

# Robbe-Grillet's Use of Pun and Related Figures in *La Jalousie*

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Pun in its broadest connotation is the metaphorical linking of two or more different meanings through a similarity between the sounds of words or phrases used to represent each of the meanings.<sup>1</sup> For pun to occur, the context of the polyvalent sound must point to more than one meaning. Just as there may be varying degrees of similarity in sound, from homophony through *paronomasia* and from rime to assonance and alliteration, so too there may be varying degrees of explicitness in the linking of the vehicle to the tenor,<sup>2</sup> from ellipsis (*double entendre* or *significatio*) through syllepsis to *traductio* and *adnominatio*. The prestige of the figure has been erratic since the neo-classical era, perhaps because the comic genres have lost the importance they had during this period. The Romantic movement, with its program of spontaneity and sincerity, brought pun and its related figures into disrepute. Although the Symbolists were interested in the allusiveness of sounds, only Verlaine made pun a significant part of his poetic expression. And the diminishing importance of rime in our century has robbed pun of one of its main supports in poetry. However, the skilled use of pun and related figures for complex ironic effect by such writers as Apollinaire, Raymond Queneau, Samuel Beckett, and Eugène Ionesco, to name only a few, is a strong indication of the resurgence of these figures. One of the high points of this resurgence occurs in prose in Alain Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie*: for the novel's structure is based on pun to a degree that is perhaps unprecedented in the history of the genre. The variety of patterns on which sound similarity is established is as extraordinary as the unobtrusiveness with which this is accomplished.<sup>3</sup> It is probable that this unobtrusiveness has resulted in the use of pun being an unexplored aspect of Robbe-Grillet's narrative art, an aspect that I now wish to examine.<sup>4</sup>

*La Jalousie* presents a jealous husband, the narrator, attempting to come to terms with his wife's behavior, which he sees as being ambivalent. On the one hand, this ambivalence is disturbing for him because it allows him to make a circumstantial interpretation of her behavior as marital infidelity—behavior which for him is intolerable.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, this same ambivalence permits him to exercise the constant hope that her behavior is not what he fears it to be. And, because the anguish of facing his wife's infidelity would be more intolerable for him than the anxiety of living with his doubts, he avoids confronting his dilemma squarely by seeking out the truth at any cost. He tries, rather, to deal with her suspicious and threatening behavior either by ignoring, justifying, or denying it, or by making it appear incoherent or otherwise unrecognizable. The use of obscure pun is in keeping with the narrator's efforts to confront and obliterate the source of his anguish by disguising it. It permits him to refer implicitly to the general character or to a comparable aspect of the intolerable situation which A... 's behavior and its setting have come to represent for him and to avoid affirming the reality of his impression by referring to it explicitly.

A special use of language contributes to this meaning of the novel, to the narrator's intense preoccupation with suppressing possibilities that he finds to be troubling. The narrator's suppressed jealousy is the constant subject, the tenor;

while his explicit and apparently neutral descriptions are in fact the vehicle, the figurative language through which his jealousy is expressed. Whereas this tenor is concealed in the case of homophony, it appears to be revealed in sound figures or vehicles such as *paronomasia*, *adnominatio*, rime, assonance, and alliteration, which are not orally identical to the tenor. The tenor, in these types of pun, however, retains its obscurity by virtue of having a denotative value which appears more prominent than its connotative allusion to the jealousy-producing situation. For example, the vehicle "trajet" refers through assonance to "tache" whose less conspicuous connotative meaning alludes to the narrator's concern with A... 's moral purity. Some of the homophonous vehicles of hidden tenors which refer to the nature of the situation which the narrator fears or to a parallel aspect of it are "jalousie," "maîtresse," "affaire," "compagnie," "margouillat," and "vapeur."<sup>6</sup> The "jalousie" referred to explicitly by the narrator, the vehicle of the pun, is a series of movable slats, in the bottom or top half of a window casement, which often obstruct his view as he looks both into and out of A... 's room and as he looks out of the southwest window of his office when the casements are closed. The explicit (pp. 40, 48, 76, 179, 180, 182, 209)<sup>7</sup> and implicit (pp. 49, 51) use of the plural, "les jalousies," in the descriptions of these windows alludes to the character of the narrator's behavior, to his "jalousie"—his observing and interrogating of A... 's behavior and its setting in such a way that he appears to be unconcerned and that he seems to be unable to fully discern scenes or activity which he finds suspicious.<sup>8</sup> This usage also alludes to what the narrator believes to be the plurality of occasions on which A... is unfaithful and which cause him to be jealous of her. (A... 's health, and perhaps her behavior, was the same in Africa as it is in her present situation, pp. 10, 22; and the narrator believes that not only does A... have no reason for not sleeping with Franck but also that she has no objection to sleeping with the natives, p. 194). The use of the plural thus represents the narrator's attempt to disguise his specific concern about Franck. This implication that A... is often unfaithful, however, has the ultimate effect of validating this concern.

