

THE SONNET IN FRANCE  
FROM BAUDELAIRE TO VALÉRY

VOLUME ONE

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the extensive revival of the sonnet in French nineteenth century poetry and explores its various roles, analytical, "musical," descriptive, and formalistic, in the works of eleven major authors. Surprisingly, use of the genre in this period has attracted little detailed critical attention. The few general studies concentrate on the orthodoxy or otherwise of the sonnet rhyme-scheme but do not relate this to content and expression. Criticism of individual authors, however, is primarily concerned with themes, imagery or biography. Versification figures only marginally and is rarely considered in conjunction with patterns of argument, metaphor, rhythm and sound within the individual poems. This thesis aims to some extent to fill this gap where the sonnet is concerned. It shows how "regularity" or "irregularity" of rhyme-scheme in themselves are poor indicators of the coherence of a sonnet and how poetic quality in the genre depends rather on how successfully the writer has matched thematic and formal structures. The choice and handling of the sonnet by the various authors naturally reflects general preoccupations of the time: the new interest in lyric poetry, the association of poetry and music on the one hand, poetry and plastic art on the other, the move towards an aesthetic of the short poem, the influence of Poe, the emphasis on formal technique. This study endeavours to set the contributions of the different authors against the background of these trends but concentrates on analysing the role of the sonnet within the work of the individual poets.

## INTRODUCTION

Although the sonnet plays at least as substantial a part in French nineteenth century poetry as the prose poem or the vers libre, it has attracted no study comparable to Suzanne Bernard's Le Poème en prose de Baudelaire jusqu'à nos jours.<sup>1</sup> This is no doubt because the sonnet in this period is neither avant-garde enough as a form nor sufficiently restricted to certain specific thematic areas to arouse immediate notice and comment. Indeed, mention of the sonnet in French poetry calls to mind first and foremost echoes of the sixteenth century, of Ronsard and Du Bellay and the poets of the Pléiade generally, for whom the sonnet was a formal novelty and who also created a relatively homogeneous sonnet tradition. As Henri Weber has shown in the chapter on "La poésie amoureuse de la Pléiade," in his book La Création poétique au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle en France,<sup>2</sup> the sixteenth century sonnetist worked within closely defined limits of imagery and structure and his originality depended on his ability to infuse new life into traditional themes and ideas by the merest twist of phrase or minor variations of standard metaphors. But this is not the case where the nineteenth century sonnet is concerned. The renewal of

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1. Suzanne Bernard, Le Poème en prose de Baudelaire jusqu'à nos jours (Paris, Nizet, 1959).
  2. Henri Weber, La Création poétique au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle en France (Paris, Nizet, 1956), pp. 231-398.

the form's popularity was an offshoot of the general revival of lyric poetry in the 1820's and the sonnet thus found itself drawn away from its established patterns of imagery and argument towards the Romantic interest in individual emotion, individually expressed. In addition to the diversification attendant on this change in attitudes, a further dimension was introduced by the preoccupation of certain members of the Romantic movement with the technical aspects of poetry. The fixed yet relatively flexible structure of the sonnet clearly distinguished it from other poems in fixed form, such as the rondeau or the ballade which derived from the old traditions of round and dance and were hence dependent on highly restrictive systems of repetition and refrain. Nineteenth century writers could thus find in the genre both a counterbalance to indiscipline and prolixity and an arena for an imaginative demonstration of their technical skill. The sonnet therefore, whilst on the one hand remaining within the lyrical tradition, also assumed a new role as a model for that technical expertise in poetry demanded by the "art for art" movement and the Parnassian poets.

With such diversification it is perhaps hardly surprising that the important role of the sonnet in French nineteenth century poetry is not instantly and fully recognized. The vogue for the form is however amply attested not only by its use in the works of the major poets of the period (with the exception of the first generation of Romantics), but also in those of a host of others,



professional and amateur; in the renewal of sonnet competitions in the newspapers and in the provincial contests of the Jeux Floraux; in the fashion for sonnets as album pieces; in an indulgence in bouts-rimés worthy of the Hôtel de Rambouillet in salons such as that of the Princesse Mathilde; in the publication of sonnet anthologies and of a luxury edition such as Sonnets et Eaux-fortes;<sup>1</sup> in the appearance of numerous monographs on the subject.<sup>2</sup> One sonnet of the 1830's by a poet named Félix Arvers became so well known that the expression "sonnet d'Arvers" emerged as a household word to describe anyone's poetic pièce de résistance. Pierre Louÿs, amongst others, uses it with this connotation in a letter to Valéry in 1890.<sup>3</sup> At the end of the century, the sonnet enters a cause célèbre in Louÿs' translation into sonnet form of one of Oscar Wilde's letters to Lord Alfred Douglas in order to demonstrate the "poetic" nature of the letter's phraseology.<sup>4</sup> The new vogue for the form in the late 1820's and 1830's is recorded by Balzac in Les Illusions perdues where the literary baggage of the aspiring

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1. Sonnets et Eaux-Fortes (Paris, Lemerre, 1869).

2. V. infra p. 11.

3. Arvers' sonnet can be found in Appendix B, p. 613. Pierre Louÿs' comment on Valéry's early sonnet Pour la Nuit ran "Soyez condamné à l'avoir pour Vase brisé /a famous piece by Sully Prudhomme/, Midi /Leconte de Lisle's celebrated poem/ ou sonnet d'Arvers." Quoted in Paul Valéry, Oeuvres complètes in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2 vols (Paris, Gallimard, 1957-1960), I, 1579 (pagination of the 1965 printing).

4. The letter can be found in Oscar Wilde, Letters, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London, Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd., 1962), p. 326. An anonymous sonnet in French based on this letter and written by Louÿs appeared in the Spirit Lamp, an Oxford undergraduate periodical, on 4 May 1893.

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poet Lucien de Rubempré is a collection of at least fifty and probably more sonnets, Les Marguerites.<sup>1</sup> In 1842 Louis Reybaud satirizes the fad in Jérôme Paturot à la recherche d'une position sociale. The enthusiasm of the hero for the sonnet in his "poète chevelu" period appears to have been unbounded (and indiscriminate):

Je viens de vous parler du sonnet, monsieur; quels souvenirs ce mot réveille en moi! L'ai-je cultivé, cet aimable sonnet! Tout ce qu'il y a dans mon être de puissance, de naïveté, de grâce, d'inspiration, je l'ai jeté dans le sonnet. Pendant six mois je n'ai guère vécu que de sonnets. Au déjeuner un sonnet; au dîner deux sonnets, sans compter les rondeaux. Toujours des sonnets, partout des sonnets; sonnets de douze pieds, sonnets de dix, sonnets de huit; sonnets à rimes croisées, à rimes plates, à rimes riches, à rimes suffisantes; sonnets au jasmin, à la vanille; sonnets respirant l'odeur des foins ou les parfums vertigineux de la salle du bal. Oui, monsieur, tel que vous me voyez, j'ai été une victime du sonnet, ce qui ne m'a pas empêché de donner dans la ballade, dans l'orientale, dans l'iambe, dans la méditation, dans le poème en prose et autres délassements modernes.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of such a massive revival of interest, the would-be

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1. Balzac, Les Illusions perdues (Paris, Garnier, 1961), pp. 261-268. Lucien explains his choice of the sonnet form as follows: "Le sonnet ... est une des oeuvres les plus difficiles de la poésie. Ce petit poème a été généralement abandonné. Personne n'a pu rivaliser Pétrarque, dont la langue, infiniment plus souple que la nôtre, admet des jeux de pensée repoussés par notre positivisme ... Il m'a donc paru original de débiter par un recueil de sonnets. Victor Hugo a pris l'ode, Canalis donne dans la poésie fugitive, Beranger monopolise la chanson, Casimir Delavigne accapare la tragédie et Lamartine la méditation." p. 263. Four samples of Lucien's sonnets are given: La Pâquerette and Le Camélia (actually written by Lassailly); La Marguerite (by Delphine de Girardin); La Tulipe (by Théophile Gautier).
  2. Louis Reybaud, Jérôme Paturot à la recherche d'une position sociale, 10th ed. (Paris, J.-J. Dubochet, Le Chevalier et Cie., 1848), pp. 7-8.

student of the nineteenth century sonnet is confronted firstly by a problem of selection. A nineteenth century attempt at a Bibliographie des Sonnets français au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>1</sup> goes no further than the first number Abadie-Banville, before giving up the unequal struggle. The wealth of sonnets by the Soularys, the Boulay-Patys, the Fertiaults and the like renders any comprehensive treatment utterly impractical.<sup>2</sup>

A second problem with such a diversified topic is one of approach. The external form of the sonnet naturally provides a framework and contemporary commentators and theoreticians and some subsequent critics have offered summaries and surveys of the basic characteristics of the genre as it appeared in France in the nineteenth century and earlier. These include its statutory fourteen lines, its bi-partite structure which in France traditionally falls into a pair of quatrains followed by a pair of tercets, its established rhyme-schemes - the Marot abba abba ccd eed arrangement and the Banville abba abba ccd ede pattern, as well as details of departures from these norms. But such accounts tend to the aridly statistical and the two early theses on the French sonnet generally, Everett Ward Olmsted's The Sonnet in French

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1. Bibliographie des Sonnets français au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle d'après les documents réunis par les VII Amis du Sonet /sic/ et mis en ordre par Hugues Vaganay. Fascicule I. Abadie-Banville (Louvain, Imprimerie Pollennis et Centerick, 1899).
  2. Joséphin Soulay, Oeuvres poétiques, 3 vols (Paris, Lemerre, 1880). Evariste Boulay-Paty, Sonnets (Paris, Féret, 1851). François Fertiault, Les Amoureux du Livre. Sonnets d'un Bibliophile (Paris, A. Claudin, 1877).

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literature and the development of the French sonnet form<sup>1</sup> and Max Jasinski's Histoire du Sonnet en France,<sup>2</sup> well illustrate the shortcomings of such an approach. Olmsted is preoccupied with details of rhyme-scheme and confines himself to a tabulation of the variations in sonnet rhyme from the popularization of the form in France in the 1550's until the end of the Romantic movement. He explains that it is impossible through lack of space to extend his account to include the multiplicity of schemes employed by later nineteenth century writers. In practice such a study is little more than a replica of the treatises of the theoreticians - with the one difference that its function is a descriptive and not a prescriptive one. Max Jasinski's Histoire du Sonnet en France combines rhyme-scheme analysis with a broader based historical literary survey, but little attention is paid to the success or otherwise of the use of the sonnet form in the context of a particular theme or aesthetic idea. Such judgements as do appear on individual poets are very often highly questionable. What is one to make of a critic who will comment but not elaborate on the oddity of the fact that Gautier failed to show a real preference for a form that superficially at least would seem to coincide perfectly with his

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1. Everett Ward Olmsted, The Sonnet in French literature and the development of the French sonnet form (Cornell PhD thesis, Ithaca, New York, 1897).
  2. Max Jasinski, Histoire du Sonnet en France (Douai, Impr. H. Brugère et Cie., 1903).

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most cherished ideas<sup>1</sup> or who can actually term Barbier's sonnets in Il Pianto "vigoureux"?<sup>1</sup>

The obvious deficiencies in both these works point up the fact that what is really interesting in the consideration of a fixed form such as the sonnet is not the details of formal structure and structural variations in themselves. It is rather the way in which ideas and themes have been matched with the form or adapted to it or the manner in which formal structure has been stretched to fit a particular insight on the part of the poet.

My method has therefore been to examine the sonnet as it appears in the work of major poets of the nineteenth century since it seemed that it would be in their works that the sonnet would come in contact with ideas and themes foreign to its earlier applications and that it would be here that its durability, adaptability and possibilities as a form might be most clearly demonstrated. This approach has the additional advantage of automatically excluding a large body of amateur and second-class material, thus offering a solution to the problem of selection. It does however also lead to the less than ideal situation where consideration of the work of a poet such as Pierre Louÿs who makes quite substantial use of the form has to give place to the few sonnets of a Leconte de Lisle.

The choice of major poets still leaves intact the central problem: how to organize an extended analysis of the French

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1. Ibid., p. 201.

nineteenth century sonnet. As soon as the different thematic concerns of the individual writers are taken into account, the development of a consistent argument over the whole pattern of the use of the sonnet in the nineteenth century becomes virtually impossible. The choice of the form by the various authors naturally reflects certain general preoccupations of the time - the new interest in lyric poetry and the emphasis on formal technique already mentioned, the influence of Poe in the latter half of the century, and the increasing tendency to prefer shorter poems and even to conceive of a poem as being by definition short. I have tried to set the contribution of the different authors against the background of these general trends but have concentrated on analysing the role of the sonnet within the work of the individual poets. The study is thus organized in six chapters with 1857, the date of the publication of Les Fleurs du Mal and of the first large-scale appearance of the sonnet in a major poetic work, as a focal point. The first chapter deals with the re-emergence of the sonnet as a respected form in the late 1820's, its intermittent appearance in the works of Sainte-Beuve, Gautier, Musset and Nerval and the type of shaping it received in their hands. The second chapter examines Baudelaire's more extensive use of the sonnet, on the one hand as a means for expressing his awareness of the duality of human nature and experience and on the other, as an instrument for the creation of a "sorcellerie évocatoire." The third chapter considers the association of the form with the ideas of the "art for art" movement, dealing with its appearance

in the works of Banville, Leconte de Lisle, and Heredia. The fourth chapter discusses the role and significance of the sonnet in Verlaine's evolution from Parnassian to "poète maudit" to Catholic poet. The fifth looks at Mallarmé's intensification of Parnassian credos, culminating in the two sonnet hyperbole, "Ses ongles très haut dédiant leur onyx" and "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui," and his development on the other hand of a more flexible and sinuous quatorzain. The sixth and last analyses Valéry's gradual assimilation of the sonnet into his general preoccupation with the passage from formless potential to constructed artefact. I have indicated briefly in an appendix the numbers of sonnets produced by each poet and the way they are distributed in his work. In the main text, however, I have tried to go beyond such purely quantitative data to a discussion of the characteristic features of the sonnet of the individual writers. I have attempted to evaluate their success in the manipulation of the form, to suggest the extent to which the choice of the form conditions theme and presentation, and to show the range of variations of which the sonnet is capable. Overall then the aim of this study could be said to be a descriptive one, a charting of the career of the sonnet in major poetic works of the second half of the nineteenth century. However, small individual theses are put forward regarding the role of the sonnet in the work of the different authors.

Critical comment on the French nineteenth century sonnet is very limited. Apart from the general surveys of the French sonnet by Olmsted and Jasinski that we have already mentioned, it is

confined to passages in Walter Mönch's more recent Das Sonett. Gestalt und Geschichte<sup>1</sup> and a thesis by Ingrid Kraft, Fortleben lyrischer Dichtung in fester Form in Frankreich nach der Romantik.<sup>2</sup> Mönch's book, comprising a chronological survey of the fortunes of the sonnet, traced through the various literatures of Europe and America, is inevitably brief in its discussion of particular periods. The author does use his survey to ask the important question, "Why does the sonnet possess such a durable attraction?" but, as he himself agrees at the outset, the emphasis on an overall picture results in summary treatment of much that merits detailed discussion. Thus the sonnet in nineteenth century France receives only eleven pages of attention and within that space Baudelaire, the Parnassians and the Symbolists only four, two and three pages respectively.<sup>3</sup> Ingrid Kraft's thesis is the only work to go beyond statistical detail or broad historical survey, but the sonnet has to share attention with forms such as the ballade, rondeau, virelai and villanelle, whose origins, use and potential are essentially different and distinct from its own. Such diversification of effort naturally precludes any detailed examination of individual poems and the conclusions reached by the author can only be very general ones and have to be taken largely on trust.

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1. Walter Mönch, Das Sonett. Gestalt und Geschichte (Heidelberg, Kerle, 1955).
  2. Ingrid Kraft, Fortleben lyrischer Dichtung in fester Form in Frankreich nach der Romantik (unpublished doctoral thesis, Tübingen, 1958).
  3. Mönch, pp. 200-207, 216-219.



Nineteenth century commentators shed little light on the subject. Louis de Veyrières' Monographie du Sonnet<sup>1</sup> proceeds according to a standard pattern - etymology of the word "sonnet," origins of the form, rules of the form followed by lists of its practitioners. Others such as Charles Asselineau in his Histoire du Sonnet written in 1855<sup>2</sup> offer little more than a general sketch accompanied by a few anecdotes and patriotic claims as to the French origin of the form. Alfred Delvau in his Sonneurs de sonnets 1540-1866 explains that he intends his monograph as a kind of "causerie":

Je suis un poète qui s'occupe des poètes qui  
l'intéressent à titres divers et non un érudit  
qui traite de matières savantes. Je butine.<sup>3</sup>

The result is an anthology of what seem to him the most original sonnets of their kind, even in "le genre ennuyeux."<sup>4</sup> These works have little or no definitive comment to make on the nature of the nineteenth century sonnet and are of interest mainly as evidence of the popularity of the genre in that period.

As far as the individual authors are concerned, the wide range of this study makes an exhaustive bibliography impossible. However,

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1. Louis de Veyrières, Monographie du Sonnet. Sonnetistes anciens et modernes, 2 vols (Paris, Bachelin-Deflorenne, 1869).
  2. Charles Asselineau, Histoire du Sonnet (Alençon, chez A. Poulet-Malassis et De Broise, 1855). Reprinted as a preface to Le Livre des Sonnets (Paris, Lemerre, 1874).
  3. Alfred Delvau, Sonneurs de sonnets 1540-1866 (Paris, Bachelin-Deflorenne, 1867), p. 32.
  4. Ibid., p. 10.

it is hoped that no major critical source has been omitted. Studies of the versification of the poets considered here are surprisingly few, and those relating versification to theme almost non-existent. General studies of a particular author may include at some point a couple of pages on his techniques of versification but considerations of space almost invariably preclude anything but a quantitative survey. Exceptions are Claude Cuénot's chapter on Verlaine's sonnet in Le Style de Paul Verlaine,<sup>1</sup> Albert Thibaudet's remarks on Mallarmé's use of the form in La Poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé,<sup>2</sup> and James R. Lawler's Lecture de Valéry. This study aims to some extent to fill this gap and to offer some description and analysis of a most important but hitherto neglected aspect of French nineteenth century poetry.

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1. Claude Cuénot, Le Style de Paul Verlaine (Paris, Centre de documentation universitaire, 1963), pp. 463-496.
2. Albert Thibaudet, La Poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé, 11th ed. (Paris, Gallimard, 1926), pp. 305-312.
3. James R. Lawler, Lecture de Valéry. Une étude de "Charmes" (Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1963).

CHAPTER I

The Sonnet before 1857

The period from 1829, the year of the publication of the Vie, Poésies et Pensées de Joseph Delorme, to 1857, the year of the publication of Les Fleurs du Mal, was one of rediscovery for the sonnet in France. The form had yet to gain the wide popularity it was to experience in the latter part of the century. During this period it was not used in a major collection by any poet in the front rank though it enjoyed quite extensive currency among poets of lesser stature, well-known and respected in their day. Sainte-Beuve is the main example, but one thinks also of Barbier in Il Pianto,<sup>1</sup> Brizeux and the sonnets included in his Histoires poétiques<sup>2</sup> and the sonnet collections of Soulary.

Many of the sonnets of this period seem thin, particularly in comparison with Les Fleurs du Mal and with some work produced in the later years of the century. Often they possess little intrinsic interest and are chiefly remarkable as examples of a growing acceptance

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1. Il Pianto (1833) contains 11 sonnets out of 17 pieces. Barbier also used the sonnet for the 31 pieces of Rimes héroïques (1843). He explains the reason for his choice of the form in the Préface to the collection: "Ce petit poème d'invention moderne a le mérite d'encadrer avec précision l'idée ou le sentiment. Il se prête à tous les tons; et quoique accoutumé à soupirer les peines du cœur et à exhaler les tristesses de l'âme, il peut monter aux notes les plus fières, et faire entendre les accents les plus mâles." Rimes héroïques (Paris, Mascagna, 1843), pp. 3-4.
  2. Brizeux's large collection Histoires poétiques includes 14 sonnets, 8 of them "sonnets renversés." 3 of these are paired with a sonnet in normal order to give an overall symmetrical arrangement. These are Symboles I and II, Amitiés I and II, and Formes et Pensées. The last of these, on the subject of the sonnet, can be found in Appendix B, p. 604.

of the genre and of a negative reaction to sixteenth century versions of the form. In this opening chapter space will thus be given to some pieces which might scarcely appear to warrant it on their own merits. However this would seem inevitable in any account of the gradual reemergence of a form to popularity and its slow adaptation to new modes of feeling and thought.

The chapter concentrates on four poets who typify the range and unevenness of sonnet writing in this initial phase. Sainte-Beuve, Gautier, Musset, and Nerval between them demonstrate both the growing vogue for the sonnet and also the very varying extent to which its potential was appreciated and assimilated by the writers of the 1830's and 1840's.

### Sainte-Beuve

Traditionally, nineteenth century interest in the sonnet in France is traced back to Sainte-Beuve's Tableau historique et critique de la poésie française et du théâtre français au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle,<sup>1</sup> a piece of work undertaken initially for the 1826 Academy competition, "Discours sur l'histoire de la langue et de la littérature française depuis le commencement du seizième siècle jusqu'en 1610," but not completed in time and published in eleven fragments in Le Globe from 7 July 1827 to 30 April 1828 and subsequently in book form by Sautelet in 1828. Some work had already been done in the field of sixteenth century and early seventeenth century literature, in particular by Viollet-le-Duc, "tout classique qu'il voulait être"<sup>2</sup> but where the sonnet at least was concerned, the renewal of scholarly interest in the poets of the Pléiade and their

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1. The references given here are to the 1842 Charpentier edition. It is perhaps worth mentioning the comment of Louis de Veyrières following his account of the resumption of the sonnet competition at the Jeux Floraux of Toulouse (in 1806) and Caen, the translation of 28 sonnets of Petrarch by Ginguené in 1811 and the use of the form in the early years of the nineteenth century by a few now long forgotten writers: "Il est bien évident que des vestales ont entretenu le feu sacré du sonnet jusqu'à notre temps. CH. AUG. SAINTE-BEUVE, mort en solidaire le 13 octobre 1869, n'a donc point ressuscité le sonnet, comme on s'est plu à le dire." However, Veyrières is still forced to agree, "Mais on ne peut disconvenir il l'a prôné et popularisé." Monographie du Sonnet (Paris, Bachelin-Deflorenne, 1869), I, 108-109.
  2. Sainte-Beuve, Portraits contemporains (Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1881-1889), V, 120. Viollet-le-Duc, father of the famous architect, had already mentioned Ronsard in his Histoire de la Satire en France in 1822: "Je n'ai pu résister au désir de rendre justice à un poète oublié, ou, ce qui est pis encore, mal connu, et qui, selon moi, a fait faire les plus grands pas à notre littérature," 2nd ed., 1823, p. iv. Sainte-Beuve later wrote: "M. Viollet-le-Duc ... avait précédé tout le monde dans le goût des vieux auteurs français antérieurs à Malherbe et de la poésie du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle." Nouveaux Lundis (Paris, Lévy, 1863-70), III, 119.

successors would probably have been in itself insufficient to bring the form to prominence at a time when the younger generation of poets was concerned with more spectacular experimentation in versification or preoccupied with the untrammelled expression of highly personal emotion. The relatively few direct references to the sonnet form in the Tableau historique would seem unlikely to fire any poet of the 1820's with an overmastering enthusiasm for the form. Sainte-Beuve clearly views the sixteenth century version as primarily a "poésie des dames," a social exercise generally productive of a rather wearying uniformity if occasionally of substantial pecuniary benefits.<sup>1</sup> The constraints of such a genre and the ritualistic expression of feeling or epigrammatic function habitually associated with it were hardly likely to appeal to a Lamartine or a Hugo. Sainte-Beuve remarked much later on the inappropriateness of the sonnet for such poets à propos of Soulayr's sonnet which compares "cette opération difficile de mettre dans un sonnet un peu plus qu'il ne peut tenir, et sans pourtant le faire craquer," to "cette difficulté de toilette bien connue des dames et qui consiste à passer une robe juste et collante":

... on conçoit ... quand on voit ce travail et cette sueur pour y entrer, que jamais les grands poètes de ce temps-ci n'aient fait de sonnets: ceux de Musset sont irréguliers,<sup>2</sup>

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1. Tableau historique, p. 110, n.1, sketches in the outstanding success of Desportes in the field: "Des Portes avait de bonne heure été attaché au duc d'Anjou, avec lequel il fit, à son grand déplaisir, le voyage de Pologne. Quand ce prince fut devenu roi de France sous le nom de Henri III, Des Portes reçut de lui en bénéfices et abbayes jusqu'à dix mille écus de rente. Cette fortune, prodigieuse alors, était passée en proverbe, et dans les auteurs du temps il n'est question que de ces trente mille livres de M. l'abbé de Tiron. 'Ce fut un dangereux exemple, dit Balzac, qui fit faire bien des sonnets, des élégies à faux; un écueil contre lequel dix mille poètes se sont brisés.' Le même écrivain a remarqué que, dans cette cour où le duc de Joyeuse donna à Des Portes une abbaye pour un sonnet, le Tasse eut besoin d'un écu, et le demanda par aumône à une dame de sa connaissance."
  2. On Musset's "irregularity" in the sonnet, v. infra p. 100.

Lamartine ni Hugo n'en ont fait d'aucune sorte,<sup>1</sup> Vigny non plus.<sup>2</sup> Les cygnes et les aigles, à vouloir entrer dans cette cage y auraient cassé leurs ailes. C'était affaire à nous autres, oiseaux de moins haut vol et de moins large envergure.<sup>3</sup>

His pride in his initiatory role in the field is clear, however, as he continues:

Certes, et je ne l'ai pas oublié, tous les grands poètes de la Renaissance ont fait des sonnets: qui ne connaît ceux de Dante, de Shakespeare, de Milton? C'était alors un genre à la mode, et chacun lui payait son tribut en passant, une fois au moins en sa vie. De nos jours le sonnet a été un genre restauré, légèrement artificiel, une gageure ou une gentillesse. Ceux de nos maîtres qui n'y étaient point intéressés par curiosité et par goût s'en sont passés, et n'ont que faire de cette prison. Je me flatte d'être le premier, chez nous, qui ait renouvelé l'exemple du sonnet en 1828; mais je n'en ai jamais fait que de temps à autre, par-ci par-là, et en entremêlant cette forme aux autres rythmes plus modernes.<sup>4</sup>

1. In fact Hugo wrote 4 sonnets, all printed in Toute la Lyre (1888). Ave dea; moriturus te salutat, addressed to Judith Gautier, first appeared in the 1874 Etrennes du Parnasse. Roman en trois sonnets, though undated, seems likewise to date from the end of Hugo's life and was almost certainly written after this 1861 article. Hugo's general attitude towards the form is clearly revealed in such lines as:

Dans le parc froid et superbe  
Rien de vivant ne venait  
On comptait les brins d'une herbe  
Comme les mots d'un sonnet.

Le Chêne du Parc détruit in Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois.

2. Vol. I of the Pléiade edition of Vigny's Oeuvres complètes (Paris, Gallimard, 1950) includes 6 sonnets in the section Notes et Additions, which follows the collections of poetry published by Vigny himself: one accompanying the MS and brochure of La Maréchale d'Ancre, sent in 1831 to Marie Dorval who should have been the leading actress in the play (pp. 191-192); L'Esprit parisien, written after the Fieschi execution, 19 Feb. 1836, dated March 1836 in Journal d'un Poète and published in L'Ariel, 19 March 1836 (p. 207); Daniel, concerned with the foreign policy of the July monarchy, in Journal d'un Poète, 14 May 1837 (p. 199); La Trinité humaine in Journal d'un Poète, 9 May 1838 (p. 199); A Evariste Boulay-Paty, to thank him for sending a copy of his Sonnets (Paris, 1851) and for dedicating one of them, Les Statues, to Vigny (p. 208); Sonnet ("Eh quoi, vous désertez votre sage comptoir"), a piece revealing Vigny's scorn for the bourgeoisie (p. 205).

3. Nouveaux Lundis, III, 344-345. For Soulayry's sonnet, see Appendix B, p.605.

4. Ibid.

This last remark can only be considered true in the light of its immediate context; Sainte-Beuve is presumably comparing his own intermittent production of sonnets to the collections, consisting entirely of sonnets, of Boulay-Paty, Soulayr, and the like. In fact, of the 55 poems of the Vie, Poésies et Pensées de Joseph Delorme (1829), 12 are sonnets<sup>1</sup> and subsequent collections show a continued preference for the form. Les Consolations (1830) has 10 sonnets out of 29 poems,<sup>2</sup> while Pensées d'août (1837) has 18 out of 54.<sup>3</sup> Clearly such figures illustrate how an academic interest in one of the main forms of sixteenth century poetry is translated into new poetic reality - Sainte-Beuve's practice as a poet, it might be claimed, achieves a revival of interest in the sonnet in a way the Tableau historique with its rather less than enthusiastic allusions to the form could never have done by itself. What of the "autres rythmes plus modernes" of which Sainte-Beuve speaks? The figures given above can be further refined to indicate more precisely the significance to be attributed to them. It is instructive to have some idea of the competition offered by other forms, and the ends that may be served by them. A more detailed breakdown of the Poésies de Joseph Delorme shows that the 12 sonnets follow the rimes plates (21 examples) as the most strongly represented form.<sup>4</sup> In Les Consolations and Pensées d'août also, rimes

1. Another sonnet was added to the Poésies de Joseph Delorme in the 1861 edition of the Poésies complètes by Poulet-Malassis. This was the Sonnet imité de Keats, "Piquante est la bouffée." It is included in the 2 vol. 1863 Lévy edition of the Poésies complètes, I, 137.
2. One of these sonnets is a translation of a sonnet of Michelangelo, included at the head of the long poem in rimes plates, A mon ami Leroux.
3. In addition Pensées d'août includes a poem by Musset A Sainte-Beuve. For further details of sonnets written by Sainte-Beuve, v. Appendix A.
4. Besides the 12 sonnets, the collection includes 3 poems in alexandrine quatrains rhyming alternately, 1 poem in quatrains of alexandrines and hexasyllabic lines alternately and also rhyming alternately, 1 poem (A la Rime) in 6 line stanzas rhyming aabccb and with line lengths 7/3/7/7/3/7 (an early but isolated use by Sainte-Beuve of vers impairs, modelled on Rémy Belleau's Avril), 1 poem in 6 line stanzas rhyming aabccb with lines of 12/12/8/12/12/8 syllables, 7 poems of 6 line stanzas (including Les Rayons jaunes) rhyming aabccb and with line lengths of 12/12/6/12/12/6 syllables, 7 poems in octosyllables rhyming abaab, 21 poems in rimes plates and 1 poem of mixed strophic pattern (L'Attente).



plates and the sonnet persist together as the dominant forms - 17 poems in rimes plates and 9 sonnets in Les Consolations and 17 poems in rimes plates and 18 sonnets in Pensées d'août. The sonnet then, numerically at least, occupies an important position in Sainte-Beuve's work. It remains to be seen whether the predominance also of rimes plates implies a division of labour or whether the sonnet will be found to be attracted towards more descriptive or narrative subject-matter and towards simpler techniques of presentation.

Gérald Antoine in his edition of Joseph Delorme, terms Sainte-Beuve's restoration of the sonnet "une page connue d'histoire littéraire."<sup>1</sup> It is at best a page only imperfectly known. Critical comment is limited.<sup>2</sup> We know of Sainte-Beuve's interest in the poetry of the sixteenth century, we have the comments on the form that appear scattered in his critical work, we have the evidence of the numerical distribution of the sonnet in his collections of poems, but nowhere is there a systematic attempt to draw this knowledge together and to evaluate the role played by Sainte-Beuve in the emergence of the form from its debased position as

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1. Sainte-Beuve, Vie, Poésies et Pensées de Joseph Delorme, ed. Gérald Antoine (Paris, Nouvelles éditions latines, 1957), p. LXXIX. References to this edition will henceforth be given as Joseph Delorme, ed. Antoine.
  2. For an example of the type of comment, André Bellessort, Sainte-Beuve et le dix-neuvième siècle (Paris, Perrin, 1927), pp. 71-72: "Il était fier d'avoir ressuscité dans la poésie française le sonnet importé d'Italie par la Pléiade et presque abandonné depuis cent cinquante ans. Les grands poètes du dix-septième siècle ne s'en étaient guère servi que pour loger une épigramme, ceux du dix-huitième n'aimaient point se plier aux règles des formes fixes. Lamartine les ressemblait. Hugo se fût trouvé à l'étroit dans ce cadre resserré. Vigny n'avait pas daigné. Parmi les douze sonnets que contiennent les Poésies de Joseph Delorme il y en a au moins un qui s'est inscrit au livre d'or: celui où il réhabilite Ronsard, où il lui élève un autel expiatoire sans d'ailleurs espérer le remplacer sur son trône radieux ... Quant aux autres, ils expriment des impressions pittoresques ou des sentiments élégiaques, désir d'amour, regret de n'être pas aimé, dureté de la vie que la pauvreté a marqué de son sceau, et ils se rattachent à ceux de Du Bellay."

a "petit vers" of the seventeenth and eighteenth century salon, "le sonnet fade, efféminé, énérvé et à pointe des spirituels et minces Fontenelles,"<sup>1</sup> to its eminence in nineteenth century poetry, from a society verse to a vehicle for "l'expression de douleurs individuelles."<sup>2</sup> Remarks by later writers<sup>3</sup> testify to the seminal importance of Sainte-Beuve's work as a poet for many subsequent developments in nineteenth century French poetry. Critics have, however, tended to emphasize the evolution, from their sources here, either of certain themes common to later poets, or, less frequently, invoking A la Rime and the Pensées de Joseph Delorme, that of a craftsman approach towards poetry. But the two aspects are invariably considered separately, the latter generally in terms of theories expressed by the poet rather than in the light of his actual practice. There is little attempt to assess the relationship between them in the context of the individual poem and the consubstantial impact they necessarily produce on the reader. Thus the gradual imposition of the sonnet in the nineteenth century, beginning with Sainte-Beuve, has never been fully investigated in its first important appearance in his work. In M. Antoine's Introduction to Joseph

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1. Causeries du Lundi, 3rd ed. (Paris, Garnier), XIV, 79.
  2. Sainte-Beuve, Vie de Joseph Delorme, Poésies complètes, I, 5. All page references to Sainte-Beuve's collections of poems are, unless otherwise stated, those of the 2 vol. Poésies complètes (Paris, Lévy, 1863), henceforth PC.
  3. e.g. Gautier: "Oncle Beuve, ton Joseph Delorme m'a beaucoup servi pour mes vers," Conférence de Jules Troubat, 11 Oct. 1904, quoted by Georges Roth, "Kirke White et Joseph Delorme," Revue de Littérature Comparée, I (1921), 597. Baudelaire: "Décidément, vous aviez raison: Joseph Delorme c'est Les Fleurs du Mal de la veille. La comparaison est glorieuse pour moi. Vous aurez la bonté de ne pas la trouver offensante pour vous," letter to Sainte-Beuve of 15 March 1865. Coppée: "Sainte-Beuve fut pour moi un maître, un initiateur... Dès mes plus lointaines années de travail, je m'étais nourri de Joseph Delorme ... et j'éprouvai pour Sainte-Beuve les sentiments d'un féal," Journal, 6 Aug. 1896.

Delorme, for example, in spite of what might have seemed a promising subheading, Sainte-Beuve poète-artiste,<sup>1</sup> the discussion is maintained at a theoretical level, confined to comment on the Pensées, and is not extended to actual examination of the poet's practice. M. Antoine's remarks are grouped under the traditional rubrics of vocabulary, imagery, sentence structure, and versification, and little attempt is made to suggest how these various features combine to form a poem. This is particularly true of the versification section which shows a total absence of consideration of any unit longer than the single line!

The faculties which led to Sainte-Beuve's success as a critic naturally had their impact on the orientation of his poetry. Sainte-Beuve was aware that there was nothing to be gained from following the patterns set by Lamartine and Hugo, since on their terms he could never hope to outshine or even equal them. The rational element in his nature held him back from an unrestrained exhibition of sentiment, even prevented him from experiencing the excesses of feeling of which Lamartine or Hugo were capable. Delorme bemoans his inability to lose himself in pure feeling:

Du moins, si, en se retirant de lui, la raison l'eût sans retour livré en proie aux égarements d'une sensibilité délirante, il eût pu s'étourdir dans ce mouvement insensé, et l'enivrement du vertige lui eût sauvé les brisures de la chute. Mais il semblait qu'un bourreau capricieux eût attaché au corps de la victime un lien qui la retenait par moments, pour qu'elle tombât avec une sorte de mesure. La Raison morte rôdait autour de lui comme un fantôme, et l'accompagnait à l'abîme qu'elle éclairait d'une lueur sombre. C'est ce qu'il appelait avec une effrayante énergie, "se noyer la lanterne au cou."<sup>2</sup>

Sainte-Beuve writes to Lamartine in a letter dated 29 August 1829:

Croyez-moi, car je vous le dis bien sincèrement, lorsque je lis quelques-uns de vos vers, que j'admire cette manière si large, si naturelle, si ouverte et si pleine ...

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1. Joseph Delorme, ed. Antoine, p. LIV.  
 2. Vie de Joseph Delorme, PC, I, 17.

il me prend grand mépris de cette manière petite, étroite et curieuse, où l'impuissance d'atteindre plus haut m'a confiné, et dans laquelle j'ai tâché de me faire une poésie comme un pauvre diable s'arrange un petit jardin sur sa fenêtre ou dans les fentes de sa cour. Vous êtes heureux de n'avoir pas été sujet, en débutant, à cette indigence un peu honteuse du génie, et d'avoir taillé tout d'abord en pleine nature avec luxe et opulence. Je crains fort pour ma muse chétive qu'elle ne perde jamais tout à fait sa gaucherie première.<sup>1</sup>

But while Sainte-Beuve certainly envied Lamartine his facility, he was nevertheless vividly aware of the ridiculous aspects of some Romantic grandiloquence. Hugo is criticized not only in the Globe article of 1827 on the Odes et Ballades but also in that on Les Chants du Crépuscule in 1835 for his lack of a sense of proportion:

En poésie, comme ailleurs, rien de si périlleux que la force: si on la laisse faire, elle abuse de tout; par elle, ce qui n'était qu'original et neuf est bien près de devenir bizarre; un contraste brillant dégénère en anti-thèse précieuse; l'auteur vise à la grâce et à la simplicité, et il va jusqu'à la mignardise et à la simplesse; il ne cherche que l'héroïque, et il rencontre le gigantesque; s'il tente jamais le gigantesque, il n'évitera pas le puéril.<sup>2</sup>

He has a tendency labelled by Sainte-Beuve as "fâcheux" of pursuing an image down to its tiniest details and in his poetry it can happen that "le pli d'un manteau tient autant de place que la plus noble pensée."<sup>3</sup> Sainte-Beuve's advice to Hugo therefore in 1827 is to set his sights a little lower and to aim at an achievable perfection, as did Racine in Esther and in Athalie.<sup>4</sup> And it is this classical example that Sainte-Beuve himself follows, turning as he does so, his shortcomings into poetic assets. He accepts the short forms, and specifically the sonnet, as his

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1. Quoted in Joseph Delorme, ed. Antoine, pp. XC-XCI.

2. Premiers Lundis (Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1886-1894), I, 179.

3. Portraits contemporains I, 453.

4. Premiers Lundis, I, 185 and I, 188.

natural mode:

Tel filet d'idée poétique qui chez André Chenier découlerait en élégie, ou chez Lamartine s'épancherait en méditation, et finirait par devenir fleuve ou lac se congèle aussitôt chez moi et se cristallise en sonnet; c'est un malheur, et je m'y résigne.<sup>1</sup>

And for his subject-matter, he looks to "des peintures d'analyse sentimentale et des paysages de petite dimension,"<sup>2</sup> to "la vie privée" - "c'est ... de la vie privée, ... d'un incident domestique, d'une conversation, d'une promenade, d'une lecture que je pars"<sup>3</sup> - and attempts to elevate "la réalité la plus vulgaire ... à une plus haute puissance de poésie."<sup>4</sup> The limitations of his temperament thus become the source of something new and original in French poetry.

But how are form and content to be adapted to each other? The question presents itself with particular force where the sonnet is concerned. Of the twin objects of Joseph Delorme's poetry - "peintures d'analyse sentimentale" and "paysages de petite dimension," only the first seems to offer itself as a suitable candidate for the sonnet genre as alluded to by Sainte-Beuve in the Tableau historique. Yet even this similarity is deceptive, since the aims of the sixteenth century and the nineteenth century poet can hardly be expected to be the same. Sainte-Beuve deals with this problem in a letter to Philarète Chasles in 1830, replying to the latter's criticisms and justifying his own position:

Vous dites que Delorme a voulu faire de la Poésie du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle et vous jugez qu'il y a désaccord entre la forme et le fond des pensées. - Mais quand il y aurait désaccord fondamental entre certaines idées, certains sentimens généraux du Poète et cette forme restreinte et curieuse, croyez-vous que cela n'ait pas pu être chez lui réel et vrai, ne fut ce [sic] qu'à titre de manie, une bizarrerie de plus caractéristique et nécessaire dans cette nature rabougrie et incohérente

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1. Pensées de Joseph Delorme, XII, PC, I, 163.  
2. Vie de Joseph Delorme, PC, I, 26.  
3. A V.H., Les Consolations, PC, II, 14.  
4. Ibid.

[étiolée biffé]. Cette infiltration d'un système métrique et de style jusque dans la mélancolie la plus intime ne vous paraît elle pas possible et dans un certain sens naïve chez un esprit malade, en quête d'enthousiasme, s'accrochant à tout, et à Ronsard faute de mieux en interl: ce qu'il appelait L'Art dans les Rêveries.

Where a form such as the sonnet is concerned then, an approach totally different from that of the sixteenth century is operative. Whereas the themes, imagery, and structuring of ideas already established in the Italian sonnet were accepted by the Pléiade poets as an integral part of the genre and emotion canalized into ritual patterns, the attempt in nineteenth century France was to create personal systems of expression to render the emotions and perceptions of the individual. And not only this. The most commonly experienced emotions amongst poets of the time were generally of a type hostile to all the principles of clarity and rational order the sonnet might seem to embody. Indeed such order might be felt by some determined and extrovert personalities to be a negative phenomenon and disorder seen as a fruitful experience and a positive virtue. Byron for example wrote in his diary in 1813, "Redde [sic] some Italian, and wrote two sonnets. I never wrote but one sonnet before, and that was not in earnest, and many years ago, as an exercise - and I will never write another. They are the most puling, petrifying, stupidly platonic compositions,"<sup>2</sup> a remark which Sainte-Beuve noted down thus:

Byron déteste les sonnets qu'il dit la plus langoureuse, la plus ennuyeuse, et stupidement platonique de toutes les compositions.

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1. Inéd. Coll. Dupont. - No. 88 of Cat. de l'Exposition Sainte-Beuve à la Bibl. Nat. (1955), quoted in Joseph Delorme ed. Antoine, pp. LVI-LVII.
  2. Quoted in Byron, Miscellanies (London, John Murray, 1853), v.2, p. 351.
  3. Coll. Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, documents contenus dans l'armoire D, fonds Sainte-Beuve 574, f.8<sup>vo</sup>. Quoted in Joseph Delorme, ed. Antoine, p. LXI, n. 77.

Why then should a form such as the sonnet be adopted? In the letter to Chasles, the more restrained and sober Sainte-Beuve suggests that the choice is part of a general search for stability. Natures such as Delorme's, "rabougries et incohérentes," have been incapable of creating a mental discipline of their own and have had to opt instead for forms already devised, symbolic of a general principle of order which their inner turmoil or indecision prevented them from formulating on their own account. Naturally, however, a choice based on negative grounds such as these, is bound to give rise to repercussions within the forms themselves. Though the outer shell of a distinctive yet relatively simple form<sup>1</sup> such as the sonnet may be adopted to give shape to ill-defined or disorganized states of mind, new images and new structures derived from those states necessarily spring up within the form and militate against the principles of constraint and discipline embodied in the initial choice. The result is a tension between thematic and formal patterns which reflects the struggles going forth within the poet himself. Sainte-Beuve's sonnets show some signs of this and of course, it was later to be one of Gautier's main criticisms of the Baudelairian sonnet.<sup>2</sup>

Let us now look more closely at the "peintures d'analyse sentimentale" in Sainte-Beuve's sonnets. To anyone at all acquainted with sixteenth century French sonnets, the first impression given by those of Sainte-Beuve is one of an extraordinary lack of complication - even of substance. Yet on the surface, nothing appears changed. The subject-matter seems the same, the external shape of the sonnet is the same.

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1. Compared, that is, to forms such as the rondeau, ballade, etc.  
 2. V. infra, p. 65. V. also Banville's comment in his Petit Traité de poésie française on Baudelaire's sonnet, Le Rebelle, infra p. 241. The trend continues in Verlaine's sonnets.

Sainte-Beuve's sonnets for the most part conform to the pattern abba abba ccd eed established by Marot.<sup>1</sup> With one exception, "A Francfort-sur-le-Mein" in Les Consolations, they all maintain the 8:6 division with more vigour than generally shown even in the sixteenth century, and as a general rule a definite break is also made between the two quatrains.<sup>2</sup> The following poem from Joseph Delorme in vocabulary and conception is clearly derivative of sixteenth century love sonnets.

Enfant, je m'étais dit et souvent répété:  
 "Jamais, jamais d'amour; c'est assez de la gloire;  
 "En des siècles sans nombre étendons ma mémoire,  
 "Et semons ici-bas pour l'immortalité."

Plus tard, je me disais: "Amour et volupté,  
 "Allez, et gloire aussi! que m'importe l'histoire?  
 "Fantôme au laurier d'or, vierges au cou d'ivoire,  
 "Je vous fuis pour l'étude et pour l'obscurité."

Ainsi, jeune orgueilleux, ainsi longtemps disais-je;  
 Mais comme après l'hiver, en nos plaines, la neige  
 Sous le soleil de mars fond au premier beau jour,

Je te vis, blonde Hélène, et dans ce cœur farouche,  
 Aux rayons de tes yeux, au souffle de ta bouche,  
 Aux soupirs de ta voix, tout fondit en amour.

PC, I, 55

The subject of this sonnet is the primacy of love over all other human desires, and in order to illustrate his point, the poet organizes his poem around the varying ambitions of the different ages of man, love, in the tercets, occupying the climactic structural position of the piece. Thus the first eight lines of the sonnet fall into two equal sections, describing successively his childhood dreams of glory to the detriment of love and his rejection "plus tard" of both love and glory for scholarly

1. Of the 31 sonnets not on the Marot pattern out of a total of 93 sonnets in the 1863 Lévy edition of the Poésies complètes, 17 rhyme on the abba abba ccd ede pattern later preferred by Banville; other combinations are abba abba cdd cee (3), abba abba cdc dee (1), abba abba cdc ddc (4), abba abba cdd cdc (3). There are also 3 sonnets with an irregular arrangement of rhymes in the quatrains, Sonnet à Théophile Gautier (Suite de Joseph Delorme, I, 198-199), "Avignon m'apparaît dans sa charmante enceinte" (Notes et Sonnets II, 313-314), and Sonnet à Mademoiselle Eliza-Wilhelmine (Un Dernier Rêve II, 341).
2. In the 93 sonnets of the 1863 Lévy edition of the Poésies complètes there are 9 examples of overrun between the quatrains. Overrun between the tercets, a more common occurrence generally in the sonnet, takes place on 7 occasions.



study. Line 9, the structural pivot of the sonnet, underscores the attitudes expressed in the quatrains, emphasizing, on the one hand, that these are now past history - "disais-je" (1.9) echoing "Enfant, je m'étais dit" (1.1) and "Plus tard, je me disais" (1.5) - and, on the other, advancing a judgement on the presumption of the earlier mode of conduct - "jeune orgueilleux." In the tercets, in contrast to the calculations described in the quatrains, the poet is confronted with a coup de foudre, an impact reproduced in the structure of the poem by the postponement of the key-phrase "Je te vis, blonde Hélène" to the beginning of the second tercet. In addition the past definite verb provides a sharp contrast with the imperfect tenses appearing in the first line of each quatrain. The sonnet, then, is clearly and simply articulated on the basis of a sort of chronological progression and the regular rhyme scheme mirrors this orderly development. The subject is traditional even down to the choice of the girl's name and her one attribute "blonde."

However, if one considers sixteenth century poems on similar themes,<sup>1</sup> one is immediately struck by very significant modifications in the use of

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1. For example, Du Bellay, L'Olive XXXI, Oeuvres poétiques, ed. Henri Chamard, vol. I (Paris, S.T.F.M., 1908), p. 53, or Ronsard, Les Amours CLXV, Oeuvres complètes, vol. IV, ed. Paul Laumonier (Paris, S.T.F.M., 1939), pp. 156-157:

Quand le grand oeil dans les Jumeaux arrive,  
 Un jour plus doux seréne l'Univers,  
 D'espicz crestez ondoyent les champs verdz  
 Et de couleurs se peinture la rive.  
 Mais quand sa fuite obliquement tardive,  
 Par le sentier qui roule de travers,  
 Atteint l'Archer, un changement divers  
 De jours, d'espicz, et de couleurs les prive.  
 Ainsi quand l'oeil de ma deesse luit,  
 Dedans mon cueur, dans mon cueur se produit  
 Un beau printempz qui me donne assurance:  
 Mais aussi tost que son rayon s'enfuit,  
 De mon printempz il avorte le fruit,  
 Et a my herbe il tond mon espérance.

For a mingling of the two images of winter as frigidity and winter as age, v. "Puis qu'elle est tout hyver, toute la mesme glace," Ronsard, Les Amours diverses XXIV, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Laumonier, vol. XVII (Paris, S.T.F.M., 1959), p. 307.

imagery within the sonnet form. In the first quatrain, any image appears purely coincidental; "semons ici-bas" has no real metaphorical force, but is merely an accidental figure of speech. In the second quatrain, the images of the third line, allegories for "amour," "volupté," and "gloire," are of the most banal variety. In the tercets, in apparent contrast to this poverty of imagery in the quatrains, there is an extended figure providing the analogy for the poet's attitude before and after his meeting with Hélène. Several remarks can however be made concerning the choice and use of this image. It is in the first place so common as to be cliché, but images of spring and winter have been used successfully in the past and will no doubt continue to be so used. The way in which they are handled can abolish their banality. Here, however, the image seems to be applied in its most obvious and basic form. It is in no way prepared for in the quatrains. In fact, the winter into spring image used to suggest the softening of the heart to love, runs counter to that other traditional association of youth with spring and age with winter and there is no attempt to devise, as a sixteenth century poet might have done, a relationship between the two ideas. As far as the tercets are concerned, the analogy seems rather more loosely applied than is common in Renaissance poetry. There is for example little attempt, say, to link the figure of Hélène directly with the idea of Spring. The poet does refer to the "rayons de tes yeux" and the "souffle de ta bouche," conventional both, but the connexion between these two attributes and the "soleil de mars" and presumably the gentle breeze of spring is not made explicit.<sup>1</sup> The ambiguities of vocabulary are not overtly

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1. In contrast, v. note 1 on the preceding page.

exploited. Significantly, "souple de ta voix" has no equivalent in the image of the first tercet. Instead, the reader's attention is focussed on the sensation experienced by the poet; the double use of the verb "fondre" (l. 11 and l. 14) is the hinge on which the tercets are balanced. One notes also the enjambement from line 10 to line 11, which gives emphasis to the verb "fond" in line 11 as well as contrasting with the enumeration hemistich by hemistich which, in the final tercet, accelerates the chain of events "Je te vis ... tout fondit" (note the symmetrical arrangement of these two events in the final tercet). Again, in contrast to sixteenth century practice, one notes the absence of paradoxes of heat and cold, ardour and frigidity; the poet here concentrates on simple notation of emotion.

In short, in contrast to sixteenth century usage, the imagery and the development of theme are singularly uncomplicated. The ability of the sonnet form to support the elaboration of the various facets of a single idea, its paradoxes and analogies, is not brought into play and manipulation of concepts and their illustrative imagery no longer appears as the chief feature of the poem. This absence of any really tight coherence between and within the formal and thematic structures gives the piece a curious feeling of emptiness. Beneath the apparent resemblance to earlier practice, it has the direct tone and leisurely approach of prose or even ordinary speech. There is little feeling of transmutation into poetry.

Sainte-Beuve was to comment later on the sonnets of Evariste Boulay-Paty that, "Sa poésie, pour nous, expression fidèle de sa manière d'être, est trop directe ou trop linéaire si je puis dire; elle ne passe point par une création."<sup>1</sup> The same remark could be applied to the sonnet

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1. Nouveaux Lundis, X, 180.

just discussed or even more strongly to the two Sonnets à Madame \*\*\*, both of which could take the title of the piece in rimes plates that follows them, Causerie au bal.

SONNETS

A madame \*\*\*

La fine del mio amore fu già  
il saluto di questa donna, ed in  
quello dunorava la beatitudine  
del fine di tutti i miei desiderj.  
Dante, Vita nuova

I

O laissez-vous aimer!... ce n'est pas un retour,  
Ce n'est pas un aveu que mon ardeur réclame;  
Ce n'est pas de verser mon âme dans votre âme,  
Ni de vous enivrer des langueurs de l'amour;  
  
Ce n'est pas d'enlacer en mes bras le contour  
De ces bras, de ce sein; d'embraser de ma flamme  
Ces lèvres de corail si fraîches; non, Madame,  
Mon feu pour vous est pur, aussi pur que le jour.  
  
Mais seulement, le soir, vous parler à la fête,  
Et tout bas, bien longtemps, vers vous penchant la tête,  
Murmurer de ces riens qui vous savent charmer;  
  
Voir vos yeux indulgents plus mollement reluire;  
Puis prendre votre main, et, courant, vous conduire  
A la danse légère... O laissez-vous aimer!

PC, I, 64

II

Madame, il est donc vrai, vous n'avez pas voulu,  
Vous n'avez pas voulu comprendre mon doux rêve;  
Votre voix m'a glacé d'une parole brève,  
Et vos regards distraits dans mes yeux ont mal lu.  
  
Madame, il m'est cruel de vous avoir déplu:  
Tout mon espoir s'éteint et mon malheur s'achève;  
Mais vous, qu'en votre coeur nul regret ne s'élève,  
Ne dites pas: "Peut-être il aurait mieux valu..."  
  
Croyez avoir bien fait; et, si pour quelque peine  
Vous pleurez, que ce soit pour un peigne d'ébène,  
Pour un bouquet perdu, pour un ruban gâté!  
  
Ne connaissez jamais de peine plus amère;  
Que votre enfant vermeil joue à votre côté,  
Et pleure seulement de voir pleurer sa mère!

PC, I, 65

The first Sonnet, a lover's prevarications, to reinforce the original demand "Oh! laissez-vous aimer!" follows a straightforward scheme, framed within the quatrain-tercet structure, of denial of any pretension to a reciprocation of love on the lady's part (quatrains) and requests that he should be merely allowed to love her from his side (tercets). Imagery here is minimal, consisting of the conventional "flamme," "feu," "lèvres de corail," and figures such as "verser mon âme dans votre âme" and "enivrer des langueurs de l'amour." There is no development of any image; these are discontinuous clichés on the surface of the purely discursive development of the poem. Syntactical structures within the formal framework are similarly relaxed. Non-coincidence of metre and syntax in lines 5-7 ("Ce n'est pas d'enlacer en mes bras le contour / De ces bras, de ce sein; d'embraser de ma flamme / Ces lèvres de corail si fraîches; ...") and lines 13-14 ("Puis prendre votre main, et, courant, vous conduire / A la danse légère...") echoes the rhythms of ordinary speech. The "circular" repetition of "Oh! laissez-vous aimer!" in the first and last hemistichs of the sonnet, which might superficially be taken as evidence of a densely realized network of formal, thematic and syntactic features, is part and parcel rather of the same diffuse and unsystematized approach. In effect, if not in title, this is indeed a "causerie." The second Sonnet, "Madame, il est donc vrai," describes in its quatrains the lady's rejection of her suitor and in the tercets his magnanimous desire for her happiness nonetheless. Again, no use is made of the structure of the sonnet to underpin or explore an image or argument. There is, for example, no elaboration within the various possible parallels offered by the form, of a contrast between her happiness and his misery. Instead the fourteen

lines progress in conversational meanders to the sentimental conclusion:

Ne connaissez jamais de peine plus amère;  
Que votre enfant vermeil joue à votre côté,  
Et pleure seulement de voir pleurer sa mère!

This sentimentality perhaps seems to us now the most distinctive feature of much of Sainte-Beuve's poetry. Yet for his own time, simplicity might in fact be a more accurate term. As Banville put it:

Avec sa merveilleuse divination, il avait bien senti, que même dans la poésie intime et personnelle, le Romantisme resterait théâtral ... il voulut, lui, d'autant que son tempérament l'y poussait, échapper à cette manie théâtrale et peindre non des décors, mais la nature vraie, intime, le paysage qui est sous notre main et qu'il découvrirait avant notre grande école de paysagistes; non des sentiments d'épopée et de tragédie, mais les amours, les doutes, les douleurs, les vraies défaillances de nos âmes modernes. Avant le grand poète Charles Baudelaire, et comme lui, Sainte-Beuve rompant avec la psychologie de convention, regarda en nous et en lui-même et traduisit en vers durables une souffrance nouvelle, un héroïsme nouveau; il connut et peignit poétiquement l'homme du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle.<sup>1</sup>

From this point of view, Sainte-Beuve accomplished an important task in freeing the love sonnet from the conceits to which it had been bound from its inception and which by the eighteenth century had swamped and killed it as a living poetic form. But is his achievement thus a purely negative one, merely a clearing of the ground for his poetic successors? Or are there any suggestions in his work of possible future paths for the sonnet to follow? In this context, possibly the two most interesting sonnets in his work are "Chacun en sa beauté vante ce qui le touche" and "Sur un front de quinze ans," both in the Poésies de Joseph Delorme.

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1. Banville, Critiques, ed. Victor Barrucand (Paris, Charpentier, 1917), pp. 127-128.

Chacun en sa beauté vante ce qui le touche;  
 L'amant voit des attraits où n'en voit point l'époux;  
 Mais que d'autres, narguant les sarcasmes jaloux,  
 Vantent un poil follet au-dessus d'une bouche;  
 D'autres sur des seins blancs un point comme une mouche;  
 D'autres, des cils bien noirs à des yeux bleus bien doux,  
 Ou sur un cou de lait des cheveux d'un blond roux;  
 Moi, j'aime en deux beaux yeux un sourire un peu louche;  
 C'est un rayon mouillé; c'est un soleil dans l'eau,  
 Qui nage au gré du vent dont frémit le bouleau;  
 C'est un reflet de lune aux rebords d'un nuage;  
 C'est un pilote en mer, par un ciel obscurci,  
 Qui s'égare, se trouble, et demande merci,  
 Et voudrait quelque Dieu, protecteur du voyage.

PC, I, 134

This sonnet presents a traditional appearance - a regular rhyme-scheme of the Marot type and an unexceptional thematic pattern, a contrasting of different viewpoints with the repetition of "d'autres" in the quatrains, the poet's own preferences with a corresponding repetition of "C'est" occupying the tercets. The theme of the sonnet, however, the subjective nature of beauty, seems a new one for the form, implying a rejection of formulae of the "lèvres de corail" type. Lines 2-7 develop the proposition advanced in line 1, that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, from a general standpoint. This is an observation made by the poet on other people, whose odd preferences he views with amused tolerance. The tercets, to which the previous enumeration serves as a sort of justification, provide the real interest of the sonnet. We see that the poet's idea of beauty, "Moi, j'aime en deux beaux yeux un sourire un peu louche," requires a whole new set of images to explain it, and imagery moreover that seems to run counter to all previous concentration of the sonnet on the clear, sharp line of an argument or metaphorical pattern. Mystery, opacity, muted brightness, trembling and indistinct reflection, ill-defined emotion, these are the qualities which poets such as Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Valéry will all on occasion endeavour to adapt to the sonnet, using the symmetries of

its structure and the complex interplay of thematic, syntactic, rhythmic, and phonetic patterns within a fixed prosodic form not for the logical investigation of a concept but to suggest an impression or convey a mood. This, of course, is still embryonic in Sainte-Beuve's sonnet. The images occur here within a traditional pattern of enumeration. Theme and form do not run parallel. After this brief flash of intuition, the sonnet lapses back into the archaic image (and language) of the final tercet. The theme of the pilot lost at sea and longing for a safe port, detached here from its conventional frame of reference (the lover seeking a secure position in his mistress' affections), seems strangely at odds with the images of the first tercet.

The sonnet "Sur un front de quinze ans," provides an interesting indication as to how this inner modification of the sonnet may be achieved:

Sur un front de quinze ans les cheveux blonds d'Aline,  
 Débordant le bandeau qui les voile à nos yeux,  
 Baignent des deux côtés ses sourcils gracieux:  
 Tel un double ruisseau descend de la colline.

Et sa main, soutenant ce beau front qui s'incline,  
 Aime à jouer autour, et dans les flots soyeux  
 A noyer un doigt blanc, et l'ongle curieux  
 Rase en glissant les bords où leur cours se dessine.

Mais, au sommet du front, où le flot séparé  
 Découle en deux ruisseaux et montre un lit nacré,  
 Là, je crois voir Amour voltiger sur la rive;

Nager la Volupté sur deux vagues d'azur;  
 Ou sur un vert gazon, sur un sable d'or pur,  
 La Rêverie assise, aux yeux bleus et pensive.

PC, I, 60

It seems curious in retrospect to think that this sonnet first attracted comment - and adverse comment at that - on account of the expression "ongle curieux."<sup>1</sup> It was also criticized by Magnin in Le

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1. Musset commemorated Sainte-Beuve's fondness for both synecdoche and the sonnet in Réponse à Charles Nodier, Poésies complètes in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1957), p.444: "Sainte-Beuve faisait dans l'ombre, / Douce et sombre / Pour un oeil noir, un blanc bonnet / Un sonnet." The famous "oeil noir" of Sainte-Beuve occurs in the dizain Voëu, PC I, 84: "Pour trois ans seulement, oh! que je puisse avoir / Sur ma table un lait pur, dans mon lit un oeil noir."



Globe amongst others for the preciousness of its imagery<sup>1</sup> and it is true that it is certainly worthy of the sixteenth or seventeenth century.

The comparison between the girl's hair and the river dominates and shapes the poem. Moreover, by the last tercet, the basic image has been complicated by the introduction of a second and distinct water image, the "deux vagues d'azur" of the eyes. How is the poet to extricate himself from this entanglement and bring the sonnet to a satisfactory conclusion?

It is at this point that Sainte-Beuve diverges sharply from traditional sonnet technique. He renounces any attempt to follow his analogies through to the ultimate crowning conceit or paradox, and instead turns from description to suggestion - "je crois voir." The simile "Tel un double ruisseau," is replaced by a symbol; the two levels on which the traditional sonnet was played, merge in a vision in which the girl is simultaneously herself and something more, a mythical figure almost, eternally dreaming in an atmosphere of blue, green and gold.

The allegories of "Amour" and "Volupté" are hardly new images for the sonnet, but the personification of "la Rêverie" is, and it receives

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1. Magnin lists this amongst the sonnets that Delorme "a eu la fantaisie un peu puérile de calquer sur ceux du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, reproduisant avec une fidélité bien malheureuse l'affectation de cette époque." Quoted in Joseph Delorme, ed. Antoine, p. 175, n. 173. Ronsard, for example, opens Les Amours LXXVI, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Paul Laumonier, vol. 4, (Paris, S.T.F.M., 1939), pp. 77-78, with a similar comparison, but does not however maintain the image into the tercets.

Soit que son or se cresse lentement  
 Ou soit qu'il vague en deux glissantes ondes,  
 Qui ça qui là par le sein vagabondes,  
 Et sur le col, nagent follastrement:  
 Ou soit qu'un noud diapré tortement  
 De maintz rubiz, & maintes perles rondes,  
 Serre les flotz de ses deux tresses blondes,  
 Je me contente en mon contentement.  
 Quel plaisir est ce, ainçois quelle merveille  
 Quand ses cheveux, troussez dessus l'oreille  
 D'une Venus imitent la facon?  
 Quand d'un bonet son chef elle adonize,  
 Et qu'on ne sçait (tant bien elle desguise  
 Son chef douteux) s'elle est fille ou garçon?

not only the weight of the sonnet's closing emphasis but also an additional stress from the tautological balance of "Rêverie" and "pensive" as the first and last words of the climactic final line. Furthermore the motif of the dream is associated in the last four lines of the poem with an intensification of certain syntactic and phonetic effects which create a sense of musicality and fluidity that transforms the limited initial commonplace of the flowing hair into a suggestive evocation filled with all the elusive charm of the young girl. In the second quatrain, Sainte-Beuve seems to attempt, though rather clumsily, to promote an illusion of movement through the syntactic overruns of lines 6-7 and 7-8. In the tercets, this tendency undergoes a considerable extension. Not only is the technique of the second quatrain continued in the positioning of the subject and verb of the subordinate clause over the junction of lines 9-10, but, much more important, both tercets are dependent on the single main verb "je crois voir" which occurs in the last line of the first. The first tercet in fact serves as a kind of springboard for the second. The tempo quickens with the double accusative and infinitive based on "je crois voir" in lines 11 and 12 (a syntactic repetition thrown into additional relief by the traditional pause at the end of the first tercet), and a parallel repetition, this time of adverbial phrases, in line 13 ("Sur un vert gazon, sur un sable d'or pur"), all of which culminates in the resolution of the "je crois voir" construction with a direct object ("la Rêverie assise") in line 14. At the same time an analogous intensification in the phonetic pattern of the lines may be observed. The clumsy reiterations of whole words, "le front," "le flot," "deux (double) ruisseaux" in lines 1-10, used with little attention to musical effect or to the need for an economic and pointed use of vocabulary in a form so brief as the sonnet, are now replaced by

a subtle interweaving and positioning of sounds. One notes, for example, the repetition of the v throughout lines 11-14, the rhymes "azur" and "pur" where the final r prolongs and supports the vowel, backed up also within line 13 by the repetition of "sur" and by the r of "or," the repeated atonic e of line 14, extending the preceding vowel at the hemistich as well as at the rhyme, the assonances "La Rêverie assise aux yeux bleus et pensive," the s repetition associated with the i assonance, the support of the i assonance for the "rive" - "pensive" rhyme. The poet thus creates in lines 11-14 a gentle and obsessive web of sound which parallels on the phonetic level the flowering of the limited simile into a harmonious vision. Suggestion replaces statement as a source of poetic effect. Sainte-Beuve in his unpublished notes picked out as the key words to Joseph Delorme "flottant" and "rêve."<sup>1</sup> The introduction of this element into the sonnet was to be one of the most fruitful innovations in the form in the nineteenth century.

Sainte-Beuve, however, only very occasionally produces sonnets of this calibre, and then, it seems, almost by accident. In general, the more realistic details of "la vie privée" prevail. But such themes might have been expected to fall more naturally into the rimes plates of narrative verse. Why should the sonnet have been a candidate for this type of theme? Some precedent can perhaps be found in the work of Du Bellay. In the Tableau historique Sainte-Beuve had commented on the continuing vogue of Les Regrets and attributed it to the simplicity and naturalness of Du Bellay's subjects and technique:

Littérairement, ces Regrets de Du Bellay ont encore du charme, à les lire d'une manière continue ... sa plume va au sentiment, au naturel, même au risque d'un peu de

1. Coll. Lovenjoul, Armoire D569 f.198-199. Quoted in Joseph Delorme, ed. Antoine, p. LXVI.

prose. Dans un des sonnets à Ronsard, il lui dit d'un air d'abandon

Je suivrai si je puis  
Les plus humbles chansons de ta muse lassée.

Bien lui en a pris; cette lyre un peu détendue n'a jamais mieux sonné; les habitudes de l'art s'y retrouvent à propos, au milieu des lenteurs et des négligences.

Tableau historique, pp. 347-348

Or again perhaps the work of a poet of the Louis XIIIth period such as Saint-Amant offered itself as a model. But Du Bellay's subjects in Les Regrets are not precisely those of "le genre moral, familier, domestique,"<sup>1</sup> advocated by Sainte-Beuve, and the "realistic" sonnets of Saint-Amant and his contemporaries often have a rude vitality quite alien to the nineteenth century Delormes. It must also be remembered that Sainte-Beuve in his article on Gautier's volume Les Grottesques displays considerable reservations with regard to the quality of the work of the Louis XIIIth poets.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps then it was rather the English example which was the influential factor. Two of the twelve sonnets of Joseph Delorme are adaptations of sonnets by Wordsworth,<sup>3</sup> while Les Consolations and Pensées d'août each contain three Sonnets imités

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1. Portraits contemporains IV, 471.
  2. Portraits contemporains V, 121: "... je suis de ceux qui ont toujours reculé devant cette poésie Louis XIII, et je n'ai jamais pu m'en inoculer le goût; tout en désirant qu'il s'en écrivit une histoire exacte et critique, et en croyant qu'il en résulterait des jours curieux et utiles sur la formation définitive du genre Louis XIV, il m'a été impossible d'admirer à aucun degré (j'excepte bien entendu Corneille et Rotrou) aucun de ces poètes."
  3. "Je ne suis pas de ceux pour qui les causeries," PC I, 135-136, v. Wordsworth, "I am not One who much or oft delights," Poetical Works, ed. in 5v. by E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1940-1949), v.4, p. 73, and "Ne ris point des sonnets, ô Critique moqueur," PC I, 136, v. Wordsworth, "Scorn not the Sonnet," Poetical Works, v.3, p. 20. The 1861 edition of Joseph Delorme, Poésies complètes, by Poulet-Malassis also included a rendering of Keats's sonnet, "Keen, fitful gusts are whispering here and there," Poems, ed. Miriam Allott (London, Longman, 1970), p. 63: "Piquante est la bouffée à travers la nuit claire." This is to be found also in the 1863 Lévy edition, PC I, 137.

de Wordsworth,<sup>1</sup> and Notes et Sonnets, a translation of a sonnet by Charles Lamb and two Sonnets imités de Bowles.<sup>2</sup> The precise importance of the Lakist poets in Sainte-Beuve's poetic development has however always been a much debated point from the time of Charles Magnin's assertion in his review of Joseph Delorme in Le Globe of 11 April 1829 that, "Pour trouver quelque chose d'analogue, il faut recourir aux Lakistes."<sup>3</sup> The analogy may exist, but it seems conclusively adduced by E.M. Phillips that Sainte-Beuve's effective knowledge of English, and hence of English poetry, was indeed limited.<sup>4</sup> Sainte-Beuve himself admitted as much on more than one occasion:

Moi-même ... tout en professant et même en affichant l'imitation des poètes anglais et lakistes, je vous étonnerais si je vous disais combien je les ai devinés comme parents et comme frères aînés bien plutôt que je ne les ai connus d'abord et étudiés de près.

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1. In Les Consolations, "C'est un beau soir, un soir paisible et solennel," PC II, 51, v. Wordsworth, "It is a beautiful evening," Poetical Works, v.3, p. 17; "Les passions, la guerre; une âme en frénésie," PC II, 52, v. Wordsworth, "Not Love, not War, nor the tumultuous swell," Poetical Works, v.3, p. 24; "Quand le Poète en pleurs, à la main une lyre," PC II, 53, v. Wordsworth, "There is a pleasure in poetic pains," Poetical Works, v.3, p. 29. In Pensées d'août, "Reposez-vous et remerciez," PC II, 196-197, v. Wordsworth, "Rest and be thankful," Poetical Works, v.3, pp. 270-271; La Cabane du Highlander, PC II, 197-198, v. Wordsworth, Highland Hut, Poetical Works, v.3, p. 271; Le Château de Bothwell, PC II, 198, v. Wordsworth, Bothwell Castle, Poetical Works, v.3, p. 275.
  2. "Nous étions deux enfants à passer notre enfance," PC II, 296, v. Charles Lamb, "We were two pretty babes, the youngest she," Poems, Plays and Miscellaneous Essays, ed. Alfred Ainger (London, Macmillan, 1895), p. 3; "Comme, après une nuit de veille bien cruelle," PC II, 394, v. William Bowles, "As one who, long by wasting sickness worn," Sonnets and other poems (London, Cadell and Davies, 1805), p. 25; "Etrange est la musique aux derniers soirs d'automne," PC II, 395-396, v. Bowles, "There is strange musick in the stirring wind," Sonnets and other poems, p. 27.
  3. Quoted by T.G.S. Combe, Sainte-Beuve poète et les poètes anglais (Bordeaux, Delmas, 1937), p. 5.
  4. E.M. Phillips, "Sainte-Beuve and the Lake Poets," French Quarterly VIII (1926), 215-222, "Sainte-Beuve's criticism of English poetry," French Quarterly IX (1927), 200-209, and "Sainte-Beuve et les poètes romantiques anglais," Rev. anglo-américaine, XII (1935), 493-507.

