alain's father refuses to capitulate completely, holding onto the remnants of his idealistic past in his capacity as the mature outsider.

Searching for authenticity and communication with others like themselves, temporarily believing they are able to see this in a particular élite, the need to be accepted by this élite replaces their basic need for 'others' in general. As the young protagonists in Portrait d'un inconnu, Martereau, and Le Planétarium desperately play for the attention of those they admire, in Les Fruits d'or and more particularly in Entre la vie et la mort, the outsider individual seeks in a so-called élite this same security. Aware of his own unimportance in the total order of the action, he experiences the same desire for power as that experienced by anyone else who finds himself a little different from, or superior to, the 'ordinary' man. Recognizing himself as a somewhat anonymous link in the chain of beings he wishes nevertheless to be accepted by the intellectual élite as one of them, to become one with these great minds he so admires and to rule supremely over lesser minds (cf. Les Fruits d'or). Compromising his individuality to become part of what he believes or hopes is this élite, secure in its collective power, he finds that, unfortunately, the authenticity he is seeking is not to be found with these particular people. This outsider believes he knows what real communication is, compares these people to post-card lovers as compared to real ones: "Ce n'est pas qu'il s'attribue un don, des qualités plus grandes"... "quand il voit des gens se glorifier de ces choses-là, il se demande toujours s'ils ont vraiment jamais connu ces moments, s'ils

savent ce que c'est...cette limite, ce point extrême atteint ne serait-ce que pendant quelques instants...Ces instants de si parfaite fusion, hors de toute proportion, de toute commune mesure...Quelque chose en somme comme l'amour".⁶ He reaches the point of finding their usage of 'nous' objectionable, implying as it does that all the members of this élite are on the same wave-length.

Aware himself of a 'noyau' at the centre of every being like the 'noyau' or nucleus of his own book, open to varied interpretations, he wishes them to be aware of this also, but all they are able to see are reflections of themselves. Yet because he the outsider cannot really exist alone he is writing to communicate above all else, believing as does Sarraute that all are not as limited as they would like to appear. Wishing to express to them his conviction that human calculations and human time are nothing, through their eyes he becomes aware of his own nothingness. Revolting against their refusal to see, he desires his solitude again. Alone in what has become an enemy camp he wishes only to escape, appalled by the filth the others put on everything they touch. Torn by his opposing needs, he is afraid of the others and yet does need them. They tell him that his surprise at finding he is like them is not unusual: there are always some who rebel in the beginning like him, but in the end they settle down. Like a child whose hand is held too tightly by the damp

soft hands of his elders he rejects them. They tell him he must submit to rules, but he does not yet know how to play the game and does not want to. This élite has now become just another form of the society he wishes to reject. He has in turn become just another part of this society and yet is still to a certain extent apart from it. At times he sees elements of his previous existence where he was still seeking authenticity and was still optimistic about true insight into the nature of the centre of being. There was also the possibility of communication with another person who felt as he did, for these protagonists cling to the hope, frail though it may be, that "il doit y avoir bien d'autres comme moi à travers le monde. Timorés comme moi. Un peu repliés sur eux-mêmes. Pas habitués à s'exprimer. Ils appellent peut-être timidement sans que personne leur réponde".⁷ Merely to know they exist is however sufficient. This optimism is doomed to be overcome by the individual's needs which will betray his high ideals, leaving him, except in fleeting moments when he is haunted by memories of his past hopes, with images of his own death which is his compromise. In joining the artistic élite he has betrayed himself. This outsider, now a victim, has accepted inauthenticity rather than choosing solitude, in the need he has to establish contact and feel communion with others. As Gerda Zeltner says⁸ "ce qu'ils ont de personnel est si instable qu'ils cèdent toujours à la tentation préférant même le plus conventionnel des contacts à

une solitude qui ne leur révèle que leur propre vide".

All the Sarrautian protagonists need others to reflect themselves and all are too weak to break out of the bars of society as it exists. The child, grown or not, feeling the need to free himself, nevertheless becomes emmeshed in the web of his own need for security and joins others. "L'homme sensé, l'homme normal, l'homme actif, l'homme digne et sain, l'homme fort triomphait".⁹ Yet because he is more sensitive and aware than other members of society, the latter are unable to dispel the fears he has, as the child's parents are unable to really comfort the child afraid of the dark. His only security lies in "son conformisme par trop obéissant".¹⁰ If he reveals to the others that he is too different from them, they will torture him as cats do their prey. There is no way out of their world: "Ils l'avaient bien vidé et rembourré et lui montraient partout d'autres poupées, d'autres fantoches. Il ne pouvait pas leur échapper".¹¹

Thus the struggle to be oneself at the same time offensively and defensively, versus the need for the group, is the main theme underlying the works of Nathalie Sarraute. Victims/executioners, oppressors/oppressed, the rôles are constantly reversed, but the outsider will finally crawl on hands and knees to enter the circle of society: "Et quand ils le voyaient qui rampait honteusement pour essayer de se glisser entre eux, ils abaissaient vivement leurs mains entrelacées

et, tous s'accroupissant ensemble autour de lui, ils le fixaient de leur regard vide et obstiné, avec leur sourire légèrement infantile".¹² Lost and confused with all sense of equilibrium gone, this individual sees that "en fin de compte tout rentre dans l'ordre"... "Tout est dit. Il n'y a rien de nouveau sous le soleil. Sur toutes les places, nos prédicateurs apaisent les populations: 'Calmez vos vagues regrets, arrêtez vos rêveries, tournez vers des buts plus sûrs et plus utiles vos nostalgies, guérissez-vous de vos sentiments d'infériorité. Vous n'avez rien à regretter. Vous n'avez pas à vous inquiéter. Il n'y avait rien à chercher, vous n'auriez rien pu trouver: tout est dit'".¹³ Significant with religiously symbolic overtones of the Christ figure sacrificed by those whom he has tried to save, in a scene almost exactly like that of Kafka's Der Prozess--acknowledged as such by the protagonist--the young nephew in Martereau is led off between his uncle and Martereau. Society has once again taken care of its own errant children to the extent that it has destroyed its hope for redemption. The would-be saviour has learnt that life like art, must be compromise. Faced with deception, solitude and the uncertainty of ever bringing to realization what would take so much sacrifice to attain, he will come back to the fold. The others know how to sound his depths and "Il se défend à peine, il se laisse tirer, pousser dans tous les sens, il est pris, enfermé...mais il l'a été toute sa vie"... "enfermé ici parmi ces fous...la stupeur, la peur, la pitié,

l'empêchent de se défendre, il les repousse mollement".¹⁴

This purity and everything else will come to naught. He will play the game. Like the deserter in the army, he has come out of his hiding place if only to "s'établir ici, chez nous, en conquérant, de renverser l'ordre établi, d'abroger nos lois, de tout mettre sens dessus-dessous, nous forcer à abjurer lâchement nos croyances, nous obliger à constater que la paresse, l'ennui, la dépression, la mélancolie, l'égo-centrisme et le délire de persécution, les ruminations stériles, les obsessions, idées fixes et manies, le vertige de l'échec, la mégalomanie, le goût de suicide lent, le mépris des réalités peuvent se changer en or pur".¹⁵ Even in this he fails, although to the populace he appears as: "Un mage. Un sage. Un prophète. Un sphinx. Un sorcier. Une force naturelle. Un prisme. Un catalyseur. Un corps conducteur parcouru par les plus intenses, par les plus faibles courants. Il est le réceptacle précieux dans lequel du fond des âges sont transportés jusqu'à nous les grands mythes. Il est le fondateur d'un ordre. Le créateur qui ne se soumet qu'à ses propres lois".¹⁶ This superior being who believed in one combat alone, that with death, whether this death be a material or spiritual one, will fail. He will submit to 'l'ordre' and to what is socially required of him as an artist, filling the needs of the ever hungry people around him. Although the final question remains with both its inherent optimism and despair "Après la mort?"..."Juste encore un pas de plus à

franchir",¹⁷ the Sarrautian protagonist who sought authenticity has lost himself in a maze of reflections upon reflections, becoming unsure of anything that he has seen. Even art is submitted to the same rules of society, becoming for the individual merely another form of compromise. Like his own work or any work of creation, hovering between life and death, the writer of the last novel or the outsider individuals of the earlier novels will accept compromise and become one of the living dead, hovering in the region "Entre la vie et la mort".

Michel Butor:

The Butor protagonist, failing in life, through artistic means attempts to compensate for this failure. Starting at the point the Sarrautian protagonist leaves off, in a state of self-deception and awareness of his own 'lâcheté' and inauthenticity, the Butor protagonist attempts to reconstruct himself. He tries this first through other people, but is constantly frustrated in this by his inability to achieve true communication with others. Trapped within their own minds, as they are within the tortured inhibitions of the society in which they live but whose mores often confound them, a radical change is the only way out. As the Sarrautian protagonist/outsider was haunted by images of his own death the Butor protagonist is haunted by images of hell.

Through this inability to communicate, they are unable

to be helped by those very individuals who could otherwise assist them in finding their way. This inability to communicate is further revealed as an inability to tell the truth to those they are attempting to communicate with. Jacques Revel in L'Emploi du temps will lose both the women he loves, first by not being able to see that his lying to others extends to self-deception and secondly through a fear of committing himself to reality. His constant fear of surrendering too much of himself to others which takes the form of a deliberately formed carapace of lies and his inability to see beyond his own lies and recognize his need for others are the two causes of this loss. Like the other protagonists in Burtor's novels, to begin with, Revel lays the blame for his own failure on others. He blames Rose for not being able to guess his real feelings for her, but also places that blame in part on the mystical power he attributes to Bleston.

Within the novel the two myths of Theseus and Oedipus are constantly present. Rose is to him Phaedra, and yet like Oedipus unrecognized by his own sister, he had fallen before her as if in an epileptic trance in the city he had not recognized as being connected to him by ancient myth. Because of Rose he has become in his own eyes the murderer of the author of the book, Le Meurtre de Bleston. He has betrayed this author who is to him a father figure as Oedipus killed his own father.

He will not really commit himself to any acts nor to any

other people. As with Rose, when it is a matter of life and death, he hides the truth from Rose's sister Ann. Although to begin with, he and Ann cannot communicate because of a language barrier, falsely causing him to believe he is more interested in Rose, there is a scene when Ann is at the dentist's and she looks at him with "ce regard que vous m'avez adressé du plus lointain de cette enfance terrifiée"... "prise au dépourvu"... "et qui m'a fait à tout jamais confident de cette partie de vous-même qui n'émerge pas lors de la pleine santé",¹⁸ which will bind him to her forever. He is not able to recall this scene until too late however and has as his only consolation the probability of writing to her after his departure and telling her everything he has been unable to in real life--again using the written word as a substitute for 'reality'. Learning of her engagement, he wants, like Oedipus, to burn out his own eyes, feeling that once more the city has moved against him as it had in various smaller ways during their relationship.

In La Modification, Léon Delmont, in search of his lost youth and all it represents, believes that the woman he thinks he loves will restore authenticity to him and give him meaning in life. Everything he believes is however a by-product of his own mental processes including the 'love' he has discovered, a necessary ingredient in his search for the youth he wasted in the past. Just as he misjudges his own wife,

feeling she hates him, but needs him, so he misjudges his fellow passengers basing what he believes them to be on what he is himself. Like the other protagonists in all the other novels treated, he feels thwarted in his search for his own identity by others in society. In Sarraute's novels this threat was to a large extent a real one, society as such for its own survival, needing to bring the outsider into its ranks. In Butor's novels however, the protagonist, who feels himself so different and an outsider, is in many ways one of the more deficient members of society. Those he condemns for condemning his desire to be different, are often revealed as having more insight into his motivations than he himself has. Again this is the case to a greater or lesser extent in all the "nouveaux romans" treated, but more particularly in the novels of Sarraute and Ducharme, where in both instances there are older and wiser individuals, who, although regretting the loss of the ideals of their past youth, can see the follies of the present in the idealistic young they come into contact with.

Believing he has found love in the form of Cécile and wishing to have it with him always, Léon Delmont plans his mistress's future residence in Paris. At the same time he is afraid that Rome will no longer be the same for him with her in France, not realizing that it is Cécile who will diminish in stature away from all she is bound to in his mind. Fearing the loss of Rome with her departure, he decides to

make the fullest possible use of her knowledge before that departure when he will be the remaining 'Roman'. Beyond this there is nevertheless a persistent inquiétude constantly present in his mind in spite of all his optimism.

The beginning of a doubt not only in his own illusions but in those upon whom he has invested these illusions remains. This doubt points out his 'lâcheté', lack of authenticity and self-delusion which he believed he was beginning to overcome. In fact in a rather vicious circle this gnawing doubt reveals these deficiencies to be at the root of his illusions.

When he begins to think of Cécile and Henriette together, as they actually were in Paris, it occurs to him that Cécile actually reproaches him in the same way his wife does. To neither one has he been really sincere. He is not yet sure what the truth is, but realizes that he has been lying to both of them. The reproaches levelled at him, removing from him the possibility of finding a lost youth, also remind him of his age: "Seriez-vous donc maintenant ballotté entre ces deux reproches, ces deux rancunes, ces deux accusations de lâcheté?"¹⁹ What has become a cancerous growth in Henriette, a gangrenous wound from which he is afraid to remove the scab by telling the truth, for fear of the hidden pain underneath, is already beginning to grow in Cécile. Aware that he must choose between the two women, he recognizes that he himself is the carrier of this pain. There is, however, another fear

which haunts him and prevents him telling everything to his wife. This is fear of loneliness, for again, like the Sarrautian and indeed all the other protagonists, the fear of loneliness forces capitulation.

Seeing the extent of his own weakness he is unable to combat it. Thinking back, he realizes that the hatred he has for Henriette is a result of his not being able to have Cécile with him in Paris. Ironically though, with the remembrance of a trip Cécile made to Paris comes the memory of the failure of that experiment as his second trip to Rome with Henriette had been a vain attempt to recapture a past that no longer existed. Although Henriette is aware of the fact that Rome represents for him 'le lieu d'authenticité', he failed her there in his inability to make their stay a success. She had been only too grateful to return to her beloved Paris.

As for Cécile in Paris, she had become to him almost a stranger and, what was even worse, having agreed to his wife and mistress meeting, he had seen with horror their "formant un accord, une alliance contre vous" based on "un mépris commun"²⁰ since he represented to both of them the disaster of their hopes. Indeed Cécile informs him that his wife does not actually need him and gives him full liberty. Cécile is lost to him in Paris as were both Rose and Ann to Jacques Revel in Bleston. In both instances this is a result of the

protagonist believing his own illusions and attempting to re-constitute a world without meaning in the same way as did the Sarrautian protagonists.

