

THE SONNET IN FRANCE
FROM BAUDELAIRE TO VALÉRY

VOLUME TWO

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
The University of Leeds, Department of French

August 1976

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CHAPTER IV

Verlaine

The frequency with which Verlaine employs the sonnet form varies substantially and significantly in the various phases of his career in accordance, it seems, firstly with his début in the Parnassian group,¹ then with his movement away from the Parnassians and his development (following the lead of Baudelaire) of an aesthetic of suggestion as formulated in the Art poétique of 1874, and finally with his attempt, after the break with Rimbaud, to reconstruct his inner life within the framework of the Catholic religion and its institutions.²

As M. Borel points out in his introduction to the Pléiade edition of the Oeuvres poétiques complètes, p. xiv, the majority of Verlaine's earlier commentators tended to concentrate on the biographical aspects of their subject.³ More recently critics such as J.-H. Bornecque, Octave Nadal, and J.-P. Richard have discussed the quality of Verlaine's vision and experience as it is revealed in the poems themselves. However despite a general recognition of the Art poétique as an important document in the development of nineteenth century French poetry, relatively little space has been devoted to detailed examination of

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1. For details of his contributions to the 1866 and 1869 Parnasse contemporain see p. 359 and its notes.
 2. For details of the numbers of sonnets in the different collections, see Appendix A.
 3. The page references to Verlaine's poems are those of this edition, henceforth OPC. The full reference is Verlaine, Oeuvres poétiques complètes, edited by Y.-G. Le Dantec and Jacques Borel in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1962). This is probably the most accessible edition for the poems. Note that it is the 1968 printing that has been consulted. For Verlaine's prose (articles, letters, etc). reference will be to the 2 vol. ed. of the Oeuvres complètes (Paris, le Club du meilleur livre, 1959-60), introduced by Octave Nadal with studies and notes by Jacques Borel. Henceforth OC.

particular aspects of Verlaine's poetic technique, to an assessment of the ways in which it reflects the general preoccupations of the poet or to the question of just how far Verlaine does in fact depart from traditional prosody. The problem of Verlaine's frequent use of the sonnet, which, when taken in conjunction with the counsels of the Art poétique, seems to constitute something of an anomaly, has thus roused less comment than might have been expected.

The place in any general work for a discussion of technique is inevitably brief. However M. Martino does manage in his Verlaine to reserve a little space for the sonnet. He situates Verlaine's preference for the form as a Parnassian trait and then goes on to outline Verlaine's subsequent departures from this model:

Verlaine a fait ... à toutes les époques de sa vie, grand usage du sonnet; c'était suivre la plus grande préférence de l'école de l'art et du Parnasse ...

Mais Verlaine, s'il a aimé cette forme traditionnelle, s'est accordé beaucoup trop de liberté dans la façon d'en user; il a vite brisé les règles trop étroites des traités de versification. Rien qui rappelle chez lui la tenue officielle des Trophées! Ses sonnets, dits réguliers, offrent une grande diversité dans la disposition des rimes et celle des quatrains surtout; au total, cela fait un assez bon nombre de combinaisons voisines, mais différentes. Mais ce sont là de petites libertés. Dès les Poèmes saturniens, Verlaine désarticule et déguise ce beau rythme traditionnel.¹

As examples of this, he cites Nevermore and Résignation (to which he gives the general title of the section which it opens - Melancholia) and L'Allée from Fêtes galantes, concluding:

Ces essais, parmi bien des sonnets de bon et de respectueux disciple, pouvaient paraître d'amusantes fantaisies: une cabriole devant l'autel; de fait ils sont très rares dans les premiers recueils. Mais après Sagesse, le nombre des sonnets irréguliers augmente sensiblement; à la fin ils sont quelquefois plus nombreux que les sonnets réguliers.²

1. Pierre Martino, Verlaine (Paris, Boivin, 1944), pp. 170-171.

2. Ibid., p. 172.

This unqualified stress on regularity and irregularity is somewhat misleading since it tends to obscure the fact that apparently minor changes may in reality be more significant and more profound than grosser but possibly gratuitous distortions. But in a brief survey of the type possible in a general work, it is no doubt inevitable for the attention to be caught by those major departures from the norm represented by the "sonnet renversé" or by rhyme-schemes where the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes is expanded or perhaps even ignored i.e. by sonnets of quite definitely irregular pattern. This is the case in the three sonnets instanced here. The later sonnets do, as M. Martino contends, show a considerable increase both in variations to the sonnet form of this more extreme type and also as regards their "regularity" more narrowly defined. Only a small proportion of the Dédicaces, 22 out of 90 sonnets or 25%, follow a strictly regular rhyme-scheme, i.e. the patterns abba abba ccd eed or abba abba ccd ede or abba abba followed by tercets on two rhymes only. This can be opposed to 5 out of 11 or 50% in the Poèmes saturniens, 14 out of 21 or 66% in Jadis et Naguère¹ and 11 out of 22 or 50% in Sagesse. The other 68 sonnets of Dédicaces include wide variations of form.² Statistical facts of this sort are,

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1. Several of these sonnets, as indicated in Appendix A, date from the 1860's.
 2. There are 2 "sonnets renversés" (A Paterne Berrichon, A Louis et Jean Jullien), tailed sonnets (A E. pour ses étrennes, A mon éditeur - Richesse), metrical experiments of all kinds, not only with "impairs," 5, 7, 9 and 11 syllable lines, but even with a 14 syllable line (A Laurent Tailhade), and a range of heterometric sonnets with the strangest combinations of metres (No. XLIX A * * * 9/8/9/11 - 9/9/8/8 - 8/9/8 - 10/10/12, A Jean Richepin 3/8/12/12 - 3/8/12/12 - 3/8/12 - 3/8/12, A Raymond Maygrier 8/7/7/8 - 8/7/7/8 - 7/10/14 - 7/10 (by dint of counting "rien" as disyllabic)/14, A Henri Bossane 12/4/12/4 - 12/4/12/4 - 12/4/12 - 12/4/12, A Mme J... en vers libres 11/14/12/14 - 10/12/12/12 - tercets all alexandrines). Rhyme-schemes show equal variety with all masculine sonnets (A Leon Vanier, Suite au premier sonnet), assonance rather than rhyme (A Mlle. Adèle "rouge - bouche"), rhymes without partners (A Un Passant abba abba cde ffe) and a trick of using related rhymes for the masculine and feminine endings (A Maurice Boucher, where the first quatrain is all masculine rhymes "soldat - d'or - encor - état" to which correspond in the second quatrain the feminine rhymes "date - arbore - pore - constate").

however, of relatively little importance in themselves. The arrangement of rhyme, the choice of metre, the variations on the traditional form of the sonnet, only take on significance when they are studied with reference to the theme and imagery of the whole poem. By themselves they can offer little clue either to the originality of the poet or his skill as a sonnetist. As M. Martino indicates, the increasing capriciousness of the Verlainian sonnet after Sagesse is in fact an index of the poet's negligence. Formal variation is associated with pedestrian themes and old conceptual patterns, with conventional rhetoric or facile colloquialism. Number 73, A Henri Bossane, will serve to illustrate the point:

Bon imprimeur de la première édition
 De Dédicaces,
 Vous vîntes à Paris dans une intention
 Des plus cocasses:
 S'agissait de me voir, de m'interviewer
 Pour, la province,
 Apprendre ce que pouvait agir et rêver
 Ce moi si mince.
 Or il advint qu'au jour où j'eus le cher plaisir
 De vous connaître,
 J'étais chez moi, rideaux tirés sur la fenêtre,
 En manches de chemise et chaussons de loisir,
 Avec deux femmes!!!
 Et vous: "Ce n'est donc pas CE prince des infâmes!"

OPC, p. 608

In contrast to the two Baudelairian pieces, Le Chat and La Musique, discussed on pages 190 and 225, the mixing of metres within the sonnet form does not correspond to any requirement of the theme. The Dédicaces are full of mechanical tricks of this type, which are in fact but a cover for the failing inspiration of the poet. As such they are curiosities worthy of no more than a passing remark and of little interest for this study which will limit its enquiry to the sonnets up to and including those of Sagesse.

No doubt the most detailed examination of the Verlainian sonnet is supplied by M. Claude Cuénot in his monumental volume Le Style de Paul Verlaine, pp. 463-496. It consists of a brief historical resumé of the fortunes of the sonnet form in France followed by statistics on the rhyme-schemes of Sainte-Beuve, Musset and Baudelaire which illustrate the increasing freedom of the external form of the sonnet. In comparison with these poets, and especially with Baudelaire, Verlaine stands out, in the sonnets up to and including Sagesse, as an upholder of the regular sonnet form:

En somme Verlaine est un traditionnaliste qui de temps en temps s'amuse, mais quand il joue, ses jeux sont plus hardis que ceux de Baudelaire.¹

From the basis of this statistical survey, M. Cuénot proceeds to examine the possibility of a link between variations of rhyme and the shaping of theme within a given sonnet, but concludes that it is "assez vain sauf, dans quelques cas (Nevermore, L'Allée, Sonnet boiteux, are among those instanced), de chercher à préciser les rapports entre le thème, pris en lui-même et la forme du sonnet." However, "ce qu'on peut et doit tenter d'éclaircir, c'est comment la pensée s'adapte aux strophes du sonnet."² This leads M. Cuénot to a discussion of the potentiality of the sonnet which he classifies as essentially a "genre mineur" (using "mineur" in its musical sense) on account of the imbalance in its structure between the quatrains and the tercets:

Dans les quatrains, type normal de strophes, la pensée poétique se déploie librement, sans entraves. Dans les tercets, la pensée poétique perd de son ampleur et de son volume, elle devient plus aiguë, plus concise, plus nerveuse et aboutit à une pointe, à une idée ou une image frappantes et concises ... Nous avons défini par

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1. Claude Cuénot, Le Style de Paul Verlaine (Paris, Centre de Documentation Universitaire, 1963), p. 469.
 2. Ibid., pp. 471-472.

là le type "idéal" du sonnet, autrement dit le sonnet mineur, celui où, conformément à la structure même des strophes, la pensée vers la fin devient plus fine, plus aiguë, tel un cône renversé qui reposerait sur la pointe. Le sonnet est un genre naturellement "mineur" et c'est peut-être une des raisons pour lesquelles le poète a été séduit par cette forme.¹

The relative fragility of the tercets (in the purely physical sense at least) is then linked to the Verlainian insistence on evanescence and evaporation. The definition of the sonnet as essentially "mineur" might well be debated as a general proposition; in the case of Verlaine, however, Cuénot's contention does appear largely valid. What is questionable, however, is the methodology of Cuénot in his demonstration of the point. What is one to make of such self-defeating statements as this one, purporting to describe the role played by the final tercet in the sonnet Angoisse:

- . Une conclusion, même ornée d'une image poétique est nécessairement plus concentrée. L'emploi du tercet est tout à fait naturel.²

Such false logic means that the most important aspects of Verlaine's use of the sonnet are not explored and that attention is diverted from the fundamental problem of the correlation between the frequency of Verlaine's use of the sonnet and the flowering and fading of his vision of a poetry of nuance and impression, which attempts to convey a sensation in its immediacy and ephemerality. The idea of Verlaine's use of the sonnet not to condense and resume but to dissolve and dissipate is not properly worked out and is not situated within the context of a chronological development. There is no real investigation of the different patterning factors at work in the form and no real attempt to show how or if these are modified over the years.

1. Ibid., pp. 472-473.

2. Ibid., p. 473.

Verlaine's early sonnets, as might be expected, reflect the prevailing fashion of the day and are generally in the Parnassian idiom. His first known sonnet, "O Sirnium, cap au gazon fleuri," written while still at school, already reveals the facility of the schoolboy for the imitation of a model. The piece, vaguely reminiscent in the tercets of Du Bellay and "Heureux qui comme Ulysse," is a rendering of a Latin original. The choice of the sonnet form in this context has the appearance of a standard schoolboy exercise and the poem is of little intrinsic interest. Either through lack of knowledge or inability within the framework of a translation to meet the strictest requirements of the sonnet form, the quatrains are on four rhymes. A certain juvenile daring is however apparent in the enjambement of lines 12-13 which places the possessive article in the rhyming position:

. Aussi, salut, cap Sirnium et toi, son
 Bleu miroir, lac qu'une forêt ombrage.
 Gai! que la joie emplisse la maison. OPC, p. 13

The Parnasse contemporain of 1866 contained eight poems by Verlaine, including the three sonnets Vers dorés, Mon Rêve familial, and Angoisse, which was printed in the final section Sonnets.¹ The 1869 Parnasse contemporain had five, including the two sonnets Sur le Calvaire and La Pucelle.² These sonnets, along with others published in the Poèmes saturniens or later on in Jadis et Naguère reveal the ambiguities of Verlaine's position in Parnassian company. Verlaine himself commented

1. The other five poems included in the 1866 Parnasse contemporain were Dans les Bois, Il Bacio, Cauchemar, Sub Urbe, and Marine. All five were included in the Poèmes saturniens, together with the sonnets Mon Rêve familial and Angoisse, its title altered to L'Angoisse.

2. The other three poems included in the 1869 Parnasse contemporain were Les Vaincus, L'Angéhus du Matin and La Soupe du Soir. These three poems and La Pucelle were included in Jadis et Naguère.

on this fact in his article "Critique des Poèmes saturniens" in 1890:

... j'avais, dis-je, déjà des tendances bien décidées vers cette forme et ce fond d'idées, parfois contradictoires, de rêve et de précision ...

OC II, 300

Even at this early stage, Verlaine is already divided between his proclivity for the dream and a surrender to pure sensation, and a correspondingly strong desire for an ordered and regular existence. The sonnet in his work is always involved in this dichotomy.

The Parnassian aesthetic to some extent satisfies the second of these two yearnings, since its insistence on technique and control, as exemplified in the preference of its practitioners for forms such as the sonnet, seems to provide a definite barrier against drifting, dream and hallucination. Vers dorés offers clear support for this view:

L'Art ne veut point de pleurs et ne transige pas,
Voilà ma poétique en deux mots: elle est faite
De beaucoup de mépris pour l'homme et de combats
Contre l'amour criard et contre l'ennui bête.

Je sais qu'il faut souffrir pour monter à ce faite
Et que la côte est rude à regarder d'en bas.
Je le sais, et je sais aussi que maint poète
A trop étroits les reins ou les poumons trop gras.

Aussi ceux-là sont grands, en dépit de l'envie,
Qui dans l'âpre bataille ayant vaincu la vie
Et s'étant affranchis du joug des passions,

Tandis que le rêveur végète comme un arbre
Et que s'agitent, - tas plaintif, - les nations,
Se recueillent dans un égoïsme de marbre.

OPC, p. 22

The contempt for the passive existence of "le rêveur" and the admiration for the effort of will involved in the achievement of an attitude of calm detachment has its counterpart firstly in the initial choice of the sonnet and secondly in the precise structuring of the form. The argument of the poem follows a simple pattern - statement of the poetic (first quatrain), assertion of the difficulties of the advocated course (second quatrain), consequential greatness of those who realize the ideal of complete detachment (tercets). Within each

of these three sections, there is a noticeable preoccupation with the achieving of an effect of balance and symmetry. The succinct formulation of line 1 is amplified by a parallel arrangement of repeated constructions in lines 3 and 4:

De beaucoup de mépris pour l'homme et de combats
Contre l'amour criard et contre l'ennui bête.

The second quatrain is composed of two equal sections, each consisting of the opening assertion, "Je sais" and associated object clauses. In addition, line 7 is balanced on a third repetition of "Je sais" and the division of line 8 between the two direct objects, one in each hemistich, echoes not only the "je sais" repetition but also those of lines 3 and 4.¹ The tercets provide a confrontation between the achievements of the great and the weaknesses of the rest, lines 10 and 11 opposing lines 12 and 13 and thus composing a sort of chiasmic structure within the six-line framework of this section of the sonnet. The final line restating the poetic of line 1 in terms of the marble metaphor realizes an overall symmetry in the sonnet.

For a purist, the one doubtful note might be the question of the rhyme-scheme, for though the sonnet is on five rhymes only, those of the quatrains are alternate and in addition occur in a reversed arrangement in the second quatrain. However the result of this change of pattern is a chiasmic symmetry in the overall arrangement of rhyme in the quatrains, which echoes the general theme of a deliberately adopted stasis.

A more important note of divergency is however to be found in the number of enjambements occurring in the quatrains. In the first stanza, ll. 2-4, this produces a rhythmic pattern of 9/3 - 8/4 - 6/6 across the twelve

1. Note also the chiasmic arrangement of line 8.

syllable unit of the alexandrine line. Similarly in the second quatrain, lines 7 and 8 are divided rhythmically into a pattern of 3/5/4 - 6/6. Such non-coincidence of metre and syntax tends to undermine the symmetries and parallels noted above and suggests that the equilibrium portrayed in the sonnet is a more fragile one than the poet himself would care to admit. Even at this early stage the Parnassian idea already seems at risk.

The desire for emotional detachment which produced on the one hand a concentration on technique and a preference for the complications of a fixed form, is also demonstrated in the "realistic" content of many Parnassian sonnets. Verlaine's use of this type of theme in his sonnets pre-1870 is thus very probably less of an anomaly than a critic such as Octave Nadal would have one believe.¹ The extreme regularity of form of all these sonnets (the only exceptions are the early L'Apollon de Pont-Audemer [1864] and Vers dorés [1866]) and their almost naturalistic description are two aspects of the same attempt to realize an ideal of stability and order within the known form of reference of a traditional form of versification on the one hand and of everyday reality on the other. For this reason, Nadal's assertion of Verlaine's parodic intention in, for example, L'Apollon de Pont-Audemer, seems a highly debatable point. On the other hand, many of Verlaine's Parnassian sonnets do have an undertone of disquiet foreign to the ideal of detachment. One thinks of the morbid note in A Horatio, Le Squelette and Le Clown.² The break with Parnasse becomes clearly evident with Verlaine's contributions to the Album zutique, and in his parody of the sonnets of

1. Octave Nadal, Introduction to OC, unpaginated.
 2. Included in Jadis et Naguère.

Heredia and Banville, along with that of the "dizains" of Coppée. It is also interesting to note that none of the purely Parnassian sonnets found their way into the Poèmes saturniens.

The Parnassian idiom was not, of course, the only model available to Verlaine. His article in Xavier de Ricard's periodical L'Art of 16 November, 1865, reveals the young poet's admiration for the modernity of Baudelaire's handling of the eternal themes of lyrical poetry with its emphasis on "l'homme physique moderne avec ses sens aiguisés et vibrants."¹ Questions of technique however occupy relatively little space and it is the Parnassian aspects of the Baudelairian technique which receive the strongest stress - the distrust of inspiration, the control retained by the poet over the most vivid and ostensibly spontaneous emotions. There is no direct reference to that quality of nuance and suggestion which was to occupy a central place in Verlaine's aesthetic and to be developed by him beyond the rationalizations and rhetoric still persisting in Baudelaire, to convey the aimless drift between dream and reality which is at the heart of Verlaine's own experience. The comments on form are couched instead in terms of the prevailing aesthetic and its preoccupation with poetry as a craft:

... nul plus que Baudelaire ne connaît les infinies complications de la versification proprement dite. Nul ne sait mieux donné à l'hexamètre à rimes plates cette souplesse qui seule sauve de la monotonie. Nul n'alterne plus étonnamment les quatrains d'un sonnet et n'en déroule les versets de façon plus imprévue.

OC I, 66

The observation on the sonnet gives the reader little insight into Baudelaire's originality in the use of the form. In a sense, it is little more than a polite rendering of Gautier's adverse reaction

1. OC I, 54.

to the Baudelairian sonnet (v. supra p. 64). There is no indication of an appreciation of Baudelaire's ability to transform the sonnet on occasion from an instrument of argument and demonstration into a quasi-musical composition. However, the musicality of the poet has not in fact escaped the commentator, as his following remark makes plain:

... là où il est sans égal, c'est dans ce procédé si simple en apparence, mais en vérité si décevant et si difficile, qui consiste à faire revenir un vers toujours le même autour d'une idée toujours nouvelle et réciproquement; en un mot à peindre l'obsession.

OC, I, 66

But Verlaine indicates only the larger patterns of repetition in Baudelaire's poems and ignores the more subtle system of echoes which he from time to time achieves in the sonnet, a fixed form but one distinguished specifically by the absence of any set pattern of refrains. A brief reference to the rhythmic audacities of Baudelaire concludes the article. This is interesting since it was precisely here that Verlaine's greatest innovations were to be made; the young poet, let it be noted, fails to indicate to his reader that such daring in Baudelaire is only of a very occasional nature. Verlaine's own experimentation with traditional rhythms would be much more far-reaching and of course has a substantial impact on his use of a fixed form such as the sonnet.

The sonnets included in Poèmes saturniens are generally those which bear a clear affinity to Baudelairian practice. (The exceptions would seem to be Résignation with its proliferation of proper names in the first three lines and the closing rejection of "la rime assonante" in the manner of the Parnassians and the satiric Une grande dame and Monsieur Prudhomme.) The title of the section in which eight of these are grouped, Melancholia, recalls the theme of "spleen" in Les Fleurs

du Mal and some of the pieces are little more than pastiches of the Baudelairian ambiguities of mistress-mother, mistress-madonna or mistress-sister.¹ Much of the imagery of Baudelaire is reproduced: autumnal decline (Nevermore), the motif of battle (Lassitude cf. Baudelaire, Sonnet d'automne), the ravening beasts (A une femme cf. Baudelaire, Causerie), the wandering boat (L'Angoisse cf. Baudelaire, La Musique). But beneath these surface similarities, a profound divergency is concealed. Baudelaire had used the sonnet form to investigate the gap between the real and the ideal and the schism within human nature itself, sometimes analysing the struggle of "la Conscience dans le Mal," sometimes concentrating on a single aspect and using the symmetries of the sonnet to suggest the perfect and unified nature of the ideal or the stasis of total despair. The vision of Verlaine is at once more limited and more fragile. He exists on the nebulous borders of reality and the dream and his poetry is concerned with those indefinable, bitter-sweet moments where the one merges into or floats away from the other and the mind no longer perceives a distinction between them. In Poèmes saturniens this is most fully realized, not in any of the sonnets, but in the section Paysages tristes, where a sinuous syntax, short and some cases unusual metre,² insistent repetition and interweaving of key motifs of theme and sound are all calculated to produce a kaleidoscopic effect suggesting the release of sensation from all rational control.

1. Similarly Femme et Chatte in the section Caprices (OPC, pp. 74-75) perpetuates the Baudelairian female-cat analogy though in a much more brittle and precious manner.

2. See in particular the five syllable line of Soleils couchants and the mixture of three and four syllable lines in Chanson d'automne.

Une aube affaiblie
 Verse par les champs
 La mélancolie
 Des soleils couchants.
 La mélancolie
 Berce de doux chants
Mon coeur qui s'oublie
 Aux soleils couchants.
 Et d'étranges rêves,
 Comme des soleils
 Couchants sur les grèves,
 Fantômes vermeils,
 Défilent sans trêves,
 Défilent, pareils
 A des grands soleils
 Couchants sur les grèves.

Soleils couchants, OPC, pp. 69-70
 My underlining

The sonnets of Melancholia, however, beneath the veneer of the lucid and rationally controlled perspective suggested by the very choice of the form, convey something of the same impression of instability. The hegemony of the sonnet and the Parnassian emphasis on solidity and regularity are already in retreat before the surrender of the poet to his vision. The consequent modulations to the sonnet and the possibilities and limitations of the sonnet for Verlaine's purposes are well exemplified in Après Trois Ans and Mon Rêve familial.

In Après Trois Ans, the formal structure of the sonnet is used in combination with patterns of syntax, theme and rhythm to render with an appropriate delicacy the ephemerality and instability of human experience and the elusive and fragile quality of memory, "the impression, somehow, of something dreamed and missed, something reduced, relinquished, resigned: the poetry, as it were, of something sensibly gone."¹

Ayant poussé la porte étroite qui chancelle,
 Je me suis promené dans le petit jardin
 Qu'éclairait doucement le soleil du matin,
 Pailletant chaque fleur d'une humide étincelle.

Rien n'a changé. J'ai tout revu: l'humble tonnelle
 De vigne folle avec les chaises de rotin ...
 Le jet d'eau fait toujours son murmure argentin
 Et le vieux tremble sa plainte sempiternelle.

1. Henry James, The Spoils of Poynton (N.Y., Dell, 1959), Ch.XXI, p.308.

Les roses comme avant palpitent; comme avant,
Les grands lys orgueilleux se balancent au vent.
Chaque alouette qui va et vient m'est connue.

Même j'ai retrouvé debout la Velléda
Dont le plâtre s'écaille au bout de l'avenue,
- Grêle, parmi l'odeur fade du réséda.

OPC, p. 62

The most obvious feature of this sonnet is the relative insignificance of the logical element as a patterning factor. A first reading shows that the only discernible logical break occurs not in the position one would normally expect, between the quatrains and the tercets, nor even after line 11, but instead at the end of line 4. The first quatrain sets the scene, the walk in the garden; the remainder of the sonnet is an enumeration of the different objects in that garden. There is no sense here of any contrast or comparison. The first quatrain may stand slightly apart in its introductory role but the sonnet follows one continuous line of development. The possibilities for opposition, analogy or paradox inherent in the octave-sestet arrangement are not exploited, at least on the logical level. There is, for example, no analysis of the poet's reaction to the objects he describes, nor is there any attempt to play off a conceptual opposition of time past and time present.

Syntactic and thematic structures, on the other hand, are suggestively associated with the formal pattern of the sonnet. If we examine first the angle of approach, we find that the first quatrain and the second tercet are presented in the personal mode, "je me suis promené," "j'ai retrouvé," while the second quatrain and first tercet are phrased as direct description in the third person. The poet has been at pains, however, to avoid any sharp line of contrast, and the changeover from one mode to the other and back again is carefully muted. Line 5 introduces the impersonal mode, "Rien n'a changé," then briefly switches back to the personal, "J'ai tout revu," before finally settling

into the enumeration of lines 5-11. The pronoun "me" in line 11 performs a similar function, preparing the transition to the personal mode in line 12, where "j'ai retrouvé" picks up "j'ai revu" of line 5.

Grammatical constructions follow the same pattern of formal differentiation. The second quatrain and first tercet are composed almost entirely of main clauses. There are four in the second quatrain and three in the first tercet, one in each line, except for line 6 where the extension of the object "l'humble tonnelle" (1.5) by qualification compensates for the two short main clauses of line 5 which serve to mingle the personal and the impersonal modes of approach. The only other clause in lines 5-11 is the tiny encapsulated relative clause of line 11. By contrast, the syntax of the first quatrain and second tercet appears distinctly complex. The first quatrain consists of a past participle phrase and relative clause (1.1), main clause (1.2) and relative clause (1.3-4), divided into the relative clause proper (1.3) and an appended participial phrase (1.4). The second tercet has a main clause (1.12), relative clause (1.13) and an appended adjectival phrase (1.14) - a pattern bearing a certain similarity to that of lines 2-4.

Syntactical complexity thus corresponds to the use of the "je" pronoun, while the simple main clause constructions occur as part of the third person description. Or, in other words, one might say that in the first quatrain and second tercet, the poet stands at the centre of the scene directing the progress of his experience, while in the second quatrain and first tercet, beginning from the dots at the end of line 6, he simulates a spontaneity and immediacy of sensation which escapes the complex organizing power of his intellect. This differentiation in accordance with one of the symmetrical elements in the formal pattern of the sonnet has important connotations for the thematic

structure of the poem. The poet is concerned with a simultaneous awareness of change and changelessness. The theme of immutability is concentrated in the second quatrain and the first tercet, "toujours" (1.7), "sempiternelle" (1.8), "comme avant" (1.9) stressed by the almost immediate repetition and the phonetic association with "au vent," "balancent" and "va et vient." However, the "revu" and "retrouvé" of the poet in lines 5 and 12 do not correspond to a total renewal of his past experiences in the garden. "Rien n'a changé" and "j'ai tout revu" of line 5 are not interchangeable statements despite their juxtaposition. The garden is, for the speaker, changed in a fundamental if unstated way though in itself it continues to exist as always. This is indicated partly by the dots at the end of line 6 - the chairs are now empty - and partly by the subtle interplay of similarity and dissimilarity between the first quatrain and final tercet. Besides the syntactical similarity already noted, there is also a certain thematic and phonetic similarity:

... le soleil du matin
Pailletant chaque fleur d'une humide étincelle.

... la Velléda
Dont le plâtre s'écaille au bout de l'avenue,
- Grêle, parmi l'odeur fade du réséda.

These serve to emphasize an important change in tone. The sunlit scene of lines 3-4 is now played through in a minor key. The only remotely human presence in the garden is a flaking statue, the flower is reduced to a tired fragrance, the tiny allusion "qui chancelle" of line 1 comes finally into perspective as one more minute indication of the ephemerality of human experience.

Verlaine has used the formal structure of the sonnet to express a combined similarity and dissimilarity, change and changelessness. But he has been careful to avoid the most obvious pattern (octave-sestet)

and most obvious level (interplay of concepts) of contrast. Instead, the less obtrusive relationship between first quatrain and final tercet, second quatrain and first tercet, develops as a result of syntactic and thematic arrangements. The symmetry of this patterning is in addition further muted, firstly by the overlay of the normally important but here relatively insignificant logical structure which cuts across and diverts attention from the 4:4 - 3:3 arrangement, and secondly by the modification of tone in the syntactically and phonetically similar, formally symmetrical but thematically differentiated first quatrain and final tercet.

The very word "symmetry" suggests however a coherency and organisation which would seem foreign to the experience of instability and impermanence the poet is attempting to describe. Verlaine has maintained a strictly regular rhyme-scheme. How does he break free from the control implied in the choice of the sonnet form and create the necessary sensation of hesitancy, indecision and drift? The answer lies, of course, in his manipulation of the rhythm of his poem. Under half the lines, 2, 3, 4, 7, 10 and 13, have a natural break at the hemistich. Lines 1 and 9, opening the quatrain and tercet sections of the sonnet divide 9/3, while the second quatrain and the final line of each of the sections except the first quatrain show far wider departures from the norm. Thus, in the second quatrain, the ternary alexandrine of line 5, followed by the enjambement and 4/3 division of line 6, is succeeded by the completely disorientating line 8 with its atonic sixth syllable, which, however, if one ignores the two mute e's, can be read as a decasyllable with three main stresses:

Et le vieux tremble sa plainte sempiternelle.

Similar rhythmic disruption is evident in line 11, where with

normal pronunciation of the mute e of "alouette," "qui" would fall as the sixth syllable, although "chaque alouette / qui va et vient / m'est connue" clearly belong together as syntactic groups. In line 12, the sense requires the playing down of any pause after "retrouvé," and finally, in line 14, the poet takes advantage of traditional expectation at the caesura to detach and emphasize the important adjective "fade." The corresponding detachment of "grêle" and the key positions of both "grêle" and "fade" as the first and seventh syllables of the line, together with the repetition of the three open vowel sounds at the rhyme, combine to suggest the progressive rarification of the poet's memories. Line 14, isolated by the dash from the remainder of the sonnet, appears to float away on its own, the disembodied and fading essence of the whole poem.

This combination of rhythmic variety and a fixed formal pattern creates an effect of uncertainty greater than that which might have been achieved in a freer structure. The rhythmic pattern never infringes the "rule" that the four sections of the sonnet remain separate. Nor does it affect the regular succession of the lines¹ except in the case of the enjambement of lines 5-6 and perhaps the surjet of line 9. Nevertheless it shows a freedom within the individual line from the second quatrain onwards, which overruns and counters the formal symmetry around which the changing angles of presentation, certain aspects of the thematic structure and the syntactical structure are organised. Modification of the alexandrine on the one hand, retention of the regular sonnet form on the other,

1. The constant liberties of the Milton or Wordsworth sonnet with the division between octave and sestet or between individual quatrains and tercets would make Verlaine's experimentation seem pale indeed. The nature of French versification in general of course made his task a very different one from theirs.

reproduce on the artistic plane the uneasy balance between the trend towards the dream, towards the unimpeded movement of direct sensation, and the control achieved through the intervention of the conscious mind and a deliberate exercise of will.

Mon Rêve familial is concerned with the intermingling of similar sensations of familiarity and alienation. The poet again uses the sonnet to suggest the various gradations of perception and the indefinable limits where the dream becomes reality, memory a dream, and where past and present meet as one:

Je fais souvent ce rêve étrange et pénétrant
D'une femme inconnue, et que j'aime, et qui m'aime
Et qui n'est, chaque fois, ni tout à fait la même
Ni tout à fait une autre, et m'aime et me comprend.

Car elle me comprend, et mon coeur transparent
Pour elle seule, hélas! cesse d'être un problème
Pour elle seule, et les moiteurs de mon front blême,
Elle seule les sait rafraîchir, en pleurant.

Est-elle brune, blonde ou rousse? - Je l'ignore.
Son nom? Je me souviens qu'il est doux et sonore
Comme ceux des aimés que la Vie exila.

Son regard est pareil au regard des statues,
Et, pour sa voix, lointaine, et calme, et grave, elle a
L'inflexion des voix chères qui se sont tues.

OPC, pp. 63-64

The obsessive desire for tenderness and understanding ("Je fais souvent ce rêve") is presented in the quatrains through a series of thematic and phonetic repetitions which recapture the soothing calm of a lullaby. The first quatrains concentrates on the need for love, "que j'aime et qui m'aime," "et m'aime" (1.4) supported by the homonym "même" at the rhyme in line 3. At the same time, the elusive quality of the dream figure, the "femme inconnue," is stressed by the repetition "ni tout à fait la même / Ni tout à fait une autre."¹ The theme of comprehension is initiated in the closing syllables of line 4, and the second quatrain is occupied with this aspect, beginning with the reiteration of "elle me comprend" in line 5 and working through the

1. Boileau, in his Art poétique, condemns such repetitions.

notion of the problem heart to be understood, to the ability to relieve and console in line 8 ("Elle seule les sait rafraîchir"). Simultaneously the figure of the woman assumes a more concrete existence. The notion of the dream, gradually weakened in the first quatrain by the proliferation of relative clauses all increasingly distant from their source, temporarily disappears. The poet's vision has become a reality and the statement of the first quatrain, "Je fais souvent ce rêve ... d'une femme ... qui ... me comprend," has been succeeded by the definite assertion "Car elle me comprend." The solidity of the figure in the mind of the poet continues to be further stressed in the threefold repetition of "elle seule" at the beginning of lines 6, 7, and 8.

This process reaches a climax in the question of line 9 with its emphasis on specific physical detail. The poet's inability to provide an answer shifts the figure back into the shadows, "je l'ignore" recalling "femme inconnue" of line 2 and contrasting with the emphasis on knowledge in the second quatrain. Similarly in the corresponding line of the second tercet, the poet can only describe the woman's look in terms of the statue, an image where the sense of calmness and tranquillity is inescapably bound with qualities of absence and sightlessness. The only identification that can be offered is that which is most nebulous, most intangible. Lines 10-11 suggest the lingering sound of the forgotten (or unknown) name. Lines 13-14 respond with the sound of the voice, qualified by three adjectives paralleling those of line 9 and sharply contrasting with them in their abstract character. Both sounds, the name and the voice, are situated in almost identical terms in the context of the past and of death "Comme ceux des aimés que la Vie exila," "les voix chères qui se sont tues." The tercets thus echo in a more muted key the pattern of the quatrains. They start from an awareness on the part of the speaker of the irreality

of the dream, show a progressive detachment from a point of conscious reference, "Je me souviens," and finally arrive again at a separation from reality, "son regard est pareil, elle a l'inflexion." The tercets and the sonnet, however, close on a note of exile and final silence. The dream has faded somewhat as a living presence.

As in Après Trois Ans, the rhyme-scheme follows a completely regular pattern and each of the four sections of the sonnet is endstopped. How then does Verlaine translate the shifting relationship between dream and reality into a suitably mobile form of expression? The answer lies once again in his manipulation of rhythmic patterns, associated in this instance with a looser disposition of the syntax. The sonnet has only three clear examples of enjambement in lines 5, 6 and 13. However, within the individual sections of the sonnet, with the exception of the opening part of the first tercet, the syntax is continuous. The first quatrain is a single sentence, composed of a main clause (ll. 1-2) followed by a string of five coordinated relative clauses, two in line 2, one in lines 3-4 where the pattern is varied by the use of a single clause but a double attribute, and two in line 4, exactly parallel in position to those of line 2 and only differing in the omission of the subject pronoun and in the very important modulation from "que j'aime et qui m'aime" to "et m'aime et me comprend." The second quatrain follows a similar pattern. Again it is composed of a single sentence, but one broken down this time into three coordinated main clauses with run-ons in lines 5-6, 6-7, 7-8. In the first tercet, the pattern changes for a moment as the poet is brought brusquely face to face with the elusive quality of his vision. Clauses become short (l.9) and finally elliptic (beginning of line 10). Then with the consideration of the sound of the name, a more continuous syntax takes over once more, with main clause, relative clause and second relative clause dependent on the

first and a run-on in the sense between lines 10 and 11. The pattern is repeated in the second tercet, first the simple main clause of line 12 then a main clause with run-on in lines 13-14. The interjection of "pour sa voix ..." before the verb recalls the construction of line 7 where the object "les moiteurs de mon front blême" precedes the subject and verb while the final relative clause (l.14) corresponds, as has already been noted, to that of line 11.

The rhythmic pattern of the sonnet shows a combination of soothing regularity and unusual disruption. Lines 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 12 all divide normally at the caesura and in some cases, for example lines 2 and 4, are further divided into three syllable groups. The situation is complicated in the second quatrain by the run-ons of lines 5 and 6. The repetition of "pour elle seule" counteracts the effect of the double enjambement since line 6 can be read, along with the subject at the end of line 5, as a coherent syntactic and rhythmic unit. The reader is then however surprised by the appearance of a second and apparently unnecessary "pour elle seule" and in his disorientation is forced back to a reconsideration of the syntax and rhythm of lines 5-6. The two final lines of the stanza depart in any case from the 6/6 rhythm of the alexandrine. Line 7 divides 4/8 and line 8, 9/3. Further disorientation is produced by the different syllabic value to be given in this line to "elle seule," 4 syllables here, 3 in lines 6 and 7 where the final e of "seule" is in hiatus. The first line of the tercets again divides 9/3 but with a sub-division of 5/4. Line 10 has a strong rhythmic and syntactic break after the second syllable but otherwise conforms to the 6/6 pattern. In the last two lines of the sonnet, however, the rhythmic pattern sketched out in the fragmentation of line 9 and the first two syllables of line 10 takes flight. Line 13 is composed of groups of 1/3/2/2/2/2; line 14 divides 8/4 with

the slight hesitation after the sixth syllable in expectation of the normal caesura throwing the adjective "chères" into relief. The enjambement between the lines results in three main syntactic and rhythmic groups, two of ten syllables, one of four syllables, in place of the two alexandrines defined by the rhyme. As in Après Trois Ans, modulations of rhythm within a fixed formal framework create a dual and somewhat contradictory effect. On the one hand, thematic and phonetic repetition reproduce the consoling security of a lullaby. On the other, manipulations of rhythm and syntax across the regular pattern of versification suggest the evanescent and elusive quality of the dream experience. André Gide, attacking the idea of a logical syntax of subject, verb and attribute as the only means of expressing the nature of a relationship, cites the closing lines of this sonnet as an example of what verse may achieve:

Voilà ce que la prose ne peut pas: les césures
violées dans une métrique normale; sous une apparence
insoumise, la règle pourtant suivie, fait jaillir
le rythme fantasque.

... et calme, et grave, elle a

Par ces allitérations blanches et noires jusqu'à
trois fois alternées, l'impression de pas lents qui
s'en vont dans un éloignement immuable; puis avec
les deux derniers mots précédents, ressaisis, le
vers d'étend, sans même une césure, comme en une
longueur de quatorze syllabes ...

elle a
L'inflexion des voix chères qui se sont tues.

C'est la ligne indéfinie des horizons d'outre-tombe,
entr'aperçue dans SA parole.

Mais en prose, il faudrait des règles, pour pouvoir
les enfreindre après qu'on les a possédées.¹

In Après Trois Ans and Mon Rêve familial, internal changes of rhythm and modification of the alexandrine combine with the still

1. André Gide, Les Cahiers et les Poésies d'André Walter (Paris, Gallimard, 1952), p. 141.

clearly realized outline of the sonnet form to produce an effect of hesitation and uncertainty, possibly all the more apparent in the contrast it offers to the controlled character of the total framework. At the same time, repetitions of theme, phrase and sound within the symmetries of the sonnet's structural pattern create a sense of formal security. The balance of the form between quatrains and tercets, to be commented on by Banville in his Petit Traité de poésie française of 1872 (v. supra p. 242), seems however to be reorientated towards an effect of evaporation and dissolution, the smaller space of the tercets no longer providing the occasion for a greater concision and richness, a summation of all that has gone before, but operating as a series of diminishing echoes fading into silence. To a certain degree then, the sonnet is capable of functioning as an "impressionistic" form but only within the limits imposed by its formal pattern. Verlaine does experiment with modifications to that formal pattern, for example in the rhyme-pattern of Nevermore where the first quatrain is all on one feminine rhyme and the second similarly on one masculine rhyme (which in fact also persists as one of the rhymes in the tercets), or in his use of the "sonnet renversé" as in L'Allée in Fêtes galantes.¹

L'Allée is the one example of the sonnet form in Verlaine's

1. Poèmes saturniens also contains an example of the "sonnet renversé," Résignation (OC, pp. 60-61), but in Résignation Verlaine uses the arrangement as the formal equivalent to the movement from the exotic dreams of youth (shorter section and less balanced rhyme scheme abb acc of the opening tercets) to the more realistic, more solid (or stolid!) attitude of Parnassian maturity: "Soit! le grandiose échappe à ma dent, / Mais, fi de l'aimable et fi de la lie! / Et je hais toujours la femme jolie, / La rime assonante et l'ami prudent." The equivalent balance of the tercets, a + bb a + cc, becomes identical balance, deed deed, in the concluding quatrains with enclosed rhymes giving a block-like effect. All the rhymes of the sonnet are rich. There is a further early use of the "sonnet renversé" by Verlaine, Sappho, the last sonnet of Les Amies (1867). V. infra p. 378, n.1.

second collection of poems¹ and, in harmony with the rest of the work, it is a "masked" sonnet, not only through its inverted pattern but through the printing of the piece as a single typographical block.²

Fardée et peinte comme au temps des bergeries,
Frêle parmi les noeuds énormes de rubans,
Elle passe, sous les ramures assombries,
Dans l'allée où verdit la mousse des vieux bancs,
Avec mille façons et mille afféteries
Qu'on garde d'ordinaire aux perruches chéries.
Sa longue robe à queue est bleue, et l'éventail
Qu'elle froisse en ses doigts fluets aux larges bagues
S'égaie en des sujets érotiques, si vagues
Qu'elle sourit, tout en rêvant, à maint détail.
- Blonde, en somme. Le nez mignon avec la bouche
Incarnadine, grasse et divine d'orgueil
Inconscient. - D'ailleurs, plus fine que la mouche
Qui ravive l'éclat un peu niais de l'oeil.

OC, p. 108

The characteristic element of artificiality in this miniature - "fardée et peinte," "avec mille façons et mille afféteries," "la mouche / Qui ravive l'éclat un peu niais de l'oeil" - is appropriately rendered firstly in the initial choice of the sonnet and then in the additional complications to which the form is subject here. Virtuoso inversion of the sonnet structure reproduces on a formal level the highly sophisticated but vapid charm of the vision. At the same time of course, the frailty of the figure - the shape drowned in the ribbons, the delicate fingers, burdened with rings, the dry rustle of the fan³ -

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1. The second collection, if one discounts Les Amies (6 sonnets on a Lesbian theme), published clandestinely in Brussels by Poulet-Malassis in December 1867 and ordered destroyed by a Lille tribunal in May 1868. Subsequently published in La Revue Indépendante, Oct. 1884, and Parallèlement, 1889.
 2. J-H. Bornecque in Lumières sur les Fêtes galantes (Paris, Nizet, 1969), p. 154, comments (without giving references): "Sur le plan technique, cette espèce de sonnet masqué est le premier que Verlaine sur son manuscrit avait conçu sans aucune ponctuation dans sa majeure partie, le mouvement glissant avec douceur, mais d'une traite, du vers 1 au vers 12."
 3. Note the important f alliterations in lines 1, 2, 5 and 8. Also those on s in line 3.

its ephemerality ("Elle passe") and the dissolving distances of the landscape cannot, as in Après Trois Ans and Mon Rêve familial find a formal equivalent in the diminished space offered by the concluding tercets. Instead they are rendered by a process of fragmentation which increases throughout the piece. The rhymes, restricted to two in the opening tercets, where three would be equally acceptable, are diversified to four, instead of the regular two, in the concluding quatrains. Simultaneously, syntax and rhythm show a fragmentation which reaches its apogee in the final quatrain. Thus the whole of the tercets consists of a single sentence, composed of one main clause, "Elle passe," preceded by two adjectival phrases and followed by two relative clauses. The first quatrain, however, though physically shorter than the combined tercets, has two main clauses, each with a different subject, "sa longue robe" and "l'éventail." The detailing of the appearance, begun here and underlined by particular reference to the fan, is continued in the final quatrain in a series of brief and disconnected notations. There is no main verb and only one subordinate one; the dash assumes an important role in the punctuation. Syntax and rhythm, which in the tercets fall into six broad twelve syllable units, become increasingly dissociated as the sonnet advances. In the first quatrain, the continuation of the sense over the alexandrine divisions is repeated with intensifying effect at each of the three possible positions. As a result a rhythmic pattern is established which no longer corresponds to the traditional one of the alexandrine line. This departure continues in the double use of the rejet in the final quatrain which creates a pattern of twelve and eleven syllables (lines 11-12 and 12-13) cutting across the surface arrangement of alexandrines. It is worth noting, however, that once again Verlaine

compensates for his rhythmic audacities with an increased emphasis on patterns of alliteration and assonance. Furthermore, in this instance, the technique has a double function. Verlaine uses internal rhyme, "incarnadine - divine - fine," to highlight the slightly grating contrast of his final phrase thus substituting phonetic relief for the structural emphasis built into the quatrains-tercets sequence of the sonnet as normally arranged. Similarly attention is drawn to the opening line of the quatrain section by the internal rhyme "queue - bleue" with the repetition of e in particular lending further coherence to the stanza. In the final quatrain an analogous effect is achieved with the repetition of ε as the opening syllable of the two inner lines. In all these instances phonetic structures may be seen as providing a counterbalance to formal as well as to rhythmic audacity.

L'Allée illustrates the limitations of the sonnet form for Verlaine's "Effort [...] vers la Sensation rendue."¹ The "masking" of the sonnet behind a deceptive typography, a reversed pattern, a slackening of the rhyme-scheme and an increasingly fragmented rhythm, while in harmony here with a vision of an ephemeral artifice and frailty, implies in the long run a loss of the sonnet's identity as a recognizable form. Such departures from the norm can only be effective as exceptions. In general, the rendering of the universe of the sensations where the distinction between subjective and objective, dream and reality is blurred and uncertain, will only be impeded by the choice of a fixed form which inevitably imposes an alien pattern on impressions essentially shifting and mobile. The absence of the sonnet in Romances sans Paroles is thus a logical

1. OC I, 929. Letter of 22 Nov. 1866 sent to Mallarmé along with Poèmes saturniens.

phenomenon in the development of the Verlainian aesthetic and one which can be explained in the same terms as those used by Verlaine to explain his contemporaneous eschewing of the alexandrine:

L'alexandrin a ceci de merveilleux qu'il peut être très solide, à preuve Corneille, ou très fluide avec ou sans mollesse, témoin Racine. C'est pourquoi, sentant ma faiblesse et tout l'imparfait de mon art, j'ai réservé pour les occasions harmoniques ou mélodiques ou analogues, ou pour telles ratiocinations compliquées des rythmes inusités, impairs pour la plupart, où la fantaisie fût mieux à l'aise, n'osant employer le mètre sacro-saint qu'aux limpides spéculations, qu'aux énonciations claires, qu'à l'exposition rationnelle des objets, invectives ou paysages.

OC II, 301-302

The alexandrine, and no doubt an established and clearly structured form such as the sonnet, retain their traditional associations with logical exposition, clarity and precision and in the case of the sonnet with a mode of development based on a well-defined system of opposition, comparison and contrast. Hence they seem largely inappropriate for the notation of fragile sensations, elusive and fleeting moods, indefinable emotions. This aspect of Verlaine's work, already visible in Poèmes saturniens in the section Paysages tristes, achieves its formulation in the Art poétique of 1874 and its most complete realization in the little songs of Romances sans Paroles.

In this collection, Verlaine, under the guidance of Rimbaud, finally surrenders for a moment at least, to his true genius, the exploration of the universe of pure sensation. The element of logical connection in the framework of the sonnets Après Trois Ans and Mon Rêve familial disappears; emotion is freed from all causality - "Les choses qui chantent dans la tête / Alors que la mémoire est

absente."¹ The poet receives and reflects the different emotions and sensations in the non-intellectual apparently haphazard sequence in which they occur, creating, as they do so, their own kaleidoscopic relationships, the swaying of the swing or the whirling of the merry-go-round, reminiscent of those induced by a state of fever² or by hallucination. Normal hierarchies and priorities vanish, together with the sense of individual identity. J.-P. Richard notes the prevalence of the impersonal notations "il y a" and "c'est" and finally of "qu'est-ce que c'est" as the poet's self-awareness and ability to orientate himself grow weaker.³ At the same time, the formal solidity of the Parnassian aesthetic, which in Vers dorés had acted as a barrier against the drift towards the world of the dream with its impersonality and passivity and which had persisted in the retention of the sonnet for some of the pieces of Poèmes saturniens and in the prosodic arrangements of Fêtes galantes, is naturally rejected in favour of a system, more fluid and more appropriate to the poet's experience:

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1. Opening lines of Vendanges, sent with three other sonnets, to Lepelletier 28 Nov. 1873 under the collective title Mon almanach pour 1874. The other sonnets were "La bise se rue," now a 20 line poem in Sagesse (III, xi), "L'espoir luit" (Sagesse III, iii), v. infra p. 397, and Sonnet boiteux (Jadis et Naguère) v. infra p. 394. The original titles of these sonnets were Printemps ("La bise se rue"), Été ("L'espoir luit"), Automne (Vendanges) and Hiver (Sonnet boiteux). Vendanges is included in Jadis et Naguère (OPC, p. 331).
 2. "... rien de délicieux comme un commencement de fièvre; c'est volatile, les idées (de pensée, on n'en a plus et quel bon débarras!) tourbillonnent en s'entrelaçant et se désenlaçant sans cesse et toujours. On ne sait plus où on en est, sinon qu'on s'y en trouve bien et mieux. C'est un peu comme certain moment de l'ivresse où l'on croit se rappeler qu'on a vécu le moment où l'on est, et le vivre ce moment-là. Seulement, ici, la sensation est si vague qu'elle n'en est plus sensation, mais caresse indéfinie, jouissance de néant meilleure que toute plénitude." Confessions, OC II, p. 1117.
 3. Jean-Pierre Richard, "L'Expérience sensible de Verlaine," French Studies, VII (1953), 305.

De la musique avant toute chose,
 Et pour cela préfère l'Impair
 Plus vague et plus soluble dans l'air,
 Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou qui pose.

...

Car nous voulons la Nuance encor,
 Pas la Couleur, rien que la nuance!
 Oh! la nuance seule fiancée
 Le rêve au rêve et la flûte au cor!

