

Novels of Robbe-Grillet

- *Jealousy*, 1957
- “A first-person narrator who, however, never says “I” and whom one never sees or hears, draws us into an identification with him, installs us in the “hole” that he occupies in the center of the text, so that we see, hear, move, and feel with him.” (Bruce Morrisette)
- Repetitions—with slight variation to account for point of view
- Minute descriptions
- Reversals of chronology
- Objectivist: no inner monologue or psychological analysis—purely descriptive but in a relativistic way

Objective themes

- Objects that reappear—the reader imposes signification on these objects
- “Network of stains,” chiefly “a centipede crushed on the dining-room wall by Franck, the lover of the jealous narrator-husband’s wife A, whom we often see, with the husband’s eyes, through the *jalousie* or sun blind of a window...” (Morrisette)
- The crushed centipede takes on symbolic meaning, perhaps conveying eroticism, physicality, life/death...

Characters

- “A”, wife
- Unnamed husband who observes
- Franck, the neighbor
- First person narrative that appears to be a third person narrative. The husband has written himself out of the narrative as he jealously observes his wife and Franck and re-imagines various scenes with slightly different details
- You don’t know which one really happened and which is the narrator’s imagination
- After “A” says she needs to go to town and Franck offers to drive her tomorrow...
- “A centipede!” she says in a more restrained voice, in silence that has just fallen.
Franck looks up again. Following the direction of A...’s motionless gaze, he turns his head to the other side, toward his right.
On the light colored paint of the partition opposite A..., a common *Scutigera* of average size (about as long as a finger) has appeared...
It is not unusual to encounter different kinds of centipedes after dark in this already old

wooden house. And this kind is not one of the largest; it is far from being one of the most venomous. A...does her best, but does not manage to look away, nor to smile at the joke about her aversion to centipedes.

Franck, who has said nothing, is looking at A....again. Then he stands up, noiselessly, holding his napkin in his hand. He wads it into a ball and approaches the wall.

A...seems to be breathing a little fast, but this may be an illusion. Her left hand gradually closes over her knife. The delicate antennae accelerate their alternate swaying...

Franck lifts the napkin away from the wall and with his foot continues to squash something on the tiles, against the baseboard.

About a yard higher, the paint is marked with a dark shape, a tiny arc twisted into a question mark, blurred on one side, in places surrounded by more tenuous signs, from which A...has still not taken her eyes." (64-65)

The spot is everywhere...

- "The spot in on the wall of the house, on the flagstones, against the empty sky. It is everywhere in the valley, from the garden to the stream and up the opposite slope. It is in the office too, in the bedroom, in the dining room, in the living room, in the courtyard, on the road up to the highway." (1-2)
 - What does this mean?
- "Aunt Safiyya and the Monastery"
- Novella by Bahaa' Taher, 1996
 - Set in 1967, the period of the war with Israel, but this is only hinted at
 - Nameless narrator in small Egyptian village, 12 year old boy
 - He recalls how he would take cookies to the Coptic, Christian monastery—the Coptics and Muslims get along well
 - Saffiya is like a sister to him though she is a distant cousin
 - Many men woo her and the family wants to marry her to Harbi, another cousin
 - One day the old Bey comes and asks to marry her and surprisingly she says "yes"
 - Soon after she gives birth to a boy, Hassan
 - There are rumors in the village, but none explicit.
 - The Bey has Harbi attacked by his men; Harbi shoots the Bey
 - She will raise Hassan to hate Harbi and to kill him

Aunt Saffiya as Post-Modern

- Setting with a local, non-Western point of view
- Gender tensions
- Cycle of Revenge as a metaphor for religious and national strife is questioned
- Tension between modern and traditional
- Change: people move from the village and the village modernizes; even the monastery changes, becoming more scholarly and less connected to community
- What divides Egypt? Is peace possible?

“The Death of Artemio Cruz”

- Carlos Fuentes, Mexican author, 1962
- Cruz is on his deathbed
- He was a revolutionary, politician, business tycoon
- We see how corrupt he became; how he had lovers; how he betrayed those he loved
- Multiple narrators; multiple points of view
- Abrupt shifts in time

Summary

- Traditional novelistic form tested: narrator; non-sequential time; point of view;
- Represents characters from previously under represented groups: third world countries, or minorities, women
- Invite us to look at questions differently—Recenter or decenter our own point of view