After a dream-like sequence where he is led by a she-wolf with the obvious symbolism of the founding of Rome, he attains a new awareness, more self-control and a new perspective. For the first time he is able to acknowledge what his relationship with Cécile really is and sees that he loves her only "dans la mesure où elle est pour vous le visage de Rome" because she is his "Introductrice, la porte de Rome".²¹ The only thing left for him is to find why Rome holds such sway over him. He must go beyond lies to the truth.

In L'Emploi du temps, superficially defeated by the city and by his own inauthenticity, Revel's attempt to find what he has lost and the reasons behind this loss lead to the discovery of connections between himself and Bleston. These reveal deeper ties not only between the city and himself but between his past and that of the city and between the city and western society in general. More specifically this society is one based on the Roman Empire with the inherent pagan Christian dichotomy of Rome and of western Man.

In La Modification Léon Delmont gradually becomes aware of parallels between the two cities of Paris and Rome, as his physical spatial journey is transformed into a mental journey

through time. His physical relationship with Cécile is shown to be dependent upon what she represents to him rather than what she is. With this realization as with Revel's similar realization, Léon Delmont decides to further the discovery he has made and dedicate himself to the creative act of writing as a means to self-fulfillment and to an understanding not only of himself but of Man.

Thus failing in their quest to find themselves through and with other individuals, and realizing that society in the form of the city they are in may hold a key to the lost self, the protagonists will try to discover this secret part of the city and of society.

In the last novel, Degrés, Pierre Vernier begins his mammoth task of recreation of time only to find out this necessarily also involves a simultaneous recreation of space and imagination. This again leads to the revelation of myriad interconnections between individuals and societies. The task itself is the subject of this novel and the outcome of its realization becomes the decisive factor in the protagonist's existence.

In L'Emploi du temps, Jacques Revel's search for his own past leads him into the past of the city where he is finally able to cast off the enormous 'tortoise shell', which seems to cover him and the city with a defensive shield and can

say to the city "nous sommes quittés".²² This shell is symbolic of the Roman shields used in war and indicative of the city's past. For, like Revel, the city is "le survivant" of itself, Roman in origin (founded by Hadrian) and connected to Theseus in legend as to Cain the founder of the first city, it is also connected to Revel by its stained glass window made in France in the sixteenth century. Bleston stands for two series of cities and periods of time surviving in Bleston but falsified and suffocated. Although Bleston has taken from him all it could he also realizes that his losses are caused in part by his own writings and effort. The illusions of Bleston are as much a part of its reality as all illusions are of reality. He now believes that "je demeurerai l'un des princes puisque j'ai réussi, en reconnaissant ma défaite à exaucer ton désir secret de me voir survivre à cet engourdissement, à cette sorte de mort que tu m'avais réservée, puisque je suis devenu maintenant, par ce baptême de ta fureur, invulnérable à la manière des fantômes, puisque j'ai obtenu de toi cette proposition de pacte que j'accepte".²³

The conditions of this pact become clearer before his departure. The city wishes in part its own destruction, its deliverance and redemption.

In La Modification Rome appears to Delmont in a dream and he realizes that wanting to have Cécile in Paris was not so much for her own presence, but as an ever-present ambassador

of Rome. Since this no longer seems feasible and since the myth of Rome cannot be incarnated in a decisive way, he sees that to capture Rome he must do it in art form, i.e., in a book. Desiring to return to the Pax Romana situation where Rome was the centre of the world (reflected in the modern Paris) he realizes that what he must do is "montrer"... "le rôle que peut jouer Rome dans la vie d'un homme à Paris".²⁴

All means of communication between the two cities are possible. Rome and Paris seem to him two cities superimposed one on the other and connected by various trap doors only known of by some people and then, according to the knowledge these individuals have, "l'espace romain déformant plus ou moins pour chacun l'espace parisien, autorisant rencontres ou induisant en pièges".²⁵ The trap door for him will be the book he writes in which he will be able to fully reveal the truth to Cécile and himself. In this book Cécile will appear in all her beauty, a reflected beauty of Rome. He decides that it is probably better to keep the distance between the two cities, and makes up his mind to go back to Rome with Henriette, and "de tenter de faire revivre sur le mode de la lecture cet épisode crucial de votre aventure, le mouvement qui s'est produit dans votre esprit accompagnant le déplacement de votre corps d'une gare à l'autre à travers tous les paysages intermédiaires, vers ce livre futur et nécessaire dont vous tenez la forme dans votre main".²⁶

The search for the city's past has led him to the attempt to reconstruct in art form, the past--to write a book. In L'Emploi du temps Jacques Revel was writing a diary which was to him also the search for self in art form. In the last novel--Degrés--the writing of a book to explain reality becomes ever more complex and complicated. Like Butor's novel, which loses itself in descriptions of relationships apparent or not, this work originally meant to describe an hour which its creator Pierre Vernier intends as exceptional becomes an impossible task. It involves him more and more as he goes ever deeper into his task finding out how much one relationship depends on others. To understand the students in the class, he must understand all their classes, their family lives, all the work they undertake. No longer a mere matter of spatialized time as was the case with La Modification, it becomes space/time/matter. Wishing to give his students an impression of the rapidity of time and thus a means to find duration as he is attempting to do in the book, the class he teaches deals specifically with time and space: "J'essayais de vous faire comprendre qu'il est impossible de représenter la terre sans la déformer, de même qu'il est impossible de faire passer la réalité dans le discours sans employer un certain type de projection".²⁷ Thus he himself realizes, unable to know everything, that he is obliged to invent and that deformation is impossible to avoid, "ce calendrier déformé, de plus en plus déformé de cette narration".²⁸

The work is begun by Pierre Vernier but will be completed by another uncle, for this enormous task of creation will destroy its creator...as Micheline Pavin says "'Vous y laisserez votre peau'"²⁹ when Pierre Vernier tells her he feels as if the doors of a prison are closing on him. The struggle gets harder. He will lose not only Micheline Pavin, like Revel and Delmont through his inability to establish himself in reality, but also his very life. His last despairing cry to the woman he has been unable to love reveals his defeat. He cannot finish the work, one that is stained with blood, and he will sink into a delirium which will lead to death.

In L'Emploi du temps, the task of writing the diary, set himself by Jacques Revel, has exactly the same result. Although it does not lead to the actual physical death of its author, it does result in his 'spiritual' death. Beset as was Pierre Vernier, by the problem of rendering the truth, Revel sees that truth becoming ever more and more obscure and is afraid of deceiving himself by not confiding everything he could to the journal. At the same time overcome by the fatigue caused by such a task, wanting to shake the scales from his eyes, to awaken from his long sleep, he finds it ever more difficult to piece together the past: "sept mois d'eau de moins en moins transparente parce que l'agitation a dérangé la vase".³⁰

Thus from not being able to discover their lost selves

through others and failing to establish any communication with another person, they have turned to art in an attempt to explain and understand the reality they cannot otherwise grasp. Their original failure was one due to their own personality. Their efforts to redeem themselves are substitutes for the reality they refuse to face. Like the cities they regard as possibilities to reveal their inner being, relying on external aids to solve their internal problems, they too lose. They become mere remnants of a past they have been so pre-occupied in recreating that the present has passed them by. They see far enough to realize they need to see further, but are limited by their past conditioning as the cities too are confined by spatial and temporal borders. As with the protagonists of Nathalie Sarraute their capitulation has led them only into the realm of the living dead. By a slightly different path, yet still attempting to arrive at meaning in their lives and the authenticity they find lacking in themselves and in others, both Sarraute's and Butor's protagonists come to the same end. However, as already noted in the chapter on Sarraute, in the former there is a note of optimism formulated in the half-expressed desire to discover those others who somewhere feel the same way as do the protagonists. The protagonists of both authors suffer the same failing--an inability to see objectively what reality is. They therefore project onto others what is in themselves and are helplessly trapped within that self. Even the creative act of writing

a novel in the novels of Butor, far from freeing the writer by allowing him to see reality as it is, entraps its creator even more. Basing all on a past that must be fully reconstituted to understand the present, paradoxically each second that passes, like Gray's tortoise, adds to the impossibility of ever knowing the present, while the future and their hopes in it seem ever more distant. The imagined reality in the creative act of Butor ends by being the same thing as the imagined reality of the person upon whom Sarraute's protagonists inflict their own interpretation of their own reality.

Robbe-Grillet:

Robbe-Grillet's protagonists experience the same feeling of paranoia and guilt already experienced by the Sarrautian and Butor individual with the same need for and repulsion by contact with others. Their paranoia is reflected in their intense obsession with 'flaws' revealing flaws--'failles'--in their own security as it did with such characters as Tante Berthe in Sarraute's novels. Where this is an actual physical flaw in Les Gommages, there is a literal 'trou' in time in Le Voyeur when the 'crime' presumably took place: "un trou demeurerait toujours dans l'emploi du temps"³¹ reflected in the 'faille' (fissure with its consequent sexual connotations) on the cliff face. Mathias is unable to explain to himself this lost time, having no remembrance of anything during it. In La Jalousie the flaw is that of the stain left by the cen-

tipede and indicative of Franck's intrusion into the narrator's and his wife's life. The narrator/husband will think of means to erase this stain which from time to time assumes gigantic proportions in his tortured mind. The stain of the millipede is again reflected in the blood-like shadow which in the absence of Franck and A..... seems to cover the whole house: "le tache est sur le mur de la maison, sur les dalles, sur le ciel vide",³² but violence real or imaginary does not seem necessary. The husband thinks of a very hard fine grained eraser to erase the surface, as Wallas in Les Gommes will search endlessly for an eraser to wipe out the flaw in his own being or his actual past. In La Jalousie however, like the step the husband hears or imagines he does or the experience itself "à mesure qu'il s'éloigne dans le passé, son vraisemblance diminue. C'est maintenant comme s'il n'y avait rien eu du tout. Par les fentes d'une jalousie entrouverte--un peu tard--il est évidemment impossible de distinguer quoi que ce soit"³³ indicating the distorting qualities of both the physical venetian blind and the emotion of jealousy.

The awareness of their flaws usually comes to the Robbe-Grillet protagonists at moments of fatigue, intoxication, or delirium, when the obsessed mind, out of control, is struggling to regain this control. In Dans le labyrinthe, it is at such moments that the soldier is increasingly aware of his own impotence, with an accompanying paralysis of his body. As this

solders sees the imminent failure of his mission, he is disturbed by a flaw in his memory, reflected physically, as was that of Mathias, by the fissure which 'gâte l'uniformité de la surface' in the room where the unknown narrator lies:

"mince comme un cheveu à peine sinueuse, dont la forme, elle aussi, a quelque chose d'à la fois précis et compliqué, qu'il serait nécessaire de suivre avec application de coude en coude, avec ses courbes, tremblements, incertitudes, changements de direction subits, infléchissements, reprises, légers retours en arrière, mais il faudrait encore du temps, un peu de temps, quelques minutes, quelques secondes, et il est déjà maintenant, trop tard!"³⁴

Again this 'faille' is reflected in the half centimeter of torn leather on the button of the nurse's coat. As with the other protagonists, the soldier sends for a 'gomme' to erase the imaginary 'faille'--an eraser which seems a weaker version of the glass marble he gives a strange blond child with an adult's voice, who mysteriously appears and reappears as if to help the lost soldier.

The guilt felt by the protagonist is not based on conventional mores--indeed, cannot be judged morally--but on his own failure, as was the case for the Sarrautian protagonists who felt guilt for their failure as individuals and for failure as members of society. This sense of failure is one heightened by fatigue or illness as again is the case with Kafka's protagonists, such as K..... in Der Prozess, particularly when faced with the confusion of modern society. In Robbe-Grillet's Les Gommages, fatigue accumulated during his

search for he knows not whom, gradually overcomes Wallas, as weariness and absinthe take their toll of Mathias in Le Voyeur, causing "une sorte de bourdonnement cotonneux dont tout le crâne était noyé".³⁵ To the soldier in Dans le labyrinthe nothing is as it seems. "Et le soldat marche toujours, de son pas mécanique, engourdi de fatigue et de froid, avançant machinalement un pied après l'autre, sans même être certain d'une progression quelconque."³⁶ Becoming ever more confused and lost, failure haunts him like an elusive mythical fountain: "il n'a pas la force de recommencer sa tentative, de s'avancer dans le dédale des couloirs sans lumière jusqu'à cette eau infiniment lointaine et problématique".³⁷

The narrator--if there is one--in Projet pour une révolution à New York, is constantly aware of his own fatigue as were the other Robbe-Grillet and Butor protagonists. He wanders endlessly along subway corridors, and the passageways of his own mind, the ones indistinguishable from the others. At moments of fatigue delirium-like sadistic imaginings occur preceded by the usual geometric descriptions as if the overburdened mind is trying to focus its attention on the pure object. These objects, however, assume the images of the obsession.

With continuing fatigue and delirium, physical and mental changes take place: "Le soldat ne sentait plus son corps".³⁸ Time, for all of them, has no real meaning. They exist

almost in a timeless state where time stands still, inexplicable and frightening or slows down as it does for the soldier in Dans le labyrinthe and for Mathias. It is symbolized in the snowflakes "Visible à chaque fois pendant quelques secondes, dans les taches de lumière successives, de plus en plus petit, à intervalles de temps égaux, mais les espaces étant de plus en plus raccourcis par la distance, si bien qu'il semble ralentir de plus en plus à mesure qu'il s'approche".³⁹ The protagonists' speech seems to them abnormally slow and unreal. As in the painting depicted in the soldier's room with its unreal facial contortions, the people around the protagonists assume the aspect of statues "la torsion a succédé au mouvement, les traits se sont crispés, les membres raidis, le sourire est devenu rictus, l'élan a perdu son intention et son sens. Il ne subsiste plus, à leur place, que la démesure, et l'étrangeté, et la mort".⁴⁰ This view of others in the "nouveau roman" not only reflects the possibility of the other people around the protagonist being unreal or in the case of Sarraute 'inauthentic' but also stresses the alienation of the protagonist from himself and others. In Le Voyeur, as Mathias continues his 8-form (infinity in Tarot symbolism) trip around the islands during the day, heat and absinthe succeed in bringing him to a state of near delirium, of which he himself is unable to see the beginning. Dream-like he goes over his day's 'marche' in his mind and obliterates what he refuses to look at. Affected by what

appears to him as excessive heat, and overcome by fatigue, not having slept for several days, just as Kafka's traveler in In der Strafkolonie overcome by heat and delirium sees in a harmless ditch a grave, Mathias falls into a state of delirium where truth and imagination are inseparable.