...

Prends l'éloquence et tords-lui son cou!

...

De la musique encore et toujours!

OPC, pp. 326-327 .

The poet chooses short metres and short poems which force a pregnant simplicity of expression with a minimum of obvious control and which render the vertiginous nature of the experience by their obsessive sound patterns. These result from the closeness of the rhymes and a system of internal assonance and alliteration easily apprehensible to the ear by virtue of the brevity of the pieces. Several of the poems also include some form of refrain. The folk-song is a clear source for Verlaine in poems such as Streets I and A Poor Young Shepherd, but is also a general inspiration to the poet:

Un air bien vieux, bien faible et bien charmant
 Rôde discret, épeuré quasiment ...

Qu'est-ce que c'est que ce berceau soudain
 Qui lentement dorlote mon pauvre être?
 Que voudrais-tu de moi, doux Chant badin?
 Qu'as-tu voulu, fin refrain incertain
 Qui vas tantôt mourir vers la fenêtre
 Ouverte un peu sur le petit jardin?

OPC, p. 193

The note of uncertainty and question which gives such songs their poignancy is an important characteristic of the sections Ariettes and Bruxelles, where Verlaine uses the unfamiliar impairs to create the same effect of hesitation and indefinable longing.

There is one sonnet dealing with this experience of mingled ecstasy and malaise, though not included in Romances sans Paroles. "Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois," published in Sagesse, is dated on the annotated Kessler copy of the third (1893) edition of the collection, "Jehonville (Belgique), ressouvenir de Charleville, hiver 1872," and indeed resembles in manner the poems of Romances sans Paroles. Why then should it not have been included? M. Cuénot suggests that the piece may well have been omitted for the purely formal reason that it is a sonnet.¹ Such a return to establishment practice would scarcely have been approved of by Rimbaud and would probably have been viewed by him as a retrograde step, characteristic of the timid "vierge folle." Verlaine may perhaps for that reason have excluded the poem from the 1873 collection.² However that may be, it can once again be observed that, while the sonnet can be used, as Baudelaire and Verlaine himself had already used it, as a suggestive form, it nevertheless constrains the poet in some degree to its own patterns of development. From the reader's point of view, this results in a reduction of the impression of immediacy and spontaneity. Of course, no poem can present an emotion or mood directly but has to recreate it in the mind of the reader. However in poems not in fixed form, the illusion of spontaneity is necessarily more complete, especially when, as in Romances sans Paroles, the poet borrows from the apparently artless techniques of

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1. Cuénot, Le Style de Paul Verlaine, p. 486.
 2. However the dates and places indicated on the Kessler copy often fail to correspond to those indicated on the manuscript of Cellulairement supposedly drawn up at Mons. The accuracy of Verlaine's memory may well be called into question therefore, and it is perhaps also significant to note that "Le son du cor" does not figure in the manuscript and is not one of the seven poems finally incorporated from it into Sagesse. The problem of dating is further complicated by doubts concerning the date of the MS of Cellulairement itself.

refrain and repetition characteristic of folk-song. Number VIII of the Ariettes oubliées, slightly shorter syllabically than "Le son du cor,"¹ provides an interesting point of reference for the sonnet, illustrating how the different forms condition the development of originally similar themes.

Ariettes oubliées VIII

Dans l'interminable
Ennui de la plaine
La neige incertaine
Luit comme du sable.

Le ciel est de cuivre
Sans lueur aucune.
On croirait voir vivre
Et mourir la lune.

Comme des nuées
Flottent gris les chênes
Des forêts prochaines
Parmi les buées.

Le ciel est de cuivre
Sans lueur aucune.
On croirait voir vivre
Et mourir la lune.

Corneille poussive
Et vous, les loups maigres,
Par ces bises aigres
Quoi donc vous arrive?

Dans l'interminable
Ennui de la plaine
La neige incertaine
Luit comme du sable.

OPC, pp. 195-196

Le son du cor ...

Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois
D'une douleur on veut croire orpheline
Qui vient mourir au bas de la colline
Parmi la bise errant en courts abois.

L'âme du loup pleure dans cette voix
Qui monte avec le soleil qui décline
D'une agonie on veut croire câline
Et qui ravit et qui navre à la fois.

1. Ariettes oubliées, VIII, has 120 syllables, "Le son du cor" 140.

Pour faire mieux cette plainte assoupie,
 La neige tombe à longs traits de charpie
 A travers le couchant sanguinolent,

Et l'air a l'air d'être un soupir d'automne,
 Tant il fait doux par ce soir monotone
 Où se dorlote un paysage lent.

OPC, p. 282

The "ariette" is composed of series of juxtaposed impressions with no explicit link between them. It derives its effect principally from the repetition of the first two stanzas as a kind of refrain and from the use of the very short five syllable line which forces a simple accentual pattern, a very simple syntax and a barely sketched out imagery. In the sonnet, on the other hand, the poet operates within a pre-existing formal pattern and the logical, thematic, syntactic, rhythmic and phonetic structures of his poem have all to take account of this arrangement. The poet is virtually obliged, as a result of the length restriction, to adopt a longer, and hence probably more formal metre (here he avoids the alexandrine in favour of the lighter weight of the decasyllable), and constrained to an obvious systematization in the presentation of his theme. "Le son du cor" is based on the emotional paradox captured in the accident of the phonetic similarity between "doux" and "douleur."¹ The quatrains concentrate on the theme of loneliness, pain and suffering as expressed through the medium of sound - "Le son du cor s'afflige" (1.1), "la bise errant en courts abois" (1.4), "L'âme du loup pleure dans cette voix" (1.5). The poet has been clearly at pains to interlink these three impressions and, not content with a general thematic resemblance, has prepared for the wolf of line 5 with "abois" in line 4, uniting both with the opening sound of the horn by the allusion "cette voix" in line 5. Further

1. Baudelaire had exploited this same paradox most obviously in Brumes et Pluies, v. supra, p. 223.

syntactic and thematic parallels define the quatrains as a coherent unit. Lines 1 and 5 are parallel both formally (as the opening lines of their respective quatrains), thematically (as noted above) and syntactically (consisting of subject with a genitive qualification, verb, and an adverbial clause of place). The thematic and syntactic arrangements of lines 2 and 3 recur in their second quatrain equivalents, line 6 and 7, but in an inverted form. The relative clause of line 3 qualifying "douleur" is paralleled by that of line 6, but as a result of the inversion of the lines, this now qualifies "voix" (1.5) and not "agonie" (1.7). Both clauses, however, describe movement in the vertical plane, "vient mourir au bas de la colline" (1.3) and "monte avec le soleil qui décline," the second introducing beside the motif of dying sound, the analogous one of the setting sun. Lines 2 and 7 show an almost total resemblance, except that "douleur" (1.2) has become intensified, following the introduction of the theme of death ("mourir" in line 3 and the sunset of line 6), to "agonie," and "orpheline" has been replaced by "câline."

The introduction of this unexpected note, followed by the balanced relatives of line 8, "Et qui ravit et qui navre," prepares for the opposition of these apparently contradictory qualities in the tercets. Unlike the quatrains, the tercets are formed of a single period, composed of a main clause in each tercet coordinated by "et." Though differentiated in themselves, they thus form a syntactic block which balances the combined weight of the quatrains. The thematic pattern shows features some of which support the traditional octave-sestet disposition, some of which develop other possibilities of the formal structure. M. Cuénot notes for example that "l'amenuisement strophique est utilisé, non pour amener une conclusion, mais pour

exprimer un affaiblissement de vitalité."¹ The vocabulary of the tercets indeed displays an increasing colourlessness. The laments of the quatrains are reduced to a "plainte assoupie" (1.9) and finally to a "soupir" (1.12). The wintry "bise" (1.4) and snow (1.10) fade to the anodyne "automne" (1.12), and "le soleil qui décline" (1.6) and "couchant sanguinolent" (1.11) to the neutrality of "ce soir monotone" (1.13). The very shape of the sonnet, M. Cuénot suggests, quatrains followed by the shorter tercets, seems the formal equivalent of the dying sound of the horn and of the neutralization of the landscape under a blanket of snow.

On the other hand, one could contend that the continuation of the theme of suffering in the first tercet links lines 9-11 to the quatrains creating an 11:3 patterning arrangement. Besides the rather gauche transition of line 9, attempting to establish a solid link between the new visually based image of suffering and the sound motifs of the quatrains, more subtle associations are developed in lines 10 and 11. The new development of the theme of the sunset finds background support in particular from the syntactical pattern of line 11 and the use of the verb "tombe" in line 10. Line 11, an adverbial clause of place, and the final line of the first tercet, recalls the adverbial phrase of place in line 4, formally parallel as the final line of the first quatrain, and thus provides a link with the sound motifs of the octave. Similarly "tombe" belongs with the reference to movement in the vertical plane noted in the relative clauses of lines 3 and 6, and so the falling snow is linked with the motif of dying sound and once again (through line 6) with that of the dying sun. Despite these associations, however, which support an 11:3 formal pattern, it could be argued that

1. Cuénot, Le Style de Paul Verlaine, p. 474.

the image of the snow as bandaging on a bleeding sunset is such a drastic change from the sound motifs of the quatrains as to mark off a division in the sonnet after line 8. Perhaps, in fact, the most important thing here is the way in which Verlaine has suggested various possibilities of patterning without confining himself completely to any one system.

The final tercet, in contrast with the first tercet and with all the first eleven lines of the sonnet, shows the disappearance of themes of suffering and death, and their replacement by an overall neutrality, or, as J.-P. Richard would say, "fadeur." The play on "air" in line 12 can perhaps be ascribed to the desire to render this sensation. More important perhaps is the role at this point of the phonetic factor. The dominant vowels in the sonnet are i and the ɔ̃ and u groups. The i vowel is concentrated in the quatrains and first tercet where it occurs in prominent positions at the rhyme - "orpheline," "colline," "décline," "câline," "assoupie," "charpie," and at accentuated positions within the line - "s'afflige," "mourir," "bise," "agonie," "ravit," "sanguinolent." The u vowel, which provides the important link "doux - douleur," occurs in roughly equal proportions throughout the sonnet - three times in the first quatrain, "douleur," "mourir," "courts," once only in the second, but in the important word "loup," three times in the first tercet, "pour," "assoupie," "couchant," and three times in the final tercet, "soupir," strongly echoing "assoupie," "doux," "où." In the closing lines of the sonnet, its muffled tonality, contrasting with the sharp timbre of the i, receives additional support, firstly from the concentration of the nasals ɔ̃ (1.10 "tombe," "longs") and ɑ̃ (1.11 "couchant," the rhyme pair "sanguinolent" 1.11 and "lent" 1.14, closing the sonnet, together with "tant," the opening vowel of line 13),

and secondly from the concentration of ɔ's in the final tercet, many in association with the nasal consonants n and m or else with the dental t ("automne," "monotone," "dorlote"). The disposition of these different groups of vowels in the sonnet thus appears to correspond to the 11:3 patterning arrangement observed with regard to the theme so that the i occurs primarily in the rendering of the experience of pain¹ while the dominance of the u and ɔ groups coincides with the neutrality of vocabulary and theme of the final tercet.

In contrast then to the method of juxtaposition and direct repetition employed in the "ariette," the various structures of the sonnet are organized around the central paradox contained in the phonetic association of "doux-douleur." The obvious pattern of repetition in the quatrains and the striking change of imagery in the first tercet espouse the octave-sestet arrangement delineated by the regular rhyme-scheme. However syntactic and thematic parallels within the poem are by no means confined to this basic and conventional opposition. The poet has to some extent succeeded in muting the octave-sestet division by developing other systems of balance within the formal pattern of the sonnet. The theme of suffering, for example, occupies lines 1-11, the sound motif is retained throughout, albeit in somewhat rarified fashion in the tercets, lines 10 and 11 have thematic and syntactic associations with lines 3 and 6 and line 4 respectively, the phonetic opposition of i's to ɔ's and u's does not correspond to a sharp division after line 8, since i persists as the rhyme of lines 9 and 10 and as an accentuated syllable in the following rhyme "sanguinolent."

1. The i vowel shows a similar prominence in the Baudelaire sonnets, La Cloche fêlée and La Fontaine de sang, again in association with the theme of pain.

Nevertheless, in the sonnet the reader remains conscious of a stylization of the material, which, though obviously present in the different form in the "ariette" also, seems there to arise as an integral part of the theme.

In the "ariette" all remains ill-defined, nebulous. The description of the snow as "incertaine" and the likening of it to sand, the cloud-like mass of the trees, the hesitation of "On croirait vivre et mourir la lune," the interrogative form of the fifth stanza, occur in a stanzaic system whose length the poet is free to modify at any point in the process of composition and whose different parts, the individual quatrains, are not governed by any fixed series of inter-relationships. In "Le son du cor" on the other hand, despite the qualification "on veut croire" in lines 2 and 7, and "L'air a l'air d'être" in line 12, the formal structure of the sonnet causes the organization of the different impressions to follow a limited number of well defined patterns. Not only does the sound motif recur in the opening line of each of the four main sonnet sections, but the poet is at pains to establish beyond doubt the relationship between its different manifestations. Even more important, the combination of "douceur" and "douleur" is brought to the surface primarily in the change of imagery from that of mournful and penetrating sound in the quatrains to the deadening, numbing snow of the first tercet and the "fadeur" of the final scene, and to a lesser extent in a secondary formal and thematic opposition between lines 1-11 and 12-14. Use of the sonnet cannot but help call attention to the sophistication of the poet's technique and as a result, any impression of naïveté such as that created in the song-like "ariette" is unavoidably lessened. Nevertheless, "Le son du cor" is thematically so similar to the inspiration of Romances sans Paroles that, despite the obvious formal link, it remains clearly distinct from the other sonnets of Sagesse. Once again, however, the limitations of

the sonnet form for the suggesting of purely sensory or emotional impressions emerge clearly. Use of the sonnet directs attention to the process of selection and arrangement present of course in any work of art but not always so immediately apparent to the eye or ear of the spectator or reader. It remains a sign of control at odds with the attempt to render the "feel" of an emotional state, accepted but not examined, experienced but not rationalized.

Sagesse, however, the collection in which this sonnet is included, stands in marked contrast to Romances sans Paroles in that it constitutes a return to more conventional versification. The alexandrine becomes once again the most important single metre¹ and the sonnet form is strongly represented. Moreover, eleven of the twenty-two sonnets follow the strictly regular patterns abba abba ccd eed or ccd ede (this figure includes one with the pattern cdc dcd) and in addition, seven more have quatrains on the abba abba system. In contrast, there is only one example of quatrains on four rhymes (III, iii, "L'espoir luit" - abba cddc), and two of reversed quatrain rhymes i.e. abba baab (I, xviii, "Et j'ai revu l'enfant unique," and II, iv, i, "Mon Dieu m'a dit"). There is also one "sonnet renversé," "Parfums, couleurs, systèmes, lois!" (III, viii), but in this instance, the choice of the inverted form corresponds to a refutation of the principle of "dérèglement de tous les sens" proposed by Rimbaud, and seems to indicate on the formal plane the perversions induced by that attempt at reversal of the Christian ethic.

1. Counting the 10 sonnets of the sequence "Mon Dieu m'a dit" separately, 30 of the poems are in alexandrines. There are 9 poems in octosyllables, 5 in decasyllables, 3 each of nine and five syllables, 2 of seven syllables, 1 each of eleven and six syllables, and 4 with mixed metres - 2 of 12/6/12/6 quatrains, 1 of 8/4/8/4 quatrains, and 1 with stanzas 1, 3, and 5 on a syllabic pattern of 5/5/13/5/5/13 and stanzas 2 and 4 with five nine syllable lines.

The coincidence of the return to a more regular and more conventional versification with Verlaine's break with Rimbaud and subsequent conversion to a new belief in Catholicism, "O la foi, la naïve et la bonne certitude," can scarcely be fortuitous. It surely represents on a different level the same effort towards a reconstruction of the poet's inner life, an attempt to bolster up his weakness and vacillation and to turn his back on the temptations of his inmost nature by a clinging to established, and therefore proven, institutions and traditions.¹ The consonance of moral vigour or weakness and the greater or lesser control exercised by the poet over the formal aspect of his poems is clearly displayed in a revelation of incapacity and failure such as Sonnet boiteux on the one hand, and on the other, in the attempt at exorcism of sonnets such as "Les faux beaux jours" and "L'espoir luit."

Sonnet boiteux derives its name from its thirteen syllable metre and from the fact that the tercets contain four blank lines.² In addition the quatrains have a four rhyme pattern. The disintegration

1. "Il faut avoir passé par tout ce que j'ai vu et souffert depuis 3 ans, humiliations, dégoûts et le reste! - pour sentir tout ce qu'a d'admirablement consolant, raisonnable et logique cette religion si terrible et si douce." OC I, 1090. Letter of 8 Sept. 1874 to Lepelletier accompanying the sonnet sequence "Jésus m'a dit." My underlining.
2. One in fact (l. 14) repeats a rhyme of the quatrains, and there is assonance between lines 9, 13 and 14. The one "conventional" rhyme (ll. 10-11) is very weak. Sonnet boiteux was one of the few sonnets of Mon almanach pour 1874 and was finally published in Jadis et Naguère (1885). Normally the expression "sonnet boiteux" describes a heterometric sonnet such as Baudelaire's La Musique. In connexion with the formal disruption apparent in Sonnet boiteux, it is worth noting that the other three sonnets of Mon almanach pour 1874 are also irregular in varying degrees. Été (later "L'espoir luit...") and Automne (Vendanges) have four rhymes in the quatrains and Automne concludes with a couplet, while Printemps ("La bise se rue ...") in its original version had the apparent form of a sonnet but was in fact in "rimes plates."

of the form as apparent in the deficiencies of the rhyme-scheme, the awkward, stumbling metre, the prosaic tone of the opening and closing lines, the chaotic and hallucinatory imagery all bear witness to the simultaneous collapse of moral resistance and poetic capacity:

Ah! vraiment c'est triste, ah! vraiment ça finit trop mal.
 Il n'est pas permis d'être à ce point infortuné.
 Ah! vraiment c'est trop la mort du naïf animal
 Qui voit tout son sang couler sous son regard fané.

Londres fume et crie. Ô quelle ville de la Bible!
 Le gaz flambe et nage et les enseignes sont vermeilles.
 Et les maisons dans leur ratatinement terrible
 Epouvantent comme un sénat de petites vieilles.

Tout l'affreux passé saute, piaule, miaule et glapit
 Dans le brouillard rose et jaune et sale des Sohos
 Avec des indeeds et des all rights et des haôs.

Non vraiment c'est trop un martyr sans espérance,
 Non vraiment cela finit trop mal, vraiment c'est triste:
 O le feu du ciel sur cette ville de la Bible!

OPC, pp. 323-324

In the sonnets appearing in Sagesse, the established regular structure of the form appears to offer a means of exorcizing the past and provides a guarantee against a relapse into former temptation. The sonnet seems to resume its role of earlier days in Verlaine's production as a defence against the surrender to pure sensation now definitely seen as dangerous and ultimately sterile. In many cases, the poet's interest in the sonnet is apparently due almost entirely to the restrictive nature of its formal pattern and his return to the use of the genre is associated with a reversion to conventional patterns of logic and syntax (as, for example, in the enumerative technique and pay-off line of "La vie humble aux travaux ennuyeux et faciles")¹ a conceptual vocabulary, and an imagery that either tends to allegory, or in many cases is virtually non-existent. Rhythmic variations on the other hand are, in comparison with the earlier sonnets, greatly increased. Enjambements, rejets and surjets proliferate in a quite

1. OPC, p. 248.

arbitrary fashion and contribute little to the total effect, suggesting rather a faltering of the poetic inspiration and skill. In a very few cases, however, the poet couples the sonnet form with a renewal of the rural imagery of his early sonnets in the Parnassian vein. If, as suggested earlier, not only the principle of aesthetic rigour underlying Parnassian technique, but also the Parnassian concentration on the objective description of reality represented for Verlaine a kind of barricade against the vegetative existence of the dreamer, the re-emergence of this combination of formal and thematic qualities at this stage in his career seems particularly noteworthy. The obvious sonnets in this connexion are "Les faux beaux jours" and "L'espoir luit."¹

In "Les faux beaux jours" the threat to the spiritual equilibrium of the poet is expressed in terms of the image of the summer thunderstorm.

Les faux beaux jours ont lui tout le jour, ma pauvre âme,
 Et les voici vibrer aux cuivres du couchant.
 Ferme les yeux, pauvre âme, et rentre-sur-le-champ:
 Une tentation des pires. Fuis l'Infâme.

Ils ont lui tout le jour en longs grêlons de flamme,
 Battant toute vendange aux collines, couchant
 Toute moisson de la vallée, et ravageant
 Le ciel tout bleu, le ciel chanteur qui te réclame.

O pâlis, et va t'en, lente et joignant les mains.
 Si ces hiers allaient manger nos beaux demains?
 Si la vieille folie était encore en route?

Ces souvenirs, va-t-il falloir les retuer?
 Un assaut furieux, le suprême sans doute!
 O va prier, contre l'orage, va prier.

OPC, p. 248

The symbolic value of the storm is made plain within the octave-sestet arrangement of the sonnet, but the division is not so clear cut as to reduce the symbol to pure allegory. The spiritual significance of the storm as stated in the closing line is indicated not only in the tercets, but also in the repetition of "pauvre âme" in the first

1. And, to a lesser extent, "O vous, comme un qui boite au loin," OPC, p. 247.

quatrain, in lines 3-4 and again in line 8. This thematic pattern is supported and varied by the syntactical structures of the sonnet. These also espouse the formal 8:6 arrangement of the sonnet, but utilize more completely the series of balanced repetitions such a system provides. Most important are the numerous imperatives concentrated in lines 3 and 4 of the first quatrain (three times) and lines 9 and 14 (two each). Those of lines 3 and 4 are surrounded by the evocation of "les faux beaux jours" as the statement of line 5 echoes and repeats that of line 1, and the second quatrain goes on to develop the theme of the storm as indicated in lines 1 and 2. At this point, the resolution indicated by the imperatives seems overshadowed by the enveloping violence of the impending storm. In the tercets, by contrast, the position is reversed. The imperatives of lines 9 and 14 enclose a series of questions which reveals the doubts and uncertain strength of the soul and they thus appear positioned in a defensive and reinforcing arrangement. A clear differentiation of rhythm parallels this pattern. The lines in which the imperatives occur have strong divisions in the conventional places, either at the hemistich or at one of the subsidiary breaks in the lines (i.e. after the ninth syllable). There are no enjambements. The reiteration of the imperative is thus associated with a slowing of movement and a sense of solidification. In contrast, in the second quatrain, the destructive violence of the impending storm is rendered by the use of enjambement in lines 6 and 7, resulting in a rhythm of 10/10/8/8 over the three lines 6-8. Significantly perhaps, lines 10-13 in the tercets show no comparable rhythmic modifications, each line forming a rhythmic and syntactic entity and only line 12 having a definite caesura not at the sixth syllable. Line 14, on the other hand, imitates in a more disrupted

form (4/5/3) the three regularly placed breaks (3/3/6) of line 9, as the two imperatives, urging the soul to prayer, enclose the final reference to the storm. The sonnet operates as a sort of incantation. The established nature of the form, its traditional structure, the symmetries of the quatrain-tercet arrangement with its potential for balance and contrast, compose the prosodic equivalent of the retreat to prayer and the forms of established religion to combat the threat of the resurgence of "la vieille folie." At the same time, rhythmic variations, modifying though not flouting the dominant notion of regularity, suggest, as in the earlier sonnets Après Trois Ans and Mon Rêve familial, the fragility of the equilibrium between opposing tendencies towards order and control on the one hand, disorder and a passive surrender on the other.¹

"L'espoir luit" is constructed around the same delicate balance between agitation and repose:

L'espoir luit comme un brin de paille dans l'étable.
Que crains-tu de la guêpe ivre de son vol fou?
Vois, le soleil toujours poudroie à quelque trou.
Que ne t'endormais-tu, le coude sur le table?

Pauvre âme pâle, au moins cette eau du puits glacé,
Bois-la. Puis dors après. Allons, tu vois, je reste,
Et je dorloterai les rêves de ta sieste,
Et tu chantonneras comme un enfant bercé.

Midi sonne. De grâce, éloignez-vous, madame.
Il dort. C'est étonnant comme les pas de femme
Résonnent au cerveau des pauvres malheureux.

Midi sonne. J'ai fait arroser dans la chambre.
Va, dors! L'espoir luit comme un caillou dans un creux.
Ah, quand reflleuriront les roses de septembre!

OPC, p. 278

At the most obvious level, Verlaine has chosen to write his poem as a sonnet, but the sonnet he has written is technically an irregular one since it has four rhymes in the quatrains. By this

1. An interesting gloss on "Les faux beaux jours" is provided by a remark made by Verlaine to Delahaye in a letter of 29 Apr. 1875: "J'ai besoin atrocement de calme. Je ne me sens pas encore assez reconquis sur mes idiotismes passés, et c'est avec une espèce de férocité que je lutte à terrasser ce vieux Moi de Bruxelles et de Londres, 72-73 ... de Bruxelles, Juillet 73 aussi ... et surtout." OC I, 1100.

arrangement, contradictory desires for formality and informality find simultaneous satisfaction. Logical, syntactic and thematic patterns singly and in combination follow this double lead. The logical thread in the sonnet twists and turns from statement to question to imperative and back again, reproducing the freedom of ordinary speech. Similarly, the syntax is essentially discontinuous. The first quatrain has four completely separate periods and four main clauses together with an interjected imperative "vois"; the second quatrain three separate periods, five main clauses and two additional interjections, "Allons, tu vois"; the first tercet four periods, four main clauses and one subordinate clause; and the second tercet five periods and five main clauses with the interjection "Va." Noticeable here is the absence of extended grammatical constructions. There is only one example of a subordinate clause. The poet copies the patterns of ordinary speech - short sentences or simple coordinating of main clauses.

This artlessness, however, is more apparent than real. On closer examination, the syntactical structure of the sonnet is seen to be composed of a series of parallels and contrasts which reflect the tension between the regularity and sophistication of a fixed form and the superficial informality and discontinuity of the syntax overall. In the first quatrain, lines 1 and 3 are syntactic and thematic partners. Each, within an affirmative main clause, offers an image of hope in terms of light. At the same time however they are differentiated by the use of simile in line 1 and direct statement in line 3 and also by the interjection of the imperative "vois" at the beginning of the third line. Similarly line 4 resembles line 2.

Both are questions, and in both cases the second hemistich of the line consists of a qualification to a noun in the first. At the same time, though both questions open with the interrogative "que," the meaning of the interrogative varies from "what" in the first instance to "why" in the second. In the second quatrain the imperative of line 6 provides a parallel for that in the same opening position in line 3, a similarity reinforced by phonetic resemblance - "vois," "bois." Lines 7 and 8, both main clauses, show an exactly parallel use of a future verb, the first in the sonnet, but are differentiated by the opposition of their subjects, "je," "tu." Line 8 also performs the function of delineating the quatrains since it contains a simile which parallels that of line 1 and provides a suggestive adjunct to it in the bringing together of the theme of the stable and that of the child. Two obvious repetitions dominate the organization of the syntax in the tercets, "Midi somme" and "Il dort" and its slight variation "Va, dors!" changing the person and mood of the verb, but remaining syllabically and phonetically virtually identical. Otherwise the tercets show a differentiated syntactic structure. Parallels exist, however, with arrangements elsewhere in the sonnet. "Va, dors!" and "Il dort" pick up the earlier phonetically similar pair of imperatives in lines 3 and 6, "Vois" and "Bois-la." The combination of a disjointed syntax in lines 9-10 and an extended period running over the limits of the single line, lines 10-11, echoes the arrangement of the second quatrain, lines 5-6 and 6-8. The final tercet, on the other hand, with its absence of syntactic run-overs and the repetition of "L'espoir luit" recalls the structure of the first quatrain. At the same time, however,

the simile associated with "L'espoir luit" also brings to mind the simile of line 8 while the future verb "refleuriront" repeats the tense of lines 7 and 8 though this time in the third person and in the interrogative mode of lines 2 and 4. The syntax thus participates in the combination of informality and sophistication, freedom and discipline observed with respect to the formal pattern. Its discontinuity and apparent fragmentation is compensated by the parallels between different sections of the sonnet or internally within the separate sections, while these very parallels with their leaven of dissimilar elements perpetuate on a smaller scale the same fragile equilibrium.

The thematic arrangement of the sonnet shows an analogous mixture of differentiation and similarity. The piece is clearly organized around the traditional octave-sestet division, the tercets being marked off from the quatrains by the disruption induced by the sound of the chimes ("Midi sonne") and the footsteps of the woman. In addition, as is often the case, there is a secondary division, the tercets being themselves differentiated in tone, the first agitated, the second soothing, beneath the uniting repetition of "Midi sonne." The first tercet seems particularly strongly set apart by the absence of any image of hope and a reference instead to the "pauvres malheureux." In compensation perhaps, the second tercet offers three possibilities as images of hope, thus balancing the three suggested in the quatrains. Water, the pebble and the September roses reply to the gleaming straw, sun-beam and water of lines 1-8. On the other hand, both tercets participate in the other important thematic pattern of the poem. The motif of refreshing sleep runs throughout the entire sonnet beginning

with "endormais" (1.4), and continuing with "dors" (1.6), the suggestion, through phonetic association, of "dorloterai" (1.7), the semantic association with "sieste" and "bercé" to a renewed repetition of "dort" and "dors" in lines 10 and 13.

The phonetic factor also assists in the maintenance of a mingled similarity and dissimilarity. Apart from the obvious repetitions involving complete sentences, assonance and alliteration can give a particular section or line its own peculiar character and bring together through their phonetic resemblance words which may often be quite unconnected. This is the case with the image "comme un caillou dans un creux," the linking of two of the metaphors of hope "arroser" and "roses," the r alliteration of the final line or the p alliteration of line 5. In other instances, phonetic similarity is the product of an etymological relationship. Verlaine makes particular play in the tercets on the verb "sonner" and its compound "résonner." Phonetic similarity with "chantonneras" and "étonnant" further increases the effect of insistent repetition and helps to underline the sense of disruption occasioned by the chimes and the footsteps. The concern of the poet for these matters provides a counterbalance to the casualness displayed at the rhyme, compensating for the irregularity of the quatrain rhymes with internal patterns of repetition and thus once more achieving an ostensible freedom but one backed in fact by a careful system.

A final glance at the sonnet, this time in terms of its rhythmic pattern, reveals once again the characteristic interplay of the principles of agitation and repose. In each of the four sections of the sonnet, the unease of the spirit has its counterpart

in rhythmic disruption of at least one line, or if not in positive disruption, in hesitation as in line 3 over the position of the caesura or as in line 7 over the suppression of the final e of "rêves." But in each case, Verlaine has also maintained at least one line in the traditional 6/6 arrangement with the result that the sense of security, though tenuous at times, is never totally lost.

In "L'espoir luit," a combination of fixed if not strictly regular form, an informal and generally unrhetorical syntax and rhythm, which are yet arranged in accordance with carefully determined systems of parallels, and a thematic pattern not organized exclusively around the obvious octave-sestet combination, realize on the one hand, the sense of reassurance and security characteristic of lullaby, while on the other they suggest that state of agitation and disquiet which it is the function of lullaby to soothe.

The best of Verlaine's sonnets are distinguished by this combination of freedom and restraint which appropriately renders the poet's vacillation between established institutions and tradition, whether artistic, social or religious, and new modes of perception and standards of values, such as those offered by Rimbaud. The sonnet occurs at those points in Verlaine's career, where there is either a preference for the former (in the early period of association with the Parnassian group, in Sagesse where the poet is engaged in an attempt at self-rehabilitation through the established forms of the Catholic Church, in Dédicaces where the sonnet appears in one of its most traditional and most conventional roles), or else - and more

interestingly - where a delicate and transitory equilibrium exists between the two opposing aspects of Verlaine's character and experience. This is the case with Après Trois Ans and Mon Rêve familier in the Poèmes saturniens. The balance is already rapidly disappearing in L'Allée of Fêtes galantes, and the sonnet subsequently rejected for the experiments of Romances sans Paroles. However "Le son du cor" may well represent a further attempt to investigate the possibilities and limitations of the form as an impressionistic medium. Finally, in a very few cases in Sagesse, the equilibrium is momentarily regained, the supreme example being "L'espoir luit."

Verlaine in these few but significant instances uses the fixed form of the sonnet in a fruitful combination with rhythmic innovation to express his personal dilemma. Regular form and rhythmic disruption are mutually enhancing and the ambiguity of the result reflects the poet's peculiar combination of timidity and daring. But in none of the sonnets discussed does manipulation of the rhythm disturb the separate entities of the four sections of the sonnet. Verlaine's technique is essentially delicate. In the sonnet, he can mingle principles of control and escape from control, order and rejection of order by a skilful handling of different patterning factors within the overall structure of the formal pattern. He realized, unlike the "vers-libristes," the artistic capital to be made out of the interplay of rule and the infraction of rule and that such a deliberate skirting of traditional prosody may generally be expected to produce an effect infinitely more suggestive than total abandonment of conventional procedure:

homo duplex, P.V.; j'admets et j'adore en certains cas certain, cer-tain vague, de "l'indécis" (mais dans indécis il y a décis qui vient de décision) mais qui "au précis se joint" en tout cas, et je pense que la clarté, que la force du style sont "idoines" à toute saine littérature, à l'allemande comme à l'espagnole, à l'anglaise comme à l'italienne, mais pas à une comme à la française.¹

1. Correspondance, OC II, 1604, to Cazals [26 Aug. 1889].

CHAPTER V

Mallarmé

Mallarmé's sonnets have, like all his poems, been extensively commented. The primary aim, however, has almost always been one of exegesis and any examination of formal questions has therefore been subordinate to the attempt to elucidate a meaning or suggest an interpretation. So it happens that, despite the fact that the sonnet accounts for 39 out of the 64 Poésies in the Pléiade edition of the Oeuvres complètes¹ and that it appears with increasing frequency in the work of the 1880's and 1890's,² the general topic of Mallarmé's use of the form has only ever been tackled in Albert Thibaudet's seven page analysis in La Poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé.³

Thibaudet begins by situating Mallarmé's use of the sonnet as a Parnassian trait, passes quickly over the early sonnets, still "taillés sur le patron de l'école" though irregular in detail, and then pauses for a more extensive analysis of Hommage (à Richard Wagner). He sees this sonnet of 1885 as a "sonnet de

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1. Mallarmé, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1945). Unless otherwise stated, all page references to Mallarmé's work are those of the 1965 printing of this edition, henceforth OC.
 2. For details of the numbers and distribution of the sonnet in Mallarmé's work, v. Appendix A.
 3. Albert Thibaudet, La Poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé (Paris, Gallimard, 1926), pp. 305-312.

transition [qui] reste très classiquement composé" with its "enchaînement d'images au moyen d'une 'idée." In subsequent sonnets, however, "tout énoncé de l'idée disparaît." In Le Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire and in Tombeau (de Verlaine) for example, "la suggestion et l'allusion deviennent les deux seules puissances maîtresses et le sonnet, au lieu d'être un complexe enchaîné et organique, devient une juxtaposition d'images qui s'exhalent, sans se grouper, ni s'ordonner, autour d'une émotion."¹ This system of juxtaposed images is carried to its limits in the octosyllabic sonnets. Thibaudet briefly mentions Salut and Hommage (à Puvis de Chavannes) to illustrate his point.

Subsequent students of Mallarmé's poetic technique have tended to accept Thibaudet's account as comprehensive. Jacques Schérer, for example, in L'Expression littéraire dans l'oeuvre de Mallarmé, refers the reader back to Thibaudet and confines himself to a few short remarks on the fact that Mallarmé's versification is the least original of all the elements of his technique:

A la différence de celle de la phrase, la structure du vers chez Mallarmé n'est pas originale ... Il est fermement partisan du vers traditionnel et lui reste toujours fidèle.²

There is no attempt to tackle the question of how Mallarmé coordinates new syntactic structures and traditional prosody or of the effects he is thus able to achieve. Schérer's chapter on versification deals only with the distinction made by Mallarmé

1. Thibaudet, p. 307.

2. Jacques Schérer, L'Expression littéraire dans l'oeuvre de Mallarmé (Paris, Droz, 1947), p. 197.

between "vers" and "prose" and with his use of mute e and draws solely on Mallarmé's theoretical pronouncements on these subjects. There is no discussion of the sonnet or of any other poetic form and in conclusion Schérer is content merely to state once again the orthodox character of Mallarmé's prosody:

... une étude de la versification de Mallarmé ne révélera aucune nouveauté ... Dans la technique de Mallarmé, la versification est ... un point fixe. Tout le reste est modifiable: le vers, comme le mot, est sacré.¹

The way in which Schérer totally separates syntactic structures from prosodic ones seems in itself highly questionable, but even leaving this more general criticism of his method aside, he can also be faulted in his actual remarks on Mallarmé's versification, at least as far as the sonnet is concerned. He takes no account of Mallarmé's preference at the end of his career for the Shakespearian rhyme-pattern of three quatrains and a terminal couplet, a system untraditional in France and generally called there "faux sonnet" or "quatorzain." Nor is this point dealt with by Thibaudet. No quatorzain is included in his pages on the sonnet and Mallarmé's use of this arrangement is interpreted as a sign of the poet's insufficiencies as a sonnetist:

Si Mallarmé appréciait la forme du sonnet, il ne la réalisait qu'avec des difficultés, et jusqu'au bout il écrivit des sonnets irréguliers, sans retour de rimes aux quatrains, s'autorisant de l'exemple de la Renaissance anglaise.²

Such a negative interpretation seems scarcely appropriate for the poet whose skill in the most rigorous form of the

1. Ibid., p. 200.

2. Thibaudet, p. 307.

conventional sonnet is clearly evident in "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui." In fact all the sonnets of the Poésies written after 1864, with the special exception of "Ses purs ongles très haut dédiant leur onyx,"¹ fall into the two groups of quatorzain or French regular sonnet on the Banville rhyme pattern (abba abba ccd ede). Thibaudet, in advancing the traditional criticism of a four-fold rhyme in the quatrains, seems unaware of the peculiar nature and possibilities of the English form. The pattern of three quatrains differentiated by their rhyme and followed by a final couplet, can permit a sense of movement and progression in the main body of the piece to which the French-Italian version with its repetition of rhyme in the quatrains and its underlining of the equilibrium between quatrains and tercets is rather less suited. The respective roles of regular sonnet and quatorzain in the work of Mallarmé have thus received no developed critical comment though they could be seen to correspond to the two main trends in the poet's work, stasis or pirouette, represented by Hérodiade and L'Après-Midi d'un faune, but played out on a much less ambitious scale.

In this connexion a further gap in our understanding of Mallarmé's sonnet becomes apparent. The relationship of the form to Mallarmé's general preoccupations has never been properly examined, nor the question asked: does the sonnet have a peculiar

1. This is the celebrated "sonnet en - yx." It rhymes abab abab cdd ccd in the 1868 version and abab abab ccd cdc in the definitive version. However, the rhyme-scheme displays special complexity as the a and d rhymes and b and c rhymes are homophonous. For a discussion of this sonnet, v. infra, pp. 437-447.

relevance for his ideas on the nature and requirements of Poetry? What is the Mallarméan aesthetic of the sonnet? Schérer deliberately eliminates any questions of this sort. Thibaudet, on the other hand, is necessarily somewhat limited in this respect, since the wealth of supplementary information, and especially the correspondence, brought together by the efforts of Henri Mondor in particular, was not of course available at the time his book was written.¹ The aim here will therefore be to examine the development in Mallarmé's use of the sonnet, bearing in mind his remarks on the technique and function of Poetry as they appear in contemporary letters and articles. It is hoped that it will thus be possible to trace the poet's progress from a standard type of sonnet to more original formulations and perhaps also to establish a correlation between his handling of the sonnet structure and the development of his aesthetic ideas.

Thibaudet begins his discussion of Mallarmé's sonnet with a reference to Parnassian practice but gives in fact a general background to sonnet production in the 1850's and 1860's. At the moment that Mallarmé was beginning to write seriously, the Parnassian group as such was not yet in existence and Mallarmé himself, though kept in touch with developments in the literary world by Cazalis, Des Essarts and Mendès, was not in Paris to participate in any of the gatherings of poets which preceded in the early 1860's the appearance of the first Parnasse contemporain. In any case, the poets whom Thibaudet mentions specifically - Sully Prudhomme and Heredia - had as yet as few sonnets to their

1. So far 4 vols. of Mallarmé's Correspondance have appeared: Vol. I (1862-1871), ed. Henri Mondor and Jean-Pierre Richard (Paris, Gallimard, 1959); Vols. II-IV (1871-1885, 1886-1889, 1890-1891), ed. Henri Mondor and Lloyd James Austin (Paris, Gallimard, 1965, 1969, 1973). Vol. IV consists of two separate books, the second of which is a Supplément aux tomes I, II et III. Reference henceforth will be to Corr. I, II, III, IVi, IVii.

name as Mallarmé himself. More important perhaps is the indication of Soulary's Sonnets humoristiques, published in 1858,¹ and of course the example of Baudelaire. In invoking this, however, Thibaudet perpetuates the idea of Baudelaire's lack of skill as a practitioner of the form and as usual in these instances Boileau is dragged in to support the point:

... la forme de ses sonnets est malhabile et lâche,
et il n'en est pas dans les Fleurs du Mal deux qui
soient sans défaut.²

Mondor's Mallarmé lycéen³ enables the modern student to be rather more specific where Mallarmé's youthful aspirations are concerned. Of the four school-boy notebooks, published by Mondor, three, entitled Glanes, contain poems transcribed from a wide variety of poets. These include, in the first notebook, literal translations of some poems by Poe, thirty-seven poems of Baudelaire⁴

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1. In letters to Cazalis of July and August 1864 Mallarmé describes his plans for his forthcoming trip to Paris, including a visit en route to Soulary in Lyons. Corr.I, 122, 125, 130. In 1870 he suggests that Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, en route to see him at Avignon, should stay overnight in Lyons with Soulary. Corr.I, 331. From the letter it is clear however that Mallarmé has not been in touch with Soulary for a long time, probably not since his own visit. Extracts in the early notebooks, v. infra p.411 show that Soulary's work did make a certain impression on the schoolboy. Mallarmé's early and continued liking for the sonnet may well therefore owe something to Soulary, but the mundane character and obvious techniques of Soulary's sonnets are quite unlike any but the most juvenile of Mallarmé's sonnets. V. infra pp. 412-413.
 2. Thibaudet, p. 306. There are in fact six sonnets "sans défaut" in the strict technical sense in Les Fleurs du Mal: Bohémiens en voyage, Parfum exotique, Sed non satiata, Le Possédé, Un Fantôme III. Le Cadre, Sonnet d'automne.
 3. Henri Mondor, Mallarmé lycéen (Paris, Gallimard, 1954), 3rd ed.
 4. 10 of these, i.e. between a quarter and a third, are sonnets. This proportion is rather less than the ratio of sonnets overall in Les Fleurs du Mal, 60 sonnets out of 127 pieces in the 1861 edition, or just under a half. They are La Muse vénale, L'Idéal, "Avec ses vêtements ondoyants et nacrés," "Une nuit que j'étais près d'une affreuse Juive," Causerie, La Cloche fêlée, Tristesses de la lune, Le Mort joyeux, Le Revenant, Les Deux Bonnes Soeurs. Mondor also lists a Spleen but does not indicate which one.

and a selection of poems from a number of sixteenth century poets - Du Bellay, Gohorry, Villon, Brodeau, Baif, Magny, Remi Belleau, Jacques Tahureau, la Taille, Desportes, Bertaut; in the second notebook, poems by Sainte-Beuve¹ and a variety of other Romantic writers - Musset, Lamartine, Hugo, Barbier - and poems of Poe in English; in the third, further poems from the sixteenth century, a few by Théophile de Viau as a supplement to those quoted in Gautier's Grotesques, and an additional selection from nineteenth century poets, including four sonnets by Soulayr.² The fourth notebook, Entre quatre murs, is a collection of forty-one poems by Mallarmé himself and includes four sonnets.³ The most important features of the three notebooks of extracts are the obvious interest in the work of Poe and in that of the recently published Baudelaire. However, little sign of this is to be found in Mallarmé's own sonnets in Entre quatre murs. Unlike the sonnets of the years 1862-64, they show no trace of a Baudelairian influence and there is no sign as yet either of Poe's insistence on carefully planned and rigorously executed work. In subject-matter and technique these pieces recall rather the capriciousness of Musset in "Que j'aime le frisson d'hiver." "J'adore la catin et son baiser

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1. None of these are sonnets.
 2. These are A son Imprimeur, Rêves ambitieux, Rimembranza, Les Deux Cortèges.
 3. These are "Quand sous votre corps craque un soyeux coussin," Sonnet en envoyant un pot de fleurs, Sonnet. Réponse ("Ami, ton vers est gai comme un éclat de rire"), Sonnet. Pénitence ("Quand tel un bleu nuage"). Mondor mistakenly refers, p. 266, to Rêve antique as "le premier sonnet du jeune Mallarmé." In fact this poem, printed on p. 125, is composed of four quatrains.

m'inspire / Comme elle, en mes sonnets, je danse un fandango" writes Mallarmé in the Sonnet. Réponse, "Ami, ton vers est gai comme un éclat de rire."

All four sonnets are irregular in their rhyme-scheme and two at least show a striking nonchalance towards conventional requirements of structure. Unlike the Musset sonnet, however, their mixture of informality and formality is not germane to the subject they present.

A brief examination of the first sonnet of the group reveals a youthful and rather appealing contrast between the effort towards a studied casualness in subject-matter and construction and the naively paradoxical assertion of the strictness of the sonnet form in the tercets:

Quand sous votre corps craque un soyeux coussin,
Fumer dans l'ambre et l'or un tabac qu'on arrose
De parfums espagnols: voir voltiger l'essaim
Des houris à l'oeil noir, dont l'enivrante pose
Vous fait rêver au ciel; renverser sur le sein
De celle qui, rieuse, entre vos bras repose
Un verre de Xérès, et dans le frais bassin
Mouiller en folâtrant ses tresses d'eau de rose,
C'est l'Eden! - pense Hassan: et je lui fais écho!
Mais le ciel, c'est pour moi comme à mon vieux Shakespeare
Un sonnet! - où l'esprit jouit d'être au martyre
Comme en son fin corset le sein de Camargo!
- Quoi! J'ai tant bavardé! plus qu'un vers pour te dire
Mon voeu: "Pour moi demande un (sonnet) à ta lyre!"¹

The quatrains utilize a typical pattern of enumeration and cumulation in a description of a sensual cornucopia, to which the tercets respond with an assertion of the supreme appeal of the sonnet by virtue of the restrictive and hence enhancing nature of

1. Mondor, Mallarmé lycéen, p. 206.

its form. The discontinuous presentation of theme in the tercets, however, prevents the poet from arriving at a satisfactory total arrangement. Lines 9, 10-12 and 13-14 all lead in different directions. Line 9 rounds off the sense of the quatrains; lines 10-12 then introduce the completely new theme of the sonnet. The only connexion with the opening stanzas is the tenuous comparison: "C'est l'Éden! pense Hassan ... / Mais le ciel, c'est pour moi ...". Finally, in lines 13-14, it turns out that the whole exercise has been undertaken less as a comparison between the different kinds of pleasure derived from full sensual enjoyment on the one hand and the more restricted but perhaps therefore more attractive charms of the sonnet on the other, but as a social game. Rhyme-scheme and rhythm do little to support the Soutaryesque¹ image of the sonnet put forward in line 12. The quatrains have two rhymes only but in an alternate arrangement and the tercets close on a couplet rhyme. Rhythmic structures are more in keeping with the exuberant evocation of the quatrains with carry-overs of syntax and sense occurring between all the major divisions of the sonnet structure as well as within the individual stanzas.

This early sonnet is a schoolboy effort which gives no hint of Mallarmé's later originality in the form. The sonnets that precede the beginning of Hérodiade in October 1864 show some increase in maturity but their interest, like that of the juvenile efforts of Glanes, is still mainly a historical one. Mallarmé's enthusiasm for the form emerges clearly in a letter to Henri

1. V. Soutary's sonnet on Le Sonnet, Appendix B, p. 605.

Cazalis for which Mondor suggests a date of 1862:

Tu riras peut-être de ma manie de sonnets - non, car tu en as fait de délicieux - mais pour moi c'est un grand poème en petit: les quatrains et les tercets me semblent des chants entiers, et je passe parfois trois jours à en équilibrer d'avance les parties, pour que le tout soit harmonieux et s'approche du Beau.¹

Corr. I, 32

However, the sonnets of 1862-64 are quite clearly derivative with Baudelaire as their chief model. Like the majority of the sonnets in Les Fleurs du Mal, they deal with the emotional life of the poet¹ envisaged in terms of a conflict between physical and spiritual elements, between thoughtless enjoyment and past innocence on the one hand and present disillusionment on the other. This dichotomy is framed, as in many of Baudelaire's sonnets, within the simpler structural possibilities of the sonnet form for contrast and comparison. Like Baudelaire, Mallarmé at this stage pays little attention to rhyme-scheme

1. In 1866, "malade d'Hérodiade, usé de veilles, impuissant," Mallarmé reluctantly allowed 10 of his poems to be included in the first Parnasse contemporain. A letter to Cazalis of May 1866 shows him acutely aware of their imperfections, the chief of which was their strongly personal element: "aucun de ces poèmes n'a été en réalité conçu en vue de la Beauté, mais plutôt comme autant d'intuitives révélations de mon tempérament et de la note qu'il donnerait." Corr. I, 215. Mallarmé's contribution included the 4 sonnets Vere novo (later Renouveau), A celle qui est tranquille (later Angoisse), Le Sonneur, and Tristesse d'été.

except as a delineator of the sonnet's main structural blocks. All six of the sonnets of this period included in Poésies are, in their original versions at least, irregular. Placet futile and Tristesse d'été have alternate rhymes in the quatrains, Le Pitre châtié, in its first version, a pattern of abba baab.¹ Le Sonneur has alternate rhyme in the quatrains and the pattern cdd cee in the tercets. Renouveau and Angoisse also have a scheme with a terminal couplet. In addition they each have four rhymes in the quatrains, in an enclosed pattern in Renouveau, in an alternate one in Angoisse.

Let us now examine these sonnets in a little more detail in order to form a precise idea of the structure and direction of Mallarmé's sonnet at this point. Tristesse d'été, linked by its central image to several of Mallarmé's other sonnets,² as well as to the whole corpus of poetry on the subject of the hair of the poet's mistress,³ seems a particularly suitable starting point.

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1. Le Pitre châtié was extensively reworked before being included in the Poésies of 1887 and was, amongst other things, transformed into a regular sonnet. v. infra pp. 421-425. It is the only one of the 1862-64 sonnets to be altered in this way.
 2. "De l'Orient passé des Temps" (later "Quelle soie aux baumes de temps"), v. infra pp. 432-434. "Victorieusement fui" and La Chevelure, v. infra pp. 455-462. Camille Soula devoted a whole book to the subject, La Poésie et la Pensée de Stéphane Mallarmé: Essai sur le symbole de la chevelure (Paris, Champion, 1926). Reprinted in Camille Soula, Gloses sur Mallarmé (Paris, Editions Diderot, 1941).
 3. The theme is of course a famous Baudelairian one. But Sainte-Beuve ("Sur un front de quinze ans," v. supra pp. 34-37) and Banville (Sur une dame blonde, v. supra pp. 253-254) use it also, and it is indeed common coin in love sonnets and in love poetry in general. The sixteenth century is full of examples, for instance Ronsard, Les Amours, CLXXVII: "L'or crespelu, que d'autant plus j'honore" and CLXXVIII: "Si blond, si beau comme est une toyson," Oeuvres complètes, vol.4, ed. Laumonier, (Paris, S.T.F.M., 1939).

