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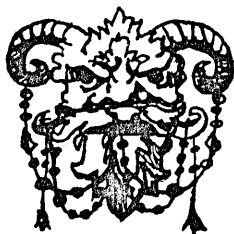
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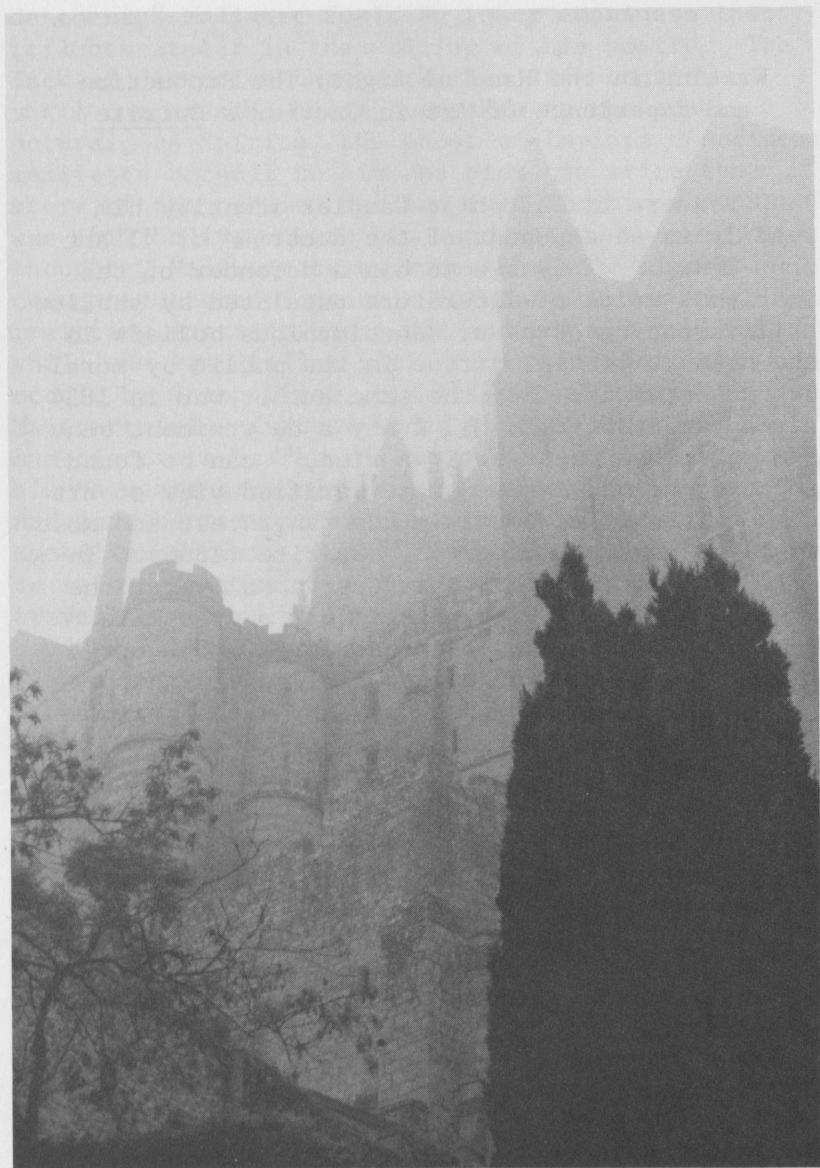
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Writing in the Hand of Light: The Production  
and Experience of Art in Gautier's Spirite

Readers of Théophile Gautier identify him readily as an exponent of the doctrine of "l'Art pour l'Art." They see in him a defender of the intrinsic value of literature untainted by shallow utilitarian concerns or sanctimonious beliefs in the need to instill virtue in the public by moralistic posturing. Yet the same author who in 1834 already had affirmed "[i]l n'y a de vraiment beau que ce qui ne peut servir à rien,"<sup>1</sup> can be found to have evolved an even more rarified view of art some thirty years later in his lengthiest and most complex "conte fantastique," Spirite (1866). Indeed, despite the fact that Guy de Malivert, the protagonist in Spirite, is himself a poet like Gautier, the tale reveals that for him the most intense experience of beauty lies not in the production of a series of texts, but in the celebration of the love he feels for Spirite, a love that has the effect of turning his life itself into a work of art. An analysis of the tale may thus reveal how Gautier's ideal of art had attained an even greater purity a mere six years before his death. Paradoxically, the implication of the text is that the highest aesthetic awareness is not the one that leaves behind messages or artifacts, but is instead the one that forgoes expression altogether.<sup>2</sup>

Spirite recounts the story of Guy de Malivert, a worldly idler, frequenter of exclusive social circles, and eligible bachelor sought after by the most attractive of Parisian ladies, such as the lovely but vapid Mme d'Ymbercourt. While unattached and uninvolved in any serious "affaires

de coeur," Malivert feels an inner emptiness that reflects itself in the writing of his poetry. The lack of direction that marks his life continues until one evening he is overtaken by the supernatural, as Spirite, the ghost of Lavinia d'Aufideni, manifests herself to him and bids him write the story of the passion she had felt for him when she was still alive. With his hand guided by her thoughts, Malivert transcribes the tale of this convent-educated ingenue's infatuation for him, his unwitting inattention to her and her own death while she was still a girl. Initiated into the occult by Baron Féroë, his friend and confidant, Malivert falls further under Spirite's influence and discovers he returns her love. In her presence, his thoughts grow clearer, his poetry more eloquent, and soon he terminates his pointless liaison with Mme d'Ymbercourt. Restless and bereft, he longs to rejoin Spirite, but cannot do so until, when traveling abroad in Greece, he is murdered by a band of highwaymen and his own death sets him free.

Throughout, the story's emphasis is on the problem of art as a method of communication, art that, at the outset, is not as yet redeemed by love. And so it is no surprise that early on Malivert, as intellectual, "désœuvré" and member of "tout Paris," feels himself to some extent an exile in a society that proscribes spontaneity in relationships in favor of propriety. There he finds oral communication restricted to the compliments and commonplaces spoken on receiving lines, written communication to the names inscribed on dance cards, and visual communication to the examination of beautiful women through lorgnettes at the theater. Comfortably understimulated in this milieu, Malivert is shown leading a life of self-indulgent mental inactivity, "dans cette paresseuse disposition d'âme où l'absence de pensée est préférable à la plus belle idée exprimée

en termes sublimes."<sup>3</sup> Living on the level of the body, he enjoys the dormancy of his intellect, as he sits somnolently in his drawing room beneath the muted light of his lamp, while the sounds of the outside world filter in to him through a layer of snow on the street. Yet already one sees evidence of his repugnance for this empty life of social rounds and his need for recourse to his art as the only means of honest self-expression. His serene numbness of mind seems more to have resulted from an effort to inure himself against the monotony of an existence scheduled around endless teas and formal dinners. Even before discovering the spirit world, Malivert balks at the need to speak and write while revealing nothing of himself and learning nothing of others. It is this unwillingness to send dishonest messages that first causes his reluctance to appear at one of Mme d'Ymberecourt's receptions or to send her a note alleging a reason for his absence. And it is his insistence on a kind of communicative integrity that first draws Spirite to him, to show him the true meaning of art and teach him to express himself with a greater immediacy and transparency than he ever imagined possible.

Gautier's tale shows that, because of the lack of meaningful content in normal conversations, information about people's real thoughts can best be culled from observation of their behavior, dress and gestures. A blush, a downcast eye, a look of satisfied conceit, may make a more eloquent statement about an individual's private feelings than the one that he intends. Yet Gautier does not suggest that appearances are any less important in motivating actions. Conventional exchanges, evidence gained from superficial contacts, cause inferences to be made that can have a binding effect on those involved. It is for this reason that Malivert's frequent presence at Mme d'Ymberecourt's parties leads others to make assumptions that

almost force him to marry a woman he does not even love. Malivert has himself observed how conversations in social settings include all those capable of overhearing a message and substituting for the intended meaning one distorted to fit their own interpretation. Eavesdroppers control the sense given to one's words, so Malivert finds that he can best express himself in writing, where he can posit a generalized audience to begin with. Thus when Spirite remarks to Malivert, "chez vous le parfait gentleman cachait un écrivain distingué" (Spirite, p. 235), she is observing how Malivert in face-to-face contact discloses less of himself than when addressing an audience he cannot even see. In writing, Malivert can pay more attention to saying what he means. The nature of speech is such that it can be appropriated by anyone in range of hearing. It is paradoxically a more public form of communication than is writing, which allows a sensitive reader to experience a private understanding with an author by sharing an appreciation of the finer nuances of his meaning. "[L]a vraie attitude de l'âme," asserts Spirite, "finit par se révéler pour celui qui sait lire . . ." (Spirite, p. 235).

Gautier's tale suggests that, further, beneath the various masks society makes a man adopt, there exists a core of personal truth that resists the pressure to flatter and deceive. Yet, since the social text is a collaborative one, both in its rules and composition, it often suffocates the individual's impulse toward directness of expression. For Malivert to voice his most personal needs and feelings, he must erase the social text as palimpsest, must empty his mind and restore it to the status of a blank page.<sup>4</sup> Otherwise, discretion and dissimulation are best cultivated in this gala social world, in which the most confidential message is the one first seized on and converted into public speculation. That is why, in social settings, Baron Féroë wears an air of non-committal

impassivity and Malivert camouflages his boredom with perfect cordiality. Having been taught to still the language of the heart, Malivert is at first a man without a genuine inner life, a figure who dispenses pleasantries and shares in banal conversation absent-mindedly. He appears a sleep-walker through the arid social pageantry he is part of. To him and Féroë, the soirées they attend seem peopled by throngs of lovely, soulless automata. "Charmante personne!" remarks the baron to Malivert about one particularly graceful lady. "[Q]uel dommage qu'elle n'ait pas d'âme. Celui qui en deviendrait amoureux éprouverait le sort de l'étudiant Nathaniel dans 'L'Homme au sable' d'Hoffmann; il courrait risque de serrer au bal un mannequin entre ses bras et c'est une valse macabre que celle-là pour un homme de coeur" (Spirite, pp. 183-184).

This motif of lifelessness and somnambulism figures prominently in Gautier's tale, from the incuriosity of Malivert as he lounges before the fire with his cat -- "toute la soirée il avait été paresseux, somnolent, engourdi par une torpeur de bien-être" (Spirite, p. 177) -- to the crucial later scene when Malivert welcomes the presence of Spirite as she plays for him on his piano. The evolution of the character of Malivert from a twilight consciousness to a state of heightened thought and feeling is the main thread of Gautier's story, which in effect describes a process of awakening. It is not coincidental that it is at a presentation of "La Sonnambula" that young Lavinia first experiences a disappointment of her hope to attract the attention of Guy de Malivert. It is natural as well that this failure eventually brings her to the realization that true love can only be expressed when both parties are freed of the encumbrance of the body, which dulls their minds and imprisons them in an obscure sleep of the senses.

