

PRESENTATION

by Ben Stoltzfus

ARCHIVE ON THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF Alain Robbe-Grillet's *LA BELLE CAPTIVE*

In 1995 the University of California Press published Ben Stoltzfus's English translation of *LA BELLE CAPTIVE* by Alain Robbe-Grillet (illustrated with 77 images by René Magritte). It included a critical study of the piconovel. The hardback edition of 1500 sold out, and a paperback edition of 2000 copies was published in 1996.

The publication of the English translation occurred only after many efforts and dead ends that took almost ten years to complete, from initial contact to final publication. It involved correspondence not only with Robbe-Grillet, but also with six editors at the University of California Press, Georges Borchardt (R-G's New York literary agent), various museums, people in Belgium, the UK, and elsewhere.

Packet one contains eight letters by Robbe-Grillet and several by me concerning the difficulties of publication, copyright, and obtaining the film clip of the Magritte illustrations in *LA BELLE CAPTIVE*, a film clip that was in the possession of a Paul Vandebossche in Brussels. The letters in packet one are best understood in the context of the complete correspondence that is in packet two.

Packet two contains my correspondence with all these entities. In 1988, there were many midnight phone calls (due to the time differential) to Monsieur Vandebossche, and they resulted in a trip to Brussels where I was to pick up the film clip. When I arrived at his office, his secretary informed me that he was in the hospital and unable to deliver the clip. In 1989, Georges Borchardt wrote to say that Vandebossche had gone bankrupt. Letters to SABAM and the Editions Collet failed to locate the clip. It was generally assumed that although Vandebossche was bankrupt, he had kept the clip. I wrote to him again in 1990, but he never answered. In 1990 and 1991 I was in touch with Charly Herscovici, a friend of Magritte's, and the Artists' Rights Society in New York City concerning fees and copyright permissions for the Magritte images in *LA BELLE CAPTIVE*. After many dead ends, and unable to secure electronic images, the University of California Press glossed the images from the original 1976 French edition and reproduced them in black-and-white. All of these difficulties and more are detailed in packet two. They illustrate how hard it is sometimes to get a book published.

Packet three contains press clippings and book publicity.

Packet four contains photos of Robbe-Grillet, photos taken by me at my house in 1978, in Riverside, California, when he was a visiting professor at UCLA. Packet four also contains a xerox letter from Robbe-Grillet to Lynne Diamond-Nigh, editor of the *NEW NOVEL REVIEW*, concerning the flap at Washington University in Saint Louis over political correctness. Robbe-Grillet was a visiting professor at Washington University. Packet four also contains a copy of the

journal, FICTION INTERNATIONAL, which published my translation of that letter and a brief commentary concerning the flap.

Packet five contains a “blue line” copy of the hardback edition/translation of LA BELLE CAPTIVE.