The vehicle, "maîtresse," refers to A... 's role as "maîtresse de maison" (pp. 70, 216) and employer of the native boy ("sa maîtresse," pp. 106, 110, 141). The hidden tenor, "mistress," with its connotation for the narrator of unacceptable sexual behavior—an aspect of A... 's and Franck's discussion of the novel which interests the narrator ("... une jeune femme blanche ... qui accorde ses faveurs à un indigène, peut-être à plusieurs" p. 194)—is suggested by A... 's apparent disinterest in her housekeeping duties when Franck fails to come to lunch ("A... ne se détourne même pas pour y jeter un coup d'oeil maîtresse de maison" p. 70). It is also suggested by all the scenes and circumstances of the novel which represent A... 's and Franck's interest in each other (for example: their interest in the African novel, the mysterious letter, the ice bucket incident, the position of the terrace chairs, the lighting of the dining room table, the serving of the drinks on the terrace at night, Franck's killing of the centipede, the trip to town, etc.).

Similarly, the hidden tenor, "love affairs," of the vehicle "*affaires*," which refers to "possessions" (p. 85) or "business" (pp. 155, 208, 216) is suggested by the reference to the young white woman in the African novel whose behavior A... does not condemn. As in the case of "*jalousie*," the use of the plural, "*affaires*," suggests the narrator's attempt to obscure his concern about an affair between Franck and A... by implying that it is a question of several affairs and thus normal:

. . . elle cherche longuement un objet qui lui échappe . . . à moins qu'elle ne se livre à simple rangement de ses *affaires*. (p. 185)

. . . au cours du dîner, Franck et A . . . font le projet de descendre ensemble en ville, un jour prochain, pour des *affaires* séparées. (p. 208)

. . . les *affaires* de cette compagnie sont mauvaises . . . Les *affaires* de la compagnie sont très bonnes. (p. 216)

And, also as in the case of "jalousie," this implication that illegitimate sexual relations are normal only justifies the narrator's concern about the possibility of an affair between A . . . and Franck.

The existence of a hidden tenor, or allusion, is not evident in the case of "affaire." It is nevertheless suggested in the first example ("Il y a les divers aléas retardant le départ lui-même: prolongement imprévu de quelque *affaire* . . ." p. 155), which occurs in the second half of the narrative, by the narrator's association of "affaire" with "quelque," to which he has already given a consistent and particular usage: that of helping him try to avoid contemplating the precise nature of suspicious behavior and helping him try to diminish the suspicious nature of certain incidents and situations. For example, the narrator uses "quelque" in an attempt to make Franck's suspicious behavior appear inconsequential, whether it is the killing of the centipede ("Franck . . . achève d'écraser *quelque* chose sur le carrelage . . ." pp. 63-64, 97) or his manner of eating (" . . . il néglige *quelque* règle essentielle . . ." p. 23). The other occurrences of "quelque" (pp. 37, 43, 78, 80, 82, 100, 121, 122, 154, 170, 174, 183, 194, 209) also reflect this usage.

That the vehicle, "affaire," has a hidden tenor is also suggested by its association in the last example ("Les *affaires* de cette compagnie sont mauvaises. . . . Les *affaires* de cette *compagnie* sont très bonnes" p. 216) with the pun on "compagnie," whose vehicle suggests a business of some sort and whose hidden tenor has the meaning of "companionship." It is also a paronym of the terms "compagne" (p. 97) and "compagnon" (p. 87) which the narrator uses to refer to A . . . and Franck respectively in the section in which is presented their explanation of their delayed return from town, rather than the terms "voisin" (p. 30) or "hôte" (pp. 70, 217) used elsewhere. It would seem, then, that the narrator feels he can risk more allusions with "affaire" since the context of its tenor is specific and thus more difficult to detect than that of "jalousie" which is general and thus inherently allusive.