C'était pour moi comme une conversation que j'aurais suivie en me promenant dans un jardin de l'autre côté de la haie ou de la charmille; il ne m'en arrivait que quelques mots qui me suffisaient et qui dans leur incomplet prêtaient d'autant mieux au rêve.<sup>1</sup>

He knew of the work of the Lakists through the Voyage historique et littéraire en Angleterre et en Ecosse of Amédée Pichot, of which he wrote a review in Le Globe of 17 December 1825. He possessed at his death the 1828 Paris (Galignani) edition, containing all Wordsworth's poems to that date, as well as a life and appreciation of Wordsworth, the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, and also the Preface to The Excursion.<sup>2</sup> However, according to E.M. Phillips, the volume does not appear to have been much consulted and, possibly significantly, the sonnets imitated in Joseph Delorme and Les Consolations all appear on pages 117 to 120.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the poems chosen for imitation, with the single exception of "It is a beautiful evening" are hardly among Wordsworth's most inspiring productions. One may therefore conclude with E.M. Phillips that "ce que [Sainte-Beuve] doit vraiment aux poètes anglais, c'est l'idée de dépouiller la poésie de tout ce qui est prétentieux, et sa grande originalité est d'avoir étendu cette idée à l'expression des sentiments personnels intimes,"<sup>4</sup> to which conclusion we may also add the fact that whatever his lack of fluency in the English tongue, he would no doubt be capable of recognizing the sonnet form in the service of the expression of simple, unpretentious sentiment in domestic and natural settings. At the very least this must have corresponded with the inclination of his own temperament and his researches in other fields and encouraged him in his liking for the sonnet form, found here divested of the Petrarchist

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1. Nouveaux Lundis, IV, 455.

2. E.M. Phillips, French Quarterly, IX (1927), 217.

3. Ibid., p. 218.

4. E.M. Phillips, Rev. anglo-américaine, XII (1935), 507.

conceits characteristic of the sixteenth century version of the form. The extent to which the inspiration of the Wordsworth and the Sainte-Beuve poet may differ is, however, amply illustrated, as E.M. Phillips has pointed out<sup>1</sup> in Sainte-Beuve's adaptation of "It is a beauteous evening." Whereas Wordsworth's sonnet is concerned with the ineffable peace of evening and the sublimity of the natural universe, of which the girl is an unconscious yet integrated part, the Sainte-Beuve rendering translates the experience in conventional religious terms, interpreting "The holy time is quiet as a Nun breathless with adoration" in terms of the Annunciation, transforming "the mighty Being" - sea or spirit - into the Catholic God, the "sound like thunder" into a pealing organ, and finally seeing in the young girl a model of unconscious piety.

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,  
 The holy time is quiet as a Nun  
 Breathless with adoration; the broad sun  
 Is sinking down in its tranquillity;  
 The gentleness of Heaven broods o'er the sea:  
 Listen! the mighty Being is awake,  
 And doth with his eternal motion make  
 A sound like thunder - everlastingly.  
 Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,  
 If thou appear untouch'd by solemn thought,  
 Thy nature is not therefore less divine:  
 Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;  
 And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,  
 God being with thee when we know it not.

Poetical Works, ed. E. de Selincourt, v.3, p. 17

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1. E.M. Phillips, Rev. anglo-américaine, XII (1935), 501-502.

Sonnet imité de Wordsworth

C'est un beau soir, un soir paisible et solennel;  
A la fin du saint jour, la Nature en prière  
Se tait, comme Marie à genoux sur la pierre,  
Qui tremblante et muette écoutait Gabriel:

La mer dort; le soleil descend en paix du ciel;  
Mais dans ce grand silence, au-dessus et derrière,  
On entend l'hymne heureux du triple sanctuaire,  
Et l'orgue immense où gronde un tonnerre éternel.

O blonde jeune fille, à la tête baissée,  
Qui marches près de moi, si ta sainte pensée  
Semble moins que la mienne adorer ce moment;

C'est qu'au sein d'Abraham vivant toute l'année,  
Ton âme est de prière, à chaque heure, baignée,  
C'est que ton coeur recèle un divin firmament.

PC II, 51

In the Sainte-Beuve sonnet, clearly the horizon narrows. From the first quatrain of the Wordsworth poem, for example, he adopts only the specifically religious aspect of the simile of the Nun and proceeds to develop it into a single physical pose - that of the kneeling Virgin at the Annunciation. In the Wordsworth version, on the other hand, the reader's attention, far from being restricted to a particular figure and a particular situation, remains directed towards a quality of emotion which is diffused throughout the whole of the scene that lies before the poet. Both terms of the simile of the Nun are active. Not only is the religious element developed throughout the stanza - "holy time" (1.2), "breathless with adoration" (1.3), but also - an aspect barely referred to by Sainte-Beuve - the theme of an infinite serenity, "quiet as a Nun" combining with "calm" (1.1) and "tranquillity" (1.4).

In the second quatrain, one continues to note the absence of a cosmic dimension in the Sainte-Beuve version. His sea is "asleep," and it and the setting sun are merely the backcloth to the man-made music of the organ. But in the Wordsworth sonnet, "the mighty Being" dominates the entire scene described by the poet. Divine power and the calm grandeur of the natural world are seen as one. The "mighty Being" is



both sea and God and is not reduced by the poet to a single univalent definition.

In the tercets, the limitation of scope in the Sainte-Beuve sonnet intensifies. The girl in the Wordsworth poem is open to and absorbed within the scene of divine harmony evoked in the quatrains. "God being with thee when we know it not" is the climax to the two Biblical images of the girl encompassed within Abraham's bosom and within the Temple and expresses the poet's view of her as an integrated part of a universe filled with divine spirit. In the Sainte-Beuve version, however, the link between girl and universe operates finally on quite a different level. Sainte-Beuve's tercets work out an opposition between the beauty of the scene observed in the quatrains and the greater beauty of the thoughts of the girl's heart. The natural spectacle of the opening stanzas thus operates only as a springboard to this final assertion. The multiple frames of reference that give the Wordsworth sonnet its resonance are not reproduced and the sense of the grandiose and the infinite that fills the original is narrowed down to nothing more than a conceit and a platitudinous statement of the virtues of a single individual: "C'est que ton coeur recèle un divin firmament."

Of course the difficulties involved in the translation of poetry are enormous and Sainte-Beuve does term his piece an imitation. Nevertheless his almost complete failure to capture the spirit of his model can perhaps be seen as significant, especially when considered in conjunction with his attitude towards the poetry of Lamartine and Hugo. Unlike Wordsworth who uses the various resources of his sonnet to explore an intense emotional experience, Sainte-Beuve adopts only the simpler possibilities of the sonnet structure, simultaneously effecting a scaling down of thematic and emotional content. At the same time however,

it seems only fair to point out that the sonnet form as it presented itself to Wordsworth had certain advantages for the type of theme he had in mind. The combination of serenity and boundless latent power - "calm and free," "the broad sun ... in its tranquillity," "the gentleness of Heaven ... the mighty Being" - finds its formal equivalent firstly in the relatively flexible pattern of the English sonnet<sup>1</sup> and secondly in the contrast to the fixed structure of the sonnet provided by the variety of accentual arrangements available in the pentameter. Of note are not merely the enjambements of the quatrains, none of which run over stanzaic divisions, but the changes of stress which give force to "Breathless with adoration," "Listen! the mighty Being is awake" and "God being with thee." Sainte-Beuve, by contrast, is handling a genre only recently resurrected and much more rigidly conceived, and in addition has at his disposal for manipulation within its set frame a much less flexible metrical system. Under this arrangement, devices such as the rejet "Se tait" (1.3) emerge, in comparison with the Wordsworth techniques, as stilted and unsubtle. The end result is that whereas the structure of the Wordsworth sonnet combining formal control with a certain rhythmic freedom complements the

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1. Relative, that is, to Continental versions of the form. Leaving aside such variants as the Shakespearian or Spenserian arrangements, the Italian pattern of octave and sestet, 2 quatrains and 2 tercets, becomes considerably more elastic in the hands of poets such as Milton and Wordsworth. Divergence of metre and syntax is no longer contained within the 4 component stanzas of the sonnet but often spreads across the traditional divisions between them, blurring the characteristic structure of the genre. It is interesting to note that although Sainte-Beuve to some extent adopts the themes of the English sonnetists, he makes little attempt to copy this aspect of their technique. The adherence to a relatively strict form of the sonnet, particularly from the metrical and syntactic point of view, continues to characterize all nineteenth century French manifestations of the genre. Verlaine's rhythmic innovations, for example, can hardly be considered in the same category as those of the English poets - though the impact of his experiments, within their own context, is far from negligible.

thematic motifs and their development, the formal structure of the Sainte-Beuve sonnet remains inert, offering little more than a convenient framework for a parallel and contrast between a beautiful evening and a still more beautiful soul.

This tendency towards sentimental or moralizing schematizations where the formal structure of the sonnet is used for nothing more than the underpinning of a single simple theme or contrast finds perhaps a truer parallel in the writings of minor English poets such as William Bowles or Henry Kirke White. The similarities between aspects of Joseph Delorme and the work of the latter author had been indicated from the first by Charles Magnin's comment in Le Globe of 26 March 1829 à propos of Le Creux de la Vallée that "nous allons posséder non pas un imitateur, mais un émule de Kirke White."<sup>1</sup> The work of Kirke White, who had died of tuberculosis on 19 October 1806 aged twenty-one, while a student at St. John's College, Cambridge, had been edited subsequently by Southey under the title, The Remains of Henry Kirke White. In Joseph Delorme, Sainte-Beuve adopted the same general pattern as in Southey's edition of White; a moral biography of the defunct author, followed by works, followed by prose fragments. In Sainte-Beuve's case, the adoption of this plan enabled him to preserve an air of detachment from his work and from attitudes which here were often "livresque" in origin and which already in 1829 he felt to be excessive. More pertinent to this study, Kirke White's works include two groups of sonnets of nine and eleven poems respectively. The tone of practically all of these is unrelieved melancholy, their theme the imminent approach of death. To a Taper is a representative example of these sonnets whose titles where they have

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1. Quoted by Georges Roth, "Kirke White et Joseph Delorme," Rev. Litt. Comp., I (1921), 586.

them, also include Written at the Grave of a Friend, To Misfortune, and To Consumption.

To a Taper

'Tis midnight. - On the globe dead slumber sits,  
And all is silence - in the hour of sleep;  
Save when the hollow gust, that swells by fits,  
In the dark wood roars fearfully and deep.  
I wake alone to listen and to weep,  
To watch, my taper, thy pale beacon burn;  
And, as still memory does her vigils keep,  
To think of days that never can return.  
By thy pale ray I raise my languid head,  
My eye surveys the solitary gloom;  
And the sad meaning tear, unmixt with dread,  
Tells thou dost light me to the silent tomb.  
Like thee I wane; - like thine my life's last ray  
Will fade in loneliness, unwept, away.<sup>1</sup>

In Kirke White then Sainte-Beuve could certainly have seen the sonnet in the service of themes which were in part at least to be those of Joseph Delorme and used with a looseness and lack of complexity of thematic structure comparable to that which he practised himself. Moreover White's explanation of his choice of the sonnet has much in common with that of Sainte-Beuve some twenty-five years later.

Let the sublimer muse, who, wrapt in night,  
Rides on the raven pennons of the storm,  
Or o'er the field, with purple havoc warm,  
Lashes her steeds, and sings along the fight;  
Let her, whom more ferocious strains delight,  
Disdain the plaintive Sonnet's little form,  
And scorn to its wild cadence to conform,  
The impetuous tenor of her hardy flight.  
But me, far lowest of the sylvan train,  
Who wake the wood nymphs from the forest-shade  
With wildest song; - Me, much behoves thy aid  
Of mingled melody, to grace my strain,  
And give it power to please, as soft it flows  
Through the smooth murmurs of thy frequent close.

Remains, v.2, p. 58

1. The Remains of Henry Kirke White with an account of his life by Robert Southey, 2 v. (London, 1807), v.2, p. 188. Note the establishing of a suitable background of darkness and gloom in the first quatrain, the implied parallel between candle and poet in the second and third quatrains, the explicit formulation of this equivalence in the final couplet. Note also how the Shakespearian form of the sonnet with the detached terminal couplet, which the English poet uses here, tends to rob a preceding image or theme of any resonance it might have had by resolving it too precisely in a kind of simple equation.

With the decision to turn to "la vie privée" for his subjects, to introduce into French poetry the "genre moral, familier, domestique," characteristic, in Sainte-Beuve's eyes, of the English poets and to depict contemporary emotions on a non-heroic scale in a domestic and generally bourgeois setting, the sonnet was in fact to become more, and not less, essential to Sainte-Beuve. For, at the same time as he espoused the notion of a "poésie à mi-côte"<sup>1</sup> one of his strongest tenets derived from his association with the Cénacle was that "la langue poétique [doit] être radicalement distincte de la prose."<sup>2</sup> And hence a need was felt to compensate for the prosaic nature of the subject-matter by an increased emphasis on the ability of poetic form to ennoble and elevate. Thus, in the Pensées de Joseph Delorme, Sainte-Beuve underlines the differences between the requirements for Lamartine's poetry and those for his own:

... quand Lamartine, exprimant ce qu'il y a de plus rêveur et de plus inexprimable en l'âme humaine, se serait souvent passé avec bonheur d'une forme précise et sévère, en pourrait-on sérieusement conclure qu'il est, à plus forte raison, inutile de s'y asservir dans l'expression de sentiments moins fugitifs, dans la peinture d'un monde moins métaphysique et d'une vie plus réelle?... Conclusion étrange, en vérité! Disons tout le contraire: c'est précisément à mesure que la poésie se rapproche davantage de la vie réelle et des choses ici-bas, qu'elle doit se surveiller avec plus de rigueur, se souvenir plus fermement de ses religieux préceptes, et, tout en abordant le vrai sans scrupule ni fausse honte, se poser à elle-même, aux limites de l'art, une sauvegarde incorruptible contre le prosaïque et le trivial.

Pensées VII, PC I, 159

Or again, as he writes in A. M. Villemain in the Pensées d'août:

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1. Notes et Sonnets (PC II, 322-323) in the sonnet "Pardon, cher Olivier, si votre alpestre audace ..."
  2. Portraits littéraires (Paris, Garnier, 1862-1864), I, 151.

Plus simple est le vers et cōtoyant la prose,  
Plus pauvre de belle ombre et d'haleine de rose,  
Et plus la forme étroite a lieu de le garder.

PC II, 233

Working on this principle, a form such as that of the sonnet would seem clearly to offer itself as a peculiarly suitable guarantor of the poetic quality of verse of this kind. It has a well defined yet relatively unobtrusive structure which leaves the poet sufficient freedom to develop his theme as he will. The majority of the sonnets from Les Consolations onwards appear to fall into this category.

But is a purely external formal perfection enough? How far can it exist without support from within? Can perfection of form really compensate for banality of content or for content not transfigured by the creative imagination of the poet? Where the sonnet is concerned, the danger of the form's being degraded into nothing more than a crutch for the weak is particularly evident. It is too easy to accept the structure it offers as a convenience, without reflecting on the maximum benefits to be derived from it. Instead of exploring fully the various symmetrical and climactic possibilities of its form in association with the structural potential of the poet's chosen theme, it is too easy to adopt only the most obvious feature of the genre, the pattern of quatrain-tercet opposition. In the hands of a moral analyst, as was Sainte-Beuve, this means at worst a straight division of a sonnet into illustration and moral prescription, the depiction perhaps of a simple incident or humble scene, and the drawing from it, not of a poetic intuition but of a moral conclusion and the reliance all the while on the traditional rigours of the sonnet as a means of "dignifying" an ordinary subject or a banal reflection. The remark offered as one of his own "maximes" at the end of the article in La Revue des deux mondes, 15 January 1840, on La Rochefoucauld: "Dans la jeunesse, les pensées me venaient en sonnets;

maintenant, c'est en maximes,"<sup>1</sup> clearly reveals the exhaustion of Sainte-Beuve's poetic vein<sup>2</sup> and is also an excellent gloss on his use of the sonnet in the collections following Joseph Delorme. An example of the type is offered by the Sonnet à M. Roger d'A in the Pensées d'août:

- Un rayon, un rayon venant je ne sais d'où,  
Rideaux, volets fermés, dans une chambre close,  
Près du berceau vermeil d'un enfant qui repose,  
Un oblique rayon trouvant jour au verrou,

Et passant comme au crible en l'absence du clou,  
Un rayon au tapis dessinait quelque chose,  
Et, bizarre, y semait des ronds d'or et de rose.  
Un jeune chat les voit, - jeune chat, jeune fou!

Il y court, il s'y prend, il veut cette lumière;  
Au pied de ce berceau, manque-t-il la première,  
Il tente la seconde, et gronde tout fâché.

Je songeai: Pauvre enfant, ce jeu-là c'est le nôtre!  
Nous courons des rayons, un autre, puis un autre,  
Tant que le soleil même, à la fin soit couché.

PC II, 216

Lines 1-11 describe a common scene - the kitten trying to catch a sunbeam; lines 12-14 offer the poet's reflections on the scene. At the outset, the sonnet ostensibly depicts a sort of Dutch interior, but the reader's attention, well before the final tercet is reached, is already being diverted to the moral significance of what is being shown. The structure of quatrains and tercets serves solely to reinforce a simple

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1. Portraits de Femmes (Paris, Garnier, 1886), p. 312.
  2. Sainte-Beuve noted in 1869 that this article on La Rochefoucauld indicated "une date et un temps, un retour décisif dans ma vie intellectuelle. Ma première jeunesse, du moment que j'avais commencé à réfléchir, avait été toute philosophique, et d'une philosophie positive en accord avec les études physiologiques et médicales auxquelles je me destinais. Mais une grave affection morale, un grand trouble de sensibilité était intervenu vers 1829, et avait produit une vraie déviation dans l'ordre de mes idées. Mon recueil de poésies, les Consolations, et d'autres écrits qui suivirent, notamment Volupté, et les premiers volumes de Port-Royal, témoignaient assez de cette disposition inquiète et émue qui admettait une part notable de mysticisme. L'Etude sur La Rochefoucauld annonce la guérison et marque la fin de cette crise, le retour à des idées plus saines dans lesquelles les années et la réflexion n'ont fait que m'affermir." Portraits de Femmes, note to p. 321.

scheme of analogical argument. The first quatrain juxtaposes the sunbeams and the sleeping child, a juxtaposition paralleled and amplified in the second quatrain by the description of sunbeam and kitten. This point is not allowed to escape the reader but is made quite explicit by the balancing of "jeune chat, jeune fou" in the final hemistich of line 8. This parallel once firmly established, the first tercet brings kitten, sunbeam and child within one descriptive focus before the moral of the scene is neatly encapsulated in the final tercet with "Pauvre enfant" like "jeune fou" in line 8 remaining sufficiently vague to apply to either kitten or child. The pleasant scene of lines 1-11 thus turns out to have no real value in its own right (as it might have done) but is merely a part of the poet's didactic intention, a link in the chain of argument leading to the maxim of the final tercet. And yet this miniature could have provided Sainte-Beuve with a truly poetic theme, could have been used by him far more subtly to make an interesting comment on the whole nature of his art, for in his notes he describes his poetry thus:

Ce sont des vers de chambre faits pour l'ombre et non pour le soleil ... mon rayon de poésie ne m'arrive souvent que dans une petite chambre bien sombre, à travers une vitre dépolie.<sup>1</sup>

The "petite chambre" of the sonnet is in this case, poetically speaking, quite dark. Yet it does still remain important to stress that Sainte-Beuve's turning towards simple subjects based on the circumstances of day to day life did have a significant part to play in emphasizing the existence of other possibilities for the sonnet besides the love theme. But he lacked the wider perspectives of a Wordsworth and the form of the

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1. Sainte-Beuve, Mes Poisons, éd. Victor Giraud (Paris, Plon, 1926), p. 25.



sonnet he had at his disposal was in any case a much less flexible instrument than the English version for intuitions of that type. Similarly the sophistication of Du Bellay's apparent "négligence" also eluded him and though in his own work, he tried to introduce a new simplicity in choice of theme, his attempt to balance this by the use of strict form was largely a failure. Ultimately his temperament as a critic and commentator asserted itself in his use of the sonnet form to codify and moralize and of rimes plates to narrate and observe, and finally of course he ceased writing poetry altogether.

In conclusion, it seems that it was through a combination of his talents as both critic and poet that Sainte-Beuve was instrumental in the re-establishment of the sonnet in the nineteenth century as a valid poetic form. The sonnets of Joseph Delorme, Les Consolations and Pensées d'août sustain the interest in a form, out of fashion in the previous century and not a real poetic force since the sixteenth century, in a way in which the Tableau historique on its own with its often less than enthusiastic references to the genre would probably not have done. In these collections, Sainte-Beuve uses the sonnet to two main ends - on the one hand to analyse emotion and on the other to portray incidents or ideas of ordinary daily life. The first of these functions is the one primarily associated by tradition with the form. It is, however, considerably modified in the work of Sainte-Beuve. While the outer shape of the sonnet is strictly maintained, syntax and imagery within are much less rigidly patterned. "Causerie" replaces argument; suggestion, illustration or demonstration of a particular point. The sharp lines of the traditional sonnet become blurred. This loosening of the various intertwining structures is the natural result of the impact on the form of a new aesthetic. The Romantic emphasis on individual emotion contrasts

sharply with the formalized expression of the traditional sonnet. The sonnet may be acceptable for the principle of control it embodies as an aid for the organization of confused emotional states but the additional constraints of a stereotyped imagery and rhetoric are dispensed with in favour of more fluid figures which render with greater accuracy the instability of mood. There is therefore a divergence between form and theme. A similar gap exists where Sainte-Beuve's use of the sonnet as a descriptive vehicle is concerned. In this instance the form is selected because it is hoped that its stylized nature will provide the artistic counter-balance to a definitely prosaic subject at the same time as its traditional patterns offer a convenient framework for the introduction of a moralizing element. But the constraints of the sonnet can only throw into relief the quality of the original conception, not alter its basic nature. The elegance and balance of the form cannot redeem the pedestrian unimaginativeness of the theme, which is rendered all the more glaringly apparent by the discrepancy with the sophistication of the form. Both patterns were to persist in the nineteenth century French sonnet - the tension between fixed form and personal emotion in the work of Baudelaire and Verlaine, the confusion of correction of form with poetic perfection in that of many writers of Parnassian tendencies such as Coppée, who attempted to combine "le Beau" and "le Bien" by the simple expedient of using the sonnet as a frame to render "poetic" naturalistic description or moral precept.

Gautier

The first volume of Poésies by Gautier published in 1830, unlike Sainte-Beuve's Joseph Delorme and Les Consolations, contains a mere 3 sonnets out of 42 poems. By the time the new edition including Albertus appeared in 1832, this had risen to 7 sonnets out of a total of 62 poems.<sup>1</sup> However, as here, so too in the Poésies diverses accompanying La Comédie de la Mort published in 1838, in the section Poésies nouvelles (a further group of Poésies diverses and España) appearing in the Poésies complètes of 1845, and in Emaux et Camées, the proportion of sonnets scarcely exceeds and frequently falls below ten per cent. Gautier's most concentrated production of sonnets appears in fact to have taken place in the 1860's when Gautier formed part of the circle around the Princesse Mathilde. But by this time Gautier's creative powers were well on the wane. Significantly, the last complete edition of Gautier's poetic work prepared by the poet himself appeared in 1845 and after the publication of Emaux et Camées in 1852, he seems to have made no attempt to prepare a new collection which might also include the scattered sonnets of his later years.<sup>2</sup> As the titles of many of these later pieces indicate, they fall mainly into the category of social versifying. While of interest

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1. Sonnet VII was omitted in the 1845 edition of the Poésies complètes, no doubt on account of its political orientation. It was however reinstated by the various later editors and line 5, "Un budget éléphant boit notre or par sa trompe," should not be missed!
  2. The number of poems in Emaux et Camées, however, rose from 18 in the 1st edition of 1852 to 47 in the definitive 6th edition of 1872.

as evidence of the vogue for the sonnet within the group around the Princesse Mathilde, they have, as will be shown, little bearing on the question of the evolution of the form, if any, in Gautier's hands and his possible influence on the use of the form by admirers of his general technique such as Baudelaire in the 1840's and 1850's and the young Heredia of the early 1860's.<sup>1</sup> Gautier's baggage as a sonnetist thus appears somewhat on the slender side, but it is nevertheless hoped to show that he took a strong interest in a form in which he could find an admirable illustration of his own conviction of the value per se of "l'art difficile" and of the notion of poetry as a craft. In this context the fact that couplets, quatrains - particularly the poem of four quatrains - and the terza rima occupy a place at least as important in his work is an interesting comment on both the limits and aptitudes of the sonnet form and those of Gautier as a poet.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of his career as a critic, Gautier passed judgement several times upon the sonnet form. His earliest pronouncements occur in the various articles appearing in the 1830's in La France littéraire and La Revue des Deux Mondes and issued in book form as Les Grotesques in 1844. Of course, the charm of Les Grotesques, as the title might suggest,

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1. René Jasinski in the Introduction to his edition of Gautier's Poésies complètes (Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1932), I, CXVIII, attributes rather more value to these sonnets, but he is of course pleading the case for his own particular grouping of Gautier's scattered poems. His comments are quoted in Appendix A, infra pp. 591-592.
  2. For the relative proportions of these forms in Gautier's work, v. Appendix A.

lies not in the accuracy of their documentation<sup>1</sup> but in the brilliant wit displayed by Gautier, who capitalizes on every opportunity for provocative remark or display of bravura. For this reason his account of the various sixteenth and seventeenth century poets cannot be taken wholly seriously. Nevertheless his comments do seem to indicate a rather negative attitude towards the sonnet form at least in its more extravagant sixteenth century and early seventeenth century manifestations.

In these articles, the sonnet seems clearly associated in Gautier's mind, as was the case with Sainte-Beuve in the Tableau historique, with the stereotyped expression of love and a proliferation of conceits. His remarks on Scalion de Virbluneau, sieur d'Ofayel, emphasize the syllogisms, hair-splitting and tortured logic to which the love sonnet had become prone by the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Gautier ingeniously links such tendencies to the general preoccupations of the age:

... au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'amour ressemblait, à s'y méprendre, à la théologie. C'est la même métaphysique embrouillée, la même subtilité, le même fatras scientifique, la même symétrie de pensées et de formes. - L'amour argumente comme un docteur de Sorbonne in baroco et in baralipton; il syllogise la passion, il se sert de la majeure et de la mineure; il ergote, il sophistique, il divise et subdivise la plus petite fraction de pensée: il la prend, il la tourne sur l'enclume, il la bat, il l'étend, il la passe au laminoir. Jean Scott et le docteur séraphique n'ont jamais été aussi loin.

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1. Most of Gautier's information was taken directly from the abbé Goujet's Bibliothèque française (1755-56), Lefort de la Morinière's Bibliothèque poétique (1745) and especially Michaud's Biographie universelle (1812). V. René Jasinski, Les Années romantiques de Théophile Gautier (Paris, Vuibert, 1929), p. 227. Sainte-Beuve's article on Les Grotesques in his Portraits contemporains V, 125-134, indicates the inaccuracy of the scholarship and criticizes Gautier for such falls from critical probity as the unmentioned omission of stanzas in the quotation of some poems and "corrections" to the style of some pieces so that they appear better than they really are.
  2. The date of Virbluneau's volume, Les loyalles et pudiques amours de Scalion de Virbluneau à Madame Boufflers, is 1599.

C'est quelque chose d'inextricablement tortillé, d'excessivement pointu et tiré aux cheveux que l'on ne conçoit guère maintenant, et qui ne ressemble ni aux bonnes et franches allures de la vieille galanterie gauloise, ni aux prétentieuses afféteries des madrigaux mythologiques du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

On sent, à tout cet esprit de controverse, que Luther est venu; un pan du froc de ce gros moine révolté flotte à travers les quatrains et les tercets de tous ces beaux sonnets à l'espagnole ou à l'italienne. C'est le mysticisme german, l'idéalisme du Nord qui se condensent et se cristallisent dans l'art plastique du Midi, plus amoureux de la forme, plus curieux du style et de l'extérieur que de la pensée, c'est l'Allemagne rêveuse qui donne la main à la sensuelle Italie. - C'est l'âme et le corps. - Le sonnet est une goutte d'ambre qui tombe sur toutes ces pensées voltigeantes, qui les embrasse étroitement et nous les conserve embaumées à travers les siècles et les variations du langage.<sup>1</sup>

After this somewhat sweeping generalization, Gautier turns his verve onto the unfortunate Scalion, whose work "monstrueusement nul, démesurément plat et gigantesquement médiocre"<sup>2</sup> he sees as an unconscious caricature of the poetic tendencies of his century:

Ses vers ne sont peut-être pas précisément merveilleux; mais ce qu'il y a de sûr, c'est qu'ils sont à la dernière mode et dans le goût le plus nouveau. C'était une fureur alors que d'être amoureux et de chanter symétriquement ses amours en plusieurs livres sous la forme imperturbable du sonnet. Le sonnet venait d'être importé en France par Pierre de Ronsard, Vendômois,<sup>3</sup> il était dans tout son éclat printanier, et il épanouissait, au soleil de la cour, ses quatrains et ses tercets diaprés d'antithèses et d'allusions mythologiques. Aussi le livre de Scalion est-il tout écrit en sonnets: il y en a bien, Apollon le lui pardonne! deux ou trois mille, tout autant que cela. C'est effrayant. Ils sont adressés en grande partie à une dame idéale ou réelle qui a nom Angélique. Cette brave dame, à ce qu'il paraît, était vertueuse outre mesure, car les sonnets du malheureux Virbluneau ne roulent que sur sa cruauté. Pardieu! si j'eusse été madame Angélique, je lui aurais cédé sur-le-champ, afin qu'il ne fît plus de sonnets; mais Scalion aurait été

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1. Les Grotesques (Paris, Charpentier, 1913), pp. 44-45.  
2. Ibid., p. 46.  
3. Ronsard did not of course introduce the sonnet into France. An example of Gautier's casual attitude towards the accuracy of his documentation. Mellin de Saint-Gelais is generally held to be the first French poet to use the sonnet.

homme à chanter son ivresse aussi longuement que sa détresse, et son bonheur aurait été aussi à redouter que son infortune.<sup>1</sup>

Having thus made fun of the vogue enjoyed by the love sonnet, Gautier passes in review the corpus of stereotyped imagery utilized by the sonnetist in the description of the lady:

Pour le physique, elle ressemble à toutes les Dulcinées de poètes et de chevaliers errants, c'est un écrin complet: elle a des cheveux d'or, un front de nacre, des yeux de cristal et de saphir, un teint d'oeillets, de lis et de roses, des lèvres de corail, des dents en perles orientales, une gorge d'albâtre avec une framboise pour bouton, un corps d'ivoire, des pieds de neige, des jambes de lait, peau de satin et le reste, avec cela une haleine mieux flairant qu'ambre gris et civette, une voix de syrène, une démarche de déesse, et toutes les qualités que les poètes prodiguent à leur héroïne.<sup>2</sup>

The persistence of these clichés in the sonnet is noted by Gautier in his article on the work of Guillaume Colletet:

... on trouve ... des millions de sonnets qui ne contiennent rien autre chose que de la neige ardente, de la glace de feu, des doubles collines d'ivoires à former une chaîne plus longue que celle des Andes ou des Cordillères, des cheveux qui pêchent des coeurs à l'hameçon, des yeux qui réduisent les cieux et le soleil en poudre, et auprès de qui les diamants ne sont que des charbons, des soupirs à faire voguer un vaisseau, et mille autres belles inventions de cette espèce.<sup>3</sup>

Similar hyperbole characterize the Magdaléneide of Le Père Pierre de Saint-Louis where the lady is compared to the sun and moon and her perfections celebrated in acrostic sonnets:

... il [le Père] fit plus de mille fois l'anagramme de ce nom dont il avait l'imaginative si doucement blessée; il en composait jusqu'à trois douzaines par jour, qu'il allait porter lui-même, en sorte que le nom de Magdelaine est incontestablement, de tous les noms du monde, celui qui a été le plus tourné et retourné.

Théophile de Viau, on the other hand, is praised for his rejection of Philis:

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1. Les Grottesques, pp. 48-49.
  2. Ibid., p. 57.
  3. Ibid., p. 232.
  4. Ibid., p. 129.

Vous savez tous combien Philis était puissante en ce temps-là, comme elle a été choyée, encensée, madrigalisée. - Quels innombrables soupirs n'a-t-elle pas fait pousser! que de pâmoisons, que de songes galamment indiscrets, que d'ivresses et de désespoirs, que de quatrains, que de stances, que de petits vers, que de grand vers, que de vers libres et autres, que de sonnets, que de complaintes, que de chansons elle nous a valu! - Tous les échos et tous les perroquets de cette époque le savent parfaitement ce nom qui rime si bien à lis. Son oeil a été cause de six mille sonnets; chacun de ses cheveux en a produit un: sa bouche en a fait naître plus que vous ne comptez de saints dans le calendrier. Je n'essayerai pas d'énumérer ceux qu'on a rimoyés sur sa gorge, les chiffres arabes et romains n'y suffiraient pas.<sup>1</sup>

Somewhat paradoxically then, in view of the sonnets addressed by him subsequently to his various mistresses and to the Princesse Mathilde, to whom he even signed himself "De Votre Altesse le très humble et très dévoué sonnetiste"<sup>2</sup> Gautier rejects the debased patterns of imagery and argument of the traditional love sonnet. Nevertheless, Les Grottesques do reveal the continuing interest in pre-Classical, pre-Malherbe literature initiated by Sainte-Beuve in his Tableau historique, and on those occasions where Gautier is not trying to dazzle his reader, certain positive attitudes filter through. Thus we might retain in particular the recognition of Ronsard in the article on Théophile de Viau as "le plus grand inventeur lyrique qui jamais ait été"<sup>3</sup> and note that Gautier cites with approval Saint-Amant's sonnet Les Goinfres for the "quelque chose de vivace et de pénétré, un accent de nature qui est rare dans la poésie française" that he finds in its lines.<sup>4</sup> Clearly his mockery elsewhere of the sonnet is directed at its extravagant excesses of theme rather than at the form itself as a "petit vers."

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1. Ibid., p. 113.

2. Letter to the Princesse Mathilde, quoted by J.N. Primoli, "Théophile Gautier et la Princesse Mathilde," Revue des Deux Mondes, période 7, XXX (1925), 71.

3. Les Grottesques, p. 105.

4. Ibid., p. 173.



More measured, if less entertaining, comment on the form is to be found in the articles on contemporary poets. The analogy between the new poets of the nineteenth century and those of the sixteenth is mentioned or implied on several occasions<sup>1</sup> and the role of the sonnet in contemporary writing recurs several times with reference to individual poets. In Les Progrès de la Poésie française (1867), Gautier introduces the work of the sonnetist, Joséphin Soulayr, by first indicating the leadership of Sainte-Beuve in the field:

L'école romantique a remis en honneur le sonnet, depuis si longtemps délaissé. La gloire de cette réhabilitation appartient à Sainte-Beuve, qui, dans les poésies de Joseph Delorme s'écria le premier:

Ne ris point des sonnets, ô critique moqueur!

Il en a fait lui-même qui valent de longs poèmes, car ils sont sans défauts, et depuis lors cette forme charmante, taillée à facettes comme un flacon de cristal et si merveilleusement propre à contenir une goutte de lumière ou d'essence, a été essayée par un grand nombre de jeunes poètes.<sup>2</sup>

He also notes that Hugo has never<sup>3</sup> produced a sonnet and that Goethe for a long while made no use of the form either, "ces deux aigles ne voulant sans doute pas s'emprisonner dans cette cage étroite."<sup>4</sup>

The analogy of the "flacon" (repeating Pensée XII of Joseph Delorme: "Une idée dans un sonnet, c'est une goutte d'essence dans une larme de

1. For example in Histoire du Romantisme (Paris, Charpentier, 1911), p. 12: "Nous avons eu le bonheur de les connaître à leur plus frais moment de jeunesse, de beauté et d'épanouissement, tous ces poètes de la pléiade moderne dont on ne connaît plus le premier aspect." Sainte-Beuve had made the same connexion in the Tableau historique: "... je n'ai perdu aucune occasion de rattacher ces études du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle aux questions littéraires et poétiques qui s'agitent dans le nôtre." (Préface to the 1st ed. of 1828); "... j'y multipliais les rapprochements avec le temps présent, avec des noms aimés, avec tout cet âge d'abord si fervent de nos espérances." (Dedication to the 1842 edition.)
2. Histoire du Romantisme, p. 344. This volume includes Les Progrès de la Poésie française. Note the banality of the comment on the Sainte-Beuve sonnet consisting in the standard repetition of Boileau's aphorism. Boileau's remarks are quoted in Appendix B, p. 612.
3. v. supra p. 17, n1.
4. Histoire du Romantisme, p. 345.

crystal"<sup>1</sup>) is continued further to characterize the work of Soulayry himself:

Dans un temps de fécondité débordante, c'est bien peu, nous le savons, qu'un volume de sonnets; mais nous préférons à des bibliothèques de gros volumes d'un intérêt mélodramatique cette fine étagère finement sculptée qui soutient des statuettes d'argent ou d'or d'un goût exquis et d'une élégance parfaite dans leur dimension restreinte, des buires d'agate ou d'onix, des cassolettes d'émail contenant des parfums concentrés, de précieux vases myrrhins opalisés de tous les reflets de l'iris, et parfois un de ces charmants petits vases lacrymatoires d'argile antique contenant une larme durcie en perle pour qu'elle ne s'évapore pas.<sup>2</sup>

Some sixteen years earlier in La Presse of 28 July 1851, Gautier had already characterized the sonnet in remarkably similar terms à propos of the work of the sonnetist Evariste Boulay-Paty.<sup>3</sup> However his use of this type of terminology is not in fact confined to the sonnet alone but may on occasion refer to works as dissimilar in form as, for example, those of Vigny and Baudelaire.<sup>4</sup> From one point of view, such reutilization of

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1. Sainte-Beuve, Poésies complètes (Paris, Lévy, 1863), I, 163.
  2. Histoire du Romantisme, pp. 346-347.
  3. "Le sonnet nous vient de l'Italie, ce pays du rythme arrêté, de la forme précise, où il y a trop de soleil pour que l'on souffre le vague et le brouillard dans la pensée ou dans l'expression. Ce vase étroit, taillé à facettes, transparent et pur comme le cristal, ne peut admettre qu'une goutte d'essence; topaze, diamant ou rubis pour la couleur; ambre, myrrhe ou cinname pour le parfum. Pétrarque y mit ses larmes sur les rigueurs de Laure, et y enferma ses soupirs. La précieuse liqueur, l'odeur suave ne sont pas encore évaporées du flacon fragile mais bien fermé." Quoted by René Jasinski in the Introduction to his edition of Gautier's Poésies complètes I, CXVII.
  4. "Symeta, Dolorida, le Cor, la Frégate la Sérieuse, montrent partout la proportion exquisite de la forme avec l'idée; ce sont de précieux flacons qui contiennent dans leur cristal taillé avec un art de lapidaire des essences concentrées et dont le parfum ne s'évapore pas." Histoire du Romantisme, p. 163. Of Les Fleurs du Mal: "Chaque poésie est réduite par ce talent concentrateur en une goutte d'essence renfermée dans un flacon de cristal taillé à mille facettes: essence de rose, haschich, opium, vinaigre ou sel anglais qu'il faut boire ou respirer avec précaution, comme toutes les liqueurs d'une exquisité intense." Histoire du Romantisme, p. 350.

vocabulary clearly reveals the journalistic pressures of Gautier's life, but it also makes plain Gautier's enduring attachment to the shorter poetic genres where it is easier for the attention to remain concentrated on questions of form and technique and not to be distracted by any social or moral preoccupations, foreign as Gautier saw them to the true spirit of art.<sup>1</sup> The only goal of Art, he maintained, was Beauty<sup>2</sup> and the one great heresy therefore was to "faire mauvais,"<sup>3</sup> to fail to bring one's work to the highest possible pitch of aesthetic perfection. The notion of the superiority of an "art difficile" begins to emerge. This it is, according to Gautier, that elevates poetry above prose and becomes the hallmark of quality in the former:

Quand même de la belle prose vaudrait de beaux vers, ce que je nie, le mérite de la difficulté vaincue doit-il être compté pour rien? Je sais que beaucoup de gens disent que la difficulté ne fait rien à la chose; cependant qu'est-ce que l'art, sinon le moyen de surmonter les obstacles que la nature oppose à la cristallisation de la pensée, et si cela était facile, où serait donc le mérite et la gloire? Nous réclamons donc pour le poète

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1. Gautier is in part reacting here to the utilitarian trend of the literature of the 1830's. His point of view is set out in the Préface to Mademoiselle de Maupin (1835): "Non, imbéciles, non, crétins et goîtreux que vous êtes, un livre ne fait pas de la soupe à la gelatine; - un roman n'est pas une paire de bottes sans couture; un sonnet, une seringue à jet continu; un drame n'est pas un chemin de fer, toutes choses essentiellement civilisantes, et faisant marcher l'humanité dans la voie du progrès." Mademoiselle de Maupin (Paris, Charpentier, 1882), p. 19. Gautier is referring here to the various examples of progress on display at the 1834 Exposition de l'Industrie.
  2. "L'art pour l'art veut dire non pas la forme pour la forme, mais bien la forme pour le beau, abstraction faite de toute idée étrangère, de tout détournement au profit d'une doctrine quelconque, de toute utilité directe." L'Art moderne (Paris, Lévy, 1856), p. 153.
  3. Fusains et Eaux-Fortes (Paris, Charpentier, 1880), p. 148. This view can also be seen as reflecting Gautier's early training as a painter and presents something of a contrast with the distinction made by Sainte-Beuve between the differing demands of literature and painting in his article on Gautier, Portraits contemporains V, 141: "... en poésie c'est la pensée et le sentiment, qui restent le principal, qui gardent pour ainsi dire, la haute main, tandis qu'en peinture la main d'oeuvre, au besoin, prend le dessus."

le trône le plus élevé dans l'Olympe des supériorités de la pensée humaine; le poète absolu et arrivé au degré le plus inaccessible de perfection serait aussi grand que Dieu, et Dieu n'est peut-être que le premier poète du monde.<sup>1</sup>

Such a conception clearly holds possibilities for a fixed form such as the sonnet. "Un sonnet ne se verse pas comme une rasade," as Gautier remarks in his article on Saint-Amant.<sup>2</sup> Amédée Pommier's collections, Le Livre de Sang, Océanides et Fantaisies, Sonnets sur le Salon de 1851, Colères, and Colifichets are seen as excellent examples of the value of fixed form as an artistic discipline:

... l'auteur s'est livré à tous les tours de force métriques qu'on puisse imaginer, avec une aisance, une agilité et une souplesse incomparables. On peut dédaigner ces jeux difficiles qui sont comme la fugue et le contrepoint de la poésie, mais il faut être un maître pour y exceller, et qui ne les a pas pratiqués peut se trouver un jour devant l'idée sans forme à lui offrir.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly Soulary's sonnets triumph as a result of the skill displayed by the poet in his handling of a demanding form:

Au commencement de son livre Sonnets humoristiques, il compare sa Muse à une belle fille enfermant son corps souple dans un corset juste et un vêtement qui serre les formes en les faisant valoir. L'idée entrant dans le sonnet qui la contient, l'amincit et en assure le contour, ressemble en effet à cette beauté qu'un peu de contrainte rend plus svelte, plus élégante, plus légère. Le talent de Joséphin Soulary, d'une concentration extrême, est une essence passée plusieurs fois par l'alambic et qui résume en une goutte les saveurs et les parfums qui flottent épars chez les autres poètes. Il possède au plus haut degré la concision, la texture serrée du style et du vers, l'art de réduire une image en une épithète, la hardiesse d'ellipse, l'ingéniosité subtile et l'adresse d'emménager dans la place circonscrite qu'il est interdit de dépasser jamais, une foule

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1. Fusains et Eaux-Fortes, p. 54.
  2. Ibid., p. 293.
  3. Histoire du Romantisme, pp. 312-313. Amédée Pommier is quoted as follows on the sonnet by Louis de Veyrières, Monographie du Sonnet (Paris, Bachelin-Deflorenne, 1869), I, 48: "Je ne connais et n'admets qu'une chose, le sonnet régulier, symétrique, sévèrement et méthodiquement construit. Je le veux parfait, avec toutes ses entraves habilement et consciencieusement surmontées: ce n'est qu'à cette condition qu'il procure à l'esprit comme à l'oeil un plaisir pur et complet." Note the omission of any reference to "l'oreille" in the final clause.

d'idées de mots et de détails qui demanderaient ailleurs des pages entières aux vastes périodes.<sup>1</sup>

Under such a system, poetry will tend increasingly to become the prerogative of an élite, since appreciation of technical ability requires some specialist knowledge on the part of the poet's public, and Gautier concludes by recognizing that the sonnet may prove difficult for the reader as well as for the writer by reason of its concision:

Ceux qui aiment les lectures faciles et tournent les pages d'un doigt distrait pourraient trouver le style de Joséphin Souлары un peu obscur ou malaisé à comprendre; mais le sonnet comporte cette difficulté savante. Pétrarque ne se lit pas couramment.<sup>2</sup>

This line of argument which judges the merit of a poet by his ability to overcome technical difficulty, has a curious result when followed through to its logical conclusion by Gautier: the mercurial and whimsical writer, while on the one hand bemoaning the effect of the advent of Malherbe, nevertheless adopts a similarly inflexible attitude with regard to the question of "correction" in poetry. And his general belief in "la forme inflexible du vers, dont on ne peut déranger une seule syllabe sans en détruire complètement l'harmonie"<sup>3</sup> is of course reflected in his attitude to forms such as the sonnet. As early as 1835, though he had made fun of the stereotyped imagery of Guillaume Colletet's sonnet, he had nevertheless noted and praised his exposé of the genre and its requirements in the Traité du Sonnet:

Après cette histoire du sonnet, il en donne les règles et en quelque sorte la syntaxe, que devraient lire et méditer avec soin beaucoup de jeunes gens de maintenant qui se mêlent d'en faire et ne se doutent pas le moins du monde de ce que c'est.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Histoire du Romantisme, pp. 345-346. Souлары's sonnet on the sonnet can be found in Appendix B, p. 605.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Fusains et Eaux-Fortes, p. 212.
  4. Les Grottesques, p. 238.

With reference to the sonnets of M. de Grammont's Chants du Passé, Gautier speaks approvingly in Les Progrès de la Poésie française of "cette forme si artistement construite, d'un rythme si justement balancé et d'une pureté qui n'admet aucune tache,"<sup>1</sup> and even clearer illustration of his attitude is provided by his contact with Baudelaire in the 1840's and subsequently with Heredia in the 1860's. At his first meeting with Baudelaire, recounted by the latter in his article "Théophile Gautier," in 1859 and by Gautier in his preface to the third edition of Les Fleurs du Mal in 1868, the feature singled out for notice by Gautier in the volume submitted for his inspection is the number of "sonnets libertins, c'est-à-dire non orthodoxes et s'affranchissant volontiers de la règle de la quadruple rime."<sup>2</sup> Gautier's account of the incident then moves on to consideration of the poems of Les Fleurs du Mal, many of which, he says, were already composed at that time and amongst which he discovered "un assez grand nombre de sonnets libertins qui non-seulement n'avaient pas la quadruple rime, mais encore où les rimes étaient enlacées d'une façon tout à fait irrégulière." He opposes this procedure to that of the "sonnet orthodoxe comme l'ont fait Pétrarque, Félicaja, Ronsard, du Bellay, Sainte-Beuve" but sees some excuse for Baudelaire in the fact that although there are many poems in his work "qui ont la disposition apparente et comme le dessin extérieur du sonnet," he has never entitled any of them "Sonnet."<sup>3</sup> Gautier's

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1. Histoire du Romantisme, p. 308. My underlining.
  2. Baudelaire, Oeuvres complètes in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1961), p. 680. The collection in question was no doubt the Vers prepared in collaboration by Prarond, Le Vavasseur and Auguste Dozon (who used the pseudonym of d'Argonne).
  3. Portraits et Souvenirs littéraires (Paris, Charpentier, 1885), pp. 233-234. Les Fleurs du Mal has the piece Sonnet d'automne (No. LXIV), first published in the Revue contemporaine of 30 Nov. 1859. In addition, "Je te donne ces vers," when first published in the Revue française of 20 Apr. 1857 was entitled Sonnet. However the first of these fulfils the exact rhyme-scheme requirement of the regular sonnet while the second shows a close approximation to it with 2 rhymes only in the pattern abba baab in the quatrains.

remarks become more interesting as he explains the reasons for his rejection of the "sonnet libertin":

La jeune école se permet un grand nombre de sonnets libertins, et, nous l'avouons, cela nous est particulièrement désagréable. Pourquoi, si l'on veut être libre et arranger les rimes à sa guise, aller choisir une forme rigoureuse qui n'admet aucun écart, aucun caprice? L'irrégulier dans le régulier, le manque de correspondance dans la symétrie, quoi de plus illogique et de plus contrariant? Chaque infraction à la règle nous inquiète comme une note douteuse ou fausse. Le sonnet est une sorte de fugue poétique dont le thème doit passer et repasser jusqu'à sa résolution par les formes voulues. Il faut donc se soumettre absolument à ses lois, ou bien, si l'on trouve ces lois surannées, pédantesques et gênantes, ne pas écrire de sonnets du tout.<sup>1</sup>

The two different conceptions of the possibilities of the sonnet indicated here - strict adherence to the rule, on the one hand, and, on the other, a flexible handling and interplay of all the different frames of reference the sonnet can provide, including the rhyme-scheme - are of key importance for an understanding of the evolution of the nineteenth century sonnet in France. As often in articles of this nature, more is revealed about the writer of the article than about the writer with whom the article is concerned. Gautier provides here a clear statement of his own position, that of a poet committed to art for art ideals for whom perfection of form generally and hence "correction" of form in a chosen genre is the ultimate criterion. The conservatism of his attitude goes far to explain his relatively limited use of the sonnet form and his preference for the freer modes of the couplet, quatrain and terza rima.

Heredia's account of his contact in the 1860's with Gautier demonstrates the far-reaching effect of this attitude. His memories of his collaboration on La Revue française in the early 1860's run as follows:

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1. Portraits et Souvenirs littéraires, pp. 235-236.

C'est là, dans ce lieu sans lumière [the offices of the review], que, pour la première fois, j'entendis le beau poète Armand Silvestre réciter ses premiers Sonnets pafens magnifiques et voluptueux. Jules Claretie y fit ses premières armes de plume. Quant à moi, je confesse y avoir publié quelques médiocres sonnets, mal venus et mal bâtis, à rimes incorrectement croisées, dont Théophile Gautier, avec sa bonhomie gouailleuse, paternelle et magistrale, daigna me dire: "- Comment! Si jeune, et tu fais déjà des sonnets libertins!" - Et c'est pourquoi je n'en fis et je n'en ferai plus jamais de tels.<sup>1</sup>

When the reader turns then to Gautier's own sonnets, he would therefore naturally expect to see the regularity advocated in theory, achieved in practice. He will, on the whole, not be disappointed on this score, but there are one or two interesting points to be noticed. One finds, in the first place, a minor matter perhaps, but amusing nonetheless, that the first sonnets published by Gautier, the three of the Poésies of 1830, are marked by some of that same irregularity he condemns later in the two generations of poets succeeding him, Baudelaire and his friends of the "école normande," and the early Heredia. All three, "Aux vitraux diaprés des sombres basiliques," "Ne vous détournez pas, car ce n'est point d'amour," and "Quelquefois au milieu de la folâtre orgie,"<sup>2</sup> though sporting the common title of Sonnet, yet show alternate rhyme in the quatrains.<sup>3</sup> Any hopes of success Gautier might have had for his first collection were dashed from the start by the July Revolution. However, in the one article reviewing the collection which

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1. Heredia, Préface to Voyage en Patagonie of comte Henry de la Vaulx (1901). Quoted in Miodrag Ibrovac, José-Maria de Heredia. Sa Vie - Son Oeuvre (Paris, Les Presses Françaises, 1923), p. 79.
  2. Poésies complètes, ed. in 3 v. by René Jasinski (Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1932) I, 11, 31, 63. All subsequent references to Gautier's poems are to this edition, henceforth PC.
  3. The quatrains are however on two rhymes only.



Jasinski was able to locate, appearing in the Débats of 1 November and signed F. [ontaney], the author of these sonnets is severely reprimanded for this stylistic audacity or negligence and is called upon to return to "la vieille législation" and to renounce such "enlacements vicieux."<sup>1</sup>

A second peculiarity of the sonnet as practised by Gautier and one in sharp contrast to "correct" practice as suggested by the Marot example or as later defined by Banville in his Petit Traité de poésie française<sup>2</sup> is the preference for the use of a terminal couplet in the tercets. This arrangement has generally been condemned by purists particularly in countries other than England. A version did exist in Italy with a final rhyming couplet, but in that instance, the unity of the tercet pattern was preserved by the restriction of the rhymes in the tercets to two instead of three. There are some examples of this in Gautier, in Sonnet IX of the Douzain for the Princesse Mathilde (PC III, 223), in "Parfois une Vénus ..." (PC III, 192), and in Le Sonnet. A maître Claudius Popelin, émailleur et poète. Sonnet III (PC III, 204). The reason for the dislike of a final couplet on a new rhyme is fairly obvious. Since the function of the rhyme is to underscore the development of the idea, image or thought, such an arrangement might tend to induce a new balance within the sonnet leading perhaps towards a combination of three quatrains against a final couplet (as in Shakespeare). The imbalance inherent in such an arrangement would in its turn tend to reinforce the propensity of the sonnet to terminate in a "pointe," since the first four lines of the tercets rhyming as a quatrain might well become assimilated to the development of ideas in the quatrains proper

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1. Quoted by R. Jasinski, Les Années romantiques de Théophile Gautier, p. 60.

2. v. infra, p. 240.

and their function as an instrument of synthesis thus devolve entirely on the last two lines of the poem with a consequent intensification of their aphoristic quality. While the figures<sup>1</sup> clearly demonstrate Gautier's fondness for the arrangement, it remains to be seen whether his use of it reflects a corresponding trend in the disposition of his themes or whether his opting for this pattern is nothing more than a superficial idiosyncrasy, possibly the counterpart to the strictness with which "correction" is practised in the quatrains, the tercets having been always considered in comparison relatively free in the arrangement of their rhymes.

Examination of those sonnets with a final couplet shows that in the majority of cases, the final tercet is in fact syntactically complete. In some instances, however, the entity of the final couplet is more clearly defined than elsewhere - for example in Sonnet IV (PC I, 86), which concludes with a distinct "pointe":

Non, ce n'est pas assez de souffrir qu'on vous aime,  
Ma belle paresseuse, il faut aimer vous-même.

in Destinée (PC II, 146), where the tercets divide in a 5:1 arrangement, line 14 summing up the failure of either party to attain happiness, and

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1. The terminal couplet arrangement occurs in 1 of the 3 sonnets of the 1830 Poésies, 2 of the 4 sonnets added in the 1832 edition, 2 of the 5 sonnets of the 1838 Poésies diverses (in addition a 3rd and 4th sonnet, "Pour veiner de son front ..." and Versailles rhyme in couplets ccd dee throughout the tercets), 1 of the 2 sonnets of the 1845 Poésies diverses, 3 of the 4 sonnets of España (1 of these, Perspective, has the scheme abba abba cdd caa), in the 1 sonnet of Emaux et Camées, and, in Jasinski's group of Dernières Poésies, in 4 of the Sept Sonnets à Marie Mattéi, 7 of the 15 sonnets of Autres Sonnets (this section also includes "Parfois une Vénus ..." and Le Sonnet. A Claudius Popelin III with 2 rhymes only in the tercets, and A Claudius Popelin II which rhymes in couplets ccd dee throughout the tercets), 1 of the 2 sonnets in the section Pour Carlotta Grisi, 7 of the 13 Douzain de sonnets (in addition No. IX, D'après Vanutelli, has 2 rhymes only in the tercets) and in 1 of the other 2 sonnets in the section A la Princesse Mathilde.

A des amis qui partaient (PC II, 250), where the literary precedent of Horace cited in line 12 becomes the model for the poet's farewell. Generally speaking, however, this rhyme pattern in the tercets seems to achieve just the opposite end from what might have been expected. It appears to lead in fact to a greater degree of symmetry between the tercets: each one is treated as a separate entity to which the other is the counterpoise. Thus the linking rhyme, lines 9 and 12, is followed in each case by a balancing pair of couplets, lines 10 and 11, and 13 and 14. What one seems to have here is in fact nothing other than an inversion of the Marotic scheme. Instead of the ccd eed progression, here the rhyming link between the tercets is established first; as a result the autonomy of the different parts of the sonnet seems to be preserved even more zealously than usual. In contrast to the sonnets of Shakespeare, the divisions between quatrain and quatrain, quatrain and tercet, are most strictly adhered to. Examples of enjambement between them are non-existent.

So far it is only Gautier's critical comments on the sonnet and certain general aspects of his sonnet technique that have been discussed. But two equally important points must also be considered - firstly, if one is not to fall into the same trap as many of the "art for art" and Parnassian poets, the effectiveness of Gautier's sonnet form, "correct" or otherwise, in the service of his chosen themes, and secondly, Gautier's practical contribution to the evolution of the genre, within the general context of French nineteenth century poetry.

Very roughly, it seems possible to divide Gautier's sonnets into three main groups: sonnets on the themes of melancholy, isolation, deprivation recalling in tone and structure those of Joseph Delorme; what might be termed the "sonnet-tableau"; and finally the "sonnets

galants" (nearly all of which postdate Emaux et Camées) with which we can also loosely associate sonnets such as A des amis qui partaient (PC II, 250), and even the Préface to Emaux et Camées where the form is being used in an accredited traditional manner for the valedictory salute, or the liminary piece.

The first three sonnets published by Gautier in the 1830 Poésies clearly fall within the general scope for the form set out by Sainte-Beuve in Joseph Delorme. Sonnet II, for example, with its preservation of the syntax of speech irrespective of metrical demands, has a vague family resemblance with "Oh! laissez-vous aimer! ... ce n'est pas un retour," and "Madame, il est donc vrai, vous n'avez pas voulu,"<sup>1</sup> and provides an interesting illustration of the way in which a new type of emotional analysis is developing within the frame of the traditional love sonnet. The opening lines give clear indication of the change of direction:

Ne vous détournez pas, car ce n'est point d'amour  
Que je veux vous parler; que le passé, madame,  
 Soit pour nous comme un songe envolé sans retour,  
 Oubliez une erreur que moi-même je blâme.

Mais vous êtes si belle, et sous le fin contour  
 De vos sourcils arqués luit un regard de flamme  
 Si perçant, qu'on ne peut vous avoir vue un jour  
 Sans porter à jamais votre image en son âme.

Moi, mes traits soucieux sont couverts de pâleur;  
 Car, dès mes premiers ans souffrant et solitaire,  
 Dans mon coeur je nourris une pensée austère,

Et mon front avant l'âge a perdu cette fleur  
 Qui s'entr'ouvre vermeille au printemps de la vie,  
 Et qui ne revient plus alors qu'elle est ravie.

PC I, 31

Nevertheless the quatrains continue to skirt about the social courtesies, "que le passé, madame, ..." and include the expected

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1. Sainte-Beuve, PC I, 64-65. v. supra, pp. 28-30.

compliment (all the second quatrain). However, the axis of the sonnet lies not in these things themselves (there is, for example, no development of the idea of the "regard" as a piercing shaft<sup>1</sup>) but in the contrast they present to the poet's own experience. The poem centres on the "Moi" of line 9, its sufferings, isolation, premature loss of youth, of which disappointment in love is only one aspect. From the possibility of being a badinage on the lady's coldness, the wounding power of her gaze or his unbounded admiration for her, the sonnet becomes instead a vehicle for emphasizing the poet's melancholy.

This sonnet and Sonnet III "Quelquefois au milieu de la folâtre orgie" (PC I, 63), both utilize the quatrain-tercet structure of the sonnet as a convenient frame for contrast. Otherwise, however, the form remains largely inert, and in neither case is there any real attempt to build thematic motifs around the many symmetries and parallels available within the formal structure of the genre. In Sonnet III, description in the quatrains of the moments of alleviation in the mental state of the "malheureux" leads into the allegory of the tercets where the external appearance of the ivy-clad tower belies the inner devastation. However, unlike Baudelaire's later sonnet on a somewhat similar theme, L'Aube spirituelle,<sup>2</sup> the tercet analogy, common coin at the time in any case,<sup>3</sup> is in no way foreseen in the quatrains.

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1. For a comparison with sixteenth century practice, v. Henri Weber, La Création poétique au seizième siècle (Paris, Nizet, 1956), Ch.V, "La poésie amoureuse de la Pléiade," and the subsection, "La flèche du regard," pp. 237-238.
  2. Baudelaire, OC, p. 44.
  3. Sainte-Beuve uses a similar image, the devastated oak entwined by a vine, in one of the stanzas of Le Dernier Voeu in Joseph Delorme (PC, p. 48) and Byron's poem, To an Oak at Newstead, Poetical Works (London, OUP, 1970), p. 57, takes the same motif as its central focus.

Sonnet I, on the other hand, seems of rather more interest in that it leads into an evocation of the poet's mood through a description of his setting - a method of portrayal hardly utilized in the sonnets of Joseph Delorme or of Les Consolations, though a favourite technique of some of the English sonnetists, such as Bowles.

Aux vitraux diaprés des sombres basiliques,  
Les flammes du couchant s'éteignent tour à tour;  
D'un âge qui n'est plus précieuses reliques,  
Leurs dômes dans l'azur tracent un noir contour;  
  
Et la lune paraît, de ses rayons obliques  
Argentant à demi l'aiguille de la tour,  
Et les derniers rameaux des pins mélancoliques  
Dont l'ombre se balance et s'étend alentour.  
  
Alors les vibrations de la cloche qui tinte  
D'un monde aérien semblent la voix éteinte,  
Qui par le vent portée en ce monde parvient;  
  
Et le poète, assis près des flots, sur la grève,  
Ecoute ces accents fugitifs comme un rêve,  
Lève les yeux au ciel, et triste se souvient.

PC I, 11<sup>1</sup>

The four main structural divisions of the sonnet are used here by Gautier to fulfil two simultaneous functions - on the one hand, to stress through four-fold repetition the prevailing mood, on the other, to focus attention increasingly, as the sonnet progresses from the quatrains to the shorter tercets, on the figure of a single individual.

In all four stanzas, the dominant note is one of melancholy. In part this is established by explicit references - "s'éteignent" (1.2), the nostalgic "D'un âge qui n'est plus" (1.3), "pins mélancoliques" (1.8), the echo in line 10 of the general sense of "D'un âge qui n'est plus" (1.3), "éteinte" (1.10) picking up "s'éteignent" (1.2), "fugitifs" (1.13), "triste" (1.14). At the same time, however, the linear progression

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1. La Basilique (PC I, 32-34) is very close in theme to this sonnet. It is however differentiated from it by its much greater length, its more narrative approach ("Il est une basilique" etc.), the closed circle effect produced by a last stanza repeating the first and, so to speak, starting off the poem once again, its 7 syllable line, and its wealth of picturesque detail.

of the sonnet and the increasing concision of the form as it advances from the quatrains to the tercets underlines a movement from a general portrayal of mood towards the specific situation of "le poète." The quatrains are concerned with the description of a typically melancholy scene - churches at twilight and the chiascuro effect of night. The first quatrain establishes this shifting pattern of light and shade with the evocation of the double glow of the sunset and the windows and the complementary double reference to the "sombres basiliques" and their "noir contour." This is echoed and strengthened in the second quatrain by the parallel depiction of moonlight, the half-illuminated spire and the shadowy pines. In the first tercet, however, emphasis shifts from the visual to the aural and from the general scene to a specific phenomenon. The ringing of the bell becomes the focus for all the feelings of sadness and nostalgia awakened by the description of the quatrains. Finally, in the second tercet, this melancholy is concentrated around and within a single human being. The ephemerality and unreality of the sound to which he listens merge with the spectacle of his transitory and insubstantial being, face to face with the passing waves but eternal and infinite vastness of the sea.

Gautier's use here of the sonnet thus appears, in one way at least, more original and more dynamic than in the two other sonnets of the 1830 Poésies. Of course the décor of gloomy cathedrals, sunset, moonlight and dark pine trees was already a cliché at the time of the

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poem's composition and publication<sup>1</sup> and the sense of rhetoric never entirely absent from the formalized structure of the sonnet does little to alleviate this effect.<sup>2</sup> Of particular interest, however, is the emergence in the sonnet of an important pictorial element, since subsequent use of the form by Gautier for purposes of description as distinct from an analysis of the poet's own emotional situation initiates a trend in the nineteenth century sonnet which culminates in the vivid cameos of José Maria de Heredia. This sonnet is in effect a transitional piece, providing an embryonic illustration of the way in which the formal structure of the genre could be used to support a system of pictorial balances and to pinpoint the emotional significance of the scene described.

As examples of Gautier's technique in the field of the "sonnet-tableau" proper, let us now look in a little detail at two pieces, "Pour veiner de son front la pâleur délicate," first published in 1835, and Sainte Casilda, first published in 1842.<sup>3</sup> The first of these, probably

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1. The motif of the bell associated with regret for a lost past also occurs, for example, in Lamartine's poem La Cloche, written in reply to the Poésies nouvelles of Mme Tastu, published at the end of 1834. V. Lamartine, Oeuvres poétiques complètes, ed. of the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1963), pp. 799-800. One of Baudelaire's early sonnets, "Vous avez, compagnon, dont le coeur est poète" (Baudelaire, OC, p. 196), probably dating from about 1840, also uses the bell theme, as does the sonnet La Cloche fêlée in Les Fleurs du Mal. Amongst the English poets, both Cowper and Bowles use the image, Cowper in The Task, Bk. VI, Poetical Works (London, OUP, 1967), pp. 219-220; Bowles in Sonnets and other poems, 9th ed. (London, 1805), p. 15, Sonnet XI, "How sweet the tuneful bells' responsive peal."
  2. Note also the artificiality of the syntax in line 3 of this sonnet and the contrast this offers with the flexible syntactical arrangements to be found in Sonnet II.
  3. "Pour veiner de son front" was included in the Poésies diverses, published along with La Comédie de la Mort in 1838, Sainte Casilda in España in Poésies complètes (1845).



the most attractive and graceful of all Gautier's sonnets, clearly possesses more than a little affinity with the traditional love sonnet:

Pour veiner de son front la pâleur délicate,  
 Le Japon a donné son plus limpide azur;  
 La blanche porcelaine est d'un blanc bien moins pur  
 Que son col transparent et ses tempes d'agate.

Dans sa prunelle humide un doux rayon éclate;  
 Le chant du rossignol près de sa voix est dur,  
 Et, quand elle se lève à notre ciel obscur,  
 On dirait de la lune en sa robe d'ouate.

Ses yeux d'argent bruni roulent moelleusement;  
 Le caprice a taillé son petit nez charmant;  
 Sa bouche a des rougeurs de pêche et de framboise;

Ses mouvements sont pleins d'une grâce chinoise,  
 Et près d'elle on respire autour de sa beauté  
 Quelque chose de doux comme l'odeur du thé.

PC II, 194

Lines 5-9, for example, seem to find a definite echo in the subsequent poem in the collection. This is also a sonnet, first published in 1836, on the traditional theme A Deux Beaux Yeux. The imagery of the opening stanza, initiating a series of almost obligatory epithets - "feux du diamant," "miroir de flamme," "cristal" - is remarkably close to some of the references of "Pour veiner de son front...":

Vous avez un regard singulier et charmant;  
 Comme la lune au fond du lac qui la reflète,  
 Votre prunelle, où brille une humide paillette,  
 Au coin de vos doux yeux roule languissamment.

PC II, 194

In the first sonnet, however, these conventional reminiscences are incorporated into a description which concentrates not on the emotional relationship between poet and mistress but on the picturesque aspects of the Oriental subject and on the aesthetic delight of the poet in a charming visual spectacle. The woman in fact is viewed as an "objet d'art," a Japanese or Chinese figurine.

The formal structure of the sonnet is used to support a progression in the description from detail to general impression, a pattern followed

through in turn in lines 1-8 and 9-14. The first quatrain evokes the quality of the girl's complexion with particular reference to the forehead (1.1), veins (11.1-2), neck (1.4), temples (1.4) and by means of images which simultaneously establish the Oriental setting ("Le Japon a donné ...," "La blanche porcelaine ..."). The second quatrain opens with the more conventional description of the eye (1.5), before moving on in line 6 to a non-visual characteristic, the voice. Finally in lines 7-8, all details are submerged in a general impression of luminous whiteness, which complements and recalls the more specific references to the white forehead and neck in the first stanza.

The first tercet, however, returns again to details of the girl's appearance. The "yeux d'argent bruni" provide a double link between quatrains and tercets, repeating with greater effectiveness the description of line 5<sup>1</sup> and prolonging the motif of silvery light from lines 7-8. However the quatrain and tercet groups remain clearly differentiated, not only on the thematic level by a return to particular details, but by an accelerated syntactic pattern. Eyes, nose, mouth are each described in a single line composed of a single main clause (compare the quatrains) and this pattern continues furthermore into the first line of the final tercet overriding the traditional structural division at the end of line 11. At the same time the traditional rhyme pattern of the tercets is considerably simplified, the scheme of three couplets complementing the heightened tempo of the syntax. With the second tercet, the movement from the particular to the general already noted in the second

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1. But the need for a repetition of this sort correcting initial weakness might well be considered poor technique in the brief form of the sonnet.

quatrain, is once again apparent. Specific details of physique give way to a description of movement in line 12 and in the last two lines to the evocation of a nebulous, indefinable fragrance. The syntactic pattern of 4:2 (the four single line clauses of lines 9-12 slowing to the two line clause of lines 13-14), in association with the couplet rhyme-scheme, gives added relief to this closing of the sonnet not on a finite limited detail but on a note of magically suggestive imprecision. At the same time, the Oriental references of the final stanza ("grâce chinoise," "odeur du thé") match those of the first quatrain, bringing the sonnet full circle and reaffirming the exotically picturesque note on which the piece opens.

The various structural patterns used here by Gautier - the progression from the specific to the general within the individual quatrain and tercet groups, the echoing in the tercets of the thematic movement established in the quatrains, the prominence of the final couplet, the symmetrical balance of the opening and closing lines of the quatrains and the opening and closing lines of the sonnet - all play their part in supporting the delicate equilibrium of detail and imprecision on which the piece depends. Indeed the sonnet with the combination of restraint and suggestion achieved through its established structural arrangements, seems a near-perfect poetic equivalent for the subtly stylized forms of Oriental art through which the girl is visualized. Nevertheless there are certain limitations to the potential of the sonnet and some idea of these may be gained by a brief comparison of "Pour veiner de son front" with its preceding doublet version in four quatrains, Chinoiserie:

Ce n'est pas vous, non, madame, que j'aime,  
 Ni vous non plus, Juliette, ni vous,  
 Ophélie, ni Béatrix, ni même  
 Laure la blonde, avec ses grands yeux doux.

Celle que j'aime, à présent, est en Chine;  
 Elle demeure avec ses vieux parents,  
 Dans une tour de porcelaine fine,  
 Au fleuve Jaune, où sont les cormorans.

Elle a des yeux retroussés vers les tempes,  
 Un pied petit à tenir dans la main,  
 Le teint plus clair que le cuivre des lampes,  
 Les ongles longs et rougis de carmin.

Par son treillis elle passe sa tête,  
 Que l'hirondelle, en volant, vient toucher,  
 Et, chaque soir, aussi bien qu'un poète,  
 Chante le saule et la fleur du pêcher.

PC II, 193

The four quatrain structure is clearly a fundamentally less stylized form than the sonnet. The poet is not bound by a set arrangement of fourteen lines and he can prolong or curtail his poem as he will. He can also utilize a more dynamic pattern of rhyme - the alternate scheme chosen here is not of course available in the quatrains of the "correct" sonnet. This greater prosodic freedom is naturally reflected in the treatment of theme. The leisurely entrée en matière of Chinoiserie, insisting on the attractive foreignness of the girl by successive rejections of the famous ladies of the European poets, is in direct contrast to the commencement of the sonnet in medias res. Furthermore, while attention in the sonnet is concentrated on a description of the appearance of the girl herself, in Chinoiserie only the third stanza deals with actual details of her physique. Instead the conversational introduction with the repetition "Ce n'est pas vous," "Ni vous non plus," "que j'aime," "Celle que j'aime" is followed by a gentle meandering around the various aspects of the girl's existence, and the description of her appearance takes its place among other

evocations - of her surroundings and of her occupations. Another interesting feature is the higher degree of exotic detail in Chinoiserie as compared with the sonnet. It is almost as if the sonnet with its need for a central focus and consequent concentration on the person of the girl inevitably brings into play all the old conventional images (see the similarities noted with A Deux Beaux Yeux): the shorthand of the traditional love sonnet tends to prevail over the exotic and unexpected detail. Thus "tour de porcelaine" (Chinoiserie, 1.7) is assimilated into a comparison to the advantage of the whiteness of the girl's skin, the unusual "cormorans" (1.8) and the free flight of the swallow (1.14) are replaced by the banal comparison of her voice to the nightingale, the peachtree (1.16) is reduced to become the image of the rosiness of her mouth, while references to the tilt of the eyes, the tiny feet, the bronze glow of the complexion, the carmine-tinted nails are completely omitted.