I quote the original version of 1864:

Le soleil, sur la mousse où tu t'es endormie,
A chauffé comme un bain tes cheveux ténébreux,
Et, dans l'air sans oiseaux et sans brise ennemie,
S'évapore ton fard en parfums dangereux.

De ce blanc flamboiement l'immuable accalmie
Me fait haïr la vie et notre amour fiévreux,
Et tout mon être implore un sommeil de momie
Morne comme le sable et les palmiers poudreux!

Ta chevelure, est-elle une rivière tiède
Où noyer sans frissons mon âme qui m'obsède
Et jouir du Néant où l'on ne pense pas?

Je veux boire le fard qui fond sous tes paupières
Si ce poison promet au coeur que tu frappas
L'insensibilité de l'azur et des pierres!

OC, p. 1429

In this sonnet, the physical vigour and sensuality of the sleeping woman (first quatrain) contrast with the mental lassitude of the poet (second quatrain). The tercets question the possibility of the physical life as a solution to his problem and secondly, as a last, desperate measure, adopt it as a means to a final annihilation of the spirit and its torment. The pattern of contrast established between the two quatrains is thus repeated in the internal structure of each tercet, lines 9 and 12 reproducing the theme of the first quatrain, lines 10-11 and 13-14 that of the second. This thematic structure, though falling within the four traditional sections of the sonnet and depending on the broad patterns of equilibrium between them, receives no great degree of support from formal structures. This is particularly evident in the quatrains where the pattern of alternate rhyme means that from the point of view of sound, the quatrains tend to follow each other in a continuous development rather than as two blocks, exactly comparable on the one hand, clearly differentiated on the

other. The opposition of theme in the quatrains thus depends entirely on the notion of the sonnet structure at its most simple and obvious level - the four line blocks of the quatrains.

A similar lack of tightness can be observed in the imagery. The division of the first quatrain between "cheveux" (ll. 1-2) and "fard" (ll. 3-4) and the corresponding arrangement in the tercets "chevelure" (ll. 9-11) and "fard" (ll. 12-14) have to contend with the development of a quite alien element in the second quatrain. The irrelevance of the motif of desert heat in the general metaphorical pattern is amply indicated in line 1 where the germ of the image is discovered in quite different surroundings - "le soleil" but "sur la mousse"! This defect is rectified in the version included two years later in the Parnasse contemporain of 1866.¹ The sun in line 1 is now "sur le sable," "cheveux ténébreux" has become "l'or de tes cheveux," and the evaporating "parfums" (l. 4) have disappeared in favour of a liquid mixture providing a better transition to the reappearance of the "fard" motif in line 12 and the action of drinking, or as it now stands, tasting: "Je goûterai le fard." Mallarmé's concern to make his sonnet as perfect as possible is also evidenced by his letter to Mendès requesting a proof for the completion of his revision of this and other poems, and expressing his desire to find a new title here which would not repeat a word of the text itself. (The modification of the second quatrain had

1. "Le soleil, sur le sable, ô lutteuse endormie, / En l'or de tes cheveux chauffe un bain langoureux / Et, consumant l'encens sur ta joue ennemie, / Il mêle avec les pleurs un breuvage amoureux. // De ce blanc flamboiement l'immuable accalmie / T'a fait dire, attristée, ô mes baisers peureux, / 'Nous ne serons jamais une seule momie / Sous l'antique désert et les palmiers heureux!' // Mais ta chevelure est une rivière tiède, / Où noyer sans frissons l'âme qui nous obsède / Et trouver ce Néant que tu ne connais pas! // Je goûterai le fard pleuré par tes paupières, / Pour voir s'il sait donner au coeur que tu frappas / L'insensibilité de l'azur et des pierres."

introduced "attristée.")¹ There is, however, in spite of these corrections effected or proposed, no real development in the basic structural pattern of the sonnet. There is a change of emphasis in that the contrast between woman (as part of the natural universe) and poet is modified to a situation where both are dissatisfied with the limited and finite quality of their relationship. The contrast is now marked out between the continuing force and life of nature - "le soleil," "l'antique désert," "les palmiers heureux" - and the desire of both to escape from their common awareness - "l'âme qui nous obsède" - of human fragility. However it is the contrast which remains as the dominant feature framed within the main structural blocks of the sonnet and apart from the tightening of the imagery, there is no sign of a move towards a more complex or exhaustive use of the form.

Angoisse and Renouveau follow similar patterns of contrast. In Angoisse the quatrains balance the ideas of physical relief (first quatrain) and emotional relief (second quatrain); the tercets open with two lines indicating the common misery of woman and poet, and then proceed to differentiate between her obliviousness to it (ll. 11-12) and his awareness of it (ll. 13-14). In Renouveau the contrast between the burgeoning of spring and the lassitude of the poet is crystallized within a 12:2 arrangement,

1. Corr.I, 212. Letter of end April 1866. The letter also shows the importance attributed by Mallarmé to the visual appearance of his poems: "Je voudrais un caractère assez serré qui s'adaptât à la condensation des vers, mais de l'air entre les vers, de l'espace, afin qu'ils se détachent les uns des autres, ce qui est nécessaire encore avec leur condensation."

though the two themes are increasingly interwoven as the sonnet progresses and an opposition could also be seen between the quatrains which concentrate on the poet's spleen and the tercets which are more and more concerned with the enervating fertility of spring. Unlike Mallarmé's later quatorzains, the Shakespearian rhyme-scheme of these early pieces¹ is not used to support a mobile imagery or a continuous syntax. The blocks of quatrains and tercets remain separate and the presence of four rhymes in the quatrains seems, as in many of Baudelaire's sonnets, to be an entirely fortuitous arrangement with no relevance to the poet's main concern. Once again it is the central contrast of ideas that is all-important and the simplest oppositions and symmetries of the sonnet structure provide sufficient formal emphasis for the poet's purpose.

Le Sonneur too plays through the contrast between unself-conscious enjoyment in living and awareness of inadequacy and failure. The sonnet is organized around the similarity between the "sonneur" and the speaker, established in the octave-sestet pattern, and the alienation of the "sonneur" (and hence the speaker) from the ideal world of the fresh morning, the singing "faucheuse" in the meadow (child in the definitive version), and the sound of the bell, an alienation expressed in the opposition of quatrain to quatrain. In addition to these two overlapping patterns, a further factor is introduced by the use of a final couplet. This describes a resolution outside the scope of the "sonneur" - speaker

1. Angoisse rhymes abab cdcd eff egg, Renouveau abba cddc efe egg. The enclosed pattern of the quatrain rhymes of Renouveau is not in the strictest sense Shakespearian. Nor is the effe arrangement of ll. 9-11 of Angoisse.

equivalence, as presented in lines 1-12, and its separation from the rest of the sonnet is stressed in the repetition of future tenses and, in the initial version, by a dash at the beginning of line 13. Despite the couplet, and unlike Angoisse and Renouveau, this sonnet is not Shakespearian in form. The quatrains, though alternately rhymed, are on two rhymes only, and the octave-sestet arrangement remains as the dominant patterning factor. Indeed the central thematic balance in Le Sonneur is even more one-dimensional than in the other sonnets so far considered. The equivalence on which the sonnet is based has no great subtlety or originality and the exact superposition of thematic and formal structures merely serves to emphasize its limitations.

The theme of the bell and its spiritual associations, treated at length by Lamartine in La Cloche, had already provided more than once the subject for a sonnet, for example in Baudelaire's piece La Cloche fêlée. Before that it had had its place in the tercets of one of Gautier's earliest sonnets, "Aux vitraux diaprés des sombres basiliques."¹ Imagery in Tristesse d'été, Angoisse and Renouveau is more specifically Baudelairian. The original titles of the pieces underline the link - A une putain, then A celle qui est tranquille for Angoisse, Spleen printanier for Renouveau,² and Soleils mauvais and Soleils malsains as a collective title for

1. V. supra, pp. 72-74.

2. This title is suggested in a letter of 4 June 1862 to Cazalis, v. infra p.426. When published in the Parnasse contemporain of 1866, the sonnet was entitled Vere novo.

Renouveau and Tristesse d'été. However, lines such as "De ce blanc flamboiement l'immuable accalmie" have a new ring and it is also particularly noticeable in Renouveau how Baudelairian vocabulary is reorientated in a new direction. In Mallarmé the warmth, perfume and fertility, beloved of Baudelaire, lead not to vision but to despair. His feeling is reserved rather for aesthetic problems and for "L'hiver, saison de l'art serein, saison lucide." This attitude will subsequently manifest itself across the whole range of Mallarmé's work in degrees that vary from the extreme abstractions of the "Grand Oeuvre" and the purity and remoteness of Hérodiade to a general preoccupation with an obliquer imagery and a more veiled sensuality. The sonnet too will evolve accordingly, moving away from the patterns of contrast that underline the theme of the duality of man's being towards a Byzantine formalism or a will o' the wisp preciosity.

Something of this development can be observed in Le Pitre châtié. Like the sonnets already considered, it treats a well-established nineteenth century theme¹ but it possesses a special interest since Mallarmé substantially reworked it for the 1887 edition of his Poésies.² We thus have two versions separated by

1. Banville's Sous bois (Les Cariatides) v. supra, p.251, La Muse vénale of Baudelaire (copied out in one of Mallarmé's early notebooks), Pierrot and Le Clown of Verlaine (both in Jadis et naguère) are just a few examples of the popularity of the theme of the actor or clown and its frequent association with the sonnet form. It should be remembered also that Poe in his Philosophy of Composition characterized the manipulations of the writer in terms of the tricks of the theatre and that the writer himself in Baudelaire's translation of the work, La Genèse d'un Poème, is termed a "histrion littéraire."
2. It is the only one of 1862-64 so reworked, no doubt because it deals with an artistic and not a purely personal problem.

over twenty years and are in a position to appreciate the evolution of Mallarmé's sonnet technique in that period.

Pour ses yeux, - pour nager dans ces lacs, dont les quais
Sont plantés de beaux cils qu'un matin bleu pénètre,
J'ai, Muse, - moi, ton pitre, - enjambé la fenêtre
Et fui notre baraque où fument tes quinquets.

Et d'herbes enivré, j'ai plongé comme un traître
Dans ces lacs défendus, et quand tu m'appelais,
Baigné mes membres nus dans l'onde aux blancs galets,
Oubliant mon habit de pitre au tronc d'un hêtre.

Le soleil du matin séchait mon corps nouveau
Et je sentais fraîchir loin de ta tyrannie
La neige des glaciers dans ma chair assainie,

Ne sachant pas, hélas! quand s'en allait sur l'eau
Le suif de mes cheveux et le fard de ma peau,
Muse, que cette crasse était tout le génie!

OC, p. 1416

Yeux, lacs avec ma simple ivresse de renaître
Autre que l'histrion qui du geste évoquais
Comme plume la suie ignoble des quinquets,
J'ai troué dans le mur de toile une fenêtre.

De ma jambe et des bras limpide nageur traître,
A bonds multipliés, reniant le mauvais
Hamlet! c'est comme si dans l'onde j'innovais
Mille sépulcres pour y vierge disparaître.

Hilare or de cymbale à des poings irrité
Tout à coup le soleil frappe la nudité
Qui pure s'exhala de ma fraîcheur de nacre,

Rance nuit de la peau quand sur moi vous passiez,
Ne sachant pas, ingrat! que c'était tout mon sacre,
Ce fard noyé dans l'eau perfide des glaciers.

OC, p. 31

In the first version the meaning is immediately clear. The poet, the Muse's clown, has disobeyed his calling and put love first; the result is the loss of all his skill. This is framed in terms of an opposition between purity and squalid artifice, but it is an opposition which does not follow the structural balances of the sonnet form with any great degree of rigour. The tercets stand in clear contrast to each other, but in the quatrains there

is no comparable symmetry, since only lines 3-4 deal with the squalid surroundings from which the clown escapes. The most striking feature of this version is the exceedingly precious development of the image of the eyes as lakes, in particular lines 1-2: "Pour ses yeux, - pour nager dans ces lacs, dont les quais / Sont plantés de beaux cils qu'un matin bleu pénètre." This element of preciousness, also apparent in the eighteenth century pastiche Placet futile, is a constant in the poet's work and it persists in the second version of Le Pitre châtié but in a more specifically Mallarméan form. The initial image is now compressed and elliptic ("Yeux, lacs") and the rest of the sonnet shows a corresponding increase in the density and complexity of metaphor and syntax. Lines 9-10 where the image of the golden cymbal magnificently captures the brilliant impact of the sun and also creates a new dimension for the verb "frappe" in the following line, offer an excellent example. This move towards a more elliptic imagery and syntax is associated with a general tightening of the sonnet form. Mallarmé has altered the rhyme-scheme so that the quatrains now follow the regular pattern abba abba instead of the original abba baab. In addition the tercet arrangement has been changed from cdd ccd to ccd ede, the standard Banvillean pattern.

This movement towards formal orthodoxy sets off the new concentration on the network of individual words and images. However, the piece remains strongly based on the story of the clown. The story-line itself is less immediately obvious than before, but the regularizing of the sonnet rhyme-scheme brings increased sharpness to the contrast of episodes of which the story is made

up. The new pattern has the double effect of indicating more strongly the major structural break after line 8 and of more clearly differentiating tercet from tercet. As a result the image of the cymbal is thrown into strong relief at the opening of the tercets and "Rance nuit de la peau" coming after the unfinished rhyme in line 11 stands in sharp contrast to it as the opening line of the second tercet. This increased sharpness and coherence of thematic and structural patterns can also be noted in the quatrains. The second quatrain, as in the 1864 version, describes the clown's bathe in the purity of the lake. However, the opening image of the sonnet, which in the original version, took up half the first quatrain, is disposed of in the definitive version with breathtaking rapidity leaving the poet free to concentrate in lines 1-4 on the clown's squalid booth and his desire to escape. A balance thus emerges between the quatrains which corresponds to the balance to be found in both versions of the tercets. Overall too a more symmetrical pattern is created in the sonnet, since the first quatrain and second tercet, like the second quatrain and the first tercet, now stand as clear thematic parallels. An enclosed pattern thus appears which can perhaps be seen as suggesting on a formal level the vicious circle in which the clown is caught. Even beyond this general tightening of structure, the contrastive shape of the original version comes through clearly in the symmetrical positioning of individual thematic motifs. Thus "renaître" providing the opening rhyme in the quatrains is balanced by and contrasts with "Mille sépulcres pour y vierge disparaître" at the end of the octave. The description at the end of the first quatrain of the hole made

in the canvas is echoed at the end of the second by the description of the "holes" made in the water: "c'est comme si dans l'onde j'innovais / Mille sépulcres." Then too there is the parallel between "l'histrion" in line 2 of the first quatrain and "le mauvais / Hamlet" in lines 2-3 of the second. The two inner stanzas offer as in the first version a grouping of words connoting purity ("limpide" "vierge" "nudité" "pure" "fraîcheur" "nacre"). Then comes "Hilare or de cymbale" in the first line of the first tercet balanced by and contrasted with "Rance nuit de la peau" in the first line of the second. In the closing line, "noyé" recalls "dans l'onde j'innovais / Mille sépulcres" in the closing line of the quatrains, while "l'eau perfide des glaciers" brings the piece full circle to the initial image "Yeux, lacs."

As this analysis shows, the original narrative line with its contrasting episodes framed within the sonnet's four-fold structure still persists in the 1887 version. However it is now dissimulated by and in competition with a network of individual words and images thrown into relief by the elliptic syntax and the tightening of the sonnet form. The general shape of the 1864 sonnet remains, but we glimpse here how rigorously observed form can complement a more difficult and hermetic conception of Poetry and poetic language.

The sonnets of the period 1862-64 perpetuate one aspect of Baudelairian sonnet technique, the use of the contrastive possibilities of the sonnet structure to present the opposition between the unthinking, untormented, spiritually uncreative sensual or physical life and the mental anguish experienced by the poet before

life's finite quality and his own inadequacy. This debt is implicitly acknowledged in a letter of 4 June 1862 to Cazalis enclosing the sonnet later to be entitled Renouveau, "un pauvre sonnet éclos ces jours-ci, triste et laid."

Emmanuel [Des Essarts] t'avait peut-être parlé d'une stérilité curieuse que le printemps avait installée en moi. Après trois mois d'impuissance, j'en suis enfin débarrassé et mon premier sonnet est consacré à la décrire, c'est-à-dire à la maudire. C'est un genre assez nouveau que cette poésie, où les effets matériels, du sang, des nerfs, sont analysés et mêlés aux effets moraux, de l'esprit, de l'âme. Cela pourrait s'appeler Spleen printanier. Quand la combinaison est bien harmonisée et que l'oeuvre n'est ni trop physique ni trop spirituelle, elle peut représenter quelque chose.

Corr. I, 30-31

Eugène Lefébure, writing to Mallarmé on 25 June 1862, makes the point more precisely à propos of this same sonnet:

Baudelaire, s'il rajeunissait, pourrait signer vos sonnets.¹

However even in these early pieces, some of the imagery has a specifically Mallarméan ring and the two versions of Le Pitre châtié have enabled us to look further at Mallarmé's use of metaphor and to study its effect on Mallarmé's handling of the sonnet. The intellectual opposition between art and love which provides the initial germ of Le Pitre châtié and which is central to the 1864 version, is much less readily apparent in 1887. Now formal and metaphorical oppositions move from a supporting to a dominant role. The sonnet rhyme-scheme is tightened to a strictly regular pattern and provides a taut formal framework in which compressed and obscure images can be closely and

1. Quoted as a footnote to Mallarmé's letter to Cazalis. Corr. I, 31, n.1.

significantly juxtaposed.

The second version of Le Pitre châtié is examined here somewhat outside the line of chronological development that has so far been followed. However it seemed interesting to include it at this point since the comparison with the early version throws a fair amount of light on the development of Mallarmé's sonnet technique. Now it is necessary to return to the 1860's and to consider the decisive evolution in Mallarmé's aesthetic ideas and general philosophy in the period 1864-68 and the impact this may have had on his use of the sonnet form.

Mallarmé's early use of the sonnet follows the fashion established by Les Fleurs du Mal and his subjects and technique are derivative, but his contemporary correspondence shows him moving towards a more original conception of Poetry and poetic technique. From a very early stage Mallarmé is preoccupied with the need for care and concision in writing. He criticizes the inspirational approach of his former mentor Emmanuel Des Essarts, attacking his prolix and facile style.¹ In contrast is his own rejection of the twenty

1. Mallarmé to Cazalis, 3 June 1863: "Je trouve qu'Emmanuel se fait beaucoup de tort en se laissant aller à la grande facilité: il commet trop aisément de ces sortes de pages brillantes et vides." Corr. I, 90. Mallarmé to Lefébure, Feb. 1865, on Des Essarts' newly published book of poems Les Elévations: "Les Elévations me semblent détestables: la pensée lâche, se distend en lieux communs et, quant à la forme, je vois des mots, des mots, mis souvent au hasard, sinistre s'y pouvant remplacer par lugubre, et lugubre par tragique, sans que le sens du vers change. On ne ressent à cette lecture aucune sensation neuve. Le rythme est très habilement manié, voilà ce qui rachète tant de grisaille et de bavardage, et encore? Vous me dites que je maltraite un ami? Non, Des Essarts est un des rares êtres que j'aime beaucoup; seulement, par un très grand malheur, je ne puis souffrir sa poésie qui dément tout ce que je pense de cet art." Corr. I, 153.

page elucubrations of his youth¹ and his admiration for the concentrated pieces of Aloysius Bertrand.² He is also increasingly dissatisfied with the anecdotal basis of most poetry and emphasizes instead the total effect of a poem and the interrelationships of individual words which go to make it up.³ His master here is Poe.

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1. Mallarmé to Lefébure, Feb. 1865: "Enfant, au collège, je faisais des narrations de vingt pages, et j'étais renommé pour ne savoir pas m'arrêter. Or, depuis, n'ai-je pas, au contraire, exagéré plutôt l'amour de la condensation? J'avais une prolixité violente et une enthousiaste diffusion, écrivant tout du premier jet, bien entendu, et croyant à l'effusion, en style. Qu'y a-t-il de plus différent que l'écolier d'alors, vrai et primesautier, avec le littérateur d'à présent, qui a horreur d'une chose dite sans être arrangée? Corr.I, 155.
 2. Mallarmé to Victor Pavie, Feb. 1866: "Louis Bertrand ... est vraiment, par sa forme condensée et précieuse, un de nos frères." Corr.I, 199.
 3. These ideas are developed in particular detail in a letter to Cazalis of Jan. 1864 à propos of the poem L'Azur: "Je t'envoie enfin ce poème de L'Azur ... Il m'a donné beaucoup de mal, parce que bannissant mille gracieusetés lyriques et beaux vers qui hantaient incessamment ma cervelle, j'ai voulu rester implacablement dans mon sujet. Je te jure qu'il n'y a pas un mot qui ne m'ait coûté plusieurs heures de recherche, et que le premier mot, qui revêt la première idée, outre qu'il tend lui-même à l'effet général du poème, sert encore à préparer le dernier. L'effet produit, sans une dissonance, sans une fioriture, même adorable, qui distrait, - voilà ce que je cherche. Je suis sûr, m'étant lu ces vers à moi-même, deux cents fois peut-être, qu'il est atteint. Reste maintenant l'autre côté à envisager, le côté esthétique. Est-ce beau? Y a-t-il un reflet de la Beauté? Ici, commencerait mon immodestie si je parlais, et c'est à toi de décider, Henri; qu'il y a loin de ces théories de composition littéraire à la façon dont notre glorieux Emmanuel /Des Essarts/ prend une poignée d'étoiles dans la voie lactée pour la semer sur le papier et les laisser se former au hasard en constellations imprévues! Et comme son âme enthousiaste, ivre d'inspiration, reculerait d'horreur, devant ma façon de travailler! Il est le poète lyrique dans tout son admirable épanchement. Toutefois, plus j'irai, plus je serai fidèle à ces sévères idées que m'a léguées mon grand maître Edgar Poe." An analysis of the poem follows and then Mallarmé concludes: "Tu le vois pour ceux qui, comme Emmanuel et comme toi, cherchent dans un poème autre chose que la musique des vers, il y a là un vrai drame. Et ç'a été une terrible difficulté de combiner, dans une juste harmonie, l'élément dramatique hostile à l'idée de poésie pure et subjective avec la sérénité et le calme de lignes nécessaires à la Beauté." Corr. I, 103-105.

Mallarmé's letters, developing his aesthetic of rigorous conception and execution free from the vagaries of Chance, closely follow the ideas and terminology of Poe's Philosophy of Composition, translated by Baudelaire in La Revue Française in 1859.¹ Hérodiade is conceived, at least in part, as an attempt to equal and surpass the achievement of the American.² The aim is to capture the absolute purity of an aesthetic impression, not to reproduce the contingent and imperfect object or relationship which give it birth: "Peindre non la chose, mais l'effet qu'elle produit"³ or as Mallarmé put it to Villiers de l'Isle-Adam at the end of 1865:

1. For example: "Tout, dans un poème comme dans un roman, dans un sonnet comme dans une nouvelle, doit concourir au dénoûment. Un bon auteur a déjà sa dernière ligne en vue quand il écrit la première." Or "Pour moi, la première de toutes les considérations, c'est celle d'un effet à produire." Or "S'il est une chose évidente, c'est qu'un plan quelconque, digne du nom de plan, doit avoir été soigneusement élaboré en vue du dénoûment, avant que la plume attaque le papier. Ce n'est qu'en ayant sans cesse la pensée du dénoûment devant les yeux que nous pouvons donner à un plan son indispensable physionomie de logique et de causalité." Baudelaire, La Genèse d'un Poème in Oeuvres complètes. Traductions. Eureka, La Genèse d'un Poème par Edgar Poe (Paris, Conard, 1936), pp. 153, 161, 160-161.
2. Mallarmé to Cazalis, Apr. 1866: "J'ai donc à te raconter trois mois, à bien grands traits; c'est effrayant, cependant! Je les ai passés, acharné sur Hérodiade, ma lampe le sait! ... Il me faudra trois ou quatre hivers encore, pour achever cette oeuvre, mais j'aurai enfin fait ce que je rêve, écrire un Poème digne de Poe et que les siens ne surpasseront pas." Corr. I, 207.
3. Mallarmé to Cazalis, 1864. Corr. I, 137. This aesthetic is most clearly expressed in the poems in the quatorzain "Toute l'âme résumée": "Toute l'âme résumée / Quand lente nous l'expirons / Dans plusieurs ronds de fumée / Abolis en autres ronds / Atteste quelque cigare / Brûlant savamment pour peu / Que la cendre se sépare / De son clair baiser de feu / Ainsi le choeur des romances / A la lèvre vole-t-il / Exclus-en si tu commences / Le réel parce que vil / Le sens trop précis rature / Ta vague littérature." OC, p. 73.

"le sujet de mon oeuvre est la Beauté, et le sujet apparent n'est qu'un prétexte pour aller vers Elle. C'est, je crois, le mot de la Poésie."¹ The following year in July 1866 a letter to Théodore Aubanel shows this rejection of the anecdote taking on an additional dimension. Mallarmé now sees it as his task in his poetry to weave "de merveilleuses dentelles, que je devine, et qui existent déjà dans le sein de la Beauté."² Poetry and the Universe are seen as standing in an intimate correlation which it is the function of the poet to record.³ His own personal idiosyncrasies and preoccupations are abolished. His work must be the Universe made manifest.⁴

What might be the place of the sonnet in such a system? Clearly, like traditional prosody in general but to a particularly high degree, its set form offers a well-tried guarantee against the arbitrariness already inherent in language and compounded by the individuality of the poet. Initially, however, Mallarmé's plans were on a much more grandiose scale. In a letter to Cazalis at the end of April 1866 he talks of the three or four years

1. Corr. I, 193.
 2. Corr. I, 225.
 3. Mallarmé to Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, 24 Sept. 1867: "J'avais, à la faveur d'une grande sensibilité, compris la corrélation intime de la Poésie avec l'Univers, et, pour qu'elle fût pure, conçu le dessein de la sortir du Rêve et du Hasard et de la juxtaposer à la conception de l'Univers." Corr. I, 259.
 4. Mallarmé to Lefébure, 17 May 1867: "me sentir un diamant qui réfléchit, mais n'est pas par lui-même." Corr. I, 249.
 Mallarmé to Cazalis, 14 May 1867: "... je suis maintenant impersonnel et non plus Stéphane que tu as connu, - mais une aptitude qu'a l'Univers spirituel à se voir et à se développer, à travers ce qui fut moi." Corr. I, 242.

necessary to complete Hérodiade and of a work he hopes to produce La Gloire du mensonge or Le Glorieux Mensonge, "si je vis assez longtemps."¹ Later, in a letter of 28 July 1866, he announces to Théodore Aubanel that his plan for his life's work is complete and that twenty years will be needed to write the five books of which this work will be composed.² To Cazalis on 14 May 1867, he talks of "trois poèmes en vers dont Hérodiade" and "quatre poèmes en prose" and judges that he needs ten years to complete the project.³

But the preoccupation with purity of intention and execution revealed in the efforts with Hérodiade and in contemporary and subsequent references to the "Grand Oeuvre" could not in the end be sustained over an extended piece of work and we find Mallarmé writing to Coppée on 20 April 1868:

Je donnerais les vèpres magnifiques du Rêve et leur or vierge pour un quatrain, destiné à une tombe ou à un bonbon, qui fût réussi. Corr. I, 270

The result is two sonnets, "La nuit approbatrice allume les onyx," later "Ses purs ongles très haut dédiant leur onyx" and "De l'Orient passé des Temps," later "Quelle soie aux baumes de temps." Apart from a few corrections to the early sonnets before their inclusion in the Parnasse contemporain of 1866, Mallarmé's interest in the sonnet had lapsed after 1864 for a period of nearly four years. Between them these two new sonnets illustrate both the persistence of the themes and structures of the earlier examples and a development in conception and manipulation of the form, in accordance with the ideas developed since 1864. "La

1. Corr. I, 207-208.
 2. Corr. I, 223 and 225.
 3. Corr. I, 242.

nuit approbatrice" is a kind of miniature prototype of the conception of Poetry worked out by Mallarmé in the context of Hérodiade. "De l'Orient passé des Temps," on the other hand, in many ways perpetuates the theme and technique of Tristesse d'été though there has been some evolution towards a more original handling of the form.

Since "De l'Orient passé des Temps" is clearly a transitional piece, let us consider that first.¹

The sonnet in its original version is still based on the same central opposition as Tristesse d'été four years earlier. The contrast between the positive sensual affirmation represented by the hair and the poet's negative approach towards existence is expressed once again in terms of the sonnet structure's obvious potential for comparison and opposition. In the first quatrain the hair is associated with a lasting, exotic, and luxurious brilliance. In contrast is the picture of the poet in the second quatrain hiding in the darkness in an attempt to escape his fear of death. The same contrast between the hair and the general atmosphere of the poet's existence is played through again in the tercets, but from a slightly different angle that explains in retrospect the conditional "Aimeraient" of line 7. The first tercet recalls the motifs of protective darkness and fear of death put forward in the second quatrain, and then in the second tercet we see how the light and vitality associated with the hair throw into even crueller relief the poet's anguish.²

1. See over p. 433 for the text.
2. Note the important rhyme "cheveux lumineux" over the tercet division and the striking contrast this rejet provides with the other rejet, immediately preceding, which emphasizes "Mortes." "Mortes" also gains emphasis as a new sound after the homonymic rhyme "vagues" in pp. 9-10.

De l'Orient passé des Temps
Nulle étoffe jadis venue
Ne vaut la chevelure nue
Que loin des bijoux tu détends.

Moi, qui vis parmi les tentures
Pour ne pas voir le Néant seul,
Aimeraient ce divin linceul
Mes yeux, las de ces sépultures,

Mais tandis que les rideaux vagues
Cachent des ténèbres les vagues
Mortes, hélas! ces beaux cheveux

Lumineux en l'esprit font naître
D'atroces étincelles d'Etre,
Mon horreur et mes désaveux.

1868 version included in a
letter of 2 July to Bonaparte
Wyse.

OC, p. 1500

Quelle soie aux baumes de temps
Où la Chimère s'exténue
Vaut la torse et native nue
Que, hors de ton miroir, tu tends!

Les trous de drapeaux méditants
S'exaltent dans notre avenue:
Moi, j'ai ta chevelure nue
Pour enfouir mes yeux contents.

Non! La bouche ne sera sûre
De rien goûter à sa morsure,
S'il ne fait, ton princier amant,

Dans la considérable touffe
Expirer, comme un diamant,
Le cri des Gloires qu'il étouffe.

1885 version in La Revue
Indépendante.

OC, p. 75

The 1868 version also resembles Tristesse d'été in the laxity of its formal detail. There are four rhymes in the quatrains. Nevertheless there has been some progress towards a more original handling of the sonnet form. The key feature here is the use of the octosyllable. This is the first of Mallarmé's sonnets to use a metre other than the alexandrine and the trend becomes steadily accentuated as his career advances.¹ The only sonnet that can certainly be dated from the 1870's, Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe, is a regular sonnet in alexandrines. However the poems first written or published in the 1880's include six regular sonnets in alexandrines and four regular sonnets in octosyllables.² In the 1890's the position is three regular sonnets in alexandrines and three regular sonnets in octosyllables plus one regular heptasyllabic sonnet.³ In addition, the sonnets on the English pattern lean overwhelmingly to the shorter metres. Only La Chevelure, published in 1887, is written in alexandrines. Chansons bas I and II, published in 1889, are heptasyllabic while two of the six examples of this type of sonnet published in the 1890's are octosyllabic and the other four

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1. The figures given below do not include the 2 regular alexandrine sonnets, "Sur les bois oubliés," and "O si chère de loin," or the 2 quatorzains, Petit Air II and "Au seul souci de voyager," to which no definite date of writing or publication can be assigned.
 2. The 6 regular sonnets in alexandrines are "Quand l'ombre menaça," "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui," "Victorieusement fui," Hommage (à Richard Wagner), "Mes bouquins refermés," "Dame sans trop d'ardeur." The 4 regular sonnets in octosyllables are "M'introduire dans ton histoire," "Tout Orgueil fume-t-il du soir," "Surgi de la croupe et du bond," "Une dentelle s'abolit."
 3. The 3 regular sonnets in alexandrines are Le Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire, Tombeau (de Verlaine), Remémoration d'Amis belges. The 3 regular sonnets in octosyllables are Eventail ("De frigides roses pour vivre"), "A la nue accablante tu," Salut. The regular heptasyllabic sonnet is Hommage (à Puvis de Chavannes).

heptasyllabic.¹ This high proportion of sonnets with short metres is a most uncommon feature.² The original metre for the French sonnet had been the decasyllable but after Ronsard's Amours of 1555 the alexandrine became the standard choice. In the nineteenth century, as we have seen, short metres are not used to any great extent in the sonnet. In the second edition of Les Fleurs du Mal, for example, nine of the sixty sonnets are octosyllabic but almost without exception these are in the macabre vein fashionable in the 1830's and among Baudelaire's least mature and least inspired productions. In the work of the other poets we have noted a certain number of octosyllabic or decasyllabic sonnets, but in all cases they represent only a very small proportion of total sonnet output. Mallarmé is thus the first major poet in the nineteenth century who extensively associates short metres with the sonnet form. This combination no doubt appealed to him because the double restriction helped in the development of an elliptic syntax and favoured "la disparition élocutoire du poète."³ In "De l'Orient passé des Temps" it is already possible to note a move away from the rhetorical Baudelairian syntax of Tristesse d'été. However the sequence of ideas and supporting images continues to follow

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1. The 2 octosyllabic quatorzains are Billet à Whistler and Feuillet d'album. The 4 heptasyllabic quatorzains are Eventail de Mme Mallarmé, Petit Air I, Petit Air guerrier, "Toute l'âme résumée."
 2. A high proportion that is in terms of Mallarmé's rather small total output.
 3. OC, p. 366: "L'oeuvre pure implique la disparition élocutoire du poète qui cède l'initiative aux mots, par le heurt de leur inégalité mobilisés: ils s'allument de reflets réciproques comme une virtuelle traînée de feux sur les pierreries, remplaçant la respiration perceptible en l'ancien souffle lyrique ou la direction personnelle enthousiaste de la phrase."

a conventional logical pattern. In the 1887 version "Quelle soie aux baumes de temps," emphasis shifts from the original contrast of attitudes to an interplay of images which celebrates the beauty and sensual power of the hair. The vocabulary becomes slightly more abstruse and metaphor more complex, but even here the anecdotal thread persists ("Moi j'ai ta chevelure nue"). In addition, as in the second version of Le Pitre châtié, the contrastive framework of the piece, facilitated by the sonnet structure, still remains clear. Each of the quatrains is constructed on a balance between the hair and the motif of the flag and this equivalence is developed in the tercets into an opposition between the demands of love and those of military glory. It is rather in sonnets such as "Tout Orgueil fume-t-il du soir," "Surgi de la croupe et du bond," "Une dentelle s'abolit," published in La Revue Indépendante in January 1887 and "A la nue accablante tu," published in the German review Pan in 1895, that Mallarmé's octosyllabic sonnet reaches its apogee of syntactic and formal compression, confronting the reader with an enigmatic juxtaposition of unexplained images:

A la nue accablante tu
 Basse de basalte et de laves
 A même les échos esclaves
 Par une trompe sans vertu

Quel sépulcral naufrage (tu
 Le sais, écume, mais y baves)
 Suprême une entre les épaves
 Abolit le mât dévêtu

Ou cela que furibond faute
 De quelque perdition haute
 Tout l'abîme vain éployé

Dans le si blanc cheveu qui traîne
 Avarement aura noyé
 Le flanc enfant d'une sirène.

Such hermeticism is reinforced by rigorous observance of the formal detail of the sonnet, and in the 1887 version of "De l'Orient passé des Temps" we note that the sonnet rhyme-scheme is regularized as metaphorical and syntactical obscurity increases.¹ This process is not of course confined to the octosyllabic sonnets. We have already observed a similar tightening of the rhyme-scheme and a similar increase in metaphorical and syntactic complexity in the alexandrine sonnet Le Pitre châtié, and "La nuit approbatrice" which we shall consider in a moment, plainly demonstrates that the longer line of the alexandrine is by no means an inevitable passport to clarity.

Apart from the use of the octosyllable, "De l'Orient passé des Temps" still recalls the themes and techniques of the early sonnets. The definitive version "Quelle soie aux baumes de temps" shows the evolution towards a more hermetic type of poetry, but conventional patterns of logical and formal association still persist. However, if we now go back to Mallarmé's other sonnet of 1868 "La nuit approbatrice," we find, in contrast, that a complete revolution has taken place. The first reference to this sonnet occurs in a letter from Mallarmé to Lefébure of 3 May 1868, in which Mallarmé describes his descent from the rarefied atmosphere of the work on the "Grand Oeuvre" to a more mundane atmosphere:

Decidément, je redescends de l'absolu ... mais cette fréquentation de deux années (vous vous rappelez? depuis notre séjour à Cannes) me laissera une marque dont je veux faire un sacre. Je redescends dans mon moi, abandonné pendant deux ans: après tout, des poèmes, seulement teintés d'absolu, sont déjà beaux, et il y en a peu - sans ajouter que leur lecture pourra susciter dans l'avenir le poète que j'avais rêvé.

Corr. I, 273

1. The tightening of the rhyme doubles the emphasis on the important syllable "nue."

He concludes with a request for Lefébure to ask Cazalis where he bought his hammock:

parce que j'en voudrais suspendre un pareil dans les lauriers de ma cour, et dormir dans la flatterie ombreuse de leurs feuilles, au moins si je ne puis encore faire de vers! ... Enfin, comme il se pourrait toutefois que rythmé par le hamac, et inspiré par le laurier, je fisse un sonnet, et que je n'ai que trois rimes en ix, concertez-vous pour m'envoyer le sens réel du mot ptyx, on m'assure qu'il n'existe dans aucune langue, ce que je préférerais de beaucoup afin de me donner le charme de le créer par la magie de la rime.

Corr. I, 274

There are two things to notice here. First, that following on an experience of set-back and frustration in the attempt to realize the "Grand Oeuvre" it is the sonnet which offers to the poet a frame for those "poèmes seulement teintés d'absolu" to which he is now obliged to resort. And second, that it is a formal problem, the difficulties of the sonnet rhyme-scheme, that seems to be the primary stimulus for the poet.

The first version of the sonnet entitled Sonnet allégorique de lui-même, was finally sent to Cazalis in a letter of 18 July 1868. The sonnet was published in its definitive form in the Poésies of 1887.

In contrast to the other sonnets of Mallarmé in the 1860's, it is impossible to distinguish here, at first glance at least, any sort of logical pattern around which the piece is organized. "La nuit approbatrice" is the first of Mallarmé's sonnets to abandon a definite narrative thread and any obvious pattern of contrasts. Instead the emphasis is thrown back on the dense interweaving of vocabulary and imagery, and the reader is forced to meditate on the individual words and phrases and their inter-

La nuit approbatrice allume les onyx
De ses ongles au pur Crime lampadophore,
Du Soir aboli par le vespéral Phoenix
De qui la cendre n'a de cinéraire amphore

Sur des consoles, en le noir Salon: nul ptyx,
Insolite vaisseau d'inanité sonore,
Car le Maître est allé puiser l'eau du Styx
Avec tous ses objets dont le rêve s'honore.

Et selon la croisée au nord vacante, un br
Néfastes incite pour son beau cadre une rixe
Faites d'un dieu que croit emporter une nixe

En l'obscurcissement de la glace, Décor
De l'absence, sinon que sur la glace encor
De scintillation le septuor se fixe.

1868

OC, p. 1488

Ses purs ongles très haut dédiant leur onyx,
L'Angoisse, ce minuit, soutient, lampadophore,
Maint rêve vespéral brûlé par le Phénix
Que ne recueille pas de cinéraire amphore

Sur les crédences, au salon vide: nul ptyx,
Aboli bibelot d'inanité sonore,
(Car le Maître est allé puiser des pleurs au Styx
Avec ce seul objet dont le Néant s'honore).

Mais proche la croisée au nord vacante, un or
Agonise selon peut-être le décor
Des licornes ruant du feu contre une nixe,

Elle, défunte nue en le miroir, encor
Que, dans l'oubli fermé par le cadre, se fixe
De scintillations sitôt le septuor.

1887

OC, pp. 68-69

relationships before attempting to suggest any overall pattern or meaning. This sonnet is thus the first to put into practice the principle of effect ("Peindre non la chose mais l'effet qu'elle produit") worked out by Mallarmé in the period 1864-68 and it enables us to appreciate the particular suitability of a fixed form of this kind for Mallarmé's aim of "céder l'initiative aux mots."

This concern with the resonances of the individual word is indeed the aspect stressed by Mallarmé in the covering letter:

J'extrais ce sonnet, auquel j'avais une fois songé cet été, d'une étude projetée sur la Parole: il est inverse, je veux dire que le sens, s'il en a un (mais je me consolerais du contraire grâce à la dose de poésie qu'il renferme, ce me semble) est évoqué par un mirage interne des mots mêmes. En se laissant aller à le murmurer plusieurs fois, on éprouve une sensation assez cabalistique.

Corr. I, 278

In this reflection of the words among themselves the rhyme of the sonnet clearly has a key role. The scheme is a striking one both from the point of view of choice of rhyme and that of its manipulation. Martinon's Dictionnaire des rimes françaises¹ lists for -ix: phénix, onyx, sardix and pnix, to which are appended in a supplementary note, botanical and zoological terms such as bombyx, tamarix and a list of proper names including Styx. Ptyx is not mentioned. For -ixe, Martinon gives fixe (and the various grammatical terms in which it occurs - suffixe, affixe, etc.), antéfixe, prolix and rix. Nix is not mentioned. For -or and -ore, the choice is somewhat greater. With the preceding consonant, however, the field is considerably narrowed; for -phore, Martinon

1. Philippe Martinon, Dictionnaire des rimes françaises (Paris, Larousse, 1962).

suggests métaphore, canéphore, phosphore and amphore. Mallarmé, in coining lampadophore, goes one better since the initial vowel is also held in common with its rhyming partner amphore. This leonine quality of rhyme is also achieved in the homonyms sonore and s'honore. In the -or category, Martinon suggests or (conjunction and noun), hors and dehors, confiteor, fiord, and quatuor, sextuor, septuor and for -cor, cor (in its two meanings), cors, corps, accord (désaccord), record, recors, décor, encor. In the -or and especially the -ore rhyme, Mallarmé thus compensates for a rather wider range of possibilities by an insistence on richness which equates that rhyme finally with the rarity of those in -ix and -ixe.

This dense and complex interweaving of sound is further intensified by the arrangement of rhyme within the sonnet form. The scheme is not strictly a regular one since the rhymes of the quatrains follow an alternate pattern. Nevertheless it is unusually rigorous for the a and d rhymes and b and c rhymes are homophonous. The tercet rhymes thus "reflect" those of the quatrains and the normal repetitions of rhyme in the quatrains and tercets, already emphasized by the richness and rarity of many of the rhyme-words, acquire even greater resonance. Significantly, although the rhyme-schemes of Le Pitre châtié and "De l'Orient passé des Temps" were subsequently regularized, no substantial modification is made in the rhyme-scheme of "La nuit approbatrice." The abab abab arrangement of the quatrains remains. In the tercets the pattern is altered from cdd ccd in 1868 to ccd cdc in 1887, but the rhyme sounds remain the same. So too do five of the six rhyme words, though their positions are reshuffled. An improvement is made by the elimination of the rather unsuitable "rixé" and the introduction of the rare "septuor" as the closing rhyme of the sonnet.

The preoccupation of the poet with the sound quality of his sonnet extends, as the letter to Cazalis suggests, beyond the rhyme to a general interplay of assonance and alliteration over the whole poem. A detailed phonological examination of the sonnet would require far more space than is available here and would need to take stress patterns, syntactical position and perhaps even grammatical categories into account. However, even the briefest glance shows the reflective principle at work in the phonetic patterning. In the first version it is particularly marked in the first quatrain and final tercet. In lines 1-4 "allume" recalls "approbatrice," "amphore" "lampadophore" and "Phoenix," "cinéraire" "cendre." In lines 12-14 s plays a dominant part - "obscurcissement," "glace" (twice), "absence," "sinon," "sur," "se," and of course "scintillation", and "septuor." In the 1887 version some of these equivalences disappear while new ones are introduced. Thus the first quatrain now has "ongles" and "onyx,"¹ "Angoisse" "lampadophore" and "amphore," and a strong alliteration on r in line 3 - "rêve," "vespéral," "brûlé." The second quatrain has the alliteration "puiser des pleurs" and a supreme example of phonetic reflection, verging on the palindrome, in "aboli bibelot." The first tercet has "nord," "or," "décor," "licorne," while in the second tercet, line 14 preserves the major elements of the s alliteration with "scintillations," "sitôt," "septuor."

An analogous preoccupation with the principle of reflection can be observed with regard to the syntactical pattern of the

1. Note that this is not a perfect assonance (ɔ̃gl - ɔ̃niks). It is also important to notice however that the two words are cognate and reflect each other on the semantic and visual levels as well as the phonetic one.

sonnet. In the first version, a main clause (ll. 1-3) is followed by a relative clause which continues with an enjambement over ten syllables of line 5.¹ The end of line 5 and line 6 are occupied by an apposition, "nul ptyx" referring back to the "cinéraire amphore" of line 4. The quatrains then conclude with a main clause of reason introduced by the coordinating conjunction "car." The tercets follow a very similar pattern. A main clause (ll. 9-11) is followed by a relative clause (ll. 11-12) which overruns the break between the two tercets. Next comes a short apposition, "Décor / De l'absence" and the tercets then conclude with a conditional clause (ll. 13-14). This arrangement is however somewhat modified in the definitive version of the sonnet. Syntactic structures in the quatrains remain the same but reorganization of the tercet rhyme is accompanied by some alteration of syntactic pattern also. The relative clause of lines 11-12 which straddled the tercets as that of lines 4-5 straddled the quatrains disappears. However, the apposition of lines 5-6 is still balanced by an apposition in line 12 and a conditional clause still parallels the explanatory clause of lines 7-8. These syntactic arrangements not only echo the system of reflection built up on the rhyme-scheme, but also serve to enhance the scheme itself since the striking enjambements (between lines 4-5, 9-10, 11-12, 12-13 in the first version and lines 4-5, 9-10, 10-11, 12-13 in the second) all help to bring further emphasis to the exotic rhyme.

Emmanuel Des Essarts in his letter to Mallarmé of 13 October 1868 wrote of this sonnet that "ni Cazalis ni moi ne l'avons pu

1. This overlap between stanzas is of course a departure from the strictest requirements of the continental sonnet.

comprendre" and different critics have since offered widely varying interpretations. Mallarmé sent the piece to Cazalis for inclusion in Lemerre's publication Sonnets et Eaux-Fortes, a collection of forty-one sonnets by well-known poets each with an illustration by a well-known artist. Mallarmé's sonnet hardly seems capable of illustration and indeed it was not included in Lemerre's volume. Mallarmé himself in his letter to Cazalis in July 1868 confesses that it is "peu plastique" but then goes ^{on} to suggest that something might be achieved nonetheless and lays out for Cazalis the kind of scenario he has in mind:

au moins est-il le sonnet aussi "blanc et noir" que possible, et il me semble se prêter à une eau-forte pleine de Rêve et de Vide.

Par exemple, une fenêtre nocturne ouverte, les deux volets attachés; une chambre avec personne dedans, malgré l'air stable que présentent les volets attachés, et dans une nuit faite d'absence et d'interrogation, sans meubles, sinon l'ébauche plausible de vagues consoles, un cadre belliqueux et agonisant, de miroir appendu au fond, avec sa réflexion, stellaire et incompréhensible, de la grande Ourse, qui relie au ciel seul ce logis abandonné du monde.

Corr. I, 279

Using this as a guide-line, certain important thematic motifs emerge with relative clarity. Chief of these are the balance between the outer universe and the empty room or empty mirror and the interplay of light and darkness, the "blanc et noir" of the letter. The two themes are so closely intertwined as to be difficult if not impossible to separate. The first quatrain opens the sonnet with an impression of Night - both its darkness

and the starlight that relieves that darkness.¹ The scene takes place in unrestricted space, but then in the second quatrain a separate and totally different decor is evoked - an interior, an empty room. The syntax leaps daringly across the stanza division but no other type of link can as yet be perceived between the vast expanse of the night sky and the narrow confines of this "Salon." All remains dark. In the tercets, however, as the conjunction "Mais" warns us, a change takes place. The same scenes are evoked but in a modified fashion. In the first tercet the poet returns to the portrayal of light in the heavens, but now the night sky is reduced to manageable proportions, a single glow caught within the confines of the window. Finally in the second tercet, light from the sky is actually captured inside the room, and, reflected in the mirror, the form of the Great Bear constellation takes shape. In classic sonnet fashion therefore, the tercets reflect and develop the theme stated in the quatrains and in this instance the technique is particularly apt since the central theme, finally crystallized in the motif of the mirror, is itself one of reflection.

This simple scheme has many ramifications. Many other examples of reflection occur, minor ones such as the etymologically cognate pairs "onyx - ongles" and "cendre - cinéraire" or the thematic balance of "inanité sonore" in line 6 with "septuor" in the closing line, more extensive ones such as the repetition of the motifs of death and emptiness in each of the four sections of the sonnet. But

1. Jean-Paul Richard suggests that the image of the "nails" of the night may well be interpreted as the stars which catch reflected light from the "pur Crime lampadophore" of the sun. L'Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1961), p. 168.

there is another whole dimension to the theme of reflection in this sonnet that has not as yet been mentioned. In the final version the hieratic attitude of the Night as votary, the substitution of "Angoisse" for "nuit" and of "crédences" for "consoles," the introduction of "Maint rêve vespéral" all indicate a spiritual significance for the scenes described. The sonnet in fact seems to play out on the metaphorical level the drama of the poet's struggle to create. The fading of the evening light and its fragmented renewal in the light of the stars could symbolize the flickering and flaring of his dreams. The empty room or the empty mirror might be the blank page on which these reflections of the infinite may perhaps be captured and reborn. Or perhaps they are the sonnet itself with its set frame clearly outlined by its rhyme-scheme and all its inner virtuality waiting only to embody the constellations of the poet's dreams, those "merveilleuses dentelles que je devine, et qui existent déjà au sein de la Beauté." Mallarmé after all first called his sonnet Sonnet allégorique de lui-même and there is too his remark at the end of the letter to Cazalis from which we have already so often quoted:

J'ai pris ce sujet d'un sonnet nul et se
réfléchissant de toutes les façons, parce
que mon oeuvre est si bien préparé et hiér-
archisé, représentant comme il le peut
l'Univers, que je n'aurais su, sans endommager
quelqu'une de mes impressions étagées, rien
en enlever, - et aucun sonnet ne s'y rencontre.