The term "margouillat," the name of an African lizard,<sup>9</sup> is used by the narrator, who has lived in Africa, to refer to a lizard of an island, probably in the Caribbean, which is the setting of his narration. The term is also used by French colonials in Africa to refer to the morning waterbrash of alcoholics or the vomiting of malaria victims.<sup>10</sup> The term "margouillat" is used to refer to the lizard only in scenes which precede lunch (pp. 177, 195, 199). It thus constitutes the vehicle of a hidden tenor which is the narrator's chronic illness—probably malaria since he notices the references to the dosages of quinine in A . . . 's and Franck's planning of their trip to town (pp. 92-93, 193), their references to the "effets fâcheux que produit la quinine sur l'héroïne du roman africain qu'ils sont en train de lire" (pp. 93, 193), and their discussion of whether Christiane's illness is malaria or not, and whether it is pathological or psychological in origin. The narrator has seemed to sympathize with illness when he describes Franck's regard for Christiane's illness: "Sans doute a-t-il été retardé, comme cela n'est pas rare, par quelque incident survenu dans sa plantation, puisqu'il n'aurait pas remis ce déjeuner pour d'éventuels malaises de sa femme ou de son enfant" (p. 72). And the narrator has alluded to illness in his description of A . . . 's quiet manner of answering the boy's knock on the morning that Franck comes to take

her into town with him: "La voix est contenue comme dans une chambre de malade, où [sic] comme la voix d'un voleur qui parle à son complice" (p. 43). The grammatical error of the ellipsis in the adverbial clause, or the spelling error of the conjunction "ou," serves to link the narrator's illness with A... 's illegitimate behavior. And the use of an African term in another setting, like the use of the plural of "jalousie" and "affaire," suggests that the behavior is not new and thus not unlikely.

The vehicle "vapeur" ("... une purée jaunâtre, d'ignames probablement, d'où s'élève une mince igne de *vapeur*, qui soudain se courbe, s'étale, s'évanouit sans laisser de trace pour reparaitre aussitôt . . ." p. 71), which is associated with A... 's preoccupation with Franck when he has failed to come to lunch (p. 70), has as its hidden tenor the boat ("vapeur"), Le Cap St. Jean, which provides a means of leaving the island and in which the narrator believes A... to be very interested. It is in port after lunch when A... has read one quarter of the African novel and when she appears to be more interested in listening to the truck taking bananas into town than in reading the novel (pp. 202-203). The boat is also in port on the day that A... and Franck go into town (p. 155). It is in the photograph on the calendar which A... seems to be consulting when she is writing a letter (p. 121) addressed, so the narrator believes, to Franck (pp. 103, 107, 114). And the boat seems to the narrator to be associated with a problematic, criminal situation in the calendar photograph (the narrator suggests that the European, with whom he associates himself, is looking at "un vieux vêtement" floating on the water, p. 157) and in A... 's and Franck's discussion of the African novel: "Les affaires de cette compagnie sont mauvaises. Elles évoluent vers l'escroquerie. . . . Le personnage principal . . . est malhonnête. . . . Ce n'était pas un accident. Il est d'ailleurs question d'un navire (un grand navire blanc) et non de voiture" (p. 216).

