



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE FOR GIRLS

ANNUAL REVIEW

AIN SHAMS UNIVERSITY

No. 11

AIN SHAMS UNIV. PRESS

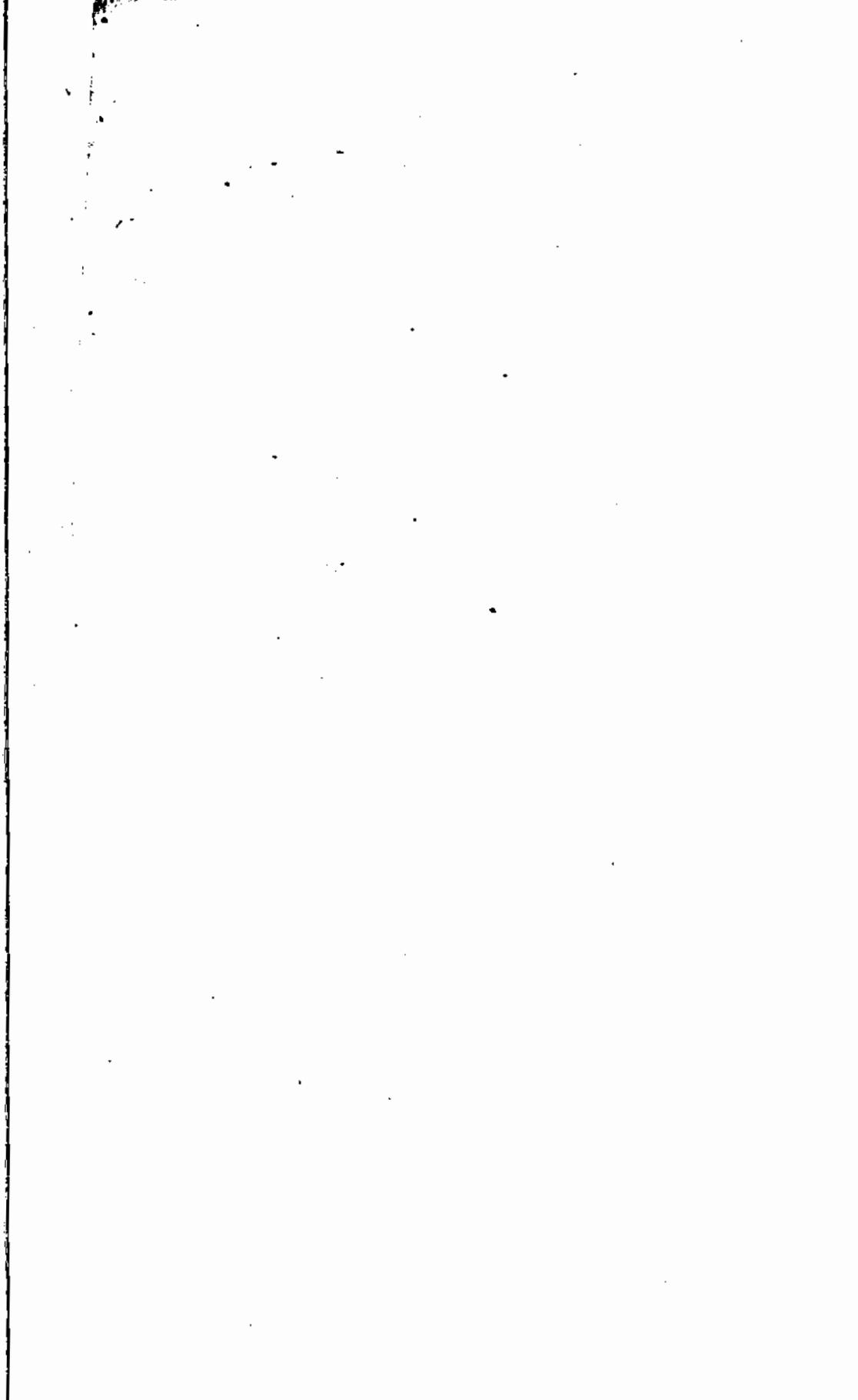
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اعتذار

نفتنر عن انقطاع تسلسل الصفحات
بين ص ١٣١ و ص ١٣٧ ، وهو ناتج عن تكرار
البدء بصفحة رقم ٩٣ فى القسم الانجلىزى ،
ولا يؤثر على محتوى البحث .