At the same time, it is interesting to note that use of the sonnet seems also to have a tendency to induce use of the alexandrine. In this instance, the unrheterical decasyllable of Chinoiserie with the imbalance of its basic 4/6 rhythm contributes to the impression of lightness and delicacy produced by the forward movement of the alternate rhyme-scheme and the relative freedom of the quatrain form. In "Pour veiner de son front," the effect is by comparison, more static and more heavily formal. All fourteen alexandrines fall into two equal hemistichs, in some cases supporting two clearly balanced thematic motifs (e.g. ll.3 and 4), and this regularity reinforces the principle of order and control inherent in the sonnet form itself. Of course there are examples in

Gautier's work of sonnets with metres other than the alexandrine<sup>1</sup> and conversely of poems in four quatrains or quatrain form generally where the alexandrine is the chosen metre. Nevertheless it is revealing to see how often the poets examined in this study associate the use of the sonnet with the alexandrine line.<sup>2</sup> Both, it seems to be felt, belong to the same rhetorical tradition. Perhaps this to some extent illuminates Gautier's relatively limited use of the sonnet form and in particular its exclusion from Emaux et Camées (apart from the octosyllabic example of the Préface) where of all collections it might have been expected to appear. From his earliest work, Gautier often preferred the shorter metres, including the "impairs"<sup>3</sup> and in his article on Scarron he

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1. It is interesting to note, however, that all the sonnets in the collections up to and including the Poésies complètes of 1845 are in alexandrines. The octosyllabic prefatory sonnet of Emaux et Camées is the only sonnet with a short metre published by Gautier in a collection. In the section grouped as Dernières Poésies by Jasinski, on the other hand, there are 5 decasyllabic sonnets amongst the Sept Sonnets à Marie Mattéi, a decasyllabic sonnet, A Maxime du Camp, and an octosyllabic one, A Claudius Popelin II, in Autres Sonnets, and an octosyllabic sonnet, Les déesses posent, in Un Douzain de Sonnets in the group of poems A la Princesse Mathilde. As far as poems in 4 quatrains are concerned, it is interesting to see the relative proportions of alexandrines, decasyllables and octosyllables especially in the collection where this form is most strongly represented, the 1838 Poésies diverses. 7 of the pieces are in decasyllables (Le Nuage, Rocaille, Pastel, Watteau, Tombée du Jour, Le Trou du Serpent, Chinoiserie), 6 in alexandrines (Niobé, Cariatides, La Chimère, Choc de Cavaliers, Le Pot de Fleurs, Le Sphinx) 1 in octosyllables (L'Hippopotame).
  2. Verlaine is a particularly striking example. V. infra, pp. 381, 392.
  3. In the 1830 Poésies, Paysage, La Basilique and Infidélité are written in 7 syllable lines, La Demoiselle in a combination of 7 and 3. The 1832 edition also has Déclaration in 7 syllable lines. Part II of La Chanson du Grillon in the 1838 Poésies diverses is written in lines of 5 syllables. The 1845 Poésies diverses has La Fuite, quatrains of 3 7 syllable lines closed by a 4 syllable line, and Les Taches jaunes, 7 syllable quatrains. España has La Lune in 7 syllable lines. In Jasinski's group of Dernières Poésies, 2 pieces in the section Fantaisies are in 7 syllables, "Sur la déserte croisière ..." and La Neige.

commented approvingly on the advantages of the octosyllable:

Le vers de huit syllabes à rimes plates ... offre des facilités dont il est malaisé de n'abuser point. Entre les mains d'un versificateur médiocre, il devient bientôt plus lâche et plus rampant que la prose négligée, et n'offre pour compensation à l'oreille qu'une rime fatigante par son rapprochement. Bien manié, ce vers, qui est celui des romances et des comédies espagnoles, pourrait produire des effets neufs et variés: Il nous paraît plus propre que l'alexandrin, pompeux et redondant, aux familiarités du dialogue, à l'enjouement des détails ... Il nous épargnerait beaucoup d'hémistiches stéréotypés, dont il est difficile aux meilleurs et aux plus soigneux poètes de se défendre, tant la nécessité des coupes et des rimes du vers hexamètre les ramène impérieusement.<sup>1</sup>

Gautier's reasons for avoiding the alexandrine - and, perhaps, we may also deduce, the sonnet - thus appear to correspond closely with the conclusions suggested by the comparison of "Pour veiner de son front" and Chinoiserie. It is all part of a desire to escape from a tradition of stereotyped oratory.

The subject of "Pour veiner de son front" had been an imaginary girl but as his starting point Gautier often uses, as Heredia was also to do later, the visual arts, i.e. a representation of life that has already undergone a process of formalization. This is the case with Sainte Casilda:<sup>2</sup>

A Burgos, dans un coin de l'église déserte,  
Un tableau me surprit par son effet puissant;  
Un ange, pâle et fier, d'un ciel fauve descend,  
A sainte Casilda portant la palme verte.

Pour l'oeuvre des bourreaux la vierge découverte  
Montre sur sa poitrine, albâtre éblouissant,  
A la place des seins, deux ronds couleur de sang,  
Distillant un rubis par chaque veine ouverte.

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1. Les Grottesques, pp. 352-353. Note, however, that Gautier is here referring specifically to the "vers de huit syllabes à rimes plates."
  2. Another example in the sonnet form is Sur le Prométhée du Musée de Madrid, PC II, 272.

Et les seins déjà morts, beaux lis coupés en fleur,  
Blancs comme les morceaux d'une Vénus de marbre,  
Dans un bassin d'argent gisent au pied d'un arbre.

Mais la sainte en extase, oubliant sa douleur,  
Comme aux bras d'un amant de volupté se pâme,  
Car aux lèvres du Christ elle suspend son âme!

PC II, 259

Here Gautier, initiating a technique which Heredia was later to develop much more fully, uses the different sections of the sonnet structure to indicate the main features of the picture and the story they reveal. The first quatrain concentrates on the angel and on its descending movement towards Saint Casilda and also prepares with the adjectives "pâle," "fauve," and "verte" for the important colour contrast of the next two stanzas. The second quatrain describes the martyr herself, emphasizing the horror of her fate by the violent contrast between the whiteness of her skin ("albâtre" backed up by the colour associations of "vierge") and the redness of the wound (again a double indication - "couleur de sang" and "rubis"). In the first tercet, the focus moves away from the saint to her amputated breasts. Again it is the whiteness of the skin which is emphasized ("beaux lis," "Blancs comme les morceaux d'une Vénus de marbre" picking up "albâtre" in line 6, and "bassin d'argent" in line 11 echoing the general paleness). At the same time, however, it seems important to notice the increasing stress in this stanza on the non-pictorial elements, in particular the three-fold reference to death ("morts," "coupés en fleur," "gisent"). These prepare and contrast with the emotions of love and triumph which dominate the final tercet. Some feeling of the compositional arrangement of the picture can still be sensed in the implied upward movement of "aux lèvres du Christ elle suspend son âme" which complements the downward flight of the angel in the first quatrain. But it is the



spiritual significance of the event represented and not the physical detail which is of ultimate importance as the sonnet closes. The climax of the sonnet is provided by the explanation in line 14 of the saint's joy - a feature given increased formal relief by Gautier's use of a terminal couplet rhyme.

The technique of the "sonnet-tableau" thus comprises greater subtleties than might at first appear. A descriptive poem can never be the exact equivalent of a visual representation: the poem has to work through a time-frame, while the initial impact of a picture is one and immediate; the picture achieves its effect through line, shape and colour, while the poem has the myriad associations and cross-references of language to consider. A good descriptive poem will take account of these essential differences and use language not merely as an instrument to convey precise compositional details (a task in which it can never hope to equal the success of the painter) but as a means of suggesting the general emotional atmosphere felt by the poet to be inherent in a particular painting or scene.<sup>1</sup> The sonnet in some senses lends itself

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1. The painting evoked in Sainte Casilda is described in more or less identical terms in the IV<sup>e</sup> Lettre d'un Feuilletoniste, La Presse, 16-17 août 1840. Reprinted in Voyage en Espagne (Paris, Charpentier, 1914), p. 49. However, as Jasinski points out in his commentary on the sonnet in his edition of España (Paris, Vuibert, 1929), p. 71: "... la description de Gautier, en prose comme en vers, est singulièrement chargée: on ne voit en réalité ni arbre ni bassin d'argent; un des seins de la victime est voilé, l'autre n'est pas entièrement coupé; l'ange mélancolique n'apporte pas de palme, mais tient les plis de sa robe." Moreover the saint represented in the picture is not Saint Casilda, who died a natural death at an advanced age, but Saint Centolla, martyred for blaspheming against the pagan gods. It is interesting to note also as far as Sur le Prométhée du Musée de Madrid is concerned, that the piece seems to be inspired at least as much by literary reminiscences as by Ribera's picture. See Jasinski's commentary, España ed. Jasinski, pp. 114-117.

to this programme, offering on the one hand clearly defined sections where the different visual elements of a painting may be individually ordered and examined, and on the other, a structure of progressively increasing concision and intensity, which can support a final pointing up of the general significance of the picture.

In Sainte Casilda, this technique is still at a rudimentary stage.<sup>1</sup> The description of the martyr, despite the transition which Gautier does effect from the specifically pictorial to the non-visual aspects of the scene, lacks both subtlety and coherence. Vocabulary oscillates between the precious ("Distillant un rubis de chaque veine ouverte") and the banal ("les seins ... beaux lis coupés en fleur") while the allusion to the pagan "Vénus de marbre" in line 10 hardly seems in keeping with the account of Christian martyrdom and thus distracts attention from the central focus of the sonnet. From a somewhat similar standpoint, the two lines of leisurely introduction in the first quatrain could also be criticized.<sup>2</sup> The brief form of the sonnet ideally requires full use of the limited space available and a pointed and carefully chosen vocabulary. For his descriptive poems Gautier in fact seems generally more at ease with longer and freer forms than those of the sonnet, forms in which he can approach his subject with the discursiveness and allusiveness of a "causeur" and indulge his eye for detail, and where too, if he so wishes, he is at liberty to ascribe an allegorical significance to the scene he portrays. Already in the 1830 Poésies, La Basilique offers an interesting contrast with Sonnet I, revealing Gautier's love of the picturesque. In subsequent collections, in the field of "transpositions d'art"

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1. Compare with Heredia later.  
2. Compare with the density of technique of Heredia.

specifically, two good examples are Melancholia, a meditation with Dürer's etching as its central focus, and Le Thermodon, based as Gautier tells us in the poem on:

Cette planche gravée en six cartons divers  
Par Lucas Vostermann, d'après Rubens d'Anvers

Rubens' Battle of the Amazons interpreted by Gautier as symbolizing the vain struggle of "la passion, aux beaux élans divins, / Avec le positif" or alternately the fate of women who refuse to accept the duties and trials of their domestic destiny!<sup>1</sup>

These long poems allow the incorporation of such pontification as one of the many elements comprising the poet's thought. It therefore does not appear unduly intrusive. The same is not true of the sonnet where parallels of structure tend to fix any easy codification of symbols and thus to emphasize whatever is facile and limited in the poet's conception of his theme. In Sainte Casilda, any sense of a message superimposed on the picture by the poet is avoided, but on occasion Gautier is less careful. The result of one such incautious attempt can be seen in Perspective where the view over Seville becomes the pretext for an apology of misunderstood greatness:

Sur le Guadalquivir, en sortant de Séville,  
Quand l'oeil à l'horizon se tourne avec regret,  
Les dômes, les clochers font comme une forêt:  
A chaque tour de roue il surgit une aiguille.  
  
D'abord la Giralda, dont l'ange d'or scintille,  
Rose dans le ciel bleu darde son minaret;  
La cathédrale énorme à son tour apparaît  
Par-dessus les maisons, qui vont à sa cheville.

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1. La Basilique, PC I, 32 and supra, pp. 70-72; Melancholia, PC II, 83; Le Thermodon, PC II, 196.

De près, l'on n'aperçoit que des fragments d'arceaux:  
 Un pignon biscornu, l'angle d'un mur maussade  
 Cache la flèche ouvrée et la riche façade.

Grands hommes, obstrués et masqués par les sots,  
 Comme les hautes tours sur les toits de la ville,  
 De loin vos fronts grandis montent dans l'air tranquille.

PC II, 312

Significantly one is reminded here of the moralizing tendency of some Sainte-Beuve sonnets. Perspective has more than an echo of "A Francfort-sur-le-Mein ..." <sup>1</sup>

But in general, Gautier seems to have remained well aware of the problem and one may note once again his relatively limited use of the sonnet and his recourse instead in this situation, when a short poem seems indicated, to the four quatrain poem where the final stanza explains the symbolic significance of the preceding three, but without the sense of opposition between the symbol and its explanation which the structural pattern of the sonnet would have induced. Niobé (PC II, 91), Choc de Cavaliers (PC II, 121), Le Pot de Fleurs (PC II, 122), Le Sphinx (PC II,

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1. In Les Consolations, Sainte-Beuve, PC II, 72:

A Francfort-sur-le-Mein l'on entre, et l'on s'étonne  
 De ne voir qu'élégance, éclat, faste emprunté:  
 O Francfort, qu'as-tu fait de ta vieille beauté?  
 Marraine des Césars, où donc est ta couronne?

Mais plus loin, à travers l'or faux qui t'entourne,  
 Ton église sans flèche, au coeur de la cité,  
 Monte, comme un vaisseau par les vents démâté;  
 Et sa tête est chenue; et comme une lionne

Qui, des ardents chasseurs repoussant les assauts,  
 Tient contre elle serrés ses jeunes lionceaux,  
 La tour tient à ses pieds toutes les vieilles rues,

Et sur son sein les presse, et, debout, les défend;  
 Et cependant le Siècle, immense et triomphant,  
 Déborde et couvre tout de ses ondes accrues.

This piece in fact has considerably more force than the Gautier one, largely as a result of the stress given to the image of the lioness and the theme of protection by the continuation of the syntax over the main divisions of the sonnet structure at lines 8-9 and 11-12.

123), Le Puits Mystérieux (PC II, 240), and Le Pin des Landes (PC II, 255) are all good examples of the technique.

It seems impossible to leave discussion of Gautier's "sonnet-tableau" without a brief consideration in conclusion of the tendency, which gains increasing importance in the latter half of the century with the work of the Parnassians and particularly Heredia, to link the descriptive sonnet with the enamel. A certain similarity can no doubt be discerned in the tendency of both these forms towards preciousness and miniaturization. Indeed it could be argued that the chief danger for both lies precisely in virtuosity of this sort. As we have seen, however, though Gautier in his criticism frequently uses the comparison with the "flacon" and the "objet d'art," his remarks on these occasions are not always specifically applied to the sonnet, and in his collection Émaux et Camées, despite the famous maxims of L'Art, the sonnet appears only once - fulfilling a traditional (and non-pictorial function) as a prefatory piece. The only relatively direct association between the sonnet and the enamel in Gautier's poetry comes at the end of the poet's life, at a time when the idea was already well established among the poets of the Parnasse contemporain. Gautier's acquaintance through the Princesse Mathilde circle with Claudius Popelin, the enameller (who significantly perhaps was also something of a sonneteer<sup>1</sup>), gives rise to three sonnets which resume in a light-hearted mode and in the context of social verse Gautier's main aspirations in poetry. The first piece is an emasculated

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1. Popelin contributed to the various issues of the Parnasse contemporain and published Cinq octaves de Sonnets (1875), Un Livre de Sonnets (1888) and Poésies complètes (1889).

echo of L'Art, the bi-partite structure of the sonnet being used to contrast the ineluctable effect of the passage of time on the great paintings of the past with the enduring work produced by the skill of the enameller:

Mais toi, mon Claudius, tu fixes ta pensée;  
 Tel que l'ambre une fleur, l'immarcesible émail  
 Contre les ans vaincus abrite ton travail. PC III, 202

The second piece "Écrit sur un exemplaire de la Mode" (PC III, 203), humorously contrasts the frippery surrounding modern beauty and the pure lines of the ancient Venus, asserting the superiority of the latter. The third, entitled Le Sonnet and dedicated "A maître Claudius Popelin, émailleur et poète," is a sonnet on the sonnet, conceived as the pictorial representation of a court ritual:

Les quatrains du Sonnet, sont de bons chevaliers  
 Crêtés de lambrequins, plastronnés d'armoiries,  
 Marchant à pas égaux le long des galeries  
 Ou veillant, lance au poing, droits contre les piliers.

Mais une dame attend au bas des escaliers;  
 Sous son capuchon brun, comme dans les féeries,  
 On voit confusément luire les pierreries;  
 Ils la vont recevoir, graves et réguliers.

Pages de satin blanc, à la housse bouffante,  
 Les tercets, plus légers, la prennent à leur tour  
 Et jusqu'aux pieds du Roi conduisent cette infante.

Là, relevant son voile, apparaît triomphante  
 La Belle, la Diva, digne qu'avec amour  
 Claudius, sur l'émail, en trace le contour. PC III, 204

The concept of the sonnet which emerges from this piece seems quite straightforward - the double presentation of the lady (i.e. the subject of the sonnet) first in the quatrains and then in the tercets, and the progressive revelation of her beauty, reaching a climax in the second tercet. Other features of note are Gautier's love of whimsy and detail, the similarity of the central image with the subject of the non-allegorical, more purely pictorial pieces of Verlaine (Cortège in

Fêtes galantes) and Heredia (La Dogaresse, v. infra p. 329), and of course the closing stress on the theme of the enamel. As a whole the piece appeals to the reader primarily as an example of imaginative virtuosity and the final reference to the enamel serves to intensify this impression.

The association of enamel and sonnet in Gautier's actual poetry is thus very limited indeed. It seems that Gautier in his various articles is concerned to stress the general concept of the supremacy of form, under which the idea of the enamel, the sonnet, and indeed of any genre which places a premium on technical skill may satisfactorily be subsumed. In the main however, his own descriptions are framed in forms more extensive and more flexible than that of the sonnet and no specific link therefore arises in his work between the miniature genre of the enamel and the type of descriptions possible in the limited confines of the sonnet. Subsequently, however, Gautier's successors amongst the Parnassian poets, for the most part less creative and gifted than Gautier himself, tend to turn increasingly to the sonnet form as a guarantee of technical perfection and at the same time to use its diminutive frame as one of the main vehicles of their descriptive poetry. It is at this point that the analogy between the enamel and the sonnet reaches its apogee.

We now come to the last of the three types of sonnet practised by Gautier. As we have just seen, the three sonnets to Popelin reiterate the general emphasis of L'Art on qualities of form, on the value of rules consecrated by tradition, on "correction" and on the durability of a genre governed by these considerations - but in a much less elevated

key, in a tone in fact more suited to the salon.<sup>1</sup> Gautier's sonnets in the later years of his life seem nearly all to fall into this category, consisting mainly of pieces addressed to various ladies, Marie Mattéi, Carlotta Grisi and her daughter Ernesta, Madame Marguerite Dardenne de la Grangerie, and of course the Princesse Mathilde. He also indulged in the party game of "bouts-rimés," one of his offerings being a "sonnet bouts-rimés-acrostiche" on the name of his daughter Estelle (PC III, 283) and written according to Gautier's son-in-law Bergerat, in a quarter of an hour.<sup>2</sup>

For the most part these pieces show little subtlety of content or form, imagery and argument following the most traditional and the most basic of patterns.<sup>3</sup> The two Sonnets à Madame Marguerite Dardenne de la

1. Popelin responded to the compliment in kind with Le Sonnet du Maître:

Ton sonnet, Théophile, en son magique essor,  
 Triomphant et paré comme un beau prince antique,  
 Sur un trône d'ivoire, au-dessous d'un portique,  
 Couvre de son manteau quatorze marches d'or.

Sa voix fait retentir le joyeux quintuor  
 Des rimes, doux écho du verbe poétique;  
 Et, pareil au rajah d'une Inde fantastique,  
 A chaque mouvement il sème un koh-i-nor.

Mais voilà qu'arrachant les palmes immortelles  
 Qui croissent en tous lieux où tu portes tes pas,  
 Il me les jette, à moi que l'on ne connaît pas!

Si bien que quand la gloire, en déployant ses ailes,  
 Conviera ses élus à s'y mettre à couvert,  
 Elle m'accueillera muni du rameau vert.

Popelin, Poésies complètes (Paris, Charpentier, 1889), p. 240. Quoted by Jasinski, PC I, CXXII.

2. Emile Bergerat, Théophile Gautier (Paris, Charpentier, 1879), pp.98-99. Bergerat married Estelle Gautier on 15 May 1872. Bergerat stresses his awareness of the slightness of these pieces but also emphasizes the technical virtuosity they reveal and the therapeutic value of the exercise for the ageing poet: "on l'engageait à se reposer à se défatiguer dans la confection tranquille et paresseuse des petits poèmes qu'il aimait à ciseler: de sonnets," p. xxvi.
3. Great expansion in the use of the sonnet had by now of course taken place, with Les Fleurs du Mal as perhaps the single most influential model.



Grangerie make a play on the name of the lady in a style one feels not unrelated to that of the much mocked Père St. Louis:

Il est, dans la légende, une vierge martyre  
Qui mène en laisse une hydre aux tortueux replis.  
Près d'une roue à dents, tenant en main un lis,  
L'Ange d'Urbain l'a peinte et le monde l'admire.

Aux prés pousse une fleur, qu'en son naïf délire  
L'inquiète amoureuse avec ses doigts pâlis  
Questionne, comptant les pétales cueillis,  
Et suspendant son âme au dernier qu'elle tire.

Mystérieusement, dans son nid de satin,  
Brille un joyau sans prix qui porte un nom latin  
Et dont le troupeau vil dédaigne le mérite.

Ne cherchez pas le mot de l'énigme à côté:  
Martyre, fleur, joyau, vertu, parfum, beauté,  
Tout cela simplement veut dire: MARGUERITE!

PC III, 196

The sonnets to the Princesse Mathilde are full of extravagant phrases, preciousness and flattery.<sup>1</sup> Bonbons et Pommes vertes is a typical example:

Comme un enfant gâté, gorgé de sucreries,  
Se rebute, et convoite avec des yeux ardents  
La pomme acide et verte où s'agacent les dents,  
L'âpre fruit de la haie et les nèfles aigries,

Vous avez en horreur le miel des flatteries,  
Les fades madrigaux dans la bouche fondante,  
Bonbons, plâtre au dehors et sirop au dedans,  
Et ne prenez plus goût qu'au fiel des railleries.

Vous préférez aux fleurs les piquants des chardons,  
Demandant qu'on "vous blâme et non pas qu'on vous loue,"  
Vous que le ciel se plut à combler de ses dons.

Par où vous attaquer? Je ne sais, je l'avoue;  
Et laissant retomber mes flèches en carquois,  
Je vous désobéis pour la première fois!

PC III, 219

In the sonnets grouped by Jasinski under the title Sept Sonnets

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1. Un Douzain de Sonnets was presented by Gautier to the Princess for her birthday on 27 May 1869. Four copies only were printed by Claye. The Princess' copy was bound in purple velvet and, contained within the binding, there was an enamel by Popelin from Jules Crosnier's portrait of the Princess.

à Marie Mattéi, there is however some attempt to "revamp" the love sonnet. Themes are traditional but in five of the seven sonnets, it is the modern details of the love affair which are emphasized, giving a new freshness to the well-worn material of compliment, longing and flattery:

J'aimais autrefois la forme païenne;  
Je m'étais créé, fou d'antiquité,  
Un blanc idéal de marbre sculpté,  
D'hétaïre grecque ou milésienne.  
  
Maintenant j'adore une Italienne,  
Un type accompli de modernité,  
Qui met des gilets, fume et prend du thé,  
Et qu'on croit Anglaise ou Parisienne.

PC III, 182

Perhaps the most charming blend of old and new elements is provided by Modes et Chiffons, published in the Revue de Paris of 1 January 1852:

Si comme Pétrarque et le vieux Ronsard,  
Viole d'amour ou lyre païenne,  
De fins concettis à l'italienne,  
Je savais orner un sonnet plein d'art,  
  
Je vous en ferais, fée au bleu regard,  
Dans le pur toscan que l'on parle à Sienne,  
Ou dans un gaulois de saveur ancienne,  
Sur votre arrivée ou votre départ;  
  
Sur vos gilets blancs et vos amazones,  
Sur les frais chapeaux, roses, noirs ou jaunes,  
Que fleurit pour vous madame Royer;  
  
Sur le Chantilly bordant vos mantilles,  
Sur vos peppermints et sur vos manilles;  
Mais je n'en fais qu'un - pour te l'envoyer.

PC III, 183

Indeed the whole piece depends on the light and knowing contrast effected by the poet between the traditional and the modern. Thus the quatrains develop the idea of the skill of the great sonnetists of the past, assimilating the poet's lady in the process to the status of the ladies celebrated by Petrarch and Ronsard. The tercets then raise the contrast of her specifically modern accoutrements and tastes, these

being the things that give her her peculiar charm for the poet. Finally, in line 14, the initial contrast set out in the quatrains between the old poets and the new, is humorously resolved in favour of the former. The sonnet structure thus supports a skilful pattern of symmetry and opposition, the ladies celebrated by the poets being presented as dissimilar but equal, the modern poet as similar but inferior to his illustrious predecessors.

As with the four other sonnets including a distinctly modern thematic element, the metre used here is the decasyllable.<sup>1</sup> This of course was the metre of both the Italian sonnetist and initially also of Ronsard, who only adopted the alexandrine in the 1555 Amours. It may be that, addressing his poem to an Italian, Gautier felt it amusingly appropriate to use this particular metre. Perhaps too he thought it would help to underline the link with his predecessors which is one of the themes of the sonnet. More important though, and borne out by the

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1. Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, Histoire des oeuvres de Théophile Gautier (Paris, Charpentier, 1887), II, 2, gives two other projected openings for Modes et Chiffons, one in octosyllables, one in alexandrines:

Si j'étais Pétrarque ou Ronsard,  
 Prenant une lyre païenne  
 Ou la mandore italienne  
 Je vous chanterais avec art

.....

Si j'étais ou Pétrarque, ou Shakespeare, ou Ronsard,  
 Maniant la mandore ou la lyre païenne  
 De concettis, suivant la mode italienne,  
 Je voudrais pailleter un sonnet avec art.

Et je vous en ferais, démon au bleu regard,  
 Dans l'antique toscan qui se conserve à Sienne  
 ...

The octosyllable produces an effect dangerously close to doggerel. The alexandrine, on the other hand, lacks the lightness and verve of the final decasyllabic version. V. also supra, pp. 77-79.

use of the decasyllable in the other four sonnets, would seem to be the light unrheterical effect associated with that metre which consorts easily with the inherently trivial, though emotionally important detail surrounding the modern love affair and giving it its characteristic flavour.

Syntactic arrangements within the sonnet structure also contribute to this sense of lightness and brio. The piece consists of only two syntactic groups. The first of these is a single sentence running from line 1 to line 13, the different sections of which are poised across the main sonnet divisions at lines 8-9 and 11-12. Then in contrast comes the syntactic detachment of the single clause of line 14 which resolves the argument of the preceding thirteen lines in a mock-modest pirouette.

Gautier creates here a sonnet whose teasing tone and light unrheterical approach has a charm lacking in the sonnets to the Princesse Mathilde. Of course in the latter Gautier is not on an equal footing with the lady and casts himself in the role of "son bouffon Gautier."<sup>1</sup> Hence, it might be claimed, the sentimentality and sententiousness characteristic of these pieces. It is however also worth emphasizing that Modes et Chiffons is contemporary with Emaux et Camées, pre-dating by ten to fifteen years the sonnets to the Princess and her circle. One could therefore also see the later sonnets as part of a wider pattern of failing creativity.

Paradoxically then the time of Gautier's greatest sonnet output is also the time of his weakest and most stereotyped use of the sonnet form. How significant then can his contribution to the evolution of the genre in nineteenth century French poetry be said to be? Following Sainte-

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1. "Sous cette véranda . . .," one of the "bouts-rimés" sonnets, PC III, 278.

Beuve's lead, Gautier as a young poet experimented briefly with the use of the sonnet as a vehicle for the expression of melancholy. But Joseph Delorme had gone before. Gautier's efforts in this direction were derivative rather than innovative, though they are significant as evidence of a continuing interest in the genre and demonstrate how the sonnet had become one of the modes in which every young poet must try his hand. However Gautier does suggest a new possibility for the sonnet by moving away from emotional analysis and using the structural features of the genre as a basis for visual description. The number of occasions on which this occurs are relatively few, Gautier preferring on the whole longer and more flexible forms where he can indulge his passion for detail and where too, if he desires, he can reflect more freely on the scene or picture he depicts. Unlike the Parnassian poets of the 1860's, Gautier appears to foresee and in the main avoid the dangers inherent in the tendency of the sonnet to schematize and codify. Miniaturizing and moralizing are evaded by recourse to other genres. The association by Gautier of the description or "transposition d'art" with the sonnet is only the merest germ of its later development in the work of Heredia. However Gautier's general attitude on questions of technique, his emphasis on poetry as a craft, and his belief (developed in the 1830's in reaction to the social and moral bias of literature in the wake of the July Revolution) in the autonomous value of the work of art, in the literary sphere as well as in that of the fine arts, had considerable repercussions in the development of nineteenth century poetry in general and the sonnet in particular. The idea of an "art difficile" comes to the fore and in that context, a fixed form such

as that of the sonnet tends to become both a challenge and a guarantee, acting simultaneously as a prototype of perfection and providing a yardstick by which achievement can be measured. From an early point in his career, Gautier insisted on the need for adherence to the rules of the sonnet form, particularly the observance of rimes embrassées in the quatrains and quatrains on two rhymes only, and except in his first three sonnets strictly practised this rule himself. That such a conception could place very severe restrictions on the poet and might often be felt as an impediment may be one conclusion to be drawn from Gautier's own relatively limited use of the form. He admires it as one model of the idea of "l'art difficile" but in practice makes only infrequent use of it - at least in his best work all produced by 1852. The confusion which he initiates however between "correction" and perfection is perpetuated by the Parnassian group of the 1860's and finally codified in Théodore de Banville's account of the sonnet in his Petit Traité de poésie française. Gautier finding "correction" restrictive seeks perfection elsewhere, but some of the Parnassian brethren convinced themselves that the two concepts were identical and that production of a sonnet, especially a "correct" one, was ipso facto the pinnacle of artistic achievement.

Musset

Musset, like Gautier, makes only slight use of the sonnet form in his earlier work, and the increase in the number of his sonnets subsequently seems, as in the case of Gautier, to coincide with a slackening in the poet's creativity. Musset's first collection, Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie, published in December 1829 with the date 1830 and thus preceding by six months Gautier's Poésies, contains only 1 sonnet out of 16 items, "Que j'aime le premier frisson d'hiver...." By 1840 Musset had published only 3 more sonnets,<sup>1</sup> and it is not until the publication of the Poésies nouvelles (1840-49) in 1850, that there is a noticeable increase in Musset's sonnet output. This volume contained 14 sonnets out of a total of 51 pieces, the second edition of 1851 17 sonnets out of a total of 57. Some of these later pieces had in fact been composed prior to 1840, but even taking dates of composition into account, the figures still show that Musset wrote twice as many sonnets in the post 1838 period as he did before it (11 up to and including 1835, 20 from 1838 onwards). These proportions seem clearly to suggest that his recourse to the form is linked with the failure, ultimately traceable to the affair with George Sand, of Musset's own characteristic aesthetic where love, life and poetry were conceived as virtually

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1. One further sonnet, A Madame N. Ménessier, had been published by Madame Ménessier herself. See details of Musset's sonnet output in Appendix A.

synonymous activities.<sup>1</sup>

Are Musset's sonnets then merely evidence of a lyrical bankruptcy? Does his capricious and volatile temperament only accept the constraints of the sonnet form because its mainspring is broken? This certainly seems to be true of many of the later sonnets. Musset is, of course, in the broadest sense, always an occasional poet, but the encounters and exchanges commemorated in these pieces are peripheral to his emotional state at that time, and they reveal nothing of either the intensity of feeling of the great lyric poems of 1835 to 1837 or of the technical virtuosity of the poems of his first collection. But, in a very few instances, it may happen that the sense of isolation and failure that was Musset's from at least the time of the writing of "A Trente Ans" onwards, is itself taken as the subject of the sonnet, and when that happens, the intensity and urgency of the emotion can be the source of a new and original note in the form.

It is clear for the reasons just discussed that detailed study of all of Musset's sonnets would be a pointless and unrewarding exercise. Instead I should like to concentrate on the two sonnets which seem best to illustrate his originality in the form as well as the general importance

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1. See Musset, Correspondance, ed. Léon Séché (Paris, Mercure de France, 1907), p. 16. Letter to Paul Foucher, 19 Oct. 1827: "... la poésie chez moi est soeur de l'amour. - L'une fait naître l'autre, et ils viennent toujours ensemble," and Musset, Un mot sur l'art moderne, published in the Revue des deux mondes, 1 Sept. 1833 (Oeuvres complètes en prose, ed. M. Allem in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1971), p. 882: "Il n'y a pas d'art, il n'y a que des hommes ... Voilà un sculpteur qui lève sur sa planche sa main pleine d'argile. Où est l'art, je vous prie? Est-ce un fil de la bonne Vierge qui traverse les airs? Est-ce le lointain murmure des conseils d'une coterie des doctrines d'un journal, des souvenirs de l'atelier? L'art c'est le sentiment; et chacun sent à sa manière. Savez-vous où est l'art? dans la tête de l'homme, dans son coeur, dans sa main, jusqu'au bout de ses ongles.  
A moins que vous n'appeliez de ce nom l'esprit d'imitation, la règle seule, l'éternelle momie que la pédanterie embaume; alors vous pouvez dire, en effet, que l'art meurt ou qu'il se ranime."



of the form in the work of a young writer of talent in the early 1830's and the development of certain characteristics prefiguring work in the field by a writer such as Verlaine. The two sonnets are "Que j'aime le premier frisson" from Musset's first collection Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie and Tristesse, first published in La Revue des deux mondes of 1 December 1841.

Sonnet

Que j'aime le premier frisson d'hiver! le chaume,  
Sous le pied du chasseur, refusant de ployer!  
Quand vient la pie aux champs que le foin vert embaume,  
Au fond du vieux château s'éveille le foyer;  
  
C'est le temps de la ville. - Oh! lorsque l'an dernier,  
J'y revins, que je vis ce bon Louvre et son dôme,  
Paris et sa fumée, et tout ce beau royaume  
(J'entends encore au vent les postillons crier),  
  
Que j'aimais ce temps gris, ces passants, et la Seine  
Sous ses mille falots assise en souveraine!  
J'allais revoir l'hiver. - Et toi, ma vie, et toi!  
  
Oh! dans tes longs regards j'allais tremper mon âme;  
Je saluais tes murs. - Car, qui m'eût dit, madame,  
Que votre âme sitôt avait changé pour moi?<sup>1</sup>

This sonnet is included in the section Chansons à mettre en musique et fragments of the Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie, where it is preceded by Venise and Stances and followed by Ballade à la Lune. This position would seem to indicate quite clearly that Musset is using the form in imitation this time of Sainte-Beuve, just as in the general conception of the Contes and in particular poems such as the Ballade à la Lune he follows and sometimes exceeds, whether involuntarily or deliberately, the Hugo of Les Orientales. After Joseph Delorme, one sonnet at least was de rigueur for every young poet. Musset's sonnet does, however, show certain features which distinguish it quite clearly from those of Sainte-Beuve, and which reveal a much more thoroughgoing Romanticism. Sainte-Beuve had generally

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1. Poésies complètes, ed. M. Allem in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1962), p. 83. Henceforward PC.

employed the "regular" sonnet rhyme-scheme, but even in his first sonnet Musset refuses to accept such externally imposed regimentation. The freedom shown here in the arrangement of the quatrain rhymes - abab baab - persists in nearly all his subsequent sonnets. There are only four examples of the "regular" sonnet, A Madame G ("C'est mon avis ..."), A M.V.H., Sonnet à Madame M.N. ("Je vous ai vue enfant ...") and Une Promenade au Jardin des Plantes. The rest, although almost never infringing the rule of two rhymes only in the quatrains as Baudelaire was to do, employ most of the permutations available in the two rhyme arrangement.<sup>1</sup> In a large proportion of cases, about two to one, Musset contrives to end the quatrains, as here, on the b rhyme, an important factor in creating an impression of mobility which the abba abba arrangement of the "regular" sonnet with its final return to the first rhyme tends to hinder.

This weakening of the outline of the regular rhyme-scheme is in no way reversed by Musset's choice of words at the rhyme. Except for the rhyme "ployer" - "foyer" (lines 2 and 4), rhyme is sufficient only. This is not, of course, a feature unique to this sonnet, or to Musset's other sonnets, but it is part of Musset's deliberate breaking away from what he had come to consider as the excessive technical emphasis of Victor Hugo. Sainte-Beuve, whose own sonnets similarly fail to reflect the views advanced in A la Rime, indicates Musset's "affectation et prétention de la négligence" and recalls his substitution of "Amaëgui" for "Ameoni" as the name of his "Andalouse," in order to avoid the rich rhyme with "bruni":

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1. An example of a 4-rhyme arrangement in the quatrains is to be found in A Madame N. Ménessier, PC, p. 130. The pattern here is highly irregular - abba ccdd ccefef. In addition the piece is in alexandrines but has a final line which is an octosyllable.

Il a voulu rompre avec l'école dite de la forme, et, en rimant mal exprès, il a cru donner une ruade au Cénacle.<sup>1</sup>

Musset himself indicates and defends his method in his letter of January 1830 to his uncle Desherbiers:

Je te demande grâce pour des phrases contournées; je m'en crois revenu. Tu verras des rimes faibles; j'ai eu un but en les faisant, et sais à quoi m'en tenir sur leur compte; mais il était important de se distinguer de cette école rimeuse, qui a voulu reconstruire et ne s'est adressée qu'à la forme, croyant rebâtir en replâtrant.<sup>2</sup>

The Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie is, as the title suggests, a hybrid collection, a combination of imitation (the second half of the title symptomatic of the influence of Hugo) and originality. The word Contes suggests the attempt to achieve a greater spontaneity, a more direct and intimate rapport between poet and reader, to "mettre la poésie en déshabillé"<sup>3</sup> and rid it of those superfluous constraints which interpose themselves between emotion and its expression and falsify the initial sentiment. As far as this sonnet is concerned, the absence of rich rhyme, especially with the variations from the "regular" arrangement, means that the formal shape of the sonnet is less sharply underlined and that a greater feeling of flexibility is achieved.

In contrast to this cavalier attitude to Cénacle insistence on the importance of the rhyme, the rhythmic structure of this sonnet bears the clear imprint of Romantic innovations in versification. Syntax and metre no longer coincide. Of course, by Romantic standards, there is nothing particularly extreme here. One thinks of Musset's own lines in Les Marrons du Feu:

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1. Sainte-Beuve, "Alfred de Musset 1833," Portraits contemporains, II, 195, note 1.  
2. Correspondance, ed. Séché, p. 23.  
3. Sainte-Beuve, "Alfred de Musset," Causeries du Lundi, XIII, 366.

RAFAËL: Tiens.  
 PALFORIO: Ah!  
 CYDALISE: Vous l'avez tué.  
 RAFAËL: Non.  
 CYDALISE: Si fait.  
 RAFAËL: Non.  
 ROSE: Si fait.  
 RAFAËL: Bah!<sup>1</sup>

But this is theatrical dialogue. The introduction of such innovations even on a minor scale into the sonnet form will have much more serious repercussions, upsetting the balance between the different sections of the poem. In this sonnet, the enjambements from line 1 to line 2 and line 9 to line 10 are less important than the continuation of the syntactical construction which blurs the division between the two quatrains and between the second quatrain and the first tercet. Instead of falling into the three sections of the sonnet structure, syntactically lines 1-11 divide into two groups arranged in a chiastic pattern, "Que j'aime" and the time clause "Quand vient la pie" and the time clauses "lorsque ... je revins, que je vis" and the exclamation "Que j'aimais." The first group is only concluded after the beginning of the second quatrain and the second group comprises the rest of the second quatrain and the first tercet. However, though the poet thus reduces the significance of the most obvious features of the sonnet form, he still relies heavily on the symmetries and parallels available in its structure. The overrun in line 5 is repeated in line 11 and line 13, "C'est le temps de la ville," "J'allais revoir l'hiver," "Je saluais tes murs," the poet calculating on the discrepancy between syntactical actuality and metrical expectation to increase the effect of studied casualness, aimed at in the parenthetical constructions of lines 1, 6, 7, 8 and 9. The traditional sonnet divisions also still play their part in the more general

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1. Les Marrons du Feu, sc. 7, PC, pp. 49-50.

organization of theme. Thus the syntactic overrun of line 5 is no overrun in the thematic sense. "C'est le temps de la ville" introduces winter in its city, as opposed to its country, aspect and provides the transition to the idea of a winter in the heart as finally emerges in the tercets: "J'allais revoir l'hiver. - Et toi, ma vie, et toi!" Similarly the main division of the sonnet structure is used to stress the all important time factor, "Que j'aime" (line 1) and the present and past historic tenses of the quatrains being replaced by the "Que j'aimais" (line 9) and the other mournful imperfects of the tercets. In addition, by use of the parenthesis of line 8, the poet provides a secondary confrontation of past time with his present situation. In the tercets, the reference to the Seine is used to balance, though without any specific play on the word "souveraine," reference to the lady.<sup>1</sup> Instead the water image is carried on into the final tercet "tremper mon âme." Finally the change from "tutoiement" to "vouvoiement" in the last four lines reflects the change in the relationship indicated by the major tense change of line 9, as well as contrasting clearly in its formality with the youthful enthusiasm of the first 12 lines conveyed by the syntactical manipulations and the deliberate eschewing of a complex rhyme-scheme.

Musset approaches the sonnet with a deceptive casualness which cloaks an ability to manipulate the form for implied as well as explicit contrast. The weakening of the outer structure here provides the contrast of tone with the formality of lines 13 and 14 which is the crux of the lovers' collapsed relationship. Choosing the sonnet form here no doubt on account of its popularity with the Cénacle at the time, he handles it with far

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1. "Souveraine" does however pick up "royaume" in line 7 and perhaps thus helps to reinforce the idea of the speaker's lost "kingship" where the lady - and her surroundings - are concerned.

more freedom than its popularizer Sainte-Beuve, using its potential for internal patterns to illustrate the cruel mixture of illusion and deception.

Tristesse, "cet admirable et affligeant sonnet final" as Sainte-Beuve called it,<sup>1</sup> was written nearly eleven years after "Que j'aime le premier frisson ..." and shows a depth of experience and an intensity of feeling foreign to the earlier poem. How does the preoccupation with individual emotional experience over and above all formal considerations ("Qu'importe le flacon pourvu qu'on ait l'ivresse"<sup>2</sup>) consort with the acceptance here of the constraints inherent in the sonnet form?

J'ai perdu ma force et ma vie,  
Et mes amis et ma gaieté;  
J'ai perdu jusqu'à la fierté  
Qui faisait croire à mon génie.  
  
Quand j'ai connu la Vérité,  
J'ai cru que c'était une amie;  
Quand je l'ai comprise et sentie,  
J'en étais déjà dégoûté.  
  
Et pourtant elle est éternelle,  
Et ceux qui se sont passés d'elle  
Ici-bas ont tout ignoré.  
  
Dieu parle, il faut qu'on lui réponde.  
Le seul bien qui me reste au monde  
Est d'avoir quelquefois pleuré.

PC, p. 402

The most noticeable feature of this sonnet is the difference in quality between the quatrains and the tercets. In the former, Musset has adapted the structural parallels and oppositions to produce a profound but unrheterical assessment of his situation in the manner rather of the "chanson." The two quatrains show an identical syntactic/structural

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1. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du Lundi, XIII, 375.  
2. Dédicace to La Coupe et les Lèvres, PC, p. 157. Cp. Gautier, La Vraie Esthétique, PC, ed. R. Jasinski (Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1932), III, 218:

La forme aux yeux donne une fête!  
Qu'il soit plein de Falerne ou d'eau prise au ravin,  
Qu'importe! si le verre a le profil divin!  
Le parfum envolé, reste la cassolette.

arrangement, each being divided into two equal sections, the second of which repeats the construction of the first. It is true that the two stanzas are differentiated by the dissimilar functions of the repetitions. In the first quatrain, the reiteration of "J'ai perdu" is emphatic, stressing the totality and irreversibility of the poet's loss. In the second, the repetition is less complete and works contrastively, the opposition of "Quand j'ai connu la Vérité" and "Quand je l'ai comprise et sentie" underlining the gulf between a superficial knowledge and one grounded in full emotional and intellectual experience.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless it is the sonnet's potential for repetition that is chiefly brought into play at this stage and not its dialectic possibilities. This aspect is heightened still further by the poet's concern with phonetic pattern. Rhyme is not strictly regular (abba baab),<sup>2</sup> and the poet thus avoids the highly stylized effect of the "correct" sonnet. At the same time, however, more fluid webs of assonance and alliteration are of key importance. Direct repetition of whole phrases is complemented by such devices as the internal rhyme provided by "perdu," "connu," "cru," and the reflection of the i vowel, which is one of the rhyme sounds in the quatrains, in "amis" (1.2) and "comprise" and "sentie" (1.3). In the latter example, alliteration is an important feature also. A similar pattern occurs in line 8 with "déjà dégoûté." The simple syntax and the shortness and lightness of the octosyllable thus acquire a depth and resonance which subtly suggest the emotional intensity of the theme.

This technique, reminiscent of the traditional "chanson," is not however maintained in the tercets. Whereas Musset has skilfully and

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1. The variant "Quand je l'ai conquise" in a manuscript of the Fonds Lovenjoul (F. 8172, f 182) is clearly much less satisfactory.
  2. M. Allem, PC, p. 806, note 3, following a note in an article of M. Grégoire Morgulès, "Autour d'un sonnet de Sainte-Beuve," Revue de littérature comparée, juillet-septembre 1934, p. 481, indicates this sonnet as one of the two regular sonnets written by Musset, loosely defining "regularity" as the two rhymes only system in the quatrains. It is clear that M. Allem is mistaken here both in his general contention (Musset in fact wrote 4 regular sonnets, v. supra p.100) and with regard to this particular sonnet.

subtly exploited the parallel structure of the two quatrains, there is no corresponding adaptation of significant features of the tercet structure. The turning point of the sonnet in line 9 seems rather to be the signal for an abandonment of the authentic personal note - "J'ai perdu," "j'ai connu," "j'ai cru" etc. - for a series of impersonal and conventional formulae on "Life," and even when the personal element reappears in the last two lines, it takes the form of a Romantic cliché whose glibness is all the more obvious for its placing in the climactic position of the sonnet. This general sententiousness is in no way diminished by the fact that the 3:3 structural pattern of the tercets is emphasized without subtlety by a 3:3 pattern of syntax and a 3:3 pattern of rhyme. In addition, the octosyllable, potentially always close to doggerel as Gautier was to remark,<sup>1</sup> takes on the colour of the thematic motifs and structural patterns with which it is associated. There is no exploitation of phonetic patterns as in the quatrains to create an effect of emotional intensity and the shortness of the octosyllable merely echoes and emphasizes the banality and unimagination of the tercet lines.

Tristesse, then, can only be seen as a flawed attempt, "admirable et affligeant" indeed, reflecting both Musset's genius and his poetic bankruptcy. As far as the development of the French nineteenth century sonnet is concerned, its interest is twofold. On the one hand, Musset in using the form to express an experience of genuine emotional deprivation goes much further than Sainte-Beuve in any of the sonnets of Joseph Delorme in the expression of "les douleurs individuelles." On the other, by his introduction into the sonnet form of "la note chantante,"<sup>2</sup> by his adaptation of the parallels and symmetries of the sonnet to create an effect of song, he seems to anticipate the experiments of Verlaine. Musset's

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1. In the article on Scarron, Les Grotesques, pp.352-353, v. supra p.79.  
 2. Sainte-Beuve, "Alfred de Musset," Causeries du Lundi, XIII, 364.



attempt in Tristesse is an imperfect one, but while the fault must be partially ascribed to Musset's failing talents, it can also be said to be to some extent inherent in the nature of the form itself. Some of the structural features of the sonnet undoubtedly lend themselves to techniques of repetition etc. characteristic of folk-song, but others, for example the arrangement of quatrains followed by the briefer structure of the tercets, create a desire for increasing precision, for a logical conclusion to what has gone before, that runs counter to the apparent simplicity of such songs. It seems significant to note that Verlaine's greatest successes in this area are achieved in forms that are his own invention and hence less restrictive than the established one of the sonnet.

In conclusion it remains to be emphasized once more that the sonnet is not extensively used by Musset and that few of the ones he produced, even including those written to George Sand, are anything more than "des billets." It is therefore dangerous to attribute to the poet more importance than is warranted by the amount and general quality of his sonnet production. His use of the sonnet in his first collection bears the mark of the example of the Cénacle and his success in Tristesse is an isolated one, a rare example of a conjunction between the unique personal note which for Musset is the key to poetry and a restricted, pre-defined form in which in most cases Musset perceived nothing more than an instrument of elevated social intercourse:

Bonjour, ami sonnet, si doux, si bienveillant,  
 Poésie, amitié que le vulgaire ignore,  
 Gentil bouquet de fleurs, de larmes tout brillant,  
 Que dans un noble coeur un soupir fait éclore.

Sonnet à Madame M.N., PC, pp. 438-439

## Nerval

Nerval's work in the sonnet is limited to the 12 sonnets which he finally collected and published as Les Chimères at the end of Les Filles du Feu (1854) and a further 7 or so sonnets revealed by twentieth century editors.<sup>1</sup> His use of the genre is of particular interest however, since it provides the first example in French nineteenth century poetry of a full appreciation of the sonnet's various formal possibilities coupled with a recognition of their peculiar suitability for his own thematic preoccupations.

Criticism of Les Chimères has however concerned itself almost entirely with exegesis. Relatively little attention has been paid to Nerval's choice and manipulation of the sonnet and how this may tie in with his efforts to bring order out of chaos and establish a stable frame of reference for his life. Léon Cellier in a Note bibliographique to Gérard de Nerval, l'homme et l'oeuvre (1956)<sup>2</sup> commented "L'étude stylistique est encore à faire" and listed in this connexion a single article on versification. This piece by Yves Le Hir entitled "La versification de Gérard de Nerval," includes a section on the sonnet, but, as in the rest of the article, the author confines himself to

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1. For additional details on the number of Nerval's sonnets, see Appendix A. Vers dorés, Delfica, and the 5-sonnet sequence Le Christ aux Oliviers were published under the collective title Mysticisme in the Petits Châteaux de Bohême (1852 and 1853). All 7 had been previously published in the 1840's: Le Christ aux Oliviers in L'Artiste, 31 Mar. 1844; Vers dorés in L'Artiste, 16 Mar. 1845; Delfica in L'Artiste, 28 Dec. 1845. El Desdichado was first published in Le Mousquetaire, 10 Dec. 1853. Myrtho, Horus, Antéros and Artémis first appeared in Les Filles du Feu (Jan. 1854). Nerval's other sonnets were published by twentieth century editors with the exception of La Tête armée, published in the 1877 Lévy edition of the Poésies complètes and Epitaphe, published in the Petite Revue Internationale of 30 May 1897.
  2. Léon Cellier, Gérard de Nerval, l'homme et l'oeuvre (Paris, Hatier-Boivin, 1956).

purely external technical detail. He gives a list of the rhyme-schemes of the different sonnets but there is no attempt to link prosodic technique with thematic patterns. The section on the sonnet concludes lamely and superficially:

Naturellement il est impossible d'affirmer que ces divers arrangements de rimes répondent à des intentions esthétiques définies. Il faut y voir avant tout le désir de rompre des cadres conventionnellement étroits et ainsi de surprendre l'oreille.<sup>1</sup>

Marie-Jeanne Durry in Gérard de Nerval et le mythe (1956) offers more general but more suggestive indications, stressing the contrast between Nerval's choice of a fixed form and the confused nature of his spiritual and emotional experience:

Si peu maître de son destin et des égarements de son esprit, il a eu la maîtrise géniale d'enfermer la fixité et le tourbillonnement de ses hantises dans la forme la plus rigoureuse, et avec plus d'exigence quant aux rimes qu'aucun praticien de l'art pour l'art ...

Le caractère unique, aujourd'hui encore, d'El Desdichado, d'Artémis, d'Erythrée, vient pour une part du contraste vertiginieux entre ce resserrement du moule et le volume de la matière incandescente qui s'y solidifie et s'y évapore.<sup>2</sup>

However there is no detailed analysis of the individual sonnets and their structure.

In 1958 Henri Meschonnic in an article, "Essai sur la poétique de Nerval," has a section entitled "La composition du sonnet."<sup>3</sup> Like Durry, Meschonnic stresses the importance for Nerval of the density imposed by the sonnet and the way in which formal continuity carries logical discontinuity. In line with this he indicates Nerval's tendency to

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1. Yves Le Hir, "La versification de Gérard de Nerval," Lettres Romanes, X (1956), 416.
  2. Marie-Jeanne Durry, Gérard de Nerval et le mythe (Paris, Flammarion, 1956), p. 174.
  3. Henri Meschonnic, "Essai sur la poétique de Nerval," Europe no. 353 (1958), 10-33.

play down any patterns of comparison and contrast within the octave-sestet structure and to develop each stanza individually. Thematic isolation of the final tercet is, he claims, particularly frequent. In addition standard rhyme-scheme is not always observed. However Meschonnic confines himself to stating these points within the space of a single page and then quickly passes on to consideration of the architecture of Les Chimères as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Some ten years later George René Humphrey spends five pages in L'Esthétique de la poésie de Gérard de Nerval (1969) on a general survey of the sonnet in France in the first part of the nineteenth century and its earlier use by the Pléiade and in particular Du Bellay.<sup>2</sup> However this account is very superficial, ending once again with a comparison of rhyme-schemes and the subsequent analyses of Les Chimères give little insight into Nerval's skill and originality in his use of the sonnet form. Still more recently, Norma Rinsler in the introduction to her edition of Les Chimères (1973) has a couple of pages on the sources for Nerval's sonnet. Direct reference to Nerval's own contribution to the genre is very brief. However the comments on Nerval's language and particularly on his choice of imagery provide a helpful insight into his preference for the sonnet form:

The absolute specificity which characterises Nerval's more obviously personal images should warn us ... to be careful when interpreting those images in his poems which seem to be common property ...

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1. There is thus no discussion of the fact that 8 of the 12 sonnets of Les Chimères (the sequence Le Christ aux Oliviers, Vers dorés, El Desdichado, Artémis) fail to show any striking isolation of the final tercet. Nor is the point made that although Nerval does not always keep to the abba abba arrangement of rhyme in the quatrains he never constructs his quatrains on more than 2 rhymes.
  2. George René Humphrey, L'Esthétique de la poésie de Gérard de Nerval (Paris, Nizet, 1969), pp. 232-238.

The essence of the poet's meaning lies not in the series of particular incidents or figures of which the sonnets speak, but precisely in the coherence which the sonnet creates between the various elements of his experience. He is trying to sum up and make sense of that experience, of his whole life indeed, and the sense only becomes tangible when he has succeeded in expressing it within the bounds of a strict poetic form.<sup>1</sup>

The most useful comment for Nerval's sonnet is however provided by two articles by Alison Fairlie, not in fact directly concerned with the topic. These are firstly "An Approach to Nerval"<sup>2</sup> which provides a suggestive analysis of the thematic organization of the poems, emphasizing "the shift from apparently random chaos to reiterated pattern."<sup>3</sup> Clearly there is here an idea to which the formal structures of the sonnet might be fruitfully related. The other article, "Nerval et Richelet"<sup>4</sup> deals with Nerval's use of rich rhyme, a further formal manifestation of the repetitive principle. These two articles provide the basis for this discussion of Nerval's increasing ability to match thematic and formal structures and the density of effect he ultimately achieves in his manipulation of the sonnet form.

The Academy competition of 1826 which inspired Sainte-Beuve's Tableau historique et critique de la poésie française et du théâtre français au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle also seems to have had a significant part in the formation of the poetic technique of Gérard de Nerval. Nerval's first

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1. Les Chimères, ed. Norma Rinsler (University of London, Athlone Press, 1973), p. 37.
  2. Alison Fairlie, "An Approach to Nerval," in Studies in Modern French Literature presented to P. Mansell Jones (Manchester U.P., 1961), pp. 89-100.
  3. Ibid., p. 93.
  4. Alison Fairlie, "Nerval et Richelet," Revue des Sciences Humaines, 1958, pp. 397-400.

collection of poetry, Napoléon et la France guerrière, élégies nationales, published in 1826, while the poet was still at school, "promettaient, disaient les professeurs, un émule à Casimir Delavigne."<sup>1</sup> This orthodox vein is however abandoned in Nerval's subsequent work, replaced in the 1830's by the odelette and in the 1840's and 1850's by the sonnet, both popular sixteenth century forms.

Nerval's entry for the 1826 competition has never been found. However in 1830 he did publish a Choix de Poésies de Ronsard, Du Bellay, Baff, Belleau, Du Barthas, Chassignet, Desportes, Régnier, preceded by a short study Les Poètes du seizième siècle. It is not clear to what extent this study repeats the essay of 1826, but when Nerval republished Les Poètes du seizième siècle as Chapter VI of La Bohême galante in L'Artiste in 1852, he did introduce it with a reference to the Academy competition:

... vous m'avez rappelé, mon cher Houssaye, qu'il s'agissait de causer poésie, et j'y arrive incidemment.  
- Reprenons cet "air académique" que vous m'avez reproché.

Je crois bien que vous vouliez faire allusion au mémoire que j'ai adressé autrefois à l'Institut, à l'époque où il s'agissait d'un concours sur l'histoire de la poésie au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. J'en ai retrouvé quelques fragments qui intéresseront peut-être les lecteurs de L'Artiste ...<sup>2</sup>

In Les Poètes du seizième siècle Nerval quotes extensively from Du Bellay's Deffense et Illustration and criticizes the Pléiade's preoccupation with the literature of Antiquity in preference to their own national tradition of folksong and fabliau. On the positive side,

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1. Gautier, Portraits et souvenirs littéraires (Paris, Charpentier, 1885), p. 7.
  2. Nerval, Oeuvres I, 1170. All references to Nerval's work relate, unless otherwise stated, to the 2 vol. edition of the Oeuvres, ed. Albert Béguin and Jean Richer in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade series (Paris, Gallimard, 1952-1956). Note that it is the 1956 printing of both volumes that has been consulted.

however, he admires their technical skill and the ability this gives them to transform commonplaces into something fresh and new:

... dans tous les genres qui ne demandent pas une grande force de création, dans tous les genres de poésie gracieuse et légère, [l'école de Ronsard] a surpassé et les poètes qui l'avaient précédée, et beaucoup de ceux qui l'ont suivie. Dans ces sortes de composition aussi, l'imitation classique est moins sensible: les petites odes de Ronsard, par exemple, semblent la plupart inspirées, plutôt par les chansons du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle, qu'elles surpassent souvent encore en naïveté et en fraîcheur: ses sonnets aussi, et quelques-uns de ses élégies, sont empreints du véritable sentiment poétique ...<sup>1</sup>

Looking back in 1852, Nerval records in La Bohème galante, Chapter VII, the effect of the sixteenth century poets on his own work:

En ce temps, je ronsardisais - pour me servir d'un mot de Malherbe. Il s'agissait alors pour nous, jeunes gens, de rehausser la vieille versification française, affaiblie par les langueurs du dix-huitième siècle, troublée par les brutalités des novateurs trop ardents ...

- Mais, me direz-vous, il faut enfin montrer ces premiers vers, ces juvenilia. "Sonnez-moi ces sonnets," comme disait Dubellay.

Eh bien! étant admise l'étude assidue de ces vieux poètes, croyez bien que je n'ai nullement cherché à en faire le pastiche, mais que leurs formes de style m'impressionnaient malgré moi, comme il est arrivé à beaucoup de poètes de notre temps.

Les odelettes, ou petites odes de Ronsard, m'avaient servi de modèle ... La forme concentrée de l'odelette ne me paraissait pas moins précieuse à conserver que celle du sonnet, où Ronsard s'est inspiré si heureusement de Pétrarque ...

O I,97

However, while Nerval published the majority of his odelettes in the 1830's, his first published sonnets were the sequence Le Christ aux Oliviers which appeared in L'Artiste of 31 March 1844. Nerval's interest in the poetry of the sixteenth century cannot therefore be directly connected with pioneering work in the revival of the sonnet as is the

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1. Nerval, Oeuvres, ed. in 2 vols. by Henri Lemaître (Paris, Garnier, 1958 ), pp. 951-952.

case with Sainte-Beuve. The link between his reading of the sixteenth century poets and his ultimate use of the sonnet is however materially evident in his transposition into his own sonnet A Madame Sand of a quatrain of a Du Bartas sonnet reproduced in full in the 1830 Choix de Poésies.

Norma Rinsler uses this single instance to suggest a general influence on Nerval's sonnets by the sonnets of Du Bartas,<sup>1</sup> but the evidence does not seem to support such a conclusion. The Du Bartas sonnet is the eighth in a sequence of nine sonnets, Sonnets des Neuf Muses Pyrenees, written partly in praise of Henry of Navarre, partly in warning, apparently to deter him from undertaking a military expedition into Spanish Navarre.<sup>2</sup> Numbers I, II, and VI use the comparative and climactic structures of the sonnet for the traditional hyperbolic praise of the king. In Number III celebration of the glories of the river Auriège in lines 1-13 is followed in line 14 by a revelation in emphatic contrast - the infestation of its banks by bandits. The quatrains of Number IV evoke the impenetrability with which Nature has shrouded her secrets; the tercets respond urging the king to "borner ses desirs des bords de sa province."<sup>3</sup> The first quatrain of Number V establishes a parallel between the river Ler and the character of the people who dwell on its banks and then in each of lines 5-14 the two hemistichs repeat the parallel. Number VII, after again urging the king not to cross the Pyrenees, describes the countryside in a series of conceits including a pun, "Campagne qui n'a point en beauté de compagne" and an extended personification of one of the mountains:

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1. Les Chimères, ed. Norma Rinsler, p. 32.
  2. Guillaume De Salluste, sieur Du Bartas, Works III, 482-486 (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1940).
  3. Ibid., p. 484.



Passant ce que tu vois n'est point une montagne,  
C'est un grand Briaree, un geant haut-monté  
Qui garde ce passage, et defend indomté,  
De l'Espagne la France, et de France l'Espagne.

Il tend à l'une l'un, à l'autre l'autre bras,  
Il porte sur son chef l'antique faix d'Atlas,  
Dans deux contraires mers il pose ses deux plantes,

Les espaissees forests sont ses cheveux espais,  
Les rochers sont ses os, les rivieres bruyantes  
L'eternelle sueur que luy cause un tel faix.<sup>1</sup>

Number IX ends the cycle with a comparison between the loftiness of kings and mountains in lines 1-11 and their vulnerability to thunderbolts in lines 12-14.

All the techniques of comparison, contrast, and emphasis used by Du Bartas here are standard procedures in the sonnet. Number VIII is no exception to this general pattern:

Ce roc cambré par art, par nature, ou par l'aage,  
Ce roc de Taracon, hebergea quelquefois  
Les Geans qui voloyent les montagnes de Foix,  
Dont tant d'os excessifs rendent seur tesmoignage.

Saturne mange-enfans, Temps constamment volage,  
Serrurier fauche-tout, change-moeurs, change-loix,  
Non sans cause à deux fronts on t'a peint autrefois:  
Car tout change sous toy chasque heure de visage.

Jadis les fiers brigands du pays-plat bannis,  
Des bourgades chassez, dans les villes punis,  
Avoyent tant seulement des grottes pour aziles.

Ores les innocens, paoureux, se vont cacher  
Ou dans un bois espais, ou sous un creux rocher,  
Et les plus grans voleurs commandent dans les villes.<sup>2</sup>

Du Bartas comments on the mutability of the human condition and in particular on the degenerate state of his own times. The sonnet opens on a grandiose evocation of the past, but this is not maintained in the second quatrain which introduces instead the theme of change. The binary structure of the tercets is then used to frame an opposition between time past and time present, and the poet's criticism of his own era is driven

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1. Ibid., p. 485.

2. Ibid., p. 486.

home by its position at the climactic point of the sonnet.

All this is far removed from Nerval's sonnet.

"Ce roc voûté par art, chef d'oeuvre d'un autre âge,  
Ce roc de Tarascon hébergeait autrefois  
Les géants descendus des montagnes de Foix,  
Dont tant d'os excessifs rendent sûr témoignage."

O seigneur Du Bartas, je suis de ton lignage,  
Moi qui soude mon vers à ton vers d'autrefois:  
Mais les vrais descendants des vieux Comtes de Foix  
Ont besoin de témoins pour parler dans notre âge.

J'ai passé près Salzbouurg sous des rochers tremblants;  
La cigogne d'Autriche y nourrit les milans.  
Barberousse et Richard ont sacré ce refuge.

La neige règne au front de leurs pics infranchis,  
Et ce sont, m'a-t-on dit, les ossements blanchis  
Des anciens monts rongés par la mer du déluge.

O I, 41

Conventional formulae and didactic comment are totally absent here, the sonnet form no longer used for hyperbolic comparison, ironic contrast, or a concluding satiric emphasis. Nerval's sonnet has no obvious logical structure as is the case with Du Bartas. Instead the thematic shape of the piece seems dictated by the characteristic Nervalian preoccupation with continuity and repetition. The quatrain taken from Du Bartas has three significant variants - the introduction of "un autre âge" in line 1, the substitution of "autrefois" for "quelquefois" in line 2, and the replacement of "qui voloyent" by "descendus" in line 3. This emphasis on the links between past and present is repeated in Nerval's second quatrain. Lines 5 and 6 stress the close association between the nineteenth century and the sixteenth century poets exemplified in the borrowing of the Du Bartas stanza. Lines 7 and 8 echo the vocabulary of lines 3 and 4 ("descendus" - "descendants", "témoignage" - "témoins") and again underline the theme of the survival from the past into the writer's own era.

The tercets repeat the pattern, but in reverse order. They open

with a reference to the poet's own experience (l. 9) and then move backwards in time. The medieval rulers and warriors Barberossa and Richard (Lionheart) constitute an intermediary stage between the poet and the distant past comparable to that provided by Du Bartas in the quatrains. Then in the final tercet the temporal perspective is pushed back still further to the origins of the mountains themselves. A parallel is thus created with the opening quatrain with its references to the rocks and mountains of the Armagnac and there are significant repetitions of vocabulary and ideas. "Ossements" in line 13 recalls "os" in line 4 and both bear witness to a preceding age, the age of the Giants in the first quatrain, the age of the Flood in the closing tercet.

In Nerval's sonnet then it is the balances and repetitive possibilities of the form which seem of primary importance. Nerval may have been attracted to the Sonnets des Neuf Muses Pyrenees, as Henri Lemaître suggests, as a result of his own private symbolism built around the motifs of mountain and fire.<sup>1</sup> However his exclusive preoccupation with his own personal destiny is so entirely different from the political concerns of Du Bartas that the formal patterns of the sonnet are also bound to be viewed and handled in a quite dissimilar manner.

The first sonnets to be published by Nerval were the sequence of five pieces making up Le Christ aux Oliviers. In his choice of subject

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1. "... selon une de ces analogies étymologiques où Gérard voyait volontiers des symboles d'analogies mystiques, le nom des Pyrenées est relié au grec Pyr qui signifie Feu: par là Du Bartas appartient à cette lignée des Enfants du Feu à laquelle appartiennent aussi le prince d'Aquitaine - Gérard et la reine de Saba-Jenny." Nerval, Oeuvres, ed. Henri Lemaître, vol. 1, p. 718. Lemaître also indicates on the same page the important symbolic role of the mountain in the Mémorables which conclude Aurélia.

Nerval found himself here in the Romantic mainstream.<sup>1</sup> However the problem of religious belief was one which he himself experienced with particular acuity and constitutes a basic strand in his search for a stable frame of reference for his life. In Aurélia (1855) we see how chaotic uncertainty gradually resolves itself within certain recurrent patterns of spiritual experience. In Le Christ aux Oliviers, published ten years earlier, Nerval imposes the formal security of the set form of the sonnet upon a description of Christ's agony of mind on the Mount of Olives. However on a thematic level there is, until the last sonnet at least, relatively little evidence of a belief in any continuing spiritual principle. Theme and form therefore often seem to be working in contradictory directions.

I

Quand le Seigneur, levant au ciel ses maigres bras  
 Sous les arbres sacrés, comme font les poètes,  
 Se fut longtemps perdu dans ses douleurs muettes,  
 Et se jugea trahi par des amis ingrats;

Il se tourna vers ceux qui l'attendaient en bas  
 Rêvant d'être des rois, des sages, des prophètes ...  
 Mais engourdis, perdus dans le sommeil des bêtes,  
 Et se prit à crier: "Non, Dieu n'existe pas!"

Ils dormaient. "Mes amis, savez-vous la nouvelle?  
 J'ai touché de mon front à la voûte éternelle;  
 Je suis sanglant, brisé, souffrant pour bien des jours!

"Frères, je vous trompais: Abîme! abîme! abîme!  
 Le dieu manque à l'autel où je suis la victime ...  
 Dieu n'est pas! Dieu n'est plus!" Mais ils dormaient toujours!...

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1. The first version in L'Artiste has the note "Imité de Jean-Paul." The definitive version carries an epigraph from Jean-Paul: "Dieu est mort! le ciel est vide... / Pleurez! enfants, vous n'avez plus de père." Jean-Paul Richter's text, Reden des toten Christus vom Weltgebäude herab, dass kein Gott sei, had widespread influence on the French Romantics. See Les Chimères, ed. Norma Rinsler, p. 59.

II

Il reprit: "Tout est mort! J'ai parcouru les mondes;  
Et j'ai perdu mon vol dans leurs chemins lactés,  
Aussi loin que la vie, en ses veines fécondes  
Répand des sables d'or et des flots argentés:

"Partout le sol désert côtoyé par des ondes,  
Des tourbillons confus d'océans agités ...  
Un souffle vague émeut les sphères vagabondes,  
Mais nul esprit n'existe en ces immensités.

"En cherchant l'oeil de Dieu, je n'ai vu qu'une orbite  
Vaste, noire et sans fond, d'où la nuit qui l'habite  
Rayonne sur le monde et s'épaissit toujours;

"Un arc-en-ciel étrange entoure ce puits sombre,  
Seuil de l'ancien chaos dont le néant est l'ombre,  
Spirale engloutissant les Mondes et les Jours!

III

"Immobile Destin, muette sentinelle,  
Froide Nécessité!... Hasard qui, t'avançant  
Parmi les mondes morts sous la neige éternelle,  
Refroidis, par degrés, l'univers pâlisant,

"Sais-tu ce que tu fais, puissance originelle,  
De tes soleils éteints, l'un l'autre se froissant ...  
Es-tu sûr de transmettre une haleine immortelle,  
Entre un monde qui meurt et l'autre renaissant? ...

"O mon père! est-ce toi que je sens en moi-même?  
As-tu pouvoir de vivre et de vaincre la mort?  
Aurais-tu succombé sous un dernier effort

"De cet ange des nuits que frappa l'anathème? ...  
Car je me sens tout seul à pleurer et souffrir,  
Helas! et, si je meurs, c'est que tout va mourir!"

IV

Nul n'entendait gémir l'éternelle victime  
Livrant au monde en vain tout son coeur épanché;  
Mais prêt à défaillir et sans force penché,  
Il appela le seul - éveillé dans Solyme:

"Judas! lui cria-t-il, tu sais ce qu'on m'estime,  
Hâte-toi de me vendre, et finis ce marché:  
Je suis souffrant, ami! sur la terre couché ...  
Viens! o toi qui, du moins, as la force du crime!"

Mais Judas s'en allait, mécontent et pensif,  
Se trouvant mal payé, plein d'un remords si vif  
Qu'il lisait ses noirceurs sur tous les murs écrites ...

Enfin Pilate seul, qui veillait pour César,  
Sentant quelque pitié, se tourna par hasard:  
"Allez chercher ce fou!" dit-il aux satellites.

V

C'était bien lui, ce fou, cet insensé sublime ...  
Cet Icare oublié qui remontait les cieux,  
Ce Phaéton perdu sous la foudre des dieux,  
Ce bel Atys meurtri que Cybèle ranime!

L'augure interrogeait le flanc de la victime,  
La terre s'enivrait de ce sang précieux ...  
L'univers étourdi penchait sur ses essieux,  
Et l'Olympe un instant chancela vers l'abîme.

"Réponds! criait César à Jupiter Ammon,  
Quel est ce nouveau Dieu qu'on impose à la terre?  
Et si ce n'est un dieu, c'est au moins un démon ..."

Mais l'oracle invoqué pour jamais dut se taire;  
Un seul pouvait au monde expliquer ce mystère:  
- Celui qui donna l'âme aux enfants du limon.

O I, 36-38<sup>1</sup>

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1. This is the definitive version of 1852 onwards. However the original 1844 version shows only a very small number of variants, all insignificant.

The five sonnets are strung together in a largely anecdotal arrangement, a pattern that creates further problems for the poet since it runs counter to the tendency of each sonnet towards its individual climax. All use standard patterns of logic and rhetoric and little attention is paid to other possibilities of the sonnet form. The rhyme, for example, remains subsidiary to the logical structure of the sonnet, a contrast with the incantatory techniques developed by Nerval in pieces such as Delfica, Myrtho and El Desdichado.

The first sonnet is based on a contrast between the agony of Christ and the brutish oblivion of the disciples. This is framed first of all in the opposition of quatrain to quatrain, supported by a further small opposition in lines 6 and 7 which contrasts the grandiose dreams of the disciples with their actual physical state. The same point is replayed in the tercets but with a formal variation. This time the poet offers not a stanza to stanza opposition but a circular arrangement within the tercets, setting "Ils dormaient" as the opening and closing note to Christ's anguished cry. This arrangement is not a particularly satisfactory one at least from the point of view of the impact of the individual sonnet. The most important feature of the poem, Christ's agonized realization "Dieu n'est pas! Dieu n'est plus!" does not form the climax of the sonnet. Closing weight falls instead on the inertia of the disciples. Formal emphasis and thematic significance fail to coincide.