In each of the above cases the vehicle of the pun is used in the presentation of a specific visual incident; and the hidden tenor refers to a general aspect of his experience which he cannot confront explicitly. When the tenor also refers to a specific incident, however, it is ultimately made evident, since the narrator is capable of contemplating his experience and even a suspicious series of experiences if he examines their visual appearance rather than their social or moral significance. This is the case of the scene in which Franck kills the centipede. In the first three descriptions of the scene, which are set in A... 's dining room, Franck uses a napkin ("serviette" pp. 63, 97) to kill the centipede; and in the second and third descriptions of the scene A... is clenching the tablecloth ("nappe" pp. 97, 113) which is also simply called a cloth ("toile" p. 113). In the fourth description of the scene the "serviette" becomes a towel ("serviette de toilette" p. 166) and the cloth ("toile" p. 166) is a sheet ("drap" p. 166). A polyvalent term and a general term thus emphasize the narrator's association of two similar incidents. Other similar but different scenes also arise from the same language: A... 's and Franck's description of the health of the heroine in the African novel is always associated with their discussion of the health of Franck's wife, Christiane (pp. 26, 54-55, 92-93, 191-194), so that the psychological origin of the heroine's ill health and her irregular behavior come ultimately to be associated with Christiane. And the scene of A... leaving Franck's car (pp. 58, 74-75, 115, 203-204, 214) which is usually presented as her return from a visit to Christiane (pp. 75-76, 115, 118, 214) can also represent her return from the trip to town with Franck (pp. 203-204). In the last two examples, descriptive phrases are used with the same ambivalence by the narrator as the single words "serviette" and "toile" in the first example to emphasize the superficial, visual link between incidents rather than threatening circumstantial implications.

There are also some hidden tenors which are slightly different in sound from their vehicle—such as “délit flagrant” which is referred to by the “manque de commodité . . . flagrant” (p. 70) of A . . . ’s position at the dining room table, the “Tézarde,” or break, in the relationship between A . . . and Franck which is suggested by “lézard” (pp. 171, 184, 200, 201, 205), the scutigera which is represented by the coleopter and the “Peinture immaculée” through their reference to the generic terms *scutigera coleoptrata* and *scutigera immaculata*. But for the most part, the narrator reveals the tenor of those vehicles which show variation. His use of sound metaphor to shield himself from his problematic situation is still disguised, however, by the fact that the tenor itself is not an explicit but a metaphorical reference to this situation. For example, the vehicles “détacher” (pp. 64, 183), “se détacher” (pp. 29, 129, 132), “tâche” (p. 44), “trace” or “traces” (pp. 14, 24, 50, 71, 90, 105, 108, 124, 130, 131, 135, 168, 209, 211, 212), “trait” (pp. 9, 15, 20, 33, 127, 132, 164, 210, 214, 217), “traits” (pp. 26, 46, 63, 120), “trajet” (pp. 31, 90, 177, 185, 191, 204), and “traînée” (pp. 67, 161, 210) are related through *adnominatio*, *paranomasia*, assonance, and alliteration respectively, to the tenor “tâche” (pp. 27, 51, 56, 57, 58, 69, 70, 74, 90, 113, 126-2, 137, 140, 145, 150, 157, 161, 183, 207, 210, 211). And because “tâche” is used denotatively to refer to the centipede mark or other marks, with its connotative function of suggesting the problematic character of A . . . ’s and Franck’s behavior in the centipede scene (“stain”) left implicit, the capacity of “détacher,” “tâche,” “trace,” “trajet,” “trait,” “traits,” and “traînée” to allude to the character of the narrator’s experience while denoting a visual pattern is likewise disguised.

Another example of a tenor which is not hidden but which is a metaphorical reference only is “mécanicien” (pp. 85, 88, 91, 108). The terms related to “mécanicien”—“mécanisme” (p. 44), “une mécanique” (p. 112), “mécanique” (pp. 65, 110, 131, 195, 198), “machine” (pp. 130, 169), “machinal” (pp. 31, 114), “mâchoires” (p. 129)—by *adnominatio* and *paranomasia* refer denotatively to activity, objects, and manners which are related to machinery while alluding implicitly to the amoral (mechanical) and immoral (“mauvais mécanicien”) character of A . . . ’s and Franck’s activity associated with the truck and car breakdowns.