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DONNE, CORBIERE AND ELIOT

Some Common Elements

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Though widely separated in time and space, the Metaphysical poets of the 17th century and the French Symbolists of the 19th had characteristics in common that interested T.S. Eliot as a young poet and taught him to use his «personal voice» and to develop his unique style.

In this paper I shall attempt to point out some of the elements that are common to the poetry of Donne, Corbière and Eliot with regard to their approach to verse, their themes and their technique. Reference will also be made to Marvell and other 17th century poets whose verse will help to elucidate some aspects of Metaphysical poetry.

Much has already been written on the impact of 19th century French poets on Eliot, such as Baudelaire and Gautier, and verbal borrowings and parallels have been adequately traced. (1) This is especially the case with Laforgue and Eliot. I believe, however, that the impact of Corbière has been, to a certain extent, underestimated — perhaps because the verbal borrowings are fewer — and that a case can be made for Corbière's influence on Eliot that is as strong as that for Laforgue.

(1) E.J.H. Greene, *T.S. Eliot et la France, Etudes de littérature étrangère et comparée*; No. 24 (Paris, 1951).

M.-J.-J. Laboule, «T.S. Eliot and Some French Poets» in *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, Vol. 16, (avril—juin; 1936); pp. 389—399.

C.M. Shanahan, «Irony in Laforgue, Corbière and Eliot» in *Modern Philology*, Vol. 53 (Nov., 1955), pp. 117—128.

René Taupin, *L'Influence du symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine (de 1910 à 1920)*, (Paris : Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1929).

Kerry Weinberg, *T.S. Eliot and Charles Baudelaire* (The Hague and Paris : Mouton, 1969) in *Studies in General and Comparative Literature*, Vol. V.

I. INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND

In considering European tradition as a whole, Eliot declares that tradition contains past and present simultaneously, that it involves a historical sense, and that this

..... historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence ; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. (2)

Eliot acknowledged the impact of this European tradition on English poetry, and in «The Music of Poetry», a lecture delivered in 1942, he refers to English poetry as «a kind of amalgam of systems of divers sources an amalgam of races, and indeed partly due to racial origins

The rhythms of Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Norman French, of Middle English and Scots, have all made their mark upon English poetry, together with the rhythms of Latin, and, at various periods, of French, Italian and Spanish. The kind of poetry we get is determined, from time to time, by the influence of one or another contemporary literature in a foreign language ; or by circumstances which make one period of our own past more sympathetic than another ; or by the prevailing emphasis in education. (3)

Eliot's indebtedness to tradition is also recorded, this time in a lecture on Yeats. Speaking about his formative years, he referred to the French «masters» who had helped him to use his «own voice» :

A very young man, who is himself stirred to write, is not primarily critical or even widely appreciative. He is looking for masters who will elicit his consciousness of what he wants to say himself, of the kind of poetry that is in him to write. The taste of an adolescent writer is intense, but narrow : it is determined by personal needs. The kind of

(2) T.S. Eliot «Tradition and the Individual Talents» in *Selected Essays* (London : Faber & Faber Ltd., 1934), p. 14.

(3) T.S. Eliot, «The Music of Poetry» in *On Poetry and Poets* (New York : The Noonday Press, 1957), pp. 20—21.

poetry that I needed, to teach me the use of my own voice, did not exist in English at all ; it was only to be found in French. (4)

At the time when Eliot was studying at Harvard and later when he lived in England at the beginning of this century, literary and artistic movements were not isolated phenomena. The cultural background of Europe and America had many elements in common, and an artistic event would often be felt beyond its national borders. Thus, no one can deny the impact — to name only a few of these cultural events — of Ibsen's plays, of the novels of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Flaubert, of Zola's Naturalistic works, of the French Impressionist and other movements in art, of William James's psychological analysis of the «stream of consciousness» or of Freud's research into the subconscious. No sensitive young writer and poet, well-read and interested in literature and in the writing of poetry, could avoid being aware of the new ideas around him. It was, for example, the reading of Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), dealing with the French Symbolist poets and devoting a chapter to Jules Laforgue, that made Eliot realise that there was a poetry in France that met his requirements. (5) In the same way, it was Verlaine's *Poètes Maudits* (1884) that turned Eliot's attention to the Breton poet, Tristan Corbière. (6)

The affinity between the Metaphysical poets of the 17th century and some French poets of the 19th was first pointed out by Eliot in his essay, «The Metaphysical Poets» (1921), when he stated that «Jules Laforgue, and Tristan Corbière in many of his poems, are nearer the «school of Donne» than any modern English poet.» (7) In an essay on Marvell dated the same year, he again refers to Donne, Baudelaire and Laforgue as poets who may almost be inventors «of an attitude, a system of feeling or of morals.» (8) In the same essay, Eliot refers to Marvell's ability to combine levity and seriousness as a Metaphysical characteristic that was also to be found in Gautier, Baudelaire and Laforgue. (9)

(4) T.S. Eliot, «Yeats» in *On Poetry and Poets*, op. cit., p. 295.