A lack of tightness in the sonnet's construction is also evident in the repetitions of lines 8 and 14 and those of line 12, in the choice of simile in line 2, and in the handling of the rhyme-scheme. As a general rule, repetition of words is discouraged within the restricted form of the sonnet. Nevertheless Nerval uses the technique to good effect in

Artémis. However, in that instance, the repetitions are central to Nerval's themes of recurrence and ultimate identity. They are not merely, as here, a facile device for emphasis. The simile of line 2 likewise has no significant role in the total structure of the sonnet. Nerval has filled out a line with the Romantic cliché which equates the figure of Christ with the figure of the poet, but the image has little direct relevance for his chosen subject. Finally it is worth noting that Nerval makes only the most limited use of the facilities offered by the sonnet rhyme-scheme. The sonnet is regular. The rhyme defines the quatrain-tercet structure but beyond this remains inert. There is only one rich rhyme in the sonnet, "jours" and "toujours."<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, as we shall see, Nerval derives considerable effect from the richness and rarity of his sonnet rhymes, but here, as in Le Christ aux Oliviers generally, the rhyme-scheme is a mere adjunct to the logical structuring of theme within the sonnet form.

The second sonnet in the sequence is much more effective. Where the first poem relates an inconclusive fragment of a tale, the second develops as an independent piece of meditation. Nerval is thus able to use the sonnet's built-in tendency to a final climax to emphasize an evocative complex of metaphor. The theme of a universal death of the spirit, described in general terms in the quatrains, is memorably crystallized in the tercet image of the empty eye-socket borrowed from Jean-Paul. In association with this, the tercets also display a subtle intertwining of vocabulary of light and darkness. In quality the rhymes are very similar to those of the preceding sonnet. There are only two

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1. This rhyme is an important one for Nerval and underlines his preoccupation with themes of transience and permanence. He uses it again in the second sonnet of Le Christ aux Oliviers and in Delfica. From the prosodic point of view, rhyme on cognate words is however generally considered weak.



rich rhymes and one of these is the "toujours - Jours" combination already used in the opening piece. Furthermore the rhyme-scheme is not strictly regular since the quatrain rhymes follow an alternate pattern. Once again then the rhyme-scheme serves almost entirely as an element in the logical structure of the sonnet. However within the body of the poem quite extensive use is made of alliteration and rhythmic balance and this gives the sonnet a resonance lacking in the preceding piece.<sup>1</sup>

The third sonnet, on the other hand, is generally weak. The whole arrangement of thematic motifs runs counter to the formal effects of the genre. The piece opens in grandiose fashion with the first quatrain invoking a series of great abstractions "Destin," "Nécessité," "Hasard." In the second quatrain the poet then questions this "puissance originelle" as to the possibility of a continuing cycle of death and renewal in the universe. This is balanced in lines 9-12 by a similar set of questions, but scaled down this time to a personal level of experience and addressed not to some abstract principle but to "mon père." The sonnet concludes with a rhyming couplet in which the scaling down operation continues, the focus moving in nearer to the personal suffering of Christ, his isolation and his powerlessness. Unfortunately this does not come over with any great depth of feeling. Line 13 seems particularly weak. The formal compression of the final couplet is not matched by a corresponding thematic density, and there is nothing in the tercets to provide a counterpoise to the power of the quatrains. The sonnet moves from a grandiose opening to a weak ending, a pattern that contradicts the expectations set in motion by the sonnet form generally and by the terminal

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1. See especially, as the most obvious examples, ll. 2-3 (v, l), 1.7 (s, v), 1.8 (nasals, s), ll. 13-14 (s).

couplet arrangement in particular. Again there are only two rich rhymes - the a rhyme of the quatrains and the closing rhyme of the tercets.

The fourth sonnet introduces two more of the main protagonists in the Crucifixion story and resembles Number I in its anecdotic character. Nerval does however try to develop the general idea of the arbitrary workings of a godless universe. The first quatrain, picking up the end of the preceding sonnet, emphasizes the isolation and helplessness of Jesus. His appeal to Judas in the second quatrain seems a final attempt to find a certainty of a sort. Judas' betrayal might at least provide positive proof of the existence of an evil principle. The tercets, however, provide a double contradiction to this hope. In the first tercet Judas is depicted as dissatisfied with his act. In the second, Pilate's arrest of Jesus is shown as motivated purely by chance. The octave and the two tercets thus each in turn play through the themes of impotence and lack of purpose. Such repetition helps to stress the universality of the phenomenon and the close parallel between line 4 ("Il appela le seul - éveillé dans Solyme") and line 12 ("Enfin Pilate seul, qui veillait pour César") brings additional emphasis to the idea. The lonely spiritual watch of Jesus - and perhaps Judas (in the context of line 4 "le seul" and "éveillé" could refer to either) in the Holy City of Jerusalem is matched and complemented by the solitary vigil of Pilate over the temporal affairs of his master Caesar. Otherwise the sonnet seems to have little to offer in support of Nerval's central theme. If Nerval's intention was indeed to stress the arbitrariness of the universe, theme and form would seem totally opposed. This is all the more evident since Nerval has written a strictly regular sonnet and used

only the standard form of the alexandrine.<sup>1</sup> In the last analysis, though, it is perhaps a mistake to spend too much time and critical energy on this sonnet as an independent unit, since its most obvious function is to provide a tremplin for the final sonnet in the sequence.

Sonnet V coming at the end of the cycle has a clear advantage over the other sonnets. The formal expectations of the genre are not contradicted by a continuation of the narrative beyond the limits of the individual sonnet and the standard movement of the sonnet from the broader developments of the quatrains towards a climax in the tercets can thus be more fully satisfied. The historical story of Jesus is now finally abandoned, the anecdotic element eliminated. Instead Nerval sets the trials of Jesus against the background of constant human striving towards godlike estate. In the first quatrain Christ is portrayed as one further link in the line of the Promethean heroes of Antiquity. The second quatrain deals more particularly with the case of Christ and the challenge it offered to the gods of Rome. As a whole the quatrains establish the theme of a constant process of spiritual renewal. The tercets, however, close this final sonnet, and the whole sequence of Le Christ aux Oliviers, on the note of interrogation which has been dominant throughout. The first tercet poses the question of Christ's divinity; the second, the even wider question of the existence of God. The final word of the sonnet is one of mystery - how to explain within man himself the co-existence of matter and animating spirit, "l'âme" and "le limon."

Apart from the general opposition of quatrains to tercets, Nerval makes effective use of two in particular of the formal resources of the

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1. As far as rhyme is concerned, one pair in the a rhyme is rich - "victime - estime," one pair in the b rhyme is leonine - "épanché - penché;" and the second rhyme in the tercets is rich - "César - hasard."

sonnet form. As in Number III he provides a striking and emphatic opening quatrain, assisted in this instance by the lead-in from line 14 of the preceding sonnet. But in this case, unlike Number III, the triumphal opening is balanced and complemented by the mythical and biblical resonances of the final line. The strength of these opening and closing sections carries much that is weak in the rest of the sonnet. The second quatrain lacks the rhetorical and allusive force of the first stanza. The direct speech making up the first tercet is disappointingly prosaic. Furthermore resources such as the rhyme-scheme are not exploited. The sonnet is a regular one and Nerval in the tercets has elected to use two rhymes only instead of the more normal three. The d rhyme is rich throughout and the c rhyme has one rare component "Ammon."<sup>1</sup> In spite of this, however, rhyme has a relatively insignificant role in the total effect of the poem and serves largely to delineate the two main structural and thematic blocks in the sonnet.

In Le Christ aux Oliviers the question is put: is there a pattern in the workings of the universe or not? Choice of the sonnet seems to supply at least a formal answer to this question. However the anecdotic element in the cycle, the continuation of the narrative from sonnet to sonnet, runs counter to the expectation of formal independence and integrity created by the genre and interferes with the development of thematic patterns within the individual poems. There is little attempt on Nerval's part to compensate for this by a strengthening of the other patterning elements in the individual sonnets. Within the separate pieces Nerval relies on standard techniques of logical and rhetorical development. Rhyme is neither rare nor particularly rich and acts merely

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1. In addition the quatrains have one leonine rhyme - "précieux -  
essieux."

as an indicator of the basic structure of the sonnet. The idea of a recurrent pattern in spiritual experience thus fails to emerge with any vigour. Theme and form are imperfectly reconciled.

The next sonnet to be published by Nerval was Vers dorés, which first appeared under the title Pensée antique in L'Artiste of 16 March 1845.

Homme! libre penseur - te crois-tu seul pensant  
Dans ce monde, où la vie éclate en toute chose:  
Des forces que tu tiens ta liberté dispose,  
Mais de tous tes conseils l'univers est absent.

Respecte dans la bête un esprit agissant ...  
Chaque fleur est une âme à la Nature éclore;  
Un mystère d'amour dans le métal repose:  
Tout est sensible; - Et tout sur ton être est puissant!

Crains dans le mur aveugle un regard qui t'épie:  
A la matière même un verbe est attaché ...  
Ne la fais pas servir à quelque usage impie.

Souvent dans l'être obscur habite un Dieu caché;  
Et, comme un oeil naissant couvert par ses paupières,  
Un pur esprit s'accroît sous l'écorce des pierres.

O I, 38-39

Once again Nerval treats a subject dear to the Romantic writers - this time, pantheistic Nature. Such a theme might appear more suited to the expansiveness of Hugo than to the strictly limited presentation enforced by a sonnet. However Nerval has managed to approach his material in a way which lends itself to expression in the set form of the genre. He takes as his central motif the interplay of liberty and constraint, examining in these terms firstly man's assumptions about himself and the universe, and then passing on to a discussion of the abundant spiritual life restrained within the material forms of the natural world.

The first quatrain concentrates on man's illusions about his freedom and power. The first line of the sonnet with its balance between "libre penseur" and "te crois-tu seul pensant" immediately makes clear the

limitations and presumption of this so-called free-thinker. Line 2 reinforces the idea by stressing in contrast the universal and patent phenomenon of spiritual life ("Dans ce monde où la vie éclate en toute chose"), to which only man in his self-absorption is oblivious. Lines 3 and 4 repeat the opposition, this time with direct statement replacing ironic question. Line 3 indicates the exceedingly restricted nature of the liberty enjoyed by man ("Des forces que tu tiens ta liberté dispose"<sup>1</sup>). Line 4 comments on his limitation and vulnerability vis -à-vis the natural world.

The second quatrain initiates a shift in the argument. The poet now moves away from the figure of man and on to consideration of the idea of a Nature infused with spirit. This is played through three times in lines 5, 6, and 7 in a progression which goes from the animate to the inanimate. "La bête," "la fleur," "le métal" are each in turn associated with a spiritual idea, "un esprit," "une âme," "un mystère d'amour." In the final and perhaps least expected example, the poet's suggestion of the association of matter and spirit is given formal support by the alliteration which links "mystère" with "métal." Line 8 performs two important functions. It summarizes the idea put forward in lines 5-7 and it also links the quatrains as a coherent whole. "Tout est sensible," crowning the examples of the preceding lines, is followed by a clause, identical in its subject and verb, which relates back to the preoccupation of the first quatrain with the limitations of man's so-called liberty, "Et tout sur ton être est puissant." This closing emphasis of the quatrains on

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1. The 1845 variant to this line, "Des forces que tu tiens ta royauté dispose," is clearly less effective, since it fails to play up the motif of freedom and constraint. By changing to "liberté" Nerval tightens and improves the structure of his sonnet.

"tout" (repeated and rhythmically stressed as the opening and closing syllables of the first hemistich of line 8) effectively contrasts with "seul" in line 1, underlining that man's uniqueness lies not in his spiritual capacity but in his vulnerability and his obliviousness to his surroundings.

In the tercets, the poet moves over completely to the theme of the spiritual element in Nature. However it is worth noting that the imperative which opened the second quatrain is picked up and repeated in the first tercet ("Crains," "Ne la fais pas servir"). This choice of mood by the poet is surely an indirect recognition of the dependent and restricted status of man, and it is against this background that further examples of spiritual activity within the material universe are advanced. The first four lines of the tercets repeat the pattern established in the second quatrain. Line 9 with its contrast between "le mur aveugle" (as man sees it) and the tautological "regard qui t'épie" in the second hemistich stresses the spiritual life that is in fact everywhere present. Line 10 links "matière," stressed by "même" and the m alliteration, with "verbe," line 12 "l'être obscur" with "un Dieu caché." Lines 13 and 14 provide the climax to the series of matter-spirit associations running from line 5 to line 12. The simile of the nascent eye in line 13 picks up and intensifies the imagery of sight developed in line 9. Line 14 then provides a final statement of the matter-spirit motif, "pierres" balancing "un pur esprit." At the same time the progressive links from the animate to the apparently inanimate developed in the "bête," "fleur," "métal" gradation of the second quatrain, are replayed in compressed form in the expression "l'écorce des pierres." Thematic compression is matched and underlined by the formal compression of the rhyming couplet.

Alliteration on p, s, and c, closely linking "un pur esprit" with "l'écorce des pierres," underlines the integration of the physical and spiritual universes.

In Vers dorés Nerval makes effective use of the sonnet in support of his chosen theme. Its set form emphasizes both man's ultimate lack of liberty and the constraints imposed by matter on spirit. In a more specific way, the "irregular" 4:2 rhyme pattern in the tercets sets off the one simile of the sonnet and crystallizes one of the central themes of the poem in a striking visual climax. Nerval's success in integrating form and theme is immediately apparent when compared, for example, with Banville's contemporaneous sonnet Conseil.<sup>1</sup> Here the Romantic theme of grandiose Nature as a source of poetic inspiration has not been conceived in a way which lends itself to expression in sonnet form. Indeed the set form of the genre seems in direct contradiction to the urge to be "libre enfin des vieilles servitudes" in the bosom of Nature. Instead Banville merely takes over the traditional device of a sonnet composed of accumulated imperatives and uses this as a convenient and rather facile method of emphasis for his "conseil." Nerval's approach shows a greater subtlety and a greater appreciation of the potential and requirements of the sonnet. At the same time his use of the sonnet in Vers dorés as in Le Christ aux Oliviers is not essentially different from that of Banville or most other poets of the period. The sonnet form throws into relief the structure of an argument. Little is made of any suggestive or incantatory possibilities the genre might possess. In this respect Vers dorés and Le Christ aux Oliviers stand in contrast with Nerval's handling of the sonnet in the rest of Les Chimères.

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1. V. infra, pp. 250-251.



A shift from statement to suggestion in Nerval's sonnet is not however evenly realized across the six remaining pieces of Les Chimères. In Horus, for example, logical unfolding of an argument within the sonnet form has disappeared. It has not however been replaced by any detailed development of other features of the genre.

Le dieu Kneph en tremblant ébranlait l'univers:  
 Isis, la mère, alors se leva sur sa couche,  
 Fit un geste de haine à son époux farouche,  
 Et l'ardeur d'autrefois brilla dans ses yeux verts.

"Le voyez-vous, dit-elle, il meurt, ce vieux pervers,  
 Tous les frimas du monde ont passé par sa bouche,  
 Attachez son pied tors, éteignez son oeil louche,  
 C'est le dieu des volcans et le roi des hivers!

"L'aigle a déjà passé, l'esprit nouveau m'appelle,  
 J'ai revêtu pour lui la robe de Cybèle ...  
 C'est l'enfant bien-aimé d'Hermès et d'Osiris!"

La déesse avait fui sur sa conque dorée,  
 La mer nous renvoyait son image adorée,  
 Et les cieux rayonnaient sous l'écharpe d'Iris.

O I, 34

The full force of the poet's meaning is obscure but the anecdotic format is a link with conventional practice and ensures a certain continuity between the different parts of the structure. A clearer pattern emerges however from the general thematic contrast in the sonnet between the quatrains with their emphasis on darkness, coldness, hatred and death, and the tercets which concentrate on new life, love and light. This transformation seems in fact to be the key idea in the poem and ties in with the suggestion of a continuing cycle of eclipse and renewal tentatively put forward in the closing sonnet of Le Christ aux Oliviers. Certain words lay particular stress on this theme of rebirth. Line 4 describes the rekindling in Isis' eyes of "l'ardeur d'autrefois." The reference to "l'esprit nouveau" in line 9 is linked in line 10 with the reenactment of a previous occasion (if one takes "revêtir" in its

etymological sense). Line 13 shows the disappearance of the goddess not to be final, since her image remains behind, reflected in the sea ("La mer nous renvoyait son image adorée"). Elsewhere Nerval associates the Isis cult with Christianity, linking Isis with the Virgin and her son Horus with Christ. In this poem Nerval concentrates instead on equivalences between Egyptian and classical mythology.<sup>1</sup> Isis is linked with Cybele and also, through the allusion to the shell in line 12, with Venus; Kneph, by the mention of his "pied tors" to Vulcan; Horus' father Osiris to Hermes. Both groups of associations have the same effect however. Nerval stresses a basic pattern of existence continuing and renewed within all the passing guises.<sup>2</sup>

How successfully is the theme of renewal woven into the sonnet form itself? As we have noted, the quatrain-tercet structure supports an opposition between the old order and the new. The change from direct speech to action and the move to a pluperfect tense isolate the final tercet from the rest of the sonnet and provide a culminating stress on the image of hope. Little is made, however, of actual patterns of repetition available in the sonnet. The structural coherence of a fixed form replaces logical coherence of argument, but there is no really detailed development of the symmetrical potential of the sonnet as for example in El Desdichado and Artémis. The same is true of the rhyme. The regular rhyme-scheme does provide some formal backing for the themes of repetition and renewal and Nerval's choice of rich rhymes helps to

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1. Both groups of associations are evoked by Nerval in Isis in Les Filles du Feu, O I, 317-328.
  2. The variant version of this sonnet, A Louise d'Or., Reine, printed in Autres Chimères (O I, 42), suggests a further dimension of more personal mythology woven into these more universal motifs. Line 9 of the variant version contains a reference to the Napoleonic myth which so strongly preoccupied Nerval, while line 1 reads "Le vieux père en tremblant ébranlait l'univers," thus suggesting the possibility of an identification with Dr. Labrunie.

increase the effect notably in lines 11-14.<sup>1</sup> However the rhyme is not incorporated into more extensive phonetic structures within the body of the lines. Horus thus lacks the incantatory quality of Delfica, Myrtho, El Desdichado or even Antéros, and the two leonine rhymes on which the sonnet closes tend to appear as isolated "tours de force."

Antéros is often paired with Horus because both draw on a corpus of pagan and Biblical mythology fashionable in the 1840's. However Nerval's handling of the sonnet in Antéros seems more sophisticated than in Horus. As in Horus it is difficult to find any logical thread in the sonnet since Nerval is once again involved in his own private symbolism. In Antéros, however, there is no anecdotic pattern either. On the other hand, phonetic structures in the sonnet, while not equalling the density of Delfica or Myrtho, are much more highly developed than is the case with Horus.

Tu demandes pourquoi j'ai tant de rage au coeur  
Et sur un col flexible une tête indomptée;  
C'est que je suis issu de la race d'Antée,  
Je retourne les dards contre le dieu vainqueur.

Oui, je suis de ceux-là qu'inspire le Vengeur,  
Il m'a marqué le front de sa lèvre irritée,  
Sous la pâleur d'Abel, hélas! ensanglantée,  
J'ai parfois de Caïn l'implacable rougeur!

Jéhovah! le dernier, vaincu par ton génie,  
Qui, du fond des enfers, criait: "O tyrannie!"  
C'est mon aïeul Bélus ou mon père Dagon ...

Ils m'ont plongé trois fois dans les eaux du Cocyte,  
Et, protégeant tout seul ma mère Amalécyte,  
Je ressème à ses pieds les dents du vieux dragon.

O I, 34-35

The sonnet depends on a series of images of disinheritance, defeat, and rebellion. The title immediately establishes the motifs of rejection

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1. The first rhyme of the quatrains is rich and includes two leonine components - "univers - hivers." In the tercets, p and its voiced counterpart b provide a close approximation to rich rhyme in lines 9 and 10 - "appelle - Cybèle." The rhyme is also rare. Both the two remaining rhymes are leonine, and one of them - "Osiris - Iris" - is rare also.

and defiance, since Anteros - like Eros a son of Venus - was according to myth the avenger of unrequited love. This is followed in the first quatrain with a reference to Antaeus, son of Gaia, goddess of the earth, and Poseidon, god of the sea. Hostile by reason of his birth to Zeus, god of the heavens, Antaeus drew invincible strength from contact with his mother, the earth, and was only finally defeated by Hercules who contrived to hold him long enough in the air for his might to ebb away. The spirit of the earth-born giant survives however in the speaker of the first quatrain, whose submissive attitude to "le dieu vainqueur" is but a mask for hatred and revolt.

The second quatrain moves from classical mythology to the Biblical sphere, but the speaker's position as victim and rebel is reiterated in the double identification with Abel and Cain. Moreover the figure of Cain, rejected by Jehovah and by his parents, has a clear connexion with the Anteros myth evoked in the title, while his activity as a farmer provides an additional link with the earth-born giant Antaeus.

The first tercet remains in the Old Testament arena, confronting the victorious Jehovah with the conquered but uncowed pagan gods of the earth, characterized now by the agricultural Phoenician deities Baal and Dagon.

The second tercet concludes the sonnet with a drawing together of classical and Biblical references. Mention of "ma mère Amalécite" recalls the disinheritance of Esau and the rejection of his race, the Amalekites, in favour of that of Jacob, while the legend of the sowing of the dragon's teeth by Cadmus continues the series of allusions to the ancient gods of the earth. However the dots at the end of line 11 and the new unidentified subject "Ils" indicate a break in the development

of the poem. The final tercet, in contrast to the three preceding stanzas, contains no direct reference to a victorious and vengeful deity. It speaks only of the enduring efforts and possible future triumph of those who struggle against him; the list of the defeated evoked in the preceding stanzas now culminates in the legend of Cadmus and his new race of men.

In Antéros the fourfold structure of the sonnet is effectively used by Nerval to underline the repeated rebellion, and hence the continuing vitality, of forces apparently defeated. The traditional sonnet rhyme-scheme with its quatrains constructed on two rhymes only provides discreet support for the repetitive idea, and the general richness of rhyme in the sonnet enhances the effect. At the same, the fixed form of the sonnet, the enclosed rhyme-scheme in the quatrains and the poet's choice of rich rhyme<sup>1</sup> also suggest the claustrophobic atmosphere of repressed hatred experienced by the speaker. In addition the sonnet is dominated by the recurrent tonality of nasal vowels. Seven of the fourteen rhyme words contain one or more of these and they are also frequent in stressed positions elsewhere in the body of the lines - "demandes," "tant" (1.1), "contre" (1.4), "inspire" (1.5), "front" (1.6), "implacable" (1.8), "vaincu" (1.9), "fond," "enfers" (1.10), "ont," "plongé" (1.12), "protégeant" (1.13) and "dents" (1.14). The sharp timbre of i provides a second important

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1. Alison Fairlie indicates a source for the rhymes in Richelet's Dictionnaire des Rimes. Nerval could find here together "indompté(e)," "Antée," "dragon," "Dagon," "Cocyste," "Amalécite" (this list also includes "Baalite" v. line 9 "C'est mon aïeul Bélus ou mon père Dagon"). Nerval mentions the dictionary in the poem Gaiété 0 I, 52. Many other of Nerval's unusual combinations of rhymes can be found, as Alison Fairlie points out, in Richelet's work. Alison Fairlie, "Nerval et Richelet," Revue des Sciences Humaines, 1958, p. 399.

phonetic strand. It occurs as the rhyme vowel of two of the tercet rhymes, is present in double strength in the quatrain rhyme word "irrité" and appears in the body of the lines in "flexible" (1.2), "issue" (1.3), "inspire" (1.5), "Caïn" (1.8) and "criait" (1.10). Phonetic structures in Antéros are thus more highly and more suggestively developed than is the case with Horus.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the other poets discussed in this chapter, Nerval makes a clear departure here from the linear structure of logical argument conventionally associated with the sonnet. He plays up instead the repetitive properties of the genre and these act as a lead-in to the meaning of the poem. Most striking of all, the rhyme-scheme, one of the sonnet's most basic and most neglected characteristics, achieves a new prominence, echoing and harmonizing with the poet's preoccupation with a constant cycle of deprivation and renewal.

Delfica is concerned with the same basic idea as Antéros - the apparent eclipse and ultimate survival of the ancient pagan gods. However the imagery is less recondite, the tone more intimate than that of Horus or Antéros. The prime appeal is to the emotions and the imagination, not to erudition. In line with this more suggestive approach, the phonetic potential of the sonnet is much more highly developed than in any of the pieces so far considered. Patterns of sound become part of the meaning of the poem as Nerval creates for the ear an obsessional effect paralleling his central thematic motifs of repetition and renewal.

La connais-tu, Dafné, cette ancienne romance,  
 Au pied du sycomore, ou sous les lauriers blancs,  
 Sous l'olivier, le myrte, ou les saules tremblants,  
 Cette chanson d'amour qui toujours recommence? ...

Reconnais-tu le TEMPLE au péristyle immense,  
 Et les citrons amers où s'imprimaient tes dents,  
 Et la grotte, fatale aux hôtes imprudents,  
 Où du dragon vaincu dort l'antique semence? ...

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1. Note also the importance of the consonant k.- "coeur," "col," "contre," "vainqueur," "Caïn," "implacable," "vaincu," "criait," "Cocyte."

Ils reviendront, ces Dieux que tu pleures toujours!  
Le temps va ramener l'ordre des anciens jours;  
La terre a tressailli d'un souffle prophétique ...

Cependant la sibylle au visage latin  
Est endormie encor sous l'arc de Constantin  
- Et rien n'a dérangé le sévère portique.

O I, 35

The first quatrain opens the sonnet with an emphasis on continuity which will persist throughout the poem. The song is described in line 1 as "cette ancienne romance" and in line 4 as "cette chanson d'amour qui toujours recommence." Moreover the inference of the question "La connais-tu" is that the song does still have a relevance for the girl in the present. These references to temporal continuity in lines 1 and 4 enclose a series of spatial notations in lines 2 and 3 which also help to stress the pervasiveness of the song.

In the second quatrain horizons widen. In the first stanza it seemed that the "chanson d'amour" was just that and no more.<sup>1</sup> However the suggestions of a Mediterranean landscape<sup>2</sup> together with the title, help to prepare the reader for a broader interpretation. Love now seems to embrace all the religion ("TEMPLE") and myth (ll. 7-8) of the past. The emphasis on continuity remains unchanged however. "Reconnais-tu," opening the second stanza, parallels and intensifies "La connais-tu" in the identical position in stanza one. Line 8 with its evocation of the seed of the dragon, ancient and dormant, but destined one day to spring into new life, reiterates the idea of constant renewal put forward in lines 1 and 4.

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1. The title of one of the variant versions of the sonnet A J--y Colonna, linking the piece with Nerval's love for the actress Jenny Colon, underlines this aspect.
  2. "les lauriers," "l'olivier," "le myrte" but also the allusions to light suggested by "lauriers blancs," and by the trembling (and shimmering?) of the willows.

In the first tercet the mood changes. The two nostalgic questions of the quatrains are replaced by a rapid succession of three parallel statements, each asserting the inevitable rebirth of the old order. In lines 9 and 10 this is expressed in terms of the futures "reviendront" and "va ramener" which carry one step further the past-into-present continuity established in the quatrains. In line 11, on the other hand, a passé composé is used to suggest the imminence of the event and this intermingling of tenses helps to underline the telescoping of temporal perspectives which the poet at this point appears confidently to foresee.

The final tercet, however, provides a sharp contradiction to the hope of the preceding stanza and to the nostalgic longing of the quatrains. Within the tercet structure, line 14 is a direct antithesis to line 11. Within the total structure of the sonnet, the austere lines of "le sévère portique" are a balance and contrast for the soaring temple ("le TEMPLE au péristyle immense") of line 5 and more generally for the whole sensuous atmosphere of music, sunlight, shimmering leaves and golden lemons evoked in the quatrains. The continuing sleep of the Sibyl beneath the arch commemorating the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of Rome offers on the other hand a closing parallel to the sleep of the dragon's seed in line 8.

Phonetic structures in the sonnet complement and intensify thematic structures to an unprecedented degree. The traditional arrangement of two rhymes in an enclosed pattern over the eight lines of the quatrains offers a ready-made support to the central motif of repetition and renewal, but the rhymes are carefully chosen to increase the effect. All are rich, the a rhyme in the first stanza achieving leonine quality.



In addition, as Alison Fairlie and Norma Rinsler have pointed out,<sup>1</sup> the a and b rhymes assonance creating a constant tonality over the whole of the quatrains. In the tercets richness of rhyme continues in two of the three cases. However, as Norma Rinsler indicates, there is a change in key here, as the  $\tilde{\alpha}$  rhyme dominating the quatrains is replaced first by  $\tilde{\epsilon}$  then by the acute sounding i and  $\tilde{\epsilon}$ . This change parallels and helps to underline the thematic development from a haunting awareness of the survival of the past to the brusque realization that its full reawakening is not yet to be. Nerval thus makes skilful use of his rhyme-scheme both as a formal example of the theme of renewal and also as a means of underlining a change of mood within his sonnet.

But it is also notable in Delfica that Nerval has not restricted his concern with phonetic pattern to the rhyme-words alone. They serve in addition as key-notes for a web of assonance and alliteration that pervades the whole fabric of the sonnet. In the quatrains the rhyme vowel  $\tilde{\alpha}$  is echoed internally in "ancienne" "tremblants" "chanson" "temple" "antique" and the sound continues as an undercurrent in the tercets with "temps" and "anciens" in line 10 and "cependant" "endormie" "encor" "Constantin" "dérangé" in the second tercet. The tercet rhymes are similarly supported. The c rhyme is indicated in advance by the internal rhyme "amour ... toujours" in line 4. The d rhyme on the vowel i is reinforced by internal assonance with "tressailli" at the hemistich in line 11, with "sibylle" and "visage" in line 12, "endormie" in line 13, and prepared for in the two quatrains by the internal rhyme "antique" and the i vowels

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1. Alison Fairlie, "Nerval et Richelet," Revue des Sciences Humaines, 1958, p. 398. Les Chimères, ed. Norma Rinsler, p. 75.

of "peristyle," "immensible," "citrons," and "imprimaient." The e rhyme on e receives similar preparation in "imprimaient" and "imprudents" in the second quatrain and occurs internally in the tercets in "reviendront," "anciens," and "rien." Beyond these central phonetic strands, the principle of repetition continues to be echoed in a number of subsidiary arrangements: the reiteration of j in "ancienne," "pied," "laurier," "olivier" in the first quatrain and in "reviendront," "ancien" and "rien" in the tercets; the internal rhyme o of "chanson," "citrons," "dragon," "reviendront" all standing as the fourth syllable of their respective lines; and simple alliteration, for example the s and n of line 1, s and l in lines 2 and 3, pl and s in line 5, r in line 6, d in lines 8 and 9, t in the first tercet, s in lines 11 and 12, c in line 13, and finally r slowing line 14 in accordance with the closing image of motionless solidity.

The potential of the sonnet as an instrument of suggestion is explored again in Myrtho. This poem is still more obscure than any of the pieces so far considered. There is no apparent logical continuity between the quatrains and the first tercet or between the first tercet and the second tercet. The poet's allusions are less erudite and more enigmatic than those of Horus or Antéros. However, as in Delfica, considerable use is made of the sonnet's phonetic possibilities and Nerval is thus able to achieve an incantatory effect which complements and enhances the mysterious and haunting imagery.

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Je pense à toi, Myrtho, divine enchanteresse,  
 Au Pausilippe altier, de mille feux brillant,  
 A ton front inondé des clartés d'Orient,  
 Aux raisins noirs mêlés avec l'or de ta tresse.

C'est dans ta coupe aussi que j'avais bu l'ivresse,  
 Et dans l'éclair furtif de ton oeil souriant,  
 Quand aux pieds d'Iacchus on me voyait priant,  
 Car la Muse m'a fait l'un des fils de la Grèce.

Je sais pourquoi là-bas le volcan s'est rouvert ...  
 C'est qu'hier tu l'avais touché d'un pied agile,  
 Et de cendres soudain l'horizon s'est couvert.

Depuis qu'un duc normand brisa tes dieux d'argile,  
 Toujours, sous les rameaux du laurier de Virgile,  
 Le pâle hortensia s'unit au myrte vert!

O I, 33-34 .

The quatrains are devoted to an evocation of the magical fascination of Myrtho expressed through two main images, those of light and intoxication. In the first quatrain, imagery of light is uppermost - "le Pausilippe ... de mille feux brillant," "ton front inondé des clartés d'Orient," "l'or de ta tresse." However the mention of "raisins noirs" in line 4 seems to establish Myrtho as a kind of Bacchante figure and provides a lead-in to the imagery of the second quatrain. Here references to intoxication predominate - "C'est dans ta coupe aussi que j'avais bu l'ivresse" in line 5 and the allusion to Iacchus, god of wine and leader of the Bacchantes in line 7. However the light metaphor still persists in line 6, "dans l'éclair furtif de ton oeil souriant."

The connexion between the quatrains and the first tercet is much more tenuous. The first person subject and verb with which the stanza opens immediately recall the first person subject and verb in parallel position at the beginning of the sonnet. Otherwise line 9 seems a completely new departure. However imagery of light does persist in the mention of the eruption of the volcano and the motif of the volcano itself leads back to line 2 and the description of the Neapolitan Posilipo "de mille feux brillant." As line 10 indicates, the timeless figure of Myrtho evoked

in the quatrains is associated in the poet's mind with this reawakening of dormant forces and we seem here to rejoin the theme of rebirth and renewal developed in Horus, Antéros, and Delfica. However line 11, describing the ashes and darkness accompanying the eruption, suggest an element of ambiguity and danger in the event and the precise nature of the poet's reaction to it is difficult to determine.

The final tercet offers no clarification on this point. All imagery of fire disappears and the poet starts on a tack that appears completely new. The only links with the rest of the sonnet seem to be the persistent references to the Neapolitan setting. Virgil's tomb was by tradition situated on the slopes of Posilipo and the mention "un duc normand" may well refer to medieval French conquests in Sicily. The central theme of this stanza is apparently one of reconciliation. Mention of Virgil can be seen as an allusion to a link between pagan and Christian cultures, since the prophecy of the birth of a child and the return of the Golden Age in the Fourth Eclogue was traditionally regarded as a prophecy of the coming of Christ.<sup>1</sup> The "pâle hortensia" of line 14, the hydrangea first cultivated in the eighteenth century, and the vigorous green myrtle, emblem of the ancient Venus, apparently symbolize a similar union of modern and antique worlds. The tendency of the sonnet to a final climax gives particular relief to this idea of a harmonious synthesis.

The disjointed nature of Myrtho is particularly interesting if one bears in mind the variants to this sonnet and to Delfica. Two other versions exist, one composed of the quatrains of Delfica and the tercets of Myrtho, the other made up of the quatrains of Myrtho and the tercets

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1. Delfica, in its 1845 and 1853 versions, has epigraphs drawn from this Eclogue.

of Delfica.<sup>1</sup> The first of these versions lacks the specifically Neapolitan setting established by the quatrains of Myrtho. The references to the volcano in the first tercet and the "duc normand" in the second are consequently even more unexpected than in the definitive version of Myrtho. Furthermore there is no syntactic parallel linking quatrains and tercets since "je sais" at the beginning of line 9 has no corresponding first person subject and verb at the beginning of the quatrains. However if these connexions are missing, it could be claimed that an alternative balance is achieved with the trees named in the first quatrain balanced and complemented by the references to laurel, hydrangea and myrtle in the final stanza.

As far as the second version (combining the quatrains of Myrtho and the tercets of Delfica) is concerned, the transition from quatrains to tercets seems initially less abrupt since there is no sudden introduction of an unexpected first person subject and verb as in the other variant. However the grief evoked in line 9 seems quite contrary to the imagery of smiling light developed in the quatrains, and conversely the idea of the rebirth of ancient beliefs in the tercets is not anticipated by motifs of return and renewal in the quatrains. Neither of the two variant versions then shows overall coherence. In the versions finally adopted, Delfica makes a more integrated whole than Myrtho. However the ecstatic opening of Myrtho and its enigmatic conclusion constitute a tantalizing and compelling sonnet.

The interchangeability of quatrains and tercets between the different versions clearly demonstrates the irrelevance of standard logical argument

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1. These can be found under the titles A J--y Colonna and Myrtho in Autres Chimères, O I, 43 and 42.

as a structuring principle within the individual sonnets. As in Delfica, much of the interest of Myrtho lies in the use of the sonnet as an instrument of suggestion, and in particular in the exploitation of the genre's characteristic rhyme-scheme to increase the phonetic density of the poem and create a formal equivalent to the theme of harmony and final synthesis put forward by the poet. The rhyme-scheme in the quatrains is regular and the fourfold return of the two rhymes is made more evident by the richness of rhyme achieved by the poet. Thus the a rhyme is leonine in the first stanza, rich in the second, while the b rhyme remains leonine through the whole of the quatrains. In the tercets, the usual pattern of three rhymes has given place to a denser scheme based on two rhymes only. Again these are rich or leonine in quality. Two of the c rhymes are leonine, while the d rhyme undergoes a series of subtle phonetic permutations, moving "agile" to "argile" and then finally to the rhyme both leonine and rare with "Virgile." Moreover the rhyme-scheme is supported by the repetition of the vowel sounds within the interior of the lines. The b rhyme of the quatrains is anticipated by the three-fold repetition of æ ("pense," "enchanteresse") in line 1 and by the appearance of its i component in "altier" in line 2.<sup>1</sup> The i's dominating lines 1, 2, and 3 recur again at the hemistich ("aussi") and as part of the rhyme word ("ivresse") of line 5, at the hemistich ("furtif") in line 6, in "fils" in line 8 and then come into new prominence as the d rhyme of the tercets followed by a final three-fold appearance in line 14 ("hortensia," "s'unit," "myrte"). u <sup>part of</sup> providing/the c rhyme, present already in the stressed "coupe" of line 5 and as part of the rhyme-word ("souriant") in

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1. Note a similar balance in line 6 - "pieds," "priant" - further supported by the p alliteration.

line 6, recurs also in "touche," "soudain," "toujours," "sous." Many smaller examples of alliteration and assonance bring additional support to these central patterns: t and s (1.1), p (ll. 1-2), o ("Au Pausilippe") and l (1.2), o (1.3 "ton front inondé"), r, or and e (ll. 3-4), s (1.5), r (1.6), p (1.7), m and f (1.8), s (1.9 and 1.11), d (1.12), r (1.13).

In El Desdichado the sonnet again departs from its traditional role of convenient framework for the elaboration of a logically structured argument. The tercets are particularly enigmatic and the exact nature of their relationship with each other and with the quatrains is not at all obvious. Instead it is the formal symmetries and tensions within the sonnet which lend significant pattern to the poet's apparently disconnected statements and images and which provide a lead into the meaning of the poem. As in Delfica and Myrtho this development is linked with an intensive and original use of the sonnet's distinctive rhyme-scheme and an associated strengthening of phonetic structures within the poem.

Je suis le Ténébreux, - le Veuf, - l'Inconsolé,  
 Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la Tour abolie:  
 Ma seule Etoile est morte, - et mon luth constellé  
 Porte le Soleil noir de la Mélancolie.

Dans la nuit du Tombeau, Toi qui m'as consolé,  
 Rends-moi le Pausilippe et la mer d'Italie,  
 La fleur qui plaisait tant à mon coeur désolé,  
 Et la treille où le Pampre à la Rose s'allie.

Suis-je Amour ou Phébus?... Lusignan ou Biron?  
 Mon front est rouge encor du baiser de la Reine;  
 J'ai rêvé dans la Grotte où nage la Sirène...

Et j'ai deux fois vainqueur traversé l'Achéron:  
 Modulant tour à tour sur la lyre d'Orphée  
 Les soupirs de la Sainte et les cris de la Fée.

O I, 33

The relationship between the quatrains is clearly one of contrast. Darkness is opposed to light, bereavement to consolation, Aquitaine and its medieval culture to the warm, natural vitality of a timeless

Mediterranean setting. Present tenses in the first quatrain, past tenses in the second give chronological sequence to the poet's experience. However the ambiguities of line 5 (does "la nuit du tombeau" refer to the poet's present state or to a similar situation experienced in the past?) suggest a repetition of events, an alternating pattern of despair and renewed life rather than a straight linear development.

The first line of the tercets reinforces this interpretation. The assertion of fixed identity ("Je suis ...") on which the quatrains opened, is directly balanced and countered by the question of line 9 ("Suis-je...?") and the complex series of alternatives which follows. The contrasting possibilities of the quatrains are now brought together in compressed and intricate pattern within a single line. Eros and Apollo, gods of classical antiquity, recalling the Italian setting of the second quatrain, stand in apparent opposition to Lusignan and Biron, figures of medieval French legend. However this is no simple contrast of darkness and light, misfortune and joy such as the quatrains present. The story of Lusignan, the suspicious and unhappy lover of the fairy Mélusine, has a parallel in the story of the ill-fated nocturnal lovers, Eros and Psyche, while Apollo, god of music and the sun, has more in common with the joyous Biron of the old song "Quand Biron voulait danser ...". The classical, Mediterranean world has its dark side, it seems, and the world of medieval France its gay one.

After the questions and alternatives of line 9, the poet fills the remainder of the sonnet with a new series of statements about his identity. But the implication of those of lines 10 and 11 in particular is by no means as clear as his original self-definition in the opening quatrain. A variety of explanations for the lines have been put forward,



drawing on both classical and medieval legend. It may be however, that such exegetical exercises hinder rather than help the meaning of the poem. Following on from line 9, what seems to be important here is precisely the blurring of references and the close association and acceptance as equally valid of two different experiences, a reconciliation formally suggested in the parallel syntax of the two lines and in the rich rhyme that links them together. This is accompanied by a change of tone which stands in contrast to that of the first quatrain. Though enigmatic, lines 10 and 11 are neutral, not pessimistic in character. Line 12 consolidates a positive impression, triumphantly resolving the motif of death which dominates the first quatrain while offering a syntactic parallel with line 11 and completing the rhyme of line 9. The poet concludes that his existence is no once and for all passage from life to death, happiness to sorrow, but is a constant cycle of emotional peaks and depths where he is alternately "Amour" and "Phébus," Lusignan and Biron ("Et j'ai deux fois vainqueur traversé l'Achéron"). "Tour à tour" in line 13 and the balanced hemistichs of line 14 are a reinforcement of this realization. The terminal couplet arrangement provides formal emphasis to the point.

In El Desdichado the structure of the sonnet performs a double function. On the one hand it acts in a linear way to suggest a process of progressive clarification. The poet sets up for himself two alternative frames of reference in the quatrains and arrives at a synthesis of the possibilities in the tercets. On the other, its repetitive and symmetrical properties are the formal analogy of the cyclical pattern the poet comes to recognize in his own existence. Thus the tercets replay the patterns of darkness and consolation, death and life, established in the quatrains

and the rhyme-scheme in particular comes into its own as an important element in the presentation of an experience of alternative possibilities and ultimate synthesis.

In El Desdichado the rhyme-scheme is in the strict sense an irregular one. The two rhymes of the quatrains rhyme alternately and the tercets conclude with a couplet. However Nerval's choice of rhyme is exceedingly interesting and subtle. In the quatrains the a rhyme is rich throughout, leonine in three cases, "superleonine" in one of these. In the fourth case "inconsolé" "constellé" though the antepenultimate syllables are not identical, the syllable immediately preceding is and the richness of rhyme thus reaches a density comparable to that of the other three. The b rhyme for its part is rich in the individual stanzas. But there are further refinements. The primary rhyme consonant in all eight cases is l. In addition in the first quatrain three rhymes out of four have o as the antepenultimate vowel. In the tercets, two of the three pairs of rhymes are rich and also have the same supporting consonant r. Furthermore the c rhyme picks up the o vowel of "inconsolé," "constellé," "consolé," while the e rhyme e is a phonetic echo of the rhyme vowel of the a rhyme (though a feminine rhyme where the a rhyme is a masculine one). This obsessive interweaving of sound at the rhyme enhances the patterns of alternation and final synthesis worked out on the thematic level. Within the individual lines a similar effect is achieved by the regular rhythmic balance of the hemistichs<sup>1</sup> combined with phonetic repetition: "inconsolé - Prince" consecutive nouns at the end of line 1

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1. Lines 1 and 8 are an apparent variation on this. Line 1 divides thematically into three parts, line 8 into three, or possibly four, parts. Rhythmically however they are in fact classical alexandrines like the rest, but with a further break dividing one or both hemistichs.

and beginning of line 2; s, t, l characterizing both hemistichs of line 3; "morte - porte" closing the first hemistich of line 3 and opening line 4; "Tombeau - Toi" on either side of the caesura in line 5; i (1.6) with "Pausilippe" balancing "Italie" at the rhyme, "fleur" and "coeur" in the two hemistichs of line 7, œ opening line 6 "Rends" and appearing again at the caesura in lines 7 and 8 "tant" "Pampre"; n standing as the initial consonant of a stressed fourth syllable in lines 6 and 7 "Pausilippe" "plaisait" and of a stressed sixth syllable in line 8 "Pampre"; r dominating lines 10 and 11; v balanced across the caesura of line 12 "vainqueur" "traversé"; s opening the two stressed syllables in the first hemistich of line 14 "souple" "Sainte."

Like Delfica and Myrtho, El Desdichado demonstrates Nerval's skill in adapting his sonnet to suggest rather than state a search for pattern and stability. Once again rhyme, in particular, has a major role to play, operating as an integral part of the meaning of the poem, not merely as a device of external structure.

Artémis is perhaps the most obscure of all the sonnets of Les Chimères. It is difficult to trace any logical development of an argument through the different parts of the sonnet structure. In particular the link between quatrains and tercets appears to be extremely tenuous, resting on the repetition of the one word "rose."

La Treizième revient ... C'est encor la première;  
 Et c'est toujours la Seule, - ou c'est le seul moment:  
 Car es-tu Reine, ô Toi! la première ou dernière?  
 Es-tu Roi, toi le seul ou le dernier amant?...

Aimez qui vous aima du berceau dans la bière;  
 Celle que j'aimai seul m'aime encor tendrement:  
 C'est la Mort - ou la Morte ... O délice! ô tourment!  
 Ia rose qu'elle tient, c'est la Rose première.

Sainte napolitaine aux mains pleines de feux,  
 Rose au coeur violet, fleur de sainte Gudule:  
 As-tu trouvé ta Croix dans le désert des cieux?

Roses blanches, tombez! vous insultez nos Dieux,  
 Tombez, fantômes blancs, de votre ciel qui brûle:  
 - La sainte de l'abîme est plus sainte à mes yeux!

Once again the poet appears preoccupied with the idea of the repetition of experience. The sonnet opens with the significant assertion, "La Treizième revient," an allusion clarified on the Eluard manuscript of the poem by the note "La XIII<sup>e</sup> heure (pivotale)" and on the Lombard manuscript by the title Ballet des Heures. This is balanced in the second hemistich by the apparently contradictory but in fact complementary statement, "C'est encor la première." Time revolves in a constantly recurring pattern, and in the system of the twelve hour cycle the thirteenth hour and the first are one and the same. The two parallel hemistichs of line 2 each centred on the word "seul" emphasize and amplify the point. Not only are the thirteenth and the first hours identical. Going beyond this, there is, in Nerval's mind, ultimately only a single moment carrying and repeating all the possibilities of the total time sequence. The temporal adverbs "encor" and "toujours" underline this perception and the whole construction of the lines - the multiplication of numeral adjectives, parallel rhythm, balanced hemistichs and repetitive syntax - is a formal representation of it.

The ambiguities of the feminines "la Treizième," "la première" and "la Seule" in lines 1 and 2 facilitate a shift in lines 3 and 4 from a purely temporal context to the sphere of personal relationships. Again concepts of first and last are played off against each other and emerge as fundamentally meaningless, the confusing and transient guises of a single essential experience. Formal backing to this idea is provided as in lines 1 and 2 by the interweaving of the adjectives "premier," "dernier," and "seul," repetition of the question "es-tu?" and parallel construction of the lines.

Lines 5 and 6 with their stress on the verb "aimer" developing the word "amant" at the end of the first quatrain make clearer the emotional

context of the poet's thought. Confusion and annihilation of a time-scale find expression here in a complex interplay of present and past tenses - "aimez - aima - aimai - aime." As in the first quatrain the temporal adverb "encor" emphasizes the point while the insistent four-fold repetition of "aimer," the balances of the syntax, the parallel structure of the hemistichs in line 6, the alliterative balance of the hemistich "du berceau dans la bière," are formal equivalents for the theme of an underlying identity. The first hemistich of line 7 with its play on "la Mort ... la Morte" continues the hesitation between the absolute and the individual. Finally "La rose tremière" with its proliferation of flowers around a single stalk closes the quatrains on a symbol of constant recurrence and essential similarity. This is echoed formally in lines 7 and 8, as in the six preceding lines, by a series of repetitions symmetrically balanced within and between the hemistichs.

The word "rose" provides a verbal link between quatrains and tercets but the connexion between them on a deeper level remains unclear. A new factor is introduced: that of religion. At the same time patterns of recurrence and identity established in the quatrains are discarded. Where the second quatrain echoed and developed the first, the binary structure of the tercets supports a pattern of contrast. The syncretism linking the "sainte napolitaine" with the northern saint Gudule<sup>1</sup> in lines 9 and 10 is not continued in lines 12-14. Instead the glowing purple rose with which both are identified stands in opposition to the

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1. Nerval's description of the cathedral of Saint Gudule in Brussels in Loirely contains a similar association of North and South: "Je ne parlerai pas de Sainte Gudule, de sa chaire bizarrement sculptée, de ses magnifiques vitraux de la Renaissance qui vous font rêver en plein Brabant l'horizon bleu de l'Italie, traversé de figures divines." O II, 814.

white roses which at the end of Goethe's Faust Part II<sup>1</sup> symbolize divine salvation. Adoration of the one in the first tercet is followed by defiant rejection of the other in the second. The final line of the sonnet with its play on "sainte" negates the accepted notion of sanctity.

In contrast then to the quatrains, the tercets describe two non-interchangeable experiences. One is reminded of the end of Delfica where the acceptance of Christianity symbolized by the rigid Arch of Constantine is opposed to the ultimate revival of the gods of antiquity, and not seen as part of an unbroken chain of spiritual experience. As a total structure Artémis thus appears to stand at the opposite pole from El Desdichado. Where this describes a movement from division to synthesis in parallel with the climactic character of the sonnet form, Artémis begins with the suggestion of synthesis and ends with an experience of schism. In harmony with this perhaps, rhyme in Artémis is rather less tight than in El Desdichado. In the strictest sense the scheme is again an irregular one (abab abba in the quatrains). More significantly however it lacks the richness of the El Desdichado scheme and has no comparable system of dense phonetic grouping of individual sounds associated with it.<sup>2</sup> Instead Nerval brilliantly violates a basic tenet of sonneteering and uses obsessive repetition of certain key words "premier," "dernier," "seul," "aimer," "mort," "rose," "sainte," "blanc," and "tombez" to create an ambiguous atmosphere of recognition and comfort on the one hand, division and confusion on the other.

Les Chimères is the first collection of sonnets published in France in the nineteenth century to go beyond the patterns of argument and

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1. Nerval's translation of Goethe's Faust Part I was published in 1829, his translation of Part II in 1840.  
2. Note however that the tercets are constructed on two rhymes only and that one of these is rare, "Gudule - brûle."

rhetoric traditionally associated with the form. In Le Christ aux Oliviers and Vers dorés Nerval is still working within the old convention. A framework of anecdote persists in Horus, but in Delfica, Myrtho, El Desdichado and Artémis, and to a lesser extent in Antéros, Nerval explores the possibilities of the genre as an instrument of suggestion. Structural symmetries and repetitions, from being a convenient rhetorical device, become an integral part of the meaning of the poem, providing an important key to the poet's central themes of recurrence and reconciliation and echoing his yearning for order and permanence. In Artémis this process is heightened by an obsessive play on the symmetries of the individual alexandrines or pairs of alexandrines. In Delfica, Myrtho and El Desdichado it is the rhyme-scheme which receives particular attention. This basic feature of the sonnet form now moves from its traditional role as little more than the indicator of the main articulations of the sonnet structure to become a key element in the total meaning of the poem. Nerval increases the repetitive aspect of the sonnet rhyme-scheme by a careful choice of rich and leonine rhymes and further enhances the effect by the subtle way in which the various rhymes are woven together. At the same time he extends the pattern to include groups of sounds within the body of the line. He thus creates a "musical" form whose obsessive phonetic structures rank equal with its enigmatic and haunting imagery.

This intensive and original handling of the sonnet form stands in sharp contrast to that of the other poets considered in this chapter. Sainte-Beuve brought the sonnet to renewed prominence in 1829 and 1830, but while freeing it from the tortuous preciousness to which it had become subject, he failed to replace the tight dialectic of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with a new bonding together of theme and form.

Gautier and Musset use the sonnet only intermittently at the beginning of their careers, trying their hand at a genre newly in vogue but reserving their original insights for other more flexible forms. At the end of their careers more extensive use of the sonnet corresponds to a slackening of inspiration. In neither case is a perfect marriage of theme and form achieved. Les Chimères, on the other hand, are the climax of Nerval's work. In their definitive version they provide the conclusion to Les Filles du Feu, replaying in a highly compressed form the various themes treated at greater length in the narratives. They are thus at one and the same time a resumé of the problems which haunted Nerval throughout his life and a model of that stability and pattern for which he constantly yearned. Nerval's handling of the sonnet form has more in common in fact with the incantatory effects of Baudelaire in pieces such as Parfum exotique, La Vie antérieure and Brumes et Pluies. However the obscurity of his poems is a severe limitation on any would-be imitator and the influence of Les Chimères on the fortunes of the sonnet in France in the nineteenth century, in particular its development as an instrument of suggestion rather than statement, would seem to be negligible besides that of Les Fleurs du Mal.



## CHAPTER II

Baudelaire

It seems strange that in comparison with the number of studies concerned with the architecture of Les Fleurs du Mal as a whole, so little space has been devoted, as Professor Peyre has pointed out, to any detailed study of the different poetic forms, and particularly the sonnet found within that collection.<sup>1</sup> Les Fleurs du Mal in 1857 is the first major work in nineteenth century French poetry to use the sonnet form to any great extent. It thus might have been thought that the publication of the first edition containing 44 sonnets out of a total of 101 poems would have been much discussed as an important stage in the history of the French sonnet following upon the more isolated attempts of Sainte-Beuve, Gautier, Musset, Nerval and Banville, and preceding the large sonnet output of the younger Parnassian poets and its use by writers including Verlaine, Mallarmé and Valéry. Yet critical study of Baudelaire's handling of the genre is surprisingly limited. It is true that the high proportion of sonnets in Les Fleurs du Mal, and the increase to 60 sonnets out of 127 poems in the 1861 edition and to a total of 73 out of 163 poems taking the Pièces condamnées, Nouvelles Fleurs du Mal, Les Epaves and Poèmes ajoutés à l'édition posthume as well, has been indicated by many commentators. But from Gautier onwards, in his preface to the posthumous edition of 1868 (v. supra p. 64), consideration of Baudelaire's technique in the sonnet has tended to be limited to a bare noting of Baudelaire's shortcomings as a sonnetist, i.e. his failure to adhere to the most rigorous type of sonnet rhyme-scheme, with little attempt to relate any

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1. Henri Peyre, Connaissance de Baudelaire (Paris, Corti, 1951), p. 131.

departures from the standard form to questions of theme and content, or to suggest why, in view of his supposed incompetence in the genre, Baudelaire should nevertheless have persisted in using it.

Gautier's emphasis on the unorthodox aspects of the Baudelairian sonnet and his disapproval of what seems to him a cavalier handling of rhyme-scheme requirements appear to have conditioned the thinking of many later critics in the matter. They confine themselves to brief statistical surveys of the types of rhyme-schemes used and/or general remarks on "l'extraordinaire liberté dont il [Baudelaire] use envers le sonnet."<sup>1</sup>

Few, however, provide such a crude interpretation of this fact as does Jasinski in his Histoire du Sonnet en France:

Peut-être crut-il qu'en contrariant ainsi les habitudes de l'oeil et de l'oreille, il ajoutait une étrangeté de plus à toutes les étrangetés de ses poèmes.<sup>2</sup>

Cassagne has the whole question in better perspective when he suggests:

Le grand avantage du sonnet était, d'après Baudelaire, d'amener par la concentration de la forme cette concentration correspondante de la pensée qui constituait pour lui l'idéal esthétique à atteindre ... si la pensée y subit cette concentration essentielle qui est le vrai, le propre caractère du sonnet, est-il d'une telle importance que le poème soit écrit sur 5 rimes ou sur 6? ou que telles rimes soient ici croisées et là embrassées ou l'inverse? Baudelaire pensait que non et Baudelaire n'avait pas tort.<sup>3</sup>

It is, however, only with the thesis of Ingrid Kraft, Fortleben lyrischer Dichtung in fester Form in Frankreich nach der Romantik, that the question of Baudelaire's use of the sonnet form receives any developed treatment. She maintains:

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1. Marcel Ruff, Baudelaire, l'homme et l'oeuvre (Paris, Hatier-Boivin, 1955), p. 127.
2. Max Jasinski, Histoire du Sonnet en France (Douai, Impr. H. Brugère, A. Dalsheimer et Cie., 1903), p. 233.
3. Albert Cassagne, Versification et métrique de Charles Baudelaire (Paris, Hachette, 1906), p. 98.

Der Umbruch jedoch, den die Sonette Baudelaires hervorriefen, liegt weniger auf der formalen Seite ...

Die Neuerung ist vielmehr in der thematischen Bereicherung und verbalsyntaktischen Auflockerung durch Anpassung der Form an die Förderung des Inhalts zu suchen,

and discusses the role of musical effects in the maintaining of an equilibrium between the opposed characteristics of form and content. Her thesis is, however, deficient in two important ways. In the first place, there is no detailed or systematic analysis of individual sonnets. In fact, the only sonnets mentioned are the usual four, Le Chat ("Viens, mon beau chat ..."), La Musique, Bien Loin d'Ici and L'Avertisseur cited as examples of extreme irregularity, and La Mort des Artistes and De Profundis Clamavi, the latter included in the section "Religiöses Bekenntnis in fester Dichtungsformen" as "ein Anruf an die göttliche Macht aus tiefer innerer Aufgewühltheit"!<sup>2</sup> And, secondly, no real attempt is made to relate Baudelaire's use of the sonnet to his use of other forms in order to compare the type of effects achieved in each and hence to try to evaluate the success with which Baudelaire incorporated it into his poetic system. The central problem of Baudelaire's preference for the form is left unsolved:

Ungelöst bleibt die Frage, warum Baudelaire bei seiner Bevorzugung des Ungewöhnlichen, das er auch "arabesque" (vgl. Poe) nannte, an traditionelle Sonettform festhielt und sogar für ihre Erhaltung eintrat.<sup>3</sup>

The critical writings of Baudelaire himself, dealing as they do with general aesthetic problems rather than specific matters of technique, contain few direct references to the sonnet form. His most developed discussion of it occurs instead in a letter to the critic Armand Fraisse dated 18 February 1860, à propos of the latter's article on the Sonnets

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1. Ingrid Kraft, Fortleben lyrischer Dichtung in fester Form in Frankreich nach der Romantik (unpublished doctoral thesis, Tübingen, 1958), p. 57.
  2. Ibid., p. 164.
  3. Ibid., p. 129.

humoristiques of the Lyonnais poet, Joséphin Soulayry. Baudelaire praises Soulayry and speaks of the "beauté pythagorique" of the sonnet form. He continues:

Parce que la forme est contraignante, l'idée jaillit plus intense. Tout va bien au Sonnet, la bouffonnerie, la galanterie, la passion, la rêverie, la méditation philosophique. Il y a là la beauté du métal et du minéral bien travaillés. Avez-vous observé qu'un morceau de ciel, aperçu par [le] un soupirail, ou entre deux cheminées, deux rochers [une arc] ou par une arcade, etc. ..., donnait une idée plus profonde de l'infini [que la grande perspective aperçue] qu'un grand panorama vu du haut d'une montagne? Quant aux [grands] longs poèmes, nous savons ce qu'il faut en penser; c'est la ressource de ceux qui sont incapables d'en faire de courts.

Tout ce qui dépasse la longueur de l'attention que l'être humain peut prêter à la forme poétique n'est pas un poème.<sup>1</sup>

The claims made here for the sonnet by Baudelaire do not appear particularly original. Adaptability, concentration, and craftsmanship have always figured largely in any characterization of the form. The subject matter of the French sonnet from Du Bellay onwards was never restricted to the love-theme nor to a specific tone of gaiety or severity. If the form had tended increasingly to pure "galanterie" and wit during the seventeenth century, its revival in the nineteenth by Sainte-Beuve and subsequent poets, was associated, as has been seen, with a new widening in the scope of its subject matter.

Baudelaire's concluding remark on the merits of brevity merely reproduces an attitude current among poets of the day. It echoes the vigorous protest of Poe in The Poetic Principle against the excessive value attributed to long poems, which Baudelaire had rendered in the following terms in the introduction to the Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires:

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1. Baudelaire, Correspondance générale, ed. Jacques Crépet (Paris, Conard, 1947-53), v.3, pp. 39-40.

... un poème ne mérite son titre qu'autant qu'il excite, qu'il enlève l'âme et la valeur primitive d'un poème est en raison de cette excitation, de cet enlèvement de l'âme. Mais, par nécessité psychologique, toutes les excitations sont fugitives et transitoires. Cet état singulier, dans lequel l'âme du lecteur a été, pour ainsi dire, tirée de force, ne durera certainement pas autant que la lecture de tel poème qui dépasse la ténacité d'enthousiasme dont la nature humaine est capable.<sup>1</sup>

Baudelaire's praise of Poe for the strictness of his methods of composition and for his insistence on the central importance of plan and on the need for the poet to exercise control over his inspiration all testify to his admiration of the aesthetic of the American poet. However, though couched here, as in the letter to Fraisse, in the language of Poe, Baudelaire's temperamental preference for the short poem was certainly confirmed rather by the example of Sainte-Beuve and Gautier, both in reaction to the prolixity and carelessness of some Romantic writing. Before any acquaintance with Poe's work,<sup>2</sup> Baudelaire is to be found writing in the Salon of 1846 with regard to those painters whom he terms "les éclectiques":

Les éclectiques n'ont pas songé que l'attention humaine est d'autant plus intense qu'elle est bornée et qu'elle limite elle-même son champ d'observation. Qui trop embrasse mal étreint.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore the application of the concept of brevity specifically to the sonnet is not to be found in the writings of Poe. His strictures with regard to the desirable length for a poem are aimed particularly against the epic, Paradise Lost is the example instanced, and his definition of a

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1. Baudelaire, "Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe," Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires, ed. Jacques Crépet (Paris, Conard, 1933), p. XVIII.
  2. Léon Lemonnier, Edgar Poe et les Poètes français (Paris, Editions de la Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1932), p. 9, points out that Poe's work was only introduced into France in 1845 and that Baudelaire's first acquaintance with it was probably the reading of Le Chat Noir in La Démocratie Pacifique of 27 Jan. 1847.
  3. Baudelaire, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Y-G. Le Dantec and Claude Pichois in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1961), p. 930. Henceforward OC. (Printing of 1966).

short or "minor" poem as he calls it, allows for any work that does not take more than a single sitting to read or exceed approximately one hundred lines.<sup>1</sup> The Raven at one hundred and eight lines he considers the right sort of length, since he is equally insistent that excessive brevity is also an evil to be avoided:

... it is clear that a poem may be improperly brief. Undue brevity degenerates into mere epigrammatism. A very short poem while now and then producing a brilliant or vivid, never produces a profound and enduring effect. There must be a steady pressing down of the wax.<sup>2</sup>

Nowhere is there any direct reference to the sonnet or any suggestion that its fourteen lines provide the perfect dimensions for poetry. Rather in The Philosophy of Composition, Poe criticizes the lack of originality that has always characterized versification:

... the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite, and yet, for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or seemed to think of doing, an original thing. The fact is that originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no means a matter, as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general, to be found, it must be elaborately sought, and although a positive merit of the highest class, demands in its attainment less of invention than of negation.<sup>3</sup>

The most interesting of the remarks on the sonnet made by Baudelaire in his letter to Fraisse is that concerning the possibilities of intensification offered by the form. The importance of this idea, a basic one in Baudelaire for art in general, tends to be obscured precisely because, where the sonnet is concerned, it seems so obvious. The choice of the analogy of the narrow aperture as opposed to the sweeping vista does little to dispel this illusion. But this is an example of that phenomenon termed by Baudelaire "la profondeur des lieux communs." Considered in conjunction

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1. Edgar Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," Works, ed. John H. Ingram (London, Black, 1901), v.3, pp. 268-269.  
2. Ibid.  
3. Ibid., p. 274.

with remarks made by Baudelaire in his critical work of the same period, the phrase "une idée plus profonde de l'infini" takes on a new significance. The words appear twice in the Salon of 1859. Referring to the painting Les Petites Mouettes by Penguilly, Baudelaire writes:

Je ne veux pas quitter cet aimable artiste, dont tous les tableaux, cette année, sont également intéressants, sans vous faire remarquer plus particulièrement les Petites Mouettes; l'azur intense du ciel et de l'eau, deux quartiers de roche qui font une porte ouverte sur l'infini (vous savez que l'infini paraît plus profond quand il est plus resserré), une nuée, une multitude, une avalanche, une plaie d'oiseaux blancs, et la solitude.<sup>1</sup>

The attempt to define the peculiar attraction of the works of Eugène Delacroix results in a similar formula:

Je tourmente mon esprit pour en arracher quelque formule qui exprime bien la spécialité d'Eugène Delacroix. Excellent dessinateur, prodigieux coloriste, compositeur ardent et fécond, tout cela est évident, tout cela a été dit. Mais d'où vient qu'il produit la sensation de nouveauté? Que nous donne-t-il de plus que le passé? Aussi grand que les grands, aussi habile que les habiles, pourquoi nous plaît-il davantage? On pourrait dire que doué d'une plus riche imagination, il a exprimé surtout l'intime du cerveau, l'aspect étonnant des choses, tant son ouvrage garde fidèlement la marque et l'humeur de sa conception. C'est l'infini dans le fini. C'est le rêve! et je n'entends pas par ce mot les capharnaüms de la nuit, mais la vision produite par une intense méditation, ou dans les moins fertiles, par un excitant artificiel. En un mot, Eugène Delacroix peint surtout l'âme dans ses belles heures.<sup>2</sup>

The breadth of application given to the idea by Baudelaire is conclusively indicated by a passage from Le Peintre de la Vie moderne, finally published in 1863:

La femme est bien dans son droit, et même elle accomplit une espèce de devoir en s'appliquant à paraître magique et surnaturelle ... qui ne voit que l'usage de la poudre de riz, si niatement anathématisé par les philosophes candides, a pour but et pour résultat de faire disparaître du teint toutes les taches que la nature y a outrageusement semées, et de créer une unité abstraite dans le grain et

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1. OC, p. 1070. My underlining, except for "plaie."  
2. OC, p. 1053. My underlining, except for "spécialité" and "âme."

la couleur de la peau, laquelle unité, comme celle produite par le maillot, rapproche immédiatement l'être humain de la statue, c'est-à-dire d'un être divin et supérieur? Quant au noir artificiel qui cerne l'oeil et au rouge qui marque la partie supérieure de la joue, bien que l'usage en soit tiré du même principe, du besoin de surpasser la nature, le résultat est fait pour satisfaire un besoin tout opposé. Le rouge et le noir représentent la vie, une vie surnaturelle et excessive; ce cadre noir rend le regard plus profond et plus singulier, donne à l'oeil une apparence plus décidée de fenêtre ouverte sur l'infini; le rouge, qui enflamme la pommette, augmente encore la clarté de la prunelle et ajoute à un beau visage féminin la passion mystérieuse de la prêtresse.<sup>1</sup>

The sonnet then for Baudelaire is eminently capable through the concentration and relief afforded by its form of rendering "l'infini dans le fini," but as these quotations make clear this concept is closely associated in the poet's mind with a whole new idea of beauty, a beauty of surprise and mystery, suggested rather than made explicit, and not at all of the sort generally linked until this point with the potential of the sonnet, although it is adumbrated in a very few of the sonnets of Sainte-Beuve and in a sense realized in those of Gérard de Nerval. The beauty he envisages is "surnaturelle," "excessive," and goes far beyond the purity of line or the idealization of subject achieved in statuary or in the analogous sphere of a poetry on the Malherbe model with its emphasis on order and balance and its clear-cut manipulation of idea and illustration. The famous definition of beauty as "quelque chose d'ardent et de triste, quelque chose d'un peu vague laissant carrière à la conjecture,"<sup>2</sup> the idea of "l'irrégularité, c'est-à-dire l'inattendu, la surprise, l'étonnement" as "une partie essentielle et la caractéristique de la beauté,"<sup>3</sup> are poles removed from the concept of Beauty as formal perfection in particular favour at the time, and poles removed also from all the notions traditionally associated with the sonnet form.

It will be noted, however, that the letter to Fraisse and the

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1. OC, pp. 1184-85. My underlining.  
 2. OC, p. 1255.  
 3. OC, p. 1254.



passages subsequently quoted, all date from the end of Baudelaire's poetic career. They are the statement of a position gradually worked out over a period of twenty years. But what was his attitude to the sonnet in the 1840's? He makes no direct reference to the form at this stage, but a certain amount of circumstantial material can be found in the short story La Fanfarlo, published in the Bulletin de la Société des Gens de Lettres in January 1847, the hero of which has many traits in common with Baudelaire himself. Samuel Cramer, like Balzac's Lucien de Rubempré, is an aspiring young poet, author of a collection of sonnets Les Orfraies, but his subjects are more extreme and more disturbing than those of Les Marguerites and he is obliged to defend his work against the criticisms of Madame de Cosmelly:

Madame, plaignez-moi, ou plutôt plaignez-nous, car j'ai beaucoup de frères de ma sorte; c'est la haine de tous et de nous-mêmes qui nous a conduits vers ces mensonges. C'est par désespoir de ne pouvoir être nobles et beaux suivant les moyens naturels que nous nous sommes si bizarrement fardé le visage. Nous nous sommes appliqués à sophistiquer notre coeur, nous avons tant abusé du microscope pour étudier les hideuses excroissances et les honteuses verrues dont il est couvert, et que nous grossissons à plaisir, qu'il est impossible que nous parlions le langage des autres hommes. Ils vivent pour vivre, et nous, hélas! nous vivons pour savoir. Tout le mystère est là. L'âge ne change que la voix et n'abolit que les cheveux et les dents; nous avons altéré l'accent de la nature, nous avons extirpé une à une les pudeurs virginales dont était hérissé notre intérieur d'honnête homme. Nous avons psychologisé comme les fous, qui augmentent leur folie en s'efforçant de la comprendre. Les années n'infirmant que les membres et nous avons déformé les passions. Malheur, trois fois malheur aux pères infirmes qui nous ont fait rachitiques et mal venus, prédestinés que nous sommes à n'enfanter que des morts-nés!<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Cramer then uses the sonnets of Les Orfraies to probe the paradoxes and complexity of his own nature, a combination of opposing tendencies - both cerebral and emotional, mystical and sensual, as revealed in his ambivalent reaction to the call of spring and in the diversity of

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1. OC, pp. 491-492. My underlining.

his reading matter:

Un air tiède et imprégné de bonnes odeurs lui ouvrit les narines - dont une partie étant montée au cerveau, le remplit de rêverie et de désir, et l'autre lui remua libertinement le coeur, l'estomac et le foie. - Il souffla résolument ses deux bougies dont l'une palpitait encore sur un volume de Swedenborg, et l'autre s'éteignait sur un de ces livres honteux dont la lecture n'est profitable qu'aux esprits obsédés d'un goût immodéré de la vérité.

OC, p. 487

It is the problem of this same duality that haunts all Baudelaire's work, and which he confronts in Les Fleurs du Mal, and to which he ultimately supplies a partial solution in the notion of "l'infini dans le fini." The sonnet through its traditional potential for contrast and comparison and its long association with argument and rhetoric seems not unsuited for a substantial role in the examination of the gulf between aspiration and limitation, spiritual and sensual yearnings, vision and despair, "spleen" and "idéal."

Baudelaire thus appears to envisage two functions for the sonnet. On the one hand, he associates it, in the 1840's tale, La Fanfarlo, with the examination of the conflicting aspects of human nature and the human struggle in an individual of peculiar, wellnigh pathological sensitivity. On the other, in the letter to Fraisse and in the context of the articles of the late 1850's and early 1860's, it emerges as an instrument of suggestion capable of reflecting through the wealth of patterning factors contained in its diminutive frame an ideal of perfect harmony and infinite potential which transcends the limits of normal existence. The first of these alternatives coincides with traditional usage, or more precisely with traditional usage as redefined by Romantic exponents of the form - not the intricate move and countermove of

emotional codifications characteristic of the majority of sixteenth century sonnets but instead a simpler use of the contrastive and symmetrical possibilities of the genre to analyze a nature alienated from its social framework and divided against itself. The second would seem to be something of a new departure.