Corr. I, 279

Noulet ingeniously suggests in this connexion a further connotation for the scene described in the tercets:

Il faut ... avoir bien soin de visualiser le décor, et, sous un même regard, capter deux fois la constellation: dans le ciel, dans le miroir. Vision, à la fois, de quatorze étoiles, deux fois le Septuor = 14 = le nombre de vers qui compose un sonnet. Quatorze vers qui se sont mirés les uns dans les autres. Voilà pourquoi ce sonnet-ci est Allégorique de lui-même. Titre-clef et supprimé pour cela.¹

What we seem to have here in fact is the hyperbole of all the sonnets on the sonnet. There is no enumeration of the sonnet's practitioners (compare with Wordsworth's "Scorn not the Sonnet" and Sainte-Beuve's adaptation of it or with Verlaine's A la louange de Laure et de Pétrarque in Jadis et naguère); no overt comment on the freeing discipline provided by the form (compare Wordsworth, "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room" or Soullary's sonnet on Le Sonnet, "Je n'entrerais pas là, dit la folle, en riant"); no direct emphasis on its ritual and climactic aspect (compare Gautier's sonnet on Le Sonnet, "Les quatrains du sonnet sont de bons chevaliers"); no testimonial to its commemorative role (compare Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "A sonnet is a moment's monument / Memorial from the Soul's eternity").² Instead, developing the meditations of Mallarmé on the nature of poetic language, this is a sonnet about the structure and significance of the sonnet form itself. Extending the principle of "céder l'initiative aux mots" Mallarmé could here be said to "céder l'initiative à la forme."

Mallarmé did produce one more regular sonnet on a par with "Ses purs ongles" in its rigorous identification of theme and

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1. Emilie Noulet, Vingt poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé (Geneva, Droz; Paris, Minard, 1967), p. 191.
 2. V. Appendix B, A Selection of Sonnets on the Sonnet.

expression. This is "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui" published in La Revue Indépendante of March 1885. Here the poet has stressed the reverse feature of the sonnet form, not the reflective principle as in "Ses purs ongles" but the stasis figured by the regular sonnet as most rigidly conceived:

Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui
 Va-t-il nous déchirer avec un coup d'aile ivre
 Ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre
 Le transparent glacier des vols qui n'ont pas fui!

Un cygne d'autrefois se souvient que c'est lui
 Magnifique mais qui sans espoir se délivre
 Pour n'avoir pas chanté la région où vivre
 Quand du stérile hiver a resplendi l'ennui.

Tout son col secouera cette blanche agonie
 Par l'espace infligée à l'oiseau qui le nie,
 Mais non l'horreur du sol où le plumage est pris.

Fantôme qu'à ce lieu son pur éclat assigne,
 Il s'immobilise au songe froid de mépris
 Que vêt parmi l'exil inutile le Cygne.

OC, pp. 67-68¹

The recapitulation of rhyme and the consequent diminution of a sense of progression is here developed to its utmost in the choice of a single vowel for all fourteen rhymes of the sonnet. In addition, the i vowel dominates the general phonetic pattern within the interior of the lines. In all it appears twice in line 1, three times in line 2, twice in line 3, once in line 4, twice in lines 5 and 7, four times in lines 6 and 8, once in lines 9, 11 and 12, three times in line 10 and five times each in lines 13 and 14 where the final immobilisation is described.

The syntactical and rhythmic structures also follow the strict conception of the regular sonnet in that each of the four

1. There are no variants to this sonnet.

sections is self-contained and separate. In addition, each line of the sonnet is a coherent syntactic and rhythmic unit. Perhaps the one exception to this general statement might be the rejet "Magnifique" at the beginning of line 6. However it should be noted that line 5 is in itself a complete logical, syntactic and rhythmic entity. There are only three departures from the basic pattern of the classical alexandrine dividing into two equal hemistichs at the caesura. These are line 1 (3/3/3/3), line 6 (4/8) and line 14 (2/8/2). The first tercet describing the swan's abortive attempt at movement significantly reveals no trace of any rhythmic disturbance.

Let us now examine the theme and its presentation and see how far they coincide with the preoccupation with immobility observed with regard to the rhyme-scheme and the syntactic and rhythmic patterns of the sonnet. The bold articulation of the opening line with its accentuation of each of the adjectives as well as of the substantivized adverb, seems to imitate, as Noulet puts it, "le départ quatre fois renouvelé de l'élan"¹ and thus to prefigure the pattern of frustrated movement through the four sections of the sonnet. The poem describes a repeated and futile attempt at escape:

The first quatrain leaps up, and then falls back before a negation and a ghost. In the second quatrain the movement is taken up again, weaker, a simple escape into the past, and the sterile winter returns. The protest of the first tercet is only the movement of the bird's head and neck, shaking off the snow and frost,

1. E. Noulet, Vingt Poèmes, p. 137.

fallen from the upper air which no longer exists for him, and which he "denies" by ceasing to move. By the second tercet there is total immobility, the spectral whiteness, winter, cold and silence are triumphant.¹

The attempt at movement takes place against a background of changing tenses carefully distributed within the four-fold sonnet structure. "Aujourd'hui" and the future orientated question "Va-t-il nous déchirer" in the first quatrain are followed in the second by "autrefois" and a return into the past with "se souvient." However, there is more to the arrangement than a simple contrast between present and past. The first quatrain closes against a background of past failure: "Le transparent glacier des vols qui n'ont pas fui" while in the second quatrain the return to the past is framed largely within the present tense. Present and past thus congeal together. Similarly a future tense in the first tercet gives way in the second to a kind of eternally frozen and immobile present. This interweaving of tenses initiated in the quatrains and echoed in the tercets is one further motif in the theme of motionless imprisonment.

Another important factor is the play on the uniform whiteness of the swan and his surroundings. This goes through a series of modulations where a differentiation of the two is attempted but without any lasting success. The undefined mass of line 1, "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui," and the "coup d'aile" of line 2 are resolved into the shape of the swan in the second quatrain but then in the first tercet plumage and snow blend once

1. Charles Mauron, Commentaries to Roger Fry's translations of Mallarmé's poems (New Classics Series; Vision, London; Binghamton printed, 1952), p. 234. Originally published London, Chatto and Windus, 1936.

more together and only "le col" can be seen distinctly. Finally in the second tercet the swan succumbs to the "blanche agonie" and is once again absorbed into the general all-embracing whiteness:

"Fantôme qu'à ce lieu son pur éclat assigne." We thus have here another pattern that parallels the motif of frustrated movement.

In this description of stasis, theme and form are inseparable. The imprisonment of the swan is mirrored in the self-contained syntax of each of the four sections of the sonnet, in the regularity of the rhythmic patterns, and in the uniform tonality of the rhyme. The interplay of tenses and the uniform colour - or absence of colour - in the scene bring added support to this vision of immobility and obliteration. This sonnet, like "Ses purs ongles," is the perfect realization of Mallarmé's comment recorded by Léopold Dauphin in Regards en arrière:

Tout sonnet, à plus forte raison, tout quatrain devait, d'après lui, constituer un "bloc" de façon que le tout, du premier au dernier mot, ne fît qu'un; il le souhaitait tel un cube de cristal. L'idée majeure et les idées secondaires en devaient être tellement liées, serrées, agglutinées ensemble que nul vide n'y fît le moindre trou.¹

In the second version of Le Pitre châtié and in "Quelle soie aux baumes de temps," the second version of "De l'Orient passé des Temps," a new emphasis on metaphor is evident, but the original patterns of contrast and logical association are reinforced by tightening of the sonnet structure and still remain clear. However,

1. Léopold Dauphin, Regards en arrière in Documents Stéphane Mallarmé, vol.4, ed. Carl Paul Barbier (Paris, Nizet, 1973), p. 314.

already in 1868 in "La nuit approbatrice" and increasingly in the later sonnets, there is no obvious lead-in of this kind to the meaning of the pieces. Instead the intensified formal precision of the sonnet acts in the main to make the poem appear more incomprehensible and more impenetrable. It gives the impression of a polished block that offers no chinks or cracks for the reader's intelligence to gain a hold. Instead he is thrown back on to the complex network of words and images and forced to consider all its different facets before any attempt at a total appreciation of the piece can be made. The sonnet thus plays an important part in Mallarmé's effort to "céder l'initiative aux mots" and in his general aesthetic of effect. Its fixed form provides a tiny self-contained and rigorously controlled frame in which a web of analogies may be isolated and closely examined. As Jean-Pierre Richard puts it in his chapter on Le Vers et le Poème in L'Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé:

Mallarmé trouvait ... dans la prosodie traditionnelle l'espace virtuel, mais rigoureux et maintes fois éprouvé d'une architectonique. Elle lui offrait l'avantage d'un champ sémantique déjà tout aimanté, où diverses possibilités structurales existaient devant lui à l'état de latence.¹

The sonnet, like the alexandrine and traditional prosody in general but to a particularly high degree, offers the poet "[une] structure déjà prête, où l'on peut espérer que le réel viendra se réorganiser avec plus de facilité que dans des formes libres, ouvertes, ou mouvantes, que, par exemple, dans ces petites îles

1. J.-P. Richard, pp. 543-544.

flottantes et non 'vérifiées', les vers libres."¹

In "La nuit approbatrice" and later in "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui," the process is carried even further. The poet meditates on the mould itself and the systems of relationships inherent within it. Organized as the ultimate in reflection in "La nuit approbatrice," the ultimate in stasis in "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui," the sonnet form follows through its own logic to a hyperbolic degree. Prosodic structures such as the sonnet are not in Mallarmé's view isolated phenomena. They seem to him to be more than arbitrary sets of rules thrown up by chance. Indeed he even believes it possible that they may reproduce in miniature form the system of absolute relationships existing at the heart of the Universe:

ces diverses possibilités structurales
pourquoi ne pas les espérer, en outre,
parallèles à celles du monde sensible? De
part et d'autre, pense Mallarmé, le nombre
des combinaisons réalisables n'est pas
infini, ce qui permettrait peut-être
d'établir une correspondance structurale
entre la gamme des formes versifiées et la
typologie des essences concrètes.²

This feeling seems exemplified with particular strength in "La nuit approbatrice" where the seven star pattern of the Great Bear constellation and its seven star reflection in the mirror seem equated with some precision with the fourteen line form of the sonnet.

As early as 1868 Mallarmé's mature technique in the regular sonnet is already established in "La nuit approbatrice." However

1. Ibid., p. 543.

2. Ibid., p. 544.

it would be incorrect to suppose that the traditional sonnet form to which he returns after his descent from the Absolute provides a solution to all his compositional problems. Indeed after the two sonnets of 1868, Mallarmé's interest in the form again lapses. Only one sonnet can be dated with any certainty from the 1870's, Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe, published in 1877 and the first in a line of "official" sonnets in memory of or in homage to the creative artists most admired by Mallarmé. Instead Mallarmé turns from the stylized structure and systematized reflections of "La nuit approbatrice" to the rimes plates and dissolving perspectives of L'Après-Midi d'un Faune. Many years later in 1891 he told Jules Huret:

J'y essayais de mettre, à côté de l'alexandrin dans toute sa tenue, une sorte de feu courant pianoté autour, comme qui dirait d'un accompagnement musical fait par le poète lui-même et ne permettant au vers officiel de sortir que dans les grandes occasions.¹

The task was not an easy one however and L'Après-Midi d'un Faune, like Hérodiade, was many years in preparation.² It seems hardly surprising then that the 1880's and 1890's see a return once again to the predetermined shape and more manageable brevity of the sonnet form. The aesthetic of L'Après-Midi d'un Faune is far from

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1. Quoted OC, p. 1454 in the notes on L'Après-Midi d'un Faune.
 2. The first references to L'Après-Midi d'un Faune appear in the correspondence in 1865 and the poem was finally published in 1876. Hérodiade is first mentioned in the correspondence in October 1864, but only the section Scène was published in Mallarmé's lifetime, first in the 1866 Parnasse contemporain and then in its definitive version in the Poésies of 1887.

being totally abandoned however. Though the first sonnets of the 1880's¹ repeat the formula of "La nuit approbatrice," the publication of La Chevelure in 1887 sees the appearance of a new element in Mallarmé's sonnet production. The kaleidoscopic dance of impressions of L'Après-Midi d'un Faune is transposed into a new and more limited medium. The variations on the "official" alexandrine find a parallel in the quatorzain, a variation on the "official" form of the regular sonnet.²

An examination of La Chevelure, bearing in mind both the early technique of Tristesse d'été and "De l'Orient passé des Temps" and the mature handling evident in another sonnet concerned with the motif of hair, "Victorieusement fui," illustrates the possibilities of this new departure.

The contrast of attitudes on which both Tristesse d'été and "De l'Orient passé des Temps" were based has vanished, though the old opposition of doubt and sensuous affirmation is latent in the couplet of La Chevelure. Imagery and syntax in both La Chevelure and "Victorieusement fui" are dense and complex, a feature distinguishing them from the two earlier sonnets and from such pieces as Banville's sonnet sequence La Toison d'or.³ La Chevelure

1. "Quand l'ombre menaça," "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui," "Victorieusement fui," Hommage (à Richard Wagner), "Mes bouquins refermés."
2. 3 quatorzains are published in the 1880's and 10 regular sonnets. In the 1890's and before Mallarmé's death in 1898, 6 quatorzains are published and 6 regular sonnets. The quatorzain represents a quarter to a third of Mallarmé's sonnets in the Poésies, 11 quatorzains out of a total of 39 sonnets (including Renouveau and Angoisse, though by virtue of their rhyme-schemes only, among the quatorzains).
3. V. supra pp. 254-258.

La chevelure vol d'une flamme à l'extrême
Occident de désirs pour la tout déployer
Se pose (je dirais mourir un diadème)
Vers le front couronné son ancien foyer

Mais sans or soupirer que cette vive nue
L'ignition du feu toujours intérieur
Originellement la seule continue
Dans le joyau de l'oeil véridique ou rieur

Une nudité de héros tendre diffame
Celle qui ne mouvant astre ni feux au doigt
Rien qu'à simplifier avec gloire la femme
Accomplit par son chef fulgurante l'exploit

De semer de rubis le doute qu'elle écorche
Ainsi qu'une joyeuse et tutélaire torche.

OC, p. 53¹

1. La Chevelure first appeared within the prose poem La Déclaration foraine. It was reprinted in this form in the collection of Mallarmé's work Pages (Paris, Deman, 1891) with no variants. However a separate publication of the sonnet in the review Le Faune, 20 Mar. 1889, has two variants:

... Occident de désirs pour la tout éployer
... Celle qui ne mouvant bagues ni feux au doigt

Victorieusement fui le suicide beau
 Tison de gloire, sang par écume, or, tempête!
 O rire si là-bas une pourpre s'apprête
 A ne tendre royal que mon absent tombeau.

Quoi! de tout cet éclat pas même le lambeau
 S'attarde, il est minuit, à l'ombre qui nous fête
 Excepté qu'un trésor présomptueux de tête
 Verse son caressé nonchaloir sans flambeau.

La tienne si toujours le délice! la tienne
 Oui seule qui du ciel évanoui retienne
 Un peu de puéril triomphe en t'en coiffant

Avec clarté quand sur les coussins tu la poses
 Comme un casque guerrier d'impératrice enfant
 Dont pour te figurer il tomberait des roses.

OC, p. 68¹

1. This sonnet first appeared in Verlaine's Hommes d'aujourd'hui (Paris, Vanier, 1885) in a version that varies somewhat from the definitive one of 1887:

Toujours plus souriant au désastre plus beau,
 Soupirs de sang, or meurtrier, pâmoison, fête!
 Une millième fois avec ardeur s'apprête
 Mon solitaire amour à vaincre le tombeau.

Quoi! de tout ce coucher, pas même un cher lambeau
 Ne reste, il est minuit, dans la main du poète
 Excepté qu'un trésor trop folâtre de tête
 Y verse sa lueur diffuse sans flambeau!

La tienne, si toujours frivole! c'est la tienne,
 Seul gage qui des soirs évanouis retienne
 Un peu de désolé combat en t'en coiffant

Avec grâce, quand sur les coussins tu la poses
 Comme un casque guerrier d'impératrice enfant
 Dont pour te figurer, il tomberait des roses.

OC, pp. 1486-87

however is characterized by a much greater sense of movement than "Victorieusement fui." This is produced by a combination of three factors: a greater accessibility of the opening imagery; a syntax which is not tied down by punctuation and where the eye is therefore free to travel through the sonnet in one continuous progression;¹ the quatorzain form with its succession of three quatrains, each with new rhymes arranged in an alternate pattern. This is not to say that all trace of the restraining, schematizing influence of the traditional sonnet form has disappeared. On the contrary, the closing couplet of the quatorzain constitutes a more clearly defined and potentially more restrictive coda than any arising in a two quatrains two tercets arrangement. Many of Shakespeare's sonnets with which Mallarmé, as an English master, was presumably acquainted, are good illustrations of the way in which the simplification enforced by the brevity of a final couplet can quite fail to cover and resume the richness of the motifs established in the three preceding quatrains. In La Chevelure, however, the pattern of extended movement and final restraint is central to Mallarmé's theme and corresponds to that aspect of his aesthetic, symbolized in the swirl of the hair, which stresses the dance of analogies around a central perception.

The central motif of La Chevelure, the unfurling and then the drawing back of the hair, is clearly established in the first quatrain. The sonnet opens with the key-word "la chevelure" quite

1. Note that this is once again, as so often in Mallarmé, a visual effect. If one reads the poem aloud, some decisions must inevitably be made about syntactic breaks.

unlike "Victorieusement fui" where the first inkling that the sonnet has anything at all to do with hair is a periphrasis in line 7, "un trésor présomptueux de tête." The third word of La Chevelure "vol" introduces the important principle of movement and is the first term in a rapid sequence of images - flame, sunset, desire - which continues through lines 1 and 2. Line 3 introduces the complementary principle of restraint with "Se pose" strongly emphasized in a rejet position and supported by the description of the gathering back of the hair in a crown around its "ancien foyer," the forehead (ll. 3-4). This clear statement of essential motifs in the opening lines of the sonnet is most important. It means that the reader is able to get off to a good start and can go along with the syntactic and formal continuity of the piece without being impeded in the initial stages by difficulties of meaning. The approach stands in direct contrast to that of "Victorieusement fui" where the opening lines constantly baffle the intellect forcing the reader to stop and consider what their meaning may be.

Each of the three subsequent sections of the quatorzain repeats the important theme of movement and repose. In the second quatrain "vive nue," the external, unrestricted blaze of the hair, is opposed to the internal confined "feu intérieur" and the enclosed "joyau de l'oeil." In the third quatrain the idea contained in "diffame" - the spreading abroad of the woman's fame - is balanced by the phrase "Rien qu'à simplifier avec gloire la femme" which describes how the hair draws together and summarizes all the notions associated with Woman. Lastly, in the couplet,

the unfolding gesture ("déployer") of line 2 is repeated in the scattering motion "semer," while "rubis" before being finally focussed into the precision and repose of the terminal simile, recalls the whole complex of images - flame, sunset, jewels - associated throughout the sonnet with "la chevelure."

However, the complementary principles of movement and ultimate restraint are also played out in more extended fashion over the whole body of lines 5-14. The second quatrain opens the sequence with a richly ambiguous web of motifs which it will be the business of the third quatrain and final couplet to organize and codify, just as the hair, in the first quatrain, is drawn back into a formal arrangement on the head. The clear notation "La chevelure vol d'une flamme" is replaced by the ambiguous metaphor "vive nue." At the same time syntactical links are deliberately blurred. In the first place the significance of the phrase "sans or soupirer que" cannot be exactly determined. Then Mallarmé leaves it open as to whether "continue" should be read as a transitive or intransitive verb i.e. "cette vive nue - continue - l'ignition" or, taking line 6 as an apposition paralleling that of lines 1-2, "cette vive nue - continue - la seule." Furthermore, the delimitation between the subordinate clause, of which the second quatrain is largely or entirely composed, and the subsequent main clause with its subject, verb and object in line 3, is left nebulous. Probably the punctuation of "les blancs" is significant here, but from the point of view of sense and syntax, Mallarmé leaves the reader the option of whether line 8 should be more closely associated with line 7 or line 9.

The reader is thus confronted with syntax and imagery denser and more complex than those of the quatrains. However a lead-in has been provided by the relatively clear statement of motifs in lines 1-4 and momentum is not unduly slowed. In addition, though the presence of "Mais" at the beginning of line 5 is a clear indication of a new departure in the sonnet and of a logical and syntactical break between the first and second quatrains, the lack of punctuation and the advance to a new rhyme combine to carry the reader forward. This process continues throughout the second quatrain and counteracts the slowing effect of a more obscure imagery and syntax, keeping the eye moving onwards, until in the third quatrain, the beginnings of a general simplification of metaphorical and syntactical patterns become apparent. The ambivalence of "vive nue" is now converted into the definite sensuality of "une nudité" on the one hand, and, on the other, into a direct reference to the hair, "chef" (l.12) in association with the adjective "fulgurante" (agreeing with "celle" in line 10). The couplet completes this progressive lightening of the imagery, triumphantly resolving it into the fixed relationship of the torch simile.

The syntax follows a parallel pattern. The turgid subordinate clause of the second quatrain gives way to the clearly organized main clause of lines 9 and 10 and the sinuous relative clause sequence that stretches from line 11 across into the closing couplet. The principle of movement as a dominant element in the sonnet is thus sustained by a syntactic pattern that continues unbroken from

line 5 to line 14 and whose constantly increasing dynamism reaches a climax in the carry-over of the construction "l'exploit / De semer" across the formal break between lines 12 and 13. At the same time the couplet rhyme after the three alternately rhymed quatrains realizes the sense of repose apparent in the final codification of the imagery in the hair-torch equivalence. The couplet thus offers one final sketch in miniature of the whole interplay of movement in the sonnet and the tension between the contradictory trends to expansion and restraint. It operates as "un echo, vague et perdu, de l'idée principale, une sorte de sonore cadence, de prolongement lumineux, de luxe inutile, 'une dernière pirouette, une queue de comète' ajoutait, en souriant, Mallarmé."¹

All this contrasts with "Victorieusement fui" where very similar motifs are presented in far more static fashion. Evocation of the hair is concentrated in the tercets and largely separate from the imagery of torch and sunset² developed in the quatrains. The coincidence of syntactic and formal units in lines 1-4 and 5-8, the self-contained effect of the regular sonnet rhyme-scheme, the impenetrability of the opening imagery, arrest the sense of progression in the first part of the sonnet. In the tercets, imagery and syntax undergo a drastic simplification. Hermetic density is now replaced by the lengthy codification provided by the dominant simile "Comme un casque guerrier ..." In neither section of the sonnet do we find the quick-silver dance of the images or the forward thrust of the syntax which characterize the quatorzain and which its form so successfully completes.

La Chevelure is the only one of Mallarmé's quatorzains written in alexandrines.³ In subsequent examples Mallarmé turns to the shorter metres of octosyllable or heptasyllable which intensify

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1. Léopold Dauphin, Regards en arrière in Documents Stéphane Mallarmé, ed. Carl Paul Barbier, IV, 314.
 2. The motif of the sonnet is explicit in line 5 of the first version of the sonnet, but in the definitive version "tout cet éclat" is substituted for "tout ce coucher," with a loss of direct sexual reference also.
 3. The early sonnets Renouveau and Ancoisse, though rhyming as quatorzains, follow the standard structural patterns - and the typography - of the continental sonnet.

the sense of speed associated with the kaleidoscopic whirling of impressions. Billet à Whistler provides a good illustration of the technique:

Pas les rafales à propos
 De rien comme occuper la rue
 Sujette au noir vol de chapeaux;
 Mais une danseuse apparue

 Tourbillon de mousseline ou
 Fureur éparses en écumes
 Que soulève par son genou
 Celle même dont nous vécûmes

 Pour tout, hormis lui, rebattu
 Spirituelle, ivre, immobile
 Foudroyer avec le tutu,
 Sans se faire autrement de bile

 Sinon rieur que puisse l'air
 De sa jupe éventer Whistler.

OC, p. 65

The piece is remarkable for its dynamism of theme, imagery, syntax and metre. The fragmentation and depersonalization of the vision from "danseuse" to "tourbillon de mousseline" to "fureur" to "éparses en écumes," the absence of main verbs and, except in lines 7, 8 and 13, of conjugated ones also, the cascade instead of participles and infinitives, the single period of which the sonnet is composed, the continuous syntax of lines 4-14, the use of the octosyllable, the enjambements of lines 1-2 and 5-6, the alternating rhymes of the three quatrains, all combine to create a sensation of break-neck speed and effervescence. This then culminates in the nonchalant pirouette of the couplet with the simplification of the syntax and imagery and the impertinent tour de force of the final rhyme.¹

1. A rhyme of similar virtuosity ("jusqu'au - Vasco") ends the quatorzain "Au seul souci de voyager," while the opening quatrains of Petit Air II and Petit Air guerrier have rhymes verging on the pun: "s'y lance - silence" and "hormis l'y taire - militaire."

The quatorzain was written in honour of Whistler's periodical The Whirlwind, each number of which carried a drawing of a dancer, hence the image of Mallarmé's poem.¹ Mallarmé thus accepted images already proposed by the title and picture of Whistler's review. However, the motif of the pirouetting dancer admirably corresponded to Mallarmé's own preoccupation with ballet which he saw as a figure for the multivalent play of analogy around a central essence. As in La Chevelure we see how effectively this conception is mirrored in the quatorzain. The pattern of movement through the three quatrains to the brief resolution of the final couplet offers a suggestion of both freedom and formal restraint more acute than any possible in the more evenly balanced system of the regular sonnet and echoes the leaping dance of metaphor towards a final synthesis.

Thibaudet's complete silence on the quatorzain in his discussion of Mallarmé's general sonnet technique is thus particularly unfortunate and does a disservice both to Mallarmé's abilities as sonnetist and poet and to the notion of the sonnet itself. It refuses to recognize possibilities of pattern within the fourteen line unit outside those of the continental sonnet. And yet the extraordinary spread of the sonnet throughout the whole of Europe was at least in part the result of a peculiar combination of flexibility and formality which distinguished it from all other poems in fixed form, made it more easily adaptable to the varying

1. Hence also the reference of the opening lines. Mallarmé seems to be contrasting the wit and grace of Whistler's Whirlwind with the empty chatter of the average news-sheet or journal.

possibilities of rhyme available in the different languages, and allowed mutations such as the Shakespearian or Spenserian arrangements. It seems clear from Mallarmé's comments to Léopold Dauphin that he himself would have made a distinction between the sonnet and the quatorzain. Nevertheless, though the species may be different, the genus is the same, and Mallarmé's appreciation of that fact seems obvious from his characterization of La Chevelure in La Déclaration foraine, the prose poem within which it first appeared, as a "boniment d'après un mode primitif du sonnet ... usité à la Renaissance anglaise."¹ To rule out discussion of the quatorzain from a study of Mallarmé's handling of the sonnet and to see his use of it as proof of an incapacity for handling the regular sonnet form does an injustice therefore to Mallarmé's technical skill. From the 1870's onwards, Mallarmé writes only strictly regular continental sonnets or quatorzains. There are no "irregular regular" sonnets and in the two sonnets of the 1860's which Mallarmé considered capable of extensive correction, Le Pitre châtié and "De l'Orient passé des Temps," the irregularity of the rhyme-scheme has been remedied. It seems fairly evident therefore that Mallarmé should not be faulted for producing a quatorzain and not a regular sonnet, when his aim (avowed in the case of La Chevelure) was in fact to write a quatorzain.

A more valid criticism might relate to the nature of the effect obtained by Mallarmé in the Shakespearian sonnet form.

1. OC, p. 283.

Mallarmé's quatorzains obviously have nothing of the emotional complexities of a Shakespearian sonnet and the play on motifs of dynamism and repose does have its limitations. The reading of two or more of the quatorzains in succession leaves the reader primarily with the sensation of a formal game. The opening line of Feuillet d'album, "Tout à coup et comme par jeu" bears out the validity of this impression, as does the note by Austin de Croze accompanying the publication of "Toute l'âme résumée" in Le Figaro of 3 August 1895 as part of his enquiry on "Le vers libre et les poètes":

Voici des vers que par jeu le poète voulut bien écrire à notre intention pour cette enquête.¹

Ultimately it is the technical skill that is more apparent than the poetry, at least when the form is employed repeatedly. This feeling is further increased by brevity of metre which in the quatorzain as in the regular sonnet, tends to induce the sensation of the tour de force in a form already restricted to a length of fourteen lines. La Chevelure with the additional space provided by the alexandrine is infinitely richer than the octosyllabic or heptasyllabic quatorzains, but since it remains an isolated example, it is difficult to say whether Mallarmé could have pursued the vein of the quatorzain more fruitfully had he retained the alexandrine.² As things stand, one can note the tendency of Mallarmé's quatorzain to take on the appearance of a largely technical exercise and to become more quickly monotonous than the regular sonnet form. Valéry's pastiches of the Mallarméan quatorzain³ are

1. Quoted OC, p. 1497.
 2. Valéry, however, has some success with the alexandrine quatorzain in Baignée and Valvins, v. infra, pp. 520-528.
 3. See Paul Valéry, Oeuvres in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1957-1960). The 1965 printing of vol.I includes in its notes the unpublished quatorzains Merci, Moi à Paris, A chaque doigt, T'évanouir on pp. 1595, 1604, 1695, 1696 respectively. These were initially published in the notes to the 1960 printing of vol.II. The Album de vers anciens includes the quatorzains Vue and Valvins, and Baignée, v. infra pp. 517, 524, 521. For T'évanouir v. infra p. 520, n.t.

a good example of the almost mechanical character the form can assume.

In conclusion, it seems possible to recognize in Mallarmé's mature sonnet production echoes of the duality of his aesthetic preoccupations, apparent primarily in Hérodiade and L'Après-Midi d'un faune. In Thibaudet's words:

son goût de l'analogie pouvait suivre et suivit en effet deux directions: l'une, qui était une impasse, de pensée pénible et sérieuse, de tendance vers cette exégèse mystique où s'usèrent sans fruit depuis les Alexandrins tant d'intelligences rares, - l'autre de fantaisie, de sourire rentré sitôt qu'esquissé, ce geste de danseuse que l'on remarquait en lui, tout ce que peut-être il retrouvait de son intelligence mobile dans le ballet qui faisait un prétexte indéfini à ses rêves.¹

The early sonnets, concerned with the inner discord experienced by the poet, imitate that aspect of the Baudelairian sonnet technique which emphasizes the possibilities of the form primarily for thematic contrast. At the same time, Mallarmé's appreciation of the ideas of Poe prepares the concentration on the perfectioning of the linguistic and formal instruments apparent in the elaboration of Hérodiade and L'Après-Midi d'un faune and recorded in the correspondence. The inability to maintain an unvarying perfection over a poem of extended dimensions apparently leads in 1868 and again in the 1880's to renewed attention to the sonnet. The brevity of the form increases the possibility of achieving a sustained level of conception and execution while at the same time the high degree of structural restraint serves to eliminate some

1. A. Thibaudet, La Poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé, p. 91.

of the element of personal arbitrariness from which Mallarmé was so anxious to free his work. Formal pattern replaces anecdotal sequence as the chief principle of organization. The rhyme-scheme and main structural lines of the sonnet provide a frame of reference within which a variety of complex metaphors can be mysteriously juxtaposed, the rigorousness of the form echoing and enhancing the hermeticism of the imagery and the obscurity of the syntax. In certain extreme cases the structure of the sonnet form itself becomes the subject of the poet's meditations. "La nuit approbatrice" ("Ses purs ongles") and "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui" are each a figure for the regular sonnet as most rigorously conceived. Extending the notion contained in the maxim "céder l'initiative aux mots" the sonnet describes itself - reflection or stasis depending on the point of view. The balanced system of the French regular sonnet is less suited however for Thibaudet's "analogie de fantaisie" where attention is concentrated on the kaleidoscopic dance of metaphor and less on a total system of reflection. The equilibrium of the two quatrains and the symmetrical arrangement of two quatrains to two tercets always has a latent quality of stasis and the impenetrability of Mallarmé's imagery and syntax brings this aspect strongly to the fore. The quatorzain, on the other hand, with its three quatrains and their three sets of alternate rhymes crowned by a final couplet exaggerates the principles both of movement and repose. Like the swirl of the hair, the pirouette of the dancer, or the piping of the faun, it constitutes a "synthèse du bond et de l'arrêt"¹ which echoes Mallarmé's view of metaphor as a dynamic activity, a series of

1. J.-P. Richard, L'Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé, p. 317.

flashing leaps through a variety of associated impressions, until a final synthesis is triumphantly reached.

Mallarmé, within the nineteenth century tradition of the French sonnet, is both continuer and innovator. On the one hand, and contrary to Thibaudet's assertion of his incapacities as a sonnetist, he is capable of pushing the structural systems defining the regular sonnet to their extremes, while on the other, he demonstrates his technical skill by his ability to appropriate a variation of the form, structurally more suited to a different emphasis in his vision. Both regular sonnet and quatorzain, however, are integrated into a frame of reference far removed from their traditional orientation. The result is an unusually high degree of identity between substance and form which is the figure, albeit on a tiny scale, of the grandiose ambition of "l'explication orphique de la terre,"¹ the poetic justification of the universe. As Valéry puts it:

Ces petites compositions merveilleusement achevées s'imposaient comme des types de perfection, tant les liaisons des mots avec les mots, des vers avec les vers, des mouvements avec les rythmes étaient assurés, tant chacune d'elles donnait l'idée d'un objet en quelque sorte absolu, dû à un équilibre de forces intrinsèques, soustrait par un prodige de combinaisons réciproques à ces velléités de retouche et de changement que l'esprit pendant ses lectures conçoit inconsciemment devant la plupart des textes.

L'éclat de ces systèmes cristallins si purs et comme terminés de toutes parts, me fascinait.²

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1. Letter to Verlaine, 16 Nov. 1885, sending the biographical details requested by Verlaine for his study of Mallarmé in the series Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui. Printed in Mallarmé, OC, p. 663 under the heading Autobiographie.
 2. Valéry, "Lettre sur Mallarmé," Oeuvres I, 639.

CHAPTER VI

Valéry

Valéry offers something of a contrast to the poets so far discussed, in that when he began to write, the sonnet was already established as a favourite mode across the whole spectrum of contemporary poetry. His situation is thus essentially different from that of Baudelaire who was writing at a time when the sonnet in the nineteenth century had still to take its place as a major poetic form. It also differs from that of Heredia, Mallarmé and Verlaine, who, as they began to write in the 1860's, perpetuated and extended a trend evident in Les Fleurs du Mal, but by no means felt from the outset that all their energies should be automatically channelled into the sonnet form. Thus, while the sonnet production of Mallarmé and Heredia in particular increased steadily over their career, they did initially experiment with a variety of other forms. Where Valéry is concerned, on the other hand, an inverse pattern is apparent, the overwhelming majority of his early pieces being couched in the fashionable sonnet form, while in Charmes the incidence of the sonnet is considerably reduced.¹ This decline means that despite the numerical superiority of the form in Valéry's poetry overall, claims for Valéry's importance and originality as a sonnetist cannot be based on statistical grounds alone. To determine

1. The main source of reference for Valéry's poems and critical articles will be the 2 vol. edition of the Oeuvres in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade series, ed. Jean Hytier (Paris, Gallimard, 1957-60), henceforth OI and OII. (Note that references are to the 1965 printing of vol.1 and the 1970 printing of vol.2. The pagination and arrangement of the notes varies according to the printing.) For details of Valéry's sonnet production, see Appendix A.

the real importance of the form in Valéry's own poetic work and the extent to which it appears organic with theme at different stages in the poet's career, detailed scrutiny is clearly necessary.

Aside from numerical claims, however, Valéry deserves a significant place in an account of the sonnet in this period in that it is the form most frequently adduced by him in support of his views on the importance of consciousness in the creative process in literature. The need for patient work as opposed to the flash of inspiration, the value of some kind of obstacle or "gênes" and in particular the established traditions of prosody as a means of restraining and disciplining, and thus ultimately enhancing, the initial idea, seems perfectly illustrated for Valéry in the model offered by the sonnet. The peculiar importance he attributes to the sonnet form in this connexion is conclusively demonstrated by the references to it which occur in his earliest letters and continue even after the publication of Charmes in 1922 and the more or less complete cessation of his activities as a poet.

However, despite the prominence of the sonnet in Valéry's poetry and his critical writing and despite many analyses of individual poems, of Charmes in particular, it was not until Professor Hytier's 1969 article, "L'Esthétique valéryenne du sonnet," that any attempt was apparently made to single out and examine this feature of Valéry's work.¹ Professor Hytier's article, as its title suggests, deals almost exclusively with the theoretical aspects of the question, bringing together the remarks on the form scattered throughout the letters,

1. Jean Hytier, "L'Esthétique valéryenne du sonnet," Australian Journal of French Studies, VI, nos. 2-3 (May-Dec. 1969), 326-336.

Cahiers and various articles, and providing a useful summary of Valéry's different approaches to the subject. Demands of space, however, preclude any detailed analysis of this information and Professor Hytier's account is a factual rather than a critical one. There is, for example, no discussion as to why Valéry, having expressed a preference for the perfection of the sonnet and an appreciation of the difficulties it entails, should then proceed to use it with a freedom that Gautier or Heredia would certainly have criticized, or of its position in his mind vis à vis other fixed forms such as the chant royal on the one hand and the rimes plates of La Jeune Parque and the more flexible forms of some of the Charmes on the other. The article makes no claim to cover the relationship between theory and practice, although this would seem to be potentially the most interesting aspect of the question. The problem is cursorily dispatched in the concluding paragraph where it is suggested that La Dormeuse seems to be the closest approximation to Valéry's ideal model for the sonnet, however "moins pour sa ressemblance présumée avec le modèle idéal que pour la raison prosaïque qu'il y a peu de sonnets réguliers chez Valéry et qu'il n'y a que celui-là dans Charmes."¹ While agreeing with Hytier's caveat, that "Rien dans Valéry n'autorise à voir dans La Dormeuse ou dans n'importe quelle autre pièce, une tentative pour illustrer expressément une théorie et pour joindre un exemple au précepte," his conclusion, "Si ses sonnets sont beaux, c'est pour des raisons étrangères à ses spéculations," seems more debatable and something of an overstatement. Of course, Valéry's sonnets are not

1. Ibid., p. 336.

written to illustrate a theoretical model. His most developed remarks on the form date in any case from 1922, 1927, and 1928 when the sonnets of Charmes were already completed. But this is not to say that the points he subsequently raises are not already implicit in the sonnets themselves. Hytier is applying here to a specific question of literary technique a view more generally and more properly directed towards those speculations on the creative process which form the subject of Valéry's later poetry but are not necessarily the source of their power as Charmes. The connexion between Valéry's practice of and theory of the sonnet at this stage in the poet's career is perhaps rather less tenuous than Hytier would lead us to believe.

The same coherence could not however be claimed for the early period of Valéry's sonnet writing. Indeed perhaps the most interesting aspect of the whole question is the way in which Valéry's use of the form and his attitude towards it evolve, the degree to which at various points of his career they coincide, and the extent to which the sonnet finally achieves in Valéry's work a degree of identity with the theme it proposes, that transforms it from a fashionable exercise to a "form informed with intensity."¹

In the period 1887-1891 Valéry's remarks on art in general and the sonnet in particular are largely derivative, and their eclectic quality is the obvious mark of an immature artist who, while instinctively recognizing certain features of the work of others as having a special bearing on his own preferences and talents, is as yet incapable of assimilating and moulding such features into a coherent individual manner. Useful information on Valéry's youthful admirations is provided

1. Conrad Aiken.

by Henri Mondor in his description of the black notebook where Valéry recorded, 1888-1891, some of the poems capturing his attention at the time.¹ These include a substantial selection of Heredia sonnets taken from reviews, several of Mallarmé's poems including some sonnets, some poems including sonnets by Verlaine, and a text from Poe that had attracted the attention of Baudelaire² thirty years before and which had brought an intellectual sanction to the idea of the short poem:

L'étendue d'un poème doit se trouver en rapport
 mathématique avec l'élevation ou excitation qu'il
 comporte: quantité d'effet. Longueur une centaine
 de vers ...³

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1. Henri Mondor, Précocité de Valéry, (Paris, Gallimard, 1957), pp. 81-107.
 2. The notebook contains only one poem by Baudelaire - Femmes damnées in a clipping from a review. Mondor speculates (pp. 94-95) that Valéry probably owned a copy of Les Fleurs du Mal (though possibly not one including the Poèmes condamnés, hence the clipping). Valéry's later remarks on Baudelaire recognize in him an unusual combination of the sensual and the precise and an exceptional instance of "une intelligence critique associée à la vertu de poésie" (Situation de Baudelaire, 1924, O I, 599). At the same time, he feels Baudelaire's work to lack that essential poetic purity observable in Mallarmé: "... observant dans Baudelaire le mélange plutôt déconcertant d'une magie extraordinaire, rebelle à toute analyse, et de parties détestables, expressions vulgaires et vers très mauvais ... cette imperfection que je trouvais dans Baudelaire mêlée à une pleine puissance harmonique ... était comme expressément faite pour créer en moi le besoin, ou plutôt la nécessité de Mallarmé" (Propos me concernant, O II, 1531). These views are expressed with the cogency and hindsight of maturity, but it is notable that the Baudelairian influence is very little apparent in the early poems. Exceptions are Les Chats blancs (O I, 1597), Le Navire (O I, 1596-97) and Port du Midi (O I, 1599) picking up the theme of the voyage and associated tropical imagery, and Repas (O I, 1596) a replay in less heroic tone of Les Bohémiens. All are sonnets.
 3. Mondor, op.cit. p. 108. Poe's remark remains axiomatic for Valéry throughout his career. v. O II, 638 on epic poems; O II, 800; O II, 1572; O II, 1599.

Similarly the letters of the period show the conflicting forces at work in the mind of the young poet who has taken for his models a widely varying group of poets whose only common feature is their belief that a true poem must necessarily be a short one and whose use of the sonnet inevitably reflects their divergency of personality and attitude. The earliest reference by Valéry to the form seems to be that occurring in a letter of 1889 to Karl Boès, the editor of Le Courrier libre, enclosing the sonnet Élévation de la Lune. Valéry is at pains to indicate that he is a provincial and therefore uncommitted to any poetic school:

Voici quelques vers commis en province par un provincial loin du grand brasier de Paris.

J'ignore quel est le vent qui souffle là-haut, si les jeunes sont symbolistes, analystes ou néo-chrétiens et je n'ai pas cherché à satisfaire un programme d'école. Je suis partisan d'un poème court et concentré, une brève évocation close par un vers sonore et plein. Je chéris, en poésie comme en prose, les théories si profondes et si perfidement savantes d'Edgar Poe, je crois à la toute puissance du rythme (sic) et surtout de l'épithète suggestive. Je préfère Mallarmé à Verlaine et Joris Karl à tous les autres.

The paragraph then concludes rather touchingly:

Et quand je fais des vers c'est ma fantaisie que je suis.¹

Apart from its length the sonnet accompanying this missive can hardly be said to accomplish in practice the model outlined.

L'ombre venait, les fleurs s'ouvraient, rêvait mon Âme,
Et le vent endormi taisait son hurlement,
La Nuit tombait, la Nuit douce comme une femme,
Subtile et violette épiscopalement!

1. Valéry, Lettres à quelques-uns (Paris, Gallimard, 1952), p. 9. Also quoted in O I, 1577. Joris Karl is of course Joris Karl Huysmans.

Les Etoiles semblaient des cierges funéraires
Comme dans une église allumés dans les soirs;
Et semant des parfums, les lys Thuriféraires
Balançaient doucement leurs frêles encensoirs.

Une prière en moi montait ainsi qu'une onde
Et dans l'immensité bleuissante et profonde,
Les astres recueillis baissaient leurs chastes yeux!...

Alors, Elle apparut! hostie immense et blonde
Puis elle étincela, se détachant du Monde
Car d'invisibles doigts l'élevaient vers les Cieux!...¹

O I, 1576-77

The subject is a conventional one and the pseudo-religious vocabulary in which it is framed seems far indeed from the "épithète suggestive" while the awkward inversion of the opening line belies the insistence on "la toute puissance du rythme." Though the final tercet provides the climax to the sonnet with the rising of the moon, one looks in vain for the closing "vers sonore et plein" and while the sonnet is broadly based on the contrast between the descent of night (quatrains) and the rise of the moon (tercets), the sloppiness of detail (for example the stars in stanza 2 are compared to "cierges funéraires" but in stanza 3 are seen lowering their "chastes yeux," "immensité" l.10 is followed two lines later by "immense") bears little relationship to that concision and concentration called for in the wake of Poe.²

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1. Sonnets in this "religious" vein are frequent in the early work of Valéry. See the early sonnets reproduced after the notes on the Album de vers anciens in O I.
 2. There is interesting criticism of this sonnet by Gustave Fourment in Paul Valéry-Gustave Fourment, Correspondance (Paris, Gallimard, 1957), pp. 80-81. The lack of coherence of Élévation de la Lune was not an isolated occurrence in Valéry's early poetry as Fourment's comments on another sonnet, La Mer (O I, 1588-89) make plain: "Il faut que l'impression laissée par le sonnet soit nette, simple; des images contradictoires la rendent trouble. Il faut que l'accouplement des syllabes et des mots soit à lui seul une beauté. Un sonnet est un diamant si petit qu'on n'y souffre aucune tache." Ibid., pp. 91-92. cf. Valéry, Autre Rhumbs (1927): "Quand les oeuvres sont très courtes, le plus mince détail est de l'ordre de grandeur de l'ensemble. La proportion des égards et des beautés dans un sonnet doit être enorme." O II, 681. See also O II, 555.

Nevertheless, the article Sur la technique littéraire, submitted by Valéry to Boès a few months later, continues to take as its starting point the idea of a highly conscious literature as envisaged by the American. "La littérature est l'art de se jouer de l'âme des autres," it proclaims, and as a result, the modern poet:

n'est plus le délirant échevelé, celui qui écrit tout un poème dans une nuit de fièvre, c'est un froid savant, presque un algébriste, au service d'un rêveur affiné. Cent vers tout au plus entrèrent dans ses plus longues pièces ... Il se gardera de jeter sur le papier tout ce que lui soufflera, aux minutes heureuses, la muse Association-des-Idees. Mais, au contraire, tout ce qu'il aura imaginé, senti, songé, échafaudé, passera au crible, sera pesé, épuré, mis à la forme et condensé le plus possible pour gagner en force ce qu'il sacrifie en longueur: un sonnet, par exemple, sera une véritable quintessence, un osmazôme,¹ un suc concentré, et cohobé, réduit à quatorze vers, soigneusement composé en vue d'un effet final foudroyant. Ici l'adjectif sera impermutable, la sonorité des mètres sagement graduée, la pensée souvent parée d'un symbole, voile qui se déchirera à la fin ...²

What is interesting here are the obvious borrowings from Poe of ideas which Valéry was subsequently to make peculiarly his own but which,

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1. That such vocabulary was common coin is well illustrated by its appearance in 1888 in George Moore's Confessions of a Young Man. It occurs on the subject of the prose poem: "We, the 'ten superior persons scattered through the universe,' think these prose poems the concrete essence, the osmazome of literature, the essential oil of art," (p. 148 in the London, Heinemann, 1952 ed.), and (ibid.), "intensity of expression [...] the very osmazome of art." Elsewhere (p. 45) Moore repeats the idea that a work of art should be (a) rare and (b) brief and refers admiringly to Poe: "Poe, unread and ill understood in America and England, here thou art an integral part of our artistic life." (p. 53).
 2. This article was never printed as Le Courrier libre ended publication in 1889. It is quoted in full in Mondor, Précocité de Valéry, pp. 181-186.

at this stage, are still recognizable as borrowed plumage, and the use of the sonnet, now as later, as an example of the type of literature he has in mind. Some months later, on 2 June 1890, he wrote to his new friend Pierre Louÿs in almost identical terms, stressing again the importance of craftsmanship over inspiration and suggesting the same equivalence between the formal aspects of poetry and the techniques of mathematics:

Voulez-vous connaître mon idéal littéraire? -
et je dois dire qu'aucun des poètes de ceux que je
connais n'a encore satisfait mes désirs.

Je rêve une poésie courte - un sonnet - écrite
par un songeur raffiné qui serait en même temps un
judicieux architecte, un sagace algébriste, un
calculateur infailible de l'effet à produire.
Jamais plus, mon idéal artiste ne s'abandonnera
aux hasards de l'inspiration - jamais il n'écrira
tout un poème dans une nuit de fièvre ... (Je
n'aime pas Musset!) Tout ce qu'il aura imaginé,
senti, songé, passera au crible, sera pesé,
épuré, mis à la Forme et condensé le plus possible
pour gagner en force ce qu'on sacrifie en longueur.
Ce sonnet sera un tout complet, soigneusement
composé en vue d'un coup de foudre final et
décisif. L'adjectif sera toujours le plus
évocateur, la sonorité des vers sagement calculée,
la pensée souvent enveloppée dans un symbole,
voile à peine déchirée par le quatorzième vers ...¹

Valéry's first letter to Mallarmé, in October 1890, enclosing
the sonnet Le Jeune Prêtre² and a thirteen line piece, La Suave Agonie,

1. This letter is quoted in OI, 1771. Note the dislike of
Musset, a sentiment shared by Baudelaire.

2. Sous les calmes cyprès d'un jardin clérical
Va le jeune homme noir, aux yeux lents et magiques.
Lassé de l'exégèse et des chants liturgiques
Il savoure le bleu repos dominical.

L'air est plein de parfums et de cloches sonnantes!
Mais le séminariste évoque dans son coeur
Oublieux du latin murmuré dans le chœur
Un rêve de bataille et d'armes frissonnantes.

(cont. over ...)

likewise affirms his preference for "les poèmes courts, concentrés pour un éclat final, où les rythmes sont comme les marches marmoréennes de l'autel que couronne le dernier vers" and admiration for the "doctrines savantes du grand Edgar Allan Poe - peut-être le plus subtil artiste de ce siècle."¹ The analogy of the marble steps had already been used by Valéry in the article of 1889:

... le poème, selon nous, n'a d'autre but que de préparer son dénouement. Nous ne pouvons mieux le comparer qu'aux degrés d'un autel magnifique, aux marches de porphyre que domine le tabernacle. L'ornement, les cierges, les orfèvreries, les fumées d'encens - tout s'élançe, tout est disposé pour fixer l'attention sur l'ostensoir - sur le dernier vers.²

Somewhat surprisingly, though, when the number of Heredia sonnets in the black notebook are considered, this view had then led the young writer on to a criticism of the Heredian sonnet:

La composition où cette gradation fait défaut à un aspect fatalement monotone, si riche et savamment ciselée soit-elle. C'est à notre avis, le grand défaut des sonnets de Heredia par exemple - qui sont trop beaux tout le long, d'un bout à l'autre. Chaque vers a sa vie propre, sa splendeur particulière et détourne l'esprit de l'ensemble.³

(... cont.) Et - se dressent ses mains faites pour l'ostensoir,
Cherchant un glaive lourd! car il lui semble voir
Au couchant ruisseler le sang doré des anges!
Là-haut! il veut nageant dans le Ciel clair et vert,
Parmi les Seraphins bardés de feux étranges,
Au son du cor, choquer du fer contre l'Enfer!...

O I, 1580-81

This sonnet with its Heredian finale gained a "mention honorable" in the sonnet competition run by La Plume in the closing months of 1890. Valéry had two sonnets in the competition. The other was Viol (O I, 1580). La Suave Agonie can be read in O I, 1584.