Beyond this automatism of expression promoted in society, there is the awareness one experiences in the process of artistic creation. Unlike the way that Malivert must speak when he is in society, his statements as an artist retain their power by having to pass only through his chosen medium. In the same way that the assumption of a remote audience enables a speaker to communicate in a less impersonal way, so does the distancing of the artist from his subject allow him to achieve a better creative rendering of his material. Thus the success of art depends on its divorce from the original model, as the abstraction and the emptiness of form calls for a particular content to make it live by filling it with meaning. Spirite observes how painting is like memory, in that the artist flees a subject whose presence overwhelms him with the excess of its evidence. The imagination works, she says, "comme un peintre qui poursuit un portrait en l'absence du modèle, adoucissant les méplats, fondant les teintes, estompant les contours, et ramenant malgré lui le type à son idéal particulier" (Spirite, p. 242). The purpose of art is to enable a man to rediscover his ideal. The value of creative effort is not the art work or the appreciation it commands. Rather, creativity is experienced when the artist, through an absorption in his subject, becomes his own medium.

On the one hand, art is a better transmitter than speech because it is of less consequence to whom the idea is addressed or whether it is received intact. Yet the art object, be it sculpture, canvas or poem, may by its solidity and permanence serve as a poor receptacle for a meaning that is forever seeking to amend itself. In writing, the fidelity of the artifact to the idea depends upon their synchronicity. Rather than having a preserved text survive the moment of the thought's articulation, the transcribed message should allow

its own immediate deletion. Since all writing entails an internal mediation, a setting into words, the author performs a variety of functions, as creator, copyist and reader. His is the mind that thinks, the hand that writes and the critical faculty that evaluates, and at each of these stages, he runs the risk of losing control of his work and faces the possibility that "je" might indeed become "un autre." Just as the link between the speaker and his audience in elegant Parisian society is tenuous and unreliable, so is the one between the thought and its expression. Thus Guy de Malivert finds he is capable of saying what he means only when it is no longer he who says it, but Spirite, who can read his mind, who knows him not by what he says and writes but by what is revealed "between the lines." Once possessed by Spirite, Malivert is freed of the need for mediation. He is no longer an author alienated from his message. Under Spirite's influence, he does not write, but takes dictation. Instead of struggling to match a creative impulse with an appropriate expression, he finds that in the place of thought there is his moving hand, which becomes itself a kind of living text. Through Spirite there exists a perfect correlation between the word and the idea. After all, he says, "la main n'était . . . qu'un signe" (Spirite, p. 226).

As one moves from exchanges in polite society, beyond art to the transparency of meaning between those in love, the mediation of messages is made more easy since the sender can be less concerned with how his words will be received. Yet before Malivert can engage in any real communication, he must first become more practiced in the art of honest reflection. Not surprisingly, the first time Spirite manifests herself to Malivert is through a mirror. But it is not one designed to reassure a subject about the acceptability of the



image he projects in society, a mirror used in the way one might expect of Mme d'Ymbertcourt -- "un de ces miroirs du siècle dernier, comme on en voit souvent dans les toilettes et les départs pour le bal de Longhi, le Watteau de la décadence vénitienne . . ." (Spirite, p. 205). Instead the glass Spirite appears in is said to resemble "une ouverture pratiquée sur un vide rempli d'idéales ténèbres" (Spirite, p. 205). As at the beginning Malivert's mind had been emptied of his social concerns and obligations, so here the mirror is made to lose its reflective property and does more than merely reproduce the physical world it faces. In it Malivert's vision ceases to be of things as they are and becomes a vision of things as he would have them. His mind is made receptive to thoughts no longer trivialized by the need for expression, so that what he sees is "plutôt l'idée d'une couleur que la couleur elle-même, une vapeur . . . si délicatement nuancée que tous les mots humains ne sauraient la rendre" (Spirite, p. 207). In her ability to rouse Malivert from his somnambulistic state, Spirite frees him of his dependence on words. She reveals him to himself and puts him back in touch with long forgotten feelings. By giving back to him the image of an ideal obscured by his worldly vision, she acts as a reflector of that part of him he had let lie dormant for so long. And by expressing through her music his yearning for the sublime, she works to mediate the ineffable. So as she plays at the keyboard:

Guy reconnut une de ses poésies,  
-- celle qu'il aimait le mieux, --  
transposée de la langue du vers  
dans la langue de la musique. . . .  
-- Spirite, avec une intuition  
merveilleuse, rendait l'au-delà  
des mots, le non-sorti du verbe

humain, . . . l'indicible et  
l'inexprimable, le desideratum de  
la pensée au bout de ses efforts,  
et tout le flottant, le flou, le  
suave qui déborde du contour trop  
sec de la parole (Spirite, pp. 281-  
282).

As the relationship between Spirite and Malivert develops, the understanding between the two begins to forego the need for mediation, progressing beyond words and music, and becoming, as Ross Chambers says, more communion than communication.<sup>5</sup> At this point, a curious inversion of perception takes place in Malivert. Having entered into contact with Spirite and glimpsed through her a world of light and splendor, Malivert finds he is the one condemned to carry out an existence in exile, in the shadow zone of the living here below. Suddenly it is no longer Spirite who appears the ghostly or insubstantial one, but rather the peers whom Malivert must continue frequenting as long as he remains alive. " [L]es hommes ne lui appar[u]rent plus que comme les ombres lointaines, comme des fantômes avec lesquels il n'avait plus de rapport" (Spirite, p. 284).

So if there is one last medium to be transcended before a perfect understanding between the two can be achieved, it is no longer speech or writing, but rather the medium of the body, "cette forme épaisse et lourde," which Malivert says "[l]'empêche de s]'élever avec l'âme adorée aux sphères où planent les âmes" (Spirite, p. 286). Yet he finds that even in death the body leaves behind a written text that substitutes its meaning for the meaning of the person's life. However, when Malivert visits the burial site of Lavinia d'Aufideni, he is pleased he can associate his

vision of Spirite with the history of her mortal antecedent. That is because he reads the inscription on her tomb not so much as the closing line in the prosaic account of her death, but as the opening line in the poem of Spirite's eternal life, which he knows will acquire its meaning only when the two lovers act together to compose it.

While Chambers is right in seeing Gautier's tale as "une allégorie de l'inspiration littéraire" (Chambers, p. 4), an expression of Malivert's longing to escape, by way of death, from a world of form and words into one of content, light and life, perhaps the real focus of the story lies elsewhere. By pointing to the need to learn a type of writing that foregoes all texts, that becomes instead a kind of aesthetic of perception; the tale seems to stress the moment when art itself must be transcended. By using the work to demonstrate the inadequacy of literature to his story's subject, Gautier makes his tale a celebration of love and art at once. Yet it is an art the exercise of which must be renounced lest it encounter its own inevitable failure at the moment of the writer's greatest inspiration. On the one hand, one might say it is Malivert's beatification and deliverance in death that mark the high point of the story. But it is also the point at which the narrative acknowledges its limitations. Once Malivert leaves behind his need for creative expression -- "L'art lui-même est oublié pour l'amour" (Spirite, p. 305), Spirite proclaims -- his transfiguration frees him of poetry and words and effectively places him outside the range of Gautier's own literary skills. So at the moment of the lovers' assumption, when there is nothing left to say on their account, the text can only turn back to Baron Féroë, who, like other men, must make do with only his creative gifts to seize hold of his ideal.

How, then, in the context of Gautier's tale, can art be understood as a conveyance of the indescribable? It would seem that for the act of mediation to bring with it no distortion of the message, art must be less a means of producing works than a manner of experiencing the world. No longer paper, clay or canvas, it is the individual's own consciousness on which images make their impress. It is the mind, purified by the experience of love, that becomes the page on which the hand of his emotions writes its message. Ultimately, it is Spirite rather than Malivert who is revealed to be the artist. It is she who sees beauty all around her and recreates the world in the image of her love. An unsophisticated young woman, Lavinia-Spirite has a mind not yet covered by the text of social rules, a mind whose blankness enables it all the better to receive the image of her beloved's face. "[V]otre image ne s'effaçà pas de mon souvenir," she says to Malivert. "Elle se conserva sur le vélin blanc de mon âme comme ces traits légers tracés au crayon par une main habile" (Spirite, pp. 229-230). Thus it is Spirite in whom the gift of artistic vision makes its first appearance. Having led a life both too protected and too short to permit her to become disillusioned, she retains the innocence she needs to view the world as a play created by an artist, a pageant held for her own personal enjoyment. "La vie est toujours la même;" she observes, "c'est une pièce de théâtre dont seuls les spectateurs changent; mais celui qui n'a pas vu la pièce s'y intéresse comme si elle était faite exprès pour lui, et à sa première représentation" (Spirite, p. 239). Since productivity is less a measure of creative talent than is sensitivity, the poet is not so much the one who writes as the one who reads, the one who sees. Similarly, the act of composing is so devalued in the story as to be little more than

a capitulation, a surrender of the head to hand. In this regard, Malivert is just a medium through which his poem passes. Art depends then on understanding, on taking in the light. It is Lavinia first and then Spirite who, irradiated from within by love, can recognize in everything the imprint of the "able hand," who can look out over the roof tops of the city and make out "[la] signature que Paris appose au bas de tous ses horizons" (Spirite, p. 233). Conversely, Malivert, for whom society is an empty and uninteresting show, is too blind to appreciate life conceived as one great work of art. He fails to sense Lavinia's love. "Un héros de roman n'y eût pas manqué;" Spirite says reprovingly to him, "mais vous n'étiez pas un héros de roman" (Spirite, p. 241).

Not surprisingly, once delivered from her body, Lavinia is changed from a victim of circumstances into Spirite, an active force arranging for the accomplishment of a love which had eluded her on earth. No longer a participant or spectator in the play of life, Spirite takes charge, assumes direction. Clearly Malivert is important in the tale only as that through which Spirite works. It is she who dictates his poems, guides him to a greater appreciation of beauty and finally leads him to an understanding that all actions leave behind a trace which together makes one's life a kind of text which can itself be judged as a work of art. While only death allows Spirite to reconstruct her existence in aesthetic terms -- "elle refaisait, après la mort, son chaste roman de pensionnaire chapitre par chapitre" (Spirite, p. 285) -- she gives this insight to Malivert while he is still alive. She enables him to realize that the only art that is worthwhile is animated from within by feeling. As for Malivert, once he has finished his period of exile on earth and forgotten art for love, he has no further need to convert his experience into writing.

Gautier's text abandons him too, just as he withdraws from literature. Instead, with Malivert's disappearance, the narrative turns to his footman Jack, who like his master at the beginning of the tale, longs for nothing more than a peaceful somnolence, a purely physical well-being undisturbed by creativity or thought.