The vehicle “accident” is related by rime to the tenor “incident” and comes to lend its connotations of intention and of degree of severity to the event described by “incident”—A . . . ’s and Franck’s trip to town. The narrator uses the term “accident” in most cases to refer to a serious collision involving heavy material damage or danger to human health. He comments on the engine breakdown which has prevented A . . . and Franck from coming home on time, that “cela vaut mieux . . . qu’un accident” (p. 87). In another reference to the car’s breakdown, A . . . ’s and Franck’s trip to town, the same distinction is made: “Oui, ils sont en parfaite santé. Non, ils n’ont pas eu d’accident, juste un petit incident de moteur qui les a contraints de passer la nuit à l’hôtel, en attendant l’ouverture d’un garage” (p. 205). Car troubles, such as “deux crevaisons successives,” “la rupture de quelque connexion électrique,” “amortisseurs cassés, arbre faussé, carter en morceaux,” are distinguished from “l’accident—jamais exclus—” (p. 154), as possible reasons for A . . . ’s and Franck’s delayed return from town. However, the “accident de voiture” (p. 216)—the crash and the fire which the narrator imagines during the delay—is associated in his mind with the “incident” (pp. 74, 84, 87, 197, 198) “de moteur” (p. 205) when he is describing Franck’s suspicious failure to compare a subsequent car breakdown with one which has delayed his return from town:

Celui-ci devrait, à ce moment, faire une allusion à l’incident analogue qui s’est produit en ville lors de son voyage avec A . . . , incident sans gravité,

mais qui a retardé d'une nuit entière leur retour à la plantation. Le rapprochement serait plus que normal. Franck s'abstient de la faire.

A . . . considère son voisin avec une attention accrue, depuis plusieurs secondes, comme si elle attendait une phrase sur le point d'être prononcée. Mais elle ne dit rien, elle non plus, et la phrase ne vient pas. Ils n'ont d'ailleurs jamais reparlé de cette journée, de cet *accident*, de cette nuit—du moins lorsqu'ils ne sont pas seuls ensemble. (p. 198)

When the narrator, at the end of the novel, is describing the main character of the African novel, in whose "complications psychologiques" (p. 216) he sees his personal situation reflected, he refers to "un *accident* de voiture" involving the death of another character and thereby suggests Franck's driving and his crash—allusions to his lovemaking with A . . . : "Le personnage principal —apprend-on—est malhonnête. Il est honnête, il essaie de rétablir une situation compromise par son prédécesseur, mort dans un *accident* de voiture. Mais il n'a pas eu de prédécesseur, car la compagnie est de fondation toute récente; et ce n'était pas un *accident*. Il est d'ailleurs question d'un navire (un grand navire blanc) et non de voiture" (p. 216). Here the concept of "un accident" becomes even more ambiguous with the narrator's assertion that the accident was not an accident. Was it an "incident sans gravité" rather than an incident having serious consequences, an accident; or was it intended rather than accidental; and intended by whom? Franck's crash or "accident de voiture" has been an "incident" (p. 198) or an "aventure sans gravité" (p. 87), since Franck and A . . . have not died and since A . . . 's escapade has not yet resulted in her departure; and the crash has not been accidental since the narrator has willed it; and since the escapade seems to have been planned by A . . . , it has not been accidental.

By denying the existence of a predecessor, the narrator casts doubt on the honesty of the main character, to whom he has attributed his own occupation and whom he had seemed to be defending, in order to eliminate the death of another character—who represents A . . . 's crime and the narrator's own nonexistence and unimportance which he cannot face. The narrator denies the existence of a predecessor by suggesting that the company is young, referring to an earlier period when this was true, since his marriage ("compagnie") has been in existence for some time. His denial of the existence of a predecessor reflects his many other attempts to deny his situation by denying the progress of time. His assertion that the situation of the African novel concerns a large white boat rather than a car suggests the calendar picture, which is described for a third time immediately after the car accident. In this picture, the boat is new (alluding to the situation in which Franck's car is new). A man in a well-cut white (p. 172) European suit (p. 157) and a sun helmet (p. 172) with an old-fashioned moustache (p. 172)—all of which allude to the narrator's occupation ("Le personnage n'est pas un fonctionnaire [des douanes], mais un employé supérieur d'une vieille compagnie commerciale" p. 216), and maturity ("Fort de ses trois ans d'expérience, Franck pense . . ." p. 25)—is observing something in the water. It is "une sorte d'épave . . . un vieux vêtement, ou un sac vide" (p. 157), "le morceau d'étoffe" (pp. 168, 172), "un vêtement, un sac de toile, ou autre chose" (p. 172)—the evidence of a possible crime—literally floating "sans gravité" on the surface of the water. References to the sea are used to describe A . . . 's behavior. Her smile "flotte" (p. 200) on her lips. On the terrace in the dark night of A . . . 's and Franck's absence, "bien que la vue ait eu le temps de s'habituer, aucun objet ne *surage*, même parmi les plus proches" (p. 139). In the corridor, "le léger bercement de la lumière, qui s'avance le long du couloir, agite la suite ininterrompue des chevrons d'une ondulation continue, semblable à celle des *vagues*" (p. 162). The darkness and silence resulting from the failure of