(5) See Richard Ellman's Introduction to Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (New York : E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc.: 1958) p.xv.

(6) Greene, p. 62.

(7) Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 290.

(8) *Ibid.*, p. 292.

(9) *Ibid.*, p. 296.

Eliot was not the first to give a modern interpretation of the Metaphysical poets for the interest in Donne had begun in the 19th century and had quickened in the last years of the century. Grosart's editions of Donne's poems in 1872 and his later editions of Herbert, Crashaw, Marvell and Cowley had greatly contributed to the revival. Edmund Gosse's biography of Donne in 1899 «climaxed a decade of excitement about the poet-preacher.» while Grierson's edition of Donne's verse «referred to the Donne revival as a *fiat accompli.*» (10) Thus, although Eliot was not introducing a new note to the Metaphysical poets, yet he was giving «a sensitive formulation», as Duncan calls it, «of ideas that had become familiar by 1912.» (11) Eliot, however, was among the first to find similarities between the poets of the 17th century in England and the poets of the 19th century in France.

The impact of both Laforgue and Corbière on Eliot was considerable. They were both innovators but Laforgue was better known and acknowledged in spite of the fact that Corbière had an earlier claim to be considered as an innovator. Corbière's collection of verse *Les Amours Jeunes*, was published twelve years before Laforgue's first work, *Les Complaintes*, went into print. Moreover, Laforgue made a thorough study of Corbière's work in his «Etude sur Corbière» (12) in which he analysed the poems from every angle — themes, versification, «irregularities» of verse, puns, imagery, irony. Although he was not always able to appreciate Corbière's verse, a study such as this must have influenced his own subsequent work. Furthermore, many of the qualities that the critics commend as original in Laforgue's verse are equally pronounced in Corbière's and it seems unfair to give entire credit to Laforgue for evolving a new style when Corbière has an earlier claim.

* * *

Edouard Joachim Corbière was born in Brittany in 1845, the son of a one-time sea-captain who had written many novels on the sea. The father was also a journalist, the founder of two newspapers in which he attacked the régime of the Bourbons and for which he was imprisoned. To avoid confusion with his father who had the same name,

(10) Joseph E. Duncan, *The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry : The Revival of a Style, 1800 to the Present Day* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1959), p. 114.

(11) *Ibid.*, p. 113.

(12) Jules Laforgue's «Une Etude sur Corbière» is to be found in «Mélanges Posthumes» of the *Oeuvres Complètes de Jules Laforgue* (Paris : Mercure de France, (1913), pp. 119—128.

the young Edouard later called himself Tristan. At the age of 14, Tristan began to suffer from arthritic pains which became so acute at 16 that he had to cut short his schooling. Arthritis also caused him some physical deformity and was the reason for his constant preoccupation with his health. His physical weakness, as well as his ugliness (which he exaggerated), may have been the reasons for his melancholic and ironic turn of mind. He travelled to Provence for his health, then to Italy, and on each occasion he returned to live on the coast of Brittany where he did a great deal of sailing, especially in dangerously stormy weather. In 1872, he met and fell in love with an actress of Italian origin (the Marcelle of his poems) and followed her to Paris although she was already the mistress of a count. How happy or unhappy he was with her, it is difficult to tell, but from such poems as «Le poète contumace», he must have known moments of deep despair. In 1873, he published his poems under the title of *Les Amours Jaunes*. He contracted tuberculosis and was taken back to his beloved Brittany where he died in 1875, at the age of thirty.

Corbière remained little known until Paul Verlaine «discovered» and included him in his *Poètes Maudits*. Though enthusiastic, the analysis of Corbière's book remained insufficient, for «Verlaine, en somme, n'a donné qu'un commentaire chaleureux et superficiel de certains aspects du livre ...» (13) Corbière's influence, nevertheless, has not been inconsiderable on the later poets of France (14) and his complete poems were reprinted several times by 1911.