Gautier's account seems to define art's province, then, as neither that of the complacent and uninquisitive nor of those whose spiritual fulfillment is so complete as to make creative effort superfluous. Yet for Malivert, the case is different. As long as he is alienated from society, separated from his audience and kept distant from the source of his inspiration, his art is more for him than just the medium of his ideas. It is the only thing that he can touch, that can compensate him for the inaccessibility of his ideal. The need to write is born then of the disunion love seeks to overcome. So while Spirite and Malivert remain apart, she must go on occupying and showing him his thoughts. But once death has united them, they no longer require literature as the bridge between earth and heaven, as the bond between two beings. Gautier's tale points out that art is an unsatisfactory medium and gives at most a crude and incomplete copy of the feelings underlying it. And already following the evening Spirite sets his poetry to music, Malivert has sensed their souls merge in understanding, and has ceased to struggle in the throes of writing. Yet even when Malivert stops creating, Spirite's hand must continue for a while guiding him, writing and editing a life still marred by imperfection. She accompanies him to Greece and prevails upon him not to take his life. When Malivert is attacked and killed by bandits on the roadside, his death marks the final chapter in the work of love that Malivert has lived and Spirite authored. Once more Spirite's hand appears, made visible both to bring to Malivert deliverance and

affix a signature to a creation that has just this moment been completed. There is seen at the dying man's side "une figure d'une éclatante blancheur . . . qui posait sur la blessure du voyageur . . . une main de lumière" (Spirite, p. 311). No longer a hand of flesh which, in its motion, distorts and falsifies the ideas of the mind, it is this time the perfect medium, one that illumines and makes clear. Having known the meaninglessness of communication in society, Malivert had first been able to redeem his life by having recourse to the constraint of words. Gradually though in his own writing and in the taking of Spirite's dictation, Malivert transcends the need for art. At the end, all his surviving messages disappear and Gautier's text falls silent, as Malivert's life is turned into a finished art work, a story plotted by Spirite and written by her in the hand of light.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Théophile Gautier, Mademoiselle de Maupin (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> For other views on the importance of the role of the artist in Gautier's "contes fantastiques," see: Albert B. Smith, Théophile Gautier and the Fantastic, University of Mississippi Romance Monographs (University: Univ. of Miss. Press, 1977), pp. 93-117, and Hilda Nelson's discussion of "Arria Marcella" in "Théophile Gautier: The Invisible and Impalpable World: A 'Demi-Conviction,'" The French Review, 45, No. 4 (1972), 828.

3 Théophile Gautier, Spirite, in Contes fantastiques (Paris: Union général d'éditions, 1973), p. 168. All further references to this work appear in the text.

4 Poulet points out how Gautier viewed the effort to disengage himself from time and material reality, to recover a past that was not lost, but only obscured by present impressions as the reading of a palimpsest. "Ainsi dans le poème de Gautier, 'Le Retour' . . . on trouve la métaphore du souvenir réapparaissant dans l'esprit 'comme en un palimpseste à travers d'autres signes, d'un ancien manuscrit ressuscitent les lignes.'" (Georges Poulet, Etudes sur le temps humain [Paris: Plon, 1972], I, 324.)

5 Ross Chambers, "Spirite" de Théophile Gautier: une lecture, Archives des Lettres Modernes, 4, No. 153 (Paris: Minard, 1974), p. 37. All further references to this work appear in the text.

6 "Aussi, quelle diable d'idée a-t-il de chevaucher toujours par des pays sales, mal pavés, absurdes, faméliques," Jack muses uncomprehendingly about his master, "tandis que nous pourrions être à Paris, douillettement installés dans un intérieur confortable . . ." (Spirite, p. 307).



## FUGUES DE MEMOIRE

On aimait tant les nattes, la course  
  effrénée  
D'une jolie Soviétique.

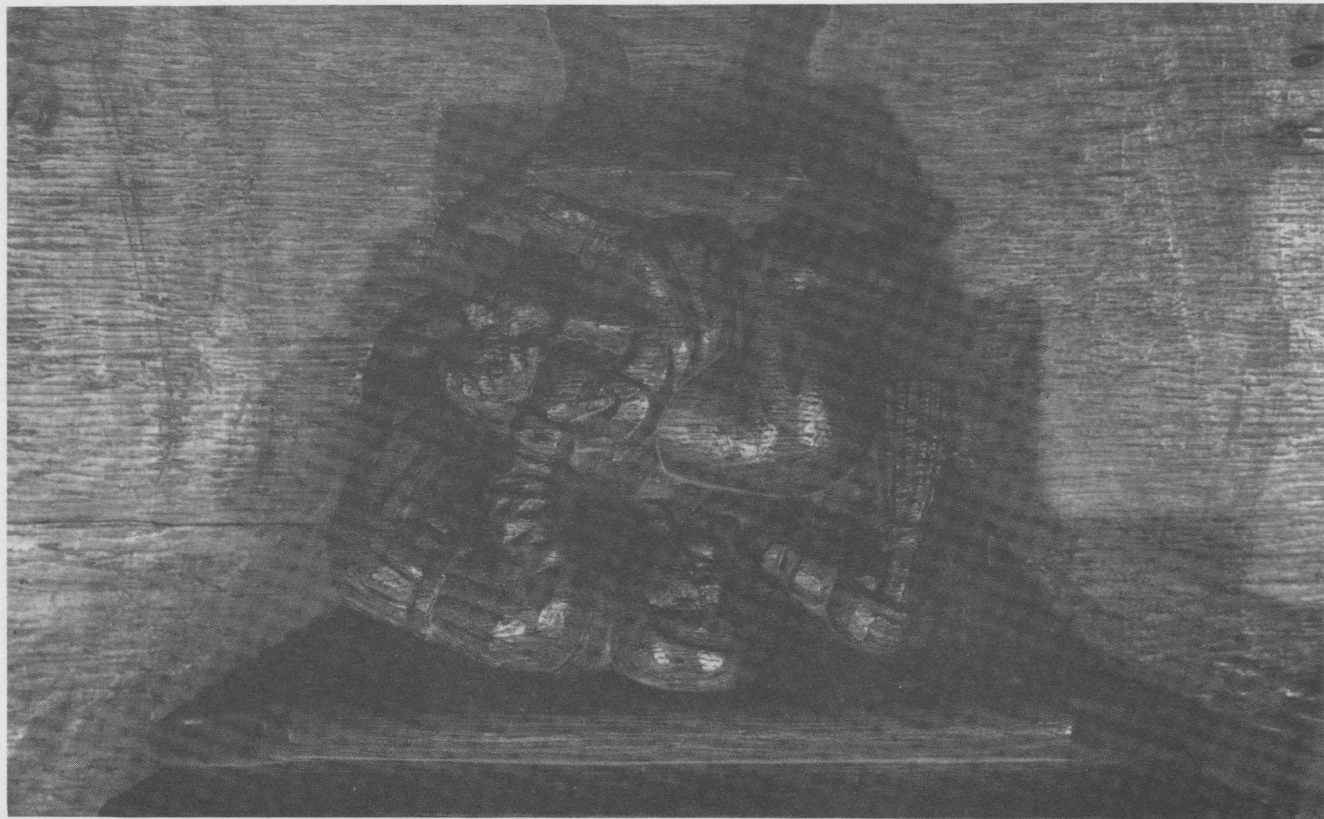
Fleurissent tard les redbuds, les cérisiers.

La vie défile, jour sur jour, languissante,  
                                  fraîche,  
Paysans, béret, tous en sueur, réclamant  
  un verre.

Gamme, couleurs, noir, pourpre, blanc,  
Fugues de mémoire à travers les Etats-unis,  
  seul, en compagnie,

Un jour au paradis.  
Le vent se lève, broyant les arbustes.

KENNETH S. WHITE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS



## Etude: L'Education sentimentale

Frédéric Moreau, le personnage principal de L'Education sentimentale de Flaubert, passe sa vie à aimer Mme Arnoux d'un amour qui absorbe tout son être. Mais la pudeur de celle-ci, la présence de son mari et de ses enfants, le manque d'expérience et surtout le caractère hésitant de Frédéric contribuent à frustrer cet amour. Une occasion inespérée de poursuivre son amour se présente néanmoins à Frédéric vers la fin du dernier chapitre de la deuxième partie du roman. Frédéric retrouve Mme Arnoux à Auteuil où elle s'est réfugiée dans sa maison de campagne, loin de la ville et des importuns. Ils y arrivent enfin à vivre ensemble une des rares périodes de bonheur de leur vie. Mais même pendant cette idylle de quelques mois (de septembre à février), des signes inquiétants se font jour. Le bonheur des quatre paragraphes de ce passage risque de se perdre dans un avenir moins heureux.

Dans le premier paragraphe, les deux amants semblent enfin vivre la vie qu'ils se sont imaginée: "une vie exclusivement amoureuse . . . où les heures auraient disparu dans un continu épanchement d'eux-mêmes."<sup>1</sup> L'emploi de participes présents ("ayant," "causant," "traversant") et les indications temporelles assez vagues ("presque toujours," "quelquefois") aussi bien que l'emploi de l'imparfait itératif placent le passage en dehors du temps et lui prêtent une qualité de rêve. Au début du passage, les deux amants occupent une position privilégiée: ils se trouvent en haut de l'escalier, dominant le paysage. Leur amour transforme le quotidien et, comme Tristan et Iseult qui se nourrissent de leurs regards, Frédéric et Marie n'ont besoin d'autre chose que d'eux-mêmes. La nudité du pavillon où ils passent des heures, et qui a

"pour tout meuble un canapé de toile grise," leur est indifférente. Ils semblent mener une vie paradisiaque.

Mais un serpent s'insinue déjà dans ce paradis terrestre. Malgré l'effet atemporel du passage, on est toujours conscient de la fuite du temps. On est en automne et les arbres ont jauni, ce qui signale un déclin. Le pavillon est délabré: les murailles sentent le moisi et la glace est tachée de points noirs. La lumière dans le pavillon tombe en barres, ce qui suggère l'idée de prison et de contrainte, et ces barres de lumière sont pleines de poussière dont les brins tourbillonnent en l'air -- agitation qui jure avec le calme bonheur des personnages. La dernière image du paragraphe est celle de Frédéric qui, ayant saisi doucement la main de Mme Arnoux, contemple "l'entrelac de ses veines." Par cette image s'établit un rapport entre les personnages et le monde qui les entoure. "L'entrelac de ses veines" n'évoque-t-il pas le système de nervures de certaines feuilles? Cette dernière image rappelle ainsi les arbres du début du paragraphe et suggère que les personnages doivent inexorablement subir le même déclin.

A partir du deuxième paragraphe du passage, un changement dans les rapports entre Frédéric et Mme Arnoux se fait remarquer. Dans le premier paragraphe, c'est le pronom sujet "ils" qui domine, ce qui suggère la réciprocité de leur amour, puisqu'ils agissent de concert. Frédéric, ou "il," sert de sujet deux fois, et "elle" seulement une fois. Dans les deuxième et troisième paragraphes, dont les verbes au passé simple marquent des étapes dans cette période de temps indéfinie, Mme Arnoux commence à jouer un rôle plus actif. Elle "se donne" à Frédéric, au moins symboliquement, en lui donnant ses gants et son mouchoir. Ce geste tout physique, matériel, s'oppose à la dévotion religieuse de Frédéric. Loin de profiter de cette ouverture, lui se contente de dresser des autels à Marie, de soupirer le nom qui, pour lui, évoque "des nuages

d'encens, des jonchées de roses." Le troisième paragraphe reprend le pronom sujet "ils" ("ils arrivèrent à fixer . . ."), mais la nature de l'action suggère déjà un changement d'attitude chez Mme Arnoux. Jusqu'à ce moment-là elle "subit" les visites de Frédéric. C'est lui qui choisit l'heure de son arrivée. Mais, ayant fixé avec lui la date de leurs rendez-vous, elle en partage la responsabilité. Leur amour semble changer de caractère aussi. Le fait qu'elle se sente obligée d'agir "comme par hasard" souligne le côté illicite de leur attachement. On dirait qu'ils sentent la nécessité de cacher leur amour au fur et à mesure que la tentation physique devient plus grande. A la fin de ce troisième paragraphe, le rôle plus actif de Mme Arnoux est mis en lumière, car c'est elle qui va au-devant de lui sur la route. Dans le quatrième paragraphe, il s'agit presque exclusivement de Mme Arnoux. "Elle" sert toujours de sujet des phrases quand le sujet n'est pas un trait de caractère qui se rapporte à elle, sauf dans les deux dernières phrases, qui, par moyen du style indirect libre, semblent traduire ses propres pensées.