the lantern suggest to the narrator the breaking or unhooking of a cable (p. 173)—such as those on the loading crane of the white ship in the calendar photo (p. 158)—allowing an object attached to it, perhaps by “filins” (p. 158), to fall helplessly into the water. The image of locks of hair going up into a chignon (pp. 173-174) also suggests the anti-gravitational (“sans gravité”) activity allowed by water, especially salt water. Many descriptions of A . . . ’s long hair allude to its undulating effect (pp. 43, 135). The rhythm of waves is suggested by the description of the regularity of breathing or the brushing of A . . . ’s hair. The possibility that A . . . ’s behavior is intentional and thus truly illegitimate is linked to “incident” by the pun on “ce n’était pas un accident” (p. 216); and the severity implied by “accident” comes to be associated with “incident” through the pun on “sans gravité” (pp. 87, 198).

Vehicles such as “*souple*” (pp. 11, 18, 42, 55, 65, 103, 177, 186, 209) and “*sourire*” (pp. 10, 26, 42, 47, 77, 83, 85-2, 107, 133, 183, 194-2, 200) referring to enigmatic movement and behavior emphasize the connotative value of immorality in “*souillure*” (p. 129) through assonance. Other vehicles related to “*mollesse*” (p. 77)—by *adnominatio* such as “*mou*” (pp. 53, 177), “*mol*” (p. 178) and “*démolir*” (pp. 26, 60), by assonance such as “*mollets*” (p. 139) and by homophony such as “*une moue*” (p. 47)—come to bear the connotation of moral laxity in the metaphorical baggage of “*mollesse*.”

Certain tenors derive the metaphorical value which they give their vehicles from the physical allusiveness of their denotative meaning. This is true of “*tâche*” in relation to “*détacher*,” “*trace*,” “*trajet*,” “*trait*,” and “*traînée*.” It is also true of “*chevron*” which—because its shape suggests the centipede mark, and thus the scene in which the centipede is killed—lends this allusion to the problematic character of A . . . ’s and Franck’s behavior to the vehicles “*écheveau*” (pp. 153, 174), “*enchevêtrer*” (p. 213), “*enchevêtrement*” (p. 34), “*chevaucher*” (pp. 108, 160).<sup>11</sup> The expression “*point d’interrogation*” (pp. 56, 64), which is used to describe the centipede mark, brings its moral connotation to “*interrogation, mal posée*” (p. 51), the narrator’s description of his questioning of the boy in relation to the ice bucket episode, and to the ambiguous intonation of the boy’s utterance (“*il n’est pas possible de distinguer les interrogations des autres phrases*,” pp. 175-176).

Another type of pun which the narrator uses to disguise his consideration of his situation is that in which not only the context of the tenor is not revealed but also the vehicle is hidden by being presented in paraphrase. The paraphrase describes a visual illustration of a literal interpretation of expressions which metaphorically describe the narrator’s situation. For example, the descriptions indicating that the “*mille-pattes-araignée*” is going toward the ceiling represent the concept “*avoir une araignée au plafond*.” That the “*mille-pattes-araignée*” is only half way to the ceiling represents the fact that the narrator is not altogether incoherent, inconsistent, or ill. The passage in which the dimensions and function of the *jalousies* are described represents the narrator’s analyzing of elements of his jealousy (“*jealousie*”). The passages in which the lizard is described suggest the narrator’s contemplation of the rupture in his relationship with A . . . .