In his study of Corbière's poems, Laforgue has rightly divided the poems into two kinds. The first is narrative and consists mainly of the Breton poems in which he depicts Brittany and the life of its people and especially of its sailors. Laforgue was unable to appreciate these poems, asserting that they were not poetry and hardly even literature : «Sans esthétique. — Tout, et surtout du Corbière, mais pas de la poésie et pas du vers, à peine de la littérature.» (15) The second consists of his personal, intimate poems, such as those written in Paris and during his travels in Italy. It is in both these divisions that we shall find elements that appealed to Eliot.

Critics may attack one aspect of Corbière's poetry or the other,

(13) Léon Bocquet, *Les Destinées Mauvaises* (Amiens : Bibliothèque du Hérisson, 1923) p.85.

(14) Albert Sonnenfeld, *L'Oeuvre Poétique de Tristan Corbière* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France; et New Jersey : Université de Princeton. Dept. de Langues Romanes, 1960), pp. 178 ff.

(15) Laforgue, p. 120.

have to admit that spark of genius in his work, and that ability to survive all changes of taste. One critic has called him «une personnalité bizarre», (16) and another that he was «un excentrique dans sa vie, dans ses idées, dans sa langue, dans sa grammaire et dans sa technique.» (17) A literary historian has declared that he was not a great poet but that his verse «est assuré de survivre à toutes les révolutions du goût.» (18) While attacking Corbière for his irregularities of rhyme and metre and for his narrative verse «sans esthétique», Laforgue nevertheless declared that «Il n'est pas artiste, mais on pardonne tout devant les plaintes parfaites et immortelles comme : *Le poète contumace.*» (19) On the other hand, Ezra Pound, Eliot's friend and collaborator, praised Corbière without reservation and declared him to be «hard-bitten, perhaps the most poignant poet since Villon, in very much Villon's manner, and adding that «Laforgue was a better artist than any of these men save Corbière.» (20) He also stated that «If Corbière invented no process he at any rate restored French verse to the vigour of Villon and to an intensity that no Frenchman had touched during the intervening four centuries». (21)

II. TRADITION AND INNOVATION

As young poets, Donne, Corbière and Eliot were confronted with the same problem — they were faced, each in his own age, with a changing sensibility that could not find expression in the literary conventions of the time. These conventions had become worn and incapable of expressing this changing sensibility and each poet had therefore to find new mediums and techniques that would replace the old. They were not alone in their revolt but they achieved by far the most effective results.

In the case of Donne, the reaction was partly anti-classical and partly anti-Petrarchan. By the end of the 16th century, references and symbols from pagan classical mythology had become hackneyed and could no longer satisfy a generation of poets who took their religion as

(16) Greene, p. 81.

(17) Bocquet, p. 110.

(18) René Lalou *Histoire de la littérature française contemporaine (de 1870 à nos jours)* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France; 1953) Vol. 1; p. 121.

(19) Laforgue pp. 122—123.

(20) Ezra Pound, «Irony, Laforgue; and Some Satire» in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*; edited with an introduction by T.S. Eliot (Glasgow : The University Press, 1954), p. 282. The article is reprinted from *Poetry*, XI, 2 (Nov., 1917).

(21) Pound, *Literary Essays*, p. 33.

intensely as did Donne and the Metaphysical poets, for the Renaissance had become tempered by the Reformation. Some forms of literature that had been influenced by the classics had changed and found their expression in a vernacular literature of the highest quality : of these, the drama was the most outstanding.

In other forms of poetry, such as the pastoral and the sonnet, the literary conventions inherited from the Renaissance had become exhausted. The Petrarchan attitude towards love and the beloved was too idealistic, or too artificial, to meet the tendency in the 1600's for a greater realism in literature. New imagery had to replace the Elizabethan imagery that had become imitative, a new imagery that was closer to the sensibility and intellectual interests of contemporary poets and readers alike. New themes, imagery and diction were bringing poetry closer to reality. Thus Donne, in his avoidance of classical mythology, in his anti-Petrarchan attitude in his *Songs and Sonnets* and his «Elegies», and in his use of scientific and philosophical imagery was paving the way for a new literary convention.