Le nouveau rôle que joue Mme Arnoux témoigne d'une nouvelle attitude envers Frédéric et envers la vie, et reflète des sentiments devenus plus profonds. La première phrase du quatrième paragraphe, qui décrit une "non-action" ("elle ne faisait rien pour exciter son amour . . .") surprend quelque peu. Pourquoi donc lui aurait-elle donné ses gants et son mouchoir? Même si elle ne fait rien pour "exciter" l'amour de Frédéric, son affection se laisse néanmoins apercevoir. La robe qu'elle porte, brune et large et qui semble peu faite pour séduire, ne réussit pourtant pas à cacher tout à fait la "flamme" de son regard. Cette robe convient, d'ailleurs, à la "mollesse de ses attitudes." Mme Arnoux est pleine de "tendresse." Elle "déborde de richesses, n'a jamais eu plus de douceur, d'indulgence." Elle "s'abandonne" à un

nouveau sentiment et s'excuse par ses chagrins. chaque détail du texte signale ainsi le glissement de Mme Arnoux vers une attitude moins rigide.

Ce dernier paragraphe se rattache au premier en ce que, malgré l'imparfait itératif qui domine dans les deux cas, on est toujours conscient de la fuite du temps. La seule indication temporelle du dernier paragraphe ("pendant toute la saison") rappelle le caractère éphémère de leur bonheur, qui ne dure qu'une saison, et fait penser à la saison précisée au premier paragraphe: l'automne. L'idée de "saison" se manifeste encore dans la description de Mme Arnoux. Elle touche "au mois d'août des femmes" où commence "la maturité." Mme Arnoux est décrite comme étant "sur la fin de ses épanouissements," image qui conviendrait aussi bien au monde végétal qu'à la femme. Cette description rappelle le rapprochement de Mme Arnoux et de la nature au premier paragraphe. Le message est clair: il faut saisir le temps. Et par son attitude et par son âge, cette fleur tout épanouie semble prête à cueillir . . . et Frédéric ne fait qu'en adorer les feuilles.

L'absence presque totale de Frédéric dans le dernier paragraphe met en lumière son manque d'action habituel. Tandis que les sentiments de Mme Arnoux semblent se développer à travers le passage, ceux de Frédéric ne dépassent jamais le stade de l'adoration religieuse. Et cette dévotion spirituelle l'immobilise; il oublie "jusqu'à la possibilité d'un amour absolu," (p. 297). On sent que leur amour ne sera jamais consommé, que la frustration de sentiments toujours contenus finira par exaspérer leur sensibilité. Le passage contient donc et la description du bonheur momentané et la menace d'une désillusion à venir. Le passage prépare aussi la scène à la fin du roman où Mme Arnoux se présentera chez Frédéric. Le danger implicite du passage devient fait accompli à la fin du roman. Les feuilles jaunies s'étant transformées en

"feuilles mortes" (p. 439), Frédéric retrouve un Mme Arnoux au cheveux blancs, touchant au mois de décembre des femmes. Le passage contient donc en germe ce que le roman dépeint en général: l'histoire d'un bonheur manqué.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Gustave Flaubert, L'Education sentimentale (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1969), p. 295. Toutes les citations renvoient à cette édition. Le passage étudié se trouve à la page 296 de l'édition citée et toute citation, si non indiquée dans l'étude, renvoie à cette page.





Notes on  
"Nel Corpo Oscuro Della Metamorfosi"

Given the difficulty of finding an accurate definition for the word "poetry" and explaining what makes certain poems good, it is not surprising that baring the essential qualities of an exceptionally good poem might seem an impossible task. The problem is compounded when we find that rare poem which possesses an almost mystical ability to touch us in such a way that we, at times, think we feel just what the poet must have felt when he set the words to paper. When we do find such a poem, when we feel that we know it, that we have analyzed the lines and found the images, each successive reading convinces us that we do very little more than scratch at the surface. Still more ideas and images are yielded with each new reading. We make new connections from one line to the next; we perceive the images and ideas differently, connect them to each other in new ways. This ability to yield up new things which touch us and hold our interest is an essential part of good poetry.

No serious reader of poetry expects to read a poem one time and immediately absorb all of it, but modern poetry, in particular, which is not often bound by traditional conventions usually demands a number of readings before all the images and meanings are clear, if they ever are. Mario Luzi's "Nel Corpo Oscuro Della Metamorfosi" is certainly such a poem.<sup>1</sup> One of the factors which makes second and successive readings of "Metamorfosi" imperative is its length. When a poem is composed of seven long sections that together cover more than fifteen pages, the significance of images presented near the beginning of the piece is bound

to change as the poem progresses. In "Metamorfosi," Luzi gives us a series of transformations in association with specific images that are reintroduced throughout the poem so that a layering of these transformations occurs.

Before a serious discussion of the major transformations within the poem itself can begin, one must give careful consideration to the title: "Nel Corpo Oscuro Della Metamorfosi." The title of any poem is important for two very obvious reasons. It serves, because of its function as title, as an overview of the poem itself. We expect the title to reflect the content of the poem, for it is often the title which first attracts reader attention. Aside from this function, the title of a poem, because it precedes the poem, can create certain expectations for the reader. Even before he begins to read the poem, he may have formed an idea of what the poem is about, and he may be expecting certain images or events to be contained within the piece. Certainly, "Nel Corpo Oscuro Della Metamorfosi" is a title which not only attracts attention, but also raises certain reader expectations.

After eliminating the prepositions and articles in the title, we are left with only three words: "corpo," "oscuro," and "metamorfosi." These three words not only produce strong initial reactions with the reader, but lend themselves well to close scrutiny. For example, even without particularly careful consideration from the reader, the importance of a word such as "metamorphosis" manifests itself. While, in simplest terms, "metamorphosis" means roughly the same thing as "change" or "transformation," as both a word and an action (because we usually think of a metamorphosis as something that happens), it presents more possibilities and should elicit more responses from a careful reader. Luzi himself obviously knows the power of this word, for although he chooses the word "metamorfosi" for the title, he refers to the observation that inspired him to write the poem as a transformation in his

notes:

Il senso della trasformazione è quasi un luogo comune. Si trova manifesto o latente in tutti i nostri sentimenti. E non parliamo dell'azione che sarebbe inconcepibile senza. Senonché noi oggi viviamo la trasformazione da svegli e l'avvertiamo in forma violenta e grandiosa come essenza della nostra epoca. Questa poesia osa farne il suo discontinuo argomento.

(Luzi, p. 264)

The fact is that transformation and metamorphosis do not mean the same thing. Metamorphosis provides two very important images which transformation does not. By definition, metamorphosis is not only a change from one form to another, but a very radical change where the two forms are not necessarily recognizable as the same creature in different states. The changes from caterpillar to butterfly and tadpole to frog represent such changes. Caterpillars become butterflies and tadpoles become frogs; however, the two different stages of each life form certainly bear little resemblance to each other. Perhaps Luzi means to imply that the change within our times is so radical that the product of change bears little resemblance to that which came before. This sense of radical change is also obvious within the three major transformations presented in the poem.

Another factor that makes "metamorfosi" a strong word is that "metamorfosi" suggests not only a change from one state to another, but also the very act of change itself. While we can see the gradual metamorphosis of a tadpole to a frog, the actual process by which the change takes place remains a mystery to us. Even more mysterious is the change from caterpillar to butterfly, which is entirely hidden from view. All that we are able to see, and even this is rare, is a caterpillar forming

a cocoon and a butterfly emerging from it. What happens within the cocoon, within the actual state of metamorphosis, we cannot see. Luzi's title, in fact, points out the inability to perceive the metamorphosis clearly: "Nel Corpo Oscuro Della Metamorfosi."

His choice of the word "oscuro" enhances this very quality of metamorphosis. It is obscure, or hidden from the eye. He can never clearly perceive the transformation as it occurs. All that is seen are the beginning and end products. As Luzi says, the "corpo," the body or state, of metamorphosis is obscure, unclear. Furthermore, this word, "corpo," in conjunction with "nel" suggests an even more interesting vantage point for the transformation. No longer are we outside the metamorphosis observing it, rather we are contained within the metamorphosis itself. We are, or at least the speaker of the poem is, lost within the change. When the meaning of each word in the title is considered individually and then in connection with the other words, the impact of the whole title, "Nel Corpo Oscuro Della Metamorfosi," seems overwhelming. However, for all the power of this title, it is not until the second reading, after one sees the confusion of the poem's speaker as he observes the multiple transformations around him, that the title's possibilities can be fully realized.

The weight of the title manifests itself with three major transformations that Luzi explores in the body of "Metamorfosi." On the concrete level, the first and most obvious of these is the transformation of Florence after the flood of the Arno in 1966. Luzi does not date his poem by giving this specific information within the poetry itself, but, once again, gives these details in his notes:

Nelle sezioni 1 e 2 immagini (e incubi) negative della "città" la cui crisi si materializza in Firenze sommersa e devastata dall'Arno (secondo brano della sezione 1). La voce di sirena della natura insinua la sua tentazione nel terzo brano della sezione 2. (Luzi, p. 264)

The importance of omitting this from the body of the poem is two-fold. In the first place, because of the nature of the event, the devastating flood of Florence, actual explanation within the poem is unnecessary. Most readers of modern Italian poetry will probably be familiar with this event and make the connection between the flooded city presented in the poem and Florence within the first few stanzas. We receive much of this information from the speaker's conversation with the "anima nascosta" in Section 1:

"Prega," dice, "per la città sommersa."