1. Valéry, Lettres à quelques-uns, p. 28. Also quoted in O I, 1581.
2. Mondor, Précocité de Valéry, p. 183.
3. Ibid.

A letter to Louÿs of 19 October 1890 indicates, however, a continuing appreciation of Heredia's skill and a preference for the sonnet form. Valéry writes he has been comparing the different treatments of the resurrection of Adonis by Leconte de Lisle in Poèmes tragiques and by Heredia in the sonnet Le Réveil d'un Dieu. His conclusion: "Très beaux, tous les deux, mais j'aime mieux Heredia. Jugez."¹

In a further letter, a month later, the Parnassian vein is extolled as Valéry praises Louÿs for his "excellents, triomphants et glorieux vers, qu'on dirait décrire une fresque miraculeuse d'un palais gènois" and proclaims yet again "Vive le dernier tercet! et le dernier vers, le splendide dernier vers du dernier tercet."²

However, the same letter notes a different trend in Valéry's own interests:

... je sens que je deviens un peu ce que j'appellerais préraphaélite! et cela malgré moi. Rien ne m'étonne autant que ma propre évolution vers un Nord absolument insoupçonné jusqu'ici.³

In similar vein, another letter to Louÿs of 21 December 1890 refers to a sonnet Valéry has just composed, Le Bois amical, as being "bien vague comme facture" and "une quelconque suggestion de l'amitié" and has an irreverent dig at the quite opposite approach of the Heredian sonnet:

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1. Valéry, Lettres à quelques-uns, p. 31. Le Réveil d'un Dieu can be found in Les Trophées (Paris, Lemerre, 1924), p. 34. Leconte de Lisle's poem is entitled La Résurrection d'Adonis.
 2. Ibid., p. 35.
 3. Ibid., p. 36.

J'ai envie de faire un sonnet à Heredia dont le sujet serait celui-ci: Retour des conquistadors de la vraie Poésie, on entend sur la mer les clairons victorieux, voici les galères dont les voiles se détachent sur le soleil couchant, voici à la proue le vainqueur J.M. de H. dont le nom sonore terminerait glorieusement la pièce rimant avec irradia ou incendia.¹

The disaffection from the Parnassian aesthetic, at least in its narrower aspects, and an involvement with a more contemporary mode of poetic expression, is moreover made quite clear in a letter to Albert Dugrip whose lack of any literary or personal allegiances made circum-spection unnecessary:²

Je sens que le parnassien qui a d'abord été Moi se dissout et s'évapore ... Il me semble que ce n'est plus l'heure des vers sonores et exacts, cerclés de rimes lourdes et rares comme des pierres! Peut-être faut-il écrire des choses vaporeuses, fines et légères comme des fumées violettes et qui font songer à tout, et qui ne disent rien précisément et qui ont des ailes ...

Un certain mysticisme m'agrée, et j'aime ces pâles préraphaélites d'Angleterre qui n'ont trouvé leur âme que dans l'art du moyen âge.³

Nevertheless this change of attitude does not imply a rejection of the idea of the poet craftsman for the letter concludes:

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1. Ibid., p. 42. Some of the features indicated here are reminiscent of Hélène in the Album de vers anciens O I, 76. For the finished sonnet v.p. 348.
 2. Louÿs, of course, married one of Heredia's daughters.
 3. Valéry, Lettres à quelques-uns, p. 40. Henry Charpentier indicates in the May 1892 number of Chimère, a review where Valéry collaborated under the pseudonym M. Doris, a translation signed M.D. of D.G. Rossetti's sonnet Lilith (for a picture). The Dec. 1892 number has a translation signed M.D. of Petrarch's sonnet La Visione della Cerva. See Henry Charpentier, "Les premières oeuvres de Paul Valéry," La Portique V (mars 1947). In a letter to Louÿs of 22 June 1890, replying to Louÿs' questions, Valéry wrote: "... je voudrais connaître ce merveilleux Rossetti dont vous me faites venir l'envie, mais je ne sais pas où le trouver." Lettres à quelques-uns, p. 13.

J'ai toujours du reste, l'oeil sur l'artiste surnaturel
et magique, le plus artiste de ce siècle à mon sens,
Edgar Allan Poe.¹

The preoccupation with strict form, and in particular with the sonnet, that emerges from these letters, seems in one sense, remarkably conventional, even old-fashioned, in a young man of the time, when the most eagerly debated question in avant-garde poetic circles was that of the vers libre.² Valéry's life in the provinces, far from "le grand brasier de Paris" was clearly a factor here. His difficulties in obtaining Hérodiade are a good illustration of the problems of communication.³ But the constant references to Poe, which, in contrast to the swing in his allegiance from an outdated Parnassianism à la Heredia to a more contemporary Symbolism, persist after his meeting with Louÿs and Gide and his first taste of Paris, are clear indications of the fundamental importance he attached to ideas of craftsmanship and calculation in art.

Valéry's use of the sonnet in this early period displays the same lack of an integrated approach as his theoretical pronouncements. He

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1. Poe always remained a key figure for Valéry. "Celui qui m'a le plus fait sentir sa puissance fut Poe. J'y ai lu ce qu'il me fallait, pris de ce délire de la lucidité qu'il communique." Letter of 1912 to Albert Thibaudet, Lettres à quelques-uns, p. 97. Partially quoted in O I, 1749.
 2. J.-P. Monod in Regard sur Paul Valéry (Lausanne, Ed. des Terreaux, 1947), p. 23 quotes a piece in vers libres. This is also printed in O I, 1604-05. Valéry's judgement on the vers libre as expressed to Mondor in 1945: "Le vers libre est surtout libre de désertter la mémoire de ceux qui aiment à se réciter des vers," Henri Mondor, Propos familiers de Paul Valéry (Paris, Grasset, 1957), p. 267.
 3. Valéry in a letter of Sept. 1890 to Louÿs: "Vous êtes bien fortuné de posséder Mallarmé. Moi je grappille ses poèmes un peu partout. Quant à Hérodiade, je la recherche depuis deux années en vain et je désespère de la lire. Quel ennui que la province!" Lettres à quelques-uns, p. 19.

has a clear preference for short forms, and especially for the sonnet of which he makes extensive and almost exclusive use - a practice criticized both by Fourment and Louÿs.¹ At the same time, he is still very much involved with the different manners of his predecessors in the use of the form and this of course inhibits exploration and appreciation of the possibilities of the form on his own account. The many sonnets of this period are dispersed through letters to friends and ephemeral reviews, only a select thirteen being finally resurrected at the urging of Gide and ultimately incorporated in the Album de Vers anciens. These thirteen survivors illustrate the four main orientations of the sonnet in the late 1880's and early 1890's - the strictly regular form and picturesque historical subjects of Heredia; the somewhat freer approach to the form of the Symbolists and their emphasis on the oscillation between the Dream and Reality;² the Verlainian combination of "naïveté" and sophistication formally rendered in the association of unexpected rhythms, and on occasion of the "impair" line, with the disciplined structural pattern of the genre; and the Mallarmean quatorzain, a ballet of elusive and constantly changing impressions and images. At the same time, the very fact of their inclusion in the Album argues for some measure of originality,

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1. For their remarks, v. infra, pp. 529-530.
 2. Symbolist experiments range from sonnets with 4 rhymes in the quatrains, sonnets on all feminine or all masculine rhymes (e.g. Albert Samain, Dilection in Au Jardin de l'Infante, 1893), rhythmic experiment in the sonnet (e.g. Pierre Louÿs, Jalousie, sonnet d'alexandrins avec césure au septième vers, one of his early poems predating Astarté, 1891), the incorporation into the body of the form of strong alliterative procedures (e.g. Stuart Merrill, Appel and Les Héros in Les Fastes, 1891) to 15 line "sonnets" such as those of Albert Samain (adding an extra line at the end, e.g. Keepsake in Au Jardin de l'Infante) and those of Pierre Louÿs (adding an extra line to the first quatrain, e.g. Emaux sur or et argent I, II, III in Astarté). However a considerable number of the sonnets produced by the Symbolist poets of the late 1880's and early 1890's in fact conform to traditional rhyme requirements and in this respect their work differs little from that of their Parnassian predecessors. The Symbolists also continue, though with some modification, the Parnassian interest in the figures of Antiquity. New motifs of Wagnerian, fairy-tale, or vaguely mystical inspiration are added however and there is a marked shift towards a more recondite vocabulary.

since Valéry presumably picked out for major publication those sonnets which he felt to be the best of his youthful efforts, in other words those sonnets possessing the greatest degree or possibility of conformity with his own mature position. The sonnets of the Album and their variants are thus of particular interest in that they allow a clear perception of Valéry's evolving technique in the sonnet and of his movement away from an uncritical acceptance and often clumsy practice of a fashionable form towards a more reflective and personal approach.¹

The disaffection from the Herodian model of the sonnet suggested in the letters of 1889-90 finds its response in the Album. There are four sonnets with titles drawn from ancient myth and history - Hélène, Orphée, Naissance de Vénus and César - but with the exception of the regular form of César and some of the technical devices of Hélène in particular,² there is little that recalls the sonnets gathered together in Les Trophées in 1893. There is no record of the publication of César during the early period of Valéry's writing. Indeed it was not even included in the first edition of the Album in 1920, but appeared only in 1926 first in Quelques vers anciens and then in the second edition of the Album in the same year. Although it is therefore impossible to make any claims about its date, a comparison with an early sonnet, La Marche impériale, published in Le Courrier libre of

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1. There are two points to notice here. Firstly the exceptionally well documented nature of much of Valéry's early work (cp. with Baudelaire for example). This is particularly true of the sonnets ultimately included in the Album which go through several different publications. Secondly, it is perhaps as well to stress at this point that the very small number of sonnets retained in the Album inevitably gives a biased picture of Valéry's early production, much of which is of a very low standard indeed. Several of these early pieces are to be found in the notes to O I, 1575-1610.
 2. See p.481 and note 1.

1 November 1889, and with Heredia's sonnet Après Cannes, published in the Revue des Deux Mondes of 15 May 1890, is most illuminating in showing which aspects of the Heredian formula were gradually assimilated to Valéry's own preoccupations and which rejected.

La Marche impériale

Sous l'arche triomphale où flottaient les bannières
Des clairons éclataient dans la gloire du soir,
Et le soleil mourant, gigantesque ostensor,
Ondoyait sur les fers luisants et les crinières.

Un cri montait dans la vapeur des encensoirs,
Les rois vaincus hurlant sous les coups des lanières,
Et des chars écrasaient des fleurs dans les ornières,
Et de grands chevaux blancs se cabraient sous des noirs!

Les images des Dieux passaient mystérieuses,
Dans le recueillement et le ruissellement
Des armes, des métaux, des pierres précieuses;

Et puis - l'empereur d'or, beau solennellement! ...
Des veuves sanglotaient alors dans le silence!
Mais, lui, resplendissait, appuyé sur sa lance.

O I, 1578

The structure of the sonnet is used here to underline the contrast between the triumphal progress of the Emperor and the suffering of the prisoners and the bereaved. The sonnet opens with images of light and the triumphant sound of the trumpets, to which are opposed in the second quatrain the cries of the captives and a series of images of subjugation - the kings under the lash of the whip (a parallel to and contrast with the flying of the flags in line 1), the flowers crushed by the chariots and the horses rearing under their riders. The equilibrium in the quatrains between these opposing ideas is replaced in the tercets by the emergence of the triumph as a dominant theme. The introduction of the images of the gods in the first tercet brings back the motifs of light and splendour of the first quatrain and leads naturally to the vision of the Emperor himself in lines 12 and 14. The association of the Emperor and the gods is given syntactic

reinforcement in the logical progression of lines 9-12, and the tercet rhyme-scheme, a quatrain followed by a couplet, provides additional support. The theme of suffering on the other hand is confined to line 13 and is thus totally enclosed and outweighed within the context of the overall tercet pattern. However Valéry uses the terminal couplet arrangement to recall and emphasize the central contrast of the sonnet, bringing together in a last compressed confrontation the motifs of grief and triumphant splendour.

A certain care is therefore evident in the construction of the sonnet but the piece as a whole does not capture the imagination. The technique of the ringing finale, "Mais, lui, resplendissait, appuyé sur sa lance," is clearly copied from Heredia, though achieved, it must be noted, with a contravention of the regular sonnet rhyme-scheme that Heredia would not have permitted himself. Overall, however, the description lacks the pungency and picturesqueness of Heredia's sonnets and displays an uneasy mixture of influences. In particular the Baudelairian echoes of line 3, "Et le soleil mourant, gigantesque encensoir," and of the rhyme "ostensoir - encensoirs" consort oddly with the rest.¹

A brief consideration of Heredia's Après Cannes which has certain similarities with Valéry's sonnet illustrates what is lacking in La Marche impériale:

1. Note that Valéry, in harmony with the general tendency of the time, though not with Heredian practice, fails to conform to strict prosodic convention and rhymes a singular with a plural. The "ostensoir," "encensoir," vocabulary naturally also occurs in some of Valéry's contemporaneous pseudo-religious sonnets. V. L'Élévation de la Lune and Le Jeune Prêtre, quoted supra, pp.475-476 and p.478 n.2 respectively.

Un des consuls tué, l'autre fuit vers Linterne
 Ou Venuse. L'Aufide a débordé, trop plein
 De morts et d'armes. La foudre au Capitolin
 Tombe, le bronze sue et le ciel rouge est terne.

En vain le Grand Pontife a fait un lectisterne
 Et consulté deux fois l'oracle sibyllin;
 D'un long sanglot l'afeul, la veuve et l'orphelin
 Emplissent Rome en deuil que la terreur consterne,

Et chaque soir la foule allait aux aqueducs,
 Plèbe, esclaves, enfants, femmes, vieillards caducs
 Et tout ce que vomit Subure et l'ergastule!

Tous anxieux de voir surgir, au dos vermeil
 Des monts Sabins où luit l'oeil sanglant du soleil,
 Le Chef borgne monté sur l'éléphant Gétule.¹

Despite obvious similarities of theme and construction, two main areas of difference are immediately apparent - the treatment of local colour and the manipulation of syntax in association with patterns of metre and sonnet structure. Valéry's Imperial triumph is not tied to a particular Emperor or historical event, but is a "typical" one and a vehicle for the well-worn opposition between the show of victory concentrated in the person of the Emperor and the sufferings and bereavements on which such "glory" rests. In Heredia's sonnet, on the other hand, the reader is introduced by the title into a specific historical event and straightway involved in the breathless sequence of events and present tense verbs of the opening quatrain.² But where does this emphasis on the particular, the proper names and erudite references, finally lead? How has Heredia compressed his subject in accordance with the requirements of his chosen sonnet form? Significantly the point on which Heredia elects to concentrate

1. Heredia, Les Trophées (Paris, Lemerre, 1924), p. 79.

2. The 1890 version of l.1 reads: "Un des consuls est mort, l'autre fuit vers Linterne ..." The use of the conjugated verb in the first half of the line is much less effective than the ellipsis with the participle of Les Trophées.

his attention is neither a description of the battle - the sonnet is concerned with Après Cannes - nor of Hannibal himself, his career and so on. The leader is not even mentioned by name and only appears in the final line of the sonnet. Instead it is his impact on the lives of others that is considered - an impact that begins on the physical level in the opening stanza but which in the subsequent stanzas gains a more disturbing dimension as their fear gradually moulds their mental image of him into the Cyclopean apparition of the final line. The sonnet thus manages to combine reference to a specific individual with something of a study in the psychology of fear. The historical figure of Hannibal is given general significance by its situation within a universal pattern of human behaviour, while, conversely the picturesque quality of the unique historical moment gives colour and life to a general phenomenon. This dual interaction of the specific and the general gives the sonnet its thematic vigour and resonance and provides a sharp contrast with the flat one-dimensional quality of the Valéry sonnet where the "typical" character of the event described is the only index of its general validity.

This vigour of the Herodian sonnet is supported by corresponding tensions within the form of the piece itself. The dynamism of Hannibal for example finds a syntactic and rhythmic parallel in the short clauses and phrases and the rejets of the opening quatrain. In straight contrast are the longer periods and more regular rhythm of the remainder of the sonnet where the passivity and indecision of the general populace of Rome are evoked. At the same time it is also possible to see in the disrupted rhythms of the opening stanza the reverse side of the coin - the panic and disorientation of the defeated.

Enhanced by its containment within the enclosed rhyme pattern and completed syntactic unit of the first stanza, this sense of unreasoning terror dominates the whole sonnet. Though the discipline of the repeated rhymes in the quatrains persists, the 8:6 division of the sonnet is undermined by the continuation of syntax and thematic focus from the second quatrain into the tercets, the differentiation of these patterns from that of the rhyme suggesting on a formal level the insidious encroachments of fear in the minds of the people. The final tercet is used as in the Valéry sonnet to draw attention to the main protagonist. Here he is much more clearly distinguished from the rest of the scene, the bizarre apocalyptic quality of the closing vision picking up the colourful violence of the opening quatrain and contrasting with and dominating the colourless quiescence of the two middle stanzas. In addition, while Valéry is content to replay in conclusion the static comparison between victory and grief, in Heredia the final tercet is the culmination of a process underlying the whole sonnet. The anxiety of the crowd reaching its climax in the appearance of the bogey of Hannibal on the horizon is created formally for the reader by the anticipation of the inevitable advent of Hannibal in the sonnet which becomes increasingly probable as the piece nears its conclusion. The Heredian sonnet is clearly less easy to imitate than might be supposed, and the emphasis on a regular form (which, as has been noted, Valéry in La Marche impériale disregards) and frequent choice of historical or mythological subject cover an appreciation of the more interesting possibilities of the genre which Valéry in La Marche impériale has yet to perceive.

In César, however, progress towards a more individual approach is evident.

César, calme César, le pied sur toute chose,
 Les poings durs dans la barbe, et l'oeil sombre peuplé
 D'aigles et des combats du couchant contemplé,
 Ton coeur s'enfle, et se sent toute-puissante Cause.

Le lac en vain palpite et lèche son lit rose;
 En vain d'or précieux brille le jeune blé;
 Tu durcis dans les noeuds de ton corps rassemblé
 L'ordre, qui doit enfin fendre ta bouche close.

L'ample monde, au delà de l'immense horizon,
 L'Empire attend l'éclair, le décret, le tison
 Qui changeront le soir en furieuse aurore.

Heureux là-bas sur l'onde, et bercé du hasard,
 Un pêcheur indolent qui flotte et chante, ignore
 Quelle foudre s'amasse au centre de César.

O I, 79-80

As with La Marche impériale, the initial choice of subject as indicated by the title, appears well within the Heredian sphere. In addition, one finds here the only example of a regular sonnet rhyme-scheme in the Album and perhaps among all of Valéry's sonnets of the late 1880's and the 1890's;¹ each stanza is end-stopped (as compared with the ambiguities of the tercet arrangement arising from the terminal couplet in La Marche impériale); and finally, the rounding off of the sonnet is pursued with a greater thoroughness with the repetition of "César" as closing as well as opening word (an arrangement recalling the structure of Heredia's Epiphanie).² But once again it is not a particular historical Caesar who interests the poet and there is no interrelation between specific event and general relevance such as gives Après Cannes its vigour. In this instance, however, the pedestrian use of the sonnet for the underlining of a well-worn opposition is replaced by the utilization of the most traditional form of the structure in support of an original perception. The figure of Caesar has a symbolic significance. He is an incarnation of that archetypal Valéryean subject, the passage from the disorder, formlessness, and multiple possibilities of potentiality

1. Assuming that César, with its rhyme-scheme as it stands in the Album, was indeed composed in this period.

2. V. supra p. 347.

to the order, form and limitation of decisive realization, a dichotomy finding a peculiarly appropriate formal reflection in the symmetrical and contrastive possibilities of the sonnet form.

The sonnet opens on the same note of conquest as La Marche impériale with the initial repetition of "César," reference to his universal dominion, "le pied sur toute chose," and his physical toughness "les poings durs." But his attitude as described in the opening lines, "César, calme César" (1.1) and "les poings durs dans sa barbe" (1.2) is a contemplative one, and the mastery exercised over the outside world is in this sonnet viewed more interestingly as a corollary of the more important mastery exercised by Caesar upon himself. Eagles and the "battle" of the sunset in line 3 recall Caesar's enormous power in the world, but what is interesting is the fact that they are contained within the frame of his eye, and are the reflection of the struggle between a multitude of conflicting possibilities with infinite repercussions for the world going forth in his mind:

Ton coeur s'enfle, et se sent toute-puissante Cause.

The latent energy of this line finds a parallel in the references to forces of Nature in lines 5 and 6. There is however an important difference. The energy of water and corn is unharnessed and spent "en vain" (repeated in lines 5 and 6) while Caesar controls and shapes the power within him, the climactic order of line 8 being preceded by three words "durcis," "noeuds" and "rassemblé" expressing concentration and formalization.

The sonnet structure provides important formal support for the motif of controlled energy. The possibility of using the quatrains

in conjunction as a single thematic unit enables the poet to follow a suggestive circular movement starting from the calm exterior of Caesar, moving to the energy which this masks, and then returning to his monumental silence, with the verb "durcis" picking up the symmetrically positioned "poings durs" of the opening quatrain. The same pattern of containment is in addition repeated by the enclosed arrangement of the rhyme-scheme in each quatrain and enhanced by the repetition of the same two rhymes. Syntax too plays its part as each of the quatrains is a self-sufficient entity. Within the stanzas, however, non-coincident patterns of syntax and metre are of paramount importance in suggesting the dynamism beneath the restrained appearance - the enjambement of line 2-3 and subsequent 3/9 rhythm of line 3 followed by the 4/8 rhythm of line 4 and then in the second quatrain the rejet of "ordre" into line 8, a device stressing its position as the end-term of a difficult process of concentration.

In the first tercet the focus shifts from the formidable state of tension within Caesar to that of the world that awaits his decision. The momentous significance of the event is emphasized by the double reference to size in line 9, building up to the mention of "L'Empire" at the beginning of line 10, while the images of lightning and firebrand on either side of the neutral "décret" recall the "combats du couchant" of line 3 and anticipate the compression and direction of that latent energy. The final tercet closes on the related image of thunder. This is seen as massing in the centre of Caesar, vocabulary of concentration bringing to mind that of line 7. It is associated in a final contrast with the fisherman, who, recalling the motifs of lines 5 and 6, typifies a state of dissipation of energy and consequent

lack of direction, "Sur l'onde ... bercé du hasard." The contrast in attitude seems perfectly summarized by the rhyme "hasard - César." Unbeknown to the fisherman, the "hasard" to which he is subject, is one willed by Caesar and a particular form of chance created out of an infinity of possibilities by the will and determination of a single individual.

The sonnet is obviously far from perfect. Most serious are the two radical changes of focus in the tercets - first to "l'ample monde" and then to the uninvolved figure of the fisherman - which disperse the attention of the reader and work against the notion of purposeful compression of energy which is at the centre of the sonnet. Nevertheless important progress has been made since La Marche impériale. The creation from chance of an arbitrary necessity, the emergence of pattern from disorder, the long process of attention, selection and compression preceding the decisive act of formulation are Valéry's own insights. His choice of the sonnet to express them depends by this stage less on the example of Heredia than on his own awareness of certain qualities in the form peculiarly appropriate to his own ends.

Similar observations could be made of Orphée and Naissance de Vénus. Again Valéry is concerned with the symbolic rather than the picturesque value of these mythical figures and uses them in association with the sonnet form to illustrate a process of formal emergence. Orphée, of course, was first published as part of the prose text of Paradoxe sur l'architecte in L'Ermitage, March 1891, and was only subsequently extracted by Louÿs and printed in La Conque of 1 May 1891 with the typography of a sonnet. In its original version at the end of the Paradoxe, it stands as the climax of the architect -

Il évoque, en un bois thessalien, Orphée
Sous les myrtes, et le soir antique descend.
Le bois sacré s'emplit lentement de lumière,
Et le dieu tient sa lyre entre ses doigts d'argent.

Le dieu chante, et selon le rythme tout-puissant,
S'élèvent au soleil les fabuleuses pierres
Et l'on voit grandir vers l'azur incandescent
Les hauts murs d'or harmonieux d'un sanctuaire.

Il chante, assis au bord du ciel splendide, Orphée!
Son oeuvre se revêt d'un vespéral trophée
Et sa lyre divine enchante les porphyres,

Car le temple érigé par ce musicien
Unit la sûreté des rythmes anciens
A l'âme immense du grand hymne sur la lyre!...

Version in La Conque, 1 May 1891

O I, 1540

... Je compose en esprit, sous les myrtes, Orphée
L'Admirable! ... Le feu, des cirques purs descend;
Il change le mont chauve en auguste trophée
D'où s'exhale d'un dieu l'acte retentissant.

Si le dieu chante, il rompt le site tout-puissant;
Le soleil voit l'horreur du mouvement des pierres;
Une plainte inouïe appelle éblouissants
Les hauts murs d'or harmonieux d'un sanctuaire.

Il chante, assis au bord du ciel splendide, Orphée!
Le roc marche, et trébuche; et chaque pierre fée
Se sent un poids nouveau qui vers l'azur délire!

D'un Temple à demi nu le soir baigne l'essor,
Et soi-même il s'assemble et s'ordonne dans l'or
A l'âme immense du grand hymne sur la lyre!

Definitive version of Album de Vers anciens (1926)

O I, 76-77

musician equivalence, its high degree of formalization synthesizing the principles of control and harmony governing both activities. Valéry later characterized the Orpheus myth in a letter to Debussy in 1900, as "l'animation de toute chose par un esprit, - la fable même de la mobilité et de l'arrangement"¹ and his sonnet with its variety of patterning possibilities is able simultaneously to suggest both these aspects. The degree of success with which it achieves this does vary however from the early version to that finally adopted in the Album.

The repetition of "Orphée" at the end of lines 1 and 9 divides the sonnet in both versions into its two main constituent groups. The second quatrain and the second tercet deal in both with the association between music and the construction of the temple. In the first version, the first quatrain and the first tercet also show a high degree of thematic similarity, "vespéral trophée" in line 10 recalling "le soir antique descend" in line 2, and "sa lyre divine" in line 11 "le dieu tient sa lyre" of line 4. Within this broad general pattern of repetition, further factors are at work. Each stanza stands as a distinct block - either endstopped (quatrains in both versions, tercets of second version) or at least with a clear syntactic division (tercets of first version). This independence is underlined in the first version by the repetition "le dieu tient" - "le dieu chante" (ll. 4 and 5) and "le dieu chante" - "il chante" (ll. 5 and 9). In addition the quatrains each show a division into two two-line sections. Rhyme also plays its part in the creation of an effect of tight construction, in particular through the recurrence of the initial rhyme at the beginning of the tercets and through the tercet rhyme arrangement of couplet and enclosed quatrain.

1. Valéry, Lettres à quelques-uns, p. 63.

In the early version, however, there are several points to notice. The opening "Il évoque" which reads on quite naturally in the text of the Paradoxe is rather more cryptic in isolation. The rhyme-scheme is imperfect in that line 3 "lumière" has no corresponding rhyme in line 1. But most important of all, there is little to suggest the dynamism which is the precondition for the miraculous construction effected by Orpheus, only the rejet of lines 1-2 and perhaps the alternate pattern of the quatrain rhymes. The Album version shows improvement in all these respects, and in particular as far as a clearer differentiation of the principles of "mobilité" and "arrangement" is concerned. The faulty rhyme is replaced and in addition the rhyme of lines 12 and 13 is changed, so that the last four lines of the piece all terminate on the same consonant r and on the long vowels this consonant induces. A stronger phonetic harmony results which reinforces the closing vision of the construction of the temple. The poem is made more complete in itself by the substitution of "Je compose" for "Il évoque" and the introduction of a more specific vocabulary of construction is picked up again at the end of the sonnet by "s'assemble et s'ordonne." At the same time, it is the act of construction which is emphasized. In the first version the temple was already "érigé"; in the second this is an ongoing process (l. 13) and the dynamic effect of the song is made more apparent by the association of "chante" and "rompt" in line 5 and the placing of "une plainte" as the subject of "appelle" in line 7. Moreover, the movement of the stones finds a formal equivalent in the more clearly delineated rejet of lines 1-2 and in the new rhythmic pattern of the first tercet, with its fragmented second line and the enjambement between lines 10-11.

Similarly, modifications between the early Celle qui sort de l'onde and the Album Naissance de Vénus seem designed to delineate more clearly the transition from formlessness to form.¹ Thematically the later version shows a far greater cohesiveness and organization. The "chair-mer" rhyme of the original version, for example, is made more significant by the introduction of "mère" in the opening line, and the continuing link between Venus and the sea indicated in the final stanza of both versions is supported in the later version by the substitution of the flowing movement of the hair for the streaming "larmes de soleil" in line 8 and of "a bu" (continuing the liquid reference) for "garde" in line 11. The differentiation of Venus from her matrix is also more clearly realized, the flower analogy ("fleur antique" 1.1, "fleuries" 1.6) being replaced by a vocabulary of struggle ("battu de tempêtes" 1.2, "amèrement vomie" 1.3, "se délivre" 1.4, "meurtrie" 1.6, "se fraye" 1.8). In addition, the second quatrain, instead of being largely a straight repetition of the first, makes

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1. Heredia has a sonnet on the same subject, La Naissance d'Aphrodité, apparently first published in Les Trophées in 1893:

Avant tout, le Chaos enveloppait les mondes
Où roulaient sans mesure et l'Espace et le Temps;
Puis Gaia, favorable à ses fils les Titans,
Leur prêta son grand sein aux mamelles fécondes.

Ils tombèrent. Le Styx les couvrit de ses ondes.
Et jamais, sous l'éther foudroyé, le Printemps
N'avait fait resplendir les soleils éclatants,
Ni l'Été généreux mûri les moissons blondes.

Farouches, ignorants des rires et des jeux,
Les Immortels siégeaient sur l'Olympe neigeux.
Mais le ciel fit pleuvoir la virile rosée;

L'Océan s'entr'ouvrit, et dans sa nudité
Radiieuse, émergeant de l'écume embrasée,
Dans le sang d'Ouranos fleurit Aphrodité.

Les Trophées (Paris, Lemerre, 1924), p. 19

See over p. 498 for Valéry's sonnets.

Celle qui sort de l'onde

La voici! fleur antique et d'écume fumante,
La nymphe magnifique et joyeuse, la chair
Que parfume l'esprit vagabond de la mer
Celle qu'une eau légère encore diamante!

Elle apparaît! dans le frisson de ses bras blancs
Les seins tremblent! mouillés à leurs pointes fleuries
D'océaniques et d'humides pierreries.
Des larmes de soleil ruissellent sur ses flancs.

Les graviers d'or, qu'arrose sa marche gracile,
Croule sous ses pieds fins, et la grève facile
Garde les frais baisers de ses pas enfantins.

Le doux golfe a laissé dans ses yeux fous et vagues
Où luit le souvenir des gouffres argentins
L'eau riante, et la danse infidèle des vagues.

1890 version, as published in the
Montpellier Bulletin de l'Association générale
des étudiants

O I, 1541-42

Naissance de Vénus

De sa profonde mère, encore froide et fumante,
Voici qu'au seuil battu de tempêtes, la chair
Amèrement vomie au soleil par la mer,
Se délivre des diamants de la tourmente.

Son sourire se forme, et suit sur ses bras blancs
Qu'éploie l'orient d'une épaule meurtrie,
De l'humide Thétis la pure pierrerie,
Et sa tresse se fraye un frisson sur ses flancs.

Le frais gravier, qu'arrose et fuit sa course agile,
Croule, creuse rumeur de soif, et le facile
Sable a bu les baisers de ses bords puérils;

Mais de mille regards ou perfides ou vagues,
Son oeil mobile mêle aux éclairs de périls
L'eau riante, et la danse infidèle des vagues.

Definitive version in the 2nd edition
of the Album de Vers anciens (1926)

O I, 77

explicit the central thematic motif of the piece with its opening "Son sourire se forme."¹

In both versions, stanza and rhyme arrangements remain to all intents and purposes the same. As in Orphée, each of the four sections of the sonnet is self-contained and as in Orphée the schematic effect of this arrangement is complemented and enhanced in a more striking way in the later version with a similar introduction in the first tercet of a fragmented rhythm (l.10) and enjambement(ll. 10-11), this time involving the splitting of the adjective from its noun. The rhyme pattern, enclosed in the quatrains but on four rhymes and in an arrangement of couplet and alternately rhymed quatrain in the tercets, shows a suitable combination of freedom and control. The enclosed rhymes are a formal reminder of the containment of Venus within her "profonde mère," the change of rhyme in the second quatrain and the alternation of rhyme in lines 10-14 of her emancipation from it. At the same time, however, it is interesting to note that the change from "enfantins - argentins" to "puérils - périls" reduces the number of sounds at the rhyme in the tercets to two, and that the final rhyme of the sonnet is in addition homonymic. In a sense therefore the theme of identification as opposed to differentiation remains as strong as ever.

In these sonnets as in the early letters, it is possible to see how the specifically Heredian model has been abandoned in favour of a more general interest in the question of form in itself. Heredia's use of the climactic possibilities of the genre and his manipulation

1. In the first edition of the Album de Vers anciens (1920), this line reads only: "Vois son sourire suivre au long de ses bras blancs."

of the regular sonnet to enhance by violent contrast a historical or legendary subject, selected for its colour and vigour, give way to a meditation on formal processes where the Ancient myths become parables and the sonnet the very model of the contrasting structures and tensions envisaged. The historical overlay and extreme technical rigidity of a Heredia have been removed, but Valéry's interest in the basic principles that had determined the "art for art" and Parnassian groups remains. In his emphasis on the paramountcy of formal considerations and of technique over inspiration, he continues to stand in the Parnassian - or perhaps more accurately, in the classical - succession.¹

Aside from the adaptation of Parnassian themes, Valéry also came to share the preoccupation of many younger poets of the day with Northern legend and fairy-tale, with the spiritual quest of heroes such as Hamlet or those seekers after the Graal brought to life by Wagner, and with the general atmosphere of moonlight, mist, echo and dream surrounding such endeavours and adventures:

... Je songe, en cette heure indécise et molle,
qu'il est bon que rien ne soit stable et vrai; des
fantômes me plaisent, et tout ce qui n'est pas
vision, mirage en un vieux miroir, reflet de lune
dans l'eau ne saurait m'attirer et me retenir ...

1. It is interesting to note that Valéry's programme introduction for the 14th exhibition of Les Artisans Français Contemporains in 1930, "De l'éminente dignité des Arts du Feu," O II, 1241-43, continues to find in the enamel, as Gautier and Heredia had done, an analogy for the poem.

... Je songe que la vie est une chose ridicule.
 En fait d'art, j'ai envie d'écrire des fantasmagories
 pour des fantoches! ou bien (conception depuis
 longtemps caressée) de très longs récits légendaires
 et fabuleux de crimes royaux en des Elseneurs qui
 seraient en vers naïfs et effrayants, et monotone-
 ment chantés devant un piano, à côté d'une fenêtre
 ouverte sur le crépuscule.¹

The generally Symbolist tone of the Album is particularly obvious as far as the sonnet is concerned in the two Féeries and in Au Bois dormant. Valéry seems in fact to have attached a surprising degree of importance to the Féerie sonnets since, working from the initial version, Blanc, published in L'Ermitage in 1890, he not only produced Féerie for the 1920 edition of the Album, but also an earlier reworking, Fée, published in Les Fêtes in 1914, and another variant published first as Féerie (variante) in Quelques vers anciens in 1926 and then in the second edition of the Album as Même Féerie.²

In all four versions, the rhyme-scheme remains unchanged; in the quatrains in fact the rhyme words remain the same, except for the very minor alteration of two plurals to two singulars in lines 6 and 7. In the tercets, only "cristal" at the end of line 11 is retained, though the same rhyme sound remains throughout for the last two rhymes. The first rhyme of the tercets, however, undergoes a complete change which has the happy result of eliminating the incongruous comparison of the waves to "blancs reptiles." This pattern of modification corresponding to the two main structural blocks of the sonnet is a most suggestive one. If we turn to the earliest version, Blanc, we find, as the title indicates, an 1890's version of the Symphonie en blanc majeur. Each line of the quatrains,

1. Valéry, Lettres à quelques-uns, p. 17.
 2. See over pp. 502-503 for these four versions.

Blanc

La lune mince verse une lueur sacrée
Comme une jupe d'un tissu d'argent léger
Sur les degrés d'ivoire où va l'Enfant songer,
Chair de perle que moule une gaze nacrée.

Sur les cygnes dolents qui frôlent les roseaux,
- Galères blanches et carènes lumineuses -
Elle effeuille des lys et des roses neigeuses
Et les pétales font des cercles sur les eaux.

Puis - pensive - la fille aux chimères subtiles
Voit se tordre les flots comme de blancs reptiles
A ses pieds fins chaussés d'hermine et de cristal;

La Mer confuse des fleurs pudiques l'encense
Car elle enchante de sa voix, frêle métal,
La Nuit lactée et douce et le pâle silence.

1890 version in L'Ermitage
OI, 1543-44

Fée

La lune mince verse une lueur sacrée
Toute une jupe d'un tissu d'argent léger
Sur les bases de marbre où va l'Ombre songer
Que suit d'un char de perle une gaze nacrée.

Pour les cygnes soyeux qui frôlent les roseaux
De carènes de plume à demi-lumineuse,
Elle effeuille infinie une rose neigeuse
Et les pétales font des cercles sur les eaux.

Mouvant l'Ombre l'iris de présences subtiles
Son frisson sur les flots coule de blancs reptiles
A ses pieds fins glacés d'hermine et de cristal;

La chair confuse de molles roses commence
A frémir, si d'un chant le diamant fatal
Fêle toute la nuit d'un fil de fée immense.

1914 version in Les Fêtes
OI, 1544

Féerie

La lune mince verse une lueur sacrée
 Toute une jupe d'un tissu d'argent léger,
 Sur les bases de marbre où vient l'Ombre songer
 Que suit d'un char de perle une gaze nacrée.

Pour les cygnes soyeux qui frôlent les roseaux
 De carènes de plume à demi-lumineuse,
 Elle effeuille infinie une rose neigeuse
 Dont les pétales font des cercles sur les eaux ...

Est-ce vivre? ... O désert de volupté pâmée
 Où meurt le battement faible de l'eau lamée,
 Usant le seuil secret des échos de cristal ...

La chair confuse des molles roses commence
 A frémir, si d'un cri le diamant fatal
 Fêle d'un fil de jour toute la fable immense.

Album de Vers anciens, 1920 and 1926
 OI, 77-78

Même Féerie

La lune mince verse une lueur sacrée,
 Comme une jupe d'un tissu d'argent léger,
 Sur les masses de marbre où marche et croit songer
 Quelque vierge de perle et de gaze nacrée.

Pour les cygnes soyeux qui frôlent les roseaux
 De carènes de plume à demi lumineuse,
 Sa main cueille et dispense une rose neigeuse
 Dont les pétales font des cercles sur les eaux.

Délicieux désert, solitude pâmée,
 Quand le remous de l'eau par la lune lamée
 Compte éternellement ses échos de cristal,

Quel coeur pourrait souffrir l'inexorable charme
 De la nuit éclatante au firmament fatal,
 Sans tirer de soi-même un cri pur comme une arme?

Quelques vers anciens (1926) and the
1926 edition of the Album de Vers anciens
 OI, 78

with the exception of line 8, carries a notation of whiteness - "lune," "argent," "ivoire," "perle," "nacré," "cygnes," "blanches," "lys," "neigeuses" - and this continues in the tercets with "blancs," "hermines," "pudiques," "lactée," and "pâle." The moonlight, "L'Enfant," the swans, the flowers and the water are all drawn together in a single impression of luminous whiteness. "Puis" at the beginning of line 9 does not indicate any change or break in the mood. Not only does the emphasis on whiteness continue, but "pensive" following immediately upon "puis" and "chimères subtiles" in the second hemistich of line 9, immediately recall "songer" in line 3. "Car" in line 13 might seem again to indicate the introduction of some kind of contrast but it is merely a device for the linking of impressions. The sound of the song enhances rather than breaks the spell, "frêle métal" merging with the silveriness of the moon and the shimmer of the crystal slippers.

The subsequent versions of the sonnet all show an attempt to utilize more fully at least one of the possibilities of the form by a clear differentiation between the function of quatrains and tercets. In the 1914 version, Fée, this is confined to the final stanza, though some modification is introduced in the first tercet to make for a sharper contrast. Thus "frisson" (l. 10) and "glacés" (l. 11) make the change of direction in "La chair confuse de molles roses commence/ A frémir" more apparent. The chief point of interest is, however, the way in which the song is now viewed. Despite the qualification "fil de fée," it now introduces a new element which changes the quality of the atmosphere ("fêlé toute la nuit"). The cool white shapes of

lines 1-11 are replaced by a rosy flesh endowed with a more positive life (note the important rejet of "commence / A frémir").

The two final versions of the sonnet extend this differentiation to the whole tercet block and use the last six lines for the introduction of a reflection on the scene. In Féerie an awareness that puts the questioner outside the magic circle is already present in the "Est-ce vivre?" of line 9 and the dissipation of the syntax and the vocabulary of the first tercet - "désert," "pâmée," "meurt," "battement faible," "usant" supports this sense of the weakening of the spell. In the final tercet, the assimilation of "le diamant fatal d'un cri" to the idea of daylight and the final description of the moonlit scene as a "fable immense" complete the process.

Même Féerie offers a different alternative - not the fading of the illusion in the light of day and of self-awareness, but the transformation of its magical quality into a sound as pure and beautiful as the night itself. The best lines of the four versions are to be found in the first tercet with the fluid but controlled syntax and the characteristic Valéryan use of alliteration and assonance paralleling phonetically the gently widening circles in the water. The continuity of the syntax over the whole of the tercets makes them a more cohesive unit than those of Féerie and their combined weight offers a suitable formal counterpoise to the two quatrains which is in keeping with the important new thematic element which they introduce.

From the impressionistic approach of Blanc which takes no particular account of the peculiar possibilities of the sonnet as opposed to any other short form and which concentrates on a homogeneous

experience, the variants introduced by Valéry work towards a differentiation between unreflective and reflective attitudes in the context of the quatrain-tercet framework. The vocabulary, especially in the almost unchanged quatrains, continues to date the sonnet and gives it a rather artificial and precious air. Nevertheless it is possible once again to see how an initial uncritical embracing of the sonnet form gives way to an exploitation of some at least of its symmetrical and contrastive potential in harmony with Valéry's mature view of the two opposing principles, self-abandonment and self-awareness, governing the field of creative thought.

A similar development can be observed with regard to the two versions of Au Bois dormant.¹ In the first, the structural opposition of quatrains to tercets is paralleled by a modulation from statement to exhortation, but there is no corresponding thematic development. Attention remains focused throughout on the absorption of the princess in sleep, the last two lines in particular renewing the references to the princess, her dreams, her slumber and the roses of the opening stanza and emphasizing the permanency of her condition - "l'éternel dormir." In the Album version, however, a new element is introduced into the tercets. The final tercet now becomes the only stanza in the sonnet where there is no reference to sound and so in a sense continues to suggest the "éternel dormir" made explicit in the first version. At the same time, however, the idea of a sensitivity hidden beneath the veil of slumber but responsive nevertheless to external stimuli assumes a central role. Great weight is given to the motif of touching. It occurs three times, the creeper touching the eyes, the rose the cheek, and finally the sunbeam the "délice de plis." Reciprocity is

1. See over, p. 507.

La Belle au bois dormant

La Princesse, dans un palais de roses pures
 Sous les murmures et les feuilles, toujours dort.
 Elle dit en rêvant des paroles obscures
 Et les oiseaux perdus mordent ses bagues d'or.

Elle n'écoute ni les gouttes dans leurs chutes
 Tinter, au fond des fleurs lointaines, lentement
 Ni s'enfuir la douceur pastorale des flûtes
 Dont la rumeur antique emplit le bois dormant.

... O belle! suis en paix ta nonchalante idylle
 Elle est si tendre l'ombre à ton sommeil tranquille
 Qui baigne de parfums tes yeux ensevelis:

Et, songe, bienheureuse, en tes paupières closes
 Princesse pâle dont les rêves sont jolis
 A l'éternel dormir sous les gestes des Roses!

Version in La Conque, Nov. 1891
 OI, 1547

Au Bois dormant

La princesse, dans un palais de rose pure,
 Sous les murmures, sous la mobile ombre dort,
 Et de corail ébauche une parole obscure
 Quand les oiseaux perdus mordent ses bagues d'or.

Elle n'écoute ni les gouttes, dans leurs chutes,
 Tinter d'un siècle vide au lointain le trésor,
 Ni, sur la forêt vague, un vent fondu de flûtes
 Déchirer la rumeur d'une phrase de cor.

Laisse, longue, l'écho rendormir la diane,
 O toujours plus égale à la molle liane
 Qui se balance et bat tes yeux ensevelis.

Si proche de ta joue et si lente la rose
 Ne va pas dissiper ce délice de plis
 Secrètement sensible au rayon qui s'y pose.

Album de Vers anciens (1920)
 OI, 79

only explicit in the final instance, "secrètement sensible," but the expression "délice de plis" which seems to be as effective a description of the rose as of the princess, the deliberate ambiguity in the first tercet arising from the positioning of "longue" and extending over "O toujours plus égale à la molle liane," and the syntactic and rhythmic balance of line 11 and line 12 suggest a similar interaction throughout the whole of the tercets between the princess and the world surrounding her. It is perhaps possible to see something of the same idea in the modification of line 3, where the murmuring of the princess is no longer described in the specific context of the dream but instead, through the precious notation "corail" for her lips, is linked with the "palais de rose pure" of the opening, a connexion further emphasized by the symmetrical positioning of "corail" and "parole obscure" in the third line. On a more general level, the theme of interrelationship between inner and outer worlds is supported by patterns of phonetic repetition of a density much greater than that of the early version. The original four rhymes of the quatrains are reduced to three, giving additional stress to the "dort - d'or" connexion with "trésor," but also, combining with the assonance that links the first and third rhymes, creating a more sustained impression of echo. Within the body of the quatrains, lines 2 and 6-8 show a playing-up of phonetic possibilities not present in the original version, and this process reaches its climax in the tercets where the interplay of long vowels, strengthened by the l alliteration (concentrated in ll. 9-11) with short vowels linked with p, d and s alliterations (concentrated in lines 12-14) provides a phonetic contrast which underlines the thematic interweaving of slumberousness and delicate activity.

The attempt at a dream-like, fairy-tale atmosphere in these sonnets and the interest expressed by Valéry in some of his early letters in a type of literature consisting in "des choses vaporeuses, fines et légères comme des fumées violettes et qui font songer à tout, et qui ne disent rien précisément et qui ont des ailes" (v. supra p. 481), are essentially the result of a contemporary fashion. Such vague impressionism appears quite alien to the concern with vigorous shape and pattern already evident in the choice of the sonnet, which emerges increasingly over the years in both Valéry's thought and poetry and which was seen by him in later life as one of the fundamental aspects of his Mediterranean inheritance.¹ It is interesting to note, for example, how the motif of the sleeping woman evolves; first the fairy-tale overtones of the original title, La Belle au bois dormant, then the more neutral Au Bois dormant which perhaps indicates a greater concentration on the phenomenon of sleep in itself, and finally the unique concern in La Dormeuse, v. infra p.546 with the paradoxes of physical and mental presence and absence, order and dispersion, summarized in the form of the sleeper and in the very structure of the sonnet. The involvement with Symbolist ideas seems however to have been significant for the Valéryan sonnet in at least two ways. Firstly as far as actual structure is concerned, the attitude of the Symbolists and poets annexed by them such as Verlaine, is clearly much more relaxed than that of a writer such as Heredia, and while Valéry in the main does not experiment in any radical manner with the

1. See Inspirations méditerranéennes, a lecture given by Valéry in 1933 to l'Université des Annales. O I, 1084-98.

sonnet form, for instance by the addition of an extra line or by incorporating it in a larger poetic canvas,¹ he nevertheless remains untroubled by the niceties of strict regularity, at least as defined in terms of rhyme-scheme.² Secondly, there is the question of the musical values in poetry. This is the aspect stressed by Valéry in his Avant-Propos to Lucien Fabre's Connaissance de la Déesse in 1920:

Ce qui fut baptisé: le Symbolisme, se résume très simplement dans l'intention commune à plusieurs familles de poètes (d'ailleurs ennemies entre elles) de "reprendre à la Musique leur bien." Le secret de ce mouvement n'est pas autre. O I, 1272 .

Innovations in metre and in the pattern of masculine - feminine alternation at the rhyme are two of the ways in which tone and tempo may be varied to give support to the theme. The latter technique is used in three of the six sonnets of Charmes - L'Abeille, Le Sylphe, Le Vin perdu, v. infra pp.546, 560, 570. In the Album, however, the

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1. Valéry's friend, Pierre Louÿs, for example, is cavalier in his treatment of rhyme in many of his sonnets. He also goes so far as to experiment with a fifteen line "sonnet" in his collection Astarté (1891). Henri de Régnier incorporates sonnets as parts of longer poems in Poèmes anciens et romanesques (1890) and in his earliest collections, Les Lendemain (1885) and Apaisement (1886), handles the sonnet rhyme-scheme with some flexibility. Of course use of the sonnet as part of a larger whole had also been extensively practised by the Parnassian Sully Prudhomme in La Justice (1878) and Régnier does revert increasingly to a more regular sonnet and a more Parnassian stance as his career progresses. He and Louÿs, incidentally, married the two daughters of Heredia.
 2. Of the work receiving definitive publication in the Album de Vers anciens and Charmes, only two sonnets César and La Dormeuse are regular. There is little evidence of regularity in Valéry's other sonnets either. That Valéry even at the very start of his poetic career was well aware of the criterion of regularity is however shown in his letter to Louÿs attempting to vindicate the appearance of his two sonnets in the competition run by La Plume (1891): "Deschamps [the editor] a inséré malignement ces vers, car ce ne sont pas des sonnets réguliers ..." Quoted in Mondor, Précocité de Valéry, p. 158.

only example is the terza rima, La Fileuse, where the persistence throughout of feminine rhymes produces an effect of gentle monotony.¹ Rhyme however is only one component in the phonetic structure of a piece of poetry; and there is more to La Fileuse than its purely feminine rhyme-scheme:

Le vers m'apparaît comme un système continu d'allitérations et d'assonances (cf. La Fileuse, qui est de mes débuts). Pas de vers pour moi sans cette substance de similitudes suivies, voyelles ou consonnes.²

This conscious extension over the whole line of the principle of phonetic repetition seems of particular interest where fixed forms are concerned. In the terza rima and to an even greater extent in the more static form of the sonnet, the richness and diversity of phonetic patterns can be of major importance in counteracting the impression of starkness that may be occasioned by the set structure and the stylization this imposes. Such seems to be the case in the revised first tercets of Féerie, Même Féerie and Au Bois dormant. The technique reaches its height subsequently in the rich harmonies of La Dormeuse. The combination of set form and musical counterpoint seems a particular example of that "équilibre admirable et fort délicat entre la force sensuelle et la force intellectuelle du

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1. Such experimentation is frowned upon in Calepin d'un poète (1928): "Où serait la spécialité de l'artiste, s'il ne considérait certains détails comme inviolables? Ainsi l'alternance des rimes masculines et féminines. Pas d'emportement qui ne doive la respecter. Cela est irritant, cela est chinois, mais sans cela tout se défait, et le poète corrompt l'artiste, et l'arbitraire de l'instant l'emporte sur l'arbitraire d'ordre supérieur à l'instant." (O I, 1454) But in practice, as with the sonnet, the rule is interpreted according to the spirit rather than the letter.
 2. Valéry quoted by Aimé Lafont, "Rencontres avec Paul Valéry," Le Figaro littéraire, 19 July 1952. Quoted by Charles Whiting, Valéry jeune poète (New Haven, Yale U.P.:Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1960), p. 24.

langage" which Valéry saw as the key to poetry.¹

As far as choice of metre is concerned, it is interesting to note that whereas only one sonnet of Charmes, La Dormeuse, is in alexandrines, there is very little experimentation with different metres in the early sonnets. There are however two examples in the Album, the heptasyllabic Vue in the style of Mallarmé and Le Bois amical. This sonnet with its nine-syllable line is the one sonnet in the collection where the influence of Verlaine seems apparent. Once again though, Valéry adopts a technique not a total conception. The divergence between Verlaine's preoccupations and those of subsequent writers, who adopted only his technical innovations, is well exemplified in the treatment given here to what is basically the Narcissus theme.² It is the individual, personal aspect though, not the symbolic which is uppermost here (despite Valéry's roughly contemporaneous "Je n'aime pas Musset"). The sonnet is dedicated to Gide in its first published version in La Conque in 1892,³ and is characterized by a deliberate attempt towards that typically Verlainian quality of "naïveté."