Other hidden vehicles and tenors, “*bête noire*” and “*éminence grise*” referring to the uncontrollable suspicion which governs the narrator’s activity, are represented by the descriptions of the centipede and the lizard respectively. The centipede is frequently referred to by the terms “*la bête*” (pp. 62, 63, 97, 128, 164) and “*la bestiole*” (pp. 97, 128, 167). Its blackness is indicated in the description of A . . . ’s hair (“*la masse noire*,” pp. 42, 43, 64, 165, 186) whose

movement resembles that of the centipede, in the description of the centipede mark ("tâche noirâtre," p. 27), and in the description of images which allude to it: the writing on the letter paper ("jambages . . . d'encre noire," pp. 131-132) and the marks on the blotter ("fragments d'écriture a l'encre noire . . . jambages," pp. 168-169). The lizard "en pierre grise" (p. 205) is analogous both in color—grey—and in its position on the terrace roof, on the pillar or on the terrace railing dominating the valley or "lézard" which divides the plateau, "éminence," to the position and color of the "éperon rocheux" (pp. 16, 33, 41, 137, 144, 181, 217). The pun on "bête noire" occurs most frequently in the first six sections of the novel whereas that on "éminence grise" is evident in Sections VII and VIII. Both images are avoided in the final section where the narrator seems unable to give even the shortest incident a detailed examination.

The hidden tenors "délit," in "flagrant délit," and "infidélité" are also presented through non-aural vehicles. The overflowing of the stream from its bed, or "lit," indicated by the erosion of the banks (p. 118) and by the repairs to the bridge (pp. 102-104, 107-108, 109, 118, 138, 176-177) or simply by a reference to the valley, represent the geological phenomenon "délit." In the context of the moralistic language ("vierge," "Christiane," "immaculé," "chute," etc.) and legalistic language ("voleur," "complice," "fugitif," "escroquerie," etc.) used by the narrator, "délit" refers to his preoccupation with A . . . 's being "out" of her marital "bed" on her trip to town and to his preoccupation with her possible "infidélité."

Similarly, A . . . 's "déshabillé matinal" represents a "négligée." It is used connotatively to characterize Franck's conjugal behavior in the action attributed to his counterpart in the African novel ("la conduite du mari, coupable au moins de *négligence*, selon l'avis des deux lecteurs," p. 193) and in his manner of eating ("il *néglige* quelque règle essentielle," p. 23). References to A . . . 's "déshabillé matinal," then, suggest her negligence of her conjugal duties. And A . . . 's decision that "toute la balustrade doit être repeinte en jaune vif" (p. 40) suggests the expression "être peint en jaune," to be deceived by one's wife. It thus translates pictorially a symbolic literary expression of the narrator's fear of his wife's infidelity.

The progression of background colors from green ("la lumière elle-même est comme *verdie* qui éclaire la salle à manger," p. 56), to blue ("la grande pièce . . . paraît sombre. La robe s'y teinte du *bleu* froid des profondeurs," p. 136), to violet ("la table laquée devient . . . d'un *bleu* plus soutenu, ainsi que la robe, le sol blanc, les flancs de la baignoire. La pièce entière est plongée dans l'obscurité. Seul la carré de la fenêtre fait une tache d'un *violet* plus clair . . ." p. 137) suggests the narrator's increasing jealousy ("vert d'envie") and anger ("bleu de rage" or "violet"). The sparks and flames of anger and desire are suggested by the last bits of daylight, ("La photographie ne se signale plus que par les bords nacrés de son cadre, qui *brillent* dans un reste de lumière. Par devant *brillent* aussi le parallélogramme que la lame dessine et l'ellipse en métal au centre de la gomme. . . . L'eau courante du ruisseau *scintille* encore des derniers *reflets* de la pénombre," p. 138), by the "reflets roux" of A . . . 's hair (pp. 44, 133, 212) and the automobile crash and fire (p. 165).