Since the analytical investigation of experience is traditional to the sonnet form, and since the majority of Baudelaire's sonnets do in fact fall into this category, it seems preferable to consider first this aspect of Baudelaire's sonnet production before going on to examine his more innovative, but also more limited, use of the genre as an instrument of suggestion. Baudelaire's view of man as a dual being, his nature a battlefield between physical desires and spiritual aspirations, the famous "deux postulations simultanées," is one which the sonnet with its primarily bi-partite structure seems particularly suited to express. On a majority of occasions it is the most fundamental of the sonnet's possibilities, the quatrain-tercet arrangement, which is the dominant factor in patterns of opposition and contrast. However Baudelaire takes care to vary the procedure, sometimes by bringing into play the symmetrical possibilities of the two quatrains or two tercets within themselves, sometimes by spreading or even shifting the balance of the opposition from the 8:6 to an 11:3 or a 13:1, or perhaps a 4:10 division, sometimes by contrasting not only the images and ideas but also the tone and rhythm of different sections of his poem. But in all these instances,

it is noticeable that it is principally in the aptitude of the sonnet for the expression of the basic dichotomy of human nature and experience that the poet's interest lies. It is the sense of his words that is of greatest importance and the poet is not to be distracted from this by the pursuance for their own sake of the rules of a formal exercise. This is no doubt one explanation for the large number of "irregular" sonnets criticized by Gautier. The rhyme-scheme in many of these analytical pieces has little active function except in so far as it delineates the main articulation of the form. Yet Baudelaire was in fact well able on occasion to take advantage of the repetitive, unifying or symmetrical possibilities of rhyme within the sonnet - including the traditional "regular" rhyme-scheme - where these would produce a telling juxtaposition of concepts or a widely differing tonality in the various sections of the sonnet and thus reinforce the dichotomy at the centre of his poem.

The use of the sonnet to give a lucid and succinct formulation to the schism in human nature covers the whole range of experience investigated in Les Fleurs du Mal - problems of the poet's own personality, his emotional relationships, his aesthetic meditations. Consideration of a sample of these pieces will give an adequate idea of the basically conventional approach of the poet to his form for purposes of analysis but also of the way in which traditional parameters may be reinvigorated by contact with an original sensitivity.

Sainte-Beuve and Gautier had already used the sonnet to explore the gap between personal aspiration and failure, and Baudelaire, more acutely aware than they had been of the gulf between potential and performance, repeats as one of his techniques that of symbol and contrast within the quatrain-tercet framework. La Cloche fêlée, entitled Le Spleen

when first published in Le Messager de l'Assemblée in 1851, is an adaptation of a Romantic theme used by Lamartine and rendered in sonnet form by Gautier,<sup>1</sup> that of the bell and the memories of yore that its sound awakens. Baudelaire's sonnet opens on this motif, but in contrast to the pictorial bias of Gautier's sonnet, the method here is a rhetorical one and by the second quatrain, the bell has come to occupy a central place in an analysis of the poet's sufferings. The poet postulates a sort of alter ego, sound and whole, with which he can then contrast his own weakness, a pattern falling easily into the two main sections of the sonnet form. Baudelaire is however at some pains to mute what might seem too stilted and obvious a contrast by the avoidance of an absolute conjunction of the two terms of the comparison i.e. "mon âme est une cloche fêlée."

Il est amer et doux, pendant les nuits d'hiver,  
 D'écouter, près du feu qui palpète et qui fume,  
 Les souvenirs lointains lentement s'élever  
 Au bruit des carillons qui chantent dans la brume.  
 Bienheureuse la cloche au gosier vigoureux  
 Qui, malgré sa vieillesse, alerte et bien portante,  
 Jette fidèlement son cri religieux,  
 Ainsi qu'un vieux soldat qui veille sous la tente!  
 Moi, mon âme est fêlée, et lorsqu'en ses ennuis  
 Elle veut de ses chants peupler l'air froid des nuits,  
 Il arrive souvent que sa voix affaiblie  
 Semble le râle épais d'un blessé qu'on oublie  
 Au bord d'un lac de sang, sous un grand tas de morts,  
 Et qui meurt, sans bouger, dans d'immenses efforts.

OC, p. 68

The sonnet opens on an almost conversational note with little hint of the nightmarish development in the latter part of the poem. The tone is one of gentle melancholy, "amer et doux," and there is even a certain cosiness in the sketch of the winter's evening by the fireside. The sound of the bells is the signal triggering a reverie which evolves in

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1. V. supra pp. 72-74.

accordance with the poet's spleenetic preoccupations. The role of the first quatrain is thus one of leisurely introduction.

The second quatrain records the initial reaction to the ringing of the bells, an exclamation of envious admiration for the bell that is sound, whole and reliable in spite of its age. The weight given to these qualities by the poet is made even more apparent by the apostrophe "Bienheureuse" with which the quatrain opens and the phrase "cri religieux" in line 7. The bell, no doubt through its church associations, seems to be a guardian and reminder of spiritual values and in its faithful performance of this duty is indeed truly blessed. The quatrains thus recall that very early sonnet of Baudelaire's:

Quand le clocher s'agite et qu'il chante à tue-tête ...  
 Lors s'élevant au fond de votre âme mondaine,  
 Des tons d'orgue mourant et de cloche lointaine  
 Vous ont-ils pas tiré malgré vous un soupir?  
 Cette dévotion des champs, joyeuse et franche,  
 Ne vous a-t-elle pas, triste et doux souvenir,  
 Rappelé qu'autrefois vous aimiez le dimanche?

OC, p. 196

The later sonnet, however, does not stop at this point but adopts it as the first term of a comparison which will throw into relief contrasting features in the soul of the poet. The image of the sound bell is succeeded in the opening hemistich of the tercets by a terse statement assimilating the flawed soul to the flawed bell. Neither as a result, can produce a harmonious sound - "un cri religieux." The "gosier vigoureux" of the second quatrain is balanced and replaced by the "voix affaiblie" of the first tercet, while the "cri religieux" (1.7) is deformed beyond recognition to the "râle épais" of the final tercet. The wintry scene of the first quatrain now loses its cosy quality and becomes an extension of the poet's despair (1.10). The second tercet expresses his impotence in terms of the associated images of weakness,

defeat, and ultimately death. The flaw in the soul is now translated into terms of a bodily wound, a transposition anticipated in the second quatrain by the simile of line 8 and gaining some support also from the conjunction of sound in "fêlée" and "blessé" in the first lines of their respective tercets. The watchfulness of the old soldier is replaced in the final tercet by the convulsive agony of the forgotten victim on the battlefield and the vision of the former within the shelter of his tent undergoes a nightmarish transformation as the bodies of the dead weigh down upon their comrade, immobilizing him despite his desperate efforts to escape. Whereas the soldier simile of the second quatrain occupies a single line, great emphasis is placed at the close of the sonnet on the sensations of pain and claustrophobia by the increase in length of the soldier parallel to occupy the whole of the last tercet.

The sonnet is thus constructed around the contrast of the whole and the flawed bell which is framed within the main division between quatrains and tercets, though the first quatrain in fact provides little more than an introductory preamble. A secondary contrast is introduced in line 8 with the soldier image and this develops in importance in the tercets, occupying one whole stanza and thus equalling in prominence the originally dominant bell image. This scheme of contrast and comparison is supported by an arrangement of sound structures which tends to differentiate the different sections of the sonnet in accordance with the development of theme described above. The rhyme pattern is in fact of a most "irregular" nature. Not only are the quatrains on four instead of two rhymes, but in addition the tercets rhyme as three couplets rather than in a couplet and quatrain or intertwined arrangement. The rhyming of the quatrains corresponds to the informal tone of the beginning of the poem, the comparison forming the basis of the sonnet not appearing until the second

quatrain. It will be noted that line 3 offers an example of rime normande and the poet's use at this juncture of a weak rhyme of this type reflects the conversational tone and introductory nature of his opening stanza. But while rhyme in the quatrains plays a relatively unimportant role, in the tercets the position is reversed. The last six lines of the sonnet form a single syntactical unit, though the spirit of the division between the two tercets is maintained in the changeover of the imagery in line 12. The rhyme however follows a two by two pattern on the visual level and a four to two plan on the aural level with the homophony of the masculine rhymes of lines 9 and 10 and the feminine ones of lines 11 and 12. This fourfold repetition of sound at the rhyme is most important since the sharp timbre of the vowel i acts onomatopoeically reproducing the grating effect of the flawed bell and suggesting phonetically the acute physical discomfort associated with it in the supporting image of the dying soldier.<sup>1</sup> The final rhyme, the closed back vowel ɔ lengthened by the r in "morts" and "efforts," provides a markedly contrasting tonality. Initiated in the word "bord" at the beginning of line 13, it underlines the concluding transition from pain and suffering to death itself (thematically stressed in the repetition "morts" - "qui meurt", as well as in "le râle épais" of line 12).

La Cloche fêlée depends heavily on the most obvious feature of the sonnet structure, the quatrain-tercet division, and the general effect is not a particularly subtle one. Les Aveugles, on the other hand, provides a good illustration of the complexity and sophistication of which this basically simple pattern is capable. The opening, "Contemple-les,

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1. A similar insistence on the vowel i occurs in the tercets of La Fontaine de Sang, OC, p. 109. Again the context is one of anguish and pain.



mon âme," indicates from the outset the double level on which the poem is to be understood. Physical blindness is the analogy for spiritual blindness where the poet is even more disorientated ("plus qu'eux hébété") than the blind men themselves.

Contemple-les, mon âme; ils sont vraiment affreux!  
Pareils aux mannequins; vaguement ridicules;  
Terribles, singuliers comme les sonnambules;  
Dardant on ne sait où leurs globes ténébreux.

Leurs yeux, d'où la divine étincelle est partie,  
Comme s'ils regardaient au loin, restent levés  
Au ciel; on ne les voit jamais vers les pavés  
Pencher rêveusement leur tête appesantie.

Ils traversent ainsi le noir illimité,  
Ce frère du silence éternel. O cité!  
Pendant qu'autour de nous tu chantes, ris et beugles,  
Eprise du plaisir jusqu'à l'atrocité,  
Vois! je me traîne aussi! mais, plus qu'eux hébété,  
Je dis: Que cherchent-ils au Ciel, tous ces aveugles?

OC, p. 88

However a less purely schematic use is made of the quatrain-tercet division than in La Cloche fêlée. The description of the blind runs over into the second line of the tercets, though it could be maintained that lines 9 and 10 perform a transitional function spelling out the theme of disorientation to be developed on a personal level at the close of the poem. Moreover the comparison of the blind men and the poet is not immediately formulated; the hurly-burly of the city contrasting with the inner silence and darkness is experienced first by "nous" and it is only in lines 13 and 14 that the poet at last uses the first person singular. Nevertheless, despite this spreading of the weight of the central comparison beyond a simple opposition of quatrains and tercets, the 8:6 division of the sonnet still remains the central structural axis. The main point of the piece, the physical-spiritual analogy, is made very forcefully by the repetition of "Au ciel," once in the second quatrain where the rejet gives the expression considerable importance, and once

in the parallel second tercet where it receives emphasis from the rhythmic break at the eighth syllable and from its thematic positioning between "je" on the one side, "tous ces aveugles" on the other. It is the 8:6 division also which provides the framework for an important interplay of parallel and contrast in rhythmic and syntactic procedures which focusses attention on the one hand on the similar situation in which the poet and the blind men find themselves, on the other on the disparity in the poet's attitude in accordance with his position as outsider or participant. The first quatrain is composed of two short main clauses, each occupying a hemistich of the opening line and these are followed by a series of disconnected adjectival and participial phrases. These phrases, however, in lines 2 and 4, follow the same even rhythmic pattern as line 1, and the departure from this model in line 3, while stressing for a moment the mingled horror and fascination with which the poet views the blind men, in the long run merely throws into stronger relief the prevailing rhythmic regularity and the poet's general lack of emotional identification at this point with the spectacle before him. In the second quatrain, the position is reversed. Syntactic fragmentation is replaced by two extended periods, but the rhythmic balance of the stanza is considerably disturbed. Only line 8 falls into two equal hemistichs. Elsewhere in the stanza, the alexandrine pattern is severely disrupted by the displacement of the caesura in three successive lines (5, 6, 7), by the enjambements between lines 5 and 6, 6 and 7, and by the rejet "Au ciel" which breaks the quatrain into two unequal sections. Such syntactic and rhythmic disturbance culminating in the overrun of the description of the blind into the tercets provides a formal underlining to their stumblings and gropings as seen by the detached outsider. In the tercets, further fragmentations in rhythm and syntax suggest a

similar experience of disorientation, but at the same time the change in the poet's attitude, once his own involvement is perceived, reveals itself in a more rhetorical, more eloquent use of language. This is characterized by a sustained syntax (lines 10-14 are a single continuous period constructed of a series of interlocking clauses - compare the staccato succession of phrases in the first quatrain) and by a skilful manipulation of the rhythmic possibilities of the alexandrine. This commences with the standard 6/6 pattern in lines 11 and 12, and works through the more emphatic variation of line 13 with its additional pauses after the first syllable of each hemistich to the climactic 2/6/4 arrangement of line 14 which underscores the three main thematic strands of the sonnet - the involvement and disorientation of the poet in a situation of quest and blindness.

In both La Cloche fêlée and Les Aveugles, it is the quatrain-tercet division in the sonnet with which the poet is chiefly concerned. However other pieces such as L'Ennemi and the Spleen poem "Pluviôse, irrité contre la ville entière," illustrate well the variety of possibilities available in the sonnet structure and the delicacy with which Baudelaire is capable of using it. In L'Ennemi, for example, it is the progressive aspect of that structure which comes into its own, helping to underline the central theme of the irrevocable passage of time.

Ma jeunesse ne fut qu'un ténébreux orage,  
Traversé ça et là par de brillants soleils;  
Le tonnerre et la pluie ont fait un tel ravage,  
Qu'il reste en mon jardin bien peu de fruits vermeils.

Voilà que j'ai touché l'automne des idées,  
Et qu'il faut employer la pelle et les râteaux  
Pour rassembler à neuf les terres inondées,  
Où l'eau creuse des trous grands comme des tombeaux.

Et qui sait si les fleurs nouvelles que je rêve  
Trouveront dans ce sol lavé comme une grève  
Le mystique aliment qui ferait leur vigueur?

- O douleur! ô douleur! Le Temps mange la vie,  
Et l'obscur Ennemi qui nous ronge le coeur  
Du sang que nous perdons croît et se fortifie!

The opening words of the sonnet "Ma jeunesse ne fut" immediately initiate the temporal sequence which forms the backbone of the poem, and lead into a contrast between a past not entirely devoid of hope ("Traversé ça et là par de brillants soleils") and the almost total devastation of the present. Consciousness of this opposition and hence of the irrevocable passage of time is maintained firmly in the forefront of the reader's mind at the beginning of the second quatrain by the image "l'automne des idées" which picks up and contrasts with "jeunesse" in the opening line of the first. The rest of the stanza, while still working within a present tense context reorientates attention towards a future whose ambiguity however emerges clearly from the juxtaposition of the expression "rassembler à neuf" with the gloomy equivalence "trous" - "tombeaux." This ambiguity forms the basis for development in the double structure of the tercets. The first tercet perpetuates the more hopeful attitude, continuing the temporal sequence into the future with "trouveront." However, this future tense occurs not in a main clause but as a result of the dubitative "si" and the use of the conditional "ferait" in the relative clause of line 11 transposes the whole temporal movement into a context of uncertainty and doubt. The second tercet, reverting to the implications of line 8, closes the sonnet however with a definite emphasis on despair and failure. The progression from the past through the present to the future is abruptly brought to a halt. Indeed the whole concept of time as passage on which the sonnet has until this point been based is nullified. Time now is visualized as an absolute power (note Baudelaire's capitalization) before which the relative phases of man's ephemeral existence lose all meaning and which therefore renders all his

dreams and strivings vain. In harmony with this change of approach, the image of the garden is discarded and replaced by motifs of destruction.

This double view of time, as the fleeting moment and as an implacable infinitude (both aspects of course contributing to man's sense of impotence) is underlined not only structurally by the 11:3 progression of time motifs and imagery already noted, but also by additional thematic and phonetic elements within the more limited context of the tercet structure. Thus the gardening image of lines 9-11 provides an image of nourishment and strengthening which is ironically paralleled and effectively reversed in the final stanza by the three-fold metaphor of Time consuming life and waxing strong on man's very life-blood. At the same time, the juxtaposition of "vigueur" and "douleur" at the heart of the tercets and their phonetic similarity and thematic disparity makes the same point.

The 11:3 pattern in the sonnet structure is thus of prime importance supporting the double theme of time as progression (in the first three sections of the form) and Time as eternally present (in the final tercet). But other patterns of contrast and association mesh with this dominant arrangement, subtly reflecting the situation of tension and impasse in which the poet finds himself. Particularly striking is the ambiguous role created for the first tercet. This is linked on the one hand through the progression past-present-future and through the garden image to the quatrains, while on the other, the image of consumption binds it to the final stanza. In addition, the difference in tone between the more narrative approach of lines 1-8 and the sudden rush of emotion apparent in the questions and exclamations of lines 9-14 reinforces the sense of the integrity of the tercets as a single block. Baudelaire thus skilfully creates a situation of structural tension around the first tercet, which

underlines the whole predicament of the poet and the struggle in his mind between a hope which he knows at heart to be irrational and his underlying certainty of the uselessness of his efforts.

In L'Ennemi, Baudelaire reshapes a motif traditional in the sonnet - the theme of temporal contrasts - and underlines his ambivalent attitude to Time by a play on both the progressive aspects and the contrastive possibilities of the genre. In "Pluviôse irrité contre la ville entière," he takes another standard device of presentation in the sonnet, enumeration, and develops it with considerable originality and success to render not the split in human nature but the sense of fragmentation which that schism induces. The enumerative technique is an old one in the sonnet and Baudelaire uses it quite conventionally in Le Vin du Solitaire for purposes of emphasis, in La Mort des Pauvres to explore the different facets or possibilities of an experience, as well as intermittently in, for example, the tercets of Sur le Tasse en prison. In the sonnet "Pluviôse irrité," however, the device functions as an integral part of the poet's experience of spleen, underlining the discontinuous and finite, limited nature of all phenomena.

Pluviôse, irrité contre la ville entière,  
De son urne à grands flots verse un froid ténébreux  
Aux pâles habitants du voisin cimetière  
Et la mortalité sur les faubourgs brumeux.

Mon chat sur le carreau cherchant une litière  
Agite sans repos son corps maigre et galeux;  
L'âme d'un vieux poète erre dans la gouttière  
Avec la triste voix d'un fantôme frileux.

Le bourdon se lamente, et la bûche enfumée  
Accompagne en fausset la pendule enrhumée,  
Cependant qu'en un jeu plein de sales parfums,

Héritage fatal d'une vieille hydropique,  
Le beau valet de coeur et la dame de pique  
Causent sinistrement de leurs amours défunts.

OC, pp. 68-69

The sonnet consists of a series of disparate notations linked only by the sense of discomfort associated with all of them. These juxta-

positions are however accompanied by a stricter use than usual by Baudelaire of the sonnet rhyme-scheme. At the most obvious level, the choice of a regular pattern fulfils the function of drawing the different parts of the sonnet more tightly together, thus counteracting the incoherence which might result from the diversity of thematic motif. A similar result appears to be achieved by the grouping in the two outer stanzas of the various allegorical figures with their associations with water and death, and the concentration in the two inner ones of more ordinary or at least less rhetorically described objects and occurrences. But both this and the established pattern of rhyme have a role to play at a deeper level. The enclosed pattern of the one, the fixed and limited nature of the other, reproduce formally the cramping limitations which the weight of finite being imposes on all the different individuals and aspects of the physical world and against which all creation struggles and protests. In a sense then, the form comments on the general phenomenon of fragmentation described in the poem, creating a feeling of that "violence immobile" which Vivier sees as the chief characteristic of spleen.<sup>1</sup> The traditional device of enumeration within the sonnet is thus transformed into the symbol of the poet's most intimate experience, mingling "vaporisation"<sup>2</sup> with claustrophobia.

On the evidence of the four sonnets so far examined, it seems plain that the extent to which traditional devices become informed with new vigour depends very much on how closely they coincide with the patterns

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1. Robert Vivier, L'Originalité de Baudelaire (Bruxelles, Palais des Académies, 1952), p. 92. This is a reprint of the original 1926 edition.

2. "De la vaporisation et de la centralisation du Moi. Tout est là." Mon Coeur mis à nu, OC, p. 1271.

of the poet's own thought and experience. This being so, it is clear that with the love sonnet, a poet enters a difficult area, one crammed with precedents established through the centuries which may or may not correspond to his own findings in the matter. It is of course possible for him to make a deliberate play on the conventions and on occasion this is what Baudelaire does. Le Flambeau vivant and to a lesser extent L'Aube spirituelle, Sisina, Remords posthume and Le Revenant are pastiches and as such they have their own particular interest offering not only an example of Baudelaire's skill in copying a style but also, and more importantly, a standard against which his more personal use of the analytical possibilities of the sonnet can be measured.

Praise of the eyes of the beloved, their light, their glance, their power, is one of the commonplaces of love poetry generally, but the sonnet with its symmetries and parallels of structure had provided the poets of the Renaissance with an admirable frame in which to develop the antitheses and comparisons associated with the theme. The most hyperbolic example in French is probably provided by Laugier de Porchères (1572-1653) in his sonnet Sur les yeux de Madame la Duchesse de Beaufort (Gabrielle d'Estrées):

Ce ne sont pas des yeux, ce sont plutôt des dieux:  
Ils ont dessus les rois la puissance absolue.  
Dieux? non, ce sont des cieux; ils ont la couleur bleue  
Et le mouvement prompt comme celui des cieux.

Cieux? non; mais des soleils clairement radieux  
Dont les rayons brillants nous offusquent la vue;  
Soleils? non, mais d'éclairs de puissance inconnue,  
Des foudres de l'Amour signes présagieux;

Car s'ils étaient des dieux, feraient-ils tant de mal?  
Si des cieux? Ils auraient leur mouvement égal;  
Deux soleils ne se peut: le soleil est unique.

Eclairs? non: car ceux-ci durent trop et trop clairs.  
Toutefois je les nomme, afin que je m'explique,  
Des yeux, des dieux, des cieux, des soleils, des éclairs.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Anthologie poétique française, XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, ed. Maurice Allem (Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1965), v.1, p. 130.



Le Flambeau vivant continues the tradition though in a more restrained manner. Baudelaire's immediate source however is the third and final section of Poe's poem To Helen. The image of the eyes as guides, the play on servant and slave (1.7), the closing metaphor of the stars undimmed by the sun all derive from here, but their formulation within a sonnet structure goes hand in hand with a more densely realized interweaving of opposed and complementary concepts, which recalls the preciousness of the sixteenth and seventeenth century sonnetists.

Ils marchent devant moi, ces Yeux pleins de lumières,  
 Qu'un Ange très-savant a sans doute aimantés;  
 Ils marchent, ces divins frères qui sont mes frères,  
 Secouant dans mes yeux leurs feux diamantés.

Me sauvant de tout piège et de tout péché grave,  
 Ils conduisent mes pas dans la route du Beau;  
 Ils sont mes serviteurs et je suis leur esclave;  
 Tout mon être obéit à ce vivant flambeau.

Charmants Yeux, vous brillez de la clarté mystique  
 Qu'ont les cierges brûlant en plein jour; le soleil  
 Rougit, mais n'éteint pas leur flamme fantastique;

Ils célèbrent la Mort, vous chantez le Réveil;  
 Vous marchez en chantant le réveil de mon âme,  
 Astres dont nul soleil ne peut flétrir la flamme!

OC, pp. 41-42

The first of these images, the eyes as guides, is concentrated in the quatrains and receives considerable support from the structural parallels available there. The unexpected association of the eyes with the verb "marcher" is given strong relief by its opening position in the sonnet, and Baudelaire proceeds to elaborate the conceit with the repetition of "Ils marchent" in a similar opening position at the start of line 3 and by a further repetition of the same idea in line 6, "Ils conduisent mes pas ...". In each case, the motif of guidance is accompanied by an allusion to spiritual influence - "ange" for the first statement, "divins" for the second, and for the third a more extended

reference which, placing "sauvant" at the beginning of the second quatrain and underlining the notion of the perils of the way by the rhythmic and phonetic balance of "tout piège" and "tout péché," puts the predominant emphasis in the second stanza on the moral aspect of the lady's tutelage.

The reciprocity of the relationship between the eyes and the poet had been expressed in Poe's To Helen by an elaboration of the old cliché of the poet, slave to his mistress. Baudelaire in the second quatrain reproduces the balance established by Poe: "They are my ministers - yet I their slave," but again uses the symmetries of the sonnet structure to reinforce the idea. Thus in the parallel line in the first stanza, he offers an analogous play on the word "frères" - the two eyes and their fraternal relationship to his own.

In the quatrains of the sonnet as in the first lines of the Poe fragment inspiring Baudelaire, relatively little space is devoted to imagery of light. In the first line, "lumières" significantly appears in a plural form, emphasizing, as does line 4, a diffusion of light rather than its concentrated splendour. Baudelaire's lack of preoccupation with the light theme at this point except as a necessary adjunct to the motif of guidance, is moreover clearly evidenced in the original version of line 1: "Ils marchent devant moi, ces Yeux extraordinaires." Similarly, the original version of line 4: "Suspendant mon regard à leurs feux diamantés," though rendering the magnetism of the eyes, lays less emphasis on the visual aspect of their magical quality.

In the tercets, however, the position is reversed. The Poe image, "two sweetly scintillant / Venuses, unextinguished by the sun," is the base for an elaborate edifice of light motifs raised within the scaffolding offered by the structural parallels of the sonnet tercets. In the first tercet it is candles not stars which remain unextinguished by the sun,

despite the rhythmic prominence given to the word "soleil" by the surjet at the close of line 10. The linking of the eyes with candles is of double importance, enabling the poet on the one hand to suggest the general spiritual aura associated with the eyes and on the other, through the connexion of candlelight specifically with the ritual of the wake, to prepare the triumphant contrast of the final tercet and the balance of line 12 between the candles and death, the eyes and spiritual awakening. The last two lines of the sonnet then bring together the whole complex of images on which the sonnet has been based. Line 13, picking up again the motif on which the sonnet opened, "Vous marchez," and joining it with the theme of spiritual awakening from line 12, gives a final stress to the spiritual dimension of the relationship between the poet and his lady. Then line 14 stresses the visual splendour, substituting the image of the stars for the now inappropriate one of the candles and, by dint of the symmetrical parallel between the opening and closing lines of the tercets, linking the new metaphor with its now distant referent, "Charmants yeux."

The sonnet thus offers a complex and sophisticated mixture of traditional thematic and structural patterns. The basic 8:6 division provides the opportunity for a concentration in the quatrains of the theme of guidance (in the form of statement), in the tercets that of light (in the form of compliment), both aspects being united in the final couplet. The parallels afforded by the sonnet structure are used to elaborate these two basic concepts. Other considerations such as sound and rhythm are very definitely consigned to a supporting role, for instance the underlining of the opposition "cierges" - "soleil", by the rhythm of line 10 or the phonetic emphasis in lines 13 and 14 on the motifs of guidance ("marchez," "chantant") or brilliance ("... dont nul

soleil ne peut flétrir la flamme"). This tendency can be seen at its most obvious in the "irregular" nature of the sonnet rhyme-scheme. It is enough for the poet that his conceits be supported by structural parallels and that the reader's attention be concentrated on the intellectual minuet he has created. The rhyme is only useful therefore in so far as it delineates the main structural blocks of the sonnet, or as in the case of the closing couplet with its cliché association of "âme" and "flamme," reproduces the tone of sophisticated playfulness adopted by the poet in the complimentary formulae of the tercets.

The conventions of the sonnet-compliment are not the only stereotypes to interpose themselves between the poet's experience of love and his account of it in his work. Adulation of a mistress may be reversed to a desire for revenge upon her for her coldness and through the centuries this has found expression not only in analogies of the "cold as snow," "hard as stone" type, but also in more sadistic imaginings. The macabre tradition played upon, in the 1830's, by poets such as Pétrus Borel in order to "épater le bourgeois" has its echoes in Baudelaire in pieces such as Une Charogne and the sonnets Remords posthume, Le Revenant and Sépulture. The way in which the sonnet form can be used to extract maximum effect from such material is well illustrated by Remords posthume.

Lorsque tu dormiras, ma belle ténébreuse,  
 Au fond d'un monument construit en marbre noir,  
 Et lorsque tu n'auras pour alcôve et manoir  
 Qu'un caveau pluvieux et qu'une fosse creuse;  
 Quand la pierre, opprimant ta poitrine peureuse  
 Et tes flancs qu'assouplit un charmant nonchaloir,  
 Empêchera ton coeur de battre et de vouloir,  
 Et tes pieds de courir leur course aventureuse,  
 Le tombeau, confident de mon rêve infini  
 (Car le tombeau toujours comprendra le poète),  
 Durant ces grandes nuits d'où le somme est banni,  
 Te dira: "Que vous sert, courtisane imparfaite,  
 De n'avoir pas connu ce que pleurent les morts?"  
 - Et le vers rongera ta peau comme un remords. OC, p. 33

The principal feature of the sonnet exploited here is its potential for a punch-line. This is a technique which, significantly, Baudelaire uses infrequently in Les Fleurs du Mal, his interest in the sonnet having little to do with its aptitude for intellectual or verbal fireworks but resulting rather from the total structural analogy it can offer with the paradoxes and aspirations of his own nature. In Remords posthume, however, the device occurs as part of a half-serious, half-mocking pastiche of a certain genre in love poetry. All is constructed with a view to the closing emphasis on Conqueror Worm. Each stanza carries a reference to some aspect of the tomb; in the first there is the ironic juxtaposition of the appellation "ma belle ténébreuse" with the "monument construit en marbre noir" and this is followed in lines 3 and 4 by a contrast between her present accommodation "alcôve et manoir" and that to be expected after death, "un caveau pluvieux," "une fosse creuse." In the second, the emphasis shifts to the claustrophobic atmosphere of the burial place. The insistent p alliteration imitates the relentless pressure of the stone and the sense of enclosure is further supported by the repetition of the rhymes of the first quatrain in the second and by the use in both of an enclosed rhyme pattern. The third stanza finally introduces the word "tombeau" and repeats it for good measure, while the closing tercet elaborates on the physical details suggested in line 4 with the repulsive image of the worm. The gradual intensification of the images of death is further supported by the interweaving of syntactic and structural patterns. The quatrains consist of a series of subordinate clauses of time, which gain in portentousness from the repetition of the conjunction "lorsque" in parallel positions

at the beginning of lines 1 and 3, from the repetition of the same idea in "Quand" at the beginning of line 5, and from the similarity of the metrical and syntactical combinations in lines 6 and 8 "Et tes flancs ... Et tes pieds ...". These provide the background for the prediction of the tercets. The positioning of the subject of the main verb, "le tombeau," at the head of the main clause and simultaneously at the head of the second of the sonnet's two main sections throws the word into strong relief. Impetus is maintained, though not perhaps very successfully, in the repetition of "tombeau" in the parenthesis of line 10, and in the postponement of verb and object to the final tercet. The detachment of line 14 - a new main clause of a single line after a period extending over lines 1-13 - contributes to a sharper emphasis of the main point at issue. It focusses attention on the image of physical decay, a mock-gruesome contrast with the evocation of the "flancs qu'assouplit un charmant nonchaloir" in line 6 but one which nevertheless underlines, in conjunction with the preceding question in lines 12-13, the horror of such a fate for the prostitute for whom physical existence is the only reality. The point is driven home by the final simile, the absence of a spiritual dimension made even plainer by the alliteration which on the phonetic level assimilates "remords," to "le vers" and "rongera."

The emphasis provided by this exploitation of the progressive aspect of the sonnet structure throws into hyperbolic relief the exaggerated formulae of this poetry of revenge, but the "send-up" has a double irony. For if the treatment of the poet's chosen theme is a mock-serious one, the theme itself coincides with Baudelaire's most deeply held beliefs on the nature of woman - her purely physical existence, her lack of spiritual answers, and the fascination that she exercises nonetheless. Vocabulary such as that of line 6 has a clear

Baudelairian ring, but all is ultimately subordinated to the effect of the final line; the subtleties are reduced to caricature.

In sonnets such as Le Flambeau vivant and Remords posthume, the facilities of the genre can thus be seen supporting concepts and analogies of a largely stereotyped kind. More frequently however, the contrastive potential of the sonnet is directed towards the expression of a specifically Baudelairian view of woman. For Baudelaire woman is indissolubly linked with the physical and sinful principle at work in the universe,<sup>1</sup> and his feelings towards her are therefore essentially ambivalent, a mixture of fascination and repulsion, desire and fear. In this context the structural divisions and parallels of the sonnet offer once again an obvious vehicle for the analysis of a divided experience, and inversely that experience, by its very intensity, renews and reinvigorates the formal convention in which it is framed.

An obvious example is offered by a piece such as Sed non satiata, where the simplest of the sonnet divisions, the quatrain-tercet balance, provides the basis for an opposition between divine and demonic elements, or rather for the shift in the poet's attitude from infatuated attraction to fear and despair.

Bizarre déité, brune comme les nuits,  
 Au parfum mélangé de musc et de havane,  
 Oeuvre de quelque obi, le Faust de la savane,  
 Sorcière au flanc d'ébène, enfant des noirs minuits,

Je préfère au constance, à l'opium, au nuits,  
 L'élixir de ta bouche où l'amour se pavane;  
 Quand vers toi mes désirs partent en caravane,  
 Tes yeux sont la citerne où boivent mes ennuis.

Par ces deux grands yeux noirs, soupiraux de ton âme,  
 O démon sans pitié! verse-moi moins de flamme;  
 Je ne suis pas le Styx pour t'embrasser neuf fois,

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1. Mon Coeur mis à nu, OC, p. 1277: "Il y a dans tout homme, à toute heure, deux postulations simultanées, l'une vers Dieu, l'autre vers Satan. L'invocation à Dieu, ou spiritualité, est un désir de monter en grade; celle de Satan, ou animalité, est une joie de descendre. C'est à cette dernière que doivent être rapportés les amours pour les femmes et les conversations intimes avec les animaux, chiens, chats, etc. ... Les joies qui dérivent de ces amours sont adaptées à la nature de ces amours." Also Mon Coeur mis à nu, OC, p. 1288: "L'éternelle Vénus /.../ est une des formes séduisantes du Diable."

Hélas! et je ne puis, Mégère libertine,  
Pour briser ton courage et te mettre aux abois,  
Dans l'enfer de ton lit devenir Proserpine!

OC, p. 27

The quatrains are concerned at every level to convey the fascination exercised by the woman over her lover. His attitude of dependent adoration is established from the outset with his description of her as a "déesse" in line 1 and by the invocatory form of the whole first quatrain. Thematically the first stanza through the concentration of motifs of magic emphasizes the intensification of experience the relationship seems to offer to the poet. The references to exotic perfumes, to genii and to Faust all suggest a widening of horizons, a release from the normal constraints of space, and this element is continued into the second stanza with the image of the caravan of desires. In the second quatrain, however, attention is primarily concentrated on another aspect of the relationship - its refreshing nature. Thus the metaphor "l'élixir de ta bouche" in line 6, though continuing the references to magic of the first quatrain, occurs as part of a whole complex of images in lines 5 to 8 concerned with liquids, and with the slaking of thirst in a desert.

Such thematic repetition, of motifs of magic in lines 1 to 4, of quenching of thirst in lines 5 to 8, finds a parallel in the insistence of certain syntactic, rhythmic and phonetic features within the quatrains. In the first stanza, lines 1, 3, and 4 each divide at the caesura into two distinct but complementary syntactic and rhythmic groups, and the regularity of this pattern and the lulling effect of its constant return finds itself confirmed and enhanced by the variation offered by line 2. Here the break after six syllables is considerably muted, but the all important principle of repetition is nevertheless maintained - in the



syntactic and rhythmic balance of the second hemistich "de musc et de havane" and in the alliteration "mélange-musc" which echoes the association of "bizarre" and "brune" in line 1 and looks forward to the alliteration and assonance of line 4, "flanc - enfant."

In the second quatrain, with the end of the invocation, the pattern is a looser one, but the symmetrical principle once again has its part to play. The stanza is divided equally into two periods, but beyond this simple syntactic balance, line 8 provides a very definite echo to line 6 in imagery ("l'elixir de ta bouche" in line 6 and in parallel position in line 8 "Tes yeux sont la citerne"), in syntax (the "où" clause in the second hemistich of both) and in rhythm (each following the 6/6 arrangement). Lines 5 and 7, on the other hand, display a more fragmented and a more hesitant rhythm and are thematically and syntactically dissimilar.

Finally the use made of the rhyme-scheme completes the incantatory spell. Strict observance of the "regular" sonnet pattern - enclosed rhymes and two rhymes only in the quatrains - combined with a choice of rich rhyme in lines 1, 4, 5, and 8<sup>1</sup> and leonine ones in 2, 3, 6, and 7,<sup>2</sup> produces a hypnotically repetitive effect which enhances the theme of magical fascination. The traditional form of the sonnet rhyme-scheme in the quatrains, from being a "rule" externally imposed as, for example, in the sonnets of Sainte-Beuve and Gautier, assumes an integral role in

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1. Note how the emphasis on richness supersedes the traditional dislike of a rhyme on cognate words - "nuits - minuits," lines 1 and 4.  
2. The sufficient rhyme -ane would have given Baudelaire a choice of about 160 words, the rich rhyme -vane only 7, while the leonine -avane offers only the four possibilities havane, savane, pavane, caravane. Albert Cassagne, Versification et métrique de Charles Baudelaire, p. 14.

the suggestive portrayal of the essential quality of an experience. Indeed the extent to which this formal aspect is able to echo the emotional pattern described by the poet goes beyond a simple effect of incantation to a perfect summary of the whole ambiguity of the relationship between lover and mistress. For the combination of strict pattern and rich rhyme, though exciting and productive of virtuoso effects, is in the last analysis a severely limiting one, and this links up with the disquieting indications which lurk beneath the enchantment evoked in the quatrains - the opening qualification of the "désité" as "bizarre" and the threefold reference to darkness in the first stanza, the comparison of "l'élixir de ta bouche" to wine and opium in the second.

In the tercets the demonic element, latent but disregarded in the quatrains, is clearly perceived. The invocation "O démon sans pitié" in line 10 balances the opening "bizarre désité" though Baudelaire has avoided too studied a contrast by the postponement of it to the second line of the tercets. Lines 9-14 are however quite clearly differentiated from the quatrains by a radical change of thematic, syntactic, rhythmic, and phonetic motifs. Most obviously the eyes, a source of refreshment in line 8, are transformed in lines 9 and 10 to pits belching forth flame, and the velvet darkness of the opening quatrain becomes the sinister blackness of the bottomless pit. By line 11 the liquid imagery of the second stanza has been totally reversed as the poet sees himself as water trying to extinguish the fire. The choice of the Styx reinforces the reference to the demon in line 10 and the connotations of torment and imprisonment of "soupiraux" in line 9,<sup>1</sup> and looks forward to the image

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1. Note how this contrasts with the notion of freedom suggested by the image "en caravane" in the second quatrain.

of the final line. The Classical references in themselves moreover provide an interesting contrast to the metaphors of the quatrains. Deliberately erudite, they act as a kind of distancing mechanism and thus underline the poet's desire for escape. Unlike the images of lines 1-8, they are not supported by extensive syntactic, rhythmic or phonetic arrangements. It is true that a certain symmetry can be observed in the positioning of the syntactically and phonetically similar "je ne suis" and "je ne puis" in lines 11 and 12 at the heart of tercet section,<sup>1</sup> but the stanzas are dissimilar in the number and arrangement of their main clauses and though the main caesura throughout falls on the sixth syllable, there is no continued coincidence of syntactic and rhythmic units comparable to that of the opening quatrain. Finally the rhyme-scheme acts in quite a different way from that of the quatrains. The tercet rhymes of a sonnet tend in any case to be more diverse than those of the quatrains, but there is here also a contrast in quality. In two cases, lines 9 and 10, and 11 and 13, the rhyme is sufficient only and the combination "âme - flamme" was already banal in the seventeenth century although of course, "flamme" is intended to be taken in its full sense here.<sup>2</sup> In the case of lines 12 and 14, on the other hand, the leonine quality of the rhyme unsupported by any other examples of neighbouring richness, stresses less a principle of harmony than the unusual preciousness of the image, a feature also emphasized by the syntactical arrangement of the final tercet and the postponing of "devenir Proserpine," the object

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1. The idea of the poet's impotence, the impossibility of escape, seems reinforced by this structural enclosure of "je ne suis" and "je ne puis" at the centre of the tercet section.

2. Baudelaire, as we have seen, supra p. 182 also uses the "âme - flamme" combination in Le Flambeau vivant. It occurs too in La Géante, OC, pp. 21-22, and infra p. 200.

of "je ne puis," to the closing hemistich of the sonnet.

Sed non satiata utilizes to its fullest advantage the most basic division of the sonnet form, the quatrain-tercet structure, as a means of underlining the duality of the poet's attitude towards his mistress. But the sonnet has other bi-partite possibilities and in Le Chat, for example, Baudelaire varies his handling of the sonnet structure and bases the tension between fascination and fear on the association of quatrain to quatrain, tercet to tercet:

Viens, mon beau chat, sur mon coeur amoureux;  
Retiens les griffes de ta patte,  
Et laisse-moi plonger dans tes beaux yeux,  
Mêlés de métal et d'agate.

Lorsque mes doigts caressent à loisir  
Ta tête et ton dos élastique,  
Et que ma main s'enivre du plaisir  
De palper ton corps électrique,

Je vois ma femme en esprit. Son regard,  
Comme le tien, aimable bête,  
Profond et froid, coupe et fend comme un dard,

Et, des pieds jusques à la tête,  
Un air subtil, un dangereux parfum  
Nagent autour de son corps brun.

OC, pp. 33-34

The 8:6 division of the sonnet supports the central analogy cat-woman, though it is interesting to note here as elsewhere Baudelaire's concern to avoid too schematic a presentation. It is true that the association is indicated at two of the key positions in the sonnet structure, the beginning of the quatrains and the beginning of the tercets, but in the first instance the link is by inference only, "mon coeur amoureux," while in the second, it is noteworthy that the assertion, "Je vois ma femme en esprit," belonging structurally and thematically to the tercets, is still linked syntactically to the second quatrain. Furthermore the intertwining of references to both cat and woman in lines 9 and 10, "Son regard, / Comme le tien, aimable bête . . .," ensures that

by the final tercet, the attributes there described seem equally applicable to either.

Underlying this central analogy, however, parallel motifs of pain and pleasure are developed within the separate units formed by the quatrains and tercets. The first quatrain offers a twofold emphasis on the beauty of the animal (ll. 1 and 3), but each time links this with an element of cruelty ("les griffes") or coldness ("yeux / Mêlés de métal et d'agate"). In the second quatrain, on the other hand, the poet concentrates on the physical pleasure derived from the stroking of the cat. Twofold use of the motif of touching ("mes doigts caressent," "ma main s'enivre du plaisir / De palper") balances the doubling of motifs of cruelty in the first quatrain. The fascinating, magical quality of the animal is further indicated in the choice of one of Baudelaire's favourite words "s'enivre" and in the reference, "corps électrique," suggesting both a physical dynamism and also, if one thinks of the description of Les Chats, a mystery and power that transcends the purely physical phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> This pattern of cruelty and fascination is repeated in the tercets in connexion with the woman. In lines 9-11 her gaze is specifically linked with the cat's, and its cutting quality emphasized by the fragmented rhythm and alliterations of line 11. The second tercet paralleling the second quatrain reverts to the theme of a fascination that is all the more attractive for the sense of latent danger.

In this sonnet, the rhyme-scheme appears to receive the minimum of attention. The quatrains are built on four alternate rhymes and throughout the sonnet, the rhymes are sufficient in quality only. Interest

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1. OC, pp. 63-64. "Leurs reins féconds sont pleins d'étincelles magiques, / Et des parcelles d'or, ainsi qu'un sable fin, / Etoilent vaguement leurs prunelles mystiques."

instead has been diverted to the rhythm and to the effect to be achieved from the combination of the fixed form of the sonnet and a heterometric pattern. The alternation of decasyllables and octosyllables effectively suggests the stroking motion described in the second quatrain. In addition, however, the formal unease created by the predominance of short lines in the second tercet, and in particular the unequal lengths of the two lines of the closing couplet and the termination of the sonnet on the shorter line, reproduces the sense of disquiet with which the poet approaches cat and woman alike, and the feeling of unfulfilled menace associated with both of them. A device rarely used in the sonnet except as a virtuoso exercise and frowned on by purists for the inevitable structural imbalances it entails, is thus transformed by Baudelaire into an integral part of his theme, giving added point to the ambiguity framed within the bipartite patterns of quatrain and tercet.

The ambivalent attitude of the poet to his mistress finds yet another type of variation in Semper eadem. In this instance, the paradoxical nature of his attachment is formulated in terms of an opposition between the woman's lack of awareness and light-heartedness and the poet's lucidity and sadness. This pattern is played out across the two main structural entities of the sonnet, the eight lines of the quatrains and the six lines of the tercets each constituting a thematic unit.

"D'où vous vient, disiez-vous, cette tristesse étrange,  
 Montant comme la mer sur le roc noir et nu?"  
 - Quand notre coeur a fait une fois sa vendange,  
 Vivre est un mal. C'est un secret de tous connu,  
 Une douleur très-simple, et non mystérieuse,  
 Et, comme votre joie, éclatante pour tous.  
 Cessez donc de chercher, ô belle curieuse!  
 Et, bien que votre voix soit douce, taisez-vous!

Taisez-vous, ignorante! âme toujours ravie!  
Bouche au rire enfantin! Plus encor que la Vie,  
La Mort nous tient souvent par des liens subtils.

Laissez, laissez mon coeur s'enivrer d'un mensonge,  
Plonger dans vos beaux yeux comme dans un beau songe,  
Et sommeiller longtemps à l'ombre de vos cils!

OC, p. 39

The opening question skilfully combines a statement of the poet's condition with both a revelation of the woman's limitations (in so far as she has to ask the question at all) and a suggestion of her attraction for the poet - conveyed in the soothing harmonies of the phraseology, the rhythmic regularity and phonetic repetition which counteract the pointlessness of the question. In contrast the poet's response has a deliberately prosaic ring. The vocabulary after line 3 becomes abstract, the rhythm of line 4 diverges to a 4/8 pattern with a complete obliteration of any suggestion of a pause after the sixth syllable, and the convention of four quite separate stanzas is flouted by the thematic and syntactic continuation from the first quatrain into the two opening lines of the second. The resumption of a regular rhythm in lines 5 and 6 prepares however a return to the soothing tonality of lines 1 and 2. Lines 7 and 8 show an analogous preoccupation with principles of balance and repetition - "taisez-vous" at the end of line 8 balancing "cessez" at the beginning of line 7 and an overall emphasis being laid on the soft sounds s and f.

In the tercets, the same pattern of disillusionment but desire nonetheless for consolation is apparent, the latter in the final tercet seemingly gaining the upper hand. The repetition of "taisez-vous" in line 9 is accompanied by epithets which recall the ambiguities of lines 1 and 2, and as in the quatrains, the ignorance and joy of the woman,

along with her soothing effect (conveyed once again by metrical regularity and phonetic repetition), soon give place to the despair of the poet. The play on abstract concepts in lines 10 and 11 echoes that of lines 4, 5, and 6 and though there is this time no deviation from a metrical or stanzaic norm, the obviously unfinished nature of "Plus encor que la Vie" and the logical and syntactic expectation this creates, together with the strong, unsubtle juxtaposition of "la Vie / la Mort," again produce a comparatively prosaic effect. This is then followed, as in the quatrains, by a return to a more soothing tone. A feeling of intellectual detachment persists, as evidenced by the play on "mensonge - songe," the balancing of "beaux yeux - beau songe" and perhaps also the renewal of the opening image of the vintage in the choice of the verb "s'enivrer." But this is counteracted and absorbed by the impression of harmony created by the various repetitions of the final tercet - of whole words ("laissez, laissez" recalling "cessez" in line 7 and "Taisez-vous" in lines 8 and 9), syntactic and rhythmic (the repetition in each of the last three lines of the same infinitive construction dependent on "laissez" and the regular 6/6 flow of these lines) and phonetic (the s sounds again, l sounds too, but also the nasalized ɔ̃ which extends the sphere of reference of "mensonge - songe" beyond an intellectual opposition by bringing the words into a larger phonetic pattern - "plonger," "longtemps," "ombre" and the associated sound of ɔ̃ and nasal consonant in "comme," "sommeiller").

This sonnet then depends for its effect on the interplay of two different responses, the one emotional the other intellectual, within each of the two main structural divisions of the sonnet. Rhyme has on the whole little part to play in underlining this pattern. The quatrains each have different rhymes and this and the alternate arrangement correspond to the conversational atmosphere of the piece. In the tercets, the



position is slightly more complex. The rhyme "mensonge - beau songe" perfectly summarizes the opposition between lucidity and self-deception on which the whole sonnet is based, while at the same time it is drawn by phonetic association into the lulling incantation of the closing lines. But even here it is the intellectual opposition which appears as the dominant factor. Note Baudelaire's underlining of "mensonge." Once again then it is the possibilities of the sonnet structure for antithesis which are chiefly important. Individual rhymes may be useful on occasion to isolate the nub of a contrast, but the main function of the total rhyme-scheme is nothing more than the delineation of the sonnet's different structural blocks.

Baudelaire's aesthetic ideas are marked by the same dualistic approach as his ideas on the human condition or the love relationship. Naturally enough, in a flawed and imperfect world, any absolute conception of Beauty exists only as a myth, an ideal dimly glimpsed through a myriad passing guises:

Toutes les beautés contiennent, comme tous les phénomènes possibles, quelque chose d'éternel et quelque chose de transitoire, - d'absolu et de particulier. La beauté absolue et éternelle n'existe pas, ou plutôt elle n'est qu'une abstraction écrémée à la surface générale des beautés diverses. L'élément de chaque beauté vient des passions, et comme nous avons nos passions particulières, nous avons notre beauté.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Salon de 1846, section XVIII "De l'héroïsme de la vie moderne," OC, p. 950.

It is this gulf between absolute beauty and limited man which is explored in La Beauté:

Je suis belle, ô mortels! comme un rêve de pierre,  
Et mon sein, où chacun s'est meurtri tour à tour,  
Est fait pour inspirer au poète un amour  
Éternel et muet ainsi que la matière.

Je trône dans l'azur comme un sphinx incompris;  
J'unis un coeur de neige à la blancheur des cygnes;  
Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes,  
Et jamais je ne pleure et jamais je ne ris.

Les poètes, devant mes grandes attitudes,  
Que j'ai l'air d'emprunter aux plus fiers monuments,  
Consumeront leurs jours en d'austères études;

Car j'ai, pour fasciner ces dociles amants,  
De purs miroirs qui font toutes choses plus belles:  
Mes yeux, mes larges yeux aux clartés éternelles!

OC, p. 20

The first quatrain establishes the nature of the relationship between Beauty and the poet, the enormous and unbridgeable gap between them being stressed by the symmetrical possibilities of the stanza. Reference to the suffering and longing of the poet occurs in lines 2 and 3, and is thus framed and dominated by the evocation of the impenetrability of Beauty in lines 1 and 4. The parallel similes, "comme un rêve de pierre," "ainsi que la matière," and the concentration in lines 1 and 4 of phonetically similar words that summarize the whole problem, "belle," "mortels," "éternel," reinforce the pattern, and the enclosed rhyme-scheme adds its own discreet note.

In the second quatrain, the focus shifts from the relationship between Beauty and the poet to a portrayal of Beauty itself. A link is provided by the simile of line 5 which recalls those of lines 1 and 4

and by the first person subject and verb with which the stanza opens. But then the pattern diverges with the first person subject and verb being used five times as compared with its one appearance in the first quatrain. The thematic motif of immobility and control dominant in the second stanza is supported by new syntactic and rhythmic arrangements. In contrast to the uneven distribution of the two main clauses in line 1 and lines 2-4 of the first quatrain, and to the varying positions of the caesuras in lines 1-3, a feeling of regularity and stasis is created by the repetition of subject and verb at the beginning of lines 5, 6, and 7, the maintenance throughout of a 6/6 rhythm and the almost identical hemistichs of line 8. The rhyme, different from that of the first quatrain but again in the enclosed pattern, provides a faint echo to the dominant principle of disciplined serenity.

The first tercet renews the theme of the first quatrain - the problem of the relationship between Beauty and the poet - with the difference that momentarily it is the poet's dilemma which receives primary stress. The thematic arrangement of the first quatrain is reversed and reference to the poet in lines 9 and 11 encloses the mention of Beauty in line 10. In addition changes of tense and subject give new prominence to the figure of the poet. "Les poètes" in the important opening position of line 9 replaces the first person pronoun of the quatrains and the change is underscored by the 4/8 rhythm of the line in striking contrast to the regular 6/6 pattern of the second quatrain. Similarly, the single future tense "consumeront," gaining added relief from its postponed position in line 11, stands out against the present tenses which, in the rest of the sonnet, render the eternal changeless presence of Beauty.

The final tercet returns however to the preoccupation with the

nature of Beauty itself and the procession of first person subjects and verbs, momentarily subdued in the first tercet, is renewed by the repetition of the relative clause verb "J'ai" of line 10 as the main verb in line 12. But the static, fixed conception developed in the second quatrain and indicated in stanzas one and three is now replaced by the sense of perspective and infinite possibility suggested through the new images of the mirror and the eye and supported by various devices such as the amplification "mes yeux, mes larges yeux," the open-ended effect of the two concluding feminine rhymes, and the formal "reflection" of the couplet rhyme. At the same time, however, it is perhaps worth noting that the principle of reflection is still made to lead back into a closed system, since the final rhyme, "belles - éternelles," repeats the key complex of thematic and phonetic association of the first stanza, "belle," "mortels," "éternel."

Baudelaire thus uses a variety of different structural possibilities in the sonnet to underline the vision of a remote and inviolate Beauty - the thematic differentiation of first quatrain and first tercet from second quatrain and second tercet, variation of thematic emphasis within these two groups, a brief stress on the traditional turning point of the sonnet (line 9) with the change of subject and tense in the first tercet, the closed circle created by the echoes of the opening stanza that recur in the closing rhymes. Nevertheless he in no way exhausts the potential of the sonnet form to support his chosen theme. It seems possible that his initial choice of the sonnet may well have been based on the apprehension of an analogy between the fixed and "anonymous" character of the form and the vision of Beauty as something unchanging, inscrutable, crystalline, with which the personal ambitions and desires of the individual are totally incommensurate. But his actual handling of the

form, particularly where the rhyme-scheme, traditionally considered as the distinguishing feature of the genre, is concerned, hardly corresponds to the strict prescriptions laid down for the regular sonnet. Rhyme in the individual stanzas brings discreet support to thematic patterns, but the principle of the fixed sonnet rhyme-scheme with its sustained rhyme in the quatrains, which might seem to coincide with the ideas of immobility and then of reflection advanced by Baudelaire, is set aside. The rhyme element in the sonnet's make-up thus remains largely inert, providing little more than an outline for the thematic and structural oppositions and balances through which the poet states his case. The relatively limited extent to which Baudelaire realizes here this aspect of the sonnet's peculiar potential can be no better illustrated than by a comparison with Mallarmé's sonnets "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui" and "Ses purs ongles très haut dédiant leur onyx" which deal with similar themes of stasis, purity, and reflection but with a much denser, more suggestive and more sophisticated use of all the resources of the sonnet form including the rhyme-scheme.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to La Beauté, L'Idéal sets up an opposition between two relative manifestations of the beautiful.

Ce ne seront jamais ces beautés de vignettes,  
 Produits avariés, nés d'un siècle vaurien,  
 Ces pieds à brodequins, ces doigts à castagnettes,  
 Qui sauront satisfaire un coeur comme le mien.

Je laisse à Gavarni, poète des chloroses,  
 Son troupeau gazouillant de beautés d'hôpital,  
 Car je ne puis trouver parmi ces pâles roses  
 Une fleur qui ressemble à mon rouge idéal.

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1. V. infra, pp. 447-451 and 438-447.

Ce qu'il faut à ce coeur profond comme un abîme,  
C'est vous, Lady Macbeth, âme puissante au crime,  
Rêve d'Eschyle éclos au climat des autans;

Ou bien toi, grande Nuit, fille de Michel-Ange,  
Qui tors paisiblement dans une pose étrange  
Tes appas façonnés aux bouches des Titans!

OC, p. 21

The 8/6 division of the sonnet is used to formulate a simple contrast between contemporary fashions in beauty, judged insipid by the poet (quatrains), and his own more vigorous and more sinister preferences (tercets). The form clearly has little in common with the grandiose visions of the tercets, and the poet has done little more than exploit its most obvious feature to create an opposition emphasizing his own conception. Rhyme in the quatrains is four-fold and alternate and has, in itself, little part to play in support of the central idea. The structural and thematic coherence of the quatrains has been sufficient for the poet.

La Géante, on the other hand, is entirely concerned with Baudelaire's personal ideas on the beautiful. If a broad analogy can be observed between the archetypal Beauty evoked in La Beauté and the sonnet form, Baudelaire's admiration for the grandiose, the bizarre and the excessive, as revealed in La Géante, would seem at first sight to run directly counter to anything the sonnet form could offer:

Du temps que la Nature en sa verve puissante  
Concevait chaque jour des enfants monstrueux,  
J'eusse aimé vivre auprès d'une jeune géante,  
Comme aux pieds d'une reine un chat voluptueux.

J'eusse aimé voir son corps fleurir avec son âme  
Et grandir librement dans ses terribles jeux;  
Deviner si son coeur couve une sombre flamme  
Aux humides brouillards qui nagent dans ses yeux;

Parcourir à loisir ses magnifiques formes;  
Ramper sur le versant de ses genoux énormes,  
Et parfois en été, quand les soleils malsains,

Lasse, la font s'étendre à travers la campagne,  
Dormir nonchalamment à l'ombre de ses seins,  
Comme un hameau paisible au pied d'une montagne.

OC, pp. 21-22

A closer inspection, however, reveals a skilful and suggestive use by Baudelaire of the sonnet's various patterns. Thematically and syntactically the piece follows a 4:10 arrangement and the detached first quatrain functions as an embryonic model for the rest of the poem. After the typically leisurely introduction provided by the subordinate clause of time in lines 1 and 2, lines 3 and 4 present the three elements on which the whole poem is based - the wish "j'eusse aimé," the infinitive construction dependent on it, the closing simile. Lines 5 to 14 repeat the pattern but in a much amplified fashion. "J'eusse aimé" in line 5 picks up that of line 3 - a repetition which together with the continuation of the b rhyme from the first stanza helps to maintain some awareness of the quatrains as an integrated unit. The second component in the pattern, however, - the infinitive construction - after a double appearance in the second quatrain, continues over the 8:6 division of the sonnet, linking the second quatrain firmly with the tercets. At the same time the formal division between quatrains and tercets is not totally obliterated. The subordinate clauses of lines 7 and 8 slow down the progression of infinitives at the end of the second quatrain, while at the beginning of the tercets, the pace is once again increased by the quick succession of "parcourir" and "ramper" as the opening words in lines 9 and 10. The structural distinction between tercet and tercet is often far less clearly marked than that between quatrains and tercets or even quatrain and quatrain, and in this instance, the sense of their syntactic and thematic continuity is reinforced by

the balancing of a clause across the formal division between lines 11 and 12. A vague awareness of this division is however retained, as the subordinate clause "quand les soleils malsains ..." slows the pattern of infinitives and creates a moment of pause, balanced on the syntactic and metrical isolation of "lasse" and its positioning as the opening word in the final section of the sonnet. The poet thus prepares for the resolution of the sequence of infinitives in the verb "dormir" at the head of line 13 and in the simile of line 14. This simile completes the pattern sketched out in the first quatrain and closely resembles that of line 4, standing in a kind of chiasmic arrangement to it:

Comme aux pieds d'une reine un chat voluptueux  
 Comme un hameau paisible au pied d'une montagne

La Géante then, appropriately enough, is constructed on a principle of expanding pattern. Baudelaire proposes a model in the first quatrain which he amplifies in the rest of the poem. As he does so, he further underlines his conception of an exuberant and monstrous beauty by a subtle playing off of extended thematic and syntactic movements against the structural restraints of the sonnet genre. Here as elsewhere, however, it is noticeable that the rhyme-scheme remains largely inert and limited to a role of structural support. The poet is more concerned with the interweaving of thematic, syntactic and structural motifs than with the creation of any extended phonetic patterns in his sonnet.

It has seemed convenient to consider first Baudelaire's more traditional use of the sonnet structure to underline the phases of an argument, to support the interplay of concepts and ideas or to examine a paradox. It is primarily the antithetical possibilities of which attract him here, for these provide a close formal correspondence for



the duality he sees in all the different facets of existence. In general he tends on these occasions to use the simpler devices for contrast available within the sonnet form, but the intensity with which he experiences the schism between the ideal and the real charges even the traditional opposition of quatrains to tercets with a vigour and a significance that is for the most part absent in the work of early nineteenth century exponents of the genre. He is nevertheless capable as the eleven sonnets studied have shown, of varying the structural and thematic combinations within this broad framework of opposition, thus avoiding the danger of monotony. Only a very limited number of sonnets are direct repetitions, for example, Le Mauvais Moine and La Cloche fêlée. In all cases, however, it is to the structural potential of the sonnet that Baudelaire's attention seems principally directed and in the main he ignores its distinctive rhyme-scheme, except in so far as it defines the stanza blocks of which the form is composed. The number of "irregular" sonnets shows a substantial increase as compared with Sainte-Beuve and Gautier. However it is important to note that this apparent indifference to the letter of the sonnet's requirements is accompanied by an awareness of a deeper and more significant connexion between structural and thematic patterns that is very largely lacking in the "regular" sonnets of his predecessors.

The sonnets so far discussed have portrayed a situation of paradox and conflict, but there is another side to Baudelairian experience where the poet arrives at a temporary resolution of his dilemma through the notion of "l'infini dans le fini." This calls for a poetry of suggestion

rather than statement where the "musical" element in language assumes a new importance over the logical. The sonnet, traditionally conceived as a contrastive genre suited to argument and epigram, gains a new role here as Baudelaire utilizes its repetitive possibilities and in particular the tight arrangements of the regular sonnet rhyme-scheme to create his "sorcellerie évocatoire." At this point, however, before passing on to a detailed examination of this aspect of the Baudelairian sonnet, it is perhaps as well to stress that the distinction proposed between a more traditional use of the sonnet by Baudelaire for purposes of analysis and his adaptation of it as an instrument of suggestion is in no way intended as a straightforward chronological account of Baudelaire's sonnet practice. The opening discussion of the different ideas associated with the sonnet in Baudelaire's various writings and the consideration first of the more traditional analytic type of sonnet may have tended to induce a belief in a direct chronological development from a conventional to a more original formulation. This view would in fact be far too simplistic. Leaving aside the difficulty of establishing dates of composition for many of Baudelaire's poems, such an interpretation would overlook the fact that patterns both of conflict and of harmony are intrinsic and unchanging parts of Baudelaire's view of life. It also fails to take account of the way in which traditional techniques can, as we have seen, assume a new force and a new relevance when associated with ideas and beliefs that follow analogous patterns to their own, and of the possibility that the two approaches, the analytical and the suggestive, may on occasion be fruitfully mingled to produce that complex interweaving of traditional and revolutionary elements recognized by Rimbaud as the Baudelairian hallmark.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, and most conclusive of all, it is possible to open

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1. Rimbaud of course considered retention of the traditional element unsatisfactory.

our discussion of Baudelaire's use of the sonnet as an instrument of suggestion with what is certainly one of the earliest examples of his use of the form, A une Dame créole.<sup>1</sup>

In the most traditional field of them all, the love sonnet, A une Dame créole shows an interesting blend of conventional and innovative elements. Reference to the sixteenth century preoccupation with the love sonnet forms an integral part of the theme and the allusion is reflected stylistically in the elegant politeness of the tercets. Yet at the same time, Baudelaire orientates his sonnet in a new direction, not towards an analysis of the lady's charm but towards the suggestion of the quality and intensity of the fascination which she exercises.

Au pays parfumé que le soleil caresse,  
J'ai vu dans un retrait de tamarins ambrés  
Et de palmiers d'où pleut sur les yeux la paresse,  
Une dame créole aux charmes ignorés.

Son teint est pâle et chaud; la brune enchanteresse  
A dans le cou des airs noblement maniérés;  
Grande et svelte en marchant comme une chasseresse,  
Son sourire est tranquille et ses yeux assurés.

Si vous alliez, Madame, au vrai pays de gloire,  
Sur les bords de la Seine ou de la verte Loire,  
Belle, digne d'orner les antiques manoirs,

Vous feriez, à l'abri des mousseuses retraites,  
Germer mille sonnets dans le coeur des poètes,  
Que vos regards rendraient plus soumis que vos noirs.

(MS version of 1841)

The quatrain-tercet division supports a delicate opposition between two modes of existence, the exotic and the familiar, the extent of the lady's power to charm being emphasized by her success in both these spheres. The first quatrain provides a backcloth to the description of

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1. This sonnet was enclosed in a letter of 20 Oct. 1841, sent by Baudelaire from the Île Bourbon to M. Adolphe Autard de Bragard in Mauritius. The family had shown great hospitality to Baudelaire during his stay in Mauritius (1-19 Sept. 1841) and the sonnet is addressed to Mme. Autard de Bragard.

the woman herself, with references to the scents, the caressing heat of the sun, the tropical vegetation and a general indolence all combining to suggest an atmosphere of sensuous well-being far removed from the restrictive conventions of European life.

The second quatrain proceeds to satisfy the anticipation aroused by postponement of mention of the lady herself to the final line of the first stanza, but in contrast to the opening scene, the description given of the woman retains in part the imprint of the speaker's own cultural background and is thus a curious mixture of exotic and conventional elements. In the first line of the stanza, the reader finds a suggestive vocabulary recalling that of stanza one. "Pâle et chaud" brings no precise picture to the mind but each derives strength from features of the scene already described, "chaud" recalling the languorous warmth evoked in line 1 and "pâle" contributing to the aura of mystery already conferred upon the lady by the remoteness and strangeness of her environment. The quality of mystery is further developed in the characterization "la brune enchanteresse," thrown into relief by its detached position, occupying the whole of the second hemistich of line 5 and isolated from its verb and object in the following line, an emphatic placing which, working retrospectively, also gives back something of the original etymological force to the word "charmes" in line 4. Yet in the rest of the stanza the poet reverts to a much more stereotyped vocabulary. "Grande et svelte en marchant comme une chasserresse" in particular seems to have little to do with the scented lethargy of the opening scene.

This interaction of two cultures gives way in the first tercet to a stylized picture of France balancing the exotic landscape of the opening quatrain. Rivers and greenness stand in tacit opposition to the heat and glowing colours ("ambrés") of the tropics, a centuries old accretion

of etiquette ("les antiques manoirs," "Si vous alliez, Madame") to the sensuous enjoyment of life portrayed in stanza one. The assertion of line 11 prepares however for a more complete integration of exotic creole and familiar scenery in the final tercet, where the poet establishes a balance between the traditional metaphor of the poet, slave to his mistress, and the subjugation to her wishes of the real slaves of her island life.

The sonnet is of particular interest since this is the first appearance of a setting which was to become for Baudelaire the landscape of the ideal. At the same time, the poem is remarkable from a technical point of view as an example from the earliest period of Baudelaire's work of what he was later to term "sorcellerie évocatoire." A une Dame créole is characterized by a high incidence of thematic recalls accompanied by a peculiar density of phonetic pattern, which not only underlines the meanings of specific groups of words, but which also reproduces through its very insistence the intensity of the experience described by the poet. In the quatrains alliteration and assonance imitate the richness and profusion associated with the tropical scene and the woman whose "analogie" it is and the sonnet finds a role beyond the contrastive potential of its structural arrangements in the possibilities for phonetic stress offered by its rhyme-scheme. The "rules" of the regular sonnet now come into their own, not because they are rules, but because they admirably conform to the preoccupations of the poet. The quatrain rhymes, although alternate and not, as most rigidly prescribed, enclosed, number two only, and in addition the c and d rhymes in the tercets are homophonic. The rich quality of the rhyme is also of great importance. Only one pair "poètes - retraites" is sufficient, while the quatrains offer two leonine pairs - "caresse - paresse" and "enchanteresse -

chasseresse." But the rhymes are important not only for the phonetic patterns and thematic links they create between themselves. They also act as the keynotes around which other phonetic and thematic motifs may be coherently organized. Thus in the first line "parfumé" is linked to "pays" by alliteration and to "caresse" at the rhyme by assonance. In the second, r's and t's are interwoven and the pattern given relief by the closing "ambrés." In the third, the p alliteration of the first line recurs, this time with an associated l alliteration, and is united in the rhyme with the ar repetition of line 1. k and r, as in "caresse," come together again in "créole" in line 4 while ç emerges in "charmes" in readiness for extensive use in the second quatrain, in the rhymes and at the hemistichs of lines 5 and 7. The p alliteration is not forgotten - "pâle" (1.5) - and s and r stressed at the rhyme also receive particular attention within line 8. However with the return to a more conventional terminology, musical elements resume their subordinate place and in the tercets, the play on "manoirs - noirs" or the combinations of r with œ and œ of the final stanza seem primarily directed towards the turning of an elegant compliment. Of course, it is not intended to suggest that it is only the rhymes of the sonnet that can be used as a basis for phonetic organization of the type described above. But clearly the established pattern of rhyme in the sonnet may be employed with some success to give relief and coherence to phonetic motifs. At the same time the fourteen line limitation can be turned to good effect as a frame where such motifs may be extended and elaborated and still remain apprehensible to the ear even without repetition of whole words, phrases or lines. A une Dame créole is of special interest because it shows Baudelaire's early awareness of these possibilities and his ability (in contrast to Gautier's contention) to capitalize when appropriate on the regular form of the

sonnet, reorientating it in a new direction towards an art of suggestion.

The same technique is apparent in sonnets such as La Vie antérieure, Parfum exotique, Brumes et Pluies, but in these cases the principle of contrast has entirely disappeared and repetition and intensification become the axes of the sonnet.

In La Vie antérieure, the temporal opposition of ancient perfection and modern disorientation as presented in Le Mauvais Moine, is side-stepped as the poet retreats into a vision of unity and harmony firmly situated in a former life. The contrast between the ideal and reality is not allowed to become explicit and is merely implied in the title and in the past tenses employed in the poem, in particular the two declarations of line 1 and line 9 shaping the whole sonnet, "J'ai longtemps habité" and "C'est là que j'ai vécu." Instead the poet concentrates on rendering the richness, order, and symmetry characteristic of his ideal world, and to this end, he creates with the aid of the parallels furnished by the structure of the sonnet form a complex system of repetitions and recalls of meaning, imagery, and especially sound.

J'ai longtemps habité sous de vastes portiques  
Que les soleils marins teignaient de mille feux,  
Et que leurs grands piliers, droits et majestueux,  
Rendaient pareils, le soir, aux grottes basaltiques.

Les houles, en roulant les images des cieux,  
Mêlaient d'une façon solennelle et mystique  
Les tout-puissants accords de leur riche musique  
Aux couleurs du couchant reflété par mes yeux.

C'est là que j'ai vécu dans les voluptés calmes,  
Au milieu de l'azur, des vagues, des splendeurs  
Et des esclaves nus, tout imprégnés d'odeurs,

Qui me rafraîchissaient le front avec des palmes,  
Et dont l'unique soin était d'approfondir  
Le secret douloureux qui me faisait languir.

OC, p. 17

This sonnet appears to fulfil perfectly the requirement of Gautier that it should be "une sorte de fugue poétique dont le thème doit passer

et repasser jusqu'à sa résolution par les formes voulues."<sup>1</sup> The tercets renew and intensify the description of a décor already evoked in the quatrains, a pattern clearly drawn by the parallel assertions of lines 1 and 9. This general structural and thematic parallel is moreover supported in numerous smaller ways. The architectural vision on which the sonnet opens is balanced, repeated and renewed in lines 3 and 4, while in line 2 the theme of reflection receives a corresponding double play with the description first of the mirroring of the sun in the sea ("soleils marins") and then of the refraction of that mirrored light against the columns. The motif of reflection is continued in the second quatrain with another evocation of the sky mirrored in the sea (1.5) and, just as in the first quatrain the poet repeated in line 4 the architectural vision of line 1, so here a further reference to light and its reflection in line 8 extends the notation of line 5. Meanwhile, in the interior of the stanza, echoing the expansion of motif in line 2 of the first quatrain, another dimension is added to the central theme of reflection: a mysterious concordance between the colours of the sunset and the sound of the waves in which it is mirrored. In addition the suggestion of mystery conveyed by "grottes" in line 4 is developed and amplified, assuming a religious connotation which recalls the integrated universe of matter and spirit described in the quatrains of the sonnet Correspondances.<sup>2</sup> Between them the quatrains

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1. Gautier, Portraits et Souvenirs littéraires (Paris, Charpentier, 1885), pp. 235-236.

2. OC, p. 11. In contrast to the situation in La Vie antérieure (v. infra) it is interesting to note the relative inertia of the rhyme factor in the sonnet Correspondances. Some play is made with phonetic motifs to imitate the general theme of echo - e.g. 1.5 "Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent," but the emphasis in the poem is on the development of an argument framed in the main structural sections of the sonnet, and the rhyme has its usual subsidiary role in this analytical approach.



thus establish a vision of a world that combines infinite spatial depth and unrestricted perspectives with serene order and vast harmony.

The first two lines of the tercets, the oxymoron "voluptés calmes" (l.9) and the imprecise and hence suggestive references of line 10, summarize and recapitulate this general atmosphere of harmonious union and unlimited potential. Then in lines 11-14 the scene moves to a new pitch of intensity with the introduction of an explicitly sensual element (ll. 11 and 12) and of a divergent note of sadness.<sup>1</sup> The latter quality especially is given an extra prominence by its isolation syntactically and prosodically in the closing couplet of the sonnet.