1. O II, 1257.

2. See in particular Narcisse parle:

Je t'adore, sous ces myrtes, ô l'incertaine
 Chair pour la solitude éclose tristement
 Qui se mire dans le miroir au bois dormant.
 Je me délie en vain de ta présence douce,
 L'heure menteuse est molle aux membres sur la mousse
 Et d'un sombre délice enfle le vent profond.

(O I, 83)

3. The use of the sonnet for a poem of dedication is of course traditional but it is interesting that Verlaine had made a particular use of it to this end in the latter part of his life. See his Dédicaces collected in 1890 and 1894.

Nous avons pensé des choses pures,
 Côte à côte le long des chemins.
 Nous nous sommes tenus par les mains,
 Sans dire! - parmi les fleurs obscures ...

Nous marchions comme des fiancés
 Seuls, dans la nuit verte des prairies
 Nous partageons ce fruit des féeries
 La Lune! amicale aux insensés ...

Et puis! nous sommes morts sur la mousse
 Très loin, Tout seuls! parmi l'ombre douce
 De ce bois intime et murmurant ...

Et là-haut! dans la Lumière immense
 Nous nous sommes retrouvés en pleurant,
 O mon bon Compagnon de Silence!...

1892 version in La Conque

The nine-syllable line which entails a constant modification of rhythmic patterns, the open-ended quality of each of the four sections of the sonnet (as indicated by the ... punctuation)¹ and the scheme of four rhymes in the quatrains (though this is of course by no means unusual in Valéry's sonnets) all work here towards an effect of "spontaneity." The syntax too displays a certain simplicity with the use throughout of main clauses only, all with the same subject "nous" and the regular return of the exclamation mark (at least one per stanza). Some variation between the different parts of the sonnet structure does however occur; the double main clause of each quatrain which produced "nous" as the opening word in lines 1, 3, 5, 7 gives way in the shorter tercets to a single clause in each. These do not, as in the quatrains, occupy parallel positions and so do not create such a strong refrain effect. In addition the second quatrain is distinguished from the other sections of the sonnet by the tense change from passé composé to imperfect. Other possibilities of the

1. The lavish punctuation, in particular the wealth of exclamation marks, dots and capitals, is substantially reduced in the definitive version, v. 0 I, 80.

sonnet structure are picked up in the arrangement of thematic motifs. The theme of companionship is stressed throughout by the first person plural verbs and the use of the reflexive, as well as by expressions such as "côte à côte," "nous nous sommes tenus par les mains," "comme des fiancés," "partagions" and of course "Compagnon" in the final line. Reference to the isolation from other preoccupations is, however, confined to the two inner stanzas with "seuls" and "tout seuls" in line 6 and 10. The silent communion experienced is indicated, on the other hand, by "sans dire" in the opening stanza and the closing "silence," while yet another pattern is followed in the interplay of light and shade, moving from darkness, "fleurs obscures" in the first quatrain, to "la nuit verte des prairies" and then to moonlight in the second, a progression repeated in the tercets with "l'ombre douce" of line 10 and "lumière immense" of line 12. These different patterning possibilities are not however worked together into any overall arrangement. The description of this sonnet in the letter to Louÿs of 21 December 1890 as "bien vague de facture" and "une quelconque suggestion de l'amitié" indicates perhaps a deliberate ignoring (in so far as this is possible) of the peculiar contrastive and symmetrical potential of the form, with the aim in mind of enhancing through this negative approach the more freely structured thematic motifs. But such a technique is both unsatisfactory and self-defeating. Even the somewhat tenuous sense of a superimposed organization that remains prompts criticism from Gide:

J'aime vos vers non comme des meilleurs, comme des plus "pour moi." Je rêverais une pièce - courte - mais vraiment "de silence," qui ne semblerait qu'une portée musicale où l'initié lecteur grouperait les notes sensibles au gré de ses intimes émois - comme plutôt une lyre inutile, muette et toute inanimée, où le souffle circulerait, au cours de la lecture haute, excitant dans le rapport des cordes les harmonies absconces à s'échapper mélodieuses. Il faut faire cela. Votre pièce en approche mais j'y sens encore trop les phrases.¹

The genius of the form cannot be totally obliterated. Surely then it is better to work with it rather than against it, or else to evolve a formal structure which corresponds directly to a particular thematic preoccupation. Verlaine had realized this and his most developed and successful attempts at pieces of pure suggestion are not amongst his sonnets where the characteristic structural features of the form inevitably impose their own principles of contrast and symmetry, but in Romances sans Paroles. When he uses the sonnet, an entirely different effect is achieved. The symmetries and constraints of the form are made more obvious in order to enhance the impression of spontaneity created by simple syntax or rhythmic liberties. The interplay between these two main groups of patterning factors accurately reflects the fragile equilibrium between order and security on the one hand, dream and drift on the other, which is at the heart of his emotional and spiritual experience. In Le Bois amical, Valéry has taken over three of the most obvious of Verlaine's stylistic devices - the impair line, the uncomplicated syntax and the sonnet form - but he has failed to appreciate and exploit the contradictory principles involved. The sonnet form is adapted to the rendering of a mood by

1. André Gide - Paul Valéry Correspondance (Paris, Gallimard, 1955) p. 53. Letter of Feb. 1891.

a weakening of its different patterns, which is carried to a point where one wonders why the sonnet form was necessary at all. Technical devices have copied but the inner necessity fusing them into significant union is absent.¹

Verlaine's work "ne vise pas à définir un autre monde plus pur et plus incorruptible que le nôtre et complet en lui-même mais elle admet dans la poésie toute la variété de l'âme telle quelle."²

Valéry contrasts this with the approach of Mallarmé:

Stéphane Mallarmé, génie essentiellement formel, s'élevant, peu à peu, à la conception abstraite de toutes les combinaisons de figures et de tours, s'est fait le premier écrivain qui ait osé envisager le problème littéraire dans son entière universalité. Je dirai seulement qu'il a conçu comme algèbre ce que tous les autres n'ont pensé que dans la particularité de l'arithmétique ...³

This concern with the principles of literary form in themselves rather than as incidentals in the rendering of individual conceptions or emotions is clearly in much closer harmony with Valéry's own preoccupations. The difference lies here in the fact that Valéry sees even "le problème littéraire dans son entière universalité" as only one case of the universal problem of formalization, whereas for Mallarmé literary values are absolute. The effect of the poetry of

1. It should be noted that Valéry produced even weaker efforts on the same theme, e.g. the two decasyllabic sonnets Ensemble and Tu sais?..., addressed to Pierre Louÿs and Gustave Fourment respectively (O I, 1585 and 1590-91). The sonnets, Ultime pensée du pauvre poète, dedicated to Verlaine (O I, 1591-92) and Sur le minuit futur (O I, 1594), described in a letter to Gide of Feb. 1891 as "quelques vers qui ne sont pas faits et ne le seront jamais ... un jeu de vagues paroles, plus un parfum, pas encore une musique, moins que rien," are similarly inept.

2. Passage de Verlaine. O I, 713-714.

3. Ibid., p. 713.

Mallarmé on the young Valéry is thus an essentially ambivalent one. Initial admiration and emulation are soon mingled with the feeling that investigation has already been pushed to a limit beyond which no new insights are possible, and that the only value left to new poetic productions therefore is that of the technical exercise. Valéry's close copying of some aspects of Mallarméan technique naturally reinforces this view. His use of the quatorzain is a case in point, but an examination of the three examples (Baignée, Vue and Valvins) included in the Album, indicates within the same framework of formal specifications as the Mallarméan quatorzain a growing divergence of effect which gives the lie to the idea that variations on a technique cannot be at least as productive and interesting as theoretical reflections on the nature of Technique in general.

Only Vue is printed in the Album with the typography of a quatorzain, but it is worth noting that Valvins was originally laid out in this way also.¹ Of the three, Vue conforms most closely to the Mallarméan model, not merely by virtue of its heptasyllabic metre but more basically by the sinuous play of syntactic and thematic structures within the framework of a freer sonnet form.²

Si la plage penche, si
 L'ombre sur l'oeil s'use et pleure
 Si l'azur est larme, ainsi
 Au sel des dents pure affleure

La Vierge fumée ou l'air
 Que berce en soi puis expire,
 Vers l'eau debout d'une mer
 Assoupie en son empire,

1. In the album presented to Mallarmé in 1897 organized by Albert Mockel and containing pieces by 23 poets.

2. Note in particular the play on "si." Claudel, in his Notes sur Mallarmé, records: "Mallarmé croyait à la valeur première et incantatoire du langage et sa pensée épousait naturellement les formes syntactiques. Je lui ai entendu parler d'un poème qui se serait appelé simplement Si tu, et qu'il est en effet très possible de concevoir." Paul Claudel, Oeuvres complètes, vol.18 (Paris, Gallimard, 1961), p. 126. "Si tu" are the opening words of Valéry's sonnet Valvins, v. infra, p. 524.

Celle qui sans les ouïr
 (Si la lèvre au vent remue)
 Se joue à évanouir
 Mille mots vains où se mue

Sous l'humide éclair de dents
 Le très doux feu du dedans.

Original version in Le Centaure,
 v.1, 1896¹

The sonnet is composed of a single sentence with the main clause, "ainsi / Au sel des dents pure affleure / la vierge fumée ou l'air..." (ll. 3-5) supporting a plethora of associated conditional and relative clauses. A strong sense of movement is created by the distribution of these various syntactic groups across the main structural divisions of the sonnet. In the main clause, the verb occurs at the end of the first quatrain, its subject in the first line of the second; similarly the verb of the subordinate clause that follows occurs in line 6 ("berce"), while its subject "Celle" appears in the first line of the third quatrain, and the final division of quatrain and couplet is syntactically contradicted by the position of the verb at the end of line 12 and of its subject in the final line of the sonnet. In the definitive version of the Album, moreover, punctuation indicating the stages of syntactical development (and thus perhaps hindering the passage of the eye and mind in one continuous movement over the poem) has been removed.² The one exception is the first quatrain where the original punctuation stands, serving to draw attention to the precious but charming game around

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1. The Album version, O I, 84, differs in the absence of commas at the end of lines 6 and 8, lack of brackets around line 10 and a small v for vierge (l.6).
 2. Cf. Mallarmé, La Chevelure vol d'une flamme, supra pp. 455-462, Petit Air I etc.

the "si" conjunction, the symmetry of its appearance at the beginning and end of lines 1 and 3 enlivened by the final pun which also underlines the relationship between inner and outer worlds. This mobile interplay of syntactic and structural patterns together with the advancing pattern of the alternating rhymes through the three quatrains is central to the constant fluctuation of impressions which the piece seeks to evoke, beginning with the almost hallucinatory "Si la plage penche" and proceeding on the basis of an oscillation between phenomena of the external world and their equivalents in the girl at the centre of the scene.¹ As in Mallarmé's quatorzains, the terminal couplet provides a kind of pirouette, stabilizing at last the freely advancing rhyme-scheme of the three quatrains and the continuous syntax and combining motifs of wetness, light, warmth and human presence in a final synthesis. Though the general technique may thus appear very derivative, this particular example of Valéry's use of the quatorzain in association with a short metre distinguishes itself from his other attempts by an avoidance of the recondite features of Mallarméan syntax and vocabulary. Apart from subject-verb inversions which can hardly be considered unusual, "pure" in line 4 is the only example of a slightly unexpected syntactic positioning, but even here its grammatical and logical function remain clear. In addition, the vocabulary of the piece is remarkably concrete. With the exception of the title there are no verbal or abstract references, but instead direct notation of the basic

1. "... si / L'ombre sur l'oeil s'use et pleure," "Si l'azur est larme," "au sel des dents," "vers l'eau debout d'une mer"; "la Vierge fumée ou l'air / que berce en soi puis expire ... Celle qui sans les ouïr / (Si la lèvre au vent remue) / Se joue à évanouir / Mille mots vains"; "éclair de dents," "feu du dedans."

elements of earth, sky, sea and sun, a multitude of finite verbs, and a notable lack of erudite adjectives which might tend to reduce the sense of palpable physical immediacy.¹ In this respect there is a distinct contrast with Mallarmé's evocation of a bathe in the sonnet Petit Air I, despite the exultancy of Mallarmé's final complet ("Dans l'onde toi devenue / Ta jubilation nue") and the suggestive alliteration of line 9 ("Mais langoureusement longue").²

Expansion of this specifically Valéryan awareness of the sensuous richness of the physical universe is however inhibited in Vue by the choice of the heptasyllable and the Mallarméan interpretation of the quatorzain's structural framework. Baignée and Valvins, on the other hand, benefit from the use of the alexandrine which allows a clearer view of Valéry's thematic originality and of the

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1. The sonnet follows Eté in the Centaure. This proximity, to some extent muted in the Album by the placing of Valvins, would clearly tend to underline the sensual tone of Vue. Another quatorzain on the same theme, still bound up in Mallarméan vocabulary and syntax and belonging to the type later classified by Valéry in 1912 as "du Mallarmé très inférieur" (to Albert Thibaudet, Lettres à quelques-uns, p. 97) provides a good illustration of the originality of Vue.

T'évanouir

T'évanouir - aile ou voileure
 Par la brume bue au nadir
 Et plus s'enfume la brûlure
 Qu'est la mer pour y refroidir

Un vertige igné dont palpite
 La ronde odeur d'onde et de pur
 Vent de spire où se précipite
 Ton vol de cheveux au sel sur. (sic)

Pense au plus délicieux gouffre;
 Crise du soir même - tu fus
 Abondamment celle qui souffre
 Aux grises roses de l'Infus

Sourire - comme au vague on glisse
 Où meurt la lèvre humide hélice.

O I, 1696

2. Mallarmé, Oeuvres complètes (Paris, Gallimard, 1965) in the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, pp. 65-66.

possibilities offered by the sonnet quatorzain to express it. They concentrate less on the dynamic movement of impressions, than on the impressions themselves. The central motif of both is that of a mirroring in water - the girl's body in Baignée, the trees, sun, boat and sail in Valvins, and the symmetry of these reflections is rendered formally in the balance achieved between the different sections of the traditional quatrain-tercet structure. At the same time, their indefinite fluid quality is subtly indicated by the more mobile rhyme-scheme and the interplay of this with the established structural pattern.

In Baignée, the theme of reflection is played out within each of the quatrains, in the overall quatrain structure and in the relationship between the tercets.

. Un fruit de chair se baigne en quelque jeune vasque
 (Azur dans les jardins tremblants) mais hors de l'eau
 Isolant la torsade où je figure un casque
 La tête d'or scintille aux calmes du tombeau.

Eclose sa beauté par la rose et l'épingle
 Du miroir même issue où tremblent ses bijoux
 Pendeloques et lys dont le bouquet dur cingle
 L'oreille-bouche offerte aux mots nus du flot doux.

Un bras vague, inondé dans le néant limpide
 Pour une ombre de fleur à cueillir doucement
 S'effile, ondule, oublie en le délice vide,

Si l'autre courbé pur sous le beau firmament
 Parmi la chevelure immense qu'il humecte
 Capture dans l'or simple un vol ivre d'insecte.

Version in La Syrinx, August 1892
 O I, 1545¹

1. The extent of Valéry's progress in conception and execution is immediately obvious from a comparison with Luxurieuse au bain, included in a letter to Louÿs of 26 Sept. 1890.

(cont. over ...)

The first quatrain develops the contrast between the vaguely glimpsed "fruit de chair" in the trembling reflections of the water (ll. 1 and 2) and the head appearing above the surface (ll. 3 and 4), where the helmet image, reminiscent of Mallarmé, suggests a precision of outline absent in the opening lines. The second quatrain follows a similar pattern. The trembling reflections of the jewels in the

(cont....) L'eau se trouble - amoureuxment - de Roses vagues
 Riantes parmi la mousse et le marbre pur,
 Car une chair, illuminant l'humide azur
 Vient d'y plonger, avec des ronds d'heureuses vagues!...

... O baigneuse! ... de ton rire c'est le secret!...
 Aux caresses de l'eau, tes murs désirs s'apaisent
 Tu chéris la clarté fraîche et ces fleurs qui baisent
 Tes seins de perle, tes bras clairs, ton corps nacré.

Et tu te pâmes dans les lueurs! Dédaigneuse
 Des amantes et des jeunes gens! O baigneuse!
 Toi, qui, dans la piscine, attends l'heure où soudain

Les buchers s'allument, rouges sur le ciel vide
 Ta nudité s'enflamme et tu nages splendide
 Dans la riche lumière impudique du bain!... (O I, 1589)

Another text, a prose piece, Le Bain, published in La Revue du Médecin, 7 Apr. 1930, indicates the aptness of the bathing motif with its integration of form and formlessness for the distinction that Valéry came to make between the worlds of being and consciousness: "Dans le pur et brillant sarcophage, douce est l'eau qui repose, tiède et parfaite épouse de la forme du corps. ... Le corps vivant se distingue à peine du corps informe dont la substance le remplace à chaque mouvement. Une personne se mélange à la plénitude indéfinie qui l'environne; quelqu'un se sent dissoudre doucement. Tout le corps à présent n'est plus qu'un songe agréable que fait vaguement la pensée. Le doux mouvement se mire et se voit des membres qu'il domine; et la tête pensante s'amuse de quelque pied qui vient paraître loin d'elle, qui obéit comme par magie. Elle observe un orteil surgi se fléchir, un genou émerger et redescendre dans la transparence comme une île océanique qu'exonde et que replonge un caprice du fond de la mer. La volonté elle-même et la liberté générale de l'être se composent dans l'aise de l'onde. Il y a peut-être dans l'air fade et vapoureux un parfum dont la fleur complexe interroge les souvenirs, caresse ou colore les désirs indistincts de l'être nu. Les yeux se perdent ou se ferment. La durée sans contacts s'affaiblit. L'esprit s'ouvre les veines dans un rêve." Quoted in Paul Valéry vivant (Cahiers du Sud, 1946), pp. 281-282.

water (1.6), supported formally by the imprecision of the elliptical syntax of line 5, contrast with the notation "bouquet dur" of line 7 even while the two pairs "la rose et l'épingle" (1.5) and "pendeloques et lys" (1.7) suggest the sense of parallel between the two halves of the quatrain. Besides this use of each quatrain separately to express the theme of reflection, an analogous effect is reached over the quatrains as a whole, with the mirroring of the sensual possibilities of "fruit de chair" (1.1) in the image of the ear as a "bouche offerte aux mots nus du flot doux" in line 8.¹

The tercets offer a further variant on the theme of reflection, their binary structure allowing for simultaneous thematic differentiation and syntactic parallel, one arm in (first tercet) and one arm out (second tercet) of the water. "Courbé pur" contrasts with "vague," "sous le beau firmament" with "inondé dans le néant limpide" while the indecisive, vaguely glimpsed movement below the water, stressed by the fragmented rhythm of line 11, gives way in the second tercet to the precision of "capture." The hair, no longer seen as a "casque," replaces the water as the medium in which the gesture occurs, and the "vol ivre d'insecte" the "ombre de fleur" of line 10.

Unlike Vue, each of the four sections of Baignée operates as an independent syntactic unit and in keeping with the theme of the piece, it is the symmetrical possibilities of the structure which are the most fully explored. The quatorzain rhyme arrangement does, however, prevent too great a sense of schematization, and in the

1. From 1900 when the sonnet was republished in A. van Bever and Paul Léautaud's Poètes d'aujourd'hui (Paris, Mercure de France), this line reads: "L'oreille abandonnée aux mots nus du flot doux."

contrast it provides with other patterns in lines 1-12 creates an unobtrusive formal parallel for the fluid outlines of the different reflections described in the poem. The terminal couplet, bringing to a close the progression of three sets of alternate rhymes and stabilizing the movement forward, provides a suitable formal equivalent to the crystallization of gesture in the closing line.¹

The same principle of controlled fluidity characterizes Valvins. Again the sonnet is used to suggest on a formal level the combination of symmetry and instability inherent in the motif of reflection.

Si tu veux dénouer la forêt qui t'aère
Heureuse tu te fonds aux feuilles si tu es
Dans la fluide yole à jamais littéraire
Traînant plusieurs soleils ardemment situés

Aux blancheurs de son flanc que la Seine caresse
Emue ou pressentant l'après-midi chanté
Tandis que le grand bois trempe une longue tresse
Et mélange ta voile au meilleur de l'été

Mais toujours près de toi que le silence livre
Aux cris multipliés de tout le brut azur
L'ombre de quelque page éparse d'aucun livre
Tremble comme ta voile et vagabonde sur

(sic) Sur la poudreuse chair immense de l'eau verte
Parmi le long regard de la Seine entr'ouverte
1897 version²

In its use of the quatorzain, the piece seems to occupy a median point between Vue and Baignée. As in Baignée, and despite the typography, the 8:6 structure of the traditional sonnet is clear, but at the same time a freer combination of syntactical and structural

1. This couplet closely resembles lines 13 and 14 of a contemporaneous sonnet, Ballet:

Petit feu naturel d'un sidéral insecte
Né sur le souffle d'or dont le songe s'humecte.

Ballet was included in the note-book, P.-A. Valéry, Ses vers, given to Gide in 1892 and is a clear ancestor of L'Abeille in Charmes. V. infra p. 551.

2. This sonnet was Valéry's contribution to the album of poems organized by Albert Mockel and presented to Mallarmé in 1897.

patterns recalls the dynamic quality of Vue.¹ Valvins falls into two syntactic groups which correspond to the quatrain - tercet division. As in Vue, the quatrains are introduced and predicated on the conjunction "si," but in this instance, the element of preciousness while not entirely absent in the balance of the opening lines, introduced and terminated by "si" plus subject and verb, is considerably muted, and seems used principally to create through the enjambement at the end of line 2 a movement corresponding to the notation "fluide yole" in the following line. Further balance is created by the repetition of the opening conditionals ("Si" in lines 1 and 2) in the structurally symmetrical "tandis que" in lines 7 and 8² and the pairing of the two present participles "trainant" (1.4), "ou pressentant" (1.6). But the equilibrium is a muted one. "Tandis que" unlike the opening "Si" is not repeated and in any case, the second group of subordinate clauses is dependent on the first. The main clause governing both stanzas is a short six syllables, tucked between the two "si" clauses in line 2, so that it is the second "si" clause with all its dependent constructions that forms the dominant syntactic unit in the quatrains running from line 2 to line 8. The poet contrives to combine minor symmetries of syntax with a basic imbalance arising from the asymmetrical positioning and very restricted dimensions of the main clause and thus to superimpose on the structural equivalences of the quatrains another more

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1. The definitive version of the sonnet is printed as two quatrains and two tercets.
 2. This symmetry is reinforced in the definitive version with the substitution of the syntactically similar conditional "selon que."

flexible pattern. This sense of dissolving stability is enhanced by the overrun of syntax between the two quatrains, a freedom foreshadowed and echoed in the structurally parallel rejets of lines 2 and 6 and the enjambement of lines 2-3, and by the mobility of the alternate rhyme-scheme and the use of four rhymes instead of two, in accordance with the overall quatorzain pattern.

The combination of balance and fluidity which the sonnet form supports, on the one hand by the principles of symmetry suggested by its shape, on the other by the possibilities for counterpoint and contrast which these very symmetries provoke, provides the backbone for a series of shifting impressions. Description in the quatrains moves in a circle from forest to water, sun, and boat and back again to forest, but underlying these shifts of focus, is the sense of the fluid quality of the scene, the merging of woods, water, sun, boat and sail, literary preoccupations into the one amalgam of a perfect summer's day.

The motif of reflection finds a more schematic realization in the binary structure of the tercets.¹ The Mallarméan vision of lines 9-11 is transmuted in the final stanza where the sail is seen, as often in Mallarmé, as the equivalent of the page, but is then presented in that physical integration with its surroundings which is the main theme of the quatrains. The couplet rhyme offers a final example of the principle of reflection. However the general fragility of the equilibrium continues to be maintained, in particular by the displacement of the verb to the beginning of line 12, which impairs

1. This is reinforced in the Album version "Tremble, reflet de voile ..."

the balance of the tercets, and by the very fact of so doing stresses its existence, and by the enjambement of lines 12-13 which echoes that of lines 2-3 and the rejets of lines 2 and 6. The quatorzain rhyme pattern is also helpful in perpetuating the mobile quality achieved in the quatrains, both by the even progression of the rhymes through a third quatrain and by the interaction between the pattern quatrain plus terminal couplet and the syntactic and thematic cohesiveness of the final tercet.

Characteristic of Valéry in all three sonnets is the direct emphasis on the physical element, particularly apparent in the more extended forms of Baignée and Valvins. The contrast with Mallarmé is especially clear in the tercets of Valvins. The first uses the Mallarméan vocabulary of "silence," "brut azur," "quelque page éparse d'aucun livre." In the second, the description of "la Seine entr'ouverte" picks up the reference to the open book, but it is the sensual meaning which is the most highly stressed, recalling along with "chair" (l. 13) the imagery of the quatrains, "dénouer la forêt," "tu te fonds aux feuilles," "ardemment," "flanc," "caresse," "émue," "le grand bois trempe une longue tresse." This preoccupation with the physical world is one of the most important elements of Valéry's mature poetry, transforming abstract considerations on the creative process in general into something palpable and immediate,¹ and causing

1. Claudel in the dialogue, L'Oiseau noir dans le Soleil levant, rejects with force the label "intellectual" for Valéry: "Quelle bêtise! Valéry est avant tout un voluptueux et tout son art est une attention voluptueuse. C'est l'esprit attentif à la chair et l'enveloppant d'une espèce de conscience épidermique, le plaisir atteint par la définition, tout un beau corps gagné, ainsi que par un frisson, par un réseau de proportions exquis." Quoted in Mondor, Propos familiers de Paul Valéry, p. 112-113.

equal weight to be given to texture and to shape in the composition of a poem.¹ The care taken over line 13 of Valvins is a good example of this concern to obtain a rich phonetic harmony, the p and y alliterations only emerging in the 1926 version of the Album, "La poudreuse peau de la rivière verte," after such essays as "Sur la poudreuse chair immense de l'eau verte" (1897), "Sur la poudreuse chair nouvelle de l'eau verte" (1898), "Sur la poudreuse chair immense de l'eau verte" (1900), and "La poudreuse chair diverse de l'eau verte" (first edition of the Album, 1920). Such considerations have important, if indirect, repercussions for a stylized form such as the sonnet. The two aspects are complementary and mutually enhancing. The shifting richness of phonetic patterns softens the effect of severe outline the sonnet may tend to impose and gives the form a sense of profusion and vigour, while the discipline of the sonnet, on the other hand, emphasizes through its very restraints the infinite multiplicity of possible patterns and at the same time stresses the general principle of harmony under which they all may be subsumed.

By examining the sonnets of the Album in their published versions of the 1890's, relating these to contemporaneous sonnets on similar themes, and then considering variants introduced in the

1. "Il n'y a que deux choses qui comptent, qui sonnent l'or sur la table où l'esprit joue sa partie contre lui-même. L'une, que je nomme Analyse, et qui a la 'pureté' pour objet; l'autre, que je nomme Musique, et qui compose cette 'pureté', en fait quelque chose."

Album, it has been possible to trace in some detail the evolution from pastiche to a more personal use of the form combining motifs of sensual richness with patterns of abstract speculation. But this is a retrospective judgement where our view of Valéry's original efforts is coloured both by the stringency with which Valéry selects thirteen sonnets from the welter of early examples and by our knowledge of the modifications through which, in the Album, Valéry brought these early sonnets into line with his mature preoccupations. But how did Valéry himself in the 1890's see his own sonneteering attempts? His concentration on the sonnet had been noted and criticized by his earliest mentors, Gustave Fourment and Pierre Louÿs. However, Fourment, writing to Valéry on 4 January 1890, comes to the reluctant conclusion that perhaps a strictly limited form is necessary for Valéry to produce work of a good standard. He has harsh words for Renaissance spirituelle, a poem of fourteen octosyllabic quatrains sent to him by Valéry in an earlier letter:

Le sens de tes vers est [..] clair; la pièce est bien divisée; malheureusement l'expression est insuffisante; les vers sont lâches, les mots peu précis: rien ne brille. Je t'ai reproché souvent de ne faire que des sonnets; je m'en veux de ce reproche: il faut te condamner à serrer ta pensée, à chercher une forme plus riche et plus splendide dût même la splendeur en devenir inquiétante.¹

Louÿs, writing to Valéry shortly after the announcement of the results of the sonnet competition in La Plume in January 1891, also urges Valéry to try "un autre moule que le sonnet":

1. Valéry-Fourment Correspondance (Paris, Gallimard, 1957), p. 94.

J'ai peur que le concours de La Plume n'ait dégoûté le public de ce poème si commode et si admirable. Essayez donc, je vous en supplie, des vers polymorphes. Vous êtes trop jeune pour vous spécialiser déjà dans un genre; avant de ne plus faire que des sonnets, Heredia a essayé de tous les rythmes, il a fait des alexandrins à rimes plates très beaux, des tierces rimes, très belles aussi. Variez-vous comme lui à vos débuts. Plus tard, si vous voulez revenir au sonnet, il sera bien temps encore, et votre excursion à travers les rythmes sera féconde pour vous et vous aura laissé une souplesse de vers, une légèreté de mesure, impossibles à acquérir sans cela.¹

Valéry for his part seems from the first to have been aware of his own lack of originality in his choice and use of the sonnet but finds himself forced into this limitation of scope by the absence of any truly personal preoccupation. Conte invraisemblable written in September - October 1889 and sent to Fourment in February 1890 is a cry of despair at his own incompetence. His "hero" in the Conte "n'avait oeuvré qu'avec la tête - de quoi faire un sonnet ..."

Finding no satisfaction in life:

... il se tournait alors vers les combinaisons du style et les pénibles enfantements des rimes. Et là, il étouffait plus qu'ailleurs.

Un ardent désir le poussait et, des nuits entières, lui congestionnait le cerveau. Mais rien. Troublé par les mille et mille écoles qui surgissaient, pétri chaque jour par un différent auteur, plus rien de lui ne semblait loger dans son esprit.

Quand une inspiration lui venait, rare aubaine, il l'abandonnait du désespoir de le faire entrer dans les mètres retentissants et sous les jupes sonores des rimes. Il se réduisait à refaire les oeuvres des maîtres, s'abstenait ou de la pensée pour plaquer le style ou du style pour la pensée, et se torturait sans aboutir pendant des heures.²

1. Quoted in Mondor, Précocité de Valéry, p. 162.

2. Valéry-Fourment Correspondance, pp. 219-220. Notes to Letter XVIII.

Ten years later to Gide in October 1899 it is the increasingly mechanical nature of the exercise that is stressed. The young poet of their youth, of which Valéry sees himself as having been a typical example, was to be found at twenty:

... plein d'ambitions étendues et d'un certain charme de hardiesse et de peur, à vingt-cinq ans, avec tout le talent que tu voudras, mais déjà il pue la rance. Il est bâti sur des idées aussi rares que quelconques, c'est-à-dire non proprement à lui. Il a tellement peur de s'embêter qu'il m'embête. Il a horreur réellement de tout changement dans la vision, car il sait que sa valeur professionnelle y est attachée. Certes, il fait de mieux en mieux la même chose ... Je sais fort bien que si j'avais continué à faire des quatorze vers, je les ferais très bien maintenant: c'est forcé.¹

Valéry's consciousness of a mechanical element in poetry extends far beyond his use or otherwise of the sonnet. And yet it may well be that the predominance of the form in his early work did much to condition his attitude on this point, especially as his use of it was restricted not only by the limitations of length and structure inherent in the form, but also by other people's handling of these problems. Interestingly enough, as already indicated, there is little attempt to expand the range of the sonnet on the lines explored by Louÿs and Régnier, for example by the addition of a floating fifteenth line or by the inclusion of the sonnet in a wider poetic structure. The exception, of course, is Profusion du Soir, O I 86-89, probably composed about 1899 and thus constituting an interesting

1. Gide-Valéry Correspondance, p. 360.

Profusion du Soir

Poème abandonné ...

Du Soleil soutenant la puissante paresse
 Qui plane et s'abandonne à l'oeil contemplateur,
 Regard!... Je bois le vin céleste, et je caresse
 Le grain mystérieux de l'extrême hauteur.

Je porte au sein brûlant ma lucide tendresse,
 Je joue avec les feux de l'antique inventeur;
 Mais le dieu par degrés qui se désintéresse
 Dans la pourpre de l'air s'altère avec lenteur.

Laissant dans le champ pur battre toute l'idée,
 Les travaux du couchant dans la sphère vidée
 Connaissent sans oiseaux leur entière grandeur.

L'Ange frais de l'oeil nu pressent dans sa pudeur,
 Haute nativité d'étoile élucidée,
 Un diamant agir qui berce la splendeur ...

O I, 86¹

1. These 14 lines in sonnet form open the poem and are followed by a further 83 lines.

rider to the view expressed in the letter to Gide.¹ A hybrid arrangement of this kind illustrates very clearly the potential and the limitations of the sonnet. The very title Profusion du Soir immediately suggests a principle running counter to the compression and coherence typical of the form and indeed we find that the sonnet functions here as a prologue. It establishes the central analogy between the sun and the creative activity of the poet and also links the eye which records the whole splendour of the evening sky, perhaps in preparation for its transformation into a poem, with the moon, that concentrate of refracted light which replaces in the heavens the dissipated energies of the setting sun.² These analogies persist in subsequent stages of the poem, particularly in the lines immediately following the sonnet, but the motif of the sea becomes increasingly important as the poem progresses. The onlooker feels himself absorbed into the scene of his contemplation and released from the veil of his own human individuality ("Moi, qui jette ici-bas l'ombre d'un personnage, / Toutefois délié dans le plein souverain, / Je me sens qui me trempe, et pur qui me dédaigne!"). The threefold repetition of the theme of emptiness in the first tercet of the opening sonnet ("le champ pur," "la sphère vidée," "sans oiseaux") suggests from the outset the sense of infinite space in the evening sky, but

1. Valéry's disenchantment with poetry after the so-called "Nuit de Gênes" is hardly total as more than one critic has pointed out. Vue, Valvins, Été, Profusion du Soir, Anne, Sémiramis all post-date 1892. Valéry's interest in the sonnet too is clearly not extinct, a more distinctly personal note being apparent in Vue and Valvins, and Profusion du Soir showing an attempt to investigate further the possibilities of the form.

2. Note the use elsewhere of the diamond as an analogy for the process of crystallization and refraction that constitutes a poem. v. infra p. 538.

reference to the sea introduces a new element, for it conveys not only spatial immensity, but a mobility which renders metaphorically the fluid and unstable quality of the onlooker's dreams and the essentially evanescent nature of the closing moment of day. This same sense of movement is captured on the formal level by the absence of a fixed stanzaic pattern. The reader's attention is concentrated on the individual line and he follows step by step the unforeseen shifts of the rhyme pattern and intertwinings of syntax and rhythm. Such leisurely and meandering progression is foreign to the sonnet and though Valéry avoids excessive schematization by careful manipulation of the different patterning possibilities offered by the sonnet structure,¹ that structure in its main outlines remains clear and unimpaired, the epitome of order and control. The analogy between sun and poet is framed in the 2:2 division of each quatrain and the opposition of tercet to tercet, and is also indicated in the linking of "Soleil" and "Regard" in the first quatrain and the parallel equivalence of eye and star in the final tercet. At the same time each of the four sections marks a stage in the transfer of energy

1. For example, the rejet into line 3 means that the first quatrain, unlike the second, is not divisible syntactically into two equal units. In addition, parallels of syntax between lines 3-4 and 5-6 are modified by the use of the coordinating et on the first occasion only and by the different arrangement of subject and verb, these elements of both main clauses occurring in line 3, while in the second quatrain, the two main clauses each occupy a whole line (ll. 5 and 6). Further variety is achieved in the association of patterns of syntax and theme with the overall rhyme pattern in the quatrains. While the former fall into a chiasmic type of arrangement with lines 1-2 corresponding to lines 7-8 and lines 3-4 to lines 5-6, the latter follows an alternate pattern which helps to maintain a sense of continuity throughout the quatrains.

from the sun to the onlooker. The dominant position of "Soleil" in the opening line is belied by the syntax, and the first quatrain generally suggests something of a balance between the two aspects. The activity of "caresse" contrasts with "paresse" but is somewhat countermanded by the qualifying "puissante," while the pair "contemplateur - hauteur" still indicate a passive role for the poet and the gap between him and the object of his contemplation. In the second quatrain, however, the theme of creativity introduced in lines 3 and 4 by the reference to the sunlight as a "Vin céleste" and a "grain mystérieux" is further developed with an assimilation to the poet of the fieriness and light of the sun - "sein brûlant," "lucide tendresse" and the Promethean reference "les feux de l'antique inventeur." At the same time, the sun is seen to be declining, "se désintéresse," "s'altère avec lenteur." Again the rhyme is helpful in stressing the contrasting directions in which the two sides are moving, "tendresse" standing with "désintéresse," and "inventeur" and the dynamism this implies with "lenteur." The tercets summarize the final transfer of power and potential, opposing the dissipation of light and energy in the heavens (first tercet) to the crystallization of light in the eye, or the moon (second tercet). The two rhyme only arrangement of the tercets, including one rhyme carried through from the two rhyme quatrains, continues to provide however a close formal link between the two sides. The precise organization of patterns of theme and rhyme has its parallel in the coincidence of structural and syntactic groups. Each of the four sections is endstopped and with the exception of line 3 with its opening rejet, 2/6/4 rhythm and closing enjambement, each line stands as a syntactic entity, a situation scarcely paralleled in the continuation of the poem.

In view of the obvious disparity of approach with which the different types of structure are associated, the question inevitably arises as to whether the integration of the sonnet into a wider framework is, or can be, successful. It seems in fact that although the theme of the sunset is a common preoccupation, the harmony of form and theme realized by each section is so different as to create two quite distinct if complementary poems. And in this arrangement, the sonnet is in a sense the loser, since it is made to fulfil the minor role of introduction with a consequent devaluation of its own peculiar interest and potential. Rather than this, a definite decision one way or the other seems preferable - as in the case of the Narcissus poems, where the original sonnet form had already been replaced in Narcisse parle (1891) by the flexible rhyme pattern and irregular groupings of a series of alexandrines in an attempt to capture the mysterious and evanescent quality of the longed-for reflection.¹ But the solution is not so simple. Valéry - as Fourment had already perceived in 1889 - appears to have found that the freer the form, the more difficult it was for him to achieve a satisfactory

1. Various versions of the initial sonnet are given in O I, 1556-58, in the notes to Narcisse parle. Of interest is Valéry's remark in a letter to Louÿs of 28 Sept. 1890 (quoted on p. 1561): "Je vous enverrais des vers si j'osais, hélas! je travaillais encore hier à un sonnet très malaisé dont le titre était Narcisse parle. Je l'ai abandonné désespérant de faire entrer tout ce que je songeais là-dedans." Less restricted forms appear to have been investigated from the outset - v. the prose fragment and a kind of symphonic project on the same theme, probably contemporaneous, on pp. 1555-56. The first quatrain of the sonnet persists, however, with slight modifications both in Narcisse parle and Fragments du Narcisse:

Que je déplore ton éclat fatal et pur,
 Source magique, à mes larmes prédestinée
 Où puiserènt mes yeux dans un mortel azur
 Mon image de fleurs funestes couronnée!

result. He was disappointed with Narcisse parle¹ and in later years a reworking of the theme still provides only Fragments du Narcisse. Nor was the writing of La Jeune Parque without its difficulties. Valéry refers in particular to his problems with "les transitions."² The dilemma is one of mechanical systematization on the one hand, lack of control and dissipation of energy on the other.³

The best of the early sonnets (Baignée and Valvins come to mind) had to a large extent avoided these pitfalls. In the more critical atmosphere of Charmes, where the careful thought given to the potential of the different forms is obvious,⁴ the six different permutations of the sonnet seem to indicate quite clearly Valéry's

1. "... Narcisse a parlé dans le désert. Quand je l'ai revu imprimé, j'en ai eu une telle horreur que je l'ai enfermé de suite. Etre si loin de son rêve! Et c'est mauvais. Et ça ne peut même pas se lire!" Letter to Gide, Mar. 1891, Gide-Valéry Correspondance, p. 74. It is however only fair to mention that Narcisse parle was one of the poems included in Valéry's second letter to Mallarmé, 18 Apr. 1891!
2. To Aimé Lafont in 1922. Lettres à quelques-uns, p. 145 and O I, 1636. Mondor, Propos familiers de Paul Valéry, pp. 161-162, reports that to the question as to how and why he set about writing La Jeune Parque, "Valéry répondit que ce n'était pas pour faire suite à Mallarmé, mais pour en finir avec les vers et, sous l'influence de Wagner, du motif, du leitmotiv, un peu aussi de Gluck et de son Alceste, assembler des morceaux. Leur mosaïque lui avait paru moins difficile que le secret de leurs liaisons." (My underlining)
3. "La haine du hasard et l'horreur de la règle. Je vais du dégoût de la règle, c'est-à-dire de l'habitude - à la haine du hasard, c'est-à-dire de l'impuissance - et je reviens." Cahier I (1897), p. 184. References to the Cahiers are to the 29 v. facsimile edition published by the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, (Paris, 1957-61).
4. In a letter to Jacques Doucet in 1922, Valéry even went so far as to describe Charmes as an "ensemble d'expériences prosodiques." Quoted in James Lawler, Lecture de Valéry (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 21.

awareness of the possible range of the genre between flexibility and order. This is borne out by his remarks in letters, articles and the Cahiers of the period. He is now clear that the sonnet is necessarily limited in questions of subject matter and presentation, and cannot fulfil the same role as a more extended piece, a point emerging from his reply to Albert Mockel in 1917 on La Jeune Parque:

Ce que vous dites de l'emploi des images, et de leur papillotement est bien vrai. Toutefois je ne crois pas qu'il faille aller jusqu'à m'opposer le Cygne incomparable. Le sonnet est autre chose que le poème. Il peut se consacrer à faire percevoir toutes les faces d'un seul et même diamant. C'est une rotation du même corps autour d'un point ou d'un axe. Mais le poème doit se fuir, et revient difficilement sur soi-même.¹

But such limitation and the concentration and coherence it entails may produce a positive result. Valéry was increasingly pre-occupied with the fluctuating and approximate nature of language and the problem this poses to meaningful communication. Only mathematics offers a pure language, algebra, capable of formulating a system of equivalences and relationships free from subjective distortions.

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1. Lettres à quelques-uns, p. 124. Also quoted O I, 1629-30. The swan sonnet is of course Mallarmé's "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui." The diamond image is elaborated in the section Diamants in Mélange (O I, 298). It is first linked with the motif of the dancer (cf. "une rotation du même corps autour d'un point ou d'un axe"):

Une danseuse compare: une cascade de pirouettes,
merveilleuses de précision, brillantes comme les
facettes d'un diamant ...

Trente-deux pirouettes! (Karsavine)
Image très belle.

Secondly the analogy with poetry is made explicit:

Diamant. - Sa beauté résulte, me dit-on, de la petitesse de l'angle de réflexion totale ... Le tailleur de diamant en façonne les facettes de manière que le rayon qui pénètre dans la gemme par l'une d'elles ne peut en sortir que par la même - D'où le feu et l'éclat.

Belle image de ce que je pense sur la poésie:
retour du rayon spirituel aux mots d'entrée.

This may seem far removed from the field of lyric poetry where the emphasis has generally been on the inspiration of the poet, but mathematics and poetry, from a purely formal point of view, do have a common feature in that both are concerned with questions of symmetry and proportion. In algebra, admiration goes to the logical thought which can formulate a series of equations which in some measure describe and hence put a control upon the varied phenomena and arbitrary occurrences of the natural world. In literature, it could likewise be said that it is the act of formal construction which gives validity to the exercise, putting new controls on language and thus limiting the inevitable misconceptions arising from the subjective linguistic distortions of author and reader alike.¹ Such formalization is more apparent in the sphere of poetry where language is used in a more highly reflective and critical fashion than in that of everyday communication or even of literary prose.² Traditional

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1. "On est conduit à la Forme par le souci de laisser au lecteur le moins de part qu'il se puisse - et même de se laisser à soi-même le moins d'incertitude et d'arbitraire possible." O II, 554. "L'attaque incessante de l'esprit, l'objection, la transmission de bouche en bouche, l'altération phonétique, l'impossibilité de vérification, etc., sont les causes de destruction, de corruption, de ces réserves de l'esprit. A partir de cette table de dangers, les principaux moyens imaginables pour les combattre: rythmes, rime, rigueur et choix des mots, recherche de l'expression limitée, etc..., auxiliaires de la mémoire, garants de l'exactitude des échanges, et du retour de l'esprit à ses repères, - apparaissent." In section entitled Forme Conservees, O II, 766.
 2. "... les personnes qui redoutent l'incertitude des échanges entre l'auteur et le lecteur trouvent assurément dans la fixité du nombre des syllabes, et dans les symétries plus ou moins factices du vers ancien, l'avantage de limiter ce risque [d'être mal entendus, mal lus, mal déclamés]..." O I, 478. "Le poète dispose des mots tout autrement que ne fait l'usage et le besoin. Ce sont les mêmes mots sans doute, mais point du tout les mêmes valeurs ... tout ce qui affirme, tout ce qui démontre qu'il ne parle pas en prose est bon chez lui. Les rimes, l'inversion, les figures développées, les symétries et les images, tout ceci, trouvailles ou conventions, sont autant de moyens de s'opposer au penchant prosaïque du lecteur (comme les 'règles' fameuses de l'art poétique ont pour effet de rappeler sans cesse au poète l'univers complexe de cet art)." O I, 1293-94.

prosody and to an even greater degree fixed forms such as the sonnet are thus particularly effective in forcing an intensity of reflection and a precision of expression rarely encountered in the ordinary preoccupations of life.¹ Valéry more than once states his admiration for the originator of the sonnet form whose achievement he sees as exceeding in significance the best examples the genre has to offer,² and his elaboration of the sonnet in mathematical terms in Cahier 8 (1921), p. 357, shows the extent to which this form in particular coincided with his views on the nature and function of art.

Du sonnet

Il y a d'abord une condition commune aux 4 éléments

$$(1) \overline{A}, B, C, \overline{D} = 0$$

Il y a une condition des quatrains

$$(2) \overline{A}, \overline{B} = 0 \text{ et une des tercets: } (3) \overline{C}, \overline{D} = 0$$

$$\text{Il y a asymétrie des quatrains } (4) \overline{\mu A + \nu B} = 0$$

$$\text{et des tercets } (5) \overline{\lambda C + pD} = 0$$

Les mêmes rimes aux quatrains ont une signification, qu'il faut trouver. Faire le sonnet, c'est trouver cette signification.

C'est trouver une des expressions ou solutions de cette relation, mêmes rimes. (Un bon sonnet ferait sentir qu'il fallait que les 2 quatrains rimassent entre eux.)

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1. "Les exigences d'une stricte prosodie sont l'artifice que confère au langage naturel les qualités d'une matière résistante, étrangère à notre âme, et comme sourde à nos désirs." O I, 480. "... les nombres obligatoires, les rimes, les formes fixes, tout cet arbitraire, une fois pour toutes adopté, ont une sorte de beauté propre et philosophique." O I, 481.
 2. "Je suis parfois celui qui, s'il rencontrait aux enfers l'inventeur du sonnet, lui dirait avec bien du respect (supposé qu'il en reste dans l'autre monde):
 'Mon cher confrère, je vous salue très humblement. Je ne sais ce que valent vos vers que je n'ai point lus, et je parie qu'ils ne valent rien, parce qu'il y a toujours beaucoup à parier que des vers sont mauvais; mais si mauvais soient-ils, si plats, si insipides, si clairs, si niais, si naïvement formés, qu'ils puissent être, - toutefois, je vous place dans mon coeur au-dessus de tous les poètes de la terre et des enfers! ... Vous avez inventée une forme, et dans cette forme les plus grands se sont adaptés.'" O II, 1254.

The significance of the equations is made clear by a remark in Cahier 13 (1929), p. 890:

Oeuvres - sont créations de zéros. Equilibres.
Perfection - Symétrie - signifiant zéro. Il faut
enfin que chaque partie ait sa réponse.¹

The sonnet then is constructed of a series of balances between each of its four sections and between the two quatrains and the two tercets (giving the traditional 8:6 division). At the same time, there is differentiation within the quatrain and within the tercet groups.

There is nothing very revolutionary about these remarks, the principle of variety in unity being followed implicitly by any sonnet writer of worth. But Valéry is the only one of the poets we have studied who maps it out with any succinctness and attempts a theoretical definition of the sonnet in terms of structural patterns rather than from the point of view of regularity of rhyme-scheme only. The mathematical layout permits a clear realization of the basis of the sonnet's effectiveness as a form. For Valéry such effectiveness depends on whether an author has founded his work "sur la nature constante de l'homme, sur la structure et le fonctionnement de l'organisme humain, sur l'être même" (O I, 585), and this behind "la diversité des impressions, l'inconstance des idées, la mobilité

1. As early as June 1891, Valéry following the lead of Poe had defined "la Poétique à faire" in mathematical terms: "La métrique est une algèbre: c'est-à-dire la science des variations d'un rythme fixe selon certaines valeurs données aux signes qui le composent. Le vers est l'équation qui est justement disposée lorsque sa solution est une égalité, c'est-à-dire une symétrie." Letter to Gide, Gide-Valéry Correspondance, p. 94.

essentielle de l'esprit" (O I, 585), he sees as consisting in "un désordre, plus un besoin de mettre en ordre" (O II, 793). The presence of both elements is essential:

L'esprit va, dans son travail, de son désordre à son ordre. Il importe qu'il se conserve jusqu'à la fin, des ressources de désordre, et que l'ordre qu'il a commencé de se donner ne le lie pas si complètement, ne lui soit pas un si rigide maître, qu'il ne puisse le changer et user de sa liberté initiale. O II, 714

Si tout fût irrégulier ou tout régulier, point de pensée, car elle n'est qu'un essai de passer du désordre à l'ordre, et il lui faut des occasions de celui-là - et des modèles de celui-ci. O I, 1172

The survival of the sonnet down the centuries suggests a satisfactory fulfilment of both requirements.¹ Its brevity makes it easily apprehensible as a work complete in itself, so that the harmonious proportions of its structure can be readily perceived. The internal balances between and within quatrains and tercets reinforce the sense of order epitomized by the form as a whole, but at the same time can be utilized to suggest the principle of irregularity by non-parallel arrangements of the other patterning factors - theme, syntax, rhythm, rhyme. The tensions thus created are of supreme importance in keeping the sonnet a lively and dynamic form, and the variety of their possible permutations ensures against a degeneration into mechanical repetition.

1. "Une mauvaise forme est une forme que nous sentons le besoin de changer et changeons de nous-mêmes; une forme est bonne que nous répétons et imitons sans la modifier heureusement.

La forme est essentiellement liée à la répétition." O II, 554.