In Dans le labyrinthe, confused and uncertain, as if in a kafkaesque nightmare where doors lead nowhere and windows open onto walls, the soldier wanders on like a sleepwalker, eyes open but seeing only what goes on in his own mind. His fixed expressionless eyes are those of a lost man. These states of fatigue and delirium enhance not only the protagonist's guilt, but also his paranoia with regard to others. Needing these others he finds himself time and again in a 'social' situation--usually a café--as if seeking refuge. The café is for Europeans, a gathering place resembling a society in miniature, yet again it is here that the protagonist feels the most alienated and unsure of himself. He is totally unable to communicate with anyone and no comprehension is possible. Yet when alone he feels the need for others "il fallait une voix humaine pour l'empêcher de poursuivre sa marche vers des régions encore plus inaccessibles".⁴¹ In Le Voyeur Mathias returns to the café he visits at intervals, and like Dr Juard in Les Gommés and Raskolnikov in Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment, or again, Franck⁴² in La Jalousie, his need to communicate and purge himself is such that he

almost says too much. Paranoiac, as are all the Robbe-Grillet protagonists, he finds others silent and staring at him. He has the impression that he is speaking too quickly and that they will take him for a 'fou'. Speaking to others, he receives no answer. He feels as if he is speaking into a void but one that is incredibly hostile. All the protagonists have their own interpretation for the paranoia they experience but one based on their feelings of guilt and insufficiency while simultaneously revealing their obsessions. Wallas is at this point afraid of being thought guilty of a crime he has not yet committed, if indeed he ever really does. Mathias, as already mentioned, is afraid of being taken for a maniac, and, naturally enough, the soldier is afraid of being thought of as a spy.

This paranoia leads to a veritable schizophrenia where the individual is not only alienated from others but also from himself, put into concrete realization through his inability to recognize himself even in mirrors or photographs. Not only is there this division in himself but there is often a confusion of several identical people. Although sometimes these people resemble him like mirror images of himself, he can establish no contact even with them: "les mêmes traits tous les deux: réguliers, tendus, peut-être amaigris par la fatigue. Leurs yeux sont creux, leurs lèvres serrées, leur peau est grisâtre".⁴³ Yet again this could be the same act

of bestowing one's own thoughts or life on others, already seen in the Sarrautian and Butor individual, but taken here as it will also be in the Ducharme children to almost psychotic proportions.

As for the inability to recognize himself, this assumes social and cultural proportions in the later novels, where the outsider individual, e.g. Kim in La Maison de rendez-vous, a member of both white and Chinese worlds feels only paranoia and incomprehension in both. Again as is the case with the equally paranoiac Wallas, her father who would seem her only possible refuge, is dead. In the last published novel, Projet pour une révolution à New York, the title itself reveals the cultural dichotomy in the novel.

Photographs play a large part in the apparently almost obliterated past of the protagonist. In Les Gommes, Wallas' photograph no longer resembles him (as is also the case with Mathias in Le Voyeur and Ralph Johnston (johnson/Jonsone) in La Maison de rendez-vous) until the final act of murder of the man who may have been his father is realized and like Oedipus, he is forced to face his real self. It is in the shop of the woman who is his possible father's ex-wife that he sees the photo that could have been one of himself with his mother and her then husband. In the same way, Mathias sees a photo possibly taken by himself of the young Jaque-line/Violette on the island. In Dans le labyrinthe the sol-

dier is helped by a young woman--Ariadne-like--in whose room there is a photo of her missing husband who could possibly be the soldier himself, making him the father of the small child who follows him around. This photo too, however, appears so scratched and worn that it is difficult to distinguish anything.

The other constant theme is that of 'dédoublement' either of theme or character. At this point in the novels, reality and imagination are impossible to separate. All the protagonists are aware that they are searching for something though unaware of what this actually is. The refusal to see and accept the bare face of reality with the consequent withdrawal into self and imagination, either in the form of pure obsession or transformed into art is characteristic of all the "nouveaux romans" treated in this thesis. It often seems as if events in the narrative are invented from existing elements in reality, as in the novel Projet pour une révolution à New York where perhaps all is a result of imagination. Whether, in the novel, Laura is one of the three strange young adolescents, blonde, vicious and sadistic, is only important in so far as they represent those on the border of existing society. In contrast to the amorphous mass of adults these young people are strangely threatening. In the same way in Dans le labyrinthe or indeed in any of the other Robbe-Grillet novels what the protagonist sees, does, and experiences is entangled

in a web of reality and imagination from which the protagonist himself seems unable to escape.

Of the Robbe-Grillet novels, Dans le labyrinthe is perhaps the most kafkaesque in theme and atmosphere and certainly the one most conducive to allegorical interpretation.⁴⁴ The soldier is searching for he knows not whom, to reveal to him he knows not what about the shoebox, reminiscent of Pandora's box, and which is in reality no shoe-box, but which has (perhaps) been entrusted to his keeping by a fallen comrade. But like all the protagonists and like Chrétien de Troye's Perceval, it is his inability to communicate with others in his quest which leads to the ultimate failure of that quest. He avoids all contact with others even refusing to answer the questions of the child/voyeur who may be his own son. In the child's eyes--seen again through those of the soldier--the soldier seems to exist or to become unreal "L'enfant pourrait croire qu'il joue seulement à faire la conversation avec quelqu'un qui n'existe pas, ou bien avec une poupée, un mannequin qui ne saurait répondre".⁴⁵

The dying soldier even fails to establish contact with the woman whose blue/green/grey eyes fascinate him in their ability to look straight at him while concealing everything from him. This black-haired woman who could be his wife and indeed is such to him when he is delirious, seems, like A..... in L'Année dernière à Marienbad and L..... in L'Immortelle,

to be vaguely threatened by another male who may or may not be her husband. Just as Jacques Revel was unable to commit himself to either Rose or her sister and thus save himself from the city, neither can the soldier even when on his death-bed, reach out to the other. The stranger in Robbe-Grillet's film L'Année dernière à Marienbad who offers to A..... "l'impossible, ce qui paraît être le plus impossible dans ce labyrinthe où le temps est comme aboli: il lui offre un passé, un avenir et la liberté" as the more positive side of the Robbe-Grillet protagonist.. But there is danger in what he offers: "s'en aller avec lui vers quelque chose, quelque chose d'inconnu, quelque chose d'autre: l'amour, la poésie, la liberté...ou peut-être la mort".⁴⁶ and from where as L..... says in L'Immortelle, there is no turning back. Unlike him, the soldier, unable to read in the woman's eyes whatever she wants to express, dies completely alone, having failed in his mission to deliver the 'shoebox' containing in essence all the elements of a human life, as perhaps he has failed in his search for his own identity.

Thus as was the case with Butor and Sarraute, the only real contact the protagonist achieves is with those who like himself are to a greater or lesser extent also 'outsiders'. The victims of most of the Robbe-Grillet protagonists are, as Lucien Goldmann points out in Pour une Sociologie du roman,⁴⁷ disruptive elements in the society they live in. The novels

and works present the narrative either from the point of view of the 'bourreau' such as Wallas, Mathias or (more frequently in films) from the victim's point of view, both points of view giving a better understanding of the relationship between the two. This outsider, usually a man, as mentioned above, offers a way out but one fraught with violence. He is offering a form of contact and communication in a world where there is otherwise nothing. He is offering a solution for both his own problems and those of the person with whom he can establish this form of contact. In La Maison de rendez-vous it is the mysterious Englishman or American with the Portuguese passport and an unrecognizable photo, who offers this route to Lorraine/Lauren, at the same time leaving her no hope of escape from him, she is: "sur le point de céder, de s'avouer vaincue, de perdre son honneur, de triompher enfin".⁴⁸ She will go with him, leaving behind her incoherent fiancé, who is constantly lost in the streets of the Asian city. Together Lorraine and this baron individual will look for "une issue à ce désordre".⁴⁹ Yet, as Robbe-Grillet states often, things are never definitively in order and at the end, her eyes hold nothing but an expressionless stare.

In La Jalousie, the husband, with his hidden violent tendencies and the implicit complicity of his wife A....., realizes that his rival Franck, representative of all that is 'bourgeois' as is Lorraine's fiancé, has no hope of suc-

cess since he is unable to offer her the unusual relationship she is seeking. A..... in L'Année dernière à Marienbad will go with the man called--again--Franck, who is this time capable of offering her a form of escape recognizable and acceptable to them both.

Both master and victim of the world they inhabit, nearly all the Robbe-Grillet protagonists are thus imprisoned by their obsessive compulsive behavior. They are free to carry out whatever they feel compelled to do and suffer no social consequences, but they are victims of their own compulsions. Ben Stoltzfus sees in Les Gommages and Le Voyeur in particular, the exploration of the human psyche as it contaminates and is in turn contaminated by reality.⁵⁰ Like the other "nouveau roman" protagonists and like Camus' Meursault, in the first part of L'Etranger, none of Robbe-Grillet's characters are really aware of being a 'conscience malheureuse'. Instead as Jean Alter infers,⁵¹ by perceiving with the minds of these characters by pointing out the differences in their natures, one is aware of the incompatibility of man and the universe and the harmony of things versus the aberrations of Man.

By seeing through the mind's eye and 'infraconscience' we are in that region of the consciousness where the significance of the world and of oneself is indecisive and inexpressible.⁵² The protagonists attempt to keep themselves within this zone, which is almost one of 'mauvaise foi', just as

Sarraute's and Butor's characters also preferred this zone to that one of startling clarity and solitude where lay reality. The possibility of this other reality exists nevertheless. It is the tortured mind of the individual which is his prison. In Projet pour une révolution à New York, the Robbe-Grillet thesis is finally developed to its own conclusion. Rather than capitulation, becoming a part of society, as did Sarraute's protagonists, or abandoning life for art as was the case for Butor's this last novel is an example of the possibility of changing that society into a world where Man is freed of all that haunts him.

"Le monde dont je rêve n'est pas celui d'un ordre établi, quel qu'il soit, mais un monde où l'on pourra jouer, où l'on aura le droit de jouer".⁵³ For it is only in carrying these fears to the point of absurdity, that Man can rid himself of his obsessions. Of the three French novelists, Robbe-Grillet's attitude is the most activist. By means of revolution--and outsiders and the young are for Robbe-Grillet the most obvious revolutionaries--Man will be liberated. According to a lesson given in Projet pour une révolution à New York by a member of the secret revolutionary organization which may or may not exist in reality, there are three "actions libératrices majeures se rapportant au rouge: le viol, l'incendie, le meurtre".⁵⁴ The lesson goes on to justify violence as necessary in order to awaken and change society, in the same way as

religious rituals act, having "ce même mélange de froideur, de précision, de délire, dans la mise en scène d'une mythologie aussi meurtrière que cathartique".⁵⁵ Thus crime is educational, acting as it does in an attempt "d'opérer une catharsis générale des désirs inavoués de la société contemporaine" to rid this very society of its fears and psychoses, just as the narrator himself, constantly aware of the 'garde-fou' in the 'metro' keeping him back from society as it also kept back Wallas and Mathias, seems to arrive at a catharsis of his own.

The capitulation of the Sarrautian characters, abandoning for the most part their 'outsider' attitudes is recompensed by the hope that somewhere there are others like them. Butor's individuals who turned to art in an attempt to give meaning to their lives and reality, abandoned reality completely. Not recognizing they were part of a myth developing with them, they attempted to explain the past through the present and lost their own present. Robbe-Grillet's characters, whether a mythical reality exists or not, in reality or the imagination, point the way to a possible future where a free man can rid himself of his myths, fears, and obsessions, by having them actualized in front of him and caricaturized to the point where they lose their 'hidden' meaning and becomes what they actually are--products of the mind of Man.

This rising optimism as to Man's condition in the French

"nouveaux romans" is counter balanced on the French Canadian side by pessimism and despair. If the French novelists' protagonists are not successful in their quest, having taken the wrong path, capitulated through 'lâcheté', or as in the case of Robbe-Grillet, having not yet arrived at the end of their path, there is nevertheless the conception of possibilities for Man. In the French Canadian novels, if there is optimism as in the novels of Jean Basile, these hopes are all crushed in a pessimistic final resignation, reflecting the tormented state of the individual alienated as a member of a minority group. The somewhat intellectualized problems of the French authors by reason of their equally intellectual resolutions, are based on a positive philosophy and idealism, whereas these problems are reality for the Québécois authors and that much harder to overcome because of their actuality. In comparison with the Québécois the French "nouveau roman" protagonists, intellectualized actualizations of their creators' philosophies, seen basically naïve. The tragic lucidity of the French Canadian protagonists is a result of their reality. Their personal tragedy is not possible in the French novel.

Gérard Bessette:

The protagonist Lagarde in L'Incubation, unlike those of the French "nouveau roman", is more fully conscious of the basic similarity of all men. At the same time he is aware of

his own position as observer, almost to the point of being a 'voyeur', and counsellor to those around him, without being able, as are many of the Bessette individuals, to help either his fellow human beings or indeed himself.

Deeply pessimistic, this protagonist attempts to detach himself from both the world and others for fear of being imprisoned by them and forced to feel the suffering he observes. Very much the antihero, with his lucid, even when inebriated, detachment, and his satiric portrayal of the society he lives in, torn between traditional values and the dominant absurdity of the modern world, he can only have one reaction, that of 'le refus' not only of his immediate society, but of the total universe. Seeing the total despair of the world of which he is necessarily a part, as he states "PATHETIC FALLACY, le paysage est un état d'âme, le monde est ma représentation"⁵⁶ like those he describes, he too feels like a captive animal. Apart from society as are the other novelists' characters, he is used as were the Sarrautian individuals, as a means to purge that society. He too, is alone: like all the others "chacun se terrait dans son petit coin sa petite coquille secrétant ruminant ses petites larves ses petits fantômes, s'imaginant qu'il était seul à en malaxer",⁵⁷ all caught in an enormous digestive system from which there is no escape.

Unlike the characters in the French "nouveau roman", this narrator cannot be the centre of the action, since he

has so deliberately put himself apart from the world he lives in, and yet he is indispensable by his very nature. This does not mean he is unaffected by what he observes and what he describes. The love and the guilt experienced by others seem to be reflected in his own thoughts as his own impotency and doubt reflect that of Man in the world he lives in.

Therefore, rather than the Sarrautian capitulation, or the attempt at compensation through art as was the case in Butor's novels, there is observation of the tragedy of others and of self. With the acceptance of reality, any substitution for that reality is looked upon by the protagonist with deep bitterness, realizing as he does that these forms of compensation are no substitutes for anything, e.g. the philological research of the German Jew Weingerter who with his cold fish eyes considers himself more alive than the old people he observes in the park who sit doing nothing. Yet he is just as limited as they are in his inability to escape his own past and in his displaced devotion to philology.