And:

"Tu che hai visto fino al tramonto  
la morte di una città, i suoi ultimi  
furiosi annaspamenti d'annegata,  
ascoltane il silenzio ora. E. risvegliati."  
(Luzi, p. 133)

But no specific city and time are given here, so the flood need not apply to only Florence. The flood Luzi describes need not be an actual flood, but can also be a symbolic one. Luzi apparently intends for the flood to work on at least these two levels. Although he points out the connection to the actual flood in his notes and the flooding of Florence in 1966 was undoubtedly a devastating event, the main importance of the flood in the poem does not seem to be the actual ruin of Florence, but the symbolic

ruin of Western ideas, which, as the title of the poem suggests, the speaker also experiences from within. Not only is he caught up as a part of the metamorphosis surrounding him, but a metamorphosis also occurs within him. On one level, he observes, without completely understanding, the metamorphosis of which he is only a part:

Quante vite, questa per esempio  
detta mia per inerzia e abitudine . . .  
E ora lei che con lo sguardo perduto  
affiora in superficie  
sdrucendo una pellicola di pioggia  
dal profondo della città pescosa,  
prende per mano suo figlio, una mano,  
mi sembra, sfuggente alla sua presa.  
(Luzi, p. 134)

In this particular event, we assume, from the first two lines of the stanza, that, on the literal level, the speaker is observing a mother recovering her child from the flooded streets. If the end result of metamorphosis is a rebirth of types (the life force within the caterpillar, which dies, is reborn in the form of a butterfly) then we are seeing within this stanza a rebirth. From the speaker's description, it seems likely that the child is dead. The mother cannot quite grasp his hand; to the speaker, it seems to "sfuggente alla sua presa." Furthermore, the speaker is also deeply saddened by the event:

non pronunzia parola  
mentre io ne ricevo dolore  
più in là di quella causa, e ondate  
d'un rimorso che tende allo spasimo  
la parte infinitesima di tempo  
in cui l'azione è sospesa, o il pulsar.  
(Luzi, p. 134)

In the previous stanza, the speaker prepares us

for this death by telling the "anima nascosta" that "non c'è morte che non sia anche nascita." (Luzi, p. 133) Although tragic, the child's death is a metamorphosis. The event begins with language which is not only suggestive of the emergence of a butterfly, which we commonly associate with metamorphosis, but is also suggestive of the birth of a living child:

E ora lei che con lo sguardo perduto  
affiora in superficie  
sdrucendo una pellicola di pioggia.  
(Luzi, p. 134)

The image produced here is very similar to the emergence of a child from the uterus as it breaks through the amniotic sac and, with this breaking, causes the amniotic fluid to escape. This image is further enhanced by language which suggests contractions, such as "ondate d'un rimorso che tende allo spasimo" and "l'azione è sospesa, o il pulsar." The choice of the word "pulsar" is particularly important, for while we do not know exactly what a pulsar is, we do know that it is characterized by the release of radio waves at short and relatively uniform intervals. This very word suggests the rhythmic contractions of a woman in labor.

The importance of this event goes far beyond the speaker's observation of it. As the first two lines of the stanza suggest, the experience contributes to his own metamorphosis:

Quante vite, questa per esempio  
detta mia per inerzia e abitudine . . .  
(Luzi, p. 134).

We already know that he is not always able to clearly distinguish between internal and external events:

non sono ben certo sia un'altra dalla mia  
alla cerca di me nella palude sinistra.  
(Luzi, p. 133)

Section 2 heightens the speaker's confusion and helplessness at being caught up by both the changing times and changes in personal philosophy:

O gioventù, per l'uomo  
perduto in un amore senza limiti,  
senza ritorno di coscienza, il punto  
tra memoria e desiderio  
si sposta, è alla deriva di un gorgo.  
Passato ed avvenire s'invertono,  
su sé si capovolgono, delfini  
o tonni nella rete del senso.  
Sono io dalla parte del torto, amen.  
(Luzi, p. 135)

In many ways, this section is reminiscent of the title, "Nel Corpo Oscuro Della Metamorfosi." The speaker is not in control. It seems that he is being sucked into a giant vortex. Everything comes together at once: dreams and reality, past and future, life and death. He is not sure of his role, or even his physical existence, within this huge metamorphosis. The image of a man blundering around in a dark universe is created.

Although both this image and the speaker's confusion are apparent throughout Section 4, it is especially strong in the following passages:

Oppure quando un tempo sotto pressione  
disperde la sua potenza inservibile  
in una nube vorticoso di scorie  
e tu stesso in una parte di te--non sai  
bene quale--soffri, vorresti dormire,  
ma un'inquieta  
semioscienza ti tiene sveglio



non del tutto presente alla metamorfosi  
e al lungo dolore della nascita di un'epoca.  
(Luzi, p. 140)

And:

lo sguardo assurro carico  
della creazione, ti sembra. (Luzi, p. 140)

These two particular passages contain a number of words and phrases that seem unusually well suited to a metamorphosis, or rebirth. While "Metamorfosi" is the most obvious one, "nascita di un'epoca" not only enhances the transformation, but is reminiscent of the italicized stanza of Section 1, where we almost see an actual birth taking place. In the latter of the two passages above, "lo sguardo azzurro carico della creazione" suggests the emergence of some henceforth unseen creation, as does "cacciandoti dal chuiso dell'infermità dell'anima." In the last of these, we are given the feeling that a metamorphosis is almost complete, that the butterfly will soon emerge from its cocoon.

It is not until Section 5 that the third and most important metamorphosis is presented. This is the transformation of the church to which Luzi refers in the feminine singular. We immediately know that Section 5 is about the church, because Luzi begins with a quotation from Giovanna Marini: "Chiesa, Chiesa . . . ." He further states that the second stanza of this section, which is about a woman who has lost her husband in a Nazi concentration camp, is actually analogous to the Roman hierarchy's divorce of Christ.<sup>2</sup> However, what the poet of a piece says about it is not always the most accurate account of the poem's events. The connection between the woman, or women, in the section and the church must be clear from the poetry itself, while the events must also work on a literal

level. Aside from the opening quotation, which suggests that the section will explore the transformation of the church, Luzi makes numerous references of the church that illuminate our reading of this section. Near the end of the second stanza, he makes a reference to the "braccio radiale della croce." This particular image is one which is traditionally associated with the church, and, within the church, life after death. From a Christian point of view, this particular rebirth is the ultimate metamorphosis. It is not the transformation of the individual man, but of the church itself. Luzi goes on to add:

che ne sai tu  
che ascolti non lei il manichine svuotato di  
memoria che un poso le somiglia.  
(Luzi, p. 142)

On one level, we see a change within the woman who has lost her husband in a concentration camp. She has, literally, become like a mannequin. The image Luzi presents here is of a woman who has not changed much in physical appearance, but has become void of emotion and memory. This is a very forceful image, one which will produce an immediate emotional reaction from the reader. Evidently, symbolically speaking, Luzi's reference here is also to the church. Luzi sees the church as a shell of its former self. It is no longer the spiritually enriching force that it once was, but seems to lack the very qualities that had made it strong. As Luzi says in the Section's opening sentence, "qualcosa la sovrasta e la domina." Luzi continues to use this metaphor throughout the section. Not until the last two stanzas of the section do we see the full extent of the metaphor:

Lei, l'agnello, vittima del brutta risveglio  
siede ora nel suo angolo

franata dentro--può darsi--  
ma eretta nell'amara dignità che le resta del  
comprendere  
a passa di grandi ore inutili . . .  
sorride frattanto il suo pastore  
e pastore della sua angoscia Giovanni.  
(Luzi, pp. 143-144)

It is only after reading this section that we can fully appreciate the female images that Luzi presented in the previous stanzas. Could it be that the woman in the last stanza of Section 1 is symbolically the church reaching out to her lost children? Perhaps the woman speaking in Section 2 is also symbolic of the church:

La voce sempre udita di donna  
che fu di mia madre ed ora è sua, la voce  
sacrificale che scioglie il nodo  
amoroso e doloroso di ogni esistenza, si stacca  
da qualche scambio di parole avuto  
con molti intercalari, opaco, nella caverna  
dell'anno  
non in primavera, nei vapori della sua nascita.  
(Luzi, p. 136)

Here again, Luzi uses beautiful, concrete images to complete the metaphor:

Voce afona spogliata della gorga  
di lei che provvisoria  
l'improntò della sua pena  
e la chiuise nella stretta  
di timidezza e d'ansia  
del diverbio in cucina, della preghiera sulle  
scale.  
(Luzi, p. 136)

It is ridiculous to assume that the church has had a spat in the kitchen, but the important thing here is not the event itself, but the emotions associated with such an event.

Even the speaking "anima nascosta" must be scrutinized. The tone of the poem is certainly changed if it is the church that says the following:

"Risvegliati, non è questo silenzio  
il silenzio mentale di una profonda metafora  
come tu pensi la storia. Ma brutta  
cessazione del suono. Morte. Morte e basta."  
(Luzi, p. 133)

In Section 6, Luzi once more brings to our attention the various levels at which metamorphosis is occurring. Here, too, is the sense of confusion and helplessness one experiences within the "corpo oscuro della metamorfosi":

Mi trafigge nel sonno  
col suo trillo d'allodola passata tra le maglie  
della fucileria domenicale la vita  
mentre io legato alla noria  
del mutamento del mondo  
(e sia pure, mi dico, con ali d'ippogrifo)  
sorrido, non le rispondo. (Luzi, p. 145)

In this passage, the speaker clearly shows us that he is captured by change. The mention of a "ippogrifo" also evokes the image of metamorphosis because it is a creature formed from the parts of other animals. Its actual creation seems mysterious to us.

In the next two stanzas, the last two of this section, the speaker prepares us for the completion of the metamorphosis in Section 7:

Lo sboccio improvviso di più anima  
nel mattino tutto sole di una fede senza sospetto  
condivisa con me, anzi unica

e se possibile universa--è questo  
che oscuramente aspetta, sono certo.  
(Luzi, p. 145)

These lines present us with an image much like that of a flower bud in the moments before it explodes into blossom. The transformation has occurred within the bud, hidden from our eyes, but we are soon to see the end result. Likewise, we have waited patiently for the products of Luzi's metamorphoses, products which he will soon present to us.

The final section of "Nel Corpo Oscuro Della Metamorfosi" is very important because it provides a solution of sorts for the numerous changes running throughout the poem. While the completed metamorphoses of man and church are easily identifiable, that of the flooded city is conspicuously absent except for the word "recede," which is usually associated with water and is suggestive of the retreating of the flood waters from the city. Although this might seem rather odd, it is actually quite logical. Within the scope of the other transformations Luzi presents, the flooding of Florence is not particularly important. The importance of the event is that it serves as an inspiration, a "catalyst," for the metaphysical metamorphoses that Luzi sets forth in the poem. More than an actual event in this poem, the flood seems to be a devastation that symbolizes the changing nature of both man and church. It is as though the flood of Florence has provided Luzi the needed time and incentive to explore problems which have long troubled him. His solution to this search ends with Luzi's reaffirmation of faith and his recognition that change is necessary:

E puo non essere più la stessa,  
subentrarle un'altra  
che la perpetua, la sgomina,

la converte in lacrime . . .--penso  
anni dopo--o evi--mentre le guardo le  
pupille e sorpendo il mutevole e il  
durevole strettamente mischiati nella  
sorgente.

After metamorphosis is complete, when the butterfly  
emerges from her cocoon and the bud bursts into  
flower, we are able to appreciate the beauty that  
often results from transformation. It is only the  
metamorphosis itself that is obscure.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Mario Luzi, "Nel Corpo Oscuro Della Metamor-  
fosi," in his Tutte le poesie: Nell'opera del mondo,  
ed. Aldo Garzanti (Milano: Società Italiana degli  
Autori, 1978), pp. 132-147. All further citations  
from this work are given in the text parenthetically.

<sup>2</sup> Mario Luzi, In the Dark Body of Metamorphosis  
and Other Poems, trans. I. L. Salomon (New York:  
W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1975), p. 110.