It is apparent from the variety and number of puns described that the narrator gives obscure pun an important role in the presentation of his experience and that pun is crucial in the structure of the novel. Whether the narrator obscures his puns by omitting their tenor, by referring to it only metaphorically, by paraphrasing their vehicle, or by the very fact that he varies his method of disguise, he is usually successful in representing with meaningful



obscurity his fears concerning A . . . 's behavior. On the one occasion when they are presented directly (in the hotel scene) it is in a dramatization rather than a statement. He thus manages to allay some of the anguish of these fears by refusing to categorize them explicitly and thus to admit them. Robbe-Grillet's use of pun in *La Jalousie*, then, is an original and significant development in narrative technique.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 681-682. René Wellek and Austin Warren, in their *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 160, refer to pun and related figures as "sound-patterns" and "sound-figures." W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. points to the metaphorical function of pun in the chapter "When is Variation 'Elegant?'" in his book *The Verbal Icon* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1960), pp. 186-199. He emphasizes this aspect of pun in his discussion of it in the subsequent chapter, "Verbal Style: Logical and Counter-Logical" (pp. 200-217), p. 208, adding that "pun contributes nothing to the truth of propriety of the metaphor involved, but it does concentrate the symbols upon whatever propriety there may be" (p. 208).

<sup>2</sup>Following I. A. Richards' usage, I employ the term "tenor" to indicate the subject of the comparison and the term "vehicle" to refer to that to which the subject or the "tenor" is compared; see I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 97.

<sup>3</sup>Pun is one aspect of Robbe-Grillet's particular use of metaphor, or allusion, a use which obscures its own existence. It is characterized by his heavy reliance on visual symbols and by his infrequent and disguised use of lexical symbols. Raymond Rousset's use of pun in his novels is also basic and unobtrusive—he had to reveal its functioning in a work called *Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres* (Paris: J.-J. Pauvert, 1963). However, it is clear that Rousset is using pun as inspiration for his fictional plot and not as a device to characterize a fictional personality.

<sup>4</sup>Bruce Morrisette, in *Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1963), p. 143, has observed the turn on the word "toile" in the associative construction of the narration of *La Jalousie*. And Jean Ricardou, in *Problèmes du nouveau roman* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967) has also observed this use of the disguised tenor ("allégories secrètes" and "métaphores implicites," p. 153) in allusive language in *Le Voyeur*. Morrisette (*op. cit.*, pp. 96-97), Ben Stoltzfus (*Alain Robbe-Grillet and the New French Novel*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), and Ricardou (*op. cit.*), among others, have observed the use of a form of visual pun (and what Ricardou calls "métaphores structurelles," *op. cit.*, p. 142), in which the hidden tenor is further disguised by the presentation of the vehicle in paraphrase in the figure-eight forms of *Le Voyeur*. Thus although pun has been touched on by certain critics, the nature of its use and its implications for narrative viewpoint in *La Jalousie* have not yet been examined, in spite of Robbe-Grillet's explicit critical interest in Raymond Rousset's work and in his use of pun (cf. Robbe-Grillet's "Enigmes et transparence chez Raymond Rousset," *Critique*, No. 199, December 1963, pp. 1027-1033, reprinted in *Pour un nouveau roman*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1963).

<sup>5</sup>This is suggested not only by the narrator's very attempt either to ignore, justify, or deny the ambiguity of his wife's behavior or to make it appear incoherent and unrecognizable, but also by connotative use of a few terms which allude denotatively either to a moral code—Catholicism ("vierge," "Christiane," "immaculé," "chute," etc.)—that condones sexual intercourse with only one partner during the lifetime of that partner or to a social code—capitalism ("voleur," "complice," "fugitif," "escroquerie," etc.)—which allows a person to have private property and condemns a person who appropriates another person's property without making a payment of some sort even if that property is a person who acts of his own free will (cf. Chapter V, "Linguistic Keys to the Narrator's Values," of my doctoral thesis, "An Analytical Study of Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie*," University of Toronto 1972).

<sup>6</sup>All quotations of the novel are taken from *La Jalousie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1957); italics used are mine.

<sup>7</sup>Paul Fortier's Concordance of "*La Jalousie*" (University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus Computer, March 30, 1970) was consulted to establish a thorough and accurate list of the expressions whose usage I am discussing.

<sup>8</sup>For a fuller discussion of this behavior, consult my doctoral thesis, "An Analytical Study of Alain Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie*," University of Toronto 1972, p. 305.

<sup>9</sup>Paul Robert, *Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française*, (Paris: Société du Nouveau Littéré, 1966).

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>The terms "*cheveux*" and "*chevelure*" are often associated with movement which suggests the centipede. Through their assonance with "*chevron*," however, they also bear the moral connotation of the centipede.