Any form of substitution merely takes he who accepts it further from life, sometimes causing the death of others. In the case of Weingerter, he lost the two people he believed he loved: his wife in the concentration camp in Germany, an alien and outcast in that society, and Nêa in Narcotown, equally an outcast. He is unable to help in either instance, without being aware of his own impotency or the reasons behind this im-

potency. He experiences vague feelings of guilt for his wife's death. Realizing there was responsibility on his part, he nevertheless places the blame on his own colleagues in the same way as the Butor protagonists place the blame for their failure on others. Néa and Weingerter, both exiles, the former befriended by the latter, both resemble creatures in an aquarium, "Antinéa et Weingerter étaient des poissons ACH des crustacées flottant immobiles repliés involués sur soi, incapables de se toucher rejoindre (les vibrations de l'air entre les deux restant aussi inefficaces incaptables que pour les habitants des profondeurs le clapotis des vagues superficielles)".⁵⁸ The fatherly affection, the worry Weingerter feels, he cannot communicate to her. He thinks that by getting her interested in her work, she can rid herself of the ghosts of her past, not realizing that what may be a half solution for himself is none at all for her. Like the others, with the partial exception of the narrator, he is unable to escape his subjectivity, again a trait shared by all these "nouveau roman" protagonists. Having lived so long with his memories he is afraid to live with another person, and, above all, of once again taking on the responsibility for another human being. So able at ferreting out small important points in his work he is unable to transfer this ability to real life. He experiences the same feeling of old age and presentiment of something bad that he felt twenty-five years before with his wife, Sara, and the same feeling of impotency: "c'était

un cercle une spirale sans fin".⁵⁹ In his solitude he gives Nêa the means to her death, at the same time realizing as he did with Sara that one becomes myopic from too close contact. In a tragically ironic scene where Weingerter and the narrator are discussing this inability to see on the part of men "la plupart des hommes sont aveugles comme des taupes qui ne voudraient pas voir, qui ne se donnent même pas la peine d'essayer ACH de s'ouvrir les yeux",⁶⁰ Nêa enters the room and although the narrator is aware of it, the old German is completely unaware of her exhaustion and depression. Unable to learn by experience, "aborder grâce à l'expérience acquise démêler la situation présente, en prévoir les dangers les écueils, naviguer entre les récifs, éviter ses anciennes erreurs (comment savoir), mais perdu dans ses rêves ses rêminiscences",⁶¹ he echoes the Bessettian cry of the narrator "sait-on jamais si on peut si on avait pu"⁶² while his final despair sounds in his hollow appeal to a seemingly non-existent deity "MEIN GOTT MEIN GOTT MEIN GOTT...".⁶³

As for Nêa herself, with or without the help of Weingerter, she too is doomed. Living a lifeless life, speaking to no-one, always on guard and with "ce noeud de vipères qui couvait fermentait au fond d'elle-même",⁶⁴ recognizing that she and Gordon are no longer on the same wave-length if indeed they ever were, finding both people and things deprived of significance to the point of causing others to feel their

very non-existence (under her gaze the narrator sees himself as ridiculous and non-existent), there is no way out, the end is inevitable. Indeed her only fear is not of death but of the form death might take: "elle voulait que ça se fasse tout douillement tout proprement sans drames sans cris sans lutte".⁶⁵ Not able to live the half life of those around her she commits herself finally and irrevocably to death.

As with Robbe-Grillet's Les Gommès, the circle of fatality must close. The act 'manqué' has to be completed, and from the chaotic world she has created for herself, symbolized in her suitcase "béante chaotique"⁶⁶ in London, she seeks escape. Although the narrator is unable to comprehend her desire to "se réombilicaliser avec un passé devenu"... "mythique jeu de miroirs se reflétant à l'infini le long de labyrinthes superposés surimprimés"⁶⁷ as Gordon is also fearful of being carried away by a "passé fatalement transformé donc devenu mythique",⁶⁸ the past and present like that of Les Gommès are again linked together in a fatality that is inescapable whether it is interior or exterior to Man. Bessette's pessimism will allow of no such thing as free will: "si ce qu'on appelait la liberté le libre arbitre contenait une once un atome de réalité si nous n'étions pas tous et Gordon en particulier entraînés ballotés broyés par une monstrueuse implacable machine dont les lois le fonctionnement nous échappaient".⁶⁹

Gordon himself, Nêa's lover, because of his 'lâcheté' and inauthenticity, is unable to communicate with her or any other person, or to commit himself to anyone. The latter is one of the contributing factors in Nêa's death, making of her the 'néant' her name implies, rather than the 'antinéant' she seemed to represent to Gordon in war-torn London. For, like the Robbe-Grillet protagonists, it is also as an outsider in a dangerous situation that the Bessettian character establishes his relationship--again a sado-masochistic one--which is doomed by its nature in conventional society. Unlike the Robbe-Grillet protagonists however, these characters have no hope of going beyond their present condition, an outlook shared by all three of the Québécois authors dealt with in this thesis.

The war ends, and after some delay Gordon returns to his fiancée Maggie of the impeccable manners, who probably knows more than she admits and who like so many of the Sarrautian women, has made of her house and her children, her life. Like the others, by her very inauthenticity, refusing to commit herself in any way to assisting anyone, she contributes to Nêa's eventual death. As for Gordon, the teaching position he has in the university in Narcotown is a series of repetitive classes, with his life like that of the others in Narcotown, one of resignation compensated for by momentary escape into the oblivion of alcohol or eroticism--the escape taken by Ripcord, a kind of reincarnation of Jack, and who, with

the end of the war has only that and his beloved horses.

As unsure of his feelings and motivations as Nêa or indeed any of the others, Gordon frequents the military-minded Ripcord as he frequented Jack in London, both of whom he feels he basically detests. Nêa's arrival forces him to see things "qui avaient couvé sournoisement pendant des années, insidieux comme des kystes cancérogènes et qui brusquement avaient émergé avec la réémergence de Nêa, avaient franchi déchiré leur enveloppe membraneuse, attaquant menaçant rongé les centres vitaux de l'organisme", ⁷⁰ as indeed it forces others to see things they would rather not. The outsider in this instance is again acting as a catalyst in the Sarrautian sense awakening reactions in those who would rather not be disturbed. Exhausted, constantly inebriated, Gordon loses Maggie if indeed he ever had her--as he has lost Nêa. To the narrator he seems like a rat trapped in a labyrinth, a prisoner of a circle. As the well-trained rat's reactions are all conditioned so are those of the human beings in this novel. They are all prisoners of a fatality of their own making as are Robbe-Grillet's protagonists. Like the others Gordon is unable to see what is happening, blaming Nêa's condition on the control Weingerter exerts over her, not seeing until too late that it is all a result of his own weakness.

In this society where people give the illusion of living together but where in reality each retires behind his

own defenses to the point where no communication is possible, the only individual who seems at all content and 'authentic' is the stableboy who cares for Ripcord's sick horse and who unlike the others who have been unable to interpret the signs of Nêa's sickness, is able by his zeal and devotion to the task, his forgetting of self and his ability to do without question or hesitation what he has to do, to save the mare in his charge. In the cool temple-like haven of the stable, in the devotion he shows to his duty he seems the epitome of the old order of values, particularly in comparison to those involved in their erotic games and other vain attempts at amusement practised in the manor where Ripcord entertains his guests.

All this is observed and notated by Lagarde, reflected in and by this narrator, an individual tragically aware of Man's basic alienation from those of his own species and from society in general, feeling his own solitude and need for others, yet aware at the same time of these same things in others. Yet for him there is nothing beyond the present actuality, only the tragic acceptance of defeat, of Man's fate. His approach to the problem of Man's loss of self and inability to communicate with others, to know them or even to know himself is completely nihilistic. Lagarde is the embodiment of the pessimism and hopelessness expressed by Gerard Bessette in this 'tale told by an idiot', only too

aware of his own shortcomings and impotency as well as those of others, seeing his own life as "ce n'est pas ce que j'avais rêvé, car j'avais rêvé, je ne rêvais plus sauf la nuit quelquefois comme tout le monde".⁷¹ His resolution is not so much a resolution as a dull acceptance of despair and a recognition of his own and other's impotency.

Jean Basile:

In comparison with Bessette, although the three protagonists, Jérémie, Jonathan and Judith, seem to express basically the same attitude towards society and Man in general as the Bessettian characters, in the first two novels La Jument des Mongols and Le Grand Khan there is hope offered in the possibility of a new society formed by such as themselves. The history of each of the three Basile protagonists is the history of all three "à l'infini répétée par les autres et lui-même"⁷² and yet it is only in the final pages of the last novel Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk, that under Jonathan's instigation the three are able to briefly but completely become one: "Pour une fois dans notre vie, nous allons être, sans esprit critique désormais, la petite chaîne que l'on a nommé pendant tant de pages les trois 'J'".⁷³

Although Jérémie states that the evenings and times they spend together are never really unhappy, the life they live is unreal, in a world with doors closed to the outside. In their conversation together they constantly try to make points

without ever succeeding, though they share the same dreams and rites "il me semble que notre vie, Jonathan, Judith et moi, se passe comme au cinéma, nous nous montrons les uns aux autres selon le temps et l'heure de notre complaisance en gros plans, en plans américains ou moyens, généraux, nous étalons aux yeux des autres telle ou telle partie de nous-mêmes sur laquelle nous voulons insister tout en gardant le secret sur les autres..."⁷⁴ It is their life 'un peu sordide' but again as Jérémie puts it 'à notre mesure'.⁷⁵ and it is a life of the privileged. Drawn together from the day they met, Jérémie sees that outside the limits of their inner circle they do not understand each other, as Jonathan and Judith do not understand his love for Armande, who forms a strident note amongst their three voices. Whereas to Jérémie, Armande is of him, Jonathan and Judith are parallel to him "ils sont à moi sans être de moi, je me sens responsable d'eux mais ils sont libres et je garde ma liberté".⁷⁶ Their belief in their integrity as a group is tinged with pessimism recognizing the insecurity of their self-created world. As they 'age' this becomes more evident. In Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk Judith sees them as "fêtus de cet espoir qui nous reste de ne plus avoir besoin de nacelles ni de jet, quand nous trouvons en dedans de nous-mêmes une sorte de force à nous replier sur un rêve où la ville devient un nuage pornographique".⁷⁷

Not part of the real world, they are only too aware of

the fragility of this one they have created for themselves: "Oh! Jérémie, sais-tu que le jour où nous saurons pour sûr que nous ne sommes pas les fils du soleil, nous nous jetterons tous ensemble dans la mer".⁷⁸ However, as in the case of the tribunal formed to judge Armande, they feel themselves capable of condemning others. Believing themselves to be outsiders, they allow no-one to enter their own inner circle. With their self-preoccupation, they are often totally unaware of people or events apart from them, and take no responsibility for others. In fact, if one member introduces a stranger into their circle, the latter is usually looked upon as an intruder. When Armande is alive Judith feels she is a threat to the love she, Judith, has for Jérémie and Jonathan. Once dead, however, Armande assumes the mythical proportions formerly granted their mentor, Victor. As Judith states, the difference between Armande and Anne (Jérémie's wife) is that the former is dead. It is the trio relationship that caused Armande's death as it causes Judith's own relationships to end in tragedy. Any relationship external to the three of them is doomed. Their trio prevents any of them establishing any real connections with outsiders to this group. This involves the implication that none of them can procreate himself. Jérémie, apart from his narcissistic and yet desperate conviction that he contains within himself a secret tare, simultaneously condemning any child of his and Armande as too beautiful to be realized, or when he does have one with Anne

as necessarily tainted, would seem the only one likely to have children. Judith, even though she would like to have a child to regain the purity they no longer have and who would represent to her "quelque chose d'avouable aussi dans une vie qui ne l'est par trop",⁷⁹ does not seem able to do so. As for Jonathan his book is his only child, a book based on their three lives together. Aware of an encroaching despair they often seek consolation in a 'past' mythical but common to all three, embodied for them in the father figure of Victor. Yet when Victor briefly returns to see Jérémie, offering Jérémie the opportunity to leave with him, prevented in part by the death of Armande which will in turn assume mythical proportions, Jérémie chooses to accept a painting which never dries, as memory from the past rather than actualizing this past in the present. Regretting his past childhood and adolescence, Jérémie is nevertheless aware of the continual boredom he then experienced and realizes that all three of them are now living without a sense of reality.

Victor returns one more time dying within a few hours of his arrival at Jérémie's, whether or not his return and death are real and the death is caused by Jérémie is not as important as the actual death of this symbol of their past. This death leaves Judith with the impression that all is over, that Jonathan has written his best lines: "Jérémie cette nuit a assassiné sa jeunesse, Judith est sa complice, Jonathan est

l'instigateur du crime".⁸⁰

Neither past nor future hold anything for them. Only the present is important. Judith's desperate plea reveals their fear of going beyond this present, their desire to remain in the security they have constructed for themselves: "ne pense pas, ni à après, ni à l'avant, surtout, reste là, avec nous, dans le temps présent"... "plus jamais bouger et plus jamais parler"... "ne plus parler de rien".⁸¹

Even despite growing up together they still withhold parts of themselves from each other. As Jérémie says: "nous avons tous des jardins dont on ne sait soi-même presque rien sinon qu'ils existent mais que personne, jamais, ne doit y pénétrer sous peine d'en compromettre l'existence même".⁸² Judith also recognizes that together they have failed in the task they set themselves, that of killing the outside world. Wanting to get back to the enchantments and innocence of their childhood they have arrived only at despair.

Individually the failure of the trio is reflected in the failure of each to find himself and what he is searching for. Desiring they know not exactly what, they miss out again and again on 'moments' which pass by while they are thinking about what they would like to do or be, as was equally the case with Butor's protagonists and to a lesser extent Bessette's. All three of the trio desire some catastrophe or tragedy to give

meaning to their lives yet when this tragedy does appear in the form of the death of Armande, all three are unaware of its import, partly because of the fear they need to hide from themselves at this event. As Jérémie says, discussing the death scene in Jonathan's novel, the three of them acted like primitive people attempting to rid themselves of evil spirits faced by an "angoisse qui accompagne quelque chose qui nous dépasse".⁸³ Jérémie, at the time of the death, misses out completely on it, dreaming only of a 'Paul et Virginie' type tragedy. Indeed, to the three of them, Armande's death seems to be a quiet exit through the back door--'la porte de service'.⁸⁴ --as, Judith says, she entered by in the first place. Before she dies, Armande tells Jérémie their love is doomed. Like that between himself and Judith it has become sterile through too many ties of blood. At the same time, according to Armande, their love is too great to withstand the slightest setback. Purity itself, it can only end in tragedy.