L'Unité du recueil Alcools  
de Guillaume Apollinaire

Dans Alcools, paru en 1913, Apollinaire a réuni cinquante poèmes qui jalonnent quinze ans de sa vie, c'est-à-dire depuis les années 1898 jusqu'à 1913. La plupart de ces poèmes ont été publiés dans des revues diverses dès 1901, comme par exemple "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé" dans le Mercure de France en 1909, une série des "Poèmes rhénans" dans Le Voile Pourpre la même année; et "La Maison des morts" dans le tome XVII des Vers et Prose sous le titre "L'Obituaire."

Pourtant, dès le début de 1904 Apollinaire songeait à un livre où il réunirait ses poèmes. Les critiques ne sont pas décidés s'il pensait à deux recueils, puisque selon les mémoires d'André Salmon, Apollinaire envisageait un recueil dont le titre serait ou Le Violon ou Olive.<sup>1</sup> D'autre part, il existe des documents qui annoncent à partir de 1904 un recueil du titre Le Vent du Rhin.<sup>2</sup>

Ce n'est qu'en 1913 avec Alcools, cependant, qu'Apollinaire réalise ses projets de publier un recueil de ces poèmes. Ce recueil contient à part les poèmes rhénans et "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé" un nombre de poèmes qui ont été composés pendant son séjour en Allemagne (1901-1902) ou du moins ils ont été inspirés de ses expériences pendant cette époque. Scott Bates, dans son livre Guillaume Apollinaire, estime qu'il s'agit presque de la moitié des poèmes d'Alcools.<sup>3</sup> Le recueil s'ouvre par "Zone" et se termine par "Vendémiaire," tous les deux publiés en 1912, "Zone" dans les Soirées de Paris au mois de décembre, et "Vendémiaire" un mois auparavant dans le même journal.

C'est peut-être à cause du fait qu'Apollinaire a rassemblé des poèmes épars qui ont paru d'abord

dans de nombreuses revues que très peu de critiques considèrent l'unité du recueil. Il existe beaucoup d'études sur chaque poème individuel. Surtout "Zone" représente le poème qui est connu et étudié le plus. Robert Couffignal par exemple a analysé sa structure et l'a confrontée avec des poèmes d'autres poètes comme Cendrars, Nerval ou Rimbaud.<sup>4</sup> D'autres poèmes, comme "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé," "Vendémiaire," "Le Larron," "Les Fiançailles," "Cortège" et surtout "Lul de Fatenin," ont également inspiré de nombreuses études. D'ailleurs, il y a des analyses détaillées de l'inspiration allemande chez Apollinaire.

Apollinaire und das Rheinland de Ernst Wolf fut la première thèse sur Guillaume Apollinaire et un tome de la série de Lettres Modernes est consacré à l'inspiration allemande. Le poème le plus aimé peut-être, "Le Pont Mirabeau," a trouvé sa place dans plusieurs anthologies à cause de la musicalité et de la tristesse profondes qu'il exprime.

Néanmoins, il y a toujours un nombre de poèmes qui restent encore sans commentaires, bien que Marie-Jeanne Durry soit optimiste:

. . . la situation a beaucoup changé, sans compter que, chaque jour maintenant, paraîtront de nouvelles études. Vous trouvez donc d'innombrables secours, ne les cherchant, j'espère, qu'après avoir lu, senti et compris par vous-mêmes.

En plus, les études qui ont pour objet l'ensemble d'Alcools se restreignent aux aspects individuels, comme par exemple l'essai de J. R. Dugan, "La technique de l'image dans Alcools de Guillaume Apollinaire."<sup>7</sup> Cet essai examine l'influence de la peinture cubiste sur la poésie d'Apollinaire. Emmanuel Aégarter et Pierre Labacherie soulignent également les rapports entre la peinture de cette époque et l'oeuvre d'Apollinaire.<sup>8</sup> Même la collection d'études, "Cinquanteenaire d'Alcools," parue dans la



série des Lettres Modernes, est dominée par des analyses de cet aspect du recueil.

Il n'est pas étonnant que la plupart des critiques ignorent l'unité du recueil. Alcools contient cinquante poèmes écrits au cours de quinze années, parmi eux des oppositions extrêmes comme "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé" et "L'Ermite." Comment concilier des poèmes dont les thèmes embrassent la plus grande variété possible: la magie, le destin, des ombres, des rêves, des caractères légendaires et historiques, des animaux et des plantes exotiques et légendaires, la mer, des fleuves, des astres, des villes, des pays et surtout la fuite du temps et de l'amour? Comment les accorder selon de strictes lois de composition?

Cependant, il y a des images et des motifs qui circulent à travers Alcools et qui prêtent au recueil en quelque sorte une unité intérieure, comme l'étude extensive de Marie-Jeanne Durry le démontre: c'est l'opposition entre la lumière et l'ombre. Ces deux éléments se représentent par des formes différentes. La lumière paraît sous forme de feu ou plutôt de flammes dans "Le Brasier," "Les Fiançailles," et "Cortège." Cette lumière est représentée par le soleil dans "Lul de Faltenin," "Merlin et la vieille femme," et "Clotilde". Elle est réfléchie dans "l'électricité flambante de "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé" et dans "la ville métallique" de "Un Soir," et le jour qui arrive à la fin de "Zone" et de "Vendémiaire."<sup>11</sup> Il y a l'ombre qui est représentée par le soir, par la nuit ("Zone," "Vendémiaire," "Le Vent nocturne," "Le Soir"): il y a les ombres des morts ("Crépuscule," "La Maison des morts") ou les ombres qui projettent l'image de l'amant ("Clotilde") ou de l'amante ("La Chanson du Mal-Aimé"). Souvent les ombres passent n'étant que des silhouettes indéfinies déjà reprises par la distance ou par l'obscurité ("La Chanson du Mal-Aimé," "L'Emigrant du Landor Road"). Elles se présentent au moment de leur fuite de sorte qu'elles sont à la fois des ombres et des souvenirs

d'ombres, comme, par exemple, dans "Les Fiançailles":

Et sombre, sombre fleuve je me rappelle  
Et ombres qui passaient n'étaient jamais jolies

Il est évident que les ombres sont associées avec le passé tandis que la lumière annonce l'avenir. C'est une opposition qui constitue un autre thème principal du recueil.

En outre, Marie-Jeanne Durry fait remarquer la fonction du titre du recueil, Alcools, comme leit-motiv. Le titre donne sans doute l'intonation du recueil. Sa signification est expliquée dans "Zone," le premier poème:

Et tu bois cet alcool brûlant comme ta vie  
Ta vie que tu bois comme une eau-de-vie.

Il est bien connu que eau-de-vie fut le titre original du recueil et qu'Apollinaire l'a changé à l'avantage d'Alcools. Dans "Zone," l'image des bars et d'alcool brûlant évoque plutôt un sentiment mélancolique tandis que la soif et l'ivresse sont le sujet même dans "Vendémiaire" où les villes deviennent des boissons vivantes et l'univers entier éclate d'une ivrognerie triomphante. De même, il y a de nombreux poèmes qui font allusion au titre: les "soir ivres" de "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé," l'alcool qui coule dans "Nuit Rhénane" ou la "brigande soûle" de "Schinderhannes."

Scott Bates, dans Guillaume Apollinaire, s'accorde à cette observation:

. . . and the result is Alcools, a balanced, clear-obscure, mysterious realistic, bittersweet, Dionysian-Apollonian dance of life, represented by its three major symbols, fire, shadow and alcohols. (p. 105)

Selon Bates, Alcools représente l'idée enthousiaste d'Apollinaire de lui-même, de l'art et de la vie.

Richard Stamelman est encore plus radical. Pour lui, Alcools témoigne l'enquête permanente d'Apollinaire sur sa propre identité:

The search for self and identity is the major concern of Guillaume Apollinaire's poetry in Alcools (1913) and Calligrammes (1918). Throughout these collections, Apollinaire strives first to find, then to identify, and finally to know his elusive, multiple and protean self.<sup>12</sup>

Quoique l'étude de Stamelman soit intéressante, sa thèse semble trop générale pour toucher à l'essentiel d'Alcools. Elle ne peut pas expliquer la plupart des poèmes rhénans et elle ignore ce motif tellement important que l'amour déçu, thème principal de la plupart des poèmes comme "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé," initialement le premier poème du recueil. Le thème de l'amour passé ou celui du mal-aimé revient dans des poèmes de chaque époque: dans "Zone," le poème le plus récent du recueil, dans "Le Pont Mirabeau," "Cours de Chasse" ou "Marie"--tous ces poèmes répondent à la fin d'amour de Marie Laurencin--dans la plupart des poèmes rhénans et ceux qui sont inspirés par l'amour déçu d'Apollinaire pour Annie Playden, la gouvernante anglaise dont il a fait la connaissance pendant son séjour en Allemagne ("La Chanson du Mal-Aimé," "L'Emigrant de Landor Road," "Un Soir," "Signe") et dans les premiers poèmes d'Apollinaire, comme "L'Adieu" ou "Clotilde."

E. T. Marshall fait remarquer l'opposition entre les poèmes courts et les poèmes longs du recueil et démontre qu'ils diffèrent non seulement dans leur longueur mais aussi dans leur structure poétique:

To a very large extent, the poems which manifest adherence to tradition are the short, lyric ones, while the poet prefers the freedom of a long poem when he is

attempting to explore new poetic concepts or to define his own position with respect to existing concepts.

L'étude de la structure des poèmes montre qu'Apollinaire emploie comme système métrique l'alexandrin ou l'octosyllabe dans les poèmes courts tandis que les poèmes longs démontrent une forme innovative et originale. Quoique l'alexandrin constitue son mètre préféré, Apollinaire n'adhère guère à ses restrictions rigides comme "Zone," "Vendémiaire," "Cortège," "Le Brasier" et "Les Fiançailles" le témoignent. En outre, les poèmes courts démontrent des rimes fixes contrairement au vers libre des poèmes longs.