This pattern of reflection and intensification is supported by a subtle and pervasive web of phonetic repetition, and the traditional sonnet rhyme-scheme comes into its own here providing the key-notes around which phonetic as well as thematic motifs are organized.<sup>2</sup> The first group of rhymes - "portiques-basaltiques-mystique-musique" - brings together in a phonetic synthesis two of the elements of the Baudelarian ideal-statuesque serenity combined with a more ethereal and elusive quality, but even more important perhaps is the general support this symmetrical repetition of sound brings to the central themes of "correspondance" and infinite regress developed in the poem. Significantly the i vowel occurs yet again in the closing rhyme of the sonnet, phonetic association and

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1. Both motifs receive phonetic emphasis - the sensual one with "vécu" and "nus" providing a kind of internal rhyme between the first hemistichs of lines 9 and 11; the sad one with the attention brought to "approfondir" by the preceding use of the nasal vowel in "front" (l. 12) and also, though less importantly, in "dont" (l. 13).
  2. Two rhymes only occur in the quatrains and this corresponds to prescribed procedure in the regular sonnet; the inversion to baab in the second quatrain on the other hand does not. It is also worth noticing that the a rhyme is not absolutely pure throughout the quatrains, since in the first it appears in a plural, and in the second in a singular, form. In addition the tercets with their terminal couplet rhyme show a departure from the standard Marot pattern.

reflection mirroring thematic amplification as the poet concludes his sonnet with his final requirement for a world of ideal beauty - that melancholy which gives an added aura because it suggests an incompleteness, a horizon not yet attained.

A close association between the ideas of beauty and pain is also effected by the second rhyme - "feux-majestueux-cieux-yeux" - and its internal rhyme "douloureux" in line 14. Once again the richness of that beauty as described by the poet is echoed phonetically in the dense pattern which emerges from the close vocalic relationship between this group of rhymes and rhyme in the tercets ("splendeurs - odeurs"). The pattern increases in complexity with the association of further internal rhymes, "leurs" (1.3), "leur" (1.7), "couleurs" (1.8), and with the intermeshing (as in "douloureux" and "couleurs") of another important strand in the sound pattern, the group of u vowels, associated especially with the liquid l - "houles" (1.5), "roulant" (1.5), "couleurs" (1.8), "couchant" (1.8) and "douloureux" (1.14). In the second quatrain it is interesting to note that this combination of sounds occurs in exactly parallel positions as the second and fifth syllables in the first and last lines of the stanza, and thus serves specifically to underline the "correspondance" between the sound of the waves and the colour of the sunset.

In addition each of the four sections of the sonnet has its own consonantal tonality. In the first quatrain, the succession of nasals and plosives and the repetition of the guttural gr provide a parallel in sound to the regularity of the alignment of the columns. In the second, the reiteration of the liquid l in particular with the vowel u realizes the harmonious mobility which is the subject of the lines. In the first tercet, the consonant v is especially prominent; in the second, f, r, p,

and s are dominant sounds.

Throughout the sonnet therefore, phonetic balance and repetition provide an important dimension to the themes of order, richness, depth and potential evoked by the poet. Not only are the structural symmetries and climactic possibilities of the sonnet form exploited, but the tight arrangements of a regular rhyme-scheme<sup>1</sup> in the quatrains have been utilized as a base for an experience of phonetic density and intensification which offers a suggestive parallel to thematic and structural motifs and which virtually equals them in importance.

Parfum exotique provides a further example of the same technique, using the repetitive possibilities of the sonnet and the peculiar potential of its rhyme-scheme to suggest the intensity of the poet's experience. The theme of guidance constitutes a link between this sonnet and Le Flambeau vivant (v. supra p.179), but a link which reveals all the more clearly the total dissimilarity of the poet's method in the two pieces. In contrast to Le Flambeau vivant, constructed to support an intellectual play on the various concepts associated with the image of the torch, the poet offers here something that is the "musical" equivalent of that magical world to which the fragrance of the woman is his guide.

Quand, les deux yeux fermés, en un soir chaud d'automne,  
Je respire l'odeur de ton sein chaleureux,  
Je vois se dérouler des rivages heureux  
Qu'éblouissent les feux d'un soleil monotone;

Une île paresseuse où la nature donne  
Des arbres singuliers et des fruits savoureux;  
Des hommes dont le corps est mince et vigoureux,  
Et des femmes dont l'oeil par sa franchise étonne.

Guidé par ton odeur vers de charmants climats,  
Je vois un port rempli de voiles et de mâts  
Encor tout fatigués par la vague marine,

Pendant que le parfum des verts tamariniers,  
Qui circule dans l'air et m'enfle la narine,  
Se mêle dans mon âme au chant des mariniers.

OC, p. 24

The first line of the sonnet is most important in that it combines

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1. Regular in that there are 2 rhymes only. V. p. 211, n.2.

within its limited space several key motifs. In the opening hemistich, "les deux yeux fermés," standing in contrast to the repetition of "Je vois" (1.3 and 1.10), the two main verbs of the sonnet, each controlling one of the two main sections of the poem, establishes at the outset the dream-like quality of the experience to be evoked. The second hemistich with the mention of "soir" and "automne," suggests a tone for the poem. The scene is set at the time of fullest maturity, at that moment when the day or year reaches a climax of richness after which it can only fade and die and where its beauty is intensified by the imminence of its extinction. Finally, there is the emphasis on warmth, a theme stressed by the redoubling of "chaud" in its semantic associate "chaleureux" in line 2 with its literal and metaphorical ambiguity. Following this compression of sensations in the opening line, there is in line 2 an isolation of the key experience "Je respire l'odeur." The association thus created of fragrance, warmth and richness, is balanced in the second half of the first quatrain by the emergence of the vision of the ideal world, only vaguely conceived at this point - "rivages heureux" - but characterized by the same features of light and particularly warmth ("Qu'éblouissent les feux d'un soleil monotone").

The second quatrain, still syntactically dependent on "Je vois" (1.3), is a new departure only in so far as the vision at this point becomes much more precise. The accusative and infinitive construction, describing the mirage-like appearance of the vision ("Je vois se dérouler des rivages heureux"), gives way here to a succession of direct objects. At the same time, the relative clauses accompanying each of the forms observed by the poet progress from that of a general impression of brightness and heat in line 4 to more specific detail in those of the second quatrain. This is the one stanza where visual impressions take over completely and where there is no mention of the stimulus provided

by the perfume. The "rivages heureux" are now perceived more distinctly as a land of languor and repose; the motif of rest indicated in "les deux yeux fermés" of line 1 is continued here in the adjective "paresseuse" and in the first tercet by the reference to the ships "encor tout fatigués." In a development of the connotations of "un soir chaud d'automne," they are also seen as a place of abundant fertility, of luxurious and exotic vegetation, virile men and overtly sensual women.

The precision of these indications is replaced in line 9 by a reversion to generalities in the phrase "charmants climats," a development corresponding to that noted in La Vie antérieure. This coincides with a renewed consciousness of the motive source of the vision. The broad central axis of the sonnet is supplied by the repetition in line 9 in the more elliptic form of a participial phrase, "Guidé par son odeur," of the verb of line 2 and in general by the repetition in line 9 of the substance of the whole of the first quatrain. In the subsequent lines of the tercet, an aspect of "rivages" and "île" not developed before, takes the stage. The ideal world is now seen as a port, simultaneously the goal of the voyage, a haven of rest and also a place filled with dreams of potential quest, as suggested by the innumerable sails now in repose but which will ultimately go forth to sea again.

The visual description of the port in the first tercet (ll. 10 and 11), corresponding to that of the island in the second quatrain, yields in the final tercet to the intangible aspects of the scene. The tropical fragrance of the trees echoes the "odeur" of the woman and smell, sight and sound ("chant des mariniers") are bound together in the unified experience of a vision of abundant richness and harmony.

The sonnet then is organized around the central theme of the almost magical perfume and its associated vision of an ideal world. There is no intellectual interplay of ideas as in Le Flambeau vivant but instead

a repetition and an interweaving of key-motifs of perfume and vision, warmth and fertility which, by its insistence, goes far to suggest the obsessive nature of both the fragrance and the dream. The sound structure of the sonnet plays an important role in its support of these themes, offering to the reader's ear something of the richness and intensity of the poet's vision. Once again the rhyme-scheme of the sonnet is a regular one<sup>1</sup> and, once again, the rhymes provide the key notes for the musical pattern. The first rhyme on the vowel o receives in the opening line strong support from its longer sister o, "chaud d'automme," and assonances with the opening vowel of that most important word "odeur" in line 2. With the other back vowel u, ("dérouler," "éblouissent," "savoureux," "vigoureux," and "tout" [1.11]), it constitutes one of the main strands in the counterpoint of the quatrains. This complex coincides with the sensations of richness, warmth and strength on the one hand and on the other, through the insistence of the associated dentals at the rhyme, with their almost obsessive quality. The second rhyme o (with which the u vowel is intimately associated in the leonine rhymes of lines 6 and 7) and the closely linked oe, prolonged by the consonants r and s in "odeur," "chaleureux," "heureux," and "paresseuse" completes the density of effect.

New sounds rise to prominence in the rhymes of the tercets. The vowel a, which had appeared seven times in the quatrains but never at the rhyme or at the other stressed position in the line at the hemistich, occurs in the shorter tercets a total of eleven times, twice as the rhyme vowel, and, in addition, appears in all the other rhyming words of the tercets as a part of the leonine rhymes. Its prominence thus coincides with the introduction into the sonnet of the theme of the port and its open sound reflects the motifs of expansion and lightness associated in Baudelaire's mind with this theme.

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1. Regular in all respects this time.

Also noticeable in the tercets is the increased emphasis on the vowel i. Like a, this appears seven times in the quatrains and never as a rhyme, or at the caesura. In the shorter tercets, on the other hand, it occurs nine times, providing the initial vowel of the tercets ("Guidé"), two of the rhymes, and constituting part of the leonine rhyme of two more. The acuteness of the sound, gradually increasing in frequency and importance throughout the sonnet apparently corresponds to a peaking of the poet's experience. It seems to operate as a sort of sign post and to resolve itself into the multiple association of sight, smell and sound to which the poet attains in the final tercet. The concluding rhyme, "tamariniers - mariniers," recalling the adjective "singuliers" (1.7) and maintaining to the end the exotic element of the vision, combines the vowels a and i with the e that constitutes the basic open sound in the quatrains. It occurs there fourteen times, though never in an important position and four times only in the tercets.

With regard to the rhyme of the tercets, it is interesting to note as Cassagne points out, that Baudelaire deliberately limits his field to achieve as close an identity of sound as possible.<sup>1</sup> Landais' Dictionnaire des rimes françaises gives 440 words ending in -ine, 56 in -rine and only 6 in -arine. Furthermore, the rhymes selected by Baudelaire, "marine" and "narine," both beginning with a nasal consonant, are practically identical in sound. Not content with this, Baudelaire chooses, for the pair of rhymes interlacing with them, words that repeat the opening nasal consonant, the a, the following r, the subsequent i, and the second nasal consonant, "tamariniers" and "mariniers." In so doing, he disregards the generally advocated policy of keeping the rhymes as different as possible in their sense and grammatical function, but instead he creates by his musical arabesque an atmosphere of almost hypnotic suggestion. The leonine rhymes of the first quatrain and of

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1. Albert Cassagne, Versification et métrique de Charles Baudelaire, p.14.

lines 6 and 7 reveal the same method and aim. This obsessive quality of the sound, comparable to the irresistible attraction exercised by the perfume, typifies also the consonantal aspect of the sonnet. Most frequent of all is the consonant r exerting a lengthening influence over all the vowels it follows and thus playing a considerable part in the establishment of an atmosphere of languorous plenty and richness. Also prominent are the dentals d and t, the liquid l and in the quatrains the sibilant s. Besides these basic sounds, other consonants occur from time to time establishing a tiny obsessive pattern within the framework of the single line or single section of the sonnet. Examples of this are to be found in line 3, "Je vois se dérouler des rivages heureux," where the similarities of sound and the shifting of the stress pattern parallels the unfolding of perspectives of infinite depth, the y and f sounds of lines 9-12, the repetition of which underlines the hypnotic effect of the waves on the ships, the perfume on the poet, or the m of the final line, "Se mêle dans mon âme au chant des mariniers," which, in association with the other nasal n and the twice repeated nasal vowel recall in their insistence the first rhyme of the sonnet and in particular that key word "monotone."

The sonnet then combines two main patterns of sound. The insistent echoes of the different vowels and consonants weave a system of hypnotic patterns which are the equivalent to the reader's ear of the images suggested by the poet to convey the enchantment operated by the perfume. And secondly there is a progression from the more muted vowels of the quatrains to an acuteness and intensification of timbre in the tercets, which corresponds to the merging of the sensations of sight and smell into that of sound, for a poet or musician the ultimate and crowning experience.



The three sonnets so far considered as examples of Baudelaire's "musical" technique in the form, have all been concerned with the portrayal of an ideal world. But the presence of the word "monotone" in Parfum exotique suggests that even this experience is not without its ambiguities. Harmony and perfection without variety are ultimately unsatisfactory to the human mind which desires simultaneously both security and innovation. Phonetic patterns in these sonnets accurately reflect this dilemma, for the rich density of sound motifs has its other side which is restriction and in the long run monotony. Thus it comes about that the sonnet may be equally suitable, as in a poem such as Brumes et Pluies, for a "musical" evocation of the opposite pole of Baudelaire's experience, "spleen." The incantatory technique of La Vie antérieure and Parfum exotique, which creates in those sonnets an impression of richness and depth, is orientated in Brumes et Pluies to a quite different end, the obsessive quality of the sounds leading to a dulling rather than an intensification of awareness, the attempt being to "endormir la douleur" rather than to recreate for the ear that "Charme profond, magique, dont nous grise / Dans le présent le passé restauré."<sup>1</sup> "Endormement" replaces "enivrement." As in La Vie antérieure and Parfum exotique, the sonnet consists largely in the repetition of an obsessive theme. Unlike La Cloche fêlée and some of the other Spleen poems which attempt to describe analytically the awareness of failure and the disintegration of the personality, Brumes et Pluies concentrates on the creation of a direct feeling for the mood of "spleen." Here the poet has gone beyond a logical investigation depending on clearly discerned parallels. His hopeless existence assumes the amorphous quality of a

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1. Un Fantôme II, Le Parfum, OC, p. 37.

mist-engulfed landscape. The one is the "correspondance" of the other. This desire for formlessness, for a relinquishing of control, might seem an inappropriate subject for the sonnet form. The arrangement of the quatrain rhymes in couplets, for example, no doubt displeased purists and might be considered by some an unjustifiable negligence. On the other hand the requirement of Gautier that "le thème doit passer et repasser" is clearly met, and the lapse into a shapeless sameness is given artistic shape in the basic repetition offered by the quatrain-tercet arrangement and in the other symmetrical possibilities of the sonnet and not the least significantly in the sound structures underpinning the whole poem.

The sonnet then develops as its central motif the "correspondance" apprehended by the poet between the numbing effect of the "brumes et pluies" of the title and the annihilation of emotional and intellectual qualities which would provide a release from suffering.

O fins d'automne, hivers, printemps trempés de boue,  
 Endormeuses saisons! je vous aime et vous loue  
 D'envelopper ainsi mon coeur et mon cerveau  
 D'un linceul vaporeux et d'un vague tombeau.

Dans cette grande plaine où l'autan froid se joue,  
 Où par les longues nuits la girouette s'enroue,  
 Mon âme mieux qu'au temps du tiède renouveau  
 Ouvrira largement ses ailes de corbeau.

Rien n'est plus doux au coeur plein de choses funèbres,  
 Et sur qui dès longtemps descendent les frimas,  
 O blafardes saisons, reines de nos climats,

Que l'aspect permanent de vos pâles ténèbres,  
 - Si ce n'est, par un soir sans lune, deux à deux,  
 D'endormir la douleur sur un lit hasardeux.

OC, p. 96

The first quatrain insists on this aspect of ultimate lapse into oblivion, opening on the key word "fins" and continuing with references to the closing seasons of the year, to an aborted spring and in line 4 to death. The expression "linceul vaporeux" is the first in a series of assimilations of landscape and mood. On the level of description of

landscape, it suggests the drifting, swirling mists of winter insidiously penetrating and chilling one's inmost being. Obliterating all things, it isolates the individual lost in it, trapping him in its very blankness and intangibility. The adjective "vague" echoing the preceding "vapoureux" combines in almost oxymoron association with "tombeau" to suggest a paradoxical mixture of both agoraphobia and claustrophobia. In the 1857 proof, the adjective used was "vaste," in the 1857 edition "brumeux." The latter is pointlessly repetitious, the former generally has in Baudelaire positive connotations. The decision for "vague" in the 1861 edition results in a greater emphasis on the poet's disorientation. He has no idea of the dimensions of the place of his imprisonment and the only answer therefore seems to be a final yielding of all hope.

The second quatrain describes a scene of cheerless immensity, the monotony of the empty plain, its bleak coldness recalling the "trempés de boue" of line 1, the darkness, "longues nuits," the perpetual winter and perpetual damp, cold and discomfort. Lines 7 and 8 indicate, as did the second half of the first quatrain, the relevance of this spectacle to the poet's own state of mind, though the crow analogy, while harmonizing with the general scene, is something of a stereotype.

The tercets follow a 4:2 pattern. Lines 9-12 largely reiterate in more general terms lines 1-8 and especially the first quatrain. "Rien n'est plus doux" picks up in an impersonal form<sup>1</sup> the preference expressed in line 2 "Je vous aime et vous loue," (note the rhyme), "blafardes saisons" (1.11) recalls "endormeuses saisons" (1.2), which is also echoed in the final line in the phrase "endormir la douleur." The motifs of death in the heart (1.9) and winter in the soul (1.10) recur, stress being laid in lines 11 and 12 on a pallid and permanent wintry twilight which recalls the "linceul vapoureux" of line 4.

The sonnet concludes on a somewhat intrusive comparison, which

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1. The change in the tercets to an impersonal construction underlines the progressive loss of individual identity.

introduces another possible alternative for the obliteration of suffering. The chance sexual encounter may perform the same function as the absorption into the unchanging gloom of winter. An entirely new element is thus brought to the reader's attention with a detrimental effect on the atmosphere of unexpectant monotony the poet has been at pains to create. Moreover the lines are very ordinary and offer little in compensation. The "soir sans lune" is a cliché and the construction "si ce n'est" introduces a note of prosaic logic into the poem.

The sonnet clearly does not attain that almost total integration of sound and sense achieved later by Verlaine in a poem such as "Il pleure dans mon coeur comme il pleut sur la ville."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless an atmosphere of pervasive and insidious melancholy is created not only by repetition of theme and vocabulary but even more significantly by the complex intertwining, interplay and repetition of the different vowels and consonants. The ear of the reader is exposed to a benumbing and engulfing influence analogous to that experienced by the soul of the poet in the pale shadows of the wintry mists. The lighter vowels a, e, ε and i generally play a minor role in this sonnet. Instead there is a heavy concentration on the more muffled timbres of the vowels o, u, œ, and φ and the nasal vowels ê and α̃. The "irregular" couplet rhyme-scheme in the quatrains, aabb aabb, plays an important part in the establishing of a pattern of monotony through the close repetition of sounds it facilitates and the o and u vowels are in addition strongly represented in the interior of the lines. O is particularly important at the beginning of the sonnet, appearing twice in the opening hemistich "O fins

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1. No doubt the choice of sonnet form has much to do with this. Verlaine's biggest successes in this area, "Il pleure dans mon coeur," for example, were not in fact achieved in sonnet form where the quatrain-tercet arrangement seems of necessity to postulate some sort of climax, hardly conducive to the evocation of an atmosphere of unexpectant monotony. For a discussion of this point, v. infra pp. 384-392, the analysis of "Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois ..."

d'automme" (three times if the shorter o of "automne" is included). U occurs a total of 13 times in the sonnet, 11 of these in lines 1-8; line 2 offers internal rhyme support, "vous" twice, though this is an unstressed syllable, while in the equivalent line in the second quatrain (1.6) the effectiveness of the repetition of the vowel is still further enhanced by the repetition of the preceding consonant, "girouette s'enroue." In line 7, the u vowel comes into intimate contact with the second quatrain rhyme on o in "renouveau," before being repeated yet again as the opening sound of line 8. It appears only twice in the tercets, but the words in which it occurs are highly significant. They stand in roughly symmetrical positions, the fourth syllable of line 9, the fifth of line 14, "doux" and "douleur," a phonetic combination that throws into relief the central thematic paradox of the sonnet, the self-indulgent acquiescence of the poet in his misery.<sup>1</sup>

The œ vowel associated with u in the key word "douleur" also plays an important part elsewhere in the sonnet particularly in the opening quatrain, occurring in the initial apostrophe "endormeuses" (1.2) and twice more in lines 3-4, "coeur," "linceul." It receives additional support in line 3 from the closely related ø of "vapœreux" and this in its turn provides the rhyme for the final couplet.

The nasal vowels ẽ and œ̃, though not appearing at the rhyme, also have a significant role in the establishing of a sombre tone in the sonnet. They each occur twice in the opening line, "O fins d'automme, hivers, printœmps trempœs de boue." The former appears twice more in the first quatrain in "ainsi" (1.3) and in the important "linceul" (1.4). After this, however, it disappears apart from a brief appearance in 1.9 ("plein"). But the dull, knell-like timbre is maintained throughout the

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1. Verlaine uses the same combination as the key-motif for his sonnet "Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois ...." v. infra p. 386.

sonnet by the nasal  $\tilde{\alpha}$ . After its double appearance in line 1, further stress is laid upon it by its position as the opening syllable of lines 2 and 3. It occurs five times in the second quatrain, twice as the sixth syllable of the line and thus directly preceding the caesura (ll. 7 and 8); it is the first vowel of the tercets where it appears a total of six times, in two instances once again directly preceding the caesura (ll. 10 and 12).

Consonants too appear in similarly obsessive fashion. The most frequent is r occurring a total of thirty times and playing a particularly effective part in lines 1 and 2 and line 14, slowing and lengthening them and thus adding to their hypnotic quality. S appears twenty-three times and is also effective in slowing down the rhythm by the lengthening of the preceding vowel as in "endormeuses" (1.2), where an even more striking result is achieved by the immediate repetition of the consonant twice more in "saisons." D and l are also prominent and sustain the general impression of monotony through their frequent repetition (line 14 is a particularly good example). In addition substantial effect is derived from consonants that may appear less frequently overall but which dominate one section or line of the sonnet. In the first quatrain, for example, the v is particularly obsessive; in line 1 t, r, p; in line 9 pl; d and s in line 10; f, b, and r in lines 9-11.

These manifold repetitions reflect and emphasize the dominant monotony. Similarity of timbre reproduces a situation where, since all things are "correspondances" of each other, all are ultimately identical. This possibility hopefully perceived in poems of the ideal, as a sign of the coherence and serenity of the universe, here reveals its other face of total uniformity. The repetitive principle inherent in the sonnet structure and in its rhyme-scheme has been fully developed and exploited.

It seems impossible to conclude a discussion of the "musical" possibilities of the Baudelairian sonnet without at least a brief consideration of La Musique. In a sense though, this sonnet is for Baudelaire an a-typical one as far as the "musical" use of the form, as we have defined it, is concerned. Whereas in La Vie antérieure, Parfum exotique and Brumes et Pluies the poet develops the harmonic possibilities of the genre, here attention is concentrated on an oscillating movement between elation and inertia expressed primarily through the interaction of rhythmic liberties and the fixed structure of the form.

La musique souvent me prend comme une mer!  
 Vers ma pâle étoile,  
 Sous un plafond de brume ou dans un vaste éther  
 Je mets à la voile;

La poitrine en avant et les poumons gonflés  
 Comme de la toile,  
 J'escalade le dos des flots amoncelés  
 Que la nuit me voile;

Je sens vibrer en moi toutes les passions  
 D'un vaisseau qui souffre;  
 Le bon vent, la tempête et ses convulsions  
 Sur l'immense gouffre  
 Me bercent. D'autres fois, calme plat, grand miroir  
 De mon désespoir!

OC, p. 65

The first line syntactically detached from the rest of the poem and with its three-fold m alliteration stressing "musique," "me," "mer," and the balance of "musique" and "mer" at the beginning and end of the line, establishes for the whole poem the equivalence between music and the sea. Thereafter the poet concentrates on the sea-image exclusively, underlining his account of its swelling and ebbing movement by his mingling of twelve and five syllable lines.

In the quatrains with their even number of lines, this heterometric arrangement does not substantially interfere with the sonnet's traditional symmetries, and the combination of movement and regularity which imitates the movement of the poet/boat over the waves is echoed

in the syntactic, rhythmic, and rhyme arrangements of the two stanzas. Lines 2-4 of the first quatrain consist of a single period, as does the whole of the second quatrain, but each smaller syntactic group within these periods fits smoothly into the metrical pattern. There are no enjambements despite the total syntactic continuity and in the longer lines, the two hemistichs are clearly delineated either by parallels of syntactic construction (the two adverbial expressions of place in line 3), by alliteration and assonance (1.7 "J'escalade le dos / des flots amoncelés") or both (1.5 "la poitrine en avant et les poumons gonflés"). The rhyme too displays a similar combination of movement and restraint. The pattern is an alternate one, but the b rhyme of the first quatrain not only persists into the second but also consists of two virtually homonymic pairs.

In the tercets, however, the illusory sense of elated control created in the quatrains is dispelled. The poet/boat is depicted with no volition of his own at the mercy of the sea. The first person subject and the active verbs of lines 2-9 are replaced by a passive situation, "me bercent" recalling "me prend" in line 1, before verbs disappear altogether as all movement ceases in the closing sentence of the poem. This loss of purposeful direction is also reflected in the divergence (in contrast to the coherence in the quatrains) of patterns of syntax, rhythm, rhyme, metre and fixed structure. In the tercets, unlike the quatrains, the alternation of twelve and five syllable lines immediately produces a disruptive effect by creating two tercets of unequal dimensions. This disequilibrium is made even more apparent as a result of a rhyme-scheme disposed on a 4:2 basis. The alternating rhyme of lines 9-12 continues to develop the forward impetus initiated in muted fashion in the quatrains, but then in lines 13 and 14, the final couplet rhyme between lines of such disparate length brings the movement to a sudden,



unsatisfactory halt, creating a sense of phonetic and rhythmic inadequacy which echoes the theme of frustration and despair. The underlying monotony suggested in the homonymic b rhymes of the quatrains is now left isolated and exposed. The weakening of the structural integrity of the tercets is completed by the presence in lines 9-14 of three separate syntactic groups, the second of which, in conjunction with the alternation of twelve and five syllables, obliterates all trace of the normal 3:3 division. Furthermore, in contrast to the quatrains, none of these groups coincides exactly with the metrical pattern. Line 10 is the only line of the tercets, apart from the last one, which does not end in an enjambement. In addition the strong internal rhythmic regularity of the longer lines of the quatrains does not recur. Line 13 in particular is remarkable for its fragmentation.

In La Musique Baudelaire stretches the rhythmic and prosodic features of his chosen form in a manner perhaps more often associated with Verlaine, to evoke an oscillation between hope and despair. But the setting up of the two extremes of the contrast, "ma pâle étoile" in the opening stanza, "calme plat" in the last, backed by the contrast in syntax and rhythm between quatrains and tercets (as well as by such smaller thematic oppositions as "Sous un plafond de brume ou dans un vaste éther") gives the piece the dualistic ring that is one of the Baudelairian hallmarks. La Musique, in fact, contrary to the expectations raised by its title, is not a "musical" sonnet in the same way as La Vie antérieure or Parfum exotique. It uses suggestively a variety of syntactic, rhythmic and metrical possibilities within the sonnet framework; but purely phonetic features play a subsidiary role. Its heterometric arrangements clearly give it an exceptional character and add a new and non-intellectual dimension to the poet's language, but like Le Chat it could certainly claim to be at least as closely associated

with the more obviously antithetical use of the sonnet discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

In the various sonnets examined, we have seen how the form is used by Baudelaire in two radically different ways to meet two different needs - as an instrument of argument and demonstration and as an instrument of suggestion, in lineal and multidimensional developments, in traditional patterns of analysis and as a "musical" poem, techniques eliciting respectively a primarily intellectual and a primarily emotional response. The ambivalence of temperament revealed in these two approaches and characteristic of all Baudelaire's work, receives its best commentary in the art criticism. From the first, in the Salon of 1845, Baudelaire attempts to define the different appeal of two great classes of painter, setting up à propos of Delacroix's work, Dernières Paroles de Marc-Aurèle, the distinction between the dessinateurs and the coloristes represented primarily for Baudelaire by Ingres and Delacroix respectively. Emotionally the subject matter and method of Delacroix have the greater appeal for him. On the other hand, he has a yearning for order and discipline all the stronger for his inability to achieve it within his personal life. Hence the attraction of the work of Ingres, an attraction analogous to that felt towards Malherbe:

Je connais un poète, d'une nature toujours orageuse et vibrante, qu'un vers de Malherbe, symétrique et carré de mélodie, jette dans de longues extases. OC, p. 1126

As a result he oscillates between the statement that the methods of coloriste and dessinateur are equally valid, as in the Salons of 1845 and 46<sup>1</sup> or L'Oeuvre et la Vie de Delacroix<sup>2</sup> and the assertion that

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1. OC, pp. 817-818 and p. 877.

2. OC, p. 1124.

the coloriste is superior to the dessinateur. Thus, in the Salon of 1846, he goes on to claim, "Un dessinateur est un coloriste manqué," and in the Exposition Universelle of 1855 delivers a particularly blistering attack on the adherents of "la ligne":

Du dessin de Delacroix si absurdement, si niaisement critiqué, que faut-il dire, si ce n'est qu'il est des vérités élémentaires complètement méconnues; qu'un bon dessein n'est pas une ligne dure, cruelle, despotique, immobile, enfermant une figure comme une camisole de force; que le dessin doit être comme la nature, vivant et agité; que la simplification dans le dessin est une monstruosité comme la tragédie dans le monde dramatique; que la nature nous présente une série infinie de lignes courbes, fuyantes et brisées, suivant une loi de génération impeccable, où le parallélisme est toujours indécis et sinueux, où les concavités et les convexités se correspondent et se poursuivent; que M. Delacroix satisfait admirablement à toutes ces conditions et que, quand même son dessin laisserait percer quelquefois des défaillances ou des outrances, il a au moins cet immense mérite d'être une protestation perpétuelle et efficace contre la barbare invasion de la ligne droite, cette ligne tragique et systématique, dont actuellement les ravages sont déjà immenses dans la peinture et la sculpture.<sup>1</sup>

In calmer moments, the reasons for this preference are more comprehensively discussed. In the Salon of 1846 the distinction is made thus:

On demande souvent si le même homme peut être à la fois grand coloriste et grand dessinateur.

Oui et non; car il y a différentes sortes de dessins.

La qualité d'un pur dessinateur consiste surtout dans la finesse, et cette finesse exclut la touche: or il y a des touches heureuses, et le coloriste chargé d'exprimer la nature par la couleur perdrait souvent plus à supprimer des touches heureuses qu'à rechercher une plus grande austérité de dessin.

La couleur n'exclut certainement pas le grand dessin, celui de Véronèse par exemple, qui procède surtout par l'ensemble et les masses; mais bien le dessin du détail, le contour du petit morceau, où la touche mangera toujours la ligne.

L'amour de l'air, le choix des sujets à mouvement, veulent des lignes flottantes et noyées.

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1. OC, p. 973. My underlinings.

Les dessinateurs exclusifs agissent selon un procédé inverse et pourtant analogue. Attentifs à suivre et à surprendre la ligne dans ses ondulations les plus secrètes, ils n'ont pas le temps de voir l'air et la lumière, c'est-à-dire leurs effets, et s'efforcent même de ne pas les voir, pour ne pas nuire au principe de leur école.

On peut donc être à la fois coloriste et dessinateur, mais dans un certain sens. De même qu'un dessinateur peut être coloriste par les grandes masses, de même un coloriste peut être dessinateur par une logique complète de l'ensemble des lignes; mais l'une de ces qualités absorbe toujours le détail de l'autre.

Les coloristes dessinent comme la nature; leurs figures sont naturellement délimitées par la lutte harmonieuse des masses colorées.

Les purs dessinateurs sont des philosophes et des abstraiteurs de quintessence.

Les coloristes sont des poètes épiques.

OC, pp. 884-885

The "coloristes" then are the artists who suggest, who capture the particular nuance of colour or mood. Significantly Baudelaire terms them "poètes." The "dessinateurs" are those who attempt to reproduce the outline of the patterns perceived by their eye in the natural world. They refine, simplify, schematize. This diversity of approach is roughly equivalent to Baudelaire's two different modes in his handling of the sonnet. The sonnet in accordance with its traditional associations provides a schema in which a complex state of mind can be reduced to its essentials and presented to the reader's intelligence in the shape of a simple contrast, paradox, or comparison. Or else, following the example of the "coloristes," it may be transformed almost into a musical stave, grouping those "masses colorées" of sound and theme whose insistent tonality and constant repetition suggests more vividly than logical or linear progression the rich harmony or despairing monotony which are the two extremes of the poet's experience.

A final question remains to be asked, remembering Gautier's strictures on the Baudelairian sonnet. How suitable a vehicle was the form for the aims indicated by Baudelaire in his critical articles as

desirable goals for art, and how does it compare in effectiveness with other forms employed by the poet?

The aptitude of the sonnet as a vehicle for analysis of the emotions had of course been established from the first appearance of the form. As Gautier perceived, however, the dense texture of syllogistic argument and supporting imagery had considerably loosened in nineteenth century adaptations of the genre. This corresponded, as may be inferred from Gautier's statements in Les Grotesques (supra pp.55-58) to a loss of interest in a general schematization of emotion. The emotional states of the nineteenth century while perhaps no more complex than their sixteenth century counterparts, are primarily expressed in terms of the individual, each with his own idiosyncrasies and priorities. The uniqueness of each experience under this system makes the sonnet less effective as a vehicle for detailed analyses. Its fourteen lines are too short for the intricate discussion of a predicament that is not already wellknown and familiar to all. For Baudelaire the prime attraction of the form as an analytical genre, in this respect, seems to have been its binary structure which enabled him to isolate and stress the essential shape of his attitude to life, its antithetical possibilities corresponding to the fundamentally dualistic cast of his temperament. The result is a sonnet often of much less formal and intellectual subtlety than those of the sixteenth century. The framework provided by the rhyme-scheme, as Gautier pointed out, becomes much weaker, since formal considerations of this sort only impinge on the general plan in so far as they bring emphasis to the central motif of duality. Imagery likewise tends to undergo considerable simplification, the preciousness of earlier periods often being replaced by a single symbolic contrast and parallel. Exploration of the various ramifications of the poet's predicament is left for longer pieces and the force of the sonnet comes

to reside largely in the general formal intensification it brings to Baudelaire's almost Manichean view of life.

In the "musical" or "suggestive" sonnets, on the other hand, Baudelaire breaks new ground, and yet it is precisely here that he is at his most rigorously orthodox in matters of formal technique. Of the four sonnets, A une Dame créole, La Vie antérieure, Parfum exotique and Brumes et Pluies, all have quatrains which rhyme on two rhymes only, though with the exception of Parfum exotique, the arrangement of these rhymes is not strictly regular. However, only Brumes et Pluies really departs from generally accepted rhyme patterns with its aabb aabb arrangement.<sup>1</sup> Since these pieces depend very largely on densely realized associations of sound and sense, obviously the poet's aim coincided with the possibilities available in the orthodox sonnet for phonetic repetition particularly at the rhyme. Moreover the limited space of fourteen lines provided a unit cohesive enough for the ear of the reader to pick out and retain the different sound motifs, rather as one follows the different themes as they recur in a musical work, and a means whereby this could be achieved in an understated and subtle way.

In his "musical" poems apart from the sonnet, Baudelaire's favourite and most successful form is the sequence of five/<sup>-line</sup>alexandrine stanzas, where the odd line results in an intensification of one of the tonal strands represented by the rhyme. There are six poems so constructed - La Chevelure, Le Balcon, Réversibilité, L'Irréparable, Moesta et Errabunda and Lesbos, and it is worth noting that in three of the six<sup>2</sup> it is the generally more open, less sharply concluded sound of the feminine rhyme which dominates, bringing phonetic support to the theme of half-satisfied

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1. And this of course produces a more intensely repetitive effect.
  2. In L'Irréparable and Moesta et Errabunda, feminine and masculine rhymes dominate in alternate stanzas.

and nostalgic longing. In comparison with the sonnet which through the pre-established nature of its structure tends to underline the principle of order that is one side of the Baudelairian ideal, the five-line stanza arrangement, through the freedom with which the form can be extended and the more flexible links possible between stanzas, gives a marginally greater stress to that other factor in Baudelaire's vision - the note of constant quest, of a yearning never perfectly stilled. The best example of this contrast is provided by Parfum exotique and La Chevelure. The sonnet derives its effect of harmonious fulfilment from the repetitive possibilities of the quatrain-tercet arrangement and from the density of the phonetic motifs organized on the basis of the rhyme scheme. In the longer poem however, imagery, sound and rhythm are intertwined in a less predictable, more subtle and more extensive manner and achieve an effect of thrust and intensity which tends to leave the sonnet and the more overt stylization inseparable from its form looking thin and insipid in comparison. La Chevelure is however unique among the six pieces mentioned in its lack of an explicit refrain. In all the rest, the first line of each stanza reappears as the last line, creating an impression of lullaby or nostalgic echo, which consorts well with the general theme of the poet's search for the ideal among the memories of his past:

Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses,  
Et revis mon passé blotti dans tes genoux ...  
Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses.

Le Balcon, OC, p. 35

From a different point of view, however, the element of overt stylization in such a technique of refrain curbs the free progression of theme and image, as observed in La Chevelure, and while the refrains in the poems mentioned, or the use of whole stanzas as refrains in Le Beau Navire, or the complex interweaving of the different metres and

the refrain of L'Invitation au Voyage all serve to enhance the suggestive quality of their respective pieces, there comes a point where stylization of this kind becomes so obvious as to detract from incantatory effect. Such a point seems to be reached with Harmonie du Soir where the reader's attention is held by the display of technical virtuosity as much as by the "musicality" of the poem. Returning then to the sonnet, one may perhaps conclude that while the sonnet can hardly hope to achieve the sense of profusion created by a poem such as La Chevelure, there is an unobtrusiveness in its long established symmetries which makes it a more flexible instrument than many of the more deliberately "musical" or "suggestive" forms.<sup>1</sup>

Baudelaire, while pursuing the old line with the sonnet, also institutes a new departure. Inclined by his temperament and by the prevailing fashion of a preference for the short poem, his attitude to its strict formal requirements is cavalier when he conceives of it in the traditional manner as a convenient genre for the examination and schematization of a state of mind. In sonnets of this type, his rhymes do indeed leave something to be desired to the mind of a purist, and it is primarily on the system of structural balances in the sonnet that he depends. On the other hand, when he turns his attention to the creation of a "sorcellerie évocatoire" which will suggest a certain mood to the

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1. Baudelaire does experiment on two occasions with the actual layout of the sonnet form. Bien loin d'ici, OC, pp. 171-172, consists of two tercets followed by two quatrains. In addition the rhyme-scheme is aaa bbb acaa cacc. In L'Avertisseur, OC, pp. 170-171, the two tercets are enclosed by the two quatrains, a pattern emphasising the theme of the ever-present "avertisseur," coiled around the human heart. But these remain isolated experiments. It is however interesting to note that they are apparently late pieces, not included even in the 1861 edition of Les Fleurs du Mal. Perhaps their appearance at this stage in Baudelaire's career reflects an inability to say anything new in the sonnet form and a turning therefore to virtuoso effects.



reader, through a dense interweaving of sound and sense, he uses all the resources natural to the sonnet to render the tonality of that emotional state. As a result and somewhat contrary to Gautier's judgement, the more radical change of aim is generally accompanied by a more rigorous adherence to formal prescription.

Rimbaud was later to criticize Baudelaire for his "forme ... mesquine,"<sup>1</sup> but the passion of the dandy, "le besoin ardent de se faire une originalité, contenu dans les limites extérieures des convenances,"<sup>2</sup> has its own wisdom. Baudelaire's use of the sonnet firstly as a vehicle for the analysis of a disordered and disorientated personality and secondly as "la mise en oeuvre d'une tonalité musicale du sentiment, le moyen de fixer une nuance,"<sup>3</sup> reveals a masterful awareness of the rationale of traditional prosody which permits within an established framework multiple possibilities for modification and experimentation and thus satisfies those two basic and opposite human desires - for irregularity and symmetry, flexibility and stability, tradition and innovation, Ingres and Malherbe as well as Delacroix.

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1. Arthur Rimbaud, letter to Paul Demeny, 15 May 1871 ("La Lettre du Voyant"), Oeuvres complètes, ed. A. Adam in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1972), pp. 253-254.
  2. Le Peintre de la Vie moderne, section IX "Le Dandy," OC, p. 1178.
  3. Gustave Kahn, "José-Maria de Heredia," La Revue (1905), p. 508. The reference is specifically to Baudelaire's poetry.

## CHAPTER III

The Parnassians

In Les Fleurs du Mal, the field of the sonnet is decisively extended into the new area of highly personal emotion indicated in certain of the sonnets of Sainte-Beuve and in those of Nerval. The contribution of the Parnassian poets of the 1860's and 1870's lies in quite a different direction. In general they favour an attitude of emotional detachment and turn away from the subjects of lyric poetry. Instead they tend to concern themselves with the depiction of civilizations distant in time or place, or indeed with vivid plastic description of any kind.<sup>1</sup> At the same time they lay a heavy premium on the formal aspects of poetry. In this last connexion, there was clearly an opening for the sonnet. Les Fleurs du Mal had established a vogue for the genre, and it offered a deceptively simple formula where, it seemed, anyone might display a modicum of technical skill. In line with the general trend of Parnassian interest, the sonnet was thus drawn away from the sphere of lyric poetry with which it had traditionally been associated and was adapted to a new function of visual description.

The importance of the sonnet in the works of the Parnassian poets is clearly shown by the vast numbers produced. The Parnasse

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1. This is of course an oversimplification. As with any "school" of writers, the individuals making up the group vary quite considerably in their themes and technique. Sonnets by Parnassians thus include Baudelairian imitations and other lyric poetry, "naturalistic" or sentimental descriptions of everyday life and so on.

contemporain<sup>1</sup> of 1866 contains 80 sonnets out of 200 poems, the 1869 volume 70 sonnets out of 206 poems, the 1876 volume 74 sonnets out of 237 poems. A parody of these collections, Le Parnassiculet contemporain (1867), has 4 sonnets out of 10 poems in its original edition and 5 sonnets out of 19 poems in the second edition of 1872.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Lemerre, the Parnassians' publisher, brought out in 1869 a special luxury edition, Sonnets et Eaux-fortes, consisting of 41 sonnets by leading poets of the day accompanied by etchings by well-known artists. He also published in 1874 Le Livre des Sonnets, an anthology of the French sonnet through the centuries, which had a second and third edition in 1875 and 1893.<sup>3</sup> The sonnet also had a major role in the numerous collections of poetry by individual poets. Leaving aside the early work of important figures such as Verlaine and Mallarmé which will be considered separately in Chapters IV and V, it appears extensively in the poetry of many lesser writers such as Coppée and Sully Prudhomme. A particular problem of selection thus arises for this chapter. I have tackled this as I have tackled the overall selection of sonnets for this study by confining my inquiry to major poetic figures even if it should so happen that these writers make less extensive use of the form than other poets of the group. An enormous number of tedious and third-rate sonnets are thus automatically eliminated. This discussion of the Parnassian sonnet is therefore based on Banville as the theorist of the group, Leconte de Lisle as its philosophical centre, and Heredia as the most successful and original sonnetist amongst the Parnassian poets.

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1. Le Parnasse contemporain (Paris, Lemerre, 1866, 1869, 1876).
  2. Le Parnassiculet contemporain, 2<sup>e</sup> ed. augmentée de neuf pièces inédites (Paris, Librairie centrale [J. Lemer éditeur], 1872).
  3. Sonnets et Eaux-Fortes (Paris, Lemerre, 1869). Le Livre des Sonnets (Paris, Lemerre, 1874).

Banville

The number of sonnets in Banville's work is relatively small<sup>1</sup> but there are two important reasons why he should be taken as a starting point for this chapter. On the one hand his Petit Traité de versification française, published in 1872, offers a codification of the Parnassian attitude towards formal questions and includes detailed remarks on the sonnet. On the other, where his own practice is concerned, Banville is of interest as a transitional figure with a thirty year career reaching from the close of the Romantic era through to the Parnassians of the 1860's and 1870's.<sup>2</sup>

The Petit Traité echoes and develops the reaction against inspirational and didactic poetry which Gautier had first publicized in the 1830's in the Préface to Mademoiselle de Maupin:

... de notre temps, dans l'artiste et dans le poète, on n'a voulu voir que le penseur, le prophète, le vates, qui certes existe en lui; mais il doit aussi contenir un ouvrier, qui, comme tous les ouvriers, doit avoir appris son métier par imitation et en connaître la tradition complète.<sup>3</sup>

Banville treats poetry as a craft that can be taught and learnt; the Petit Traité is a "manuel d'écolier" where it is assumed for the most part that if instructions are followed with

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1. For details of Banville's sonnet production, see Appendix A.
  2. Banville's first collection, Les Cariatides, was published in 1842 when he was 19. At the end of his career, Banville was adopted as a master by the Parnassian poets of the 1860's. He contributed to all three volumes of the Parnasse contemporain and to Lemerre's anthology of sonnets and etchings, Sonnets et Eaux-Fortes. He was one of the three members of the editorial board of the 1876 Parnasse contemporain, the only one incidentally who voted for the inclusion of Mallarmé's poem L'Après-Midi d'un Faune.
  3. Oeuvres IX, 171. References to Banville's work are those of the nine volume Lemerre edition (Paris, 1889-1892), henceforth O.

diligence, a creditable piece of workmanship if not a work of genius will result.<sup>1</sup> A genre with set rules such as the sonnet obviously comes out well here and we find Banville recommending adherence to old and tested forms of this kind unless there is some compelling reason for essaying a new departure. Fixed forms are described in the following terms:

... la précieuse tradition française nous a légué un certain nombre de poèmes dont la forme, parfaitement arrêtée et définie, comporte un certain nombre fixe de strophes et de vers, en un mot un arrangement régulier et complet auquel il est interdit de changer rien, ces poèmes ayant trouvé depuis longtemps leur forme définitive et absolue. Ces poèmes sont: le Rondel, la Ballade, la Double Ballade, le Sonnet, susceptible par exception d'être disposé de plusieurs façons diverses, bien qu'il existe une forme type et classique du Sonnet, qui de toutes est incontestablement la meilleure; le Rondeau, le Rondeau Redoublé, le Triolet, la Villanelle, le Iai, le Virelai, et le Chant Royal.

O IX, 118

Already it is clear that the relative flexibility of the sonnet vis à vis other poems in fixed form at least, is discounted as a positive quality by Banville. He seems to consider it on the one hand a better training and on the other a more revealing display of skill to operate within the confines of the strictest rules. In accordance with this point of view, he takes Boileau to task for the imprecision and lack of clarity of his comments on the sonnet in the Art poétique<sup>2</sup> and spends nine pages of his treatise on the

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1. "Notre outil ... la versification du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, perfectionnée par les grands poètes du XIX<sup>e</sup> ... est si bon, qu'un imbécile même, à qui on a appris à s'en servir, peut, en s'appliquant, faire de bons vers." O IX, 4.

2. O IX, 125-126. Boileau's remarks are quoted in Appendix B, p. 612.

technical detail of the genre. The sonnet may begin with either a masculine or a feminine rhyme; it may be written in lines of any length, and it may follow a regular or irregular rhyme pattern.<sup>1</sup> But there is, according to Banville, only one form of regular sonnet. This is the type abba abba ccd ede<sup>2</sup> as examples of which he quotes Les Danaïdes of Sully Prudhomme and Le Iys of Coppée. He then continues:

Si l'on introduit dans cet arrangement une  
modification quelconque,  
Si l'on écrit les deux quatrains sur des rimes  
différentes,  
Si l'on commence par les deux tercets, pour  
finir par les deux quatrains,  
Si l'on croise les rimes des quatrains,  
Si l'on fait rimer le troisième vers du premier  
tercet avec le troisième vers du deuxième tercet,  
- ou encore le premier vers du premier tercet  
avec le premier vers du deuxième tercet,  
Si enfin on s'écarte, pour si peu que ce soit,  
du type classique dont nous avons donné deux  
exemples,  
Le sonnet est irrégulier.

O IX, 201-202

Banville admits that the irregular sonnet has on occasion produced some masterpieces, for example in "le plus romantique et le plus moderne de tous les livres de ce temps," Les Fleurs du Mal. He thus shows more flexibility than Gautier in his definition of what constitutes a sonnet. Nevertheless this long list of "thou shalt not's" seems to put the notion of an "irregular" sonnet in a definitely inferior position. This impression is reinforced by

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1. O IX, 199.

2. This scheme differs from the traditional one established by Marot in the arrangement of its tercet rhymes. Marot's tercets follow the pattern ccd eed. Banville feels however that a scheme of couplet followed by alternating rhymes produces a sharper differentiation from the enclosed rhyme pattern of the quatrains.

by the quotation of Le Rebelle with the rubric:

SONNET - IRRÉGULIER, PARCE QUE LES RIMES DES  
QUATRAINS SONT CROISÉES, PARCE QUE LES DEUX  
QUATRAINS SONT ÉCRITS SUR DES RIMES DIFFÉRENTES,  
ET PARCE QUE LE DERNIER VERS DU PREMIER TERCET  
RIME AVEC LE DERNIER VERS DU DEUXIÈME TERCET.

O IX, 203

Banville comments that it is a strange thing that Baudelaire should have chosen to extol the divine beauty of the Rule in an irregular sonnet. A quotation of "Je te donne ces vers" follows with a similar heading:

SONNET - IRRÉGULIER, PARCE QUE, BIEN QUE LES  
QUATRAINS SOIENT ÉCRITS SUR DES RIMES PAREILLES,  
LA DISPOSITION EN EST CONTRAIRE, - LE PREMIER  
QUATRAIN AYANT SES RIMES MASCULINES AU PREMIER  
ET AU QUATRIÈME VERS, TANDIS QUE LE SECOND  
QUATRAIN A SES RIMES MASCULINES AU SECOND ET  
AU TROISIÈME VERS.

O IX, 204

The rigour of these definitions of regularity in the sonnet, extending even to a specified rhyme pattern in the tercets and the undertones of disapproval reserved for the "irregular" sonnet, originate in the author's belief that:

... autant que le vers exempt de liens et de  
règles permet au poète d'affirmer sa force,  
autant le lui permet aussi l'entrave d'une  
forme fixe de poème. En pouvant à son gré  
varier et modifier le vers, il se montre  
créateur infatigable; mais il fait admirer  
sa souplesse et son habileté d'artiste en  
s'enfermant sans effort dans un cadre connu  
et défini.

O IX, 202

It is the dexterity of the artist which receives primary stress.

These remarks on the sonnet rhyme-scheme provide an easy rule of thumb for the novice, but they completely fail to indicate

the structural tensions and balances at work behind the genre's characteristic rhyme pattern. However, Banville does close his discussion of the sonnet with comments on the relationship between quatrains and tercets and on the importance to be given to the final line. On the question of the balance between quatrains and tercets he shows no particular originality. He spends some time emphasizing the physical inequality of the two main sections of the sonnet:

La forme du Sonnet est magnifique, prodigieusement belle, - et cependant infirme en quelque sorte; car les tercets, qui à eux deux forment six vers, étant d'une part physiquement plus courts que les quatrains, qui à eux deux forment huit vers, - et d'autre part semblant infiniment plus courts que les quatrains, - à cause de ce qu'il y a d'allègre et de rapide dans le tercet et de pompeux et de lent dans le quatrain; - le Sonnet ressemble à une figure dont le buste serait trop long et dont les jambes seraient trop grêles et trop courtes.

O IX, 205

He then proceeds to suggest the remedy - increased density and vigour in the shorter tercets:

... [l'artifice] ne peut consister à amoindrir les quatrains et à leur donner l'aspect d'un corps atrophie, car il ne faut jamais sous aucun prétexte faire des vers mesquins. L'artifice doit donc consister à grandir les tercets, à leur donner de la pompe, de l'ampleur, de la force et de la magnificence ... il s'agit d'exécuter ce grandissement sans rien ôter aux tercets de leur légèreté et de leur rapidité essentielles. Ceux-là me comprendront qui ont admiré comment les Coustou et les Coysevox équilibrent toute une figure avec un morceau de draperie et presque avec un ruban désespérément envolé!

O IX, 205-206

There is nothing new here. Such a procedure would seem to be standard practice in the great majority of sonnets. However



the remarks that follow on the importance of the final line of the sonnet are of considerably more interest:

Le dernier vers du sonnet doit contenir un trait - exquis, ou surprenant, ou excitant l'admiration par sa justesse et sa force.

Lamartine disait qu'il doit suffire de lire le dernier vers d'un Sonnet; car, ajoutait-il, un Sonnet n'existe pas si la pensée n'en est pas violemment et ingénieusement résumée dans le dernier vers.

Le poète des Harmonies partait d'une prémisse très-juste; mais il en tirait une conclusion absolument fausse.

OUI, le dernier vers du Sonnet doit contenir la pensée du Sonnet tout entière. - NON, il n'est pas vrai qu'à cause de cela il soit superflu de lire les treize premiers vers du Sonnet. Car dans toute oeuvre d'art, ce qui intéresse c'est l'adresse de l'ouvrier, et il est on ne peut plus intéressant de voir:

Comment il a développé d'abord la pensée qu'il devait résumer ensuite,

Et comment il a amené ce trait extraordinaire du quatorzième vers - qui cesserait d'être extraordinaire s'il avait poussé comme un champignon.

Ce qu'il y a de vraiment surprenant dans le Sonnet, c'est que le même travail doit être fait deux fois, d'abord dans les quatrains, ensuite dans les tercets, - et que cependant les tercets doivent non pas répéter les quatrains mais les éclairer, comme une herse qu'on allume montre dans un décor de théâtre un effet qu'on n'y avait pas vu auparavant.

Enfin, un Sonnet doit ressembler à une comédie bien faite, en ceci que chaque mot des quatrains doit faire deviner - dans une certaine mesure - le trait final, et que cependant ce trait final doit surprendre le lecteur - non par la pensée qu'il exprime et que le lecteur a devinée - mais par la beauté, la hardiesse et le bonheur de l'expression. C'est ainsi qu'au théâtre un beau dénouement emporte le succès, non parce que le spectateur ne l'a pas prévu, - il faut qu'il l'ait prévu, - mais parce que le poète a revêtu ce dénouement d'une forme plus étrange et plus saisissante que ce qu'on pouvait imaginer d'avance.

The idea put forward here is not a new one either, but Banville's comments take on particular significance since they provide an excellent gloss on Parnassian sonnet technique as it reaches its apogee in the work of Heredia. Banville seems here to give the final line of the sonnet something of the same weight of significance as he gives elsewhere to the rhyme as opposed to the remainder of the line. The key phrase is as usual "dans toute oeuvre d'art, ce qui intéresse c'est l'adresse de l'ouvrier." This account of sonnet requirements endeavours to hedge the sonnet round with as many restrictions as those encountered in other yet more intricate verse forms.<sup>1</sup> Even so it does not seem that the sonnet offered enough of a challenge to Banville's desire for technical mastery, hence his preference for still more difficult forms such as the ballade.

How does Banville's actual practice in the sonnet compare with his theoretical requirements for the form? Where the rhyme-scheme is concerned, all Banville's sonnets from Les Cariatides onwards show a very high degree of regularity. Of the six sonnets of Les Cariatides (1842), five follow the abba abba ccd ede pattern

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1. The emphasis placed on rich rhyme in the Petit Traité would also seem likely to have considerable repercussions in a form such as the sonnet where the poet is faced with the already difficult task of producing more than a single pair of rhymes. As it turns out, however, where the sonnet at least is concerned, Banville is more rigid in theory than in practice. Of all his sonnets, only three are rhymed richly throughout - La Danseuse in Rimes dorées, and Ariane and Messaline in Les Princesses. The declaration "la Rime est tout" in A Gabriel Marc (Rimes dorées) where significantly "la Rime" is more or less equated with "la Poésie," is not supported by a total richness of rhyme in the sonnet. Often the poet compromises, the rhymes of the quatrains rhyming richly in pairs rather than all four together.

prescribed later in the Petit Traité. The remaining sonnet, Amours d'Elise V, is less than perfect in Banville's definition thirty years afterwards, in that the rhymes of the quatrains are alternate and not enclosed. The single sonnet of Les Stalactites (1846), Sur une dame blonde, follows the regular pattern; so too do six of the sonnets of Le Sang de la Coupe (1857). The other three all depart from the norm in having the alternate pattern of rhyme in the quatrains. The one sonnet of Occidentales (1869) is regular, as are all thirteen sonnets of Rimes dorées (1875); so too are the four sonnets of Roses de Noël (1878) and the twenty-one of Les Princesses (1874). The only point of note in this last collection is the rhyming of the tercets of Antiope on two rhymes only, ccd cdc. There are no examples anywhere of quatrains with four rhymes, and, except for the variation in Antiope, no departure from the tercet pattern ccd ede.

However Banville's remarks on the relationship between quatrains and tercets and his call for a striking final line to the sonnet do not seem to be reflected in any significant way in his own work. The Petit Traité itself gives us a hint as to why this should be. Banville offers no advice on the sorts of subject suitable for presentation in sonnet form. There is no discussion of the interlocking patterns of metre, syntax, imagery and so on within the formal structure and no attempt to suggest what types of theme might successfully be developed within this multiple framework. Such an omission fairly accurately mirrors Banville's own approach to the sonnet, and indeed to poetry in general. His feeling for beauty manifests itself primarily in an appreciation

of technical skill which in his own work is displayed at its most dazzling in the prosodic wit of the Odes funambulesques. But where this special talent cannot be developed freely, he has little to put in its place and is forced to rely heavily on tradition. Thus when we come to examine his sonnets, we find on the one hand strict adherence to the formal detail of the genre, but on the other largely derivative subject-matter whose inner structural patterns have not been fully assimilated and explored. Thematic motifs in the main are loosely conceived and not related with any cogency to the structural patterns of the sonnet. Instead Banville relies almost entirely on the prestige of a correct rhyme-scheme, associated with richness of rhyme.

This tendency is obvious throughout Banville's career. A derivative approach might be expected in the early work, but as it turns out, the six sonnets of Banville's first collection Les Cariatides are typical of almost all his sonnet production. They handle a cross section of the themes currently in vogue in the early 1840's. Two are love sonnets, two are neo-classical allegories, one a hymn to Nature, and one a Watteau-esque evocation. The two love sonnets make up part of a short cycle called Amours d'Elise. The title suggests sixteenth century love poetry but in fact it is the Amours tradition as modified by Sainte-Beuve.

Amours d'Elise II

D'où vient-il, ce lointain frisson d'épithalame?  
 Quels cieux ont déroulé leurs nappes de saphir?  
 Quel espoir inconnu m'anime? Quel zéphyr  
 A jeté dans ma vie errante un nom de femme?  
 Quel oiseau près de moi chante sa folle gamme?  
 Quel éblouissement s'enfuit, pour me ravir,  
 Comme le corail rose ou la perle d'Ophir  
 Que poursuit le plongeur bercé par une lame?

En vain de ma pensée, effarouchant l'essor,  
 Je veux loin de vos yeux pleins d'étincelles d'or  
 L'entraîner, sur vos pas la rêveuse s'envole,

Et, pour que mon tourment renaisse, ardent phénix,  
 J'emporte dans mon coeur votre chère parole,  
 Comme un parfum subtil dans un vase d'onyx.

O I, 90

Amours d'Elise V

Le zéphyr à la douce haleine  
 Entr'ouvre la rose des bois,  
 Et sur les monts et dans la plaine  
 Il féconde tout à la fois.

Le lys et la rouge verveine  
 S'échappent fleuris de ses doigts,  
 Tout s'enivre à sa coupe pleine  
 Et chacun tressaille à sa voix.

Mais il est une frêle plante  
 Qui se retire et fuit, tremblante,  
 La baiser qui va la meurtrir.

Or, je sais des âmes plaintives  
 Qui sont comme les sensibles  
 Et que le bonheur fait mourir.

O I, 98

Amours d'Elise II has no clearly conceived thematic structure, is discursive and occasionally awkward in its syntax, and unimaginative and incoherent in its imagery. There is no sense of climax as the tercets are reached and the final line of the sonnet, repeating a simile popularized by Sainte-Beuve and Gautier, can hardly be said to sum up and complete the motifs developed in the rest of the sonnet. The regularity of the rhyme-scheme and the richness and rarity of individual rhymes might seem to echo the image of the onyx vase. No correlation is established however between the formal detail of the sonnet and the sentiments expressed by the poet in the main body of the poem.

In Amours d'Elise V the choice of the octosyllable to some extent restrains discursiveness. However this sonnet reproduces

another of Sainte-Beuve's techniques, the unimaginative schematization of metaphor and meaning within the main structural outlines of the sonnet. Again the tercets can hardly be said to display a density equivalent to that achieved in the longer quatrains, while the final line in this sonnet has none of the resonance urged by Banville in the Petit Traité.

Very similar patterns of image and explanation occur in the two neo-classical sonnets La Renaissance and La Déesse.

#### La Renaissance

On a dit qu'une vierge à la parure d'or  
 Sur l'épaule des flots vint de Cypre à Cythère  
 Et que ses pieds polis, en caressant la terre,  
 A chacun de ses pas laissèrent un trésor.

L'oiseau vermeil qui chante en prenant son essor  
 Emplit d'enchantements la forêt solitaire,  
 Et les ruisseaux glacés où l'on se désaltère,  
 Sentirent dans leurs flots plus de fraîcheur encor.

La fleur s'ouvrit plus pure aux baisers de la brise,  
 Et sous les myrtes verts, la vierge plus éprise  
 Releva dans ses bras son amant à genoux.

De même quand plus tard, autre Anadyomène,  
 La Renaissance vint, et rayonna sur nous  
 Toute chose fleurit au fond de l'âme humaine.

O I, 186

#### La Déesse

Quand les trois déités à la charmante voix  
 Aux pieds du blond Paris mirent leur jalousie,  
 Pallas dit à l'enfant: Si ton coeur m'a choisie,  
 Je te réserverai de terribles exploits.

Junon leva la tête, et lui dit: Sous tes lois  
 Je mettrai, si tu veux, les trônes de l'Asie,  
 Et tu dérouleras ta riche fantaisie  
 Sur les fronts inclinés des peuples et des rois.

Mais celle devant qui pâlistent les étoiles  
 Inexorablement détacha ses longs voiles  
 Et montra les splendeurs sereines de son corps.

Et toi lèvres éloquente, ô raison précieuse,  
 O Beauté, vision faite de purs accords,  
 Tu le persuadas, grande silencieuse.

O I, 188

La Renaissance is of some interest since its use of the myth of the birth of Venus links it both with sixteenth century sonnets such as Ronsard's "Quand au matin ma Déesse s'abille," and with nineteenth century examples such as those of Heredia and Valéry, not to mention Rimbaud.<sup>1</sup> Banville no longer uses the myth to enhance the charms of his own "Goddess" by comparing them with those of "l'escumiere fille." Instead he diverts it to a more artificial function and makes it the figure for a specific cultural rebirth. The sonnet form is handled in a way that emphasizes the arbitrary element in the comparison. The apposition of line 12 "autre Anadyomène" takes the whole weight of the analogy and other links between the final tercet and the rest of the sonnet are of the most tenuous kind. This contrasts with the approach of Heredia in La Naissance d'Aphrodité where the civilising power associated with Beauty is reflected not only in the choice of the Venus myth but also in a full use of the symmetrical and sequential possibilities of the sonnet. Similarly Valéry in Naissance de Vénus uses the established structures of the sonnet to underline the fable of formal creation provided by the story of the birth of Venus from the sea.

In La Déesse, Banville is more successful. The sonnet is

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1. Ronsard, Les Amours XXXIX, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Paul Laumonier, vol. 4 (Paris, S.T.F.M., 1939), p. 42.

Heredia, La Naissance d'Aphrodité, Poésies complètes (Paris, Lemerre, 1924), p. 19, quoted infra p. 498.

Valéry, Naissance de Vénus, Oeuvres I in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1957), p. 77. v. infra p. 497.

Rimbaud, Vénus Anadyomène, Oeuvres complètes, in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1972), p. 22. v. infra, p. 351.

still split between the fable, recounted in lines 1-11, and its symbolic significance revealed in the final tercet. In this instance, however, the 11:3 division of the sonnet does not override all other possibilities. Equally important is the opposition between the quatrains and tercets which contrasts the silent persuasiveness of the unnamed Venus with the eloquence of Pallas in the first quatrain and the more extended promises of Juno in the second. The symbolic reference is thus incorporated into another and wider pattern within the sonnet structure and the closing evocation emerges as a natural conclusion to all that has preceded it. For once the final tercet and the final line of the sonnet possess something of the summarizing and suggestive power demanded in the Petit Traité.

Conseil, the fifth sonnet of Les Cariatides, treats one of the great commonplaces of Romantic poetry, the necessary union between poet and Nature:

Eh bien! mêle ta vie à la verte forêt!  
 Escalade la roche aux nobles altitudes.  
 Respire, et libre enfin des vieilles servitudes,  
 Fuis les regrets amers que ton coeur savourait.

Dès l'heure éblouissante où le matin paraît,  
 Marche au hasard; gravis les sentiers les plus rudes.  
 Va devant toi, baisé par l'air des solitudes,  
 Comme une biche en pleurs qu'on effaroucherait.

Cueille la fleur agreste au bord du précipice.  
 Regarde l'ancre affreux que le lierre tapisse  
 Et le vol des oiseaux dans les chênes touffus.

Marche et prête l'oreille en tes sauvages courses;  
 Car tout le bois frémit, plein de rythmes confus,  
 Et la muse aux beaux yeux chante dans l'eau des sources.

O I, 234

Apart from the lamentable cheville with which the sonnet opens, Banville does a workmanlike job and successfully strengthens the impact of the imperatives by means of the old trick of accumulated repetition. However it cannot be said that he has



brought new personal insight to the theme of the grandiose spectacles of Nature as a source of poetic inspiration. A theme that had become common coin by the 1840's has been adapted without much thought to a new form. The sonnet provides a convenient means of emphasis but no deeper correlation has been achieved between formal and thematic patterns. Indeed there is a curious discrepancy between the desire to be "libre enfin des vieilles servitudes" in the grandeur of Nature and the choice of the sonnet, and a regular sonnet too, to express that ambition. The lack of any real coherence between form and theme is amply illustrated by the comparison with Nerval's more or less contemporaneous Vers dorés<sup>1</sup> where the idea of the objects of the natural universe as the material envelope of a spiritual principle finds a formal equivalent in the solidity of the fixed structure of the sonnet.

Sous bois, the last of the sonnets of Les Cariatides, is the most successful of Banville's early efforts in the form. Once again though the theme is not an original one. Watteau-esque evocations were already gaining popularity among the poets, as Gautier's Mademoiselle de Maupin and Hugo's poem La Fête chez Thérèse clearly testify. However in this case Banville has adapted the theme with some skill to the sonnet form.

A travers le bois fauve et radieux,  
 Récitant des vers sans qu'on les en prie,  
 Vont couverts de pourpre et d'orfèvrerie,  
 Les Comédiens, rois et demi-dieux.

Hérode brandit son glaive odieux;  
 Dans les oripeaux de la broderie,  
 Cléopâtre brille en jupe fleurie  
 Comme resplendit un paon couvert d'yeux.

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1. Published in L'Artiste, 16 Mar. 1845, with the title Pensée antique. For a discussion of this sonnet, v. supra pp.127-130.

Puis, tout flamboyant sous les chrysolithes,  
 Les bruns Adonis et les Hippolytes  
 Montrent leurs arcs d'or et leur peaux de loups,

Pierrot s'est chargé de la dame-jeanne.  
 Puis après eux tous, d'un air triste et doux  
 Viennent en rêvant le Poète et l'Ane.

O I, 277

Two motifs are singled out for attention, the lavishly brilliant appearance of the actors and their larger than life dream-like quality. In lines 1-11 the first of these motifs is more immediately evident. The opening quatrain combines a glorious natural setting with the splendour of the total company. The second picks out two individual figures but continues to stress the dazzling effect. The first tercet shifts the focus to two groups of characters but still the brilliance of the spectacle remains to the fore. However the magic and mystery of the "Comédiens" is always present behind the purely visual description. In the first quatrain they are characterized as "rois et demi-dieux." The second and third stanzas maintain the theme by means of the suggestive names, "Hérode," "Cléopâtre," "Adonis," "Hippolytes." Then in the second tercet the motif of dazzling brilliance disappears and the dream-like aspect of the scene is finally dominant, summarized in the gentle figures of the poet and his donkey. This movement of thematic motifs towards an unexpected but not unforeseen resolution in the final tercet corresponds quite closely to the plan laid out by Banville later in the Petit Traité. In addition rhyme and metre in the sonnet are handled in a way which subtly reflects the two thematic strands. The brilliant appearance of the actors is echoed in the technical brilliance

of a regular sonnet rhyme-scheme with ten rich and two rare rhymes. The choice of the decasyllable, on the other hand, reduces the rhetorical impact of the sonnet form and enhances the insubstantial dream-like element in the scene.

The sonnets of Les Cariatides display a wide diversity of theme adapted with varying degrees of success to the sonnet structure. In none of these pieces, however, not even in Sous bois, is there any sign that the formal patterns of the sonnet correspond to any basic pattern in Banville's thought or experience. They constitute rather a series of formal exercises and this approach, which might seem natural in a poet of only nineteen, in fact sets the trend for nearly all of Banville's subsequent sonnets. The single sonnet of Banville's second collection, Les Stalactites (1846) is a particularly striking example. Again it is an Amour, but this time Banville indulges in the virtuoso experiment of a sonnet with four syllable lines.

Sonnet sur une Dame blonde

Sur la colline,  
Quand la splendeur  
Du ciel en fleur  
Au soir décline,  
  
L'air illumine  
Ce front rêveur  
D'une lueur  
Triste et divine.  
  
Dans un bleu ciel,  
O Gabriel!  
Tel tu rayones;  
  
Telles encor  
Sont les madones  
Dans les fonds d'or.

As Eileen Souffrin points out, the musicality of this sonnet is striking in 1844.<sup>1</sup> However, in contrast with Verlaine's later experiments, there is no feeling of personal necessity behind Banville's handling of his chosen form. Banville demonstrates a considerable degree of technical skill, but the sonnet has no deeper resonances.

More interesting are Banville's isolated experiments with a more descriptive type of sonnet in his collection Le Sang de la Coupe.<sup>2</sup> La Toison d'or I, the first of a sequence of four sonnets, echoes the central motif of the Sonnet sur une Dame blonde but orientates it in a new direction, moving away from the tradition of the Amours towards a more purely visual representation.

Je vois au grand soleil tes cheveux insolents  
Rayonner et frémir, dignes d'un chant lyrique.  
Jaunes comme l'arc d'or de la nymphe homérique,  
Ils courent sur ton sein par de hardis élans.

Et l'ivoire qui mord leurs anneaux ruisselants,  
Avant de contenir cette extase féerique  
Arrêterait plutôt les fleuves d'Amérique  
Où la neige des monts pleure depuis mille ans.

Pour caresser tes lys que la lumière adore,  
Et tes blancheurs d'étoile et tes rougeurs d'aurore,  
Ils tombent sur tes reins en flots impétueux.

Pareille aux plis épars de la pourpre qui saigne,  
Pour venir embrasser ton corps voluptueux  
Leur onde se dérobe aux baisers de ton peigne.

O III, 48

The most notable feature of the piece is the muting of the bi-partite division of quatrains and tercets and the utilisation of the sonnet as a fourfold structure. Each stanza is syntactically independent, closing on a full stop, and, except in the case of the

1. "Banville n'emploie pas le vers impair recommandé plus tard par Verlaine, mais par un choix judicieux de sons, par la répétition des voyelles longues i, u, etc., il arrive à créer un vers assez musical. Ces effets ne sont pas coupés par des tons secs aux vers masculins car le poète a choisi des rimes en ieur, iel et or qui ont un son traînant." Eileen-M. Souffrin, Les Stalactites de Banville (Paris, Didier, 1942), p. 377.
2. This collection was published in 1857 as the 6th volume in the Poulet-Malassis edition of Les Poésies de Théodore de Banville. In the text, La Toison d'or and Amazonne nue are dated respectively Oct. 1849 and Oct. 1847.

first quatrain with its two sentences, each consists of a single period. Within each of these four units, a similar complex of thematic motifs describes the hair. There are three main components: vocabulary and imagery of colour and light, a sensual element achieved largely through constant personification of the hair, vocabulary and imagery of water.

In the body of the sonnet, Banville makes no capital out of the legend of the Golden Fleece, concentrating instead on the physical qualities of colour, brilliance and profusion that the image suggests. The first quatrain contains three such references - "au grand soleil" in line 1, "rayonner" in line 2, and the double emphasis of the simile in line 3, "Jaunes comme l'arc d'or." In the three subsequent stanzas attention shifts from the colour of the hair itself to other colours traditionally associated with the idea of woman and passion. In the second quatrain there are two symmetrically placed references in the opening and closing lines of the stanza to whiteness, "ivoire" and "neige," and this motif is continued in the first tercet with the allusions to "tes lys" and "tes blancheurs." At the same time the poet revives the imagery of light initiated in the first quatrain. "Lys" is linked with "lumière" in line 9 and "blancheurs" with "étoile" in line 10. Similarly the change from white to pink in the second half of line 10 is also a change from stars to sunrise, "tes blancheurs d'étoile - tes rougeurs d'aurore." Finally in the second tercet, this blush is replaced by the cruel sensual splendour of blood-red crimson "la pourpre qui saigne."