Armande's death is an excuse for romanticism to Jérémie, and romanticism is to him an escape from reality, either backwards in time to that of the 'ancien Canadien' roaming open spaces and breathing clean air, or dreaming of his own childhood.

As for life itself to Jérémie "Le temps d'apprendre à vivre il est déjà trop tard".⁸⁵ Escape this way is an impossible dream. To all the Québécois authors, their escape is

one through imagination, based on an idealistic past or an idealised state of being, which they themselves recognize as unattainable. Unlike them the French protagonists have a goal which even though seemingly remote is still possible and realizable. Their capitulation is brought about by weariness and loneliness whereas the Québécois protagonists' capitulation arises from despair and recognition of their total impotency.

With the end of hope and his quest for love, seeing nothing much left, Jérémie's reaction is to resort to playing games with his rather dull secretary, Anne, the opposite of everything the three 'J's' believe they stand for. This results in his marriage to Anne and the gradual 'embourgeoisement' of his life. Although he does attempt through a desperate 'hippie'-type search, accompanied by all the necessary drugs and paraphernalia, to regain what he thinks he has lost, he only ends by making himself seem somewhat ridiculous. Jérémie has taken the easy way out, and has even tried to reject his past in the form of Jonathan and Judith, and in particular the former, but finds he can neither forget nor do without the other two. With Jonathan he goes over past memories. Jérémie avoids touching on those which matter and hurt the most, but the dependency he has on Jonathan is real and cannot be denied, although neither he nor Jonathan really understands how their relationship works and lasts.

Jonathan believed Jérémie to be the happiest of the three at the time of his marriage to Anne, since he appeared to have made an 'end' to it all, whether this end be ugly or beautiful.

With Jérémie's marriage to Anne, which both Judith and Jonathan regard as a betrayal and indecent, Jonathan feels that it is not just Jérémie going but their youth. Unsure even of his own ability to create, he looks with despair on the others, trying to possess people as they possess things: Jérémie and his world, Judith, overly dramatic, with the probable homosexual, Adolphe. Between himself and Judith he sees a wall of incommunicability over which they could formerly climb with ease, but now as time goes on, not because of lies but rather because of the silences between them, becoming unscaleable. Able to look at the three of them far more critically than can either Judith or Jérémie, he sees he must find his escape in his work: "il me faut inventer de nouveaux jeux, découvrir de nouvelles musiques, même croire qu'il y aura ici un jour une révolution".⁸⁷ Sometimes he too thinks of escape in time or space, though recognizing the futility of such imagining. Regarding himself as a member of an ancient race that cannot die, he dreams of what it would be like to be a young 'draveur', instead of the decadent young poet he is, although he is by no means a 'beatnik'. He is also aware of the difficulty of the task facing him--

that of writing a book where he must use reality to express the truth. He will obviously describe a world "que j'ai inventé à leur mesure, au milieu d'un décor d'emprunt"⁸⁸ -- words used by Basile to describe his own books.

Jonathan sees his task as that of "rattraper le temps"⁸⁹ when he, Judith and Jérémie were young and not yet covered by the protective carapaces they have since donned. In artistic creation, Jonathan finds as did Butor's protagonists, a form of eternity far different from his daily journalistic work "antre d'oubli où ma vie se résorbe en un travail journalistique".⁹⁰ He thinks of his childhood and the choice offered him by the devil of beauty, riches, or glory. Suspecting all three to be one and the same he is unable to choose, but the others--Jérémie with his beauty and Judith with her riches, soon to be abandoned--complement his possible future glory. The three attributes and the three of them complementing one another, Jonathan realizes that 'renoncer aux autres c'était en même temps renoncer à moi-même'.⁹¹ Jonathan would like to feel he is like the divine infant Moses, cradled on the Saint-Lawrence⁹² with the inherent implication that he is born to lead his people out of the wilderness and into the promised land. Like Jérémie and Judith, after the publication of his book, he still feels he has not succeeded in what he is searching for. Before when he had neither the money nor courage to leave, and refused as a

matter of dignity to accept any offers of payment of a trip, he had passionately wanted this departure. Now he no longer even cares. When the long-awaited glory comes he is "d'autant plus triste, d'autant plus solitaire que sa gloire accroit".⁹³ Deception is all that remains. What he thought of as an act of creation carrying in it the seeds of eternity seems barren and worthless, and he is accused by Jérémie of merely being a stylist. In his books he had the intention of refinding their 'selves' but what he has made is not 'them'. Even laughter has gone and he too tries drugs in an effort to find something in this life where he is no longer able to write and where there is nothing left: "maintenant on reste où l'on est".⁹⁴

Jérémie believes that Jonathan would in actuality like to resemble him (Jérémie) but that he has made himself the pure white and isolated being he sometimes appears to compensate for his own impotency. Judith even says of him "il se croit pur parce qu'il se construit solitaire, marin, prisonnier, ou tout simplement éternel adolescent".⁹⁵ Jérémie despairs of Jonathan ever doing anything for himself let alone writing the book which is to give them their immortality.

When young, Jonathan was an impenitent dreamer, optimistically giving his work to Victor and to the others to read, proud and always hoping for the best but needy of the approval of others. He has the impression his whole life has

been spent between work and sleep. He regrets the bad influence he feels Victor's romanticism has had on all of them and still has, and in moments of deep pessimism agrees with his girl-friend Adélaïde that all is excrement⁹⁶ "et moi-même je respire tout cela avec délice". At times he would like everything simplified, Jérémie to have a child, Judith to marry, Victor to return sowing his disarray and giving his false solutions, reinforcing Jonathan's own pessimism by sadistically teaching him the limits of freedom. Jonathan sees Man in general as an unconscious cannibal, responsible for everything in this life. But his pessimism with regard to Life and Man is tinged with nostalgia for the past, when the three of them, complete in themselves, were independent yet tributaries of one another. With the thought that all must finish, he feels as if sliced in two by a 'lame Wilkinson'.⁹⁷ He fears that in the same way Victor has achieved mythical proportions, maybe each of them has become a myth formed by their own united egoism, and that they are outsiders of their own choosing.

To Jonathan his failure in art means total failure. For him there was no hope in love. Love has two faces to Jonathan-- one comic, the other tragic. Love itself seems like an act in the Roman games where the participants are both victims and executioners. He thinks of what love should mean to him and of his relationship with Armande, where he resembled the one 'en gros sabots' in the castle of Le Grand Meaulnes.⁹⁸ The

love affair that never really existed should have been to him a source of marvels, producing feeling enough to destroy him, but when faced with women he seems able only to regard them as sexual objects unless like Judith, they have no sexual significance to him at all. Jonathan is essentially alone. One of the things that disturbs him most about his relationship with Adélaïde is that they are really two 'solitudes',⁹⁹ together. Unlike the two others he is able to accept this as part of his destiny as a creator.

His tendency to mock at himself and his feelings has alienated the others without their ever having really understood him. Jérémie begins to know Jonathan only through the book Jonathan writes and through his character Jean with his "certain tendance pour l'humain, de la pudeur, une mélancolie bien sûr".¹⁰⁰ In the incident of Jérémie's return from his honeymoon with Anne, the former completely misjudges Jonathan's wearing of Armande's dress, which had awakened in Jonathan tragic memories of her death. In fact, neither Jérémie nor Judith are able to understand Jonathan's motivation, and the reception prepared for the long-awaited Jérémie by Judith and Jonathan turns to tragedy. Jonathan, rejected by Jérémie, receives this rejection like a sabre wound in his stomach. He tries to convince himself he can do without the other two and in particular, Jérémie, yet realizes this is not what he wants. "Je n'ai plus qu'à ma vie à vivre, ça ne m'im-

pressionne pas."¹⁰¹

Unable to escape by any means, Jonathan must face reality. His book, still representing his desire to be rejuvenated, as it does to the others, is also indicative of his aging. He now knows his own courageous youth will pass as quickly as Jérémie's beauty and both will suddenly be surprised and horrified "de n'y avoir vu que du feu, malgré nos promesses, nous n'avons pas su ni les uns ni les autres saisir l'instant où l'on passe de la verdeur acide à la maturité".¹⁰²

As for Judith, her search for love seems to be rather an attempt at avoiding boredom, which she fears above all else but which she feels is gradually overcoming her. "il n'y a plus que le doux castor de l'ennui de la Bonté et de la Justice, il a abattu lentement les baobabs abris des grands grizzlis pour irriguer le grand lac de l'ennui".¹⁰³ This is again an ending of all hope in finding something to give meaning to her life and to the lives of those two with whom her life is bound so closely.

Revolt is boring to her. Age brings with it more and more days and she is beginning to doubt the existence of Love, the emotion she holds so important in life. Her relationship with Adolphe was doomed, for, as Jérémie says, she always has to break what she loves. As she lies to herself and to others,

she receives only lies from those she wants to love. She says Adolphe is free as the air, in the same way Jérémie said Armande was free, yet Judith wants to own Adolphe completely and wants to believe his only pleasure is with her. Jonathan tells her she does not believe in what she says and she retorts that she does not say what she believes. Both are right. Jonathan is aware that she "ne veut plus que 'paraître'"¹⁰⁴ before him or anyone so that people form an opinion about her not on what she is but on what she wants to be. Thus inauthentic in the way Butör's protagonists are, she too loses out on love as they do. The despair of the French Canadian is in her statement that if love does exist it does so in another country where she cannot go or is too lazy to go to, or in another time, making it equally unattainable.

Her loneliness is more painful for her than for Jérémie and Jonathan, for she has nowhere to go "prophétesse sur sa montagne trop haut et trop loin pour qu'on m'entende".¹⁰⁵ Like the other two she is haunted by the thought of death, but horrified by its stark reality. Even sickness repels her for, to Judith, it is "l'image même de la peur".¹⁰⁶ Someone else's dying makes her feel as if she herself is, in the same way as Jonathan reacts to her attempted suicide telling her that something in him died at the same time. What she finds most shocking about Armande's death is not that she is now irremediably lost, but that the actual loss is not so

important, almost like the loss of their own youth. This lack of import of a person's death does reveal something to both Judith and Armande that they both look upon as invaluable. To Judith it revealed to her, for the first time, the earth, its grandeur and its beauty, making her aware of a thousand questions still to be answered. To Armande came an almost identical revelation--that "il est bon parfois de vivre dans un autre monde, on voit ainsi les choses sous un autre aspect".¹⁰⁷ But Judith's attempt at suicide from despair has only added to her despair. Having done it because she failed, and still feeling she has failed, finding this very failure immoral in comparison to what she regards as the success of the other two, she can only bitterly complain "j'en ai assez de rater les grands rêves".¹⁰⁸ Yet she tries again in Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk in her endless search, recognizing at the same time that all she sees is a reflection of what she wants to see, as it is to all the "nouveau roman" protagonists. What she wants more than anything is for the other to be fulfilled through her and by her. The man she loves is "un être à construire".¹⁰⁹

Her quest has religious overtones, as she herself is more openly influenced by her religious background than any other of the "nouveau roman" protagonists dealt with seem to be. In each man she finds God and yet they are "dieu du néant, dieu quand même and quand même néant"¹¹⁰ rejecting in

turn both God and man. It is Jonathan who tells her all are God. He is everywhere but not in Québec so He is not with them whose lives are tied up with Québec and its future, but that future they look upon with despair: "Mais nous sommes un si petit, un si petit pays".¹¹¹ None of them express a desire for revolution in the traditional sense but there is a link with the Robbe-Grillet concept of revolution through pornography: "une pornographie virile serait la grande chance de tout séparatisme".¹¹²

Of the minor characters in the three novels, all are almost exclusively interpreted by the three main characters. Yet sometimes more is revealed of them than these three are aware of, as is the case with Armande. Though often made fun of and looked down on by the others, she is a worthy victim of the sacrifice the three of them make to their gods of youth and beauty, unlike her successor in Jérémie's life, Anne, old before her time and uncomprehending. Though Armande plays too many games with herself and others, her insight into the characters of the others is as sure as her analysis of herself as both a woman in love and a future mother. She is aware of her need for other people and when faced with death, rather than die alone in her room, goes out into the street, as she will later come to Jérémie's apartment in her almost sacrificial garb. Like Adolphe she seems very much an orphan without any ties except those she has

with Jérémie, Judith and Jonathan, which during her life they are unwilling to take the responsibility for, as for anything, and she must wait till death brings her the recognition she deserves.

Part of a young nation which as their mentor, Victor, said: "Nous sommes une petite nation qui n'a pas de vraiment graves problèmes mais qui fait comme si; cela demande quand même du courage"¹¹³ these three young Québécois with no real external problems, are left to face their inner problems. With the final realization as Jonathan says, that "on ne vit vraiment qu'une fois"¹¹⁴ their solitude, feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and realization of the life they have and are losing, creates the despair not only of the French Canadian but of Modern Man.

Réjean Ducharme:

The creation of the child world of fantasy and imagination based on childhood separated from adulthood can only have one of two outcomes, death or adulthood as an inevitable development when childhood ends. 'L'adulterie', with its accompanying evil of modern civilisation symbolized in the automobile, which like so many of Man's inventions seems to control its inventor and to have taken from him his very dignity, and takes the lives of the pale young friends as well as the pets of the protagonists, creeps up on the child insidiously. What the Ducharme children fear most is upon them before they are

even aware of it. Yet at times this hatred for the adult world seems to be more a reflection of the rejection of the protagonist by this world.

"Ô choses, ô êtres, comme vous êtes inhospitaliers, comme vous êtes impolis, comme vous êtes hautains, comme vous êtes avares de sourires! Comment vous aimer? Comment ne pas vous haïr?"..."Quel monde est celui-ci, où il ne suffit pas de vouloir recevoir et être reçu pour recevoir et être reçu."¹¹⁵ This rejection turned to hatred by those rejected is also seen in the protagonists' attitude to their mothers, or mother figures, again representative of adulthood. At moments of weakness, their need to be loved appears, as in the case of Bérénice when ill. She passionately affirms her love for her mother, yet simultaneously feeling she is betraying her inner self by doing so, as does Iode when she and her companions have been saved by Faire-Faire in the forest, leading to their eventual voyage with Faire-Faire and Iode's mother: "Qui les a laissées s'introduire ici dans nos secrets d'enfants? L'ombre qu'elles projettent déjà sur le littoral détruit toute l'envie que j'en avais et fait pousser à sa place un mépris et un désespoir tel que jamais je n'en ai connu"..."Adieu salut! Adieu rédemption".¹¹⁶ Iode describes her inner suffering as that of Leda torn open by the swan and giving up her very bowels.