L'opposition entre les poèmes courts et les poèmes longs se manifeste également dans leur sujet. Le thème dominant de tous les poèmes courts se constitue de l'amour déçu tandis que les poèmes longs témoignent l'acroissement progressif de la conscience de soi-même du poète. Ces poèmes reflètent son analyse des questions complexes comme la religion et la vie ("Merlin et la vieille femme," "Le Larron," "L'Ermite"), sa préoccupation avec sa sexualité et des désirs érotiques ("Lul de Faltenin," "Palais," "Salomé"), sa réaction aux mouvements artistiques de son époque ("Cortège," "Le Brasier," "Les Fiançailles") et finalement sa compréhension de sa position comme poète universel ("Zone," "Le Voyageur," "Vendémiaire"). Ces deux thèmes principaux sont unis dans un seul poème--poème plus long et pas du tout traditionnel du recueil, "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé," qui selon beaucoup de critiques représente le meilleur exemple d'Apollinaire d'Alcools. Le poème unit presque toutes les images principales du recueil: l'érotisme, le mythe, des allusions bibliques, classiques, exotiques et vulgaire, l'ultra-modernisme, et bien sûr l'alcoolisme. E. T. Marshall remarque:

At least the germ of all of Apollinaire's images is contained in this

one poem. The surprising thing is not that it has attracted much attention and admiration, but that it appeared relatively early in the poet's career and remained unchallenged by any other poem, at least until the year 1913. (p. 295)

L'interprétation d'Alcools comme manifestation personnelle du poète, comme "La Chanson d'Apollinaire" trouve sa légitimité dans une phrase d'Apollinaire souvent citée:

je crois n'avoir point limité, car  
chacun de mes poèmes est la commémoration d'un événement de ma vie.<sup>14</sup>

Marie-Jeanne Durry, pourtant, hésite à qualifier cette unité comme préconçue:

S'il est une structure interne d'Alcools elle aura été introduite après coup, soit que le poète ait découvert dans les oeuvres dispersées au long des ans ses lignes de force intérieure, ou qu'au nom de ses vers ses poèmes soient venus irresistiblement se rejoindre. (III, 63)

Quoique la plupart des critiques reconnaissent une certaine unité intérieure du recueil, ils n'ont pas réussi à établir une unité extérieure qui démontrait une architecture préméditée par le poète. Quant à la majorité des Apollinariens, ils arrivent à une conclusion négative de la validité d'un effort pareil, comme par exemple Roger Little:

Implicit is an indication to reader  
or critic that to appreciate the  
volume aesthetically he need neither

indulge his interest in biographical chronology nor presuppose that, beyond the poet's complicated psychological unity and the variety principle, lies a conscious preoccupation with some Baudelairien "architecture secrète."<sup>15</sup>

Cependant, Scott Bates souligne que la préoccupation d'Apollinaire de sa biographie constitue un vrai principe de composition du recueil :

In composing the book he had broken up the chronological order of his poems to extend to his "song of himself" the widest--and highest--range possible. (p. 94)

Autant qu'il s'agit de la conception de variété, il est évident qu'Apollinaire suit un principe bien réfléchi. Sauf pour la séquence de poèmes rhénans, il a placé après chaque poème un poème d'une période et d'un thème différents. Marie-Jeanne Durry constate que, bien que la plupart des poèmes s'inspirent des mêmes sujets, "l'auteur a disposé tout au long de son livre, dont la technique n'est certes pas continuellement anti-traditionnelle, des poèmes au contraire qui rompent avec leur tradition" (III, 45). Pourtant, malgré ces observations qui semblent aboutir à une organisation présumée, Durry reste hésitante :

Tout cela existe à la fois, et rien n'en est absolument désicif. Aucun principe d'organisation n'est poussé jusqu'au bout. [...] le recueil ne pouvait posséder une véritable architecture secrète et modulante qui est celle d'une musique continue, chanson ou symphonie. (III, 54)

Cependant quelques observations de Marie-Jeanne Durry offrent un point de départ d'une tentative pour établir une structure extérieure. Durry fait remarquer la position juxtaposée des poèmes "Zone" et "Vendémiaire" comme premier et dernier poèmes du recueil:

. . . l'ensemble de poèmes est encadré entre Zone et Vendémiaire, qui se répondent. [...] Zone exprime la lassitude du monde ancien, Vendémiaire, . . . la soif du monde nouveau. Zone est un adieu, Vendémiaire un appel. (III, 42)

Analogue à "Zone" et "Vendémiaire," l'avant-dernier poème du recueil, "Cors de chasse," reflète les sentiments du deuxième poème "Le Pont Mirabeau," c'est-à-dire, l'abondance mélancolique au souvenir et à la tendre tristesse du temps qui passe à jamais resaisissable, exprimé dans le refrain du poème "Le Pont Mirabeau":

Ni temps passé  
Ni les amours reviennent  
Sous le pont Mirabeau coule la Seine

et les vers qui terminent "Cors de chasse":

Les souvenirs sont cors de chasse  
Dont meurt le bruit parmi le vent

Durry voit non seulement la symétrie du but et de la fin, mais encore deux points de repère: où Apollinaire a mis les poèmes "L'Emigrant de Landor Road" et "Marie" dans son recueil. "Marie" se trouve le quatorzième poème du recueil; "L'Emigrant de Landor Road," le vingt-huitième. Durry, pour qui "A la Santé" se constitue de cinq poèmes individuels et qui conte cinquante-cinq poèmes dans le recueil, suppose que "L'Emigrant de Landor Road" soit au

centre exact du recueil et "Marie," au milieu de la première moitié. Elle ne réussit pas donc à établir une symétrie analogue pour la deuxième moitié d'Alcools. En outre, "A la Santé," comme "Le Brasier" et "Les Fiançailles" représente selon la plupart des critiques un seul poème. Par conséquent, le recueil ne se constitue que de cinquante poèmes. Néanmoins, les numéros quatorze et vingt-huit se composent tous les deux du numéro sept. Si on continue à examiner les positions qui se composent du numéro sept, l'ordre suivant se manifeste:

- 1        "Zone"  
           "Le Pont Mirabeau"  
           "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé"  
           "Les Colchiques"  
           "Palais"  
           "Chantre"
  
- 7        "Crépuscule"  
           "Annie"  
           "La Maison de morts"  
           "Clotilde"  
           "Cortège"  
           "Marizibill"  
           "Le Vogageur"
  
- 14       "Marie"  
           "La Blanche Neige"  
           "Poème lu au mariage d'André Salmon"  
           "L'Adieu"  
           "Salomé"  
           "La Porte"  
           "Merlin et la vieille femme"
  
- 21       "Saltimbanques"  
           "Le Larron"  
           "Le Vent nocturne"  
           "Lul de Faltenin"  
           "La Tzigane"



- "L'Ermite"  
 "Automne"
- 28     "L'Emigrant de Landor Road"  
           "Rosemonde"  
           "Le Brasier"  
           "Rhénanes"  
           "Signe"  
           "Un Soir"  
           "La Dame"
- 35     "Les Fiançailles"  
           "Clair de lune"  
           "1909"  
           "A la Santé"  
           "Automne malade"  
           "Hôtels"  
           "Cors de chasse"
- 42     "Vendémiaire"

Il semble être justifié de regarder les "Rhénanes" comme unité, car Apollinaire leur donne un titre commun. En outre, ils ne sont pas les seuls poèmes d'inspiration allemande; donc lui-même devrait avoir considéré ces neuf poèmes comme unité.

Il n'est pas difficile de voir le rapport entre "Maire" et "L'Emigrant de Landor Road." Comme "Le Pont Mirabeau" et "Cors de Chasse," ces deux poèmes représentent le thème d'amour déçu dans le recueil. La liaison est soulignée par le fait que la dernière strophe du poème "Marie" reprend le thème de "Le Pont Mirabeau" et "Cors de chasse":

Je passai au bord de la Seine  
 Un livre ancien sous le bras  
 Le fleuve est pareil - ma peine  
 Il s'écoule et ne tarit pas  
 Quand donc finira la semaine

Cette strophe démontre la même obsession avec l'eau coulante et intarissable qui se manifeste dans les deux autres poèmes.

Par ailleurs, un autre aspect souligne l'importance du poème "Marie": la femme dépeinte dans le poème ne représente pas seulement Marie Laurencin, comme le titre le suggère. La première strophe évoque une autre Marie, celle qu'Apollinaire avait aimée dans le passé: la jeune fille de Stavelot qui s'appelait également Marie.<sup>16</sup> Le poème représente donc premièrement la perte de l'amour en soi; l'identité de la femme prend une importance secondaire. E. T. Marshall fait remarquer que quelques images du poème reprennent des images d'autres poèmes du recueil, en particulier celles qui sont associées à Annie Playden, comme par exemple l'image de "mains feuilles" qui paraît surtout dans les poèmes rhénans et également dans "L'Emigrant de Landor Road" (p. 182). Des vers semblables peuvent se trouver dans les poèmes "Mai," "Signes," "Les Cloches," "La Blanche Neige" et "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé"--tous des poèmes dont l'amour déçu constitue le sujet principal. A cet égard, "Marie" représente un poème symbolique non seulement de la fin d'amour de Marie Laurencin mais de toutes les fins d'amour dont le poète avait fait l'expérience.

"L'Emigrant de Landor Road" fait également partie du groupe de poèmes qui évoque l'amour déçu. Le nom, "Landor Road" qui est l'adresse d'Annie Playden et le thème du voyage en Amérique (Annie a émigré aux Etats-Unis avec son mari) rangent le poème parmi ceux dédiés à Annie. Par conséquent, la première partie du poème contient beaucoup d'allusions au passé, des regrets, et des souvenirs d'amour. L'importance du poème, pourtant, se trouve dans le fait que le poète se rend compte que ses sentiments ne sont que des évocations du passé et qu'ils n'ont rien à voir avec la réalité du présent. A la fin du poème l'émigrant est prêt à recommencer sa vie: il est prêt à un nouvel amour. Ce nouveau commencement touche non seulement la vie du poète mais aussi son travail. Francis Steegmuller

constate:

With "L'Emigrant de Landor Road"  
Apollinaire has crossed a high  
pass: he is entering a new country,  
that of truly Apollinairian poetry.<sup>17</sup>

"Crépuscule," "Saltimbanques" et surtout "Les Fiançailles" sont des exemples de cette nouvelle poésie d'Apollinaire. "Saltimbanques" et "Crépuscule" étaient à l'origine un seul poème avec le titre "Crépuscule." Il a été publié sous ce titre en 1911 avec une dédicace à Marie Laurencin mais sans les trois premières strophes de la version originale. Ces trois premières strophes paraissent dans Alcools sous le titre "Saltimbanques." Quelques images du poème "Marie" ("les masques silencieux" et "tes cheveux crépus") établissent des rapports entre ces trois poèmes. La dédicace à Marie Laurencin souligne ce fait. Encore plus, les poèmes rappellent les tableaux de Picasso sur le thème de saltimbanque. Le peintre avait exposé une série de huit tableaux aux Galeries Serriert au mois de février en 1905. Apollinaire a senti une affinité profonde pour les acrobates, les clowns et les jongleurs de cette période de la peinture de Picasso et il a décrit éloquemment leur grâce nostalgique:

The harlequin in his square-shaped  
room is tranfigured by paternity,  
while his wife splashes herself with  
cold water and tries to see herself  
as slim and fragil as her puppet  
husband. Nearby is a neighboring  
family, snug in its caravan. Sweet  
songs mingle together and elsewhere  
soldiers pass by, cursing the day.

Love is a fine thing when it is  
dressed up, and the habit of living

at home strengthens the sentiment of  
paternity. The child draws the  
woman closer to its father . . .<sup>18</sup>

La ressemblance entre ce portrait (à la fois lyrique et observateur) et les deux poèmes, "Saltimbanques" et "Crépuscule," est évidente. L'atmosphère mélancolique de ces poèmes évoque un sentiment semblable à celui qui caractérise les tableaux de Picasso de 1904 à 1906. La distance éloignée et silencieuse de "Saltimbanques" rappelle en particulier les artistes muets des tableaux, Deux Acrobates avec un Chien, ou La Famille de Satimbanques:

Dans la plaine des baladins  
S'éloignent au long des jardins  
Octant l'huis des auberges grises  
Pour les villages sans églises.