This resolution of the colour motif on a strongly sensual note is in no sense a surprise. The final tercet merely replays a theme which like the colour references is present in each of the previous sections of the sonnet. The first line of the poem already contains such an allusion with the adjective "insolents" strongly positioned at the rhyme, while the closing line of the first quatrain initiates a whole series of carefully noted expressions of physical contact. "Ils courent sur ton sein" is followed immediately in the first line of the second quatrain by the yet more specific description of the comb biting the hair. In the first tercet, the hair caresses "tes lys" which in their turn are adored by "la lumière," while line 11 in construction and sound closely recalls line 4. Finally in the second tercet, "la pourpre qui saigne," given phonetic prominence by the p alliteration, is associated with two evocations of physical contact - "Pour venir embrasser ton corps voluptueux / Leur onde se dérobe aux baisers de ton peigne."

Water imagery likewise is common to all four stanzas and is used by the poet to give some indication of the downward sweep of the hair. In line 4 of the first quatrain, "Ils courent sur ton sein par de hardis élans," the idea of movement is not yet fully linked to the motif of water, but subsequent stanzas are more specific. Thus "anneaux ruisselants" in line 5 is backed up by the more extended allusions of lines 7 and 8 to "les fleuves d'Amérique / Où la neige des monts pleure depuis mille ans." The first tercet continues the pattern, "Ils tombent sur tes reins en flots impétueux," and this is echoed in the closing line of the sonnet, "Leur onde se dérobe."

There thus exists between the four sections of the sonnet a high degree of thematic uniformity varied only slightly by such details as the progression in the colour motif or the time/space references ("homérique," "depuis mille ans," "Amérique") which only occur in the quatrains. The similarity of the syntactic arrangements in each stanza has already been indicated. Patterns of rhythm and rhyme reinforce the generally static effect. Syntactical and metrical units run exactly parallel; the rhyme-scheme is strictly regular; rhyme often rich and sometimes leonine.

Interestingly then, despite the importance given to the theme of downward movement through the use of the water imagery, the effect achieved by Banville is essentially one of fixity and stasis. There is nothing here of the feeling of acceleration created by Sainte-Beuve in the tercets of "Sur un front de quinze ans" by making both of them dependent on a single main verb.<sup>1</sup> Instead Banville's sonnet operates as a structure of four separate but mutually reinforcing blocks. This technique does not correspond to any of the ideas put forward by Banville later in the Petit Traité and to a modern reader conditioned by the dense web of multivalent imagery of such pieces as Baudelaire's La Chevelure or Mallarmé's sonnet La Chevelure vol d'une flamme, the result may appear heavy and uninspired.<sup>2</sup> However, the sonnet is more interesting than any of Banville's so far considered with the possible exception of Sous bois. In it he extends the range of the genre as a descriptive

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1. For a discussion of this sonnet, v. supra, pp. 34-37.  
 2. For a discussion of Mallarmé's sonnet, v. infra, pp. 455-462.

form and thus foreshadows the efforts of some of the Parnassian poets of the 1860's. The old images of the love sonnet have been reinterpreted and their physical splendour brought to the fore. The almost tangible opulence with which the poet has endowed them finds suitable reflection in the cumulative possibilities of the sonnet form. In La Toison d'or I Banville thus achieves a coherence of theme and form which his sonnets often lack and at the same time provides in embryo an idea which Heredia was to develop later with much greater subtlety. This is the use of the fixed symmetries of the sonnet to promote in the reader a sense of the "solidity" and material presence of the object or scene described in the poem.

Amazone nue illustrates the point even more clearly. Here Banville has moved away completely from the imagery of the traditional love sonnet and depicts a robust, almost masculine beauty using the symmetries of the sonnet form to underline the grandiose and statuesque forcefulness of the Amazon and her mount.

Amazone aux reins forts, solide centauresse,  
 Tu tiens par les cheveux, sans mors et sans lien,  
 Ton cheval de Titan, monstre thessalien;  
 Ta cuisse avec fureur le dompte et le caresse.

On voit voler au vent sa crinière et ta tresse.  
 Le superbe coursier t'obéit comme un chien,  
 Et rien n'arrêterait dans son calme païen  
 Ton corps, bâti de rocs comme une forteresse.

Franchissant d'un seul bond les antres effrayés,  
 Vous frappez du sabot, dans les bois non frayés,  
 Les pâtres chevelus et les troupeaux qui bêlent.

Toi, Nymphé, sans tunique, et ton cheval sans mors,  
 Vos flancs restent collés et vos croupes se mêlent,  
 Solide centauresse, amazone aux reins forts!

O III, 52

The central motif of the integration of woman and horse occurs in all four sections of the sonnet just as in La Toison



d'or I motifs of colour and images of water are repeated in each of the quatrains and tercets. But even more important in this sonnet is the balance created by the close repetition in the final stanza of phrases and expressions used in the first. Line 12 with its double "sans" construction picks up line 2, line 13 recalls line 4 and line 14 brings the sonnet to a close by repeating line 1 in reverse order. The element of stasis already present in the repetition of theme from stanza to stanza is reinforced by the circular pattern thus achieved, and this emphasis on the fixed structures of the sonnet has the effect of rendering the impregnable unity of the Amazon and her horse more palpable and more immediate. Once again Banville seems to be moving in the direction that Heredia was later to follow. Indeed Heredia's sonnet Le Bain, published in 1888, some thirty years after Amazone nue, in the January-February number of the Revue félibréenne, describes a very similar group of man and beast merged together as one:

L'homme et la bête, tels que le beau monstre antique,  
 Sont entrés dans la mer, et nus, libres, sans frein,  
 Parmi la brume d'or de l'âtre pulvérin,  
 Sur le ciel embrasé font un groupe athlétique.

Et l'étalon sauvage et le dompteur rustique,  
 Humant à pleins poumons l'odeur du sel marin,  
 Se plaisent à laisser sur la chair et le crin  
 Frémir le flot glacé de la rude Atlantique.

La houle s'enfle, court, se dresse comme un mur  
 Et déferle. Lui crie. Il hennit, et sa queue  
 En jets éblouissants fait rejaillir l'eau bleue;

Et, les cheveux épars, s'effarant dans l'azur,  
 Ils opposent, cabrés, leur poitrail noir qui fume,  
 Au fouet échevelé de la fumante écume.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Heredia, Poésies complètes, p. 150.

However Heredia uses the sonnet form in a more subtle and more intensive fashion than Banville. The rhythmic variety of the first tercet is a key factor here. It contrasts with and therefore throws into strong relief the orderly construction of the rest of the sonnet - the regularity of the rhyme-scheme,<sup>1</sup> the richness of the quatrain rhymes, the self-contained, end-stopped stanzas, the repetition of the motif of man and horse in each of the four sections of the sonnet. Heredia thus achieves a feeling of formal solidity without recourse to the virtuoso arrangement of first and final stanza of the Banville sonnet.<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously he is able to avoid the rhythmic monotony of Amazone nue and to infuse his sonnet with the sense of dynamism inherent in the group of man and horse. In addition Heredia's sonnet displays a greater coherence and density of thematic motif than Banville's. The first tercet of Amazone nue gives a vaguely pastoral and sylvan background to the Amazon and her steed. In Le Bain, however, the portrayal of the natural surroundings is vital to the evocation of the relationship between man and horse and increasingly closely integrated with it. The sea provides a background to the group in the first quatrain, but by the end of the sonnet sea, man and horse are bound inextricably together. The surf is seen as a whip and the choice of the adjective "échevelé" recalling "cheveux épars" provides a further link.

Amazone nue lacks the density and subtlety of Le Bain.

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1. Strictly speaking the scheme is not totally regular as the tercets end with a couplet.
  2. Heredia's sonnet Epiphanie has a similar arrangement, v. infra p. 347. Again it is not particularly successful.

Nevertheless, like La Toison d'or I, it points the way towards new possibilities for the sonnet. However these poems remain isolated experiments, and Banville undertakes no detailed exploration of the potential of the sonnet as a descriptive form.<sup>1</sup> The collection Les Princesses (1874) clearly illustrates how superficial Banville's interest in a descriptive type of sonnet really was. In line with current fashion in the 1860's and 1870's, Banville produces his one collection composed solely of sonnets and chooses a theme combining historical allusion and pictorial richness.<sup>2</sup> However there has been no progress towards a more effective use of the sonnet for descriptive purposes. Several of the figures selected by Banville appear also in Heredia's Trophées, some of which were being written contemporaneously with the sonnets of the Banville collection.<sup>3</sup>

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1. One might also mention from Le Sang de la Coupe the final tercet of Banville's sonnet, Les Affres de l'Amour, which clearly foreshadows that of Heredia's Fleur séculaire. "Il est un arbre épars dont la fleur solitaire / Met cent ans à fleurir et ne dure qu'un jour: / Elle éclate en s'ouvrant comme un coup de tonnerre." Banville, O III, 55. "Et le grand aloès à la fleur écarlate, / Pour l'hymen ignoré qu'a rêvé son amour, / Ayant vécu cent ans, n'a fleuri qu'un seul jour." Heredia, Poésies complètes, p. 135. However Banville's closing description is a metaphor for the love theme developed in lines 1-11, not a description in its own right.
  2. The aim of the collection according to the preface is to "évoquer en vingt Sonnets les images de ces grandes Princesses aux lèvres de pourpre et aux prunelles mystérieuses, qui ont été à travers les âges le désir et les délices de tout le genre humain" and to "faire apparaître dans l'esprit de ceux qui me lisent leurs fantômes qui éveillent toutes les idées de triomphe, d'orgueil, d'amour, de joie, de puissance, de sang versé, et de robes d'or éclaboussées de pierreries." O IV, 215-216.
  3. Sonnets nos. II-V and VII-XII of Les Princesses appeared in 1867 in Les Exilés, Omphale had appeared in La Revue fantaisiste in 1861, La Reine de Saba in the 1866 Parnasse contemporain, while Hérodiade apparently dates from 1854. Max Fuchs, Théodore de Banville (Thèse pour le Doctorat ès Lettres, présentée à l'Université de Paris, 1910), pp. 211-213, 293.

The Ariane figure for example is the subject of the fourth sonnet of Les Princesses,<sup>1</sup> is also the subject of Heredia's early sonnet Le Triomphe d'Iacchos, and appears again in a rewritten version, Ariane, in Les Trophées. A comparison of these three pieces reveals quite clearly Banville's ultimate ineptitude in the field of the descriptive sonnet.

Despite Banville's criticism in the preface of Les Princesses of "la jeune fille des vaudevilles de M. Scribe, qui avec un sourire de romance court après des papillons," his sonnet is singularly flaccid in conception and execution.

Dans Naxos, où les fleurs ouvrent leurs grands calices  
Et que la douce mer baise avec des sanglots,  
Dans l'île fortunée, enchantement des flots,  
Le divin Iacchos apporte ses délices.

Entouré des lions, des panthères, des lices,  
Le Dieu songe, les yeux voilés et demi-clos;  
Les Thyades au loin charment les verts îlots  
Et de ses raisins noirs ornent leurs cheveux lisses.

Assise sur un tigre amené d'Orient,  
ARIANE triomphe, indolente, et riant  
Aux lieux même où pleura son amour méprisée.

Elle va, nue et folle et les cheveux épars,  
Et, songeant comme en rêve à son vainqueur Thésée,  
Admire la douceur des fauves léopards.

O IV, 224-225

As in Amazone nue Banville fails to infuse his description with any sense of passion or physical dynamism. In this instance, the quatrain-tercet division provides a convenient frame for the portrayal on the one hand of Iacchos, on the other of Ariane. The first quatrain opens the poem with a depiction of the setting into which the figure of Iacchos is finally introduced in line 4.

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1. This sonnet was first published in Les Exilés (1867). See the preceding note.

Banville however makes no perceptible attempt to establish a coherent and significant relationship between the characteristics of scene and protagonist. The only link between them is in fact the extreme banality with which both are evoked. The flowers have "calices," the sea is "douce" and its "flots" stand in the almost inevitable rhyme with "sanglots"; the god for his part "apporte ses délices," a statement whose only use seems to be to complete the requisite number of syllables in the line and to provide a suitably rich rhyme.

The situation in the second quatrain improves but little. The description of the Thyades in lines 7 and 8 is not made to relate to the passion of Iacchos and Ariane and the link between Iacchos and his followers emerges explicitly only in the reference "ses raisins noirs." The proverbial frenzy associated with the Bacchantes is left out of the picture. This omission corresponds to the passivity of the figure of Iacchos as portrayed in the first two lines of the stanza. The savage animals with which he is surrounded remain inert features of the background and Iacchos himself is visualized in an attitude of physical immobility, "Le Dieu songe."

These disconnected and static elements in Banville's presentation are accentuated by the switching of attention away from Iacchos after line 8 and the concentration of the tercet block on the figure of Ariane. Portrayal of this new figure and her surroundings is on similar lines to that of Iacchos in the quatrains. Like him she is surrounded by symbolic animals but again little use is made of the motifs of sensuality and passion latent in them.

Like Iacchos too, Ariane is a largely inactive figure. She also is plunged in thought (note the repetition of "songeant" in line 13) and there is a curious lack of integration between different notations of her attitude. Thus "Elle va, nue et folle et les cheveux épars" in line 12 contrasts oddly with "indolente" in line 10 and with the unexpressive "Assise sur un tigre" of line 9. Furthermore reference to Ariane's past experience with Thésée and the motifs of triumph and defeat arising from this are not incorporated into the main thematic complex of the sonnet. The contrast with the second version of Heredia's sonnet is striking in this respect.

Banville's sonnet then shows little sign of the thematic coherence necessary in a form of such brevity. Nowhere in this sonnet which purports to describe a passionate, sensual relationship is there any sense of emotional or physical contact between the two protagonists. They coexist by virtue of their formal juxtaposition within the quatrain-tercet structure, but otherwise the sonnet remains quite inert. There is no real exploitation of structural parallels, no utilization of the more subtle possibilities of the rhyme, no manipulation of the rhythm, in order to throw into relief the exotic, sensual, or dynamic aspects of the relationship under consideration. The limitations of Banville's sonnet are immediately apparent when compared even with the early Heredian attempt, Le Triomphe d'Iacchos (one of those sonnets from the beginning of his career which Heredia later characterized as "mal

rimés, mal venus, mal bâtis."<sup>1</sup>

Le Triomphe d'Iacchos appeared in 1863 in the Revue Française:

Evohé! la cymbale a frappé les échos;  
C'est le Dieu deux fois né, fils de Zeus, Iacchos.  
Il mène en souriant des tigres d'Hyrcanie,  
Symbole de la force aux ordres du génie.

Pâle, et saignante encor des blessures d'Eros,  
Ariane, oubliant l'infidèle héros,  
De sa lèvre enivrée où flotte l'ambroisie  
Rit amoureusement au dompteur de l'Asie.

Il s'avance, et Cybèle a frémi dans ses flancs;  
Les coteaux soleillés de vendanges pourprés  
S'égaient; le blond raisin sur les dents altérées

S'écrase, et, dans la danse aux sauvages élans,  
Les Bacchantes, frappant du pied l'herbe des prés,  
Guident le vieux Silène et ses pas chancelants.<sup>2</sup>

The sonnet has three focuses of interest - Iacchos in the first quatrain, Ariane in the second, Cybèle and Iacchos' neophytes, the Bacchantes, in the tercets. However, though the three sections remain structurally distinct, there are close thematic links between them. The depiction of Iacchos in the first quatrain differs radically from that of Banville. Where Banville through a stereotyped vocabulary misses any emphatic effect he might have derived from the postponement of the subject, Iacchos, to line 4, Heredia builds up carefully to the placing of Iacchos' name at the end of line 2. A strongly marked rhythm and the hymnlike effect of the couplet rhyme underline the god's triumphant entry on stage and help to stress his power and prestige. Lines 3 and 4 after this

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1. In his preface to Count Henry de la Vaulx' Voyage en Patagonie (1901). Quoted in Miodrag Ibrovac, José-Maria de Heredia. Sa Vie - Son oeuvre (Paris, Les Presses françaises, 1923), vol.1, p. 79.

2. Heredia, Poésies complètes, p. 246.

opening are something of an anticlimax. The symbolic significance attributed to the tigers accompanying Iacchos is disappointingly prosaic, and not at all orientated as one might have expected towards the theme of passion and wildness so important in the poem.

The picture of Ariane in the second quatrain is much more stereotyped than that of Iacchos in the first, and uses a vocabulary resembling that of the Banville sonnet. However, in contrast to the Banville piece, it is important to notice the connexion established in line 8 between Ariane and Iacchos and the preparation in line 7 "De sa lèvre enivrée où flotte l'ambroisie" of the theme of intoxication to be given fuller development in the tercets.

The description of the Bacchanalia in the tercets likewise is also closely associated with the figure of Iacchos. The section opens on the notation "Il s'avance," the stark brevity and the detachment of the clause throwing into relief the qualities of physical and emotional dominance and dynamism which Iacchos incorporates (compare with "Il s'engage" in Banville's sonnet). At the same time, the subsequent switch of attention to the Bacchantes comes as no surprise. Their presence around Iacchos is implied from the beginning of the poem in the triumphant cry of lines 1 and 2, and the association of intoxication and passion in line 7 prepares the reader to see in the description of their savage energy an allegory for the love theme. Such thematic interlinking produces a sonnet of greater coherence and density than that achieved by Banville. In addition, Heredia has turned the restrictions of the sonnet form and the alexandrine line to positive



effect to underscore the wildness and vigour of the scene he describes. The two words thrown into relief by the rejets of lines 11 and 12 are both verbs and the dynamic emphasis of the tercets is skilfully brought out by Heredia's handling of rhythmic motifs within the context of the sonnet structure. Thus the rejets of lines 11 and 12 form the climax of a pattern of disruption all the more striking for its appearance within a fixed frame. This is initiated in the 3/9 rhythm of line 9 and builds to a peak in lines 11 and 12. Then after the leap of the syntax across the traditional division between the two tercets, it diminishes in intensity in the 2/1/9 and 4/8 rhythms of lines 12 and 13 before reaching a resolution in the classical 6/6 arrangement of the closing line.

It is perhaps the dynamic aspect of Le Triomphe d'Iacchos which distinguishes it most plainly from the inert presentation of Banville's Ariane. The basic lack of coherence and density of Banville's sonnet emerges even more clearly however from a comparison with Heredia's remodelling of his sonnet. Ariane was published thirteen years after Le Triomphe d'Iacchos in Le Siècle littéraire of 1 January 1876.

Au choc clair et vibrant des cymbales d'airain,  
 Nue, allongée au dos d'un grand tigre, la Reine  
 Regarde, avec l'Orgie immense qu'il entraîne,  
 Iacchos s'avancer sur le sable marin.

Et le monstre royal, ployant son large rein,  
 Sous le poids adoré foule la blonde arène,  
 Et frôlé par la main d'où pend l'errante rêne,  
 En rugissant d'amour mord les fleurs de son frein.

Laissant sa chevelure à son flanc qui se cambre  
 Parmi les noirs raisins rouler ses grappes d'ambre,  
 L'Épouse n'entend pas le sourd rugissement,

Et sa bouche éperdue, ivre enfin d'ambrosie,  
 Oubliant ses longs cris vers l'infidèle amant,<sup>1</sup>  
 Rit aux baisers prochains du Dompteur de l'Asie.

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1. Ibid., p. 32.

In line with an increasing formal conservatism, Heredia has moved to eliminate irregularities of rhyme-scheme (the aabb pattern of Le Triomphe d'Iacchos) and the departure from the structural norm represented by the enjambement between the tercets in the earlier sonnet. He is thus forced to dispense with the hymn-like opening of the original version as well as with the vivid breathless rhythm of the tercets. Instead he exploits to the full the potential of the strictly regular sonnet which is also the chosen form of Banville in Les Princesses. Unlike either of the two versions so far discussed, there is in this sonnet a single focus of attention, Ariane herself. The ineffective juxtaposition of the Banville poem, the loose construction of Le Triomphe d'Iacchos around three centres of interest, are replaced here by a firm continuous line as references to Iacchos, the tigers and the Bacchantes are all woven together in the one description of Ariane. The first quatrain, like that of the earlier version, opens with a line describing the clash of the cymbals, but a portrayal of the Queen follows immediately in line 2. In contrast to the rather colourless vocabulary of the Banville version and Le Triomphe d'Iacchos, the depiction of Ariane is from the outset strongly sensual. "Nue" is prominently positioned as the first element in the description and the opening word of line 2; the voluptuous "allongée" contrasts with the neutral "assise" of Banville; the tiger becomes an integral part of the portrait. Virtually all the second half of the stanza is then devoted to Iacchos. It is important to note, however, that the description is dependent on

the introductory verb "Regarde" and that Iacchos, seen through Ariane's eyes, is subordinate to the description of Ariane herself and evoked with much greater vagueness. This is in harmony with the title which, in contrast to Le Triomphe d'Iacchos, situates Ariane as the dominant figure. However Heredia in 1876 is no longer content simply to state a fact of this sort. Instead motifs of dominance and submission are developed into a central thematic strand in the sonnet and used to highlight the ambiguous nature of the Ariane-Iacchos and or indeed any passionate relationship. . Thus in the first quatrain the dominant position of Ariane as the central figure in the sonnet has to be taken in conjunction with the physical attitudes assigned to her and to Iacchos, her horizontal and submissive pose, his upright and dominant position.

In the second quatrain, however, Ariane is clearly once more the masterful figure as she controls and restrains the tiger. The tiger appears in Banville's sonnet as the traditional companion of Ariane, complementing the feline menagerie of Iacchos. In Le Triomphe d'Iacchos it forms part of the habitual entourage of the god and is pallidly conceived in terms of no great appropriateness to the central theme as a "Symbole de la force aux ordres du génie." In Heredia's Ariane it is at last fully incorporated into the thematic structure of the poem and attains its full symbolic potential, suggesting all the latent violence of passion.

The first tercet, still concentrating on the figure of Ariane, associates with her the wine motif characteristic of Iacchos. This, along with the choice of the epithet "L'Epouse," helps to point

forward to the forthcoming union with Iacchos. The final tercet consists of a modified and strengthened version of lines 6-8 of Le Triomphe d'Iacchos. Here, as in the original, the motif of intoxication persists, associating by implication Iacchos with Ariane. Most important of all, line 8 of Le Triomphe d'Iacchos, now line 14 of Ariane, falls into place as the climax and resolution of the motifs of conquest and submission with which Heredia has been concerned throughout.

This sonnet then is a much more homogenous creation than either of the other two versions. The concentration on the figure of Ariane and the grouping around her of all the main thematic motifs - feline savagery, wine and intoxication, submission, taming and triumph - produces a piece of great coherence and richness. Rhythmic and phonetic arrangements support this thematic density. In contrast to his approach in Le Triomphe d'Iacchos Heredia uses a regular rhythm. The one exception is line 2 where the long central phrase gives a rhythm of 1/9/2 which helps to suggest the sensuous languor of the Queen. Elsewhere the strict control of the 6/6 pattern underlines the motif of taming and deliberate restraint. The regular rhyme-scheme and rich rhymes also contribute to this effect. In addition, the choice of quatrain rhymes, "Reine" and the similar r and nasal ɛ̃ vowel bring further emphasis to the figure of the Queen.

The Banville sonnet is clearly the least accomplished of the three versions considered. It lacks the thematic coherence present to a lesser or greater degree in the Heredia sonnets, has no sense of movement towards a climax and generally fails to integrate in

any significant way the chosen form of the regular sonnet with the chosen theme.

The other sonnets produced by Banville at the end of his career show a similar inability to grasp the basic principles involved in the construction of an effective sonnet and ignore everything but the most obvious criterion of a regular rhyme-scheme. Sonnets such as A Albert Glatigny (1869), A Claudius Popelin (1869), A Alphonse Lemerre (1875), A Jules Claye (1875), and A Gabriel Marc (1875) are of little more than biographic interest indicating Banville's involvement with various members of the Parnassian group.<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere he copies current fashion in his choice of sonnet themes. Pieces such as Le Musicien, L'Echafaud, La Blanchisseuse and Le Pompier<sup>2</sup> reproduce the unsatisfactory combination of stylized form and sentimentalised prosaic content first suggested for the nineteenth century sonnet by Sainte-Beuve and popularized in the 1860's and 1870's in the "poésie des humbles" of François Coppée. Les Humbles itself was not published until 1872 but Coppée's first collection Le Reliquaire, published in 1865, already contained several examples of this type of poetry including 4 pieces in sonnet form. Le Cabaret, included in this collection, bears a clear family resemblance to the four sonnets of Banville and indeed can be linked with many other sonnets by poets of the Parnassian group, the early Verlaine amongst them.<sup>3</sup> Le Cabaret and Le Pompier, quoted below, show there is little

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1. All five of these sonnets are to be found in Rimes dorées. All are dated 1868 in the text.  
2. All four of these sonnets are to be found in Rimes dorées.  
3. See, for example, Verlaine's sonnet L'Apollon de Pont-Audemer, Oeuvres poétiques complètes in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1962), p. 21.

favourable that can be said about such pieces. For Coppée, however, it can be claimed that he was trying to work out a personal aesthetic. Banville has no such defence.

Le Cabaret

Dans la bouge qu'emplit l'essaim insupportable  
Des mouches bourdonnant dans un chaud rayon d'août,  
L'ivrogne, un de ceux-là qu'un désespoir absout,  
Noyait au fond du vin son rêve détestable.

Stupide, il remuait la bouche avec dégoût,  
Ainsi qu'un boeuf repu ruminant dans l'étable.  
Près de lui le flacon, renversé sur la table,  
Se dégorgeait avec les hoquets d'un égout.

Oh! qu'il est lourd le poids des têtes accoudées  
Où se heurtent sans fin les confuses idées  
Avec le bruit tournant du plomb dans le grelot!

Je m'approchai de lui, pressentant quelque drame,  
Et vis que dans le vin craché par le goulot  
Lentement il traçait du doigt un nom de femme.<sup>1</sup>

Le Pompier

Un oeil crevé, le front déchiré par les flammes,  
Et n'ayant plus qu'un peu de vie en son oeil blanc,  
Ce pompier tout couvert de poussière et de sang  
Expirait dans la nuit et dans la boue infâmes.

O philanthrope ému, tandis que tu déclames,  
Une poutre embrasée avait troué son flanc.  
Pour la première fois ayant quitté son rang,  
Il s'en allait, tragique et seul, où vont les âmes.

Au bord du lit de camp, dans le poste éveillé  
Pour l'accueillir, son bras velu traînait, souillé  
Partout d'un sang épais et noir comme une lie.

Je voyais près de moi pendre ce bras guerrier,  
Et j'y lus: POUR LA VIE AMOUR A ROSALIE,  
Inscrit en rose dans un rameau de laurier.

O VII, 202

A more successful sonnet is Promenade galante, also included in Rimes dorées and dated October 1868 in the text.

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1. Coppée, Poésies 1864-1869 (Paris, Lemerre, 1873), pp. 27-28.

Dans le parc au noble dessin  
 Où s'égarèrent les Cidalises  
 Parmi les fontaines surprises  
 Dans le marbre du clair bassin,  
 Iris, que suit le jeune essaim,  
 Philis, Eglé, nymphes éprises,  
 Avec leurs plumes indécises,  
 En manteau court, montrant leur sein,  
 Lycaste, Myrtil et Sylvandre  
 Vont, parmi la verdure tendre  
 Vers les grands feuillages dormants.  
 Ils errent dans le matin blême,  
 Tous vêtus de satin, charmants  
 Et tristes comme l'Amour même.

O VII, 192

Once again, however, Banville is copying a current trend. Verlaine's Poèmes saturniens, published two years earlier in 1866, had already experimented with the contrasting effects of rhythmic and syntactic freedoms in the fixed form of the sonnet, and several of the Fêtes galantes had already appeared in reviews. Such comparison immediately reveals the limitations of Banville's piece. Verlaine's emotional predicament underlies both his choice and manipulation of the sonnet in Poèmes saturniens and the brittle artificiality of the "fêtes galantes" motif. Banville's sonnet on the other hand illustrates a cliché - with prettiness and charm, it is true, but a cliché none the less. "Charmants/Et tristes comme l'Amour même" is nicely stated but has no real depth of feeling and experience behind it. Similarly syntactic experimentation within the sonnet form, unlike that of Verlaine, carries no sense of personal necessity and significance. For Banville the process is purely a formal game.

Banville's sonnets would not in themselves merit a place in an account of the French sonnet in the nineteenth century. They

make up only a small part of the poet's total work no doubt because they give him less opportunity than such forms as the ballade to display his technical skills. Moreover Banville completely fails to grasp the rationale behind the regular rhyme-scheme of the sonnet. He scrupulously observes the external detail but appears to lack any fundamental appreciation of the balances and tensions latent in the sonnet structure. One or two pieces such as Ia Toison d'or I and Amazone nue seem to foreshadow the use of the sonnet later by Heredia for descriptive purposes. More generally, however, Banville utilizes themes currently in fashion but fails to reinterpret them in a way that makes the most of the structural possibilities of the sonnet. His importance for this study lies therefore almost exclusively in the aesthetic of technical precision codified in the Petit Traité. The remarks he makes here on the sonnet are significant for the understanding of the sonnet writing of the whole Parnassian group. His definition of the regular sonnet was taken up by Heredia who increasingly adopted the abba abba ccd ede rhyme-scheme and who gave the final tercet and the final line of the sonnet the prominence advocated by Banville. At the same time his identification of a correct sonnet with a perfect sonnet, a view shared by Gautier, goes a long way towards explaining the depressingly large number of poorly conceived and loosely constructed sonnets produced in the 1860's and 1870's. The chief interest of Banville's own sonnets would seem in fact to lie in the illustration they provide of the inadequacies of his aesthetic. Many of the sonnets by the younger Parnassian poets could provide similar illustration. However, a survey of their work would be extremely tedious. Let Banville's sonnets serve then as representative examples.



Leconte de Lisle

Leconte de Lisle's work, like that of Banville, contains relatively few examples of the sonnet, only twenty-six in all, and these, like Banville's, mainly concentrated in the period after 1860.<sup>1</sup> Unlike Banville, however, whose interest in the technique of the form is evident in the attention paid to strict formulation of the genre's requirements in the Petit Traité, Leconte de Lisle makes no theoretical pronouncements on the sonnet. Indeed, in complete contrast to Banville, he offers virtually no written comments at any time on specific matters of prosody. Nevertheless the importance of Leconte de Lisle in the Parnassian group seems to warrant a closer look at those sonnets which he did produce in order to determine his attitude towards a form practised by his disciples with so much enthusiasm, and his consequent significance in the development of the form in the later nineteenth century.

In a sense it is only to be expected of a poet working towards "la compréhension métaphysique et historique de l'évolution de l'homme et du monde"<sup>2</sup> that his remarks on matters of form be restricted to an emphasis on the need for a craftsmanship which simultaneously demonstrates the validity and clarity of the thought and guarantees its durability. Leconte de Lisle's comments are however exceptionally meagre. The nearest thing to a pronouncement

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1. For details of Leconte de Lisle's sonnet production, v. Appendix A.
  2. Quoted in Jean Dornis, Essai sur Leconte de Lisle (Paris, Société d'éditions littéraires et artistiques, 1909), p. 125.

on versification is probably his criticism of "l'héroïque bataillon des élégiaques qui verse moins de pleurs que de rimes insuffisantes," a criticism which is also in effect a repudiation of his own earliest poetic efforts.<sup>1</sup> Generally it is on the thematic aspects of poetry that his attention is fixed and formal considerations attract only brief mention in respect of their support of the poet's idea. The Préface to his first collection Poèmes antiques (1852) already puts the emphasis clearly on subject matter and theme:

... le mérite ou l'insuffisance de la langue et du style dépend expressément de la conception première.<sup>2</sup>

The same attitude persists in the 1864 article on Barbier and is summarized in a comment paralleling the Baudelairian distinction between "le fait" and "le fini":

... une oeuvre d'art complète n'est jamais le produit d'une inspiration irréfléchie, et ... tout vrai poète est doublé d'un ouvrier irréprochable, en ce sens du moins qu'il travaille de son mieux.<sup>3</sup>

Leconte de Lisle's characterization of his first collection, Poèmes antiques, as "un recueil d'études, un retour réfléchi à des formes négligées ou peu connues"<sup>4</sup> must therefore be taken in

1. From the article on Lamartine in the series Les Poètes contemporains. Leconte de Lisle, Derniers poèmes (Paris, Lemerre, 1899), p. 253. On the affiliations of Leconte de Lisle's early poetry, v. Edmond Estève, "Byron en France après le romantisme - le byronisme de Leconte de Lisle," Revue de Littérature Comparée V (1925), 264-297, and Marius Ary Leblond, pseud. i.e. Athenas, George and Merlo, Aimé, Leconte de Lisle (Paris, Mercure de France, 1933), pp. 118-124.
2. Leconte de Lisle, Poésies complètes, ed. Jacques Madeleine and Eugène Vallée (Paris, Lemerre, 1927-28), v.4, p. 212. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references are to this four volume edition of Leconte de Lisle's work, henceforth PC.
3. Leconte de Lisle, Derniers poèmes (Paris, Lemerre, 1899), p. 277. My underlining.
4. PC IV, 205.

context. If the word "form" is understood in its narrowest definition as "versification," there is in fact nothing that could be termed a new departure. The poems are for the most part in alexandrines arranged either in quatrains or rimes plates. In a few pieces, the metre is varied by the introduction of octosyllables. In the poems later called Chansons écossaises Leconte de Lisle imitates Burns' experiments with the folk-song technique of refrains and also tries his hand at mixtures of octosyllable and decasyllable or octosyllables by themselves. But the novelty of the collection lies not in "new form" in this sense, but rather in an attempt to formulate a new, for the modern world at least, concept of poetry. The four pieces termed "poème," Hélène, Niobé, Khiron, Bhavaçat, are examples of this new idea which returns to the notion of a collective poetry as practised by the ancient civilizations of Greece and India. The interest in folk-song falls into the same category. Leconte de Lisle's concept of "formes négligées ou peu connues" is distinct then from surface experimentation with prosodic form and has little to do with details of technique within specific genres.

This emphasis on collective rather than individual emotion and the important place accorded by Leconte de Lisle to historical accuracy and detail, would hardly seem a fruitful ground for the sonnet, virtually always till this point a lyric mode. And indeed the first edition of the Poèmes antiques in 1852 contained no example of the sonnet form. The first sonnets published by Leconte de Lisle appear three years later in the Poèmes et Poésies

of 1855, a collection characterized by the poet in his Préface, as being this time, in contrast to the Poèmes antiques, only too personal.<sup>1</sup> The collection included four sonnets: Le Colibri, which was ultimately placed in the 1872 edition of the Poèmes barbares; "Les bois, lavés par les rosées," dropped from the 1858 edition of the Poésies complètes; Le Sacrifice, dropped in its sonnet form from the 1858 edition, but included in a modified version in Derniers Poèmes; Les Oiseaux de proie, subsequently placed in the 1874 edition of the Poèmes antiques. The first two of these sonnets deal with the joys, the last two with the torments of emotional involvement. On what grounds then is one of each pair retained and the other omitted from the work published in its definitive version in Leconte de Lisle's own lifetime? A comparison between "Les bois lavés par les rosées" and Le Colibri on the one hand, Le Sacrifice and Les Oiseaux de proie on the other, goes far to suggest the bases on which the decisions were made and the types of role ultimately envisaged for the sonnet in Leconte de Lisle's work.

"Les bois, lavés par les rosées," in the context of the 1850's at least, is a piece of no great poetic value or originality:

Les bois, lavés par les rosées,  
 Pleurent sur la mousse et le thym,  
 Et bercent au vent incertain  
 Leurs feuilles longtemps reposées.

Les fleurs que rougit le matin,  
 Comme des urnes épuisées,  
 Ouvrent leurs corolles rosées  
 Où l'abeille fait son butin.

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1. PC IV, 223.

Mais qu'important l'aube divine,  
 La fleur qu'un rayon illumine  
 Les bois, l'abeille et le ciel bleu?

L'amour me consume et m'inonde,  
 Et je presse, oublieux du monde,  
 Tes pieds nus sous ma lèvre en feu!

PC IV, 192

The structural arrangements of the sonnet support a simple thematic pattern. The quatrains offer a description of the beauties of the natural world; the first tercet summarizes these but questions their importance; the final tercet asserts the supremacy of personal emotion ("Et je presse, oublieux du monde / Tes pieds nus sous ma lèvre en feu"). The quatrain-tercet division of the sonnet and the possibility of a progressive build-up to a climax in the final tercet are thus both called into play, but more complex parallels and oppositions remain unexplored. The latent analogy between the sun tinging the flowers and the "lèvre en feu" of the poet and the "pieds nus" of his mistress is for example not developed. In the event this is probably just as well for it seems clear that the stereotyped nature of the vocabulary in this sonnet would only have been compounded by such metaphorical elaboration within the sonnet frame. In any case the general trend of the piece seems to be away from such formalization. The choice of the octosyllable in particular creates a light, unrheterical effect. A certain stylization naturally remains however and is especially obvious in the quatrains. The two rhymes only rule is observed, though the rhymes of the second quatrain occur in reverse order, and all the rhymes are rich.

Superficially Le Colibri resembles "Les bois, lavés par les rosées." Again the piece is a love poem. It has a simple thematic structure, divided this time between the description of lines 1-11 and the climactic simile of lines 12-14, and it is written in a metre briefer than the alexandrine.

Le vert colibri, le roi des collines,  
 Voyant la rosée et le soleil clair  
 Luire dans son nid tissé d'herbes fines,  
 Comme un frais rayon s'échappe dans l'air.

Il se hâte et vole aux sources voisines  
 Où les bambous font le bruit de la mer,  
 Où l'açoka rouge, aux odeurs divines,  
 S'ouvre et porte au coeur un humide éclair.

Vers la fleur dorée, il descend, se pose,  
 Et boit tant d'amour dans la coupe rose,  
 Qu'il meurt, ne sachant s'il l'a pu tarir.

Sur ta lèvre pure, ô ma bien-aimée,  
 Telle aussi mon âme eût voulu mourir  
 Du premier baiser qui l'a parfumée!

Poèmes barbares, PC II, 220

It differs from "Les bois, lavés par les rosées" however in two very important ways - the exotic choice of setting and the more extensive use of the possibilities of the sonnet structure to emphasize important facets of the description. The poem gives a new twist to the old formula of the sweetness of the lady's lips and throughout, the poet strikes a balance between the picturesque and the more stereotyped elements. The description of the humming bird in the first half of the opening line is followed in the rest of the stanza by a more neutral vocabulary comparable to that of "Les bois, lavés par les rosées." The second quatrain then concentrates on features of the tropical setting. However the shining dew drop in the exotic flower echoes the more ordinary depiction in the first quatrain of the dew and sunlight in the nest, while the reference to the heart of the

flower looks forward to the simile of the final stanza. The first tercet, concluding the description, reverts once again to a more banal vocabulary, "l'açoka rouge" of line 7 being reduced to "la coupe rose" of line 10. This interchange of exotic and stereotyped elements is of great importance since it allows the poet to evoke one of the most common of human experiences in an unfamiliar guise which gives it new interest and charm. The technique is similar to that of Gautier in "Pour veiner de son front" and goes some way here to dispelling the banal effect of the well-worn description - . simile arrangement within the sonnet framework. The poem compares favourably in this respect both with "Les bois, lavés par les rosées" and with a piece such as Banville's Amours d'Elise V, "Le zéphyr à la douce haleine."<sup>1</sup>

The distinctive features of the unfamiliar scene are in addition made more obvious by the handling of other aspects of the sonnet. The rhyme-scheme of the quatrains, for example, is alternate, a pattern perhaps more suitable than the enclosed "regular" scheme for a description of the darting humming bird. The manipulation of rhythm and the choice of decasyllable also contribute to the impression of a light and easy grace. The first tercet with the strongly marked pauses of line 9 and 11 is of particular interest here. Furthermore (a device not employed in "Les bois, lavés par les rosées") the poet plays with the possibilities of syntactic carry-over between the metrical units - "Voyant ... / luire" and

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1. Banville, Les Cariatides, Oeuvres I (Paris, Lemerre, 1889), p. 98. For a discussion of this sonnet, v. supra, pp.247-248.

"Et boit tant d'amour !.. / Qu'il meurt" - thus reinforcing once again the sense of movement associated with the bird.

Though Le Colibri is essentially a love poem, the descriptive element has a much greater interest and importance than in "Les bois, lavés par les rosées" and the exotic detail is played up by a more imaginative handling of the various patterns of formal structure, metre, rhythm, rhyme, and syntax available within the sonnet. The poem thus suggests a possible line of development for the genre in Leconte de Lisle's work consisting in a movement away from a lyrical towards a descriptive function. Perhaps it is this shift of emphasis which makes Le Colibri suitable later for inclusion amongst the more definitely descriptive Poèmes barbares, while "Les bois, lavés par les rosées" with its vague and conventional lyricism is discarded.

The distinction between Le Sacrifice and Les Oiseaux de proie seems based on rather different grounds, though the question of overtly personal emotion is again the central point. Both poems express Leconte de Lisle's pessimistic attitude towards emotional involvement. However Les Oiseaux de proie, despite the dominance of the first person singular pronoun, is capable, as Le Sacrifice is not, of a breadth of meaning exceeding its origins in the love theme. This no doubt explains its retention in Leconte de Lisle's definitive work. The quatrain-tercet structure of Les Oiseaux de proie provides the framework for the central contrast between previous serenity and emotional detachment and present involvement and pain but within these broad structural divides additional patterns of balance and contrast are also brought into play.



Je m'étais assis sur la cime antique  
 Et la vierge neige, en face des Dieux;  
 Je voyais monter dans l'air pacifique  
 La procession des Morts glorieux.  
 La Terre exhalait le divin cantique  
 Que n'écoute plus le siècle oublieux,  
 Et la chaîne d'or du Zeus homérique  
 D'anneaux en anneaux l'unissait aux cieux.  
 Mais, ô Passions, noirs oiseaux de proie,  
 Vous avez troublé mon rêve et ma joie:  
 Je tombe du ciel et n'en puis mourir!  
 Vos ongles sanglants ont dans mes chairs vives  
 Enfoncé l'angoisse avec le désir,  
 Et vous m'avez dit: - Il faut que tu vives. -

Poèmes antiques, PC I, 274

The symmetries of the quatrain structure are used to reinforce the theme of order and harmony put forward in lines 1-8 of the sonnet. The piece opens with an emphasis in the first quatrain on the passivity ("assis"), the elevation ("cime"), purity ("vierge neige"), peace ("air pacifique") and detachment (faced only by the gods and the dead) of the speaker's original state and his perception from his position as observer and non-participant in the turmoils of life, of the links between gods and men. The second quatrain develops this idea of harmonious union on a broader, less specifically personal scale. The image of the golden chain rising up between earth and heaven in the third and fourth lines of the stanza provides a clear parallel with the heavenward ascent of the glorious dead in the identical position in stanza one. Besides such thematic equivalences within the quatrain structure, the poet also achieves a careful balance in his syntactic arrangements. Each quatrain divides equally into two sections. In the first stanza, each of these sections consists of a main clause opening with a first person subject and verb - "Je m'étais assis,"

"Je voyais." This pattern is balanced in the second by a similar arrangement of main clauses, one in lines 5-6 and another in lines 7-8. This time however slight variations occur: third person subjects replace the first person pronoun of stanza one, a subordinate clause occupies line 6, the second main verb does not appear until the last line of the stanza, whereas in the opening quatrain it follows directly on the subject in line 3.

The state of grace depicted in the quatrains disappears however completely in the tercets and the imperfect tenses of lines 1-8 are replaced by the present and the passé composé as the speaker outlines his present plight. A clear demarcation between quatrains and tercets is effected not only by the adversative "Mais" and the change of rhyme but also by an important disruption of rhythm in line 9. The decasyllabic line dividing 5/5 throughout the quatrains, and in subsequent lines of the tercets, undergoes an extra division, throwing the key word "passions" into strong relief. The parallels of structure and rhyme in the tercets are then associated with patterns of thematic opposition to stress the extent of the transformation brought about by the advent of the "passions" in the speaker's life. Thus "mon rêve et ma joie" in the second line of the first tercet contrast with "l'angoisse avec le désir" in the parallel position in the second tercet. The word "joie" is negated by its rhyming partner "proie." An equivalence between death and desire is set up in the rhyming pair "mourir - désir" and a similar equivalence is also created by the rhyme of the homonyms "vives" underlining the identity of life and torture.

Finally "mourir" as the closing rhyme of the first tercet also contrasts by its position with "vives," the closing rhyme of the second.

The sonnet is used here to good effect by Leconte de Lisle to stress his negative attitude towards emotional involvement and the suffering it entails and his belief in the preferability of untroubled contemplative isolation. He not only adopts the obvious source of contrast in the structural opposition between quatrains and tercets, but also exploits additional parallels within the two main sections of the sonnet form in order to reinforce his point. The poem shows a mixture of emotional participation and intellectual concepts peculiarly characteristic of Leconte de Lisle's later sonnets. Though originally conceived as a poem on the nature of love, as suggested by its position in Poèmes et Poésies, it is not restricted to this one area. It can also be interpreted, particularly when detached from its original context, as a statement on the true nature of the Poet, able when tranquil to perceive the links between the terrestrial and the divine and lamenting his inability to achieve a permanent existence on that elevated plane, or even as an ontological description of human origins showing the fall from a state of spiritual being into the tortures and divisions of physical ("mes chairs vives") existence. This range of possible reference no doubt explains its inclusion in the 1874 edition of Poèmes antiques.

It is however impossible to give the same breadth of interpretation to Le Sacrifice.

Pour atteindre aux sommets dont la hauteur accable  
 Il faut que le pied saigne aux angles du rocher:  
 Les dieux aiment le sang. Rien ne peut les toucher  
 Que le supplice offert du juste ou du coupable.

C'est la rigide loi du monde périssable.  
 Quand l'homme, un jour, du ciel voulut se rapprocher,  
 L'holocauste sanglant fuma sur le bûcher,  
 Et l'odeur en monta vers la nue implacable.

Nous n'avons plus de dieux, plus d'expiations;  
 Mais dans nos coeurs en proie aux sombres passions  
 L'amère volupté de souffrir reste encore;

Et je voudrais, victime et sacrificateur,  
 Répandant à tes pieds amour, haine et douleur,  
 Baigner de tout mon sang l'autel où je t'adore!

PC IV, 354

The quatrains and the first tercet follow a pattern similar to that of later sonnets of Leconte de Lisle such as L'Ecclésiaste. The sonnet opens with a series of axioms varied by their differing distribution within and across the metrical unit of the individual line. This pattern in fact overlaps the limits of the first quatrain and continues into the first line of the second. But then in lines 6-8 the impersonal constructions are replaced by reference to "l'homme" and attention diverted from the inexorable logic of the situation to the actual pain entailed for the individual. The first tercet moves the argument one stage nearer home with the involvement of both poet and reader contained in the pronoun "nous." At the same time the contrastive possibilities of the quatrain-tercet arrangement are brought into play to reinforce the theme of suffering. The existence of malevolent gods postulated in the quatrains as the origin of human torment is denied in the first line of the tercets, but paradoxically the removal of this explanation makes the whole situation more hopeless than before.

Up to this point the sonnet has followed a consistent line of argument. The second tercet, however, changes the whole focus

of the poem from reflection on the general human condition to portrayal of a specific emotional relationship, a change totally unexpected in the context of what has preceded. The sacrifice of the second quatrain now assumes a particular and limited meaning and is assimilated to a conventional vocabulary of passion. Nothing could be further from the stoic acceptance of an unpalatable situation advocated in the opening lines. The rejection of Le Sacrifice, in its sonnet form at least, may thus be in part attributed to its incoherence of tone. Even more important, however, would seem to be the peculiar prominence given to the violently personal note of the closing lines by the idiosyncrasies of the sonnet structure (the contrast with the preceding tercet, contrast with the quatrains, contrast with lines 1-11 considered as a single entity).

In all four of these early sonnets Leconte de Lisle remains within the lyrical tradition in which the genre originally developed. In subsequent sonnets he avoids the conventional love theme, but in many cases he still uses the form as a convenient way of framing and disciplining overt expressions of personal feeling. The only sonnet out of the four which shows signs of a radically new departure is Le Colibri. It points forward to the use of the sonnet as a descriptive medium, a technique which Leconte de Lisle explores further in pieces such as Le Sommeil de Lefflah and Paysage polaire and which Heredia later carries to its apogee.

Five years elapsed between the publication of Poèmes et

Poésies and the appearance in the Revue Contemporaine of 15 February 1860 of the six sonnets making up Le Conseil du Fakir. In the interim the publication of Les Fleurs du Mal had established the sonnet as a major poetic form amongst the younger poets. Leconte de Lisle's own use of the form does not in the main appear to be altered or affected by either of the two main Baudelairian models however.<sup>1</sup> The attitudes and aspirations of the two poets had by this stage assumed their own peculiar casts and Leconte de Lisle, where the sonnet is concerned, continues on the paths indicated in Le Colibri on the one hand, Les Oiseaux de proie on the other. It may well be however that the increased use of the sonnet by Leconte de Lisle in the 1860's reflects the growing popularity of a form given major poetic standing by Les Fleurs du Mal.

Leconte de Lisle's power as a descriptive poet was recognized by his contemporaries as one of his greatest qualities. Baudelaire saw there "un certain filon tout nouveau qui est bien à lui et qui n'est qu'à lui" and singles out for special praise those poems:

où, sans préoccupation de la religion et des formes successives de la pensée humaine, le poète a décrit la beauté, telle qu'elle posait pour son oeil original et individuel: les forces imposantes, écrasantes de la nature; la majesté de l'animal dans sa course ou dans son repos; la grâce de la femme dans les climats favorisés du soleil, enfin la divine sérénité du désert ou la redoutable magnificence de l'Océan.<sup>2</sup>

This most important element in Leconte de Lisle's work is however represented only to a very limited extent where his sonnets

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1. v. Chapter II Baudelaire. Baudelaire uses the sonnet both in its traditional function as an instrument of emotional analysis and, more originally, as a means of creating a "sorcellerie évocatoire."
  2. Baudelaire, "Leconte de Lisle," Réflexions sur mes contemporains, Oeuvres complètes in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1961), p. 750. Printing of 1966.

are concerned and in this respect his work offers a sharp contrast with that of his disciple José-Maria de Heredia. The early example offered by Le Colibri is nevertheless developed further in some of the sonnets of the 1860's. However it is clear that the limitations of length and structure tend to diminish the grandeur or originality of Leconte de Lisle's vision. He is a descriptive artist on a large, even epic scale and this can produce awkward situations where the sonnet is concerned. In Le Conseil du Fakir,<sup>1</sup> for example, he tries to transfer his habitual subject matter virtually unmodified into sonnet form. He clings to a narrative outline and seems unable to compress his material within the fourteen line framework. The result is a group of poems in sonnet form, none of which is self-contained and complete and which therefore lack the internal coherence and pattern characteristic of a successful sonnet. However, as Le Colibri has already suggested, Leconte de Lisle in some instances at least was able to avail himself of the particular possibilities of the sonnet as a descriptive medium. Le Sommeil de LeFlah and Paysage polaire are both excellent examples of Leconte de Lisle's ability to utilize the various features of the form to enhance key aspects of a description.

Le Sommeil de LeFlah is of particular interest. It was first published in Le Boulevard of 25 May 1862 entitled La Sieste and has a number of important variants which reveal an increasing sophistication in Leconte de Lisle's handling of a description

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1. In Poèmes barbares, PC II, 156-160.

within the sonnet structure. Furthermore it offers a suggestive parallel with other poems of Leconte de Lisle on similar themes, but not in sonnet form, for example La Vérandah and Les Roses d'Ispahan. In addition, as part of a tradition of exotic description, its techniques can be compared with those of such sonnets as Baudelaire's A une Dame créole, Bien loin d'ici and Parfum exotique. The tropical setting also provides a clear link with Le Colibri. The important difference is that here the description stands on its own and is not used to connote a particular personal emotion. Where Le Colibri uses a single facet of the contrastive potential of the sonnet, the isolation of the final tercet, to underline an emotional parallel, Le Sommeil de Leflah, in both its versions, brings into play other contrastive and symmetrical possibilities of the structure in order to emphasize, on the one hand, the importance of the woman as the central feature of the scene and, on the other, her total integration with her surroundings. Let us consider first the original version La Sieste.

Les hauts tamariniers apaisent leurs murmures,  
 La cendre du soleil blanchit l'herbe et la fleur,  
 De son bec de corail le bengali siffleur  
 S'abreuve au jus doré qui sort des mangues mûres;  
 L'air, les bois, les vergers où rougissent les mûres,  
 La montagne, la mer ardente et sans couleur,  
 Tout repose immobile et baigné de chaleur,  
 Quand elle vient dormir sous les noires ramures.  
 Parmi les vétivers, couchée indolemment,  
 Son front d'un poids léger presse son bras charmant  
 Elle colore l'ombre heureuse qui la touche;  
 Et quand elle s'éveille, avec ses grands yeux bruns,  
 On dirait un beau fruit saturé de parfums  
 Qui rafraîchit le coeur en altérant la bouche.



The quatrain-tercet division of the sonnet corresponds here to a thematic distinction between a general description of the scene and a concentration on the figure of the woman. But the poet has been careful to avoid as far as possible a stark partitioning of the different aspects of his composition. Thus the first quatrain describes four specific features of the scene and through them establishes the exotic character of the locale. In contrast, the second quatrain whilst repeating several of these features, uses a rather less picturesque vocabulary, and moves from enumeration of the different components of the setting in lines 5 and 6 to the summary in line 7 of the general atmosphere of stillness and heat. This gradual move over lines 1-7 from the particular to the general is of great importance. After the richness of lines 1-4, it provides in lines 5-7 a muted background against which the figure of the woman can come to an unobtrusive prominence in line 8. The syntax of lines 7 and 8 plays its part, with the appearance of the woman in the grammatically subordinate clause balancing in significance the main clause "Tout repose immobile" which summarizes all that has been depicted previously in the quatrains. This overlapping into the quatrains of the description of the woman helps to diminish any effect of overt opposition between quatrains and tercets and suggests the integration of the woman in a scene of which she is at the same time the most clearly visualized feature. The first line of the first tercet maintains for a moment at the beginning of the second section of the composition the link between figure and setting, "Parmi les vétivers" echoing "sous les noires ramures" of line 8. The

description of the woman that follows in lines 10-11 is disappointingly conventional. In the final tercet, however, the exotic note of the first quatrain is renewed and the balance between the opening and closing stanzas of the sonnet underlines the implicit parallel between the image of the woman as fruit and the description of the humming bird and the mangoes in lines 3 and 4. Once again a feature of the sonnet structure helps to suggest the integration of setting and protagonist.

The version of this sonnet published in the Poèmes barbares of 1872 shows a shift from a purely descriptive to a metaphorically more potent poem and still greater concision and coherence of theme and form.

Ni bruits d'aile, ni sons d'eau vive, ni murmures;  
 La cendre du soleil nage sur l'herbe en fleur.  
 Et de son bec furtif le bengali siffleur  
 Boit, comme un sang doré, le jus des mangues mûres.

Dans le verger royal où rougissent les mûres,  
 Sous le ciel clair qui brûle et n'a plus de couleur,  
 Leïlah, languissante et rose de chaleur,  
 Clôt ses yeux aux longs cils à l'ombre des ramures.

Son front ceint de rubis presse son bras charmant;  
 L'ambre de son pied nu colore doucement  
 Le treillis emperlé de l'étroite babouche.

Elle rit et sommeille et songe au bien-aimé,  
 Telle qu'un fruit de pourpre, ardent et parfumé,  
 Qui rafraîchit le cœur en altérant la bouche.

PC II, 161

The main theme of the sonnet, the exotic scene with its exotic centrepiece, remains unchanged. The image of the woman as fruit concluding the piece with a reference back to the opening stanza and thus stressing the homogenous character of the total scene is still there. Elsewhere in the sonnet however the integration of the woman in her setting is achieved in ways that differ from those

of the early version. In particular, thematic balance in the sonnet has shifted from the quatrain-tercet division to a 1-4:5-14 arrangement; the description of the woman, now named as Leflah and no longer the simple pronoun "elle," has been extended to include the second quatrain. It thus becomes the dominant factor in the sonnet, at least in terms of length, whereas before, depiction of scene and protagonist were evenly balanced at seven lines each. Other significant modifications have also taken place. The description of the first quatrain gains in power with a move from picturesque notation to suggestion. The tamarind trees of the opening line, which no doubt by 1872 had become something of a sine qua non in any description of tropical vegetation, have been replaced by a transformed version of line 7 of the early sonnet. The exotic detail has disappeared but the scene's essential qualities of stillness and silence are emphatically realized in the repetition of the three negatives. In the next two lines, the references to colour are eliminated. Again this may appear surprising in a poem where the poet is trying to establish a vision of exotic luxuriance. But, in fact, on closer consideration, one can see that the verb "blanchit" in the first version really only repeats an idea already implied in "la cendre du soleil." The substitution of the verb "nage" provides a contrast with the idea of dryness normally conveyed by "cendres," and accurately suggests the enervating, damp, yet burning heat of the tropics. "Le bec de corail," like the tamarind trees of line 1, has a stereotyped ring to it and whilst occupying valuable space, does not bring a

significant contribution to the total effect of the sonnet. The substitution of "furtif," on the other hand, combines both a reference to the characteristic movements of the bird and an allusion to the almost sinister quality of the silence that pervades the scene. Finally the modification of line 4 eliminates the pretentious "abreuve" and introduces the simile, "comme un sang doré." Like "furtif" this suggests an underlying quality of barbarity and cruelty in the tropical scene dominated by the blazing sun. It also replaces the conventional "corail" and "jus doré" of the first version and establishes new colour motifs of red and gold. These constitute an important thematic strand in this definitive version and will recur again in the second quatrain and the first tercet underlining the integration of Lefflah and her surroundings.

In the first two lines of the second quatrain, the description of the scene continues, but this time is subordinate grammatically to the figure of Lefflah, now the subject of the main clause of which the stanza is composed. Line 6 evoking the empty glare of the sky offers a suitably colourless background against which in line 7 the figure of Lefflah may be vividly set in relief. This contrasts with her unobtrusive entry "on stage" in line 8 of the first version. However the integration of the central subject and her immediate setting is still of prime importance and the remainder of the stanza explores several possibilities more complex than the simple gradation of effect of the original sonnet. In the first place, as already mentioned, the colour motif of the opening quatrain persists in the second. The orchard, merely a

part of the enumeration in the 1862 version, is singled out as the particular setting for Leflah and the rosiness of its fruit linked with the rosiness of Leflah herself. Secondly there is the choice of name for the woman, Leflah (Dalilah) which, besides giving new emphasis to the nameless figure of the original version, picks up the sinister allusions implicit in "furtif" and the reference to blood in the first quatrain. Thirdly the silence and stillness suggested in the opening lines of the sonnet are maintained in the depiction of Leflah since here, unlike the first version, she is "on stage" already and the movement of "vient dormir" is thus eliminated. Finally in the closing line of the stanza a further parallel between scene and central subject is suggested. The eye-lashes of the women in the first hemistich balance the shading tracery of the branches in the second.

In the first tercet, picturesque detail replaces the abstract and rather banal vocabulary of the first version, strengthening the focus of interest on the figure of Leflah. This contrasts with the 1862 poem where the exotic, pictorial elements were concentrated in the description of the general scene in the first quatrain, and the depiction of the woman in the tercets very much muted. Now the richness of her appearance is stressed, the jewels and pearls echoing and developing the idea of wealth implicit in the mention of the royal orchard in the second quatrain. But the vividness of her figure is not allowed to obscure her close association with her surroundings, and her ornaments and skin-tone, "son front ceint de rubis" and "l'ambre de son pied nu" repeat the colours of the mango juice of the first quatrain and the berries of the

second. In addition it is perhaps possible to see in this stanza something of the suggestive quality typical of the description of the scene in the opening quatrain. It is only the merest allusion, but perhaps the words "ceint," "treillis," "étroit" give a hint of the restriction, confinement and intrigue of the Oriental harem and thus form a link with the notations of stealth and blood in the opening stanza.

The final tercet renews the emphasis on the theme of somnolence on which the second quatrain closed and achieves a greater coherence than the original version where the "elle vient dormir" of line 8 was contradicted by the "Et quand elle s'éveille" of line 12. The closing analogy between Leflah and a fruit remains virtually unchanged. However it is important to remember that it no longer relies almost entirely on the structural balance between opening quatrain and closing tercet. Instead it is carefully prepared and sustained throughout the entire sonnet with the link between Leflah and the fruit in the second quatrain, the persistence of the red and gold colours through the first three stanzas of the sonnet, and finally by the substitution in line 13 of "ardent et parfumé" with the multiple associations of "ardent," for the "saturé de parfums" of the original version.

Leconte de Lisle thus makes skilful use of a wider range of the possibilities of the sonnet structure to give his poem both added vividness and added depth. The pictorial emphasis of the piece is redistributed, and the figure of Leflah made more striking as the standard quatrain-tercet division is replaced by a 1-4 : 5-14

pattern. At the same time the relationship between Leïlah and her surroundings is reinforced by the replay in each stanza of the motif of fruit or at least of the colours associated with the fruits mentioned in the quatrains. Finally additional perspectives are created by the use of a more suggestive vocabulary, particularly in the first quatrain, and by a more imaginative use of the restrictive richness of regular sonnet rhyme. The threefold pattern of enclosure in the rhyme-scheme now seems to support the allusions of lines 3-4 and 9-11 to some quality of hidden constraint in the somnolent atmosphere, while the modification in line 11 to achieve a hundred per cent rich rhyme in the sonnet further underlines the oppressive static luxuriance of the tropical scene.

Leconte de Lisle's handling of similar material in La Vêrandah and Les Roses d'Ispahan makes possible an evaluation of the peculiar advantages and disadvantages of the sonnet form in this area. Les Roses d'Ispahan is a poem of six quatrains where the charm of Leïlah, the insubstantial quality of her love and its vital importance for the poet's appreciation of any of the natural beauties surrounding him are interwoven in a series of overlapping motifs of moss and orange trees, wind, birdsong and running water.

Les roses d'Ispahan dans leur gaine de mousse,  
 Les jasmins de Mossoul, les fleurs de l'oranger  
 Ont un parfum moins frais, ont une odeur moins douce,  
 O blanche Leïlah! que ton souffle léger.

Ta lèvre est de corail, et ton rire léger  
 Sonne mieux que l'eau vive et d'une voix plus douce,  
 Mieux que le vent joyeux qui berce l'oranger,  
 Mieux que l'oiseau qui chante au bord du nid de mousse.

Mais la subtile odeur des roses dans leur mousse,  
 La brise qui se joue autour de l'oranger  
 Et l'eau vive qui flue avec sa plainte douce  
 Ont un charme plus sûr que ton amour léger!

O Le'flah! depuis que de leur vol léger  
 Tous les baisers ont fui de ta lèvre si douce,  
 Il n'est plus de parfum dans le pâle oranger,  
 Ni de céleste arôme aux roses dans leur mousse.

L'oiseau, sur le duvet humide et sur la mousse,  
 Ne chante plus parmi la rose et l'oranger;  
 L'eau vive des jardins n'a plus de chanson douce,  
 L'aube ne dore plus le ciel pur et léger.

Oh! que ton jeune amour, ce papillon léger,  
 Revienne vers mon cœur d'une aile prompte et douce,  
 Et qu'il parfume encore les fleurs de l'oranger,  
 Les roses d'Ispahan dans leur gaine de mousse!

Poèmes tragiques

PC III, 50-51

Thematic development depends here on the highly stylized form evolved by the poet. Not only is the poem rhymed throughout on the same rhymes, but on the same four rhyme words, the only variety being the regular reversal of the order in alternate stanzas. Such virtuosity, far in excess of any of the possibilities offered by the fixed form of the sonnet, clearly inhibits thematic scope, so the obvious question is what does it achieve in its place. In this instance, after the first two quatrains, the repetition of the same sound at the rhyme produces nothing but a feeling of tedium mingled with irritation. The restriction of the rhyme seems to be more of an exercise of the bouts-rimés variety than an attempt to enhance some aspect of the poet's chosen theme. Nor is there any attempt to use the rhymes as the key-notes of a wider series of phonetic patterns.

La Vérandah is a much more successful poem than Les Roses d'Ispahan and in many ways it is a richer one too than the sonnet.



Au tintement de l'eau dans les porphyres roux  
 Les rosiers de l'Iran mêlent leurs frais murmures,  
 Et les ramiers rêveurs leurs roucoulements doux.  
 Tandis que l'oiseau grêle et le frelon jaloux,  
 Sifflant et bourdonnant, mordent les figes mûres,  
 Les rosiers de l'Iran mêlent leurs frais murmures  
 Au tintement de l'eau dans les porphyres roux.

Sous les treillis d'argent de la vérandah close,  
 Dans l'air tiède, embaumé de l'odeur des jasmins,  
 Où la splendeur du jour darde une flèche rose,  
 La Persane royale, immobile, repose,  
 Derrière son col brun croisant ses belles mains,  
 Dans l'air tiède, embaumé de l'odeur des jasmins,  
 Sous les treillis d'argent de la vérandah close.

Jusqu'aux lèvres que l'ambre arrondi baise encor,  
 Du cristal d'où s'échappe une vapeur subtile  
 Qui monte en tourbillons légers et prend l'essor,  
 Sur les coussins de soie écarlate, aux fleurs d'or,  
 La branche du hûka rôde comme un reptile  
 Du cristal d'où s'échappe une vapeur subtile  
 Jusqu'aux lèvres que l'ambre arrondi baise encor.

Deux rayons noirs, chargés d'une muette ivresse,  
 Sortent de ses longs yeux entr'ouverts à demi;  
 Un songe l'enveloppe, un souffle la caresse;  
 Et parce que l'effluve invincible l'opresse,  
 Parce que son beau sein qui se gonfle a frémi,  
 Sortent de ses longs yeux entr'ouverts à demi  
 Deux rayons noirs, chargés d'une muette ivresse.

Et l'eau vive s'endort dans les porphyres roux,  
 Les rosiers de l'Iran ont cessé leurs murmures,  
 Et les ramiers rêveurs leurs roucoulements doux.  
 Tout se tait. L'oiseau grêle et le frelon jaloux  
 Ne se querellent plus autour des figes mûres.  
 Les rosiers de l'Iran ont cessé leurs murmures,  
 Et l'eau vive s'endort dans les porphyres roux.

Poèmes barbares  
 PC II, 133-134

Leconte de Lisle again uses a highly stylized form, this time a poem of five seven line stanzas, each on two rhymes, each with lines 6 and 7 repeating lines 1 and 2 in reverse order, and with the last stanza repeating, though with significant modifications, the first. These patterns simulate the themes of enclosure and

immobility developed in the poem. At the same time, with an extension over the whole line of alliteration and assonance, they produce through phonetic repetition a richly soporific effect which perfectly complements the evocation of the drugged "Persane." The formal virtuosity of La Vérandah thus acts, unlike that of Les Roses d'Ispahan, as an integral part of the theme. However, while it may be felt that the sonnet, Le Sommeil de Lefflah, fails to create the incantatory effect of La Vérandah and seems in contrast schematic and bare, it is worth noticing that the sonnet is much the more adaptable form. Its techniques may sometimes appear obvious (for example, the division between quatrains and tercets utilized by Leconte de Lisle in La Sieste or the climax on the image of the fruit), but it has others subtle enough to allow of endless repetition (for instance, the numerous possible parallels between each of the stanzas individually, the shifts of balance possible within the total structure of the sonnet, which Leconte de Lisle explores more thoroughly in Le Sommeil de Lefflah). The forms of La Vérandah and Les Roses d'Ispahan, more complicated than those of the sonnet, are as a result less capable of variation, less repeatable and more limited in their use. In addition, as shown by Les Roses d'Ispahan, they run the risk of making formal virtuosity an end in itself and to a much more acute degree than the established structure of the sonnet permits, they range erratically between outstanding success and conspicuous failure.

In conclusion one further point can perhaps be made about Leconte de Lisle's use of the sonnet form in Le Sommeil de Lefflah

in so far as the piece falls into a tradition of exotic writing common in the period. Leconte de Lisle is a native of the type of region described in the poem and the setting, while it may be an exotic one for the reader, is a familiar one for the poet. As a result of this perhaps, and in complete contrast to Baudelaire, he does not portray it in any sense as a landscape of the ideal. There is no use of the sonnet to formulate an opposition between the dream of the tropical paradise and grey European reality, or to suggest through the symmetries and repetitions of the genre the intensification of experience associated with that magical but elusive world. Instead the established structure of the sonnet, the clearly defined end-stopped stanzas, the regularity and richness of the rhyme-scheme all bring formal support to the sense of solidity and reality which characterizes the portrayal first of the tropical setting and then of its precisely visualized central figure.

The concrete quality of Leconte de Lisle's vision and the correspondingly solid construction of his descriptive sonnet is perhaps even more evident in Paysage polaire.

Un monde mort, immense écume de la mer,  
 Gouffre d'ombre stérile et de lueurs spectrales,  
 Jet de pics convulsifs étirés en spirales  
 Qui vont éperdument dans le brouillard amer.

Un ciel rugueux roulant par blocs, un âpre enfer  
 Où passent à plein vol les clameurs sépulcrales,  
 Les rires, les sanglots, les cris aigus, les râles  
 Qu'un vent sinistre arrache à son clairon de fer.

Sur les hauts caps branlants, rongés des flots voraces,  
 Se roidissent les Dieux brumeux des vieilles races,  
 Congelés dans leur rêve et leur lividité;

Et les grands ours, blanchis par les neiges antiques,  
 Ça et là, balançant leurs cous épileptiques,  
 Ivres et monstrueux, bavent de volupté.

As in Le Sommeil de Leflah, the poet moves from description of the overall scene to that of figures who incorporate and summarize its essential quality. This time however, in view of the type of landscape, angular, shattered, frozen, it is appropriate that the schematic impact of the quatrains vis à vis the tercets be clearly preserved and the change of focus correspond exactly to the 1-8 : 9-14 arrangement. The first quatrain is concerned with the visual aspect of the scene and emphasizes the eery chiascuro of troughs and summits. The second concentrates on sound, but simultaneously renews the opening motif of death ("sépulcrales," "râles" - note the emphasis provided by the rhyme), develops the idea of torment latent in "convulsifs" in line 3 ("Les rires, les sanglots, les cris aigus, les râles"), and formulates the Hell-like quality of the landscape ("un âpre enfer" in strong rhythmic relief in the 8/4 pattern of line 5). At the same time the tactile imagery for the wind-driven sky in line 5 ("rugueux," "blocs," "âpre") and the closing metaphor of the wind's iron trumpet maintain the sense of solid inert matter created in lines 1-4. The thematic emphasis on the harsh angularities and frozen solidity of a polar landscape finds a formal parallel in the structural balance of the quatrains and the syntactic and thematic parallels between them. Neither quatrain has a main verb and in general outline they appear the same, each ending with a relative clause (though the second differs from the first in its additional relative clause in line 6). The rhymes of the first quatrain are duplicated in the second in accordance with regular sonnet practice and the traditional

enclosed pattern maintained in both. Furthermore the static quality of this arrangement is increased by the richness of the rhyme, the same consonant persisting in the b rhyme throughout the quatrains and the a rhyme rhyming richly in each of the quatrains individually. Within the line, alliteration plays its part, slowing the rhythm and supporting the general effect of density and stasis. At the same time, however, the composition of each of the quatrains on a series of fragmented notations, linked only by juxtaposition, the syntactic differentiation between the two stanzas (the additional relative clause in the second) and the important variations of rhythm in the first line of each quatrain help to underline the element of convulsive upheaval still present in the contorted rigidity of the frozen landscape.

In the tercets the description moves to the only inhabitants of this wasteland, each of whom incorporates one of the two contrasting elements of it. Thus the rejected gods, in an actively hostile setting ("les hauts caps branlants, rongés des flots voraces") are depicted in attitudes of total paralysis ("se roidissent," "congelés"). The internal rhyme of the juxtaposed "Dieux-brumeux" possibly also contributes to this portrayal of final stasis. The bears on the other hand close the sonnet on a note of pleasure, as sinister and eery as the setting itself and with an attitude of physical contortion ("balançant leurs cous épileptiques") which recalls the monstrous upheaval of the terrain in the first stanza. As in the quatrains, this combination of rigidity and distorted movement finds support in the structure of the sonnet and its associated patterns. Like the quatrains

the tercets resemble each other syntactically. Each is composed of a main clause, but as in the quatrains differing arrangements of minor grammatical groups allow variety within unity. Again as in the quatrains, rhyme remains rich and where possible enclosed, while at the same time, in the final tercet especially, variations of rhythm underline the dynamic element in the scene described by the poet.

In Le Sommeil de Lefflah and Paysage polaire, Leconte de Lisle makes effective use of the various possibilities of the sonnet form in order to reinforce key features in his description. He was clearly capable of producing a more than adequate sonnet and of pushing the form in a new direction. However, these pieces are only a tiny part of his total poetic output. Their impact on the development of the sonnet in this period can hardly be compared to that produced by the descriptive sonnet of Leconte de Lisle's most famous disciple Heredia. Leconte de Lisle's infrequent use of the form may no doubt be explained by the small scale and inevitable schematization of sonnet description. Significantly perhaps both Le Sommeil de Lefflah and Paysage polaire are concerned with the portrayal of some scene from the natural world. In contrast to Heredia, Leconte de Lisle's historical interests are scarcely represented in his sonnets. On reflection this seems hardly surprising for Leconte de Lisle's constant emphasis is on the strangeness and unfamiliarity of the civilizations of the past and space is therefore needed in order to give the reader time to feel his way into the alien world evoked by the poet. The contrast

between this approach and that of Heredia and its repercussions on the use of the sonnet form are well illustrated by Le Combat homérique.