Nevertheless there is a strange affinity between these

children and mother figures, the latter filled with a bitterness arising only too obviously from there once having thought and felt like their children, and seeing the inevitable future for these children. These mothers all have strange backgrounds. Outsiders, as adults they drink too much, and though age has reached them they constantly reject it. Ina tells her daughter, Iode, not to collaborate: "éteignez ce qui éclaire, tuez ce qui vit et suicidez-vous. Ainsi, peut-être vous aurez sauvé la face".¹¹⁷ The loveless marriages of these apparently 'cold' women are all marriages of convenience arranged when they themselves were--orphan-like--in need of security, and unsuspectingly felt they would be saved by such a marriage from all that threatened them. The children however, with more insight than their mothers had, laugh at their mothers' useless sacrifices. At the same time these 'adult' mothers realize the children too will be 'had' in the end. As Faire-Faire says, "Mais en grandissant un enfant s'use"... "un jour ou l'autre, les enfants, manquant de courage, se vendent".¹¹⁸ These adult outsiders, like those of Nathalie Sarraute, are constantly torn between their past childhood and the present reality.

The games Faire-Faire does play are essentially adult's games, since she is an adult, yet she uses these games to turn on the other adults and tell them to "mangez de la merde". Mille-Mille's spiritual mother and mistress, Questa, has the same ambivalence of attitude as do the others. In actuality

it is she who contributes to the final loss of Chateaugué's hold over Mille-Milles. Chateaugué is aware of this but like all the masochistically inclined friends of the protagonists, while not liking the responsibility given her, aids this very friendship by looking after Questa's children. Although it is questionable as to whether these friends exist or not, the sacrifices they make for their stronger companions, as well as their inclinations to suffer through and by them satisfy simultaneously the desire for domination of the protagonist, and also the need the protagonist has to control beauty, an attribute the protagonist does not possess. At the same time the sadomasochistic relationship established, like those in Robbe-Grillet's novels, creates bonds outside existing society allowing a different form of communication not possible otherwise.

Chateaugué is doomed by encroaching adulthood. Whether she, Asie Azothe, or Constance Chlore exist or not does not matter. What they represent, the purity, innocence and beauty of childhood--an ideal childhood protected by big strong and beautiful brothers quite unlike the protagonists' own weak brothers--cannot survive the world. They must die in the purity of their childhood. Yet the protagonists are torn between their need to keep the purity symbolized in their friends and an opposing desire to harm it. As Mille-Milles says of Chateaugué, "Tout ce qui s'attire un être bon et innocent,

c'est le dégoût et, conséquemment, le désespoir. Tout ce qu'elle s'attire, ce sont des tentatives de corruption et des tentations de viol".¹¹⁹ Mille-Milles' relationship with Chateaugué becomes increasingly ambiguous. He even sees in her a hidden sexuality, deliberately so or not, he does not know. He himself is simultaneously attracted and repelled by the sexual prostituting aspect of women, while Chateaugué mainly represents to him a child-like innocence. Yet he feels not even she understands him. Sometimes she seems to him a very "cathédrale de mal"¹²⁰ consisting of only a soul when what he needs above all else is a body. "Rends-moi semblable à toi, cher coeur. Mais on ne demande pas pareille chose à une Chateaugué"... "Il ne faut rien demander à Chateaugué; on pourrait tout détruire en se montrant sous ses vraies couleurs"... "Avec elle, il faut que tout ce qu'on dit ne veuille rien dire. Il faut la laisser être."¹²¹ He is constantly afraid she will unmask herself and reveal herself not to be the pure being he would like to emulate.

As Mille-Milles decides they are not meant to die together in the suicide pact he made for them, he reveals his 'lâcheté' to Chateaugué. He does not know what she really thinks of him or, indeed, what she thinks at all. Her strength is also a question mark. As is the case with Bérénice's best friend, Constance Chlore, Chateaugué is struck by a car, but, unlike the former, she is not killed. Both were following

the protagonists on bicycles at the time. Just as the death of Constance Chlore is necessary and desired to protect her purity, so that of Chateaugué seems wished for by Mille-Milles who would like her to leave in order to preserve their friendship and the past they had together. Faced with the innocence in her eyes, he can only see "Les essences du néant et des ténèbres" awakening violent reactions in him "elle me demande quelque chose avec la couleur de ses yeux dans une langue que je ne connais pas".¹²² She cannot and does not want to understand his sexual sufferings. Loving her in purity and impurity, he hopes their friendship can conquer his impurity. As her presence begins to annoy him he sadistically tortures her mentally to hide his feelings from himself and from her, and is frightened at his own reaction. He can only be cynical-- a cynicism which comes to all the young Ducharme protagonists as it did to Judith in Basile's novels. It is an inevitable result of the ending of childhood, when laughter is chosen instead of tears "rire à mort",¹²³ or as Iode says taking herself in her own arms "C'est cela rire. Être moi: être seul avec moi et bien: n'y avoir que moi"¹²⁴ since "Il faut rire! Le rire est le contraire de l'amour, de la foi et de l'espoir".¹²⁵

Causing her to suffer, Mille-Milles enjoys Chateaugué's tears, but even this enjoyment finally turns to indifference and boredom, and he is completely lost to her. Yet once more he realizes she is friendship and he wants her back. Like

Bérénice, he feels he should be haunted by a great unique vision of Chateaugué, but this is not so. When she does return, she cannot really reach him, and reacts like a faithful dog who has been rejected. Mille-Milles feels guilt and is ashamed of his disloyalty to her in her absence. When he would like to show her how much she means to him he can say nothing, paralysed by her look. She represents to him the division within his own self--that of soul and body, yet he feels she will always be there to uphold their childhood. As he capitulates, becoming part of the adult world, taking on a menial job as dishwasher, he forces her to become a waitress in the same cafe. He even persuades her to give up painting her lips black, the mark they had decided on together as the sign of their being outsiders and tells her the name they chose for the two of them--Tate--is no more. She can only accuse him of cowardice and must accept his decision that they live in separate rooms. Her world is a frail and miniscule one based on her love for him which is all she has. Timid and unsure of herself, yet sometimes able to show astonishing strength and perseverance, she is nevertheless afraid of upsetting others, a trait shared by all these 'friends'. Having been forced to sacrifice so much for Mille-Milles she tells him she is beginning to hate him and fears him as she would the devil. Her only way out is suicide, the death Mille-Milles has gone too far beyond to accept, and which he however forced

upon her child mind. When she kills herself, pitifully small in the overlarge wedding dress, he can only see her as stupid and mediocre, hiding his own despair under a desire to laugh, yet overcome by a strange uneasiness.

Mille-Milles in his 'lâcheté' is far more akin to the brothers of the other protagonists than to Bérénice and Iode. Time after time, these brothers betray their sisters, real or imaginary, as they become part of the adult world before their sisters do. From the start however they lack the heart and imagination of their female companions. Christian's hand is soft and cold, with no fervour. When asleep he is like a stone, his fists tightly clenched. To keep Bérénice quiet, Christian promises to take her away from the world she hates, but he never will, nor will Iode's brother, who also tries to keep his sister happy by compromise. To the feminine protagonists, their brothers seem to be prematurely old, false, suspect, and having about them the taste of death which comes with encroaching 'adulterie'.

In both L'Avalée des avalés and L'Océantume the special friends of Bérénice and Iode resemble Chateaugué. Frail, blond, seemingly orphans, afraid of the cities and their corruption, the relationship they develop with the protagonists, although based on purity has strongly lesbian overtones, reflected in the two stories in L'Avalée des avalés of the two nuns who died together in the abbey, consumed by fire, and the

sisters who having lived in the same room as that occupied by Bérénice and Constance Chlore, killed themselves by consuming glass. The more adult relationships these protagonists develop later, Bérénice with Gloria and Iode with Faire-Faire, or that developed between Mille-Milles and Questa, hint more strongly of this lesbianism, or in the case of Mille-Milles, of incest, but represent at the same time a betrayal of the former 'loves'. They suggest at the same time the desire on the part of the protagonists to return to the lost innocence of their childhood. The second relationship to a large extent mirrors the first, yet as the death of these first friends is unconsciously or consciously needed, so they reject the second friendship for the betrayal it represents and the useless repetition--and repetition is a sign of adulthood--of something extraordinary that has been lost.

Sometimes, however, just as despair overcomes the protagonist at everything else, doubt as to the actual value of their companions also arises. At times they feel as if they have nothing to say to them and their solitude is increased when in their company. Their young friends also accuse them of corrupting them, causing them to do things they would not otherwise do. In this case it is not a corruption of their purity but an inability on the part of the friends to see as far as the protagonists do. Nor do they have the endurance of the protagonists although at times they exhibit extra-

ordinary courage for their seeming frailty.

The desire of the protagonists for the death of those they love is a reaction against 'le sadisme du Titan'.¹²⁶ Bérénice hopes that Constance Chlore will mean nothing to her once the latter is dead. Thus she will be able to laugh in the face of death, but her laugh again is the bitter laugh of Mille-Milles and of Judith. "Il ne fallait pas qu'elle continue à vivre. C'aurait été un blasphème à sa beauté et à sa spontanéité".¹²⁷ Yet she is completely defenceless in the event of Constance Chlore's death, feeling this to be an evil trick of the 'Titan'. In the same way, in the diary discovered by her brother, Iode writes of her desire to see Asie Azothe dead, not wanting any other friends, knowing with the death of someone, part of herself must die.

Once alone, Bérénice is overcome by loneliness, but she does not want to admit to it, trying to find in others the friendship she has lost but she is constantly disappointed. With her gradual sexual awakening, she is again torn between her need for others and her self-disgust, though feeling herself isolated and alone like Basile's Judith "assise sur ma haute montagne".¹²⁸ The solitude she experiences brings on feelings of going mad, where there is no-one to keep her from herself. However, she realizes that in madness lies an intensity of life, an ability to see only what one wishes to see and above all extraordinary lucidity. In fact, her mad-

ness like that of the poet Nelligan and the other young Ducharme protagonists is a reaction against the world they find themselves being forced into, as the Robbe-Grillet protagonists display their peculiar form of madness. Nelligan, who seems to represent the purity of youth overcome by madness when faced with adulthood, echoes their own despair "Nous ne sommes pas vieux mais déjà las de vivre".¹²⁹ To all these young protagonists 'adulterie' means "Tout ce qui était plat se met à creuser des abîmes sous tes pas. Tout ce qui était léger se met à t'écraser. De l'ère des rires et des chagrins, tu passes à l'ère des délires et des désespoirs. Ta vie devient vaste comme toute la vie".¹³⁰

Punished by her uncle, Bérénice has Constance Chlore's ghost to keep her company with its gentleness and innocence, yet Bérénice wishes she could remember her more vividly. Her desire to keep the purity of Constance Chlore is reflected in her desire to keep the children she is in charge of the same way "Je m'armerai jusqu'aux dents pour sauver ta joie d'enfant. Je me battrai jusqu'à la dernière goutte de mon sang pour qu'aucune adulterie ne te touche".¹³¹ Overcome by loneliness she drinks like her mother, and tries to commit suicide mutilating herself without really being aware of it. She is then sent away to Israel where she believes at first that she has finally found reality and authenticity: "Ici la guerre a rendu l'être humain à lui-même. Ici l'âme de l'être humain

reprend ses droits. Ici l'être humain délivré, déclenché par la foi et la violence, éclate"... "Ici on meurt en faisant quelque chose de drôle; on meurt en se battant. Ici la vie a été rendue à l'être humain".¹³² But she will once again be disappointed in this society based also on a religion breeding only hatred and where those who preach it do not believe what they say. In Israel she tells herself she must remain faithful to Constance Chlore and Christian, finding it necessary to repeat this to herself often as if she is already forgetting: "Il faut s'accrocher là, dans le temps, où on a souhaité que les choses stoppent; il faut s'accrocher là, dans le passé, où on croit avoir été beau"... but cynicism is gaining more hold over her and her only means of salvation is Gloria, again an orphan, her parents killed by the Nazis. She tells Bérénice--quoting Rimbaud--"Si on fait le vide autour d'un souvenir, il ne reste plus rien que ce souvenir dans l'infini qu'on a, et ce souvenir devient infini".¹³³

Bérénice deliberately flaunts her relationship with Gloria but at the same time feels she is betraying Constance Chlore. Using the latter's own words she feels herself violating the tomb of her dead friend. Once more her need for tenderness is overpowered by her cynicism and laughter "Je réagis à une goutte de miel par une mer de fiel".¹³⁴ She is overcome by self-disgust and in turn blames Constance Chlore for having abandoned her. She has Gloria to keep others away

by the very repulsiveness of her. Thinking again of Constance Chlore she feels they should have died together, but as was the case with Mille-Milles, the courage for such an act has disappeared with encroaching adulthood. She deliberately cuts off feeling "Pour ne pas avoir l'air de trahir trop docilement ce qui a été beau en soi, on fait semblant de ne pas avoir faim".¹³⁵ Finally finding herself alone with Gloria, in a reaction of self-protection, rejection and disgust, she uses this poor reject as a shield, destroying thus her own betrayal and entering the world of adults. Ironically Bérénice notes with the cynicism common to all these protagonists that the others believed it was an act of courage on the part of Gloria and accepted it as such, needing heroines.

One of the first indications of adulthood was the approach of boredom or 'ennui', preventing them doing anything. Things, even trees loved before and Nature itself, become boring. Even pain becomes a habit. As Bérénice says "Je suis arrivée dans un pays où je m'ennuie à mourir".¹³⁶ Perhaps the only escape is through death. Bérénice feels if she were to rule the world--and her desire for power and domination is one shared by all the Ducharme protagonists--she would punish all wrongdoers with 'l'ennui'. Once in the realm of boredom, the only moments when one is not bored

are those touching on death. Boredom and monotony are "Ces abrasifs qui rongent l'homme jusqu'à la haine"¹³⁷ and which will finally disfigure and destroy the protagonists, taking from them even their desire to leave as it did to Basile's. The gradual realization that there is no longer any desire for anything has finally plunged them into despair "la proie de l'oisiveté, de la mortelle oisiveté, pas de celle qui est paresse, mais de celle qui est impuissance, qui est désespoir, qui s'empare de celui qui est épuisé davantage et davantage encore jusqu'à ce que le seul battement de son coeur lui fasse mal, le brûle".¹³⁸

The only possible escape from boredom other than death is to be found in 'l'amertume', a mixture of bitterness and regret, since in boredom there is no 'amertume'--there is in fact nothing. And it is in memories and particularly the sweetest ones that is to be found this 'amertume'. Thus what is left is only memories of the past. Usually the present finds people sitting doing nothing. Only when present is past is it missed bitterly. Since they are not actually living in the present, they are not even real. As far as memories are concerned only such as stones can have faithful memories. The human soul eliminates what it does not choose to remember and develops and modifies what it holds onto. Maybe even the soul itself is nothing but memory and conditioned reflexes long since forgotten. It is only after childhood

that people are really 'born'.