In a sense, of course, the very fact that the form is capable of mathematical expression may make it appear suspect at least to the non-numerate, but the strength of such a formula lies precisely in the fact that it is susceptible of a range of applications. Mathematization need not imply sterile codification. The emphasis on rhyme pattern may perhaps seem to be tending in a definitely restrictive direction. For Valéry, however, as his concluding remarks on the question of the quatrain rhymes make clear, limitations properly viewed and freely accepted are more likely to be stimulating than stultifying. As he wrote in 1936 in the section "Degas et le sonnet" in Degas Danse Dessin:

Rien, en littérature, n'est plus propre que le sonnet à opposer la volonté à la velléité, à faire sentir la différence de l'intention et des impulsions avec l'ouvrage achevé; et surtout à contraindre l'esprit de considérer le fond et la forme comme des conditions égales entre elles. Je m'explique: Il nous enseigne à découvrir qu'une forme est féconde en idées, paradoxe apparent et principe profond d'où l'analyse mathématique a tiré quelque partie de sa prodigieuse puissance.

De grands poètes ont dédaigné ou déprécié le sonnet, ce qui n'entame ni sa valeur ni leurs mérites. Il suffit de répondre à ces railleries de divers lyriques ennemis des contraintes, que Michel-Ange et Shakespeare, qui n'étaient point de petits esprits, ont rimé dans toutes les règles les quatrains et les tercets qui s'assemblent dans cette forme canonique.

Michel-Ange, qui a écrit:

Non ha l'ottima artista alcun concetto
Ch'un marmor solo in se non circoscrive

Il ne vient à l'artiste excellent point d'idée
Qu'un seul marbre ne suffise à contenir

eût pu prescrire dans les mêmes termes les rapports du sonnet avec un poète accompli. O II, 1207-08¹

1. For further comment on Valéry's attitude to Shakespeare's sonnets, v. infra, p. 545.

The fixed form is a test of the ingenuity and skill of the writer and also a means of developing these abilities. Tight shoes produce new dances.¹ On condition, of course, that they do not immobilize completely. Valéry's differentiation of the sonnet from the chant royal, admiring the skill demanded by the latter ("Je ne vois pas de règle plus rigoureuse. Après du Chant Royal, le sonnet est un jeu d'enfant"²) but never practising it himself, is a good indication of his constant awareness of the need for some measure of flexibility. The definition of the sonnet in Cahier 8, p. 357 (apart from the concluding remarks on the quatrain rhymes) provides only a broad outline and leaves the way open for all sorts of shifts of emphasis. The general principle of structural balances and tensions is made clear, but the actual arrangement of the different patterning factors within a particular sonnet is infinitely negotiable. Thus Valéry can quite happily refer to Shakespeare as having "rimé dans toutes les règles les quatrains et les tercets qui

1. "Il faut faire des sonnets. On ne sait pas tout ce qu'on apprend à faire des sonnets et des poèmes à forme fixe." O I, 1454.

"De telles formules peuvent, d'ailleurs, avoir dans certains cas, vertu créatrice, suggérer bien des idées que l'on n'eût jamais eues sans elles. La restriction est inventive au moins autant de fois que la surabondance des libertés peut l'être. Je n'irai pas jusqu'à dire avec Joseph de Maistre que tout ce qui gêne l'homme le fortifie. De Maistre ne songeait peut-être pas qu'il est des chaussures trop étroites. Mais, s'agissant des arts, il me répondrait assez bien, sans doute, que des chaussures trop étroites feraient inventer des danses toutes nouvelles." O I, 1305.

2. In his Avertissement to Yvonne Ferran-Weyher, Fontaines de mémoire (1935), O II, 1368.

s'assemblent dans cette forme canonique".¹ The sonnet covers a whole range of possibilities as two further definitions of the form by Valéry make plain. At one extreme, all the patterning factors can converge in a model reminiscent of Mallarmé's sonnet, "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui":

Le sonnet est fait pour le simultané. Quatorze vers simultanés, et fortement désignés comme tels par l'enchaînement et la conservation des rimes; type et structure d'un poème stationnaire.²

At the other, a more diverse and more dynamic structure is envisaged:

Gloire éternelle à l'inventeur du sonnet. Toutefois, malgré tant de beaux sonnets qui ont été faits, le plus beau reste encore à faire: ce sera celui dont les parties rempliront chacune une fonction bien différente de celle des autres, et cette progression de différences dans les strophes cependant bien justifiée par la ligne de tout le discours.³

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1. Of course, in contrast to Shakespeare's dramatic production, at least when viewed from the French standpoint of "la fameuse règle des unités" which Valéry sees as "si conforme aux exigences de l'attention et si favorable à la solidité, à la densité de l'action dramatique," O I, 1303, his sonnets do have a certain air, if not of complete regularity, at least of fixed pattern and restraint. Valéry, while admitting Shakespeare's dramatic power, attempts to incorporate him in the sphere of his own preoccupations with formal technique by playing up this aspect: "... je me permettrai, en passant, d'émettre une idée qui me vient, et que je donne, comme elle me vient, à l'état fragile de fantaisie: Shakespeare, si libre sur le théâtre, a composé, d'autre part, d'illustres sonnets, faits selon toutes les règles, et visiblement très soignés; qui sait, si ce grand homme n'attachait pas bien plus de prix à ces poèmes étudiés qu'aux tragédies et aux comédies qu'il improvisait, modifiait sur la scène même et pour un public de hasard?" ibid.
 2. In Autre Rhumbs (1927), O II, 676.
 3. In Calepin d'un poète (1928), O I, 1454. The complementary nature of these different ideas on the sonnet is however stressed by the fact that this comment, like the mathematical model, occurs in 1922 in Cahier 8, six years before its publication, with only minor variations of text: "Gloire éternelle à l'inventeur du sonnet. Toutefois malgré tant de beaux sonnets qui ont été faits, le plus beau reste encore à faire: ce sera celui dont les quatre parties rempliront chacune une fonction bien différente de celle des autres, progressive et ces différences bien justifiées par la vie de tout le discours ." Cahier 8, p. 774.

The sonnets of Charmes offer a good range of sample possibilities. Like the rest of the collection, they are concerned with the workings of the creative process but in harmony with the basic orientation of the sonnet structure, here the problem is always framed within some sort of direct contrast between the rich diversity of unreflective being and the control and shape imposed by the conscious mind. Within this limit, however, each sonnet has its own method of approach.

The first sonnet of Charmes, L'Abeille, concentrates on a motif which occurs also but as a supporting image in the much more extensive Ebauche d'un Serpent:

Sûr triomphe! si ma parole
De l'âme obsédant le trésor,
Comme une abeille une corolle
Ne quitte pas l'oreille d'or! O I, 143

In the sonnet, however, the complexities of the Adam and Eve story and the sinuous argumentation of the serpent give way to a stress on the moment of crisis represented by the bee-sting:

Quelle, et si fine, et si mortelle,
Que soit ta pointe, blonde abeille,
Je n'ai, sur ma tendre corbeille,
Jeté qu'un songe de dentelle.

Pique du sein la gourde belle,
Sur qui l'Amour meurt ou sommeille,
Qu'un peu de moi-même vermeille
Vienne à la chair ronde et rebelle!

J'ai grand besoin d'un prompt tourment:
Un mal vif et bien terminé
Vaut mieux qu'un supplice dormant!

Soit donc mon sens illuminé
Par cette infime alerte d'or
Sans qui l'Amour meurt ou s'endort! O I, 118

On one level, as Lawler points out, L'Abeille follows the model described in the letter to Albert Mockel in 1917 - "Une rotation du même corps autour d'un point ou d'un axe." The tension between the

presence of the bee and the expectancy of the woman, an allegory of desire and beyond that in Valéryan mythology for the interplay of the conscious and the subconscious in poetic creation, is central to each of the four sections of the piece. It is not, however, a question of straight repetition but one of a modulation and a certain progression. In the first quatrain, equal space is given to the sting and the potential recipient of it and the delay in the initiation of action on both sides is suggested by the double use of a technique of syntactic postponement, more striking in the case of the sting where the interruption is both more unusual and also underlined by rhyme, but present also in the lines relating to the woman with the delay before the decisive participle "jeté."

The second quatrain, like the first, falls into two equal syntactic groups, and again the stanza is divided between bee-sting and woman. This time equal syntactic weight is given to each; a command is addressed to each in turn, while in the first quatrain the bee was addressed in a subordinate clause only, though admittedly one distinguished by the unusual disruption of the syntax. At the syntactic level then the importance of the bee has increased. Thematically it also receives stress from the opening position of "Pique," but it is the association of the idea of fruitfulness with the woman that is most extensively developed in this quatrain. The "tendre corbeille" of the opening stanza seems increasingly devoid of its "songe de dentelle" as the "gourde belle" of the breast, the ruddiness of the drop of blood and the round firmness of bosom are successively evoked. A sense of oppression and expectancy is however still very much to the fore (l. 6).

The urgency of the double command in the second quatrain receives a check as the first tercet, though retaining a double construction, reverts to statement as in the first quatrain. In addition there is a movement from the particular to the general, a personal expression of need on the part of the woman in line 9 being followed in lines 10 and 11 by a second statement which places the whole situation in a more general context. The importance of the space given to the sting here now makes it the dominant factor.

In the final tercet, the syntax of the second quatrain is echoed with the difference that here the note of urgency is muted since there is only one command. Moreover it is in the passive mode, recalling the attitude of expectant attention presented by the woman in the opening stanza. Again, as in the preceding tercet, the major part of the space (two lines to one) is given to the sting, the woman's voice and experience in line 12 being superseded by the generality of the closing relative clause. The final line picking up and modifying line 6 gives an added resonance, suggesting the cyclical nature of the single experience the sonnet has described:

...alors que dans le premier cas l'oppression pesait lourdement sur la femme, dans le second il y a détachement et libération du sommeil et de la mort qui ont précédé la piqûre. Et, cependant, bien que les mots indiquent ce détachement, la répétition même montre qu'il y a un retour au passé; le moi ne s'est pas échappé dans le futur mais a plongé de nouveau dans sa propre fascination. La progression temporelle a rejoint son passé: la femme découvre dans l'objet de son désir une illumination triomphante mais en même temps se rend voluptueusement aux forces qui ressemblent à celles du sommeil et de la mort.¹

1. Lawler, Lecture de Valéry, pp. 68-69.

The contribution of each of the four separate parts of the sonnet is clear: the complete syntactic unit of which each is composed, the alternation of statement and command, linking first quatrain and tercet and second quatrain and tercet, the replay in each section of the same basic theme. In addition a disruption of the usual quatrains-tercets relationship seems to arise as a result of "une sorte de refus de la pointe, laquelle se trouve cachée au premier tercet."¹ As has been noted, the sonnet appears to achieve its climax at the end of line 8 or possibly at the end of line 9 and from then on there is a progressive decrescendo through the aphorism of lines 10 and 11, the passive acceptance of line 12 and the renewed generality of the closing line. The effect is on the one hand to stress the composition of the sonnet as an agglomeration of four separate components, but at the same time to indicate that the overall thematic curve of the piece still follows the usual 8:6 pattern; with emphasis on the sensual elements and a more urgent tone concentrated in the quatrains and more abstract considerations in a reflective mode in the tercets.

The other patterning factor which stresses the persistence of the 8:6 arrangement is of course the rhyme-scheme. The pattern has its peculiarities as all critics have noted. The quatrains, as Alain pointed out, "par des rimes toutes féminines, mais presque identiques, font entendre comme un redoublement de chant, et un retour bourdonnant."² No doubt the enclosed pattern of the quatrain

1. Paul Valéry, Charmes commentés par Alain (Paris, Gallimard, 1952), p. 110.

2. Ibid.

rhymes is also helpful here. Beyond this, "cette similitude et cette persistante fémininité font attendre comme un complément indispensable, et de plus en plus souhaité, les rimes masculines des tercets. Dès le premier vers, nous sommes sensibilisés à de tels effets de complémentarité par une espèce de symétrie sonore (the rhyme Quelle and mortelle in the opening line)."¹ The rhyme in fact imitates the pattern of expectancy and fulfilment which is the theme of the sonnet. And along with the sense of fulfilment in the tercets comes, as Alain once again points out, a feeling of anticlimax - "Les rimes masculines des deux tercets finissent par ramener à un genre de prose, ce qui fait un decrescendo,"² an impression increased by the rhyme-arrangement of the tercets - the punctuation of the end of the first tercet by the almost immediate recurrence of the sound of the closed nasal vowel and the termination of the second on the conclusive repetitiveness of the couplet.

This interaction of the various structural possibilities of the sonnet underpins the tension and ambiguity characteristic of the experience examined in the poem. It permits the simultaneous expression of three or four contradictory yet complementary aspects - the step by step evolution of the situation, the alternation of moods involved, the total shape of the experience, and even its occurrence as a perennial rather than a single phenomenon. A comparison with the early sonnet Ballet, included in the manuscript notebook, P.-A. Valéry Ses Vers given to Gide in 1892, shows how successful is the use of

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1. Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, Etudes pour un Paul Valéry, (Neuchâtel, La Baconnière, 1964), p. 124.
 2. Alain, op.cit., p. 110.

the sonnet form in L'Abeille:

Sur tes lèvres, sommeil d'or où l'ombreuse bouche
Baïlle (pour mieux se taire à tout le bête azur),
Sens-tu, tel un vil astre indifférent, la mouche
Transparente tourner autour du mot très pur

Que tu ne diras pas - fleur, diamant ou pierre
Ou rose jeune encor dans un vierge jardin
Une nudité fraîche sous une paupière
Balancée, amusée hors du chaos mondain.

Cette minute ailée éparpille un sonore
Vol d'étincelles au vent solaire pour briller
Sur tes dents, sur tes hauts fruits de chair, sur l'aurore
Des cheveux où j'eus peur à la voir scintiller
Petit feu naturel d'un sidéral insecte
Né sous le souffle d'or qui tes songes humecte.

O I, 1595

In Ballet the circling of the bee is conveyed in a systematic contradiction of prosodic restrictions by syntactic overruns. Quatrain is linked to quatrain, a pattern repeated in the tercets and in the sequence of individual lines. In L'Abeille, on the other hand, full capital is made from prosodic restraints. The symmetries of the sonnet form are used in the simultaneous underlining of the patterns of repetition, progression and cyclical movement that characterize the relationship between woman and bee. Note too how the choice of the decasyllable as opposed to the alexandrine also increases the density of the sonnet.

The second sonnet of Charmes, La Ceinture examines the theme of self-forgetfulness and self-awareness, by means of a motif more extensively developed elsewhere - this time, that of the sunset, in the earlier Profusion du Soir (v. p.532). As in L'Abeille, however, attention is concentrated in the sonnet on the significant moment of crisis and paradox ("au point doré de périr").

Quand le ciel couleur d'une joue
 Laisse enfin les yeux le chérir
 Et qu'au point doré de périr
 Dans les roses le temps se joue,

Devant le muet de plaisir
 Qu'enchaîne une telle peinture,
 Danse une Ombre à libre ceinture
 Que le soir est près de saisir.

Cette ceinture vagabonde
 Fait dans le souffle aérien
 Frémir le suprême lien
 De mon silence avec ce monde ...

Absent, présent ... Je suis bien seul,
 Et sombre, ô suave linceul.

O I, 121

The sonnet structure appears at first glance rather looser than was the case with L'Abeille. Though both sonnets end on a terminal couplet, here that couplet is detached not only through its rhyme, but also through syntax and sense, and the typographical arrangement stresses the separate entities of lines 9-12 and 13-14. At the same time the sonnet does not follow the Shakespearian pattern, as do Mallarmé's quatorzains and Valéry's earlier pieces Vue and Baignée. It is true that repetition of rhyme in the quatrains is incomplete (unlike L'Abeille), but the persistence of the -ir rhyme into the second stanza suggests an integration of the quatrains running counter to the pattern of progression characteristic of the Shakespearian and Mallarméan arrangements.¹ The syntax lends powerful support to this sense of union between the two stanzas. Not only are they linked as subordinate and main clause, but in addition there is the repetition of que constructions (albeit with different meaning) in lines 3, 6 and 8. This continuity of rhyme and syntax has an important role to play in suggesting on the formal level the absorption

1. The Spenserian arrangement continues one of the rhymes of each quatrain to the next but in an alternate pattern - abab bcba cdcd ff.

of "le muet de plaisir" into the scene of his contemplation (first quatrain). At the same time, devices of differentiation - the three-fold rhyme, the interplay of the enclosed rhyme-pattern with the two by two progression of the syntax, the positioning of the que clauses in line 3 (and line 1 of the first quatrain if quand is included) but in the second and fourth lines of the second quatrain, the two-fold inversion of subject and verb in lines 6 and 7 as opposed to the normal arrangement in lines 1-2 and line 4 - indicate the rich but harmonious variety which gives the scene its power to enchant.

In the third quatrain a complete change of rhyme takes place. At the same time, the belt from being a simple adjunct to "une Ombre" assumes a central role. But it is now "vagabonde" rather than "libre" and its apparent dissociation from its owner is paralleled by the break that seems imminent between the poet and the scene of his contemplation. From enchaining "le muet de plaisir" in the second quatrain, it now threatens to "[faire] frémir le suprême lien / De mon silence avec ce monde." This process of dissociation is completed in the couplet, where the detachment of rhyme, syntax and typography stresses the return to self-awareness and hence to individual isolation of the speaker. At the same time, the speaker in the poem finally emerges as "Je," after being only implied in the mention of the eyes in the first quatrain, referred to in the third person, "le muet de plaisir" in the second, and suggested by the first person adjective in the first tercet. In a reverse of the traditional imagery of insight ("voir clair en soi"), this movement towards self-awareness and progressive detachment from the surrounding world is paralleled by the fading of light into darkness. The gold and pink of the opening

quatrain give way to the onset of evening in the second, "que le soir est près de saisir," and to night in line 14, "sombre" and "linceul." But something of the vision still persists as the adjective "suave" suggests. As the night is the negative aspect of the day, so perhaps is the "linceul" the other side of the "libre ceinture," the memory that remains when the vital connexion is severed and which still testifies to the enchantment of that vanished communion.

A five stanza variant of La Ceinture underlines the effectiveness of the sonnet form:

Quand le ciel couleur d'une joue
 Laisse enfin les yeux (l'oeil frais) le chérir
 Et qu'au point doré de périr
 Toutes les heures font la roue,

Devant le muet de plaisir
 Dansera la vive peinture
 D'une ombre à la belle (voisine) ceinture
 Que le soir est près de saisir

Cette ceinture vagabonde,
 Dont joue un corps aérien
 Est-elle pas le seul lien
 Qui me rattacherait au monde?

Absent, présent, toujours plus seul
 (je suis le seul espoir)

Et sombre ...
 Car ...
 Ta ...

Le songe prêt à se dissoudre
 Plus mollement se berce encor
 Dans la tristesse du trésor
 Une ceinture se ...¹

This progressive arrangement fails to play up the central

1. Quoted by Lawler, Lecture de Valéry, pp. 84-85. Lawler describes, pp. 10-15, 4 MS notebooks of poems and projects relating to the genesis of Charmes. The variant of La Ceinture occurs in the second notebook, which is dated 1917 on the cover. An interesting note in the first book suggests a new prosodic form, "sonnet 1. 6. 11 trois distiques d'un jet sans égard à la strophe," Lawler, p. 13.

opposition between integration on the one hand, dissociation on the other, and at the same time despite, or rather perhaps because of, its freer structure, is less successful in capturing the evanescent intensity of the mood of carefree participation on which the piece opens. More in fact is said in the sonnet by saying less and letting the form carry part of the weight of the meaning. The structural restrictions intensified by use of the octosyllable can suggest the restricted nature of the moment and at the same time enhance its dynamic quality. Furthermore they can give a shape to experience and yet through their elliptic effect maintain a sense of the ambiguous and the inexplicable. The cryptic ending of the sonnet is much more effective than the explanatory approach of stanza 5 of the notebook version.

The third sonnet of Charmes, La Dormeuse, is the only completely regular sonnet of the collection and the only one in alexandrines.¹ It takes up once again the motif of the sleeping woman which Valéry had treated in three poems finally included in the Album, the sonnet Au Bois dormant and the lengthier Fileuse and Anne. Though Anne was only published in its full thirteen stanza version in the 1926 edition of the Album, the six stanza original version dated 1893 and published in 1900, already included in its third quatrain an image foreshadowing lines 2 and 11 of the Charmes' sonnet:

Enfin désespérée et libre d'être fraîche,
 La dormeuse déserte aux touffes de couleur
 Flotte sur son lit blême et d'une lèvre sèche
 Tette dans la ténèbre un vestige de fleur.

O I, 89 (with the 1893 variants)

1. By contrast the majority of the early sonnets are in alexandrines.

Stanza ten of the final 1926 Album version, added in 1920 as the seventh of nine stanzas, is also reminiscent of the contemporaneous

Charme:

Laisse au pâle rayon ta lèvre violée
Mordre dans un sourire un long germe de pleur,
Masque d'âme au sommeil à jamais immolée
Sur qui la paix soudaine a surpris la douleur!

But the sonnet eliminates all considerations such as the brutalities of desire in Anne or the regular flow of the dream in La Fileuse and concentrates on the figure of the sleeper herself and the paradox of absence and presence, formlessness and form that she incorporates.

Quels secrets dans son coeur brûle ma jeune amie,
Ame par le doux masque aspirant une fleur?
De quels vains aliments sa naïve chaleur
Fait ce rayonnement d'une femme endormie?

Souffle, songes, silence, invincible accalmie,
• Tu triomphes, ô paix plus puissante qu'un pleur,
Quand de ce plein sommeil l'onde grave et l'ampleur
Conspirent sur le sein d'une telle ennemie.

Dormeuse, amas doré d'ombres et d'abandons,
Ton repos redoutable est chargé de tels dons,
O biche avec langueur longue auprès d'une grappe,

Que malgré l'âme absente, occupée aux enfers,
Ta forme au ventre pur qu'un bras fluide drape,
Veille; ta forme veille, et mes yeux sont ouverts.

O I, 121-122

The sonnet depends on the interplay of themes of sleeping and waking, immobility and activity culminating in the realization that the apparent inactivity of sleep is in fact informed with all the potential richness of the subconscious life going forth beneath its calm exterior. It thus appears to follow the progressive pattern indicated by Valéry first in Cahier 8 (1922), p. 774, and then in the Calepin d'un poète (1928):

... le plus beau ... sera/ un sonnet/ dont les parties rempliront chacune une fonction bien différente de celle des autres, et cette progression de différences dans les strophes cependant bien justifiée par la ligne de tout le discours.¹

In the first quatrain, attention is directed inwards past the figure of the sleeping woman in an attempt to establish the secret activity continuing in her mind. The rime annexée "amie-âme" stresses the interest in the inner workings of the sleeper's mind, drawing attention away from the actual figure of the woman, as does the opening question which places the object "Quels secrets" as the first words of the sonnet and relegates "ma jeune amie" to the less important position at the end of line 1. Concern with the sleeper herself is peripheral - she is a "doux masque" only, a mere adjunct of "ce rayonnement" which emanates from her. The image of fire is used to convey a secret process which the watcher cannot see, but whose effects he can apprehend, while the supporting image of the flower suggests the process is likely to be a fruitful and productive one.

In the second quatrain, the third person constructions of the opening stanza are replaced by a second person as the watcher redirects his attention, not yet precisely to the sleeper herself but to the power of sleep over her. The cognate "aspirant" (1.2) and "conspirent" (1.8) indicate, within the context of the regular breathing of the sleeper, the change of viewpoint that has taken place. The movement upwards implied in "aspirant" and the questing attitude of the soul it suggests, are now replaced by the bearing

1. V. supra p.545 and n.3.

down on the sleeper of the forces of sleep. All that remains of her inner activity is the opposition ("ennemie") it offers to this overwhelming attack. At the same time the imagery of fire and flower gives way to a totally opposed group of water metaphors, the peacefulness and power of sleep being variously evoked in terms of the calm as at sea, the single tear (an image probably suggested by the alliterative possibilities and stressed by the richness of the rhyme) and the slow roll of the wave.

In the tercets for the first time the sleeper is directly addressed. The position of "Dormeuse" opening the tercets and "Veille" symmetrically placed at the beginning of line 14 suggests a contrast reversing the progression of the quatrains and giving a pattern of waking-sleeping, sleeping-waking. But it is not a question of a straight inversion. In the first tercet there is a return to the imagery of the first quatrain, to light in line 9 and to the flower, now become fruit, in line 11. At the same time, the "dormeuse" is no longer referred to as an intangible "âme" but is seen in the fullness and sensuality of her physical presence, "O biche avec langueur longue auprès d'une grappe." An activity is now apprehended in the sleeping form itself which corresponds to the hidden activity of the absent mind sensed in stanza one and which contrasts with the subjugation described in stanza two.

In the final tercet, the evolution in the watcher's attitude is complete - "mes yeux sont ouverts." The activity of the soul is now accepted as an imponderable (l. 12) while the form of the sleeper is seen to be "awake," full of harmonies and resonances which speak to the onlooker who is ready to perceive them. The

still inchoate mass of the first tercet, "amas doré d'ombres et d'abandons" where the watcher only perceived the general principle of activity operative in the sleeping figure, is now refined and restrained in accordance with his growing awareness into the one graceful gesture of the arm veiling, yet moulded by, the potential of the "ventre."

The sonnet form constitutes a kind of equivalent to the form of the sleeper, combining in similar multidimensional fashion a glimpsed richness with obvious physical restraints. Use of the alexandrine line allows the development of extensive patterns of assonance and alliteration, whose diversity and multiplicity recall the profusion of the hidden world of the mind and its reflection in the sensual abundance of the body. Controlling and disciplining these patterns, like the restraining arm of the sleeper, are the traditional structures of the sonnet which resolve the complex links between mental and physical worlds into a simply grasped paradox. The strict regularity of the sonnet form in this instance is of two-fold importance. In a general sense, it reinforces the idea of the discovery of perfect form. More specifically where its effect on the rhyme is concerned, it fulfils the requirement of Cahier 8 ("Les mêmes rimes aux quatrains ont une signification, qu'il faut trouver. Faire le sonnet, c'est trouver cette signification") in that the repetition of rhymes and rhyme pattern in the quatrains is material in stressing the indissoluble links between the two ostensibly contradictory states of mental activity and apparent physical passivity. In the tercets, the rhyme continues to play an important role, stressing in the repetition of the opening couplet

the notion of abundance and then through the open-ended pattern of the first tercet as a whole, focussing attention forward to the ultimate realization of form and the resolution of the rhyme-pattern in the final tercet. The form, far from "sleeping," is alive with the contrasting possibilities of control and profusion it embodies. A traditional attitude (on the sleeper as being "dead to the world") and a traditional form (the regular sonnet) have been simultaneously revived and made to illustrate the basic principle of the creative process, the interaction of absorption and awareness.

The fourth sonnet of Charmes, Le Sylphe, develops quite a different range of possibilities from those exemplified in La Dormeuse. Valéry is concerned here less with an investigation of the living structure of realized form than with the problem of how such shape is achieved. In particular, Le Sylphe is a recognition of the phenomenon of inspiration, of the existence of the "vers reçu" or "vers donné" which Valéry in his theoretical remarks on the need for conscientious craftsmanship often tends to underplay. The pentasyllabic line is very important in creating an impression of speed and elusiveness while the cyclical thematic arrangement and the tightly knit, if not regular, rhyme-scheme stress tantalizing and mysterious self-containment.

Ni vu ni connu
 Je suis le parfum
 Vivant et défunt
 Dans le vent venu!

Ni vu ni connu
 Hasard ou génie?
 A peine venu
 La tâche est finie!

Ni lu ni compris?
 Aux meilleurs esprits
 Que d'erreurs promises!

Ni vu ni connu
 Le temps d'un sein nu
 Entre deux chemises!

As in L'Abeille, the four part structure of the sonnet seems the characteristic most clearly underlined but this time the process is carried much further. The refrain at the beginning of each stanza does much to establish them as equal entities and the modulation of line 9, the one departure from the norm, merely reinforces the pattern. This fourfold repetition, comparable to the fourfold linking of the bee-sting and woman in L'Abeille, has here a directness which emphasizes the sense of a delicate and teasing ballet, while at the same time the integration of all four stanzas under the same negative motif stresses the elusive, inexplicable quality of the sylph.

Just as in La Dormeuse, the banal idea of being "dead to the world" provokes a whole new range of speculation, so here a cliché, "ni vu ni connu," is turned to new and effective account, capturing and emphasizing the essential paradox of the sylph. The junction of the concrete and the intangible on which it opens the poem is paralleled in the thematic pattern of the sonnet as a whole. The first stanza introduces the sylph as wind-borne perfume - tantalizing, intangible, evanescent, paradoxical. In the second quatrain the focus changes to a question as to the origins and nature of this being, expressed in a further opposition "Hasard ou génie?" This is followed in lines 7 and 8 by a restatement of the idea of "vivant et défunt" but this time it includes reference to a task to be accomplished and to the speed with which this will be achieved. The emphasis on speed finds a formal correspondence in the shorter tercets and in particular in the absence of conjugated verbs and the reliance on participles. The first tercet, continuing the idea of the task, now situates it as a literary or intellectual one (1.9),

before going on to suggest that it will offer little help in determining the essence of the sylph. The final tercet returns to this central problem and, picking up the union of abstract and concrete codified in the refrain "Ni vu ni connu" and retaining the sense of speed, proposes a physical sensuous counterpart, the glimpse of the naked breast ("le temps d'un sein nu"), to the ethereal insubstantial perfume of the opening quatrain.

The circular movement of theme from the sylph itself to questions and speculations about it and back again is repeated in the general movement of the syntax. Stanzas one and four are each a single exclamation while in stanzas two and three the pattern is one of question followed by exclamation. The importance of this enclosed arrangement is stressed by Lawler:

Le second quatrain et le premier tercet décrivent l'effet produit sur le lecteur: le sentiment de satisfaction et la rupture avec les préoccupations ordinaires, les illusions inévitables qui sont inhérents au fait de choisir de lire de la poésie; les deux autres parties ferment le cercle magique autour de nous, le Sylphe affirmant et révélant son charme. L'ordre des parties reflète ainsi le rythme fondamental d'un art de provocation qui demande deux joueurs, le poète et le lecteur, et où le succès dépend [...] de ce que le poète a toujours le premier et le dernier mot.¹

The reader questions, the poem cannot explain itself, but merely is. This sense of mysterious and provocative self-sufficiency is also strongly underlined by the rhyme-scheme. The enclosed pattern of the opening quatrain with its exclusive use of masculine rhymes give the stanza a unified phonetic quality which is further enhanced by the inner rhyme "vu - connu," assonance on nasal œ ("vivant," "dans," "vent") and alliteration on v and f.

1. Lawler, Lecture de Valéry, p. 140.

This density is characteristic not only of the first quatrain but of the whole sonnet. In the second quatrain an alternate pattern of rhyme replaces the enclosed one of the first quatrain as the alternative possibilities of the sylph's origins are discussed. But the first rhyme, "connu - venu," is repeated, while the first feminine rhyme of the piece, "génie - finie" picks up the "Ni ... ni" of the opening formula. Interestingly enough the Doucet Manuscript shows that these two stanzas were originally envisaged in reverse order.¹ The superiority of the present arrangement where the enclosed pattern and unbreached wall of masculine rhymes open the poem with the evocation of the sylph in all its aery impenetrability seems clear. The feminine rhymes of lines 6 and 8 in the secondary position then come to seem like a momentary chink in the sylph's protective garment, suggesting without ever realizing it for more than the briefest of moments the possibility of a revelation.

In the tercets, masculine rhymes again predominate (of the fourteen rhymes of the sonnet, ten are masculine), but the presence of a feminine rhyme at the close of each tercet once more produces that sense of breakthrough adumbrated in the second quatrain and given concrete realization in the fleeting vision of lines 13 and 14. In the first tercet this feeling is enhanced by the inner rhyme "meilleurs - erreurs" which supports the masculine rhyme of lines 9 and 10, making the modulation to the feminine rhyme in line 11 even more of a pleasant surprise. In the second tercet, the completion of the rhyme from line 11 is of course foreseen, but this has the effect of emphasizing the unexpectedness of the word "chemises"

1. Lawler, *op.cit.*, p. 139, n.1. In addition, the present ll.3 and 4 are also inverted in the MS.

itself. At the same time, however, a feeling of density and completeness is maintained throughout by the continuation of the same vowel sound from the feminine rhyme of the second quatrain to the homophonic masculine rhyme of lines 9 and 10 and then into the feminine rhyme of lines 11 and 14. The reversion in lines 12 and 13 to the opening rhyme of the sonnet, underlining by phonetic repetition the divergent yet complementary nature of the imagery, works towards the same effect.

The most surprising aspect of Le Sylphe is the wealth of suggestion Valéry has managed to pack into this very restricted sonnet form. The pentasyllable intensifies the factor of compression inherent in the sonnet, and as a comparison with the subsequent poem in Charmes, L'Insinuant, also in pentasyllables, makes plain, the metre is handled in such a way as to increase the feeling of speed produced by the brevity of the form. In contrast to the lulling sinuous rhythm initiated in the first stanza of L'Insinuant by the long vowels and the mute e's, there is only one example of a mute e in Le Sylphe ("A peine" in line 7) and the pentasyllable is throughout associated with short vowels so that the impression is one of rapidity and lightness.¹ Similarly, the manipulation of the masculine-feminine alternation of rhyme present in both poems is made in each case to harmonize with overall formal and thematic patterns. In L'Insinuant, in accordance with the title, the form is the relatively free one (in comparison to the sonnet) of a succession of quatrains and the rhyme-scheme can move freely through a variety of different patterns.

1. "Quant à l'E muet, la seule règle de la Poésie, la seule pierre de touche, c'est la place de la muette." Letter of June 1891 to Gide, Gide-Valéry, Correspondance, p. 103.

The atmosphere of permanent expectation is stressed by the repetition and modulation of the first quatrain in the final one - a pattern that the shortness of the form, four quatrains, makes readily apprehensible. At the same time, the slow, subtle emergence of "le mot le plus tendre" is paralleled by the open-ended indecisive quality of the prevailing feminine rhymes. In Le Sylphe, on the other hand, the clipped, crisp tone of the dominant masculine rhymes supports the pattern of intact self-sufficiency suggested by the overall structure of the sonnet and by the coherence of each of the four sections individually, linked together under the one tantalizing refrain. At the same time they provide a background against which the feminine rhymes, particularly in the tercets, can create that element of surprise that is also germane to the being of the sylph and which is captured thematically in the unexpected sensual image of the final stanza.

The fifth sonnet of Charmes, Les Grenades, views the problem of creation and form from quite a different angle. There is the same ambivalent association as elsewhere between fertility and death, but this time it is a question of a vigorous inner life bursting through a form it has itself created and seeking new modes of realization. Form is no longer seen as an absolute, as in La Dormeuse, nor as a self-sufficient entity as in Le Sylphe. It is placed in a relative context, just one of the phases in a continuing cycle of creation. Moulded by inner and outer forces, it is the transitory shape which summarizes and realizes the potential available at a given moment. Such codification, however, inevitably supersedes itself and is then jettisoned as potential is renewed, develops further, and seeks a different form in order to become aware of its changed capabilities.

Dures grenades entr'ouvertes
 Cédant à l'excès de vos grains,
 Je crois voir des fronts souverains
 Éclatés de leurs découvertes!

Si les soleils par vous subis,
 O grenades entre-baïllées,
 Vous ont fait d'orgueil travaillées
 Craquer les cloisons de rubis,

Et que si l'or sec de l'écorce
 A la demande d'une force
 Crève en gemmes rouges de jus,

Cette lumineuse rupture
 Fait rêver une âme que j'eus
 De sa secrète architecture. O I, 146

The sonnet once again follows the principle of "une rotation du même corps autour d'un point ou d'un axe," the motif of rupture being central to each stanza - "entr'ouvertes" and "éclatés" (stanza 1), "entre-baïllées" and "craquer" (stanza 2), "crève" (stanza 3) and "rupture" (stanza 4). Parallel to this and present likewise in each stanza is an awareness of solidity and resistance - "dures grenades"¹ and "fronts souverains" (stanza 1), "cloisons" (stanza 2), "l'or sec de l'écorce" and "architecture" (stanza 4). But the tension between the irresistible force and the immovable object is not confined to mere repetition in each of the four sections of the sonnet. The sonnet form as a whole repeats the confrontation. The enclosed structure of the "dures grenades" is echoed in the way the first stanza corresponds to the fourth, the second to the third. The two inner stanzas, syntactically parallel as conditional clauses, concentrate on the inner aspect of the fruit, evoking the rich colours (working from red to gold in each case) and luscious juiciness. In contrast, the outer stanzas, both main

1. "Belles grenades" in the MS variants quoted by Lawler, Lecture de Valéry, p. 177, n.3, is clearly much less effective.

clauses, direct the attention away from the fruit towards more abstract considerations as the speaker reflects on the analogies suggested by the pomegranates. This enclosed effect is increased as Lawler has pointed out¹ by the phonetic link between the closing rhyme "architecture" and "dures" the opening word of the sonnet. It also receives support from the enclosed pattern of rhyme in the quatrains.

At the same time, however, a contrasting principle is at work. The rhymes of the quatrains may be enclosed but two new rhymes are introduced in the second quatrain, a departure from the strictly "regular" pattern. A more basic disruption of traditional arrangements follows - the syntactic linking of the second quatrain with the tercets. The role of the quatrains as an integrated unit is thereby further undermined and the balance of two quatrains to two tercets slips into the imbalance of four lines to ten. The interweaving of different structural patterns and interrelating of themes of order and enclosure on the one hand, disruption and progression on the other, do not stop here however. Beyond the general thematic resemblance noted at the outset between each of the four stanzas, links of particular strength exist between the first and second and second and third stanzas. In the second quatrain, "O grenades entre-baillées" echoes the first quatrain's "Dures grenades entr'ouvertes" and the verb occurs in the third line of the stanza, in exactly the same position as the verb in the first quatrain. As the sonnet progresses, however, a different pattern of association emerges, with the first tercet repeating the "si" construction of the second quatrain and continuing in very similar terms the description

1. Lecture de Valéry, pp. 177, 178.

of the pomegranates. This repetitiveness has been considered a fault by some critics,¹ but it could be claimed that the slowing of the forward movement of the sonnet has an important role in preparing the motif of hard-won detachment contained in lines 12-14. The sonnet seems to move forward in two surges - lines 1-8 and 9-11 - before reaching its climax in the relative independence of the second tercet, an independence that parallels on the formal level the ultimate detachment of the speaker from the structures defining his past.

It can now be appreciated that the pattern of general enclosure in the sonnet noted earlier is by no means a total one. There is certainly a parallel between the two outer stanzas in that both consider the symbolic aspect of the pomegranates, but within this parallelism there is progression also. The analogy that comes to the speaker's mind in the first quatrain has a broad general relevance. Perhaps to be taken symbolically as an image for mental creativity, perhaps all too literarily playing on the double meaning of "grenades,"² the metaphor "fronts" of line 3 links up with the notation "Dures grenades" to highlight the violence of the disruption by emphasis on the apparent imperviousness of the exterior. In the closing tercet, on the other hand, attention is turned away from the actual process of rupture. Where the final line of each of the preceding stanzas opens with a verb or participle of bursting -

1. For instance, P.-O. Walzer: "Il faut dire que, pour ce qui est des deuxième et troisième strophes, les vers fabriqués ne sont pas à la hauteur des vers inspirés. On y découvre en effet une répétition oiseuse ..." La Poésie de Valéry (Genève, Cailler, 1933), p. 319. Also Slatkine reprints, Genève, 1966.

2. Lawler also sees a possible reference to the Alhambra playing on the meaning of "grenade." Lecture de Valéry, p. 178. This reading certainly reinforces the general thematic emphasis on structure.

"éclatés," "craquer," "crève"¹ - here the bursting open is complete, the emphasis on that which is laid bare. The speaker has worked his way through to a realization of the special symbolic significance of the pomegranates where he himself is concerned. He concentrates on the internal structure of the fruit now disclosed before him, identifying it with the inner constructions of his own past self, outmoded likewise in the very moment of their revelation.

Valéry has thus skilfully combined static and progressive aspects of the sonnet form to support patterns of enclosure, disruption, and final detachment. Thematic motifs of solidity and disruption are played through in each of the four stanzas individually, but are also echoed in the total construction of the sonnet. An enclosed pattern is created by the association of the first and fourth and second and third stanzas. At the same time, the traditional quatrain-tercet structure is disturbed by the syntactic pattern linking lines 1-4 and 5-14, and the two units of particular thematic and syntactic resemblance, lines 1-8 and 5-11, provide a further conflicting strand. The tensions thereby created aptly parallel the denseness, fullness and pressure of the moment of supreme fruition, while simultaneously, on another level, the traditional articulations of the sonnet, building to the climax of the final tercet, give substance to the idea of a structure that is initially hidden but progressively revealed and recognized.

The sixth and last sonnet of Charmes, Le Vin perdu, differs from the rest in its conversational story-telling approach.

1. The MS variant of the first tercet quoted by Lawler, Lecture de Valéry, p. 177, n.3, shows that Valéry did not immediately achieve this reiterative effect: "Si l'or sec des rudes écorces / A crevé pour faire vos forces / Rire en gemmes rouges de jus."

J'ai, quelque jour, dans l'Océan,
(Mais je ne sais plus sous quels cieux),
Jeté, comme offrande au néant,
Tout un peu de vin précieux ...

Qui voulut ta perte, ô liqueur?
J'obéis peut-être au devin?
Peut-être au souci de mon coeur,
Songeant au sang, versant le vin?

Sa transparence accoutumée
Après une rose fumée
Reprit aussi pure la mer ...

Perdu ce vin, ivres les ondes!...
J'ai vu bondir dans l'air amer
Les figures les plus profondes ... O I, 146-147

In contrast to Le Sylphe, Les Grenades, and to a lesser extent L'Abeille, the four sections of the sonnet do not operate here as separate entities reiterating the same central motif. Instead that motif is harnessed within and dispersed throughout the entire sonnet just as the wine itself is dispersed throughout the water but finally reincorporated into new and significant pattern. Emphasis is on a process of natural and then supernatural transmutation presented with the apparent guilelessness of a narrative.

Each stanza is a stage in a sequence, though the movement forward is not an even one. In the quatrains the gesture of dispensing the wine is in fact viewed from two different angles. The first gives a straightforward statement of the event, at the same time surrounding it with a maximum of imprecision; time, place, quantity are all left vague - "quelque jour," "dans l'Océan/(Mais je ne sais plus sous quels cieux)," "tout un peu de vin." The second is in effect a flashback, a series of questions seeking to elucidate the reasons prompting the act. But the multiplication of alternatives, irrational impulse or emotional need, merely enhances the mystery even while the linking of the wine with blood

in line 8 suggests the fundamental importance of the gesture to the speaker's life. The imprecision surrounding the circumstances and sources of the act has the important effect of concentrating attention on the act itself. Like the sylph it is inexplicable; it merely is. This integrity receives formal reinforcement, in much the same manner as in Le Sylphe by the use of masculine rhymes only throughout the quatrains. At the same time the alternate pattern of the rhyme and the introduction of two new rhymes in the second quatrain supports the sense of dissolution and loss associated with the gesture.¹

The tercets supply a double ending to the tale. The first provides the natural outcome to the action described in the first quatrain. The speaker's intervention is over; this is the only section of the sonnet where the first person pronoun is absent. The sea resumes its normal appearance - a process stressed by the inversion which puts "sa transparence accoutumée" at the beginning of the stanza and by the way in which the last trace of the wine "une rose fumée" is surrounded in lines 9 and 11 by reference to the purity of the sea. The second tercet, however, offers a miraculous reversal of the situation - "Perdu ce vin" but "ivres les ondes." Diffusion has become concentration, loss has become gain. The pouring down into the sea in the first stanza finds a response and a counterpart in the movement upward of the final tercet with "ondes," "bondir" and "profondes" phonetically linked in a highly suggestive

1. Note the departure once again from Cahier 8, p. 357: "Les mêmes rimes aux quatrains ont une signification, qu'il faut trouver. Faire le sonnet, c'est trouver cette signification."

group.¹

As in the quatrains the rhyme has an important role to play in underlining the progress of events. It is the feminine rhymes which are dominant here, providing in the first instance in the couplet of lines 9 and 10 the expected and unsurprising development from the all masculine rhymes of the quatrains. In addition the rhyme repetition of the couplet gives a note of finality to what has gone before. But then the alternate pattern of the last four lines and the ending of the sonnet on a feminine rhyme establishes an open-ended quality in the poem which contrasts with the mysterious independence and apparent gratuity of the gesture described in the quatrains and suggests the infinite unforeseen repercussions to which it gives rise.

The most obvious structural arrangement of the sonnet, the 8:6 division, is used here as a backbone to facilitate the contrast in the narrative between the apparent detachment of the initial gesture and its unexpected and far-reaching results. But Valéry develops to the full the potential of that division so that the ostensibly straightforward recounting of his fable is in fact supported by a wide range of the possibilities for progression, symmetry, and even

1. Lawler, "The Meaning of Valéry's Le Vin perdu," French Studies, XIV (1960), 350, stresses in addition the contrasting movements backwards in stanza 2 ("the idea of obedience," "the turning back to some inner prompting") and then forwards in the resumption of the normal sequence of events in stanza 3, and points out how this does perhaps after all reinforce the sense of a fundamental immobility ("rotation autour d'un point ou d'un axe") at the heart of the sonnet: "at the centre of the forward movement that poetry must provide by its very nature as a temporal art, we discover here a fundamental immobility. The movement seems directed towards a goal, but it is not that goal that is most important and most meaningful, but the ballet, the fruitful redemption of every gesture."

cyclical pattern offered by the quatrain-tercet arrangement, and by all the resources that manipulation of the rhyme within the 8:6 framework can provide. Like the wine in the water, the initial effect is one of dispersion and yet ultimately of a high degree of coherence and design.

From this examination of the sonnets of Charmes, it seems possible to draw two conclusions, one concerning the relationship between theory and practice, rather misleadingly dismissed by Hytier at the end of his article, the other relating to the evolution in Valéry's use and handling of the sonnet from his performance of the 1890's to that in Charmes.

While Valéry certainly does not write his sonnets to a specific model, theory and practice in his later work do seem to coincide in so far as in theoretical remarks show him to be aware of the variety of patterning possibilities available in the form and of the principles of balance and imbalance the form supposes. He innovates amongst the poets we have studied in being the only one who avoids the red herring of rhyme-scheme as an absolute criterion of judgement of the competence of a sonnet and who manages instead to see it as but one aspect of a more basic pattern of general structural tensions. Indeed in a meditation centred on the sonnet in Cahier 8 (1921), p. 275, there is strong criticism of the concept of prosodic factors as the sole criteria of a given poetic form:

Sonnet

Règles poétiques - on a ôté, peut-être, leur
vertu à certaines règles poétiques en se bornant
à les définir par des conditions de la rime, du
nombre de vers, de la structure, de la strophe.

Je me demande si, dans l'intention des inventeurs, le sens n'était lui aussi, soumis à des conditions en rapport avec l'architecture - Ainsi le Sonnet.¹

True to these remarks and despite the references elsewhere to "les mêmes rimes aux quatrains" and to the sonnet as a "simultaneous" form, nowhere is the word "regularity" used and the concept of a single "true" sonnet form in the Banvillean sense can hardly survive in the face of at least three different suggestions for ways of contemplating the sonnet structure. Of course, as Hytier himself points out, for a creative artist theorizing does not precede practice but grows out of it. This is especially true of Valéry whose favourite claim is that the practice of poetry and the education of the poet are synonymous and who is inclined to see the supreme achievement of poetry as lying not in the finished composition but in the development in self-awareness in the composer. But from this to the conclusion that "si ses sonnets sont souvent exquis et parfois beaux, c'est pour des raisons étrangères à ses spéculations" seems a strange piece of logic. Each of the sonnets of Charmes is an exploration which extends the poet's (and the reader's) awareness of the range of the form and allows him to realize more clearly the organic relationship between this particular form and certain aspects of the theme of creative technique which constitutes the unique subject of the collection. Vocabulary, rhythm, imagery - all the musical and suggestive aspects of poetry - must also be resolved

1. Linking these remarks on the sonnet with Valéry's general distrust of inspirational poetry, the entry continues: "C'est une image insupportable pour les poètes que celle qui les représente recevant de créatures imaginaires le meilleur de leurs ouvrages. Agents de transmission - c'est une conception de sauvages. Quant à moi je n'en veux point. Je ne me sers que de ce hasard qui fait le fond de tous les esprits et puis d'un travail opiniâtre qui est contre ce hasard."

before the quality of a poem can be evaluated. But the patterning and developing of these features cannot be divorced from the general structural organization of the poem, and an awareness of the different possibilities of the sonnet and a sensitivity towards them is clearly material in the production not just of a competent piece of prosodic engineering but of an evocative and suggestive "charme."

Such formal and thematic integration is notably absent in the early part of Valéry's career, where he merely follows a general fashion for the sonnet. His views on the form at this point are conditioned by the terminology of his predecessors, and in his practice he reproduces the most obvious aspects of their technique without stopping to reflect on the relationship that exists between their chosen form and the general pattern of their preoccupations. The variants of the early sonnets and in particular the selective and modifying approach of the Album de Vers anciens give some insight into the evolution of an original conception and demonstrate a growing awareness of the suitability of the sonnet to accommodate certain of its aspects. In Charmes, the essential attraction of the sonnet form for Valéry becomes clear. It can be closely identified with the creation of order from disorder, form from formlessness which is the subject of all of Valéry's mature poetry, the symmetrical and contrastive possibilities of the genre providing both a frame and a model for this fundamental opposition.

Use of the sonnet particularly in association with the shorter metres naturally reinforces the emphasis on the principle of order and control and is linked with Valéry's constant attempt towards more exact thought and preciser communication. The more restricted a

form, the greater the restraints imposed on expression and the higher the level of awareness in the use of language. Free acceptance of an arbitrary rule such as the sonnet forces the poet to a greater precision, but, for this creation of order to be meaningful, some trace of the original disorder from which it was created must remain. Sufficient but not excessive formalization is required; for this the sonnet can be an ideal model. For even while its fixed structure is the figure for the achievement of a perfect if limited equilibrium, the variety of permutations possible within that frame are most effective in suggesting the creation of order as an ongoing process. The tensions between the established structural pattern and the shifting arrangements of theme, syntax, rhythm, rhyme and general phonetic motifs give the form a dynamic character. It is still working, still "awake," not finished and dead, but like the figure of "la Dormeuse" filled with all the vigour and resonance of the opposition of forces that preceded its realization. Far indeed from the incoherence of form and theme of the early sonnets, this is truly "form informed with intensity."

CONCLUSION

After two centuries of near eclipse, the sonnet in France came to new prominence as a serious form in the 1820's as part of the general revival of French lyric poetry. Its success was not immediate however. The first generation of Romantic writers were primarily interested in ridding themselves of the empty shell of Classical conventions and in expressing their own personal emotion in terms of less stylized and more flexible forms. At the same time, the need to look to places other than "le Grand Siècle" for creditable literary antecedents directed their attention back to the neglected poetry of sixteenth century France and also abroad, often to the writing of their contemporaries or near contemporaries. Both in the work of the sixteenth century Pléiade and in that of the English Romantics, especially Wordsworth, the sonnet enjoyed a privileged position.¹ The anomalous situation thus arose that the new emphasis on the features differentiating one emotional experience from another became associated in some cases with the sonnet, a set form that had traditionally been linked with, and could even be said to encourage, standardized patterns of argument and imagery - in short with a form that might well be described as possessing definite classical characteristics.