Le poème évoque bien la silencieuse et triste qualité des images du cirque de Picasso. Dans "Crépuscule," les personnages apparaissent isolés, l'un de l'autre, sans qu'il y ait aucun rapport entre eux. Cette technique rappelle l'isolement des membres de La Famille de Saltimbanques de Picasso. De même, nous pouvons reconnaître "l'arlequine" de "Crépuscule" (celle qui "s'est mise nue / Et dans l'étang mire son corps," ) dans la femme d'un arlequin du tableau La Famille d'Arlequin qui contemple aussi sa réflexion dans une miroir. En outre, l'emploi du nom "arlequine" au lieu de Colombine, suggère l'identification des sexes et rappelle la description d'Apollinaire des figures émaciées et minces dans les tableaux de Picasso:

Some harlequins match the splendor of  
the woman whom they resemble, being  
neither male nor female. The color  
has the flatness of frescos, the lines  
are firm. But placid at the frontiers  
of life, the animals are human and the

sexes are indistinct, (The Cubist Painter, p. 17).

Le thème de Saltimbanques a ses racines dans la tradition française. La conception d'Apollinaire, qui voit le caractère comme voyageur sans but, comme "animateur" itinérant, qui, comme l'artiste, existe en marge de la société évoque l'image de "Vieux Saltimbanque" de Baudelaire qui est également "sans amis, sans famille, sans enfants, dégradé par sa misère et par l'ingratitude publique, et dans la baraque de qui le monde oublieux ne veut plus entrer!"<sup>19</sup> D'autres poètes qui étaient également inspirés par le thème du Saltimbanque sont Rainer Maria Rilke, Pierre Reverdy et Jean Cocteau.

Pour Apollinaire, l'arlequin constitue un masque derrière lequel l'artiste peut cacher son identité mais qui en même temps lui permet de se révéler. Richard Stamelman constate:

His love of disguise, his complex self-contradictions, and his protean nature make harlequin a flesh and blood facsimile of Apollinaire's self. (p. 105)

Il est vrai que l'arlequin réapparaît sous des formes différentes à travers Alcools: comme voyageur sans but ("Le Voyageur," "Cortège," "L'Ermite") comme paria ("Le Larron," "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé") ou comme magicien ("Merlin et la vieille femme"). Et parce qu'il est acteur, clown, paria, voyageur et magicien, il constitue la persona la plus importante d'Apollinaire.

L'influence de la peinture se manifeste non seulement dans le contenu de "Saltimbanques" et de "Crépuscule" mais aussi dans la conception poétique même. E. T. Marshall remarque ainsi:

The technique Apollinaire adopts in order to create mood without action

resembles that of a painter, in that  
it substitutes sound and verbal image  
for the latter's color and form. (p. 165)

L'innovation de la technique continue dans le poème "Les Fiançailles," dédié à Picasso. Apollinaire l'a considéré son meilleur poème à ce jour-là. Analogue à "L'Emigrant de Landor Road" le poète rompt avec son passé. Si ce "renouvellement" est infiniment plus fort dans "Les Fiançailles," il existe quand même un rapport fort entre ces deux poèmes non seulement à l'égard du thème mais aussi à l'égard de l'identité des images. "L'Emigrant de Landor Road" se termine:

Jusqu'à l'aube ont guetté de loin avidement  
Des cadavres de jour rongés par les étoiles  
Parmi le bruit des flots et les derniers  
serments

La même image est reprise dans "Les Fiançailles":

des cadavres de mes jours  
marquent ma route et je les pleure

"Les Fiançailles" annonce la découverte d'une nouvelle langue poétique aussi bien que la réincarnation du poète même. La première section du poème est présentée comme faux rêve, rempli d'illusions dont le poète se réveille:

Un ange a exterminé pendant que je dormais  
Un agneau les pasteurs des tristes bergères  
De faux centurions emportaient le vinaigre  
Et les gueux mal blessés par l'épurga  
dansaient  
Etoiles de l'éveil je n'en connais aucune

Il est significatif que, dans la première section du poème, où le poète est encore sous le charme d'un

monde fascinant mais décevant, Apollinaire emploie des rimes fixes (ABAB) et l'alexandrin, donc des formes conventionnelles. Après le réveil, pourtant, la forme du poème change. La longueur des vers et des strophes change, les rimes et le mètre sont également irréguliers. En plus, Apollinaire supprime toute ponctuation aussi bien que toutes les conjonctions, créant ainsi un style abrupte à cause de l'absence de transition entre les images. Cette fluctuation permanente des images et l'éclatement rapide des idées produisent une vision fragmentée. Les objets et les images se confondent comme les formes indiscernables d'un tableau cubiste.

Le poème "Zone" représente peut-être le point culminant de ces nouvelles tendances. "Zone" se lit comme le manifeste du modernisme qu'Apollinaire embrasse par le premier vers: "A la fin tu es las de ce monde ancien." Le poème passe en revue toute la vie du poète jusque-là, mêlé avec des images de Paris où le poète fait une promenade. Apollinaire essaie de surpasser la division entre le passé et le présent en alternant entre les deux temps. De manière égale, le poète se place à de différents endroits en même temps en changeant abruptement sa position:

Te voici à Marseille au milieu de pastèques  
Te voici à Coblenz à l'hôtel du Géant  
Te voici à Rome assis sous un néflier du Japon  
Te voici à Amsterdam avec une jeune fille  
que tu trouves  
belle et qui est laide

Le changement de pronoms personnels établit un point de vue ambigu car le poète vient de la subjectivité de la première personne à l'objectivité par l'emploi de la deuxième personne: "Tu es à Paris chez le juge d'instruction / Comme un criminel on te met en état d'arrestation." Ces vers évoquent sans doute l'emprisonnement qui a influencé le poète profondément. Quand même, il le décrit objectivement à la deuxième

personne.

Comme dans "Les Finçailles," Apollinaire élimine toute ponctuation ou transition. Ainsi crée-t-il un effet fragmenté et multi-directionnel qui est encore plus radical que dans "Les Fiançailles" ou les autres poèmes de 1908. La narration se divise en passages de différentes longueurs. Des constatations sont présentées abruptement et sans préparation d'une manière qui rappelle les transitions nues et angulaires du cubisme analytique. Apollinaire débarrasse la phrase française de tout accoutrement ornemental et superflu et la réduit à sa forme essentielle. Ses idées se reconstruisent d'une phraséologie concise, quelquefois journalistique: "Tu es seul le matin venir."

Cette manifestation de son indépendance des relations spatiales et temporelles est relative à la "quatrième dimension" qu'il avait discernée dans les tableaux de Picasso ou d'autres peintres. Dans ces tableaux, les multiples points de vue permettent à l'artiste d'unir toutes les directions du temps à un seul instant. Par conséquent, le désir d'Apollinaire de libérer la littérature de ses restrictions temporelles se produit par la technique employée par les peintres--la simultanéité. Dans un article écrit en 1913, Apollinaire décrit cette conception: "Cette simultanéité seule est la création, . . . est la vie même."<sup>20</sup>

L'idée du temps composé fait par des moments fragmentaires qui traverse "Zone" détruit tout sens d'unité successive. Le poète annule le cours du temps et accomplit un effet d'ambiguïté chronologique.

En commençant par là, "Zone" est non seulement le premier poème du recueil mais il en est la clef. Comme "Zone," le recueil entier représente une commémoration de la vie d'Apollinaire: comme il le fait dans "Zone," le poète nous emmène d'un poème à l'autre à des lieux différents, à des époques différentes sans transition, sans préparation. C'est la raison pour laquelle il a placé après chaque poème un poème



d'une période et d'un thème différents. Analogue à "Zone," le résultat est une ambiguïté chronologique et c'est au lecteur de construire une synthèse. Apollinaire nous présente un recueil qui est un portrait de lui-même, un portrait qui embrasse le passé, le présent et l'avenir. Chaque septième position révèle un poème qui est représentatif de lui, qui évoque Apollinaire, le mal-aimé ("Marie," "L'Emigrant de Landor Road") Apollinaire, l'artiste ("Saltimbanque," "Crépuscule") Apollinaire, le phénix ("Les Fiançailles") et Apollinaire, le poète universel ("Zone," "Vendémiaire").

Il est vrai que le terme "cubisme littéraire" est employé avec hésitation, même à contrecœur, par la plupart des critiques. Ils se sentent mal à l'aise d'appliquer à la littérature une étiquette esthétique qui concerne premièrement l'art visuel. Mais, si l'épithète de cubisme est applicable à la littérature ou non, la plupart des critiques s'accordent que quelques conceptions du cubisme sont tellement puissantes qu'elles devraient émerger dans la littérature.

La passion d'Apollinaire pour toute innovation lui faisait le plus ardent investigateur du cubisme. Il le percevait comme manifestation du modernisme et il le recrutait pour former un front commun avec la littérature pour lutter contre le traditionalisme. Alcools ne représente que le début de la poétique et de la poésie innovatives d'Apollinaire. De tels poèmes que "Cortège," "Le Brasier," "Les Fiançailles" ou "Zone" et la composition du recueil, Alcools, le fait l'oeuvre d'un artiste qui a déclaré: "Et moi aussi je suis peintre."

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup> André Salmon, Souvenir sans fin (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), I, 53.

<sup>2</sup> Voir Michel Decaudin, Le Dossier d'Alcools (Généva: Droz, 1965), p. 32, et Marie-Jeanne Durry, Guillaume Apollinaire: Alcools (Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement, 1969), III, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Scott Bates, Guillaume Apollinaire (New York: Twayne Publisher, 1967) p. 103.

<sup>4</sup> Couffignal, Robert, Zone d'Apollinaire: Structure et confrontations (Paris: Minard, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> Voir Ernst Wolf, Apollinaire und das Rheinland Diss. Bonn 1937.

<sup>6</sup> Durry, Alcools, I, 13.

<sup>7</sup> J. R. Dugan, "la technique de l'image dans Alcools de Guillaume Apollinaire" Travaux linguistique et de littérature, XV, No.2 (1977) 179-191.

<sup>8</sup> Emmanuel Aegarter et Pierre Labacherie, Guillaume Apollinaire (Paris: R. Juillaurd, 1943).

<sup>9</sup> Voir Cinquentenaire d'"Alcools" dans La Revue des Lettres Modernes, Nos. 85-89 (1963).

<sup>10</sup> Durry, Alcools, III, 192.

<sup>11</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire, Alcools (Paris: Gallimard, 1977). Toutes les citations des poèmes d'Apollinaire renvoient à cette édition.

- 12 Richard Stamelman, The Drama of Self in Guillaume Apollinaire's Alcools (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976). p. 13.
- 13 Edward T. Marshall, "Compositon and Structure of Guillaume Apollinaire's Alcools." Diss. University of California at Berkeley 1959, p. 287.
- 14 Voir Bates, p. 96.
- 15 Roger Little, Guillaume Apollinaire (London: The Athlone Press, 1916), p. 16.
- 16 Voir Marshall, p. 182.
- 17 Francis Steegmuller, Poet among Painters (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), p. 122.
- 18 Guillaume Apollinaire, The Cubist Painter, translated by Lionel Abel (New York: Wittenborn and Co., 1949), p. 17.
- 19 Charles Baudelaire, "Le Vieux Saltimbanque," Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 429.
- 20 Citée par Durry, Alcools, II, 206.

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