The gradually increasing cynicism which beings to erase the conviction that for the protagonist it is only she or he that matters and that the only fight worth fighting is that fought alone slowly turns to a dull acceptance: "Au début de cet entretien, j'avais des principes; je croyais. Je m'étais formé une idée précise de moi, et je m'exerçais à tout faire pour l'imposer à la réalité. Je prétendais, m'arrangeant des pouvoirs divins, changer la réalité et les choses, les amener à force d'opiniâtreté à s'adapter à une définition simple et rigide que j'appelais moi".¹³⁹ Bérénice repeats Mille-Milles' plaint when she says "Je cherche un noeud à moi-même, et je n'arriverai jamais à ce noeud. Je sais qu'il n'y en a pas. J'ambitionnais de refaire le chaos en moi-même, de tout reprendre à zéro. J'ai bien peur qu'en arrivant à zéro il n'y ait plus rien à reprendre"¹⁴⁰ and she realizes this very act of self-construction has destroyed all her spontaneity and her heart. She arrives at the conclusion that she is not responsible for herself and cannot change the direction given her. Hope is flying too high and then falling down to earth and killing oneself.

No longer able to want the impossible, to hope in it is to be a fool. Time does not stand still. The hatred for the adult world becomes tiring, particularly when adulthood is taking the place of vanishing childhood "Tout ce qui meu-

blait le rêve de n'être que des enfants, le rêve de ne rien troubler, tournant à coup au tragique, au martyre, à l'enfer".¹⁴¹

If there is a continued hatred for adults this can only turn into a hatred of self, self-disgust and contempt. Bérénice, filled with what she has developed inside her in her childhood, feels what she will bring forth will horrify others. She has nothing but contempt and cynicism for the world she is necessarily a part of and where no action has any real meaning. Yet the acceptance of this adult world can be taken as an end or as a beginning. For Mille-Milles who, unlike Chateaugué, accepts his adulthood though with cynicism, it is the dawning of a new day like all the other days: "Par la fenêtre, une lumière pâle pénètre, une lumière grise entre. Quelle est cette lumière? Est-ce la lumière grise du soir? Est-ce la lumière pâle de l'aurore? Est-ce quelque chose qui finit? Est-ce que tout déjà recommence?"¹⁴²

Thus starting with Nathalie Sarraute and proceeding through to Ducharme, the same basic despair and dull acceptance of their part in society as it exists is seen in all but one author, and that is Robbe-Grillet. It must be remembered however that what his characters do is so closely bound up with what they imagine that whether they succeed in going beyond the confines of the society they are in is questionable. In the final chapter showing conclusions and re-emphasizing comparisons the development through each author will be examined

in so far as it pertains to central themes developed throughout all six authors, French and Québécois.

FOOTNOTE REFERENCES

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2. Portrait d'un inconnu, page 203.
3. Le Planétarium, page 241.
4. Ibid., page 226.
5. Ibid., page 249.
6. Entre la vie et la mort, page 119.
7. Les Fruits d'or, page 224.
8. La grande aventure du roman français au 20^e siècle, (Paris, 1967.) page 163.
9. Tropismes, page 77.
10. Ibid., page 129.
11. Ibid., page 112.
12. Ibid., page 140.
13. Les Fruits d'or, page 210.
14. Entre la vie et la mort, page 154.
15. Ibid., pages 166-167.
16. Ibid., page 209.
17. Portrait d'un inconnu, page 223.
18. L'Emploi du temps, page 250.
19. La Modification, page 109.
20. Ibid., page 186.
21. Ibid., pages 237-238.
22. L'Emploi du temps, page 257.
23. Ibid., page 261.
24. La Modification, page 277.
25. Ibid., page 278.

26. Ibid., page 283.
27. Degrés, page 56.
28. Ibid., page 276.
29. Ibid., page 320.
30. L'Emploi du temps, page 218.
31. Le Voyeur, page 202.
32. La Jalousie, page 141.
33. Ibid., page 171.
34. Dans le labyrinthe, page 211.
35. Le Voyeur, page 220.
36. Dans le labyrinthe, pages 117-118.
37. Ibid., page 121.
38. Ibid., page 168.
39. Ibid., page 59.
40. Ibid., page 110.
41. Le Voyeur, page 94.
42. Whose explanation to the husband resembles "un témoignage en justice, ou de la récitation", La Jalousie, page 85.
43. Dans le labyrinthe, page 166.
44. Although Robbe-Grillet in his Preface to it denies this novel any allegorical interpretation.
45. Dans le labyrinthe, page 30.
46. L'Année dernière à Marienbad, pages 13-14.
47. "Le Nouveau roman et réalité", (Paris, Gallimard, 1964), pages 153-229.
48. La Maison de rendez-vous, page 54.
49. Ibid., page 133.
50. Ben F. Stoltzfus, Alain Robbe-Grillet and the French Novel, (Carbondale, S. Illinois University Press, 1964).

51. Jean Alter, "La Vision du monde d'Alain Robbe-Grillet", Structures et Signification, (Paris, Librairie Droz, 1966).
52. As discussed by Jean Ricardou in "Description et Infra-consciences chez Alain Robbe-Grillet", N.R.F., (nov. 1960), pages 890-900.
53. "La Sadisme contre la peur", op. cit.
54. Projet pour une révolution à New York, page 113. Also see importance of number 'three' again.
55. Ibid., page 113. Also see importance of number 'three' again.
56. L'Incubation, page 163.
57. Ibid., pages 64-65.
58. This imagery of comparison of Man to marine creatures is strikingly reminiscent of Sarraute, and to a lesser extent of Robbe-Grillet, page 70.
59. Ibid., page 72.
60. Ibid., page 122.
61. Ibid., page 123.
62. Ibid., page 120.
63. Ibid., page 179.
64. Ibid., page 64.
65. Ibid., page 169.
66. Ibid., page 93.
67. Ibid., page 52.
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69. Ibid., page 45.
70. Ibid., page 87.
71. Ibid., pages 97-98.
72. Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk, page 9.

73. Ibid., page 161.
74. La Jument des Mongols, page 169.
75. Ibid., page 17.
76. Ibid., page 56.
77. Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk, page 9.
78. La Jument des Mongols, page 92.
79. Ibid., page 144.
80. Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk, page 166.
81. Ibid., page 165.
82. La Jument des Mongols, page 16.
83. Le Grand Khan, page 256.
84. La Jument des Mongols, page 216.
85. Ibid., page 45.
86. Le Grand Khan, page 80.
87. Ibid., page 30.
88. La Jument des Mongols, avertissement, page 8.
89. Ibid., page 29.
90. Le Grand Khan, page 16.
91. Ibid., page 250.
92. Ibid., page 200.
93. Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk, page 25.
94. Ibid., page 41.
95. Ibid., page 86.
96. Le Grand Khan, page 77.
97. Ibid., page 89.
98. Ibid., page 40.

99. Ibid., page 253.
100. Ibid., page 255.
101. Ibid., page 156.
102. Ibid., page 222.
103. Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk, page 44.
104. Le Grand Khan, pages 31-32.
105. La Jument des Mongols, page 103.
106. Ibid., page 206.
107. Ibid., page 202.
108. Le Grand Khan, page 279.
109. Les Voyages d'Irkoutsk, page 50.
110. Ibid., page 120.
111. Ibid., page 166.
112. Ibid., page 127.
113. Le Grand Khan, page 102.
114. Ibid., page 146.
115. Le Nez qui voque, pages 183-184.
116. L'Océantume, page 189.
117. Ibid., page 59.
118. Ibid., page 92.
119. Le Nez qui voque, pages 40-41.
120. Ibid., page 53.
121. Ibid., page 56.
122. Ibid., page 86.
123. L'Avalée des avalés, page 144.
124. L'Océantume, page 76.

125. Ibid., page 160.
126. L'Avalée des avalés, page 163.
127. Ibid., page 109.
128. Ibid., page 196.
129. Ibid., page 151.
130. Le Nez qui voque, page 208.
131. L'Avalée des avalés, page 204.
132. Ibid., page 243.
133. Ibid., page 248.
134. Ibid., page 254.
135. Ibid., page 278.
136. Ibid., page 93.
137. Le Nez qui voque, page 58.
138. Ibid., page 107.
139. Ibid., page 197.
140. L'Avalée des avalés, page 93.
141. Le Nez qui voque, page 190.
142. Ibid., page 157.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has endeavoured to show that the "nouveau roman", far from being a mere exercise in style, is an expression of modern thought. It is therefore as pertinent to the thought patterns of the modern reader as the Greek drama was to its audience. The problems facing the protagonists are those of modern man, their resolution or non-resolution pointing to various directions open to the individual. Unlike the simplistic belief in a God of former generations, or indeed the total nihilistic acceptance of nothingness in the immediately preceding existentialists, the "nouveau roman" presents the reaction of the individual based on his subjective awareness of what Man is. Whether this be a recognition of what has been, what may have been, or indeed what might be, depends upon the individual author's interpretation of the possibilities facing Man. But for all these authors the answer does not lie in the here and now. Man's present condition is a result of his own past. Reversibility of this past has been part of the quest of individual protagonists.

Man and his situation in the modern world and society of which the individual is necessarily a part, has been shown to be an indispensable theme of the "nouveau roman". The problems facing Man the individual, facing Man the member of -

society are not at all new in modern literature, but are brought into direct focus within the novels treated in this thesis.

Man is essentially alone, yet cannot live that way: religion or a god in the traditional sense is almost totally lacking in these novels. Man is tormented by the awareness of his omni-present death, hence the protagonist's quest in these novels is one to combat fears he faces of his own nothingness. The varied directions taken by this quest have been examined in the preceding chapters. Sometimes in an effort to give meaning to his life the protagonist searches his immediate past and present for keys in his search for a total self and for a comprehension of Man in general. Since it can be said that the individual is a social animal, who, though at times rejecting his fellow men, nevertheless, paradoxically, cannot exist without them, he is thus only able to see himself through others. Conversely he hopes (as in the case of the Sarrautian protagonists, and also to a certain degree of all the others) to reveal others to themselves through him. Some form of contact is therefore essential and must be seen to take place. Unlike the novels of the absurd where the only reality was to accept the absurd and live with it, these novels are necessarily tinged with optimism as to Man's condition--at least to begin with. Of course this is a necessary trait of one involved in a quest. The possible exception is

Bessette's narrator of L'Incubation at the end of his search who may be considered as an older version of the younger protagonists still not at the end of theirs. In the case of Nathalie Sarraute, although superficially pessimistic, there is an inherent optimism in her attitude: "Je crois fermement à un progrès dans la recherche, et cela dans le domaine de la psychologie, et j'entends par là l'exploration et la création, au moyen d'une forme qui lui est propre, d'un nouvel aspect de l'univers mental".¹ Both she and Bessette regard the present state of Man as less than desirable, both likening Man to a creature who has covered himself with a protective carapace to protect and hide the true biological self. The French author expresses an outlook towards the possibility for renewal of the inherently simple biological state of Man, with a subsequent obliteration of barriers constructed by society as it now exists. Such barriers hide reality and authenticity from the average individual which he must overcome in order to arrive at the true self. From the point of view shown by Bessette, Man has developed too far. He has lost this simple animal self, and, though constantly attempting to regain his lost simplicity, becomes hopelessly inadequate. In fact death is his only redemption--his means of regaining completely his lost 'horizontal' position. This pessimism of attitude is shared by all three French Canadian authors in contrast to the French authors' looking forward to a possible rediscovery of a basic authentic self existing either in the past, or un-

der present coverings. For the French Canadian authors, this authentic self is linked to an irretrievable past. As just mentioned, Man has developed too far in the evolutionary scale for Bessette. For Basile the innocence of youth is not something that can be recaptured even in art form, while the transitory state of childhood is only too obvious in Ducharme's novels, the tragedy being all the more poignant in that its passing goes almost unnoticed.

Proceeding from the basically simple biological view of Man, Butor and Robbe-Grillet present the mythological aspect of Man. Butor presents it at first with more optimism and less cynicism than does Robbe-Grillet. This mythological aspect seems to put an end to Man's solitude, linking the individual to the whole of society in both time and space. Yet the strong need to express oneself as an individual is still felt. If all are governed by an external fatality, then there is no free will. For Robbe-Grillet this fatality lies within the individual. His 'mythology' is an inability to leave behind the conditioned reflexes of his past and attain a possible freedom. In the same way Bessette thinks of Man's condition as his 'fate' and likens it as does Robbe-Grillet, to a giant circle or spiral, from which, for Bessette, but not necessarily for the French author, there is no escape. Therefore beyond the mere individual lies a whole almost fatalistically determined past, which, of itself, binds the individual

to society as a whole, just as the individual mind is of necessity an expression of all minds.

In Ducharme and Basile, both the basic condition of Man and his past are transformed into regret of either a past or of passing childhood or adolescence with all its representative purity, innocence and, above all, authenticity.

As far as the possible outcome of the individual's quest is concerned, if one takes into account the latest novel of Alain Robbe-Grillet, there is on the French side a transition through optimism, though tinged with despair, in Nathalie Sarraute's works, to hope ending in despair with Butor. Finally, the works of Robbe-Grillet, although beginning with complete alienation of the protagonist, end on a note of optimism as to the possibility of a new outlook for Man. On the French Canadian side however the reversal takes place (perhaps due in part to recent events within Québec itself). Beginning with Bessette on the Québec side, chronologically the oldest of the three Québécois writers, his projected acceptance of the world such as it is reveals a pessimism beyond hope. To Bessette all people are essentially the same as they are to Sarraute, but to Bessette they are alone and lost in a world of their own making. Basile, on the other hand, at first points the way to a new society formed by his youthful protagonists who, enclosed within their own hermetic world, seem able to exist within the established society and yet remain outside it. At the same time they retain

integrity, modifying society to their own needs and desires. Yet this too will be seen to lead nowhere, since the stimulus for change remains narrowly based in a subjective sense. Finally the mysterious Réjean Ducharme, hiding behind the dream of childhood in his young protagonists, reveals the inevitability of a profound despair. Capitulation of these children forced to face adulthood sooner or later is only too obvious. The Robbe-Grillet character, possessing many of the traits shown by the Ducharme child, but having no real chronological development in the traditional sense, points the way to a new concept of society and of Man, in that his sado-masochistic relationships reveal the possibility of a violent destruction of old myths controlling the individual to his detriment.