Sainte-Beuve's Vie, Poésies et Pensées de Joseph Delorme (1829), was the first collection of poetry in the nineteenth century to contain a substantial number of sonnets, and these offer good illustration of

1. Considerable use of the sonnet in Germany by Goethe, A.W.Schlegel, Eichendorff, Rückert, and Platen does not appear to have had any direct bearing on the revival of the genre in France, though Sainte-Beuve does have a Sonnet traduit d'Uhland, a Sonnet imité de Rückert, and a Sonnet imité de Justin Kerner in Notes et Sonnets, appended to Pensées d'août in 1845.

the paradoxical situation described above. Sainte-Beuve's interest in sixteenth century literature and in the English Lake poets is reflected in his use of the sonnet for analysis of the emotions on the one hand, for the simple portrayal of daily life on the other. In both cases the feature of prime significance and the one differentiating Sainte-Beuve's sonnet from either of these models, is the simplification of structures of theme, argument and imagery within the fixed shape of the genre. Traditional rules of sonnet prosody are meticulously observed, but their retention apparently has little intrinsic connection with the poet's selection and handling of his material.

Where the sonnet of emotional analysis is concerned, the rigid form is seen as a means of disciplining the often incoherent personal feeling contained within it. However this is never worked out in terms of the dense systems of accepted antithesis and paradox characteristic of sixteenth century sonnet writing but remains at the level of an opposition between content and form. Similarly in the sonnets, increasingly numerous in Sainte-Beuve's later collections, dealing with the ordinary events of daily life, the form is seen as being in itself an ennobling factor. There is no attempt to resolve the gap between a sophisticated literary device and the mundane content framed within it.

Sainte-Beuve's sonnets might thus appear primarily remarkable for their elimination of the conceits which had characterized the form in the sixteenth century and ultimately destroyed its poetic character. However his contribution to the fortunes of the genre in the nineteenth century had other aspects also. He stands at the head of at least three important trends in nineteenth century poetry, all with their

impact on the sonnet in that period.

In the first place, Sainte-Beuve was by temperament inclined to a dislike of exaggeration and prolixity. None of the poems of Joseph Delorme is long and in his critical work too, Sainte-Beuve stressed the merits of brevity in face of the exuberance of Hugo and the facility of Lamartine. He thus plays a large part in initiating a tradition extending down to our own day which tends to see the short poem as the only viable poetic possibility. This idea was to gain increasing currency as the first generation of Romantic writers gradually passed from favour among the younger poets. The writings of Poe translated by Baudelaire in the 1850's were a powerful theoretical influence in the same direction. In the latter part of the century the correspondence of both Mallarmé and Valéry testifies to the far-reaching effect of the American's ideas. Meanwhile, on the practical side, Les Fleurs du Mal was entirely composed of short poems, chief among which was the sonnet, which thus became conclusively established as the single most popular genre in this area.

In the second place, and closely linked with this emphasis on concision, Sainte-Beuve also laid considerable stress on the idea of formal excellence. This preoccupation was shared and developed by Gautier, who used it to combat what he saw as the excessive social or moralizing tendencies of some of the literature of the 1830's. His belief in the supreme virtue of "l'art difficile" was subsequently to provide the inspiration for Banville's Petit Traité de poésie française with its concentration on technical detail, for the Parnassian view of poetry as primarily an exercise in the creation of beautiful form, for the extreme formal precision of Heredia and for the formal

speculations of Mallarmé and Valéry. Gautier produced few sonnets himself, but as the century progressed, the sonnet became increasingly identified with the quest for formal perfection. Its set structure offered, it seemed, a yardstick against which poetic achievement could easily be measured. However poetic quality and technical skill are not necessarily synonymous. The gap already evident in Sainte-Beuve between the sophisticated form of the sonnet and the mundane subject matter confined within it and his tendency to confuse technical correction of form with real poetic insight persisted right through the century in the sonnets of a large number of poets. A "correct" sonnet, or even a sonnet, "correct" or not, came to be seen as an automatic guarantee of poetic capacity which would carry all deficiencies in the poet's choice, conception, and execution of his theme.

Finally the tension between a universal "classical" form and individual, disorganized emotion, though mainly evident in Sainte-Beuve's sonnets in a lack of formal and thematic integration, was on a very few occasions partially resolved in a new and significant way. "Le rêve" and "le flottant," seen by Sainte-Beuve as the original note in the Joseph Delorme collection, were aspects of emotional experience subsequently explored by Baudelaire and Verlaine, who wove together the various formal, phonetic and rhythmic structures of their sonnets to create suggestive "musical" patterns of dense profusion or lurking unease.

By the 1830's and 1840's, in the wake of Joseph Delorme and Sainte-Beuve's second collection of poetry, Les Consolations (1830), the sonnet had become an accepted form. Most poets of the time tried

their hand at it at least once, even if they never adopted it as a favourite genre. Gautier and Musset are good examples of the general trend. The sonnet's popularity in this period was most evident among minor poets such as Barbier and Boulay-Paty and provincials such as Soulayry or even Brizeux. None of these however showed any real awareness of its fundamental tensions and symmetries of structure nor any consideration of the sorts of thematic pattern to which they might fruitfully be married. The one exception to this generalization is Nerval who in Les Chimères produced a group of sonnets characterized by a dense interplay of formal, thematic, and phonetic structures which admirably reflected his obsessive yearning for order and permanence. This is the first example in French nineteenth century poetry of an intensive exploration of the possibilities of the sonnet form. It is notable that rhyme-scheme in particular assumes a new and integral role in the total conception of the poet and is no longer a mere adjunct to a logical argument framed in the succession of quatrains and tercets. Indeed it could be said that formal and phonetic patterns replace traditional structures of logical argument and that it is these patterns which offer the reader the key to the meaning of the poems. However Nerval's sonnets, like the rest of his writing, were too idiosyncratic and too hermetic to attract any kind of a following in the 1850's. It is only with Les Fleurs du Mal in 1857 that the emotional range of the French nineteenth century sonnet is decisively extended and some new possibilities of the formal structure thoroughly investigated.

In contrast to the majority of those who had preceded him in the use of the sonnet in the nineteenth century, Baudelaire, like Nerval,

perceived in the genre formal patterns that corresponded closely to his own fundamental cast of mind. On the one hand the bi-partite structures of quatrain and tercet echoed and emphasized his anguished awareness of the duality and division in human nature. On the other the control and concentration embodied in the form could also offer a model for the experience of harmonious intensity "l'infini dans le fini" for which he yearned, or for the reverse picture of claustrophobia and confinement. In the first instance the sixteenth century conceits, largely eliminated by Sainte-Beuve, are replaced by more broadly based antitheses founded on the various oppositions provided by the quatrain-tercet arrangement. At the same time the traditional requirement of quatrains on two rhymes only in an enclosed order is often ignored, the poet relying for his effect on the patterns of argument and imagery organized within the different structural blocks. Nevertheless, and in contrast to the contention of Gautier, Baudelaire was certainly capable of capitalizing on the detailed requirements of the traditional sonnet form when it suited him to do so. In the sonnets where he is concerned with the experience of "l'infini dans le fini," logical patterns of antithesis and paradox lose their dominant position and there is an increased emphasis on the repetitive structures of the sonnet. Rhyme-scheme is especially important here. It ceases to be a mere support to the logical development of the poet's thought through the quatrain-tercet structure. Instead the traditional duplication of the quatrain rhyme, intensified by a general emphasis on richness and supported by carefully worked out phonetic patterns within the body of the line, is used as an important element in the suggesting of the harmony, profusion and order of the ideal or its mirror image, the

claustrophobic monotony of spleen.

Les Fleurs du Mal establishes two main roles for the lyric sonnet in France in the nineteenth century: a traditional one of emotional analysis, but carried out on a much more individual level and with a considerable simplification of imagery and argument as compared with sixteenth century practice; and a new one of formal and quasi-musical suggestion. In the latter case, however, the handling of rhythmic structures within the sonnet form is not a feature of key interest in Baudelaire's sonnet writing, despite his two successful experiments with a heterometric sonnet in Le Chat and La Musique. It was left to Verlaine to take up this aspect, using disruptive rhythmic patterns within the fixed form of the genre to suggest his own emotional unease. Prosodic and syntactic structures follow a fluctuating relationship as Verlaine moves from the superficial conformism of the Parnassian sonnets of his youth, through the experiments with a more impressionistic type of sonnet in the Poèmes saturniens to the abandonment of the sonnet for the little songs of Romances sans Paroles, before returning once again in Sagesse to the superficially orthodox arrangements of sonnet and alexandrine.

However the sonnet in the nineteenth century did not remain purely a lyric form. In the latter part of the century it became closely associated with the development of a vein of descriptive poetry as Gautier's concern with plastic values was taken up and enlarged by Leconte de Lisle and by the Parnassian writers of the 1860's and 1870's. This development reached its apogee in the work of Heredia. Les Trophées

reveals the peculiar potential of the sonnet for the simulation - and supplementation - of visual effects. On the one hand the different elements of a natural, historical or mythological scene or the various aspects of an object are isolated and examined within the different sections of the formal structure. On the other, the climactic build from the longer quatrains to the concision of the tercets enables a pointing up of the most prominent visual aspect of the description and also of the universal human traits that this often reveals. The external frame of the rhyme-scheme is constantly used to increase the plastic effect. Strictly observed rhyme pattern combined with richness and rarity of rhyme enhances the impression of an almost tangible solidity and opulence. Marked variations of rhythm around the standard alexandrine line within one or possibly more of the four component sections of the sonnet contrast strongly with the prevailing sense of ordered pattern and throw it into sharper relief, infusing it with a feeling of energy and power.

A third aspect of the nineteenth century sonnet was its close association with specifically aesthetic questions. This could lead, as we have pointed out, to nothing more than an empty concern with the detail of the sonnet rhyme-scheme. In the latter part of the century however, the preoccupation with formal technique was raised to an altogether higher level in the metaphysical speculation of Mallarmé and the meditations of Valéry on the workings of the creative process.

For both these poets the balances and symmetries of the sonnet form had peculiar relevance. Mallarmé initially adopted the genre in imitation of Baudelaire but soon dispensed with the structure of

emotional antithesis characteristic of many of the sonnets of Les Fleurs du Mal. Early irregularities of rhyme-scheme disappear as Mallarmé transfers to the sonnet his unrealized dream of "le Grand Oeuvre," the symbolic representation in Poetry of the structure of the Universe. In this context the set form of the sonnet rigidly observed has value in itself as a tiny fixed system of absolute relationships counter-acting the idiosyncratic and arbitrary element in personal expression. Use of the sonnet in conjunction with shorter metres further aids "la disparition élocutoire du poète." Within the body of the lines extensive dislocation of syntax forces a comparable concentration on the individual words and images and the patterns they compose within the formal structure.

Mallarmé's interest in the sonnet is not however confined to this one area. In the Shakespearian sonnet, the quatorzain, he recognised a structure of extended movement and final repose corresponding to that aspect of his aesthetic which stressed the shifting play of metaphor around a central perception. In his quatorzains, a general use of the shorter metres stresses the element of speed and lightness and underlines the kaleidoscopic whirl of the imagery. Rhetoric is again eliminated, in the interest, this time, of a formal game, undertaken and enjoyed for its own sake. Mallarmé's sonnet writing thus falls into two distinct categories which correspond to the two approaches adopted in Hérodiade and L'Après-midi d'un Faune. It aims, on the one hand, at a static and absolute purity, on the other, at an effect of fluid modulation.

Valéry in the closing years of the century inherited a well-

entrenched sonnet tradition. Sonnets figure largely in his early work composed in the provinces but these pieces are on the whole of little value, derivative in conception and sloppy in execution. It certainly seems possible that his almost exclusive preoccupation with the sonnet in this early period may have contributed to his view of poetry as a technical exercise of limited interest and his abandonment of it, at least as a public activity, for nearly twenty years. It was only gradually that he came to an awareness of the high degree of relevance of the sonnet form for his preoccupation with the creation of ordered but dynamic structure from the multiple possibilities of subconscious experience. In parallel with this development his work in the genre shows a move from the general laxness of post Verlainian Symbolist practice to a keen recognition of the different structural tensions embodied in the form. Various permutations are worked out in Charmes, and the Cahiers of the early 1920's and a number of articles of that period examine the question on a theoretical level.

The sonnet thus has a major role in nearly all the significant developments of French nineteenth century poetry. From an initial position as part of the lyric revival, it becomes associated with the two contradictory tendencies basic to the poetry of the period which assimilate on the one hand poetry to music and on the other link poetry and the visual arts. Furthermore it is intimately connected with the growth of an aesthetic of the short poem and with a general preoccupation with questions of formal technique. The sonnet, like other literary forms, and indeed like all conventional art, embodies principles of order and control but it does so to a particularly high

degree. In the nineteenth century it stands at the opposite pole from the Romantic effusions of the 1820's, the "vers libérés" and the "vers libre" of the 1880's and 1890's, and the growing interest in the prose poem. It is a genre which permits a subtle and intensive manipulation of logical, metaphorical, rhythmic and phonetic patterns around the different possibilities, antithetical, repetitive, symmetrical, climactic, of its formal structure. Indeed the complex pull of many different elements within the set frame appears essential for the creation of an effective and interesting sonnet. The result is a form of multiple possibilities that can be successfully adapted as we have seen, to the varying preoccupations of a wide range of poets. The tightness of its prosodic arrangements combined with the elasticity of its internal patterns seems to correspond to a fundamental tension in human experience between a desire for the diverse and the contradictory and an equally strong yearning for stability and synthesis. This can be expressed across an almost infinite span of permutations and no doubt explains, as Valéry contends, the durability and success of the sonnet as a form.

APPENDIX A: Numbers and distribution of sonnets in the works of the authors considered in this study

Sainte-Beuve

Sainte-Beuve's first collection, Poésies de Joseph Delorme (1829), contained 12 sonnets out of a total of 55 poems, the most strongly represented form after the rimes plates (21 examples). One further sonnet, Sonnet imité de Keats, "Piquante est la bouffée," was added in the 1861 edition of the Poésies complètes, published by Poulet-Malassis, and this is also included in the 1863 Lévy edition of the Poésies complètes.

Les Consolations (1830) has 9 sonnets and 17 poems in rimes plates out of a total of 29 pieces. In addition, a translation in sonnet form of a Michaelangelo sonnet occurs at the beginning of A mon ami Leroux, one of the pieces in rimes plates.

Pensées d'août (1837) has 18 sonnets and 17 poems in rimes plates out of a total of 54 pieces. (In addition the collection also contains a poem addressed to Sainte-Beuve by Musset.)

In the 1863 Lévy edition of the Poésies complètes, the Suite de Joseph Delorme. Poésies du lendemain dans le même ton, which completes volume I, has 17 sonnets out of 75 poems. In volume II, Notes et Sonnets, faisant comme suite aux Pensées d'août has 31 sonnets out of a total of 43 poems, counting the 3 sonnets of the sequence "De ces monts tout est beau" as individual pieces. (Also included in this section are a sonnet addressed to Sainte-Beuve by Antoine de Latour and another poem addressed to him by Edmond Turquety.) Un Dernier Rêve, concluding volume II, has 4 sonnets

out of 9 pieces in verse form. (It also contains a prose outline for a poem.)

Gautier

The first volume of Poésies published by Gautier in 1830 contained a total of 42 poems, including 3 sonnets, 7 poems in quatrains of which 3 are poems of 4 quatrains, and 22 poems in rimes plates. There is no example of the terza rima in this collection.

The 1832 edition of the Poésies contained a further 20 pieces, not counting Albertus. These included a further 4 sonnets, a further 5 poems in quatrains, 2 of which are poems of 4 quatrains, and a further 7 poems in rimes plates. There is no example of the terza rima.

The Poésies diverses, published with La Comédie de la Mort in 1838, number 56. These include 5 sonnets, 19 poems in quatrains, of which 14 are poems in 4 quatrains and 3 poems in 3 quatrains, 4 terze rime, and 13 poems in rimes plates. (There is also 1 poem, Le Sommet de la Tour, which is printed in tercets but rhymes over groups of nine lines, aab ccb ddb, eef ggf hhf, etc.; the same pattern is followed in Portail, the first section of La Comédie de la Mort.)

To the above is added in the Poésies complètes of 1845 a group of Poésies nouvelles. This is subdivided into a further section of 19 Poésies diverses and the collection España. These 1845 Poésies diverses include 2 sonnets, 6 poems in quatrains, of which 3 are poems in 4 quatrains and 1 a poem in 3 quatrains, and 4 poems in rimes plates. There is no example here of the terza rima. España

is composed of 43 poems, including 4 sonnets, 13 poems in quatrains of which 4 are poems in 4 quatrains and 4 poems in 3 quatrains, 2 terze rime, and 13 poems in rimes plates, 2 of these (En allant à la Chartreuse de Miraflores and Consolation) with 14 lines.

The 18 pieces of Emaux et Camées (1852) included only 1 sonnet (Préface). The 47 pieces of the definitive edition (1872) still contain only the 1 sonnet. All the other poems, with the exception of 2 pieces, La Bonne Soirée and L'Art, are in octosyllabic quatrains. There are 6 poems of 4 quatrains and 2 of 3 quatrains (counting as 1 of the latter the 5 separate 3-quatrain sections of the Fantaisies d'hiver).

The remainder of Gautier's poems were not published in a collected form in Gautier's lifetime. The Charpentier edition of the Poésies complètes (1875-1876) therefore concluded with a section entitled Poésies nouvelles, poésies inédites et posthumes containing 69 poems including 34 sonnets. René Jasinski in his critical edition of Gautier's Poésies complètes (Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1932) removes 9 of the 69 pieces as belonging more properly in other sections of Gautier's work (e.g. Chanson à boire to Le Capitaine Fracasse) but adds several other pieces published by Émile Bergerat and Spoelberch de Lovenjoul as well as some hitherto unpublished pieces. He also attempts to organize this whole diverse group of poems (which he entitles Dernières Poésies) into smaller, more coherent divisions and in as far as possible to suggest the chronological sequence in which the poems occurred.

His first group consists of 9 Poèmes (the titles of these sections are Jasinski's), including 2 poems in quatrains, Le Bédouin

et la Mer published in the Revue des deux mondes, 15 August 1846, and A Ernest Hébert sur son tableau La Malaria, published in 1925 by comte Primoli.

The second group consists of 16 Fantaisies ("Nous avons cru devoir distinguer des Poèmes ces pièces plus libres, qui de la joyeuseté à la grâce légère, improvisées ou finement ouvragées, s'orientent selon la même tendance profonde," Jasinski's Introduction, pp. CVI-CVII). These include 9 poems in quatrains, dating from 1850 and afterwards, 1 poem Perplexité which uses the same form of tercet layout and 9 line rhyme arrangement as Le Sommet de la Tour and Portail and which was first published in the keepsake L'Eglantine in 1834, and 1 poem in rimes plates, Nouvel An, a compliment recited to the Princesse Mathilde in 1868 on her birthday, 27 May.

The third group brought together by Jasinski is more closely integrated in both form and theme. This is Sept Sonnets à Marie Mattéi. These poems all date from about 1852, though only one, Modes et Chiffons, was actually published at the time, in the Revue de Paris of 1 January 1852.

The fourth group Autres Sonnets are linked by their common form. Jasinski in his Introduction, pp. CXVII-CXVIII, justifies this grouping by pointing out that "le Romantisme, et surtout Sainte-Beuve, avaient remis en honneur le sonnet," that Gautier "lui gardait dès sa jeunesse une prédilection," and that "robuste et subtile, [cette forme] convenait mieux encore à sa maturité." "Il importait donc," claims Jasinski, "de grouper ici ces seize sonnets et d'en laisser s'affirmer la valeur dans l'histoire du genre." The 16 pieces are thus arranged, as far as possible, in

chronological order, beginning with La Tulipe, published in Balzac's Illusions perdues in 1839 where it is presented as the work of Lucien de Rubempré, and working through to the three sonnets to Claudius Popelin, dating from the end of the 1860's. All except the first 5 however and that addressed A Maxime du Camp can be dated from the 1860's (or early 1870's). One piece, A une jeune amie, is a poem in 4 quatrains and erroneously included in this section.

The fifth group, Pour Carlotta Grisi, is made up of 6 poems and includes 2 sonnets, and 4 poems in quatrains, 1 of which is of 4 quatrains and 1 of 3. All seem to date from the 1860's.

The sixth group, A la Princesse Mathilde, opens with 2 poems of 4 quatrains, followed by Un douzain de sonnets, presented to the Princess for her birthday in 1869 and with the "sonnet-dédicace" comprising in fact 13 sonnets. The group is terminated by 2 more sonnets. All these pieces date from the 1860's and 1870-1871.

The seventh and eighth groups, Pièces officielles (4 pieces) and Traductions et Adaptations (9 pieces) use the quatrain form twice respectively. They contain no sonnets.

The ninth group, Bouts-Rimés, like the two foregoing sections, suggests scant creativity, despite Jasinski's claim: "Nous n'avons pas cru devoir écarter ces fantaisies dont l'à-propos fit surtout le sel, mais qui n'excluent ni la virtuosité, ni parfois la poésie." (Introduction, p. CXXXIX). However the 17 pieces of this section include 14 sonnets and it is interesting to note the perennial popularity of the sonnet as a parlour-game.

Finally there comes a section of single Quatrains addressed to various individuals etc. and then a group of Fragments.

What emerges from all this is a considerable decline during the latter part of Gautier's career in his use of rimes plates and of the quatrain, particularly the poem in 4 (or 3) quatrains, and a correspondingly large increase in the number of his sonnets, an increase associated with an ever-growing amount of social versifying on the poet's part.¹

Musset

Musset's first collection, Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie, published in December 1829 with the date 1830, contains 1 sonnet out of 16 items, "Que j'aime le premier frisson d'hiver ..."

In 1831 he wrote A Madame N. Ménessier ("Madame, il est heureux, celui dont la pensée ..."), published by Marie Ménessier-Nodier in Le Perce-Neige, choix de morceaux de poésie (Paris, Heideloff et Campé, 1834). The poem was subsequently added by Musset along with 7 other pieces to volume I, Premières Poésies, of the two volume edition of his work, first published in 1852.

The sonnet figures in its traditional role as liminary piece in Au lecteur des deux pièces qui suivent in Un Spectacle dans un fauteuil (1832) and again in Au lecteur des deux volumes de vers de l'auteur in the 1840 edition of the Poésies complètes. The last of the three sections of this edition, Poésies nouvelles (1835-1840), included one sonnet, Au Roi, après l'attentat de Neunier. This assassination attempt on Louis-Philippe took place on 27 December 1836 and Alfred Tattet's copy of the sonnet is dated 28 December 1836.

1. The place of forms other than the sonnet in Gautier's work has been noted at some length since one of the most interesting questions with regard to Gautier is his failure to use the sonnet form as extensively as might have been expected.

The Poésies nouvelles (1840-1849), published in 1850, contained 14 sonnets out of a total of 51 pieces. A "deuxième édition revue et augmentée" in 1851 has 17 sonnets out of 57 pieces.

A few further sonnets are published in the Poésies posthumes section of the Pléiade edition of the Poésies complètes (Paris, Gallimard, 1957). This section is made up of a large number of poems never published in Musset's life-time and includes 9 sonnets.

Nerval

Nerval never produced a complete edition of his poetry but confined himself to quoting a selection of pieces, mainly Odelettes, in the Petits Châteaux de Bohême (published first in L'Artiste in 1852 as La Bohême galante and then in volume form in 1853) and grouping together the 12 sonnets of Les Chimères at the end of the collection of short narratives Les Filles du Feu (1854). Apart from the 12 sonnets of Les Chimères (7 independent sonnets and Le Christ aux Oliviers, a piece made up of a sequence of 5 sonnets), volume I of the Pléiade edition of Nerval's Oeuvres (Paris, Gallimard, 1952) also gives a further 9 sonnets under the title Autres Chimères. However only 4 of these (La Tête armée, A Hélène de Mecklembourg, A Madame Sand, and A Madame Ida Dumas) can be counted as independent pieces. The remaining 5 (Myrtho, A Louise d'Or., Reine, A J—y Colonna, A Madame Aguado, and Erythrée) are all to a greater or lesser extent variants on the sonnets of Les Chimères themselves. One further sonnet, Épitaphe, is published in volume I of the Pléiade edition of the Oeuvres, at the end of the section of 14 Poésies diverses (the title traditionally given to the pieces not collected by Nerval in the Petits Châteaux de Bohême or Les Chimères).

Baudelaire

The first edition of Les Fleurs du Mal, published in 1857, contains 44 sonnets out of a total of 101 poems. In the second edition of 1861 this increases to 60 sonnets out of a total of 127 poems. Sonnets thus make up the largest single group of poems. Poems in quatrain form follow - 33 pieces in the first edition, 41 in the second. Other poems by Baudelaire are published in the Pléiade edition of the Oeuvres complètes (Paris, Gallimard, 1961) under the headings of Les Epaves, Additions de la troisième édition des Fleurs du Mal, and Poésies diverses. Les Epaves, published in Belgium in 1866, is a collection of 23 pieces which includes the 6 Pièces condamnées from the 1857 edition of Les Fleurs du Mal together with 17 other poems of which 3 are sonnets. One of these, Sur Le Tasse en prison d'Eugène Delacroix is an early piece dated 1844 on the manuscript. The 14 Additions de la troisième édition des Fleurs du Mal include 10 sonnets. One of these, A Théodore de Banville, dates from the 1840's and was sent by Baudelaire to Banville in a letter of 6 July 1845. The 14 Poésies diverses include 1 sonnet probably written about 1840.

Banville

Banville's first collection, Les Cariatides (1842), contains 6 sonnets out of a total of 83 poems, Les Stalactites (1846) 1 out of 36 poems, Le Sang de la Coupe (1857) 9 out of 36 poems, Occidentales (1869) 1 out of 37 poems, Rimes dorées (1875) 13 out of 25 poems, Roses de Noël (1878) 4 out of 31 poems. The only collection entirely devoted to the form is Les Princesses (1874)

comprising 21 sonnets. Against these figures must be placed the numerous collections where no use whatsoever is made of the sonnet form - Les Exiles (1867), Idylles prussiennes (1871) and especially those collections specializing in other varieties of poems in fixed form or poems emulating in metre and stanza patterns popular among the poets of the 16th century Pléiade or earlier. This group includes Odelettes (1856), Odes Funambulesques (1857), Améthystes, nouvelles odelettes amoureuses composées sur des rythmes de Ronsard (1862), Trente-Six Ballades Joyeuses (1873) and Rondels (1875).

Leconte de Lisle

The definitive versions of Leconte de Lisle's three collections, Poèmes antiques, Poèmes barbares and Poèmes tragiques contain respectively 1 sonnet out of a total of 85 poems (counting separately each piece of the groups Odes anacréontiques, Médailles antiques, Etudes latines and Chansons écossaises), 17 out of 86 poems (counting the six sonnets of Le Conseil du Fakir as individual poems) and 2 out of 44 pieces (counting the two plays Les Erinnyes and L'Apollonide and each of the Pantouns malais). Derniers Poèmes, assembled after Leconte de Lisle's death by Heredia and the Vicomte de Guerne following a manuscript plan prepared by Leconte de Lisle, includes 1 sonnet, L'Orient. Leconte de Lisle also produced five other sonnets in the course of his career. Four of these are printed in the Lemerre 1927-28 edition of the Poésies complètes in the section Pièces diverses where the editors Jacques Madeleine and Eugene Vallée group together both the early poems published by Leconte de Lisle in La Phalange 1845-1846 and later poems, mainly

from the Revue Contemporaine of 1862 and 1864, which the poet either excluded entirely from his work or omitted from the definitive version of his various collections. Two of the sonnets, Le Présage and La Matinée, were published in the Revue Contemporaine of 30 June 1862, a third, Planètes damnées in the same periodical on 30 June 1864. The other sonnet, Les bois lavés par les rosées, first appeared in the 1855 edition of Poèmes et Poésies, as did a previous version of the poem Le Sacrifice, now four quatrains in Derniers Poèmes, then in sonnet form. Both poems were retained in the 1857 edition of Poèmes et Poésies but were eliminated from the Poésies complètes of 1858.

Heredia

Les Trophées (1893) comprises 117 sonnets in the first edition, 118 in all subsequent editions, together with the 3 terze rime of Romancero and the epic fragment in rimes plates, Les Conquérants de l'Or. The 45 pieces Sonnets et Poèmes divers, published after Les Trophées in the Poésies complètes (Paris, Lemerre, 1924) include a further 27 sonnets, 3 of them written in Spanish for the centenary in 1903 of Heredia's cousin, the Cuban poet of the same name.

Verlaine

The Poèmes saturniens of 1866 contain 11 sonnets out of a total of 40 pieces and there is also quite an extensive use of the form in those poems written by Verlaine in the years preceding 1870, which were either never incorporated into one of his collections or only included in those appearing many years later, for example in Jadis et naguère (1885). Fêtes galantes (1869), on the other hand, has

only 1 example of the form in its 22 pieces, while La Bonne Chanson (1870) and Romances sans Paroles (1873) are devoid of sonnets. In certain of the later collections, however, the proportion of sonnets surpasses that of the Poèmes saturniens. The 54 pieces of Sagesse (1880) include 22 sonnets and the collection Dédicaces (in the second edition of 1894) 90 sonnets out of a total of 113 pieces. In addition about half the pieces of Jadis et naguère, 21 out of 43, are sonnets; Amour (in the second edition of 1892) has 16 sonnets out of 64 poems, Parallèlement (in the second edition of 1894) 10 out of 45. However the significance of these last three groups of figures is not very great. Many of these sonnets date in fact from before 1870 and the figures are thus not truly representative of Verlaine's use of the sonnet at the time of the publication of the actual collections.

Mallarmé

The collection of Mallarmé's Poésies published in the Pléiade edition of the Oeuvres complètes (Paris, Gallimard, 1945) contains 39 sonnets out of a total of 66 poems, counting separately the individual sections of Hérodiade, Rondels, Chansons bas, and Petit Air I and II. Other forms are much less strongly represented and date mostly from the earlier stages of Mallarmé's career. There are 9 poems in rimes plates, 8 poems in quatrains together with 6 individual quatrains that make up part of the Chansons bas, 2 terze rime, and 2 rondels. Two further sonnets occur in the 13 poems of the section Poèmes d'enfance et de jeunesse. The group of Vers de circonstance, pp. 81-186, consists very largely of individual quatrains. However 5 sonnets do also appear on pp. 177-179 and a further sonnet on pp. 181-182.

Valéry

Valéry's first published collection, the Album de Vers anciens 1890-1900, which appeared in 1920, contained 9 sonnets out of a total of 16 pieces. Three more sonnets and 1 longer poem which however opened with fourteen lines in sonnet form (Profusion du Soir) were published in 1926 as a plaquette entitled Quelques Vers anciens. These were subsequently included in the 1926 edition of the Album de Vers anciens. This second edition thus contained 12 sonnets, together with the 1 sonnet opening Profusion du Soir, out of a total of 20 poems. One further poem Les Vaines Danseuses, was added in 1931 and the definitive edition of the Album de Vers anciens therefore contains a total of 21 poems, including 13 sonnets (one of which is the sonnet opening Profusion du Soir).

Valéry's other published collection, Charmes (1922), conceived according to Valéry in a letter to Jacques Doucet of 1922 as an "ensemble d'expériences prosodiques," contained 6 sonnets out of a total of 22 poems. In the definitive edition of 1929, Air de Sémiramis, replaced in the Album de Vers anciens from which it had been removed in 1927, disappears, giving a final figure of 6 sonnets out of a total of 21 pieces.

Valéry's longer poem, La Jeune Parque, written in rimes plates, was published in 1917 as an independent piece.

In the text of volume I of the Pléiade edition of the Oeuvres (Paris, Gallimard, 1957-60), 2 further sonnets occur - L'Oiseau cruel in the section Pièces diverses de toute époque, p. 158, and Le Sonnet d'Irène in Mélange, p. 289. These were first published in 1942 and 1939 respectively. Valéry's youthful work included numerous

poems, some published in reviews of the time, some unpublished. The sonnet is strongly represented amongst them. A selection of pieces is given in the notes to the Pléiade edition of the Oeuvres. In the first printings of this edition, these appear partly in the notes to volume I, pp. 1573-1599, and partly in a section of Notes complémentaires au tome I at the end of volume II, pp. 1610-1614 and 1618-1625. In the 1965 printing of volume I, however, the pieces added to the notes of volume II have been transferred and the whole selection now occurs in volume I, pp. 1575-1610 and 1693-1704. The first group, on pp. 1575-1610, includes 33 sonnets. 10 verse poems not in sonnet form are also given and 2 prose poems. The second group, pp. 1693-1704, begins with the Douze poèmes inédits de Paul Valéry, collected and published by Octave Nadal in 1959. These include 5 sonnets. In the 1965 printing of volume I only, a selection of 15 small "occasional" pieces follows, including 2 sonnets.

APPENDIX B:

- i. A selection of sonnets on the sonnet in French and English, together with three German sonnets on the sonnet

A Sonnet upon Sonnets

Fourteen, a sonneteer thy praises sings;
 What magic myst'ries in that number lie!
 Your hen hath fourteen eggs beneath her wings
 That fourteen chickens to the roost may fly.
 Fourteen full pounds the jockey's stone must be;
 His age fourteen - a horse's prime is past.
 Fourteen long hours too oft the Bard must fast;
 Fourteen bright bumpers - bliss he ne'er must see!
 Before fourteen, a dozen yields the strife;
 Before fourteen - e'en thirteen's strength is vain.
 Fourteen good years - a woman gives us life;
 Fourteen good men - we lose that life again.
 What lucubrations can be more upon it?
 Fourteen good measur'd verses make a sonnet.

Robert Burns, The Poems and Songs,
 ed. in 3 vols. by James Kinsley
 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968),
 I, 449.

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.

Henry Kirke White, The Remains, ed.
 in 2 vols. by Robert Southey
 (London, 1807), II, 58

If by dull rhymes our English must be chained,
 And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet
 Fettered, in spite of painèd loveliness,
 Let us find out, if we must be constrained,
 Sandals more interwoven and complete
 To fit the naked foot of Poesy.
 Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress
 Of every chord, and see what may be gained
 By ear industrious, and attention meēt;
 Misers of sound and syllable, no less
 Than Midas of his coinage, let us be
 Jealous of dead leaves in that bay wreath crown;
 So, if we may not let the Muse be free,
 She will be bound with garlands of her own.

John Keats, Poems, ed. Miriam
 Allott (London, Longman, 1970)
 p. 521¹

Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room;
 And hermits are contented with their cells;
 And students with their pensive citadels;
 Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,
 Sit blithe and happy; bees that soar for bloom,
 High as the highest Peak of Furness-fells,
 Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells:
 In truth the prison, unto which we doom
 Ourselves, no prison is: and hence for me,
 In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
 Within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground;
 Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)
 Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
 Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

William Wordsworth, Poetical Works,
 ed. in 5 vols. by E. de Selincourt
 and Helen Darbishire (Oxford
 Clarendon Press, 1940-1949), III, 1-2

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1. Allott notes that Keats copied out this sonnet on 3 May in his journal-letter of 14 Feb.-3 May 1819 with the comment: "Incipit altera Sonnetta - I have been endeavouring to discover a better sonnet stanza than we have. The legitimate [i.e. Petrarchan] does not suit the language over-well from the pouncing rhymes - the other kind [i.e. Shakespearian] appears too elegiac - and the couplet at the end of it has seldom a pleasing effect - I do not pretend to have succeeded - it will explain itself." Keats, Poems ed. Miriam Allott, p. 521.

Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,
 Mindless of its just honors; with this key
 Shakspeare unlocked his heart; the melody
 Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
 A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
 With it Camøens soothed an exile's grief;
 The Sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf
 Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
 His visionary brow; a glowworm lamp,
 It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faerie-land
 To struggle through dark ways; and when a damp
 Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
 The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
 Soul-animating strains - alas, too few!

William Wordsworth, Poetical Works,
 ed. in 5 vols. by E. de Selincourt
 and Helen Darbishire, III, 20.

Sonnet imité de Wordsworth

Ne ris point des sonnets, ô critique moqueur!
 Par amour autrefois en fit le grand Shakspeare;
 C'est sur ce luth heureux que Pétrarque soupire,
 Et que le Tasse aux fers soulage un peu son coeur;

Camoens de son exil abrège la longueur,
 Car il chante en sonnets l'amour et son empire;
 Dante aime cette fleur de myrte, et la respire,
 Et la mêle au cyprès qui ceint son front vainqueur;

Spenser s'en revenant de l'île des féeries,
 Exhale en longs sonnets ses tristesses chéries;
 Milton, chantant les siens, ranimait son regard;

Moi, je veux rajeunir le doux sonnet en France;
 Du Bellay, le premier l'apporta de Florence,
 Et l'on en sait plus d'un de notre vieux Ronsard.

Sainte-Beuve, Poésies de Joseph Delorme,
Poésies complètes (Paris, Lévy, 1863),
 I, 136.

Formes et Pensées

I

Comme un vieux prêtre a soin des vases de l'église
Pour qu'aux yeux du fidèle ébloui tout reluisse,
Vous, artistes pieux, tels que le saint vieillard,
Poètes, conservez les beaux vases de l'art.

II

Pétrarque, au doux sonnet je fus longtemps rebelle;
Mais toi, divin Toscan, chaste et voluptueux,
Tu choisis, évitant tout rythme impétueux,
Pour ta belle pensée une forme humble et belle.

Ton poème aujourd'hui par des charmes m'appelle:
Vase étroit mais bien clos, coffret plaisir des yeux,
D'où s'exhale un parfum subtil, mystérieux,
Que Laure respirait, le soir, dans la chapelle.

Aux souplesses de l'art la grâce se plaisait,
Maître, tu souriras si ma muse rurale
Et libre, a fait ployer la forme magistrale;

Puis, sur le tour léger de l'Etrusque naissait,
Docile à varier la forme antique et sainte,
L'urne pour les parfums, où le miel, ou l'absinthe.

III

Oui, moi-même, en jouant, essayons! Autrefois
Le premier je chantai sur le rythme ternaire,
Rythme bardique éclos au fond du sanctuaire:
Aujourd'hui de Boileau je braverai les lois.

IV

Les rimeurs ont posé le sonnet sur la pointe,
Le sonnet qui s'aiguise et finit en tercet:
Au solide quatrain la part faible est mal jointe.

Je voudrais commencer par où l'on finissait.
Tercet, svelte, élancé, dans ta grâce idéale,
Parais donc le premier, forme pyramidale!

Au-dessous les quatrains, graves, majestueux,
Liés par le ciment de la rime jumelle,
Fièrement assoiront leur base solennelle,
Leur socle de granit, leurs degrés somptueux.

Ainsi le monument s'élève harmonieux,
Plus de base effrayante à l'oeil et qui chancelle,
La base est large et sûre et l'aiguille étincelle,
La pyramide aura sa pointe dans les cieux.

V

Inspirez-nous toujours, ô muses immortelles,
Et des pensers nouveaux et des formes nouvelles!
Dante n'est plus Homère, autre est le grand Milton,
Comme eux soyons divers de pensers et de ton.

Brizeux, Oeuvres complètes
(Paris, Lévy, 1860), II, 419-421

Le Sonnet

Je n'entrerais pas là, - dit la folle en riant, -
Je vais faire éclater cette robe trop juste!
Puis elle enfle son sein, tord sa hanche robuste,
Et prête à contre-sens un bras luxuriant.

J'aime ces doux combats, et je suis patient.
Dans l'étroit vêtement, vrai corset de Procuste,
Là, serrant un atour, ici le déliant,
J'ai fait passer enfin tête, épaules et buste.

Avec art maintenant dessinons sous ces plis
La forme bondissante et les contours polis.
Voyez! la robe flotte, et la beauté s'accuse.

Est-elle bien ou mal en ces simples dehors?
Rien de moins dans le coeur, rien de plus sur le corps,
Ainsi me plaît la femme, ainsi je veux la Muse.

Joséphin Soulyard, Oeuvres poétiques complètes in 3 vols. (Paris, Lemerre, 1880-1883), I, 9.

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.

Gautier, Poésies complètes,
ed. in 3 vols. by René Jasinski
(Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1932), III, 204.

Long Poème

Dans un petit sonnet mettre l'immensité;
Y renfermer le ciel profond, la mer, la grève,
Le flot mouvant, le roc miné, le bruit sans trêve,
Et la brume d'hiver, et l'ouragan d'été;

Montrer à l'horizon, sur la vague emporté,
Le navire, fêtu que l'abîme soulève;
Et jeter dans cette ombre, et mêler à ce rêve
Ta lumière, Seigneur, et ton éternité;

Ah! c'est vraiment alors écrire un long poème;
C'est introduire l'âme aux régions qu'elle aime,
Et grandir l'humble vers qui promettait si peu! .

Le cadre est assez vaste, et le poète à l'aise
Peut vivre tout un jour, au bord de la falaise,
De ce petit sonnet qui lui parle de Dieu.

Eugène Manuel. Included in Le Livre d'or, poésies choisies, extraites du Parnasse (Paris, Aux Bureaux du Parnasse, 1879), p. 57.

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,
Emboîtant 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.

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:
"0 lyre! 0 délire: 0..." - Sonnet - Attention!

Tristan Corbière, Oeuvres complètes,
ed. P.-O. Walzer and F.F. Burch in
the series Bibliothèque de la Pléiade
(Paris, Gallimard, 1970), p. 718.

The Sonnet

A Sonnet is a moment's monument -
 Memorial from the Soul's eternity
 To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
 Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
 Of its own arduous fulness reverent.
 Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
 As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
 Its flowering crest impearled and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin; its face reveals
 The soul - its converse, to what Power 'tis due: -
 Whether for tribute to the august appeals
 Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
 It serve; or 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
 In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.

Dante-Gabriel Rossetti, Collected Works,
 ed. in 2 vols. by William M. Rossetti
 (London, Ellis and Elvey, 1901), I, 176.

A la louange de Laure et de Pétrarque

Chose italienne où Shakspeare a passé
 Mais que Ronsard fit superbement française,
 Fine basilique au large diocèse,
 Saint-Pierre-des-Vers, immense et condensé,

Elle, ta marraine, et Lui qui t'a pensé,
 Dogme entier toujours debout sous l'exégèse
 Même edmondschéresque ou francisquesarceyse,
 Sonnet, force acquise et trésor amassé,

Ceux-là sont très bons et toujours vénérables,
 Ayant procuré leur luxe aux misérables
 Et l'or fou qui sied aux pauvres glorieux,

Aux poètes fiers comme les gueux d'Espagne,
 Aux vierges qu'exalte un rythme exact, aux yeux
 Epris d'ordre, aux coeurs qu'un voeu chaste accompagne.

Verlaine, Jadis et naguère, Oeuvres
 poétiques complètes, ed. Y.-G. Le
 Dantec and Jacques Borel, in the series
 Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris,
 Gallimard, 1962), p. 320.

The Sonnet's Voice

(A metrical lesson by the sea shore)

Yon silvery billows breaking on the beach
Fall back in foam beneath the star-shine clear,
The while my rhymes are murmuring in your ear
A restless lore like that the billows teach;
For on these sonnet-waves my soul would reach
From its own depths, and rest within you, dear,
As, through the billowy voices yearning here,
Great nature strives to find a human speech.

A sonnet is a wave of melody:
From heaving waters of the impassioned soul
A billow of tidal music one and whole
Flows in the "octave;" then returning free,
Its ebbing surges in the "sestet" roll
Back to the deeps of Life's tumultuous sea.

Theodore Watts-Dunton, quoted in the
introduction to Sonnets of this
century, ed. William Sharp (London,
Walter Scott, 1887), p. lii.

What the Sonnet is

Fourteen small broidered berries on the hem
Of Circe's mantle, each of magic gold;
Fourteen of lone Calypso's tears that rolled
Into the sea, for pearls to come of them;

Fourteen clear signs of omen in the gem
With which Medea human fate foretold;
Fourteen small drops, which Faustus, growing old,
Craved of the Fiend, to water Life's dry stem.

It is the pure white diamond Dante brought
To Beatrice; the sapphire Laura wore
When Petrarch cut it sparkling out of thought;

The ruby Shakespeare hewed from his heart's core;
The dark deep emerald that Rossetti wrought
For his own soul, to wear for evermore.

Eugene Lee-Hamilton, Sonnets of the
Wingless Hours (1894). Included in
The Sonnet, an anthology ed. Robert
M. Bender and Charles L. Squier (New
York, Washington Square Press, 1967),
p. 394.

I will put Chaos into fourteen lines
 And keep him there; and let him thence escape
 If he be lucky; let him twist, and ape
 Flood, fire, and demon - his adroit designs
 Will strain to nothing in the strict confines
 Of this sweet Order, where, in pious rape,
 I hold his essence and amorphous shape,
 Till he with Order mingles and combines.
 Past are the hours, the years, of our duress,
 His arrogance, our awful servitude:
 I have him. He is nothing more nor less
 Than something simple not yet understood;
 I shall not even force him to confess;
 Or answer. I will only make him good.

Edna St. Vincent Millay. From Mine
 the Harvest, Collected Poems (New York,
 Harper, 1956), p. 728. Included in
The Sonnet, ed. Robert M. Bender and
 Charles L. Squier, p. 437.

In Magic Words

Wordsworth to the contrary notwithstanding,
 Milton's and Shakespeare's statements also doubted:
 A sonnet's force is not so easily routed
 That flying one should not seek the safest landing.

As much as anything, a magic word
 Is what a sonnet is, that quickly falls
 If touched indelicately or shaken hard,
 Or if it be reared too heavy or too tall.

Sonnets possess impertinence; they have bliss,
 They require excitement in at least one line,
 They need specific gravity and this
 Especially is important - to be in focus;

Rarely a sonnet deserves to be exhibited;
 Most of them should be (and they are) inhibited.

Merrill Moore. Included in The Sonnet,
 ed. Robert M. Bender and Charles L.
 Squier, p. 454.

The following German sonnets on the sonnet are quoted by Gertrud Wilker in her thesis Gehalt und Form im deutschen Sonett (Bern, 1952) on pages 18, 29 and 48 respectively.

Sich in erneutem Kunstgebrauch zu üben,
Ist heil'ge Pflicht, die wir dir auferlegen:
Du kannst dich auch, wie wir, bestimmt bewegen
Nach Tritt und Schritt, wie es dir vorgeschrieben.

Denn eben die Beschränkung lässt sich lieben,
Wenn sich die Geister gar gewaltig regen;
Und wie sie sich denn auch gebärden mögen,
Das Werk zuletzt ist doch vollendet blieben.

So möcht' ich selbst in künstlichen Sonetten,
In sprachgewandter Masse kühnem Stolze,
Das Beste, was Gefühl mir gäbe, reimen;

Nur weiss ich hier mich nicht bequem zu betten;
Ich schneide sonst so gern aus ganzem Holze,
Und müsste nun doch auch mitunter leimen.

Goethe

Das Sonett.

Zwei Reime heiss ich viermal kehren wieder,
 Und stelle sie, getheilt, in gleiche Reihen,
 Dass hier und dort zwei eingefasst von zweien
 Im Doppelchore schweben auf und nieder.

Dann schlingt des Gleichlauts Kette durch zwei Glieder
 Sich freier wechselnd, jegliches von dreien.
 In solcher Ordnung, solcher Zahl gedeihen
 Die zartesten und stolzesten der Lieder.

Den werd ich nie mit meinen Zeilen kränzen,
 Dem eitle Spielerei mein Wesen dünket,
 Und Eigensinn die künstliche Gesetze.

Doch, wem in mir geheimer Zauber winket,
 Dem leih' ich Hoheit, Füll' in engen Gränzen,
 Und reines Ebenmass der Gegensätze.

A.W. Schlegel

Abschied des Sonettes

Sonett, mein Knabe, komm heran! wir wollen
 Abrechnen, deine Dienzeit ist verstrichen;
 Treu spieltest du mit unveränderlichen
 Bemühungen veränderliche Rollen:

Des Feindes Grollen und der Freundin Schmollen,
 Den ritterlichen Kampf und minniglichen,
 Die Liebe, die erblüht, und die erblichen,
 Und was du sonst noch hast vollführen sollen.

Gern geb'ich, willst du andern Herrn nun dienen,
 Das Zeugnis dir: dass du bist wohl zu brauchen,
 Und mit Verstand zu jedem Zweck zu lenken.

Wohl geh'es dir, als wie bei mir, bei ihnen!
 Und dass sie nie dir einen Fuss verstauchen,
 Und nie die zarten Glieder dir verrenken.

Rückert

ii. Boileau on the Sonnet

On dit, à ce propos, qu'un jour ce dieu bizarre,
 Voulant pousser à bout tous les rimeurs françois,
 Inventa du sonnet les rigoureuses lois,¹
 Voulut qu'en deux quatrains de mesure pareille
 La rime avec deux sons frappât huit fois l'oreille,
 Et qu'ensuite six vers artistement rangés
 Fussent en deux tercets par le sens partagés.²
 Surtout de ce poème il bannit la licence:
 Lui-même en mesura le nombre et la cadence;
 Défendit qu'un vers faible y pût jamais entrer,
 Ni qu'un mot déjà mis osât s'y remonter.
 Du reste il l'enrichit d'une beauté suprême:
 Un sonnet sans défaut vaut seul un long poème.
 Mais en vain mille auteurs y pensent arriver,
 Et cet heureux phénix est encore à trouver.
 A peine dans Gombaut, Maynard et Malleville,
 En peut-on admirer deux ou trois entre mille:
 Le reste, aussi peu lu que ceux de Pelletier,
 N'a fait de chez Sercy qu'un saut chez l'épicier.
 Pour enfermer son sens dans la borne prescrite,
 La mesure est toujours trop longue ou trop petite.

Boileau, L'Art poétique, Chant II,
 ll. 82-102.

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1. The sonnet is generally agreed to be of Italian origin. It was first used in France by Mellin de Saint-Gelais and subsequently popularized by the Pléiade.
 2. Note that Boileau's definition fails to indicate what patterns of rhyme the quatrains and tercets should follow.

iii. "Le Sonnet d'Arvers"Sonnet. Imité de l'Italien

Mon âme a son secret, ma vie a son mystère;
Un amour éternel en un moment conçu:
Le mal est sans espoir, aussi j'ai dû le taire,
Et celle qui l'a fait n'en a jamais rien su.

Hélas! j'aurai passé près d'elle inaperçu,
Toujours à ses côtés, et pourtant solitaire,
Et j'aurai jusqu'au bout fait mon temps sur la terre,
N'osant rien demander et n'ayant rien reçu.

Pour elle, quoique Dieu l'ait faite douce et tendre,
Elle ira son chemin, distraite et sans entendre
Ce murmure d'amour élevé sur ses pas;

A l'austère devoir, pieusement fidèle,
Elle dira, lisant ces vers tout remplis d'elle:
"Quelle est donc cette femme?" et ne comprendra pas.

Alexis-Félix Arvers, Mes Heures perdues
(Paris, Fournier, 1833; Geneva,
Slatkine Reprints, 1973), pp. 71-72.

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- (1) Material of general interest concerning the sonnet.
- (2) Works of those major authors discussed in the text and critical studies on these authors in chapter order.
- (3) Works of other French nineteenth century poets. Some critical studies are also listed here, in particular those concerned with the minor authors, as it seemed that these studies would not be readily accessible as part of the general list in (4) below.
- (4) A miscellaneous section grouping in one alphabetical list general works on poetry, general works on French nineteenth century literature, works of foreign poets mentioned in the text, etc.

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CHAPTER I

The Sonnet before 1857

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