De même qu'au soleil l'horrible essaim des mouches  
Des taureaux égorgés couvre les cuirs velus,  
Un tourbillon guerrier de peuples chevelus,  
Hors des neufs s'épaissit, plein de clameurs farouches.

Tout roule et se confond, souffle rauque des bouches,  
Bruit des coups, les vivants et ceux qui n'en sont plus,  
Chars vides, étalons cabrés, flux et reflux  
Des boucliers d'airain hérissés d'éclairs louches.

Les reptiles tordus au front, les yeux ardents,  
L'aboyeuse Gorgô vole et grince des dents  
Par la plaine où le sang exhale ses buées.

Zeus, sur le Pavé d'or, se lève, furieux,  
Et voici que la troupe héroïque des Dieux  
Bondit dans le combat du faite des nuées.

Poèmes barbares

PC II, 45

The sonnet, one of the pieces in Lemerre's Sonnets et Eaux-Fortes (1869), is seen by Madame Guillaume Beer in her Essai sur Leconte de Lisle, written under the pseudonym Jean Dornis, as the culmination of Leconte de Lisle's work on the Iliad, which he finished translating in 1868:

... il sentit, qu'imprégné comme il l'était du génie grec, il pourrait condensé ses splendeurs épiques, ces milliers d'images, ces rumeurs de combats, ces interventions divines, dont tout son être était demeuré ébranlé et bourdonnant, en des vers qui auraient de la Beauté. Alors il écrivit ce sonnet: Le Combat homérique qu'il faut relire, pour sentir jusqu'au fond, ce que l'art discipliné, conscient de soi, peut ajouter de beauté absolue, à la naturelle expansion du génie.<sup>1</sup>

It is doubtful whether the poem lives up to this panegyric. Leconte de Lisle in fact does not appear to distinguish clearly

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1. Jean Dornis, Essai sur Leconte de Lisle, p. 51.

between the different range of possibilities offered and the different techniques demanded by the epic and by the sonnet. Two main features of the sonnet form are brought into play - the opposition of quatrains and tercets and the overall progression to a climax in the concluding stanza. Most obviously the quatrain-tercet arrangement supports a sharpening of focus in a manner somewhat similar to the technique of Heredia. Out of the confusion described in the quatrains there emerge in the tercets specific isolated objects - the one shield out of the many and its owner, Zeus. At the same time, each stanza individually presents an intensification and an escalation of the battle. The first quatrain is essentially static, the latent image of congealed blood receiving formal support from the regular pattern of the rhythm. All four lines are classical alexandrines. The opening simile starts the description of the conflict at the lowest point of the scale of creation - the insect and animal kingdoms ("mouches," "taureaux") before expanding in lines 3 and 4 to include the various races of men. The second quatrain continues the emphasis on the human element in the scene, but now the congealed masses of the first stanza give way to a confused mobility, a jumble of different orders of sensations and objects. Simultaneously the rhythm becomes more diversified, the caesura shifting its position in lines 6 and 7 to give syllabic patterns of 3/9 and 3/5/4 with an enjambement at the end of line 7. The tercets carry the combat a stage further, first with the introduction of the bestial though divine Gorgon in lines 9-11, then with the appearance of Zeus and "la troupe héroïque" of the



gods in the final stanza. Rhythmic diversity again promotes a sense of dynamism, lines 10 and 14 being the only ones with a single caesura after the sixth syllable. In addition, the "voici que" construction (a favourite device of Heredia) contributes to the feeling of movement, the static frame in which the action "bondit" is perceived serving to emphasize the power of that action all the more strongly.

But how successful in fact are these patterns in suggesting the essential quality of the epic scenes described by Homer? It is precisely in the distinction between suggestion and description that the crux of the matter would seem to lie. The epic has length, the sonnet pattern in order to make their respective points. In this connexion Leconte de Lisle's handling of the epic simile in his opening quatrain seems particularly significant. A comparison with Heredia's one use of the epic simile in Les Trophées is especially revealing. In Le Bain des Nymphes the device occurs in the final tercet to describe the flight of the nymphs at the appearance of the satyr:

Elles s'élancent. Tel, lorsqu'un corbeau sinistre  
 Croasse, sur le fleuve éperdument neigeux  
 S'effarouche le vol des cygnes du Caystre.<sup>1</sup>

The sonnet thus ends suggestively, leaving in the reader's mind not a precisely defined and limited scene but a general and infinitely more evocative impression of fluttering whiteness and elusive, graceful and startled movement. In Le Combat homérique,

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1. Heredia, Poésies complètes (Paris, Lemerre, 1924), p. 29.

on the other hand, the simile opens the sonnet and although it effectively emphasizes the barbarousness of the scene, it really suggests nothing further than it actually describes. This technique requires space and runs counter to the need of the sonnet for terseness and tightness. The result here is a slowing of the movement of the poem and a reduction of the first quatrain to something of a purely introductory role.

A second basic point is Leconte de Lisle's preoccupation with the alien quality of the scene. The emphasis on the unfamiliar attitudes and gestures of a vanished people eliminates a possibility of which Heredia makes much capital in his sonnets and on which indeed their success depends. Heredia's epic scenes are conventionally conceived. This may reduce documentary accuracy but it does allow the drawing of general parallels and the use of the sonnet form to highlight the eternally relevant aspects of a given situation. For Leconte de Lisle on the other hand, the whole point is that emotional identification with the peoples described is difficult. The reader must understand them in their historical context. This conception naturally leads to more extended poems where description of strange habits and beliefs can be expanded more fully to capture the reader's imagination. In Le Combat homérique it is with the bestiality of the scene that Leconte de Lisle appears particularly preoccupied but there is little space to develop this perhaps unfamiliar approach to Greek mythology. At the same time there is a failure to capitalize on the sonnet structure to draw more general conclusions. In comparison with

Heredia, a fluffing of the tercets seems particularly apparent. Surely some resounding ending could have been contrived on the figure of Zeus (or even the head of the Gorgon) thus leaving in the reader's mind a final impression of majesty or horror. Leconte de Lisle seems in fact to fall between two stools here. There is no room for development of his particular preoccupations and yet at the same time he scorns the resources of a more conventional interpretation of the past better suited to the limited form of the sonnet.

The role of the sonnet as a descriptive medium is thus inevitably limited for Leconte de Lisle, and the second and larger group of sonnets in the 1860's continues rather trends in theme and structure initiated in Les Oiseaux de proie and Le Sacrifice. In contrast to the sonnets of 1855, it is no longer the "accidents sentimentaux de la vie individuelle" which occupy the attention but what Anatole France terms "émotions intellectuelles."<sup>1</sup> Leconte de Lisle is passionately involved here not with passion itself, but with both fear of death and fear of life, combined with a hatred of sentimental exhibitionism and detestation of a materialistic society. His method in these sonnets is fairly constant and may be illustrated by an examination of one of them, L'Ecclésiaste.

L'Ecclésiaste a dit: Un chien vivant vaut mieux  
 Qu'un lion mort. Hormis, certes, manger et boire,  
 Tout n'est qu'ombre et fumée. Et le monde est très vieux,  
 Et le néant de vivre emplit la tombe noire.

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1. Anatole France, La Vie littéraire I (Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1888), p. 104.

Par les antiques nuits, à la face des cieux,  
 Du sommet de sa tour comme d'un promontoire,  
 Dans le silence, au loin laissant planer ses yeux,  
 Sombre, tel il songeait sur son siège d'ivoire.

Vieil amant du soleil, qui gémissais ainsi,  
 L'irrévocable mort est un mensonge aussi.  
 Heureux qui d'un seul bond s'engloutirait en elle!

Moi, toujours, à jamais, j'écoute, épouvanté,  
 Dans l'ivresse et l'horreur de l'immortalité  
 Le long rugissement de la Vie éternelle.

Poèmes barbares

PC II, 37

The first quatrain is chiefly remarkable for its prosaic quality and is thus strongly reminiscent of the opening stanza of Le Sacrifice. The baldness of the statements corresponds to the disillusion of the speaker. The maxims derived from the Book of Ecclesiastes<sup>1</sup> stand in counterpoint to the versification since the syntactical entity of each overruns the prosodic entity of the single lines. The three resulting enjambements both enhance the bleak prosaic tone of the statements and also throw the references to death and the void into the three important and parallel positions at the beginning of lines 2, 3 and 4.

The second quatrain repeats the pattern of enumeration set in the first quatrain. The rhythm is more regular with no enjambements, though it is varied by the supplementary caesuras in lines 7 and 8, which isolate "dans le silence" and the adjective "sombre."

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1. Ecclesiastes, Ch. IX, vv. 4 and 5: "For to him that is joined to the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. / For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten." Ch. XI, vv. 7 and 8: "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the light of the sun. / But if a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity."

The one sentence of which the quatrain is composed breaks down into a succession of adverbial phrases which indicate the spatial and temporal solitude of the prophet and through him of the whole human race.

The tercets move from statement to invocation, from detached description of a subject and feelings distant in time and place to present emotional involvement. Note the exclamation mark with which line 11 ends. "Vieux amant du soleil" opening the tercets contrasts with the description of Ecclesiastes as "sombre" in line 8. It thus underlines the natural link between the man's values and his pessimism and prepares for the more radical point of view to be advanced by the poet. For him, the prospect of oblivion and darkness is infinitely preferable to that of a continuing life. His fear is that the fear of Ecclesiastes will prove unfounded, that the instinctive urge of humanity towards light, the source and symbol of life, will not be stilled by death, that death will not be "le néant de vivre" of line 4 but "la Vie éternelle" of line 14. The fascinated horror with which this vision fills him is described in the final tercet and contrasts in every way with the ancient prophet's fear of total annihilation. The fragmentation of line 12 into a series of tiny groups reflects this panic and corresponds to and contrasts with the bald maxims which cover the fear of Ecclesiastes in the opening quatrain.

In this instance, only the simplest feature of the sonnet form, the quatrain-tercet opposition, is exploited in any depth. The different views of the ancient prophet and the modern poet are formulated one in the quatrains, one in the tercets. Certain links

are established within this broad framework, for example the repetition of the enumerative technique in lines 1-4 and line 12, or the extension of the opening proverb into the metaphor of line 14. However, very little is made of the more complex structural similarities between different sections of the sonnet. The rule of two rhymes only is maintained in the quatrains, but unlike the descriptive sonnets not the standard enclosed pattern. The prosaic tone of the opening is probably better supported by the slightly more relaxed alternate arrangement. There only seems to be one rhyme of any significance for the meaning of the poem, that of lines 12 and 13 where the notions of fear and immortality are brought into intimate conjunction. The power of the sonnet lies instead in the contrast of tone in the two main sections of the sonnet. The quatrains, especially the first, are detached, even bleak. The tercets are filled with a passionate intensity as the poet questions the prophet's point of view and formulates his own fears. Variations in the quality of the rhyme also underlie this broad contrast. Rhyme in the quatrains is only sufficient but in the tercets, where the poet is emotionally involved in his subject, the rhyme becomes rich.

This schema of statement, description, or image followed by an impassioned cry is the pattern of the majority of sonnets published by Leconte de Lisle in the 1860's and 1870's.<sup>1</sup> On occasion however, Leconte de Lisle adopts a more distinctly militant

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1. For example, Le Voeu suprême, PC II, 228; Aux Morts, PC II, 231; A un Poète mort, PC III, 105; Fiat Nox, PC II, 236; La Mort d'un lion, PC II, 225.

posture and at such times, it is the repetitive possibilities of the sonnet structure which are brought to the fore to give maximum point and force to the poet's criticisms and accusations. Two good examples of this are Les Montreurs and Aux Modernes. The quatrain-tercet division still supports the opposition between the poet and his reactions (tercets) and the scene of behaviour that excites his emotions (quatrains). But there is no corresponding opposition of tone. In Les Montreurs the indignation of the poet pervades the quatrains expressing itself in the exclamatory "Promène qui voudra" (1.3) and the parallel "Déchire qui voudra" (1.7) before achieving its climax in the categorical thrice repeated repudiation of the tercets.

Tel qu'un morne animal, meurtri, plein de poussière,  
La chaîne au cou, hurlant au chaud soleil d'été,  
Promène qui voudra son coeur ensanglanté  
Sur ton pavé cynique, ô plèbe carnassière!

Pour mettre un feu stérile en ton oeil hébété,  
Pour mendier ton rire ou ta pitié grossière,  
Déchire qui voudra la robe de lumière  
De la pudeur divine et de la volupté.

Dans mon orgueil muet, dans ma tombe sans gloire,  
Dussé-je m'engloutir pour l'éternité noire,  
Je ne te vendrai pas mon ivresse ou mon mal,

Je ne livrerai pas ma vie à tes huées,  
Je ne danserai pas sur ton tréteau banal  
Avec tes histrions et tes prostituées.

Poèmes barbares

PC II, 221

In Aux Modernes the opposition between quatrains and tercets is still more muted:

Vous vivez lâchement, sans rêve, sans dessein,  
Plus vieux, plus décrépits que la terre inféconde,  
Châtrés dès le berceau par le siècle assassin  
De toute passion vigoureuse et profonde.

Votre cervelle est vide autant que votre sein,  
 Et vous avez souillé ce misérable monde  
 D'un sang si corrompu, d'un souffle si malsain,  
 Que la mort germe seule en cette boue immonde.

Hommes, tueurs des Dieux, les temps ne sont pas loin  
 Où, sur un grand tas d'or vautrés dans quelque coin,  
 Ayant rongé le sol nourricier jusqu'aux roches,  
 Ne sachant rien faire ni des jours ni des nuits,  
 Noyés dans le néant des suprêmes ennuis,  
 Vous mourrez bêtement en emplissant vos poches.

Poèmes barbares  
 PC II, 352

The sonnet is divided between castigation of man's present state and dire prognostication of his future. Each of the four stanzas of the sonnet, however, repeats the motifs of sterility and death, and quatrains and tercets follow similar patterns of balanced and emphatic repetition: "Sans rêve, sans dessein," "Plus vieux, plus décrépits," "Votre cervelle est vide autant que votre sein," "D'un sang si corrompu, d'un souffle si malsain," "Ne sachant rien faire ni des jours ni des nuits." Extensive alliteration supports the cumulative effect. The only new note in the tercets is the introduction of specific references to money. These constitute the despairing climax of the poet's attack. The closing rhyme of the sonnet completes the process. Eagerly awaited since the end of line 11, it is no resounding finale, but the deliberately prosaic and bathetic "poches."

The predominant use of the sonnet by Leconte de Lisle for his few direct expressions of personal opinion or belief seems dependent on two factors. On the one hand, the form of the sonnet embodies principles of restraint and impersonality and in a sense it can therefore be seen as performing an analogous function to



Leconte de Lisle's choice elsewhere of historical, mythological or zoological subjects. These are the mask assumed by a poet whose instinctive mode, as revealed by his earliest poems, was the Lamartinian one and they are his defences against a lapse into the sentimental exhibitionism he so much deplored. On the other hand, where the more militant pieces are concerned, the brevity of the sonnet and the repetitive and climactic aspects of its structure are excellent vehicles for lapidary comment. In both cases, however, it is noticeable that Leconte de Lisle relies on the main structural framework of the sonnet and is not overly concerned with the regularity or the richness of the sonnet rhyme-scheme. The technique resembles that of Baudelaire in his analytic sonnets.<sup>1</sup> Theme is of prime importance and the sonnet structure of interest only as a way of framing and emphasizing a contrast or argument.

In conclusion, then, it seems that Leconte de Lisle does not make sufficient use of the sonnet to enable him to qualify as an innovator in the form. Furthermore, a majority of his sonnets belong to the established sonnet tradition of argument and rhetoric and, following the lead of Sainte-Beuve, deal with personal expressions of feeling with no great degree of formal subtlety. In the personal sonnets, rhyme-scheme is not very strictly observed. Leconte de Lisle, like Baudelaire, is more concerned with the idea he wishes to put across and is interested in the formal detail of

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1. However Leconte de Lisle, unlike Baudelaire, almost invariably constructs his quatrains on two rhymes, but the order of the rhymes is not strictly observed. Exceptions are Le Parfum impérissable in Poèmes tragiques and Le Présage and La Matinée, PC IV, 198 and 199.

the sonnet only in so far as it provides an emphatic framework for the different stages of his argument. Nevertheless because of the depth of personal feeling, these sonnets are, on the whole, more powerful, more coherent, and more cogent than any produced by the formally more meticulous Banville.

In the descriptive sonnets, on the other hand, strictly regular rhyme-scheme and richness of rhyme enhance the solid construction of the sonnet and reinforce the sense of palpable density associated with the visual description. However Leconte de Lisle's exploration of this field is confined to a very few sonnets, notably Le Sommeil de Leïlah and Paysage polaire. Leconte de Lisle's most significant contribution to the French nineteenth century sonnet seems therefore to lie less in his own sonnet practice than in his development of a general technique of descriptive poetry. His work furnishes the great rebuttal to Lamartine's contention: "La poésie pleure bien, chante bien, mais elle décrit mal."<sup>1</sup> This faculty for plastic description scarcely appears in his own sonnets. Nevertheless Leconte de Lisle has an important role in the history of the genre in the nineteenth century since it is his work which provides the inspiration for José-Maria de Heredia and the sonnets of Les Trophées.

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1. Quoted by G.A. Keiser, Stilstudien zu Leconte de Lisle (Halle, Niemeyer, 1917), p. 56.

Heredia

Les Trophées, published in 1893, contains 117 sonnets in the first edition, 118 in all subsequent editions.<sup>1</sup> The influence of Leconte de Lisle is evident, even without the supporting testimony of the letter preceding the collection, in the choice of historical and mythological subjects, the objective presentation, and the taste for rich and vivid description. The decisive introduction of these aspects of the Parnassian ideal into the sonnet, formerly an almost exclusively lyric mode, is Heredia's great originality in the form.

His earliest poems reveal a groping to find his natural bent. Following his first acquaintance with the work of Leconte de Lisle in 1858, he tries his hand at the epic style in Les Bois américains. However he apparently lacks the vigour and breadth of vision necessary to sustain his theme and the piece remains a fragment. The poems contributed by him to La Conférence La Bruyère<sup>2</sup> in 1862 show a variety of metres and stanzas - Nuit d'été in alexandrine quatrains, Mars six line stanzas of twelve and eight syllables, Ballade sentimentale in five line stanzas in octosyllables, Chanson

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1. The sonnet not included in the 1893 edition was Le Thermodon, first published in La Nouvelle Revue, 15 Feb. 1893. It appears in the 1895 edition of Les Trophées. For details of the role of the sonnet in Heredia's poetic production overall, v. Appendix A.

2. This was an association founded by a group of young law students to "étudier et discuter des questions de littérature, d'art et de philosophie" and to "admirer le beau, rechercher le vrai, respecter le bien." It numbered among its members, besides Heredia, three other future Parnassians, Georges Lafenestre, Emmanuel Des Essarts, and Sully Prudhomme. For further details, v. Miodrag Ibrovac, José-Maria de Heredia. Sa Vie - Son Oeuvre (Paris, Les Presses Françaises, 1923), vol.1, p. 55

seven line stanzas in decasyllables and Coucher du Soleil in alexandrines with a varied rhyme pattern. A la fontaine de la India (1860) seems however to have been his first poem in sonnet form and he soon adopted the genre as his permanent mode.<sup>1</sup> His attitude toward the sonnet is expressed in two almost identical pronouncements, one in a letter to Edmund Gosse quoted in Critical Kit-Kats and one in his speech at the unveiling of the statue of Du Bellay in Ancenis in 1894. To Gosse he writes:

Si je m'en suis tenu au sonnet, c'est que je trouve que dans sa forme à la fois mystique et mathématique, c'est le plus beau des poèmes à forme fixe, et qu'il exige par sa brièveté et sa difficulté une conscience dans l'exécution et une concentration de la pensée qui ne peuvent qu'exciter et pousser à la perfection l'artiste digne de ce beau nom.<sup>2</sup>

In his speech in Ancenis the same terms recur with two significant additions:

Le sonnet par la solide élégance de sa structure et par sa beauté mystique et mathématique, est sans contredit le plus parfait des poèmes à forme fixe. Elliptique et concis, d'une composition logiquement déduite, il exige du poète, dans le choix du peu de mots où doit se concentrer l'idée, des rimes difficiles et précieuses, un goût très sur, une singulière maîtrise.<sup>3</sup>

In both cases Heredia stresses the difficulty of the sonnet form and the precise and coherent conception and execution it

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1. All these poems can be found in the section Sonnets et poèmes divers in Heredia, Poésies complètes (Paris, Lemerre, 1924). All page references to Heredia's poems are those of this edition, henceforth PC.
  2. Edmund Gosse, Critical Kit-Kats (London, Heinemann, 1896), pp. 225-226.
  3. Quoted in Henri Chamard, Joachim du Bellay, Travaux et Mémoires de l'Université de Lille, Tome 8, Mémoire No.24 (Lille, 1900), pp. 521-522.

demands from the poet. There is nothing original or striking in this. In the Ancenis speech however, he is somewhat more specific. On the one hand he refers directly to the need for "des rimes difficiles et précieuses," on the other he makes an illuminating allusion to "la solide élégance" of the sonnet structure. Where rhyme in the sonnet is concerned, Heredia's mature views resemble those of Gautier and of Banville in the Petit Traité. At the beginning of his poetic career, while a contributor to the Revue Française in the early 1860's, he was reproached by Gautier for his "irregular" quatrains<sup>1</sup> but he subsequently abandoned or substantially altered all those sonnets in which they occurred. Thus L'Héliotrope, Le Lis I and II, La Mort d'Agamemnon, Le Triomphe d'Iacchos, Voeu,<sup>2</sup> Les Scaliger, Prométhée and L'Ecran are not included among the sonnets of Les Trophées, while La Mer montante, Pan, La Mort de l'Aigle, Fleurs du feu, La Congue, and La Dogaresse which are included, are all modified to achieve an abba abba arrangement in the quatrains. Where the tercets are concerned, Heredia displays a steadily increasing stringency. From the chronology of composition and reworking, as far as this can be determined from the dates of publication, it seems that until 1876 Heredia made use of the Marot arrangement ccd eed at least as often or possibly more frequently than the ccd ede pattern advocated by Banville; other arrangements also appear in similar proportions. After 1888, however, the

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1. V. supra, pp. 65-66.

2. A different sonnet from that which appears in Les Trophées under the same title.

ccd eed arrangement appears in scarcely one out of five sonnets and other variations are almost completely eliminated.<sup>1</sup> Léon Barracand recounts an incident illustrating Heredia's final strictness on this point:

Une seule fois, je le vis un peu inquiet, à propos d'un sonnet "Quand il pleut," que j'avais dédié à Leconte de Lisle et qui avait plu au cher maître. A quelque temps de là, Heredia m'en reparlait:

- Il est bien, mais ce n'est pas un sonnet.
- C'est un sonnet irrégulier, je le sais. Les rimes des deux tercets ne s'entrecroisent pas comme il faudrait.
- Et comptez-vous en faire beaucoup?
- C'est un des rares que j'aie fait et, je crois bien, le dernier. Je ne m'y sens pas à l'aise.<sup>2</sup>

Such rigorousness is compounded by Heredia's general attitude to rhyme. Like Banville he sees it as a tremplin for the poet:

La rime est une convention, je le veux bien, mais une convention admirable. Les règles n'en ont été fixées qu'après de longues expériences. On a dit qu'il fallait affranchir la rêverie et la pensée des difficultés de la règle. Mais ces difficultés ne sont pas une gêne pour le vrai poète. Elles sont seulement une obligation de recherche, de travail et de perfection. Ainsi, il m'est arrivé, à moi-même, de trouver, par le souci des rimes, des pensées intéressantes. Dans un sonnet, il faut trouver quatre rimes. Tandis que ce souci ne conduit le maladroit qu'à faire des bouts-rimés, il peut obliger le bon poète à introduire un mot qui apporte souvent avec lui une idée nouvelle. La rime devient ainsi un aiguillon qui contraint le poète à un plus grand effort.<sup>3</sup>

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1. V. Jacques Madelaine, "Chronologie des sonnets de José-Maria de Heredia," Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France, XIX (1912), 419.
  2. Léon Barracand, "Souvenirs de Lettres," La Revue de Paris, 1<sup>er</sup> mars 1914, pp. 191-192.
  3. Quoted in Georges Le Cardonnell and Charles Vellay, La Littérature contemporaine (Paris, Mercure de France, 1905), p. 286.

In Les Trophées the complexities of the sonnet rhyme-scheme are increased by Heredia's preference for rich and rare rhyme. Stymphale is a good example. In the quatrains of this sonnet Heredia elects to use the rhyme -ale and to avoid repeating the title. He nevertheless manages to produce one rare, three rich<sup>1</sup> and two leonine rhymes: "dévale," "rafale," "Omphale," "trionphale." In the absence of manuscript versions it is difficult to say just how far in fact Heredia's sonnets are conditioned by choice of rhyme. According to F. Brunot and Ch. Bruneau in their Précis de grammaire-Histoire de la langue française, bouts-rimés are definitely the method:

Un curieux poème inachevé nous montre comment travaillait de Heredia.

• L'Autodafé

Riff  
serge  
vierge  
juif  
  
suif  
verge  
cierge  
vif

Cet homme seul debout blond à la grosse lippe  
Grave et blême, vêtu de noir, c'est Don Philippe  
Le peuple le regarde avec un vague effroi

Et quand la chair prend feu sous l'huile qui l'arrose  
Il croit voir s'animer le visage du roi  
Au joyeux flamboiement de l'Autodafé rose.<sup>2</sup>

No source reference is given however, and it is perhaps significant that no sonnet of this name appears in Les Trophées or indeed anywhere in the 1924 Lemerre edition of the Poésies

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1. Four, if one stretches a point and remembers the close relationship between the fricatives f and v.
  2. F. Brunot and Ch. Bruneau, Précis de grammaire - Histoire de la langue française (Paris, Masson, 1949), p. 586.

complètes. Heredia in fact insists that richness of rhyme is not on its own enough:

Voyez Sully Prudhomme, ses vers riment très bien. Malheureusement, les mots qui sont au bout des vers sont toujours ceux qui ne devraient pas s'y trouver: ce sont les moins expressifs. C'est ce qui fait que sa poésie est banale.<sup>1</sup>

In his own sonnets particular attention is given to the placing of important words at the rhyme. Le Huchier de Nazareth, for example, uses the tools of the carpenter's trade for some of its rhymes: "bédane," "polissoir," "gouge," "varlope." Beyond this however, richness of rhyme and regularity of sonnet rhyme-scheme are rarely in Heredia's sonnets gratuitous preoccupations. In the Ancenis speech the reference to "la solide élégance" of the sonnet's structure offers an important key to Heredia's success in the form. The solid construction of the regular sonnet form reinforced by richness and rarity<sup>2</sup> of the rhyme gives an almost material dimension to his dense and vivid descriptions. Other formal factors play their part, the solidity of the alexandrine, for example,<sup>3</sup> or the extensive use of alliteration and assonance.

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1. Quoted in Antoine Albalat, "Les 'Samedis' de J.-M. de Heredia," La Revue Hebdomadaire, XXVIII (1919), 57.
  2. Albert Thibaudet, La poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé (Paris, Gallimard, 1926), pp. 228-229, notes the single exactly defined sense of the rare vocabulary of Parnassian poetry and the static effect it produces.
  3. This is the only metre used by Heredia in Les Trophées, or indeed in any of his sonnets in the 1924 edition of the Poésies complètes. Ibrovac does mention a single octosyllabic example in the album of one of Heredia's cousins and quotes the first quatrain, op.cit., vol.1, pp. 49-50. Heredia's attitude towards the alexandrine is given in the preface to his edition of André Chenier, Les Bucoliques (Paris, Maison du Livre, 1907), p. xxix. (cont....)



In contrast then to Banville and the general run of Parnassian poets, Heredia's strict observance of a regular rhyme pattern and his preference for rich rhyme are not empty formal exercises. Instead he makes the form work for him and transforms it into an integral part of the theme of his sonnets.

From the first critics have stressed the descriptive power of Heredia's sonnets and have equated them with painting or sculpture. Antoine Albalat's remarks in 1894 are typical:

Le sonnet, tel que l'a exécuté M. de Hérédia [sic], n'a plus rien de commun avec l'ancien sonnet de nos pères et peut passer pour une chose absolument neuve dans notre langue. Au lieu d'une poésie d'idées, nous avons une poésie d'images. Plus de compliment, mais une peinture. On admirait des pensées; on voit un tableau. D'un côté, du dessin léger; de l'autre, de la couleur en relief. Ils finissaient autrefois par une pointe; aujourd'hui, c'est par la synthèse du tableau même. Le sonnet ancien était un air à variation pour un motif de la fin. Celui de M. de Hérédia [sic] est une superposition d'images accumulant leur effet sur la dernière; ce n'est plus de la peinture: c'est de la sculpture.<sup>1</sup>

However there has been little detailed analysis of how these

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(cont...) "Avec l'hexamètre grec, l'alexandrin français est le plus sonore, le plus solide, le plus suave, le plus souple des instruments poétiques. Il est composé, ainsi que le dit Ronsard, de douze à treize syllabes, suivant qu'il est masculin ou féminin. Ce grand vers contient donc tous les vers, d'une à treize syllabes, et au moyen de l'enjambement, il semble pouvoir se prolonger indéfiniment. Malgré cette élasticité que l'enjambement prête à la phrase poétique, l'alexandrin ne perd jamais sa structure, sa personnalité, grâce au temps fort de la césure, si mobile qu'elle soit, et surtout grâce au rappel de la rime qui, on le doit remarquer, même dans les vers féminins de treize syllabes, sonne toujours sur la douzième."

1. "José-Maria de Heredia et la poésie contemporaine," La Nouvelle Revue, 1<sup>er</sup> déc. 1894, pp. 530-531.

effects are achieved or just how far in fact the analogy between the sonnet form and a painting can be carried.<sup>1</sup>

Heredia's pictorial technique in the sonnet can perhaps be most easily evaluated in those pieces directly linked with pictures or objets d'art, especially those which carry no specific historical or mythological reference. Le Tepidarium, first published in Le Siècle littéraire of 15 November 1875 is an excellent example of Heredia's adaptation of a pre-existing work. It is based on Chassériau's painting, Le Tepidarium de Pompeïa, first exhibited at the 1850-51 Salon and subsequently hung in the Louvre.<sup>2</sup> Gautier describes the painting in his article on Chassériau to be found in Les Beaux-Arts en Europe, and it is interesting to compare his remarks with the presentation of the picture in Heredia's sonnet.

Gautier writes:

Ce tableau est un de ceux de l'auteur que nous aimons le mieux. Au salon de 1850-51, il obtint un très-grand succès. Ces jeunes femmes, les unes demi-nues, les autres ayant repris leurs vêtements, assises dans des attitudes charmantes de rêverie et de nonchalance, rajustant leurs cheveux, consultant le miroir de métal poli, cherchant une parure dans leur boîte à bijoux, ou causant entre elles de la prochaine représentation de la Casina de Plaute au théâtre comique, des luttes de gladiateur au cirque ou de la danseuse Gaditane, nouvellement arrivée, forment un bouquet vivant très agréable aux yeux; la femme qui s'étire avec un mouvement de lassitude voluptueuse, celle qui tend ses mains au reflet de la flamme, une troisième

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1. The impressionistic approach of A.R. Chisholm in his article "Artistic transpositions. An appreciation of three sonnets by José-Maria de Heredia," French Quarterly III (1921), 36-39 is not very helpful.

2. A reproduction of this painting can be seen in Miodrag Ibrovac, Les Sources des Trophées (Paris, Les Presses françaises, 1923), facing p. 70.

ramassant ses draperies autour d'elle en montrant  
un dos blanc et souple où s'évaporent les  
dernières perles du bain, une autre, au visage  
majestueux et fier, qui s'isole de tout ce babil,  
sont les plus remarquables figures de la toile,  
meublée jusque dans ses coins de têtes aussi  
purement antiques que des médailles ou des camées  
du meilleur temps.<sup>1</sup>

And now Heredia:

La myrrhe a parfumé leurs membres assouplis;  
Elles rêvent, goûtant la tiédeur de décembre,  
Et le brasier de bronze illuminant la chambre  
Jette la flamme et l'ombre à leurs beaux fronts pâlis.

Aux coussins de byssus, dans la pourpre des lits,  
Sans bruit, parfois un corps de marbre rose ou d'ambre  
Ou se soulève à peine ou s'allonge ou se cambre;  
Le lin voluptueux dessine de longs plis.

Sentant à sa chair nue errer l'ardent effluve,  
Une femme d'Asie, au milieu de l'étuve,  
Tord ses bras éternés en un ennui serein;

Et le pâle troupeau des filles d'Ausonie  
S'enivre de la riche et sauvage harmonie  
Des noirs cheveux roulant sur un torse d'airain.

PC, p. 75

In contrast to the Gautier account with its description of the whole group of women and then of four individual figures, Heredia, refining his material in accordance with the exigencies of his chosen form, isolates within the group only "la femme qui s'étire avec un mouvement de lassitude voluptueuse." The complexity of the picture is thus reduced to a straight contrast. Even so Heredia is still left with the far from straightforward task of

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1. Gautier, Les Beaux-Arts en Europe (Paris, Charpentier, 1856-57), vol.1, No. XIX, "M. Chassériau," pp. 256-257. Note Gautier's inability to refrain from embroidering on the scene ("Causant entre elles ..." etc.) This tendency to enlarge and discuss explains the diffuse presentation of such "transpositions d'art" as Melancholia (from Dürer) or Le Thermodon (Rubens' Battle of the Amazons). The contrast between the latter poem and Heredia's sonnet of the same name reveals the unsuitability of the sonnet for Gautier's talents. For similar reasons, it seems highly unlikely that Gautier would ever have made a good painter.

creating in his sonnet an effect similar to the pictorial one. How does he use the sonnet structure to suggest the placing and values of the different figures in the painting? The opening line establishes the atmosphere of the scene in the most general - and in the case of "la myrrhe" the least visual - of terms. The women are not yet mentioned directly. There is merely an awareness of a state of physical relaxation where individual identities and even that of the group are all but submerged. To this is added in line 2, after the semi-colon, a corresponding mental relaxation "Elles rêvent." At the same time, the women emerge as distinguishable though undifferentiated figures within the group. Heredia then passes on in lines 3 and 4 to more specifically visual effects, moving again from the general scene - the bronze tints created by the flickering firelight (the word "bronze" being stressed by the alliteration with "brasier") - to the fair complexions ("beaux fronts pâlis") of the group of women.

The opening lines of the second quatrain continue the colour references, progressing once again, as in lines 3 and 4, from the surroundings to the women. In the second half of line 6, however, a new element is introduced - a diversification within the group of women itself. As often happens, Heredia uses a temporal expression, in this case the adverb "parfois," to suggest something of the simultaneous diversity possible in the visual arts. The increasing fragmentation of the scene into the detail of individual figures is however inhibited by the return in line 8 to a general description of the whole scene, comparable to that of line 1.

The quatrains as a unit are characterized by certain obvious symmetries. There is of course the regular rhyme-scheme but in addition there are clear syntactic and thematic balances. Lines 1 and 8 are parallel both in the generality of their description and in their syntactic detachment from the body of the quatrains. The references to colour are concentrated in the centre of the total quatrain unit with lines 3 and 4 forming a parallel to lines 5 and 6. Furthermore there is a certain parallelism between lines 2 and 7, both of which contain the verbs relating to the women. At the same time as facilitating these symmetrical arrangements however, the sonnet structure is also a sequential one. Each quatrain also functions as an individual unit. Thus the placing and frequency of verbs in the second quatrain are different from those of the first and the rhythm in this stanza shows a much greater variety. This interplay between the symmetrical and the sequential features of the sonnet structure has a most important role to play in underlining the theme of variety gradually emerging from unity and the progressive differentiation both of the group from the background and of individuals within the group.

This process reaches its climax in the first tercet. The whole stanza is devoted to the description of a single figure, and this structural isolation and consequent emphasis completes the movement from the general to the individual latent in the quatrains. The embryonic stirrings of line 7 give way to a single action with its own clearly defined character ("énervés," "ennui").

In the final tercet with the return of colour references

which recall those of the opening quatrain, the "femme d'Asie" is to some extent reabsorbed into the general context of the picture. Her identity as an individual figure gives way to a concentration on the tones of her skin and hair which can be combined in a visual contrast with those of the general mass ("troupeau") of women. At the same time, however, it is still her colouring which concludes the sonnet and, as a result of this positioning, it is her figure that leaves the strongest impression on the reader's mind.

The sonnet has thus become an equivalent for the painter's canvas, its structural divisions, its parallels, its rhyme-scheme, no longer strengthening the twists and turns of an argument but defining instead a pictorial pattern. The symmetrical possibilities of the sonnet structure are used in association with patterns of theme and syntax to express something of the formal balance of the painting, the complementary relationships of different colours, movements and figures. The regularity of the sonnet rhyme-scheme and the rich quality of the rhyme, particularly in lines 11-14, provide a linguistic equivalent to "la riche et sauvage harmonie" of the tableau. Patterns of alliteration and assonance increase the phonetic density. Finally the exploitation of the sequential and climactic aspects of the sonnet creates a parallel for the visual prominence of a particular figure and suggests how it emerges from and harmonizes with the total scene.

A similar technique is apparent in La Dogaresse, conceived, as indicated in line 2 of the sonnet, after the manner of Titian. It was first published in the Revue des Lettres et des Arts of

27 October 1867. We shall examine the definitive version of Les Trophées. Nevertheless it is useful to bear in mind the 1867 variants and both versions are therefore quoted.

La Dogaresse

Le palais est de marbre, où, sous de hauts portiques,  
Circulent des seigneurs tels qu'en peint Titien;  
Et, sur l'ample splendeur des rouges dalmatiques,  
Pendent de lourds colliers dans un goût très ancien.

Les yeux calmes, où luit l'orgueil patricien,  
Regardent à travers les feuillages antiques,  
Sous le pavillon clair d'un ciel vénitien,  
Etinceler l'azur des mers Adriatiques.

Et, tandis que l'essaim des brillants cavaliers  
Traîne la pourpre en feu par les blancs escaliers  
Joyeusement baignés dans la lumière bleue,

Indolente et superbe, une Dame, à l'écart,  
Se tournant à demi dans des flots de brocart,  
Sourit au négrillon qui lui porte la queue.

1867 version, PC, pp. 315-316

La Dogaresse

Le palais est de marbre où, le long des portiques  
Conversent des seigneurs que peignit Titien,  
Et les colliers massifs au poids du marc ancien  
Rehaussent la splendeur des rouges dalmatiques.

Ils regardent au fond des lagunes antiques,  
De leurs yeux où reluit l'orgueil patricien,  
Sous le pavillon clair du ciel vénitien  
Etinceler l'azur des mers Adriatiques.

Et tandis que l'essaim brillant des Cavaliers  
Traîne la pourpre et l'or par les blancs escaliers  
Joyeusement baignés d'une lumière bleue,

Indolente et superbe, une Dame à l'écart,  
Se tournant à demi dans un flot de brocart,  
Sourit au négrillon qui lui porte la queue.

Version in Les Trophées, PC, p. 107

The scene described in the sonnet is made up of two groups of figures, "l'essaim des brillants Cavaliers" and the detached group "à l'écart" formed by the lady and her page. The capitalization of both "Cavaliers" and "Dame" in the Trophées version stresses this

opposition. So too does the introduction of the personal pronoun "ils" (for "les seigneurs") as the subject of the main clause of the second quatrain. In the 1867 version, the construction making "les yeux" the subject of the main verb had meant that "les seigneurs" unlike "la Dame" were nowhere subject of a main clause and had tended to mute the sense of their solidarity as a group.

But how is this simple division incorporated in the sonnet in such a way as to give a sense of spatial values and to indicate the relative prominence of the two groups? The first line of the sonnet sets the background for the scene, then the focus sharpens and moves in towards the "seigneurs" themselves and details of their appearance. The second quatrain opens with the same concentration on "les seigneurs" but as the stanza progresses, the perspective once again widens to include other aspects of the background. The total pattern of the quatrains thus emerges as one of encirclement, a motif supported by the self contained syntax, and, in the Trophées version, by the regular rhyme-scheme. The first tercet offers a resumé of the elements of the scene described in the quatrains. The "Cavaliers" in their red and gold summarize the description of lines 3 and 4,<sup>1</sup> the white staircases recall the marble palace of line 1, and the blue light echoes the description of sea<sup>2</sup> and sky

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1. Note that the correlation is less precise in the first version. This lacks the reference "au poids du marc ancien" in the first quatrain and has "la pourpre en feu" as opposed to "la pourpre et l'or" in line 10.
  2. Note the substitution of the significant word "lagunes" for the inappropriate "feuillages" in the definitive version of the second quatrain.



in the second quatrain. The repetition of sound in the initial couplet rhyme helps to underline the sense of completion induced by this recapitulation of the scene of lines 1-8. The new rhyme in line 11, on the other hand, prepares for the opening of a new dimension. So too does the conjunction "tandis que." Such conjunctions in Heredia often have little real temporal, concessive, or causal force but are one of his favourite devices for establishing the distribution of figures within a scene.<sup>1</sup> The first tercet, then, combines the different planes of palace, "seigneurs," sky, and sea into one structural and syntactic unit and into one integrated background for the vision of the final tercet. The isolation of the lady in a position of emphasis in the closing stanza of the sonnet gives her an importance that far surpasses that of the "Cavaliers." While they fade into the background (through their encirclement by their surroundings in the quatrains, their amalgamation with their surroundings in the first tercet and their absence from the second tercet), she remains triumphantly distinct. Her unique position is moreover emphasized by an absence of the brilliant colours of lines 1-11, though the "négrillon" does still offer an exotic note. Heredia concentrates instead on a certain quality of bearing and attitude. Her movement "se tournant à demi" differentiates her from the mass of the crowd, contrasts with the stationary verbs of the quatrains and reverses any suggestion of a general move in one direction or plane as implied in the first tercet. At the same

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1. They also have the advantage of providing a strong articulatory link between the different sections of the sonnet, thus reinforcing the total effect of solidity.

time, however, it is interesting to note that she represents not so much a departure from all the features of the scene in which she appears, as a quintessential realization of them. The vivid colours of lines 1-11 may have disappeared, but in doing so they leave the way clear for the emergence of a more fundamental motif. The patrician spirit, wealth, and power of Venice are all epitomized in the vision of the Dogaress smiling at her slave. The visual climax of the sonnet is thus an emotive one also.

Clearly there is a suggestive element here that an exclusively pictorial interpretation would inevitably overlook. The best of Heredia' sonnets are in fact those which go beyond the purely descriptive and which use the resources of the formal structure not only to create an illusion of spatial perspective, but also to bring out some enduring truth about human ambition, fear, or desire. This fruitful tension between the particular and the general, the visual and the abstract, is most successfully achieved in those sonnets with mythological or historical subjects. Here Heredia can indulge his passion for vivid description and at the same time, by careful selection of a scene that summarizes a whole chain of events or typifies a basic emotion, can suggest a relevance to that scene that transcends its purely visual aspect. Like the classical dramatists, Heredia exploits the restrictions of his form. He relies on a pre-existing acquaintance with the subject in the mind of his reader and uses the brevity of the sonnet to enhance the general significance or the fatefulness of the scene it depicts. Antoine et Cléopâtre, probably the most famous of all

Heredia's sonnets, demonstrates the depth of historical perspective and the range of emotional observation that can thus be achieved in the fourteen line framework:<sup>1</sup>

Tous deux ils regardaient, de la haute terrasse,  
L'Égypte s'endormir sous un ciel étouffant  
Et le Fleuve, à travers le Delta noir qu'il fend,  
Vers Bubaste ou Saïs rouler son onde grasse.

Et le Romain sentait sous la lourde cuirasse,  
Soldat captif berçant le sommeil d'un enfant,  
Ployer et défaillir sur son cœur triomphant  
Le corps voluptueux que son étreinte embrasse.

Tournant sa tête pâle entre ses cheveux bruns  
Vers celui qu'enivraient d'invincibles parfums,  
Elle tendit sa bouche et ses prunelles claires;

Et sur elle courbé, l'ardent Imperator  
Vit dans ses larges yeux étoilés de points d'or  
Toute une mer immense où fuyaient des galères.

PC, p. 85

On one level the sonnet is pictorially organized. In the first quatrain Heredia sets the scene, portraying the two protagonists high on their terrace looking out over the land of Egypt. Then in the next two stanzas the focus moves inwards to the embrace of Anthony and Cleopatra, stressed by the present tense and the tautology of the relative clause in line 8. The second quatrain looks at the figure of the Roman leader, the first tercet at that of the Egyptian queen. Finally, in the second tercet, the focus moves inwards once again. Attention is concentrated on the eyes of Cleopatra and on the new scene glimpsed by Anthony in their

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1. Note that Le Cydnus and Soir de bataille, the two other sonnets of the Antoine et Cléopâtre group, are much less successful. This is because Heredia does not stay close enough to the familiar centre of the Anthony and Cleopatra story and thus forfeits the suggestive aura provided by the reader's own memories of it.

depths. This picture within a picture provides the climax to the visual organization of the sonnet. Clearly, however, a pictorial analysis of this sort is hopelessly inadequate on its own, and from the start non-visual elements are of the greatest significance.

The elevated position of Anthony and Cleopatra in the first quatrain, though on one plane precisely located in an exotic Egyptian setting, is of course a symbolic one. Roman conqueror and Egyptian queen stand at the height of their fortunes. Similarly the portrayal of the oppressive heat and the sluggish river has a metaphorical dimension. The reader with his prior knowledge of the Anthony - Cleopatra story can see there an ominous foreshadowing of Anthony's inability to resist Cleopatra's fascination. As the claustrophobic heat imprisons men in sleep, so too will Anthony capitulate to his fatal passion. In the second quatrain visual references are replaced by abstract ones and motifs of conquest and defeat receive a more specific emphasis. Anthony is a "soldat captif" and one captured by "un enfant." The rhyme with "trionphant" stress the ambiguities of his situation, triumphant, it seems, both in war and love but soon to be the victim of his passion. In the first tercet the motif of victory and defeat is kept alive by the reference to the "invincibles parfums" with which Cleopatra surrounds Anthony. Then line 12, while still stressing Anthony's quality as conqueror, depicts him in an attitude that summarizes his capitulation to Cleopatra and foreshadows his defeat by the forces of Octavian:

Et sur elle courbé, l'ardent Imperator

In the quatrains imperfect tenses describe the historical and emotional background. In the tercets these are replaced by the two past definite verbs "elle tendit sa bouche" and "il vit" which summarize the causal chain between the love of Anthony and Cleopatra, visually represented in the embrace, and the final débâcle at Actium. The same intimate association between the fascination of Cleopatra and the disaster to come is rendered imagistically in the final tercet as the depth and brilliant gold flecks of Cleopatra's eyes are metamorphosed into a vision of an endless sea covered with fleeing ships. As often in Heredia, the main force of the sonnet lies in the imaginative power of the closing scene for which the rest of the sonnet serves largely as a preparation. The background of glory and dominion in the first quatrain and the interplay of concepts of victory and defeat in the second quatrain and first tercet achieve their full significance only within the added perspective of the closing lines. The postponement of Anthony's vision to line 14, the important position of "Toute" opening the line, the two hiatuses all contribute to the importance of the scene. Léon Daudet also describes how Heredia's slight stammer, "un bégaiement qui ne dédoublait pas les syllabes, mais les différait," gave added relief to the concluding line of this sonnet:

Toute une mer im-m-mense où fffuyait des galères.<sup>1</sup>

Heredia thus supplies a perfect model to Banville's call in the Petit Traité for a final line containing "la pensée du sonnet

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1. Léon Daudet, Fantômes et vivants (Paris, Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1914), p. 98.

tout entière":

chaque mot des quatrains doit faire deviner - dans une certaine mesure - le trait final, et ... cependant ce trait final doit surprendre le lecteur, - non par la pensée qu'il exprime et que le lecteur a devinée, mais par la beauté, la hardiesse et le bonheur de l'expression. C'est ainsi qu'au théâtre un beau dénouement emporte le succès, non parce que le spectateur ne l'a pas prévu - il faut qu'il l'ait prévu, - mais parce que le poète a revêtu ce dénouement d'une forme plus étrange et plus saisissante que ce qu'on pouvait imaginer d'avance.<sup>1</sup>

The final tercet supplies both a visual and an emotive climax to the sonnet. Pictorial and abstract patterns are inseparably woven throughout. Furthermore phonetic patterns also play an important part. The regular rhyme-scheme of the sonnet is more than a convenient way of delineating main structural blocks and the richness of the individual rhymes is not an empty formal exercise. Phonetic density increased by patterns of alliteration and assonance supports both the lushness of the scene described in the first quatrain and the sense of oppression associated with it. Furthermore the important motif of capture finds formal expression in the enclosed rhyme of the quatrains, reinforced by richness and by the standard repetition.

Heredia thus makes all the aspects of his sonnet work together in a way which Banville never achieves. One final feature should perhaps also be noticed that is typical of Heredia and characteristic of the extreme economy of his sonnets. Anthony and Cleopatra, named in the title, have no space wasted on their names in the body

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1. Banville, Petit Traité de poésie française, Oeuvres IX (Paris, Lemerre, 1891), p. 207. V. supra p.243.

of the sonnet. Instead Anthony is "le Romain" and "l'Imperator," epithets underlining the ambiguity of his situation. Cleopatra, on the other hand, is merely "elle" and her fascination all the more plainly suggested for the vagueness with which it is evoked. By contrast, the exotic nature of the opening scene is firmly established by Heredia's inclusion in his sonnet of the names of two cities of ancient Egypt, carefully chosen too for the support they bring to the alliterative patterns of the first quatrain.

Fuite de Centaures is constructed according to the same technique of visual and emotive climax as Antoine et Cléopâtre. In harmony with the title, however, the element of movement is much more pronounced in this sonnet than in those so far considered and the piece is a good illustration of another important characteristic of Heredia's sonnet technique, the interweaving of rhythmic and formal patterns to achieve an effect of repressed energy.

Ils fuient, ivres de meurtre et de rébellion,  
Vers le mont escarpé qui gardent leur retraite;  
La peur les précipite, ils sentent la mort prête  
Et flairent dans la nuit une odeur de lion.

Ils franchissent, foulant l'hydre et le stellion,  
Ravins, torrents, halliers, sans que rien ne les arrête;  
Et déjà, sur le ciel, se dresse au loin la crête  
De l'Ossa, de l'Olympe ou du noir Pélion.

Parfois, l'un des fuyards de la farouche harde  
Se cabre brusquement, se retourne et regarde,  
Et rejoint d'un seul bond le fraternel bétail;

Car il a vu la lune éblouissante et pleine  
Allonger derrière eux, suprême épouvantail,  
La gigantesque horreur de l'ombre Herculéenne.

PC, p.18

On a visual plane the sonnet is divided into two dark masses.

The two quatrains portray in similar terms the total group of the centaurs. Then in the first tercet a variation is introduced into the scene by the detachment of a single figure. As in Le Tepidarium this is effected through the temporal adverb "Parfois," and here the result is to enhance the impression of panic-stricken movement by a momentary reversal of its general direction. The centaur "se cabre, se retourne, et regarde." Finally in the closing tercet, the second dark mass of the poem, "La gigantesque horreur de l'ombre Herculéenne," counterbalances and dominates the group of the centaurs and provides a climax to the visual element in the sonnet.

As with Antoine et Cléopâtre, however, a purely pictorial interpretation of this kind does scant justice to Heredia's skill as a sonnetist. The description of the centaurs' flight is also a study in fear and Heredia makes skilful use of the sonnet structure in order to bring out this point. The explanation of the panic of the centaurs is postponed to the final tercet and the reader is thus made to experience a sense of anticipation which is in some way akin to the awful expectancy experienced by the centaurs and which undergoes a similar increase in intensity as the sonnet progresses towards its appointed conclusion. In addition the final tercet, by means of the favourite Heredian construction of accusative and infinitive based on "voir," combines vivid observation with subjective reaction. The shadow of Hercules is seen through the centaur's eyes and Heredia is thus able to conclude his poem on a striking visual description while at the same time situating that grandiose and terrifying vision as the end-term of a process of



increasing panic.

Skilful rhythmic manipulation in combination with the fixed structure and strictly regular rhyme-scheme also enhances the resources of the sonnet and brings substantial support to the theme of frenzied fear. The dynamic aspect of the scene is emphasized at the outset by the detachment of "Ils fuient" at the beginning of line 1, but the impression of flight is scarcely maintained in the rest of the quatrain. The description in lines 1 and 2 of a purposeful flight with a refuge as its destination gives way in lines 3 and 4 to an evocation of a panic that lacks any sense of direction. This development is supported by the return to a regular rhythm in lines 2-4 and by the many devices suggestive of stasis: the enclosed arrangement of the rich rhyme, the coincidence of syntactic and prosodic units, and the alliterations and pronounced regularity of the caesura in line 3. This process is apparently reversed in the second quatrain. "Ils franchissent" corresponds to "Ils fuient" at the beginning of the first quatrain, but this time the sense of movement is maintained by a different and more continuous arrangement of the syntax within the metrical framework and by a more fragmented rhythm. Lines 5 and 6 show a strong syntactic continuity since "Franchissent" points forward to its direct objects in the following line. Lines 7 and 8 are linked by enjambement. As far as rhythm is concerned, line 5 divides 4/8, line 6 2/2/2/6, line 7 3/3/6, and line 8 3/3/6 also. At the same time, however, beneath the rhythmic disturbances which convey the speed and violence of the gallop, the quatrain repeats the

encircling and reiterative patterns of stanza one. There again are the alliterations, the rich rhymes,<sup>1</sup> the enclosed rhyme-scheme, the syntactic division of the stanza into two distinct and equal sections, the same type of rhythmic pattern in the opening line. Under a superficial appearance of movement, no real progress has been made. The restrictions and symmetries of the sonnet form in combination with patterns of rhythmic disturbance stress both the urgency of the flight and its lack of direction<sup>2</sup> and ultimate futility. The first tercet is characterized by a proliferation of verbs and by rhythmic disturbances which parallel those of the second quatrain. At the same time, any sense of positive action continues to be counteracted by the contradictory nature of the verbs involved and by the persistence of patterns of alliteration. Then in the closing tercet the paralysing effect of fear is powerfully underlined by a rhythmic pattern of the greatest regularity. All the caesuras are strongly marked and line 14 ends the sonnet on a superb note of balanced alliteration.

Once again Heredia uses the sonnet form in a most subtle and intensive manner. An effect analogous to that of the visual arts is achieved by using the opposition of quatrains to tercets and tercet to tercet to differentiate between the different focusses of interest in the scene and by framing the shadow of Hercules in

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1. The phrase "l'hydre et le stellion" seems primarily the result of the desire for richness of rhyme. It could perhaps be argued however that the word "hydre" provides a pointer to the figure of Hercules.
  2. Lines 7 and 8 echo the reference to "le mont escarpé" in line 2 but there is no longer one fixed goal for the centaurs' flight. In addition no specific link is established between the mountains and the fugitives (cp. "Vers ..." in l.2).

the closing line of the poem so that it is this aspect which will linger longest in the reader's mind. But the development of other possibilities of the sonnet form increase the significance and interest of the poem. The sonnet also builds to an emotional climax, passing from purposeful flight, to increasing panic, to the terror of the closing vision. The interplay of patterns of movement and stasis brings strong support to this aspect of Heredia's conception. The fixed and strictly observed structures of the sonnet in conjunction with inner rhythmic disturbance are of key importance in suggesting the essential quality of fear, the frenzied effort towards escape combined with the inability to arrive at purposeful action.

As analysis of Antoine et Cléopâtre and Fuite de Centaures has shown, the abstract or emotional element has an essential part to play in giving a historical or mythological description a relevance that transcends its pictorial bounds. Heredia's achievement is that he not only adapts the sonnet structure to express the formal organization of a particular scene, but that he seizes all the possibilities of his regular form and uses them to underline the latent non-visual aspects of his chosen spectacle. This consideration of his work has so far concentrated on the descriptive sonnets since these are in general the most memorable and most suggestive of his pieces, but it is also important to realize that in a larger number of his sonnets than one might suppose, the process operates, so to speak, in reverse. Emphasis on Heredia's

skill as a painter in words has tended to obscure the fact that many of the Trophées, in particular of the section La Nature et le Rêve, are primarily lyric poems. Here it is the emotion which has the dominant role and the visual effects which heighten its portrayal, by giving solid form to delicate and elusive states of mind. The best example of Heredia's use of the sonnet in this direction is certainly La Sieste.

Pas un seul bruit d'insecte ou d'abeille en maraude,  
 Tout dort sous les grands bois accablés de soleil  
 Où le feuillage épais tamise un jour pareil  
 Au velours sombre et doux des mousses d'émeraude.

Criblant le dôme obscur, Midi splendide y rôde  
 Et, sur mes cils mi-clos alanguis de sommeil,  
 De mille éclairs furtifs forme un réseau vermeil  
 Qui s'allonge et se croise à travers l'ombre chaude.

Vers la gaze de feu que trament les rayons,  
 Vole le frêle essaim des riches papillons  
 Qu'enivrent la lumière et le parfum des sèves;

Alors mes doigts tremblants saisissent chaque fil,  
 Et dans les mailles d'or de ce filet subtil,  
 Chasseur harmonieux, j'emprisonne mes rêves.

PC, p. 142

Heredia makes skilful use of the symmetrical and contrastive potential of the sonnet to achieve a sense of almost total identity between the lyrical and the descriptive elements. The first quatrain and the first tercet depict a scene from which the poet is absent, while in the second quatrain and the second tercet he is at its centre. This alternate pattern of thematic stress within the four part structure of the sonnet has the advantage of avoiding a process of schematization all too easily reached if the sonnet is used as a binary form describing a scene in the quatrains and then indicating its metaphorical significance in the tercets. Here the

emergence of any but a visual dimension to the scene is extremely gradual. The first quatrain sets the stage - the total silence, the universal drowsiness, the escape from the sun in the restful greenish light that filters through the leaves. The second quatrain, picking up "accablés de soleil" (1.2) first moves the focus to the activity of the sun. "Rôle" stands in contrast to the absence of marauders described in line 1 and the participle "criblant" reinforces the idea of aggression. A second depth of shade and sleep paralleling that of the first stanza is then introduced in the figure of the poet himself. The light plays through his eye-lashes as it plays through the leaves, and the impression of luminous criss-cross latent in the verb "tamiser" in line 3 and sustained and intensified in "criblant" in line 5 now finds a much more extensive realization in lines 7 and 8. The first tercet reverts to a description of the general scene. The motif of the web of light remains more prominent however than was initially the case with "tamise." At the same time a change can be noted to a vocabulary much vaguer than that of the first quatrain. There are no specific references to woods, leaves, jewel-bright moss but merely to their fragrance, no reference directly to the sun but instead to a general luminosity stressed by the appearance in fairly close succession of "feu," "rayons" and "lumière." In this scene, only the butterflies have any distinct identity and they attract the attention by the contrast they offer with the absence of bee and insect noted in the opening line of the poem and by the suggestive force of their qualifying adjective "riches." These features prepare for the

revelation of the metaphorical significance of the scene in the final stanza. Here attention is once again focussed on the poet, who this time appears as an active force at the centre of the scene. Like the sun in stanza two, he is a hunter. "Chasseur" in the final line forms a concluding contrast to the scene described in line 1. However this similarity is merely hinted with the lightest of touches, the aim being not the elaboration of some symbolic link between sun and poet but the suggestion of the fundamental unity of the poet's dreaming state of mind and the warmth, beauty and light of a summer noon. In like fashion the equivalence between "papillons" and "rêves" is not made explicit but merely emerges from their presence in adjacent stanzas. The important thing is not the separate existences of a personal and an external world but their indivisibility, a perception stressed throughout by the motif of the web which reaches a climax in the final tercet in the semantic play on "fil" and "filet."

The constant interchange between the two worlds is reproduced formally in the criss-cross of thematic stress noted in the four part structure of the poem. At the same time, the repetition of the web motif in each of the stanzas of the sonnet also stresses their inseparability. The rhyme-scheme works unobtrusively in the same direction, the tercets inevitably falling together as a single group, the regular rhyme-scheme of the quatrains achieving the same effect in slightly more obvious fashion in the first part of the sonnet.

For this sonnet then as for those discussed earlier the

judgement of Jules Lemaitre holds good:

... ces sonnets ... comme tous les sonnets n'ont  
que quatorze vers mais contiennent autant de choses  
que s'ils en avaient soixante.<sup>1</sup>

Heredia's range as a poet is not a wide one. He has none of the philosophical interests of Leconte de Lisle, none of the individual intensity of emotional experience to be found in Baudelaire, but in the sonnet he finds a form which enhances his ability for brief but significant description. However the technique is not an easy one and not all the sonnets are equally successful. Visual and abstract elements have to be balanced in such a way that neither completely dominates the structural arrangements of the sonnet, thus reducing the suggestiveness fundamental to the best of Heredia's work. In many of the early sonnets this was not the case. In a piece such as L'Héliotrope, for example, the analogy Sun-Love, heliotrope - "mon âme," so exactly coincides with one of the basic structural features of the sonnet, the prominence of the final tercet, and so completely disregards any of the other possibilities of the form, that all sense of poetic suggestion is lost. Similarly Les Scaliger and Prométhée, though not developing an analogy for the poet's feelings, show the tendency of the poet to obtrude on his subject matter, this time to preach to his reader using the 11:3 and 8:6 divisions of the sonnet respectively as a facile framework to this end.<sup>2</sup> In Les Trophées itself, the same pattern

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1. Jules Lemaitre, Les Contemporains, 2<sup>e</sup> série (Paris, Boivin, s.d.), p. 56.

2. These pieces can be found in PC, pp. 245, 250, 251. Note that these three sonnets and Mer montante, La Conque, and La Mort de l'Aigle are all early pieces.

persists in a number of sonnets. These include in particular three pieces of the 1860's, Mer montante, La Conque and La Mort de l'Aigle all inserted in the section La Nature et le Rêve. Heredia modified the rhyme-scheme of all three from its original arrangement to a regular pattern but in each case the presentation of a banal analogy within the main structural divisions of the sonnet - the 8:6 division or the 11:3 - still persists and dominates the piece.

La Mort de l'Aigle

Quand l'aigle a dépassé les neiges éternelles,  
 A sa vaste envergure il veut chercher plus d'air  
 Et le soleil plus proche en un azur plus clair  
 Pour échauffer l'éclat de ses mornes prunelles.

Il s'enlève. Il aspire un torrent d'étincelles.  
 Toujours plus haut, enflant son vol tranquille et fier,  
 Il monte vers l'orage où l'attire l'éclair;  
 Mais la foudre d'un coup a rompu ses deux ailes.

Avec un cri sinistre, il tournoie, emporté  
 Par la trombe, et, crispé, buvant d'un trait sublime  
 La flamme éparse, il plonge au fulgurant abîme.

Heureux qui pour la Gloire ou pour la Liberté,  
 Dans l'orgueil de la force et l'ivresse du rêve,  
 Meurt ainsi d'une mort éblouissante et brève!

PC, p. 157<sup>1</sup>

In those sonnets which are primarily visually based, the danger lies less in a sterile schematization of this kind than in a general thematic and formal preciosity. The analogy between the enamel and the sonnet of which Heredia like many other Parnassians was so fond, is not on the whole a very hopeful one for the survival of the genre as a major poetic form. It links it with an art of miniaturization where outlines are hardened and sharpened and delicacy and nuance sacrificed in the interests of a boldly intricate design. Compression of material in Heredia's work is not always distinct from a certain imaginative poverty. There is a tendency to be satisfied with a

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1. Note the freedom of the rhythm within the first tercet, stressing the downward plunge of the dying eagle.



decorative exterior, to settle for the bibelot rather than for some scene of overpowering beauty or human significance, to accept the diminished horizons of the artisan, sculpting "le combat des Titans au pommeau d'une dague."<sup>1</sup> This seems particularly true of the medieval and Renaissance cycle in Les Trophées where the sonnets generally fail to recapture any sense of the cultural spirit of which they are relics. Perhaps Heredia's visual talent was more attuned to the plastic imagination, violence, and vividness of the Ancient World than to the Christian tradition with its emphasis on spiritual rather than material values. A sonnet, such as Epiphanie, for example, carries no intimation of a spiritual significance. It is merely a pretty picture and the sonnet structure emphasizes this aspect with the mannered repetition in line 14 of the reversed form of line 1.

Donc, Balthazar, Melchior et Gaspar, les Rois Mages,  
 Chargés de nefs d'argent, de vermeils et d'émaux  
 Et suivis d'un très long cortège de chameaux,  
 S'avancent, tels qu'ils sont dans les vieilles images.

De l'Orient lointain, ils portent leurs hommages  
 Aux pieds du fils de Dieu, né pour guérir les maux  
 Que souffrent ici-bas l'homme et les animaux;  
 Un page noir soutient leurs robes à ramages.

Sur le seuil de l'étable où veille saint Joseph,  
 Ils ôtent humblement la couronne du chef  
 Pour saluer l'Enfant qui rit et les admire.

C'est ainsi qu'autrefois, sous Augustus Caesar,  
 Sont venus, présentant l'or, l'encens et la myrrhe,  
 Les Rois Mages Gaspar, Melchior et Balthazar.

PC, p. 98

The same reduction of scope is at times also apparent in the cycle La Nature et le Rêve. Heredia often seems incapable of

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1. Sur le Pont Vieux, PC, p. 108.

expressing the grandiose aspects of the natural world except in terms of human artefacts. Thus the sky becomes a man-made decoration, an enamel, heraldic shield, or stained-glass window:

Blason céleste

J'ai vu parfois, ayant tout l'azur pour émail,  
Les nuages d'argent et de pourpre et de cuivre,  
A l'Occident où l'oeil s'éblouit à les suivre,  
Peindre d'un grand blason le céleste vitrail.

Pour cimier, pour supports, l'héraldique bétail,  
Licorne, léopard, alérion ou guivre,  
Monstres, géants captifs qu'un coup de vent délivre,  
Exhaussent leur stature et cabrent leur poitrail.

Certe, aux champs de l'espace, en ces combats étranges,  
Que les noirs Séraphins livrèrent aux Archanges,  
Cet écu fut gagné par un Baron du ciel;

Comme ceux qui jadis prirent Constantinople,  
Il porte en bon croisé, qu'il soit George ou Michel,  
Le soleil, besant d'or, sur la mer de sinople.

PC, p. 151

The preciousness of the description is formally underlined by the stylization of the regular sonnet rhyme-scheme and by the tour de force of the closing rhyme. The trick is a favourite one with Heredia and Valéry makes gentle fun of the trait in his letter to Louÿs of 21 December 1890 where he proposes a sonnet "à Heredia" ending with the poet's name and the accompanying rhyme "irradia" or "incendia."<sup>1</sup> In this instance the virtuoso quality of the technique perfectly matches the poet's general theme. But though the admiration of the reader may be aroused by the sheer ingenuity of Heredia's presentation, the intricacy of the description hardly compensates for its lack of depth.

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1. Valéry, Lettres à quelques-uns (Paris, Gallimard, 1952), p. 42. The sonnet, A J.M.D.H., Retour des Conquistadors, was sent to Louÿs on 7 Jan. 1891: "Le soir victorieux dans les vagues s'allume./Et, sur l'eau vierge, ainsi que des rires hautains/Les clairons messagers des fastueux destins/Emerveillent la guivre éparsée dans la brume.// Car, de sa voile immense ouvrant la mer qui fume/Le navire se cabre, écrasé du butin,/Sur l'orbe du soleil chimérique et lointain/Et soulève, éperdu, l'éblouissante écume!//Vois! Sur la proue en flamme, un grand Conquistador/Vers Palos triomphale élève un lingot d'or/ Dont l'éclat se souvient de l'héroïque grève!//Et, gloire de mes yeux, alors irradia/Le pur métal mûri dans les grottes du Rêve,/ L'or fabuleux que tu ravis, Heredia!..." Université de Paris, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet. Paul Valéry pré-Teste, Cat. of exhibition of 3-23 Dec. 1966, p. 30.

A facile division of the sonnet into scene and signification on the one hand, exploration of extremes of descriptive and formal preciousness on the other, may then entail a considerable reduction in the suggestive effect of the different pieces concerned. These pitfalls are magnificently avoided in sonnets such as Antoine et Cléopâtre, Fuite de Centaures, or La Sieste. Nevertheless, one question mark still remains. Heredia's limited range of subjects and his constant use of a single genre, and of its most strictly regular form, results inevitably, as we have noted, in a recurrence of many technical devices. These include the isolation of a single figure by the use of "seul" (spatial separation) or "parfois" (temporal separation); indication of the different planes of a picture by temporal or causal conjunctions; the use of the accusative and infinitive construction to combine description with suggestion; emphasis on the role of the final tercet to fix a closing vision and hint at its deeper significance; the intertwining of rhythmic and structural patterns to achieve a sense of repressed energy. The effect over a hundred and eighteen sonnets is of course one of monotony, a charge which Les Trophées was fortunate to escape at the time of its publication, largely as a result of the circumstances of its composition. As an article in the Fortnightly Review noted, following Heredia's death in 1905:

The rock against which a sonnet sequence inevitably dashes itself owing to its unavoidable monotony was ... avoided, thanks to the pleasure which those who had known and eulogized his craftsmanship in advance took in identifying and reciting aloud one after another of their special favourites.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Thomas Seccombe and Louis Brandin, "José-Maria de Heredia (1842-1905). The Evolution of the Sonnet," Fortnightly Review, Dec. 1905, p. 1077.

The quality and the spaced out composition and publication of Heredia's sonnets did much to counteract the impression of monotony inevitable in a collection covering a fairly narrow range of subject matter and utilizing a single form of fixed pattern and limited dimensions. But these conditions do not generally apply to the vast mass of sonnets which accompanied the growing reputation of the Parnassian poets after 1866. For many the fixed form of the sonnet seemed an easy recipe for instant poetry, and by the late 1860's and early 1870's, the sonnet was little less than a fetish at least among the minor writers of the group. "Il y a quelque dix ans," wrote Emile Goudeau in Le Chat noir of 29 December 1882, "la poésie avait disparu de ce monde, étouffée sous les pyramides de sonnets que les Parnassiens avaient renversées sur elle."<sup>1</sup> The sonnet thus came to typify all that was most mechanical and most stultifying in the Parnassian concept of poetry. A piece such as Tristan Corbière's sonnet on the sonnet in Les Amours jaunes (1873) amusingly underlines the mechanical aspect:

I SONNET

AVEC LA MANIERE DE S'EN SERVIR

Réglons notre papier et formons bien nos lettres:

Vers filés à la main et d'un pied uniforme,  
Emboitant bien le pas, par quatre en peloton;  
Qu'en marquant la césure, un des quatre s'endorme...  
Ça peut dormir debout comme soldats de plomb.

Sur le railway du Pinde est la ligne, la forme;  
Aux fils du télégraphe: - on en suit quatre, en long;  
A chaque pieu, la rime - exemple: chloroforme.  
- Chaque vers est un fil, et la rime un jalon.

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1. Quoted in Noel Richard, A l'aube du Symbolisme (Paris, Nizet, 1961), pp. 40-41.

- Télégramme sacré - 20 mots. - Vite à mon aide ...  
 (Sonnet - c'est un sonnet -) ô Muse d'Archimède!  
 - La preuve d'un sonnet est par l'addition:  
 - Je pose 4 et 4 = 8! Alors je procède,  
 En posant 3 et 3! - Tenons Pégase raide:  
 "O lyre! O délire! O ..." - Sonnet - Attention!<sup>1</sup>

At the other end of the scale, Rimbaud's Vénus Anadyomène deliberately distorts and degrades the Parnassian cult of beauty symbolized in the myth of the birth of Venus and simultaneously devalues the favourite Parnassian form of the sonnet:

Comme d'un cercueil vert en fer blanc, une tête  
 De femme à cheveux bruns fortement pommadés  
 D'une vieille baignoire émerge, lente et bête,  
 Avec des déficits assez mal ravaudés;

Puis le col gras et gris, les larges omoplates  
 Qui saillent; le dos court qui rentre et qui ressort;  
 Puis les rondeurs des reins semblent prendre l'essor;  
 La graisse sous la peau paraît en feuilles plates;

L'échine est un peu rouge, et le tout sent un goût  
 Horrible étrangement; on remarque surtout  
 Des singularités qu'il faut voir à la loupe ...

Les reins portent deux mots gravés: Clara Vénus;  
 - Et tout ce corps remue et tend sa large croupe  
 Belle hideusement d'un ulcère à l'anus.<sup>2</sup>

The Parnassians' identification of a correct sonnet with a good sonnet, indeed their tendency to consider anything in sonnet form, regular or not, as ipso facto an acceptable poem, certainly encouraged an enormous amount of second and third-rate sonnet writing. Amongst the three poets we have studied, Banville's sonnets reveal a typical looseness and lack of coherence. He does

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1. Charles Cros, Tristan Corbière, Oeuvres complètes, in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1970), p. 718.
  2. Rimbaud, Oeuvres complètes in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1972), p. 22. Note the frequent disruption of the rhythm of the alexandrine, and the presence of 4 rhymes in the quatrains.

however nearly always maintain the strictest regularity of rhyme-scheme. But the Parnassian aesthetic did have its fruitful aspects also. In particular the solid frame of the regular sonnet, reinforced by rich and rare rhyme, provided Heredia with the perfect formal counterpart for his dense and vivid descriptions. Furthermore Parnassian ideas are the rearing ground for sonnetists of the calibre of Verlaine and Mallarmé.