The French authors, together with the Québécois authors, although differing in detail, nevertheless have many points in common, not the least of which being the rejection of all traditional values. In the Québécois this is the more noteworthy in that it is a reflection of the young nation of which they are a part, making the comparison between the two literatures even more interesting. While all treat basically the same subject matter in the same style, the French are far more 'intellectual' in their approach to the problems which affect all men, whereas the problems affecting the protagonists of the French Canadian novels have a strongly nationalistic and subjective flavour. Indeed the general theme of alienation

treated by all six authors can be considered an actual reflection of the personal alienation faced by the Québécois in his country, making of his writings a literature that is more 'engagé' in the political and sociological sense, than it is for the French authors for whom the concept of 'engagement' is pertinent only in the widest sense.

The French novelists' general expression regarding alienation of modern man is, on the part of the Québécois, a real and personal anguish, reflected not only in the works of these authors but in their recent political history. Thus from an intellectualised concept of Man's 'angoisse' the Québécois pass to a far more subjective depiction of their own 'angoisse', part of a culture attempting to assert themselves in a country where they are a minority group.

The society depicted throughout these novels is made up of shapeless individuals who, en masse, become a threat to the isolated individual and to his search for authenticity. At the same time this individual is necessary to the group in that his membership enables it to exist. His revelation of faults in the system allows others, unable to see as objectively as the outsider, to partake of the necessary change which results in renewal.

This society which poses a threat to the individual protagonist is symbolized in the modern city. Thus the criticism

of society is directed more specifically against modern society. The city itself is a structure made by man in an attempt to give himself the durability he otherwise does not have. Superficially the city has a deleterious effect on the individual protagonist. As most cities seem decayed, it represents a decay of purity and originality.. Soulless, and needing Man to give it this soul, the city demands birthright. This is apprehended and attempted by both Butor's protagonists in L'Emploi du temps and by Jonathan in Basile's novels. To Nathalie Sarraute and to Ducharme's child protagonists, it is the city that has caused people to lose themselves in streets described by Sarraute as damp and humid, where people seem to ooze from walls like fungi or creep along corridors of dark houses like lost animals in cages.

The cities of Butor and Robbe-Grillet are threatening, not simply because of the ties they have with the past which in turn chain the individual, thus preventing him from freeing himself. Time and space within these cities form labyrinthine corridors in which the individual attempts to find his way, self and freedom. He must of necessity however depend on others for help, and this is symbolized in the Theseus myth of Butor's L'Emploi du temps. The labyrinthine structure is impossible to escape, in time or in space, so that the past haunts those who come to such alien cities, awakening individual or collective memories of their own past. Escape

is sometimes sought in space, as is the case with Léon Delmont in La Modification, the Ducharme children or Basile's protagonist who expresses his desire to explode into 'l'azur', to disappear far from the city which haunts him. Yet the connecting threads between the cities and the lives of the protagonists are omni-present, like a giant maternal figure representing both a threat to their freedom and a shelter from their loneliness. The rift between themselves and the city indicates a basic personality defect, realized by Jonathan in Le Grand Khan,² in his long soliloquy on the relationship between the city of Montréal and himself.

Stultified within the city, the protagonists need to escape in time, space, or imagination. Childhood to all of them represents purity, a certain innocence and freedom in an existence beyond that of the commonplace. Ducharme's children are all brought up in strange, isolated, island-like structures, coming into contact with the adult world gradually. Basile's characters, in attempting to create a hermetic society within society itself based on their past youthful experiences, express the same need for individuality and freedom. Robbe-Grillet's schizoid personalities likewise lead lives so far removed from the norm that reality and imagination becomes hopelessly confused and existence seems as a consequence a fleeting part of society in general. Sarraute's children are quickly contaminated by contact with older members

of society, while Butor's characters attempt first to regain lost authenticity by going back to vital origins to begin again their lost lives. Bessette's tormented protagonist is too far removed from hope even to help those he sees undergoing the same process he has undergone himself, thus tending to become an observer removed from human discourse.

A common feature is relative anonymity of the individual. In the case of the youngest Québécois writer, Ducharme, this anonymity is translated into a strange façade of invented names--extraordinary in their obvious significance. Constance Chlore becomes Constance Exsangue³ after her death; Christian is the Catholic brother of the Jewish Bérénice, not to mention others such as Ina Ssouvie, Questa, and Mille-Milles (a self-invented name).

All these people are torn by conflicting desires, needing others as others need them. The resulting dichotomy causes feelings of guilt and paranoia in the outsider (not associated with any religious or moral codes) thereby awakening different reactions within the various protagonists. Symbolically these feelings can be seen as obsessions with flaws (as was the case with Kafka's characters), particularly in the work of Sarraute and Robbe-Grillet, but also to a reduced extent in the other novelists. As was the case with the Gidean hero, the "nouveau roman" protagonist is not self-sufficient. Unable to live outside his own society, he is unable to reach

an accord with it. Characterized by a Nietzschean superiority, but resembling Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment, he is forced into terms with society. These antiheroes are rarely successful in the material sense and others in society often reject their involvement with personal forms of self-satisfaction. If it is not the man-made city which, monster-like, devours them, they are defeated by themselves.

Most people represent to the protagonist all he abhors and wishes to avoid. He always hopes, however, to discover within other individuals the means of attaining communication which will modify his loneliness. Most of those he meets frighten him in their attempts to coerce uniformity. Taken to extremes such people are depicted in the Sarrautian novels as the grasping old men and women, attempting to make the young protagonists face all the 'mauvaises surprises' of the world, and removing salvation from themselves. To the protagonists, with rare exceptions, other people seem lifeless, servile, filled with hatred toward their fellow men, people in whom no trust can be placed; people who are unable to face the loss of their selves and so attempt to possess objects or, by extension, other people. For this reason, the family unit comes under criticism by the new novelists, representing as it does a unit set up by society in the express intention of molding its members into the cast set by past generations, where to be different is to be suspect and condemned. In the

French Canadian novels of Basile and Ducharme the protagonists have no families or would like to have none. The Ducharme children would prefer to be born of themselves owing allegiance to no one; the three Basile 'J's' recognize none but their own trio as having any relationship to them except for the mysterious father figure Victor. Nevertheless, a dominant theme emerges, the protagonists seeking out others in an attempt to find in them reflections of the hope they see in themselves. Sarraute's young people fix their attention on others whom they believe represent authenticity they are seeking. Butor's protagonists and Basile's Jonathan, finding this communication impossible, attempt to give meaning to Man through recreating life in art, even though this represents a sacrifice of self to art. In the case of both Butor and Basile the protagonists are unable to give to themselves or to others the immortality and authenticity they are seeking by this means, again constrained by the immediate despair of their lives.

Robbe-Grillet, Ducharme and to a limited extent Bessette, seek in dangerous sado-masochistic love relationships (seen also in the relationships of two of the three Basile protagonists), some contact with another being. These relationships express at the same time the difficulty of establishing any relationship whatsoever and the desire for purity in any relationship. Hence Ducharme's young protagonists would like

above all to establish a brother-sister relationship with another being, based not on possession of, but on being with, another. Domination and fear of solitude are, however, constant fears in the mind of the protagonist; as the child calls out at night to its parents in its fear of the dark in the novels of Sarraute and Ducharme, and rejects those same people in the daytime, so the isolated individual alternately rejects and desires contact with others. Catalysts in the Sarrautian sense, their actions affect others, cause reactions, and in turn are affected by others. Total communication is rare and, perhaps for this reason, the sado-masochistic communication is more successful than other kinds, resembling as it does the existentialist confrontation with death and its consequent breaking down of all barriers. When communication, illusory or real, does occur, as in the previously mentioned sado-masochistic relationships of Alain Robbe-Grillet, it emerges at moments of danger or stress.

Those people with whom the protagonists achieve communication are, like themselves, to a large extent outsiders. They are either older or wiser versions of their younger contacts, accepting life such as it is, the case with the participants in Sarraute's novels, with the Mother figures in Ducharme's novels, or younger counterparts such as the frail blond orphan companions of the Ducharme children. Though basically all of bourgeois origin and milieu, the protagonists

feel themselves isolated from the society in which they exist. The only communication Butor's characters achieve is with outcasts of society who are more or less as alien as themselves (also the case with the Robbe-Grillet protagonists). For Butor however, the protagonists refuse this contact in their fear of increasing their own alienation through association with outsiders. The young women accomplice victims of the Robbe-Grillet characters show an abnormality of character akin to madness and yet seem to have a strange control over the society they are in. Sometimes these contact figures seem more imaginary than real. In both Robbe-Grillet and Ducharme, and even Butor, they assume the characteristics of the Doppelgänger. The interpretations the protagonists make of others is based to a larger extent on their own selves and, realizing this, they are led to doubt not only themselves but the validity of anything beyond their own minds.

The confusion they feel is usually heightened by illness, fatigue or a sensation of 'engourdissement' common to Kafka's, Sartre's and Camus' characters. This state of mind brings about a schism within the self, accompanied again by feelings of guilt and paranoia, to the point that the protagonist is unable to recognize himself even in mirrors and is unable to be understood by, or indeed to understand, others. Thus in a Kafkaesque sense all these protagonists are to a greater or lesser extent in a nightmare of their own making.

Fatality, as such, is man-made. Symbolism, even that of Tarot, needs Man for both its invention and its continuation. In the same way encroaching adulthood, threatening to the Ducharme children and inescapable, is dependent on those same protagonists for its survival.

In general, it can however be said that the rare communication achieved between persons in these novels happens in spite of expressed anticipation of the individuals involved. Once contact has been achieved, however, the experience becomes of determining nature affecting all future events. It is as though what is truly desired becomes implemented contrary to convictions based on the everyday waking experience of rejection and disillusionment.

Like Camus' protagonists, the protagonists of these "nouveaux romans" would like to be able to regard the world of objects external to themselves in its true perspective, but too often, as was the case with Sartre's Roquentin, they are overcome with fear of this reality. According to Robbe-Grillet, Man needs to rid himself of all his old myths, including those attached to objects. Often, just as others are controlled by the desire to possess things compensating for their lack of self-possession, the protagonists use objects as an outlet for emotions, unable to see things in their true perspective or, perhaps, afraid to. Throughout all six novelists' works, the

world of objects is one which alternately fascinates and repels the protagonist, as does the bourgeois world of those around him. Recognizing their 'lâcheté' in a refusal to accept or see the true face of things and in disgust at and contempt for themselves and society, they feel the need for what Basile calls a 'belle catastrophe' to give meaning to their lives. In Robbe-Grillet this reaches cathartic proportions. At the same time fascination and fear of death and violence are reflected in attempted or desired suicide. As Ducharme's protagonists would have it, or as Robbe-Grillet himself says, a catharsis is needed to rid Man of his fear. To go to the limits of these fears would hopefully take him beyond them, making them meaningless, in the same way that their desperate search for love offers an opportunity to go beyond their present state as well as allowing the protagonists to feel again and thus to present meaning in a life without meaning.

The madness of the "nouveau roman" protagonist and his outward 'refus'⁴ are those of modern Man. The "nouveau romancier" writes not only to purge himself but to show others they are not alone in feeling alone. The form of the "nouveau roman" is a deeply personal one, a communication of the mind, showing that even in a world of objects the only thing which can to a certain extent express itself is human reality, and that, through the human mind. As Claude Mauriac, himself a writer of "nouveaux romans", says:

All of us are possessed by the same vain hope of being able to understand the universe such as it appears to us, and to master, not the whole of it --that is, unfortunately, out of the question-- but at least whatever aspects come under our command, with the greatest possible exactitude.⁵

And he continues:

We try to convey a vision--both inner and outer-- which resembles no other...We are no longer telling a story, but depicting a world--our own world.⁶

Thus the essential purpose of the "nouveau roman" is that of communication and a means for these writers to reconquer the world and themselves, by going beyond the mere physical into the very mind of Man.*

*

The importance of Man as subject of the 'nouveau roman' of all six authors is justified. The style of the 'nouveau roman' is an expression of thought pertinent to the age of which these novels are a product. Using the same language,

and with many similar cultural and ethnic influences, the six authors chosen reveal two opposed attitudes to the final resolution of man's alienation. While these two attitudes are related to the different sociological and psychological factors within their cultures, parallel reactions to the present condition of Man is seen in both groups of writers.

As already shown, the authors can be placed in like pairs, one from each culture. Sarraute and Bessette represent a predominantly conservative reformist point of view. For them society is a collection of like individuals and reform must come from within society. This reform is still possible for Sarraute but not for Bessette. Butor and Basile share a more anarchistic attitude. In refusing their present condition they are attempting to transcend it. Butor is attempting this through art, Basile through art and the formation of a society outside the confines of the existing one. Finally Robbe-Grillet and Ducharme present a more violently radical reaction to society. For Ducharme this state of revolution is neither durable nor feasible. On the other hand for Robbe-Grillet revolution does exist elsewhere than in the mind of the protagonist, but it has yet to come.

All six authors reject the values of the society they live in. For the Quebecois authors the salvation of the individual lies in the salvation of their particular society. Their struggle is that of their nation. For the French authors alienation is more an intellectualized problem and the resolution they envisage is one based on an idealistic conception of what Man's condition could be. For the French authors the reform of the individual represents a possibility for all men.

POSTFACE

Although the essential critical reading for this thesis was completed in 1969, there are a few comments to be made on works whose publication was subsequent to this date and which have a direct bearing on the subject matter.

If Michel Zérafra's Personne et personnage* had been available earlier much of the initial groundwork could have been eliminated. In a work of some magnitude, Zérafra discusses both the background and basic themes leading to the subject matter of this thesis.

As far as critical works on individual authors are concerned the studies by Micheline Tison Braun on Nathalie Sarraute* and by Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon* on Butor reaffirm the central arguments of this thesis while reinforcing the grounds for comparison of the three French authors studied.

Finally the recent collection of articles on the 'nouveau roman' edited by Réal Ouellet* and its inclusion of the French Canadian author Hubert Aquin as a 'nouveau romancier' is worthy of note although this particular author is not included in this thesis. Hopefully the tendency to disregard

* see Addenda to bibliography

the Canadian literature in a particular 'genre' is coming to an end and rather than regarding these Canadian authors as picturesque but peculiarly 'nationalized' writers, they will be accepted as writers in the universal sense.

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1. Nathalie Sarraute quoted by J. H. Matthews, op. cit., page 197.
2. Page 122.
3. L'Avalée des avalés.
4. As discussed by Melvin Maddocks in Time Essay "The New Cult of Madness: Thinking as a Bad Habit", Time Canadian edition, Vol. 99, #11, (March 13, 1972), 49-50.
5. Claude Mauriac, "The New Novel in France, New York Times Review of Books, (January 19, 1960), page 5.
6. Ibid., page 12.

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