That the other poets of his time were aware of this conflict between the old and the new can be seen in Thomas Carew's elegy on Donne in which, as a contemporary, he appraises the work of the older poet. He praises Donne for purging the Muses' garden from its pedantic weeds, for throwing away «The lazie seeds / Of servile imitation», and for planting «fresh invention». Donne had paid back

Licentious thefts, that make poetique rage
A Mimique fury, when our soules must bee
Possesst, or with Anacreons Extasie,
Or Pindars, not their owne ;
Thou hast redeem'd and open'd Us a Mine
Of rich and pregnant phansie, drawne a line
Of masculine expression,
Our stubborne language bends, made only fit
With her tough-thick-rib'd hoopes to gird about
Thy Giant phansie, which had proved too stout
For their soft melting Phrases.(22)

* * *

Corbière in his turn, found himself faced with the same problem as Donne. The Romantic movement had reached its end, yet the

(22) Thomas Carew, «An Elegie upon the death of the Deane of Pauls, Dr John Donnes» in *The Metaphysical Poets*, edited by Helen Gardner (Middlesex : Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 143—45.

Romantic attitude persisted in using stock situations and responses, imagery and modes of versification. Exasperated by the tearful spirituality of the Romantics, as well as by the impersonal precision of the Parnassians, Corbière's frank realism and his belief that poetry is life — «la poésie est : vivre» (23) — led him to attack both camps and to develop a style of his own that was closer to reality.

In «I Sonnet», he mockingly satirises the Parnassian manner of writing with its mechanical counting of syllables and the placing of exact rhymes, and as you mark the four caesuras, one of them will fall asleep standing like soldiers of lead. He compares the sonnet to a telegram for the proof of the sonnet is in its mathematical sum :—

La preuve d'un sonnet est par l'addition :
— Je pose 4 et 4 = 8 ! Alors je procède,
En posant 3 et 3 ! — Tenons Pegase raide :
«O lyre ! O délire ! O..... » — Sonnet — Attention ! (24)

He expressed his anti-Romantic feelings in two ways : first, by direct satire on the poets themselves, and secondly, by parodying the language and the situations that were typically Romantic.

In Corbière's «Un Jeune qui s'en va», (25) the young poet believes that he is dying so he picks up his pencil and writes a few scathing remarks on each of the poets he dislikes — Murger, Baudelaire, Moreau, Lamartine, Byron, Hugo, and a pile of other lovers of the moon who are not more dead now than when they were living :

Puis un tas d'amants de la lune,
Guère plus morts qu'ils n'ont vécu,

It is, however, for Lamartine and Victor Hugo that Corbière reserves his bitterest criticism. He calls Lamartine

Inventeur de la *larme écrite*,
Lacrymatoire d'abonnés !

for his tearful sentimentality and self-pity and heart-wringing verse. It is possible that Corbière is parodying Lamartine's «Un poète mourant» (26) where the poet also believes that he is dying and repeatedly evokes his «lyre», «swans» and «glory», exclaiming,

(23) Tristan Corbière, *Les Amours Jaunes* (Paris : Editions Gallimard; 1973) p. 55.

(24) *Ibid.*, pp. 39—40.

(25) *Ibid.*, pp. 51—55.

(26) Alphonse de Lamartine, *Oeuvres choisies : Poésie* (Paris : Bibliothèque Larousse, 1925), Vol. I, pp. 71—5. Corbière makes an even harsher attack on Lamartine's *Graziella* in his «Les Fils de Lamartine et Graziella.»

Chantons, puisque mes doigts sont encore sur la lyre ;
Chantons, puisque la mort, comme au cygne, m'inspire,

Corbière, on the contrary, jestingly calls for his bit of pencil — his lyre.

Donne-moi mon bout de crayon
— Mon bout de crayon, c'est ma lyre —

and refers to Chénier as the swan who came under the kitchen knife ...»
«..... Et ce cygne / Sous le couteau du cuisinier :»
In his «delirium», he imagines Glory eating out of his hand,

Vite ! j'ai vu, dans mon délire,
Venir me manger dans la main
La Gloire qui voulait me lire !
— La gloire n'attend pas demain. —

Corbière not only brings down the Romantic heroes from their pedestals and changes their glorified symbols into prosaic everyday objects, but he sets the «noble», regular and melodious alexandrines of Lamartine in contrast to his own crisp, sharp and colloquial quatrains.

As for Hugo, Corbière calls him

..... l'Homme apocalyptique,
L'Homme-Ceci-tûra-cela,
Meurt, gardenational épique ; (27)

and satirises the «epic» tone used by Hugo for subjects that were of bourgeois quality — as bourgeois as the National Guard.

Corbière was quite aware of what he was doing, for he sets a passage from Hugo's «Oceano Nox» at the beginning of his own poem, «La Fin». Both poems deal with the same subject — the death of sailors at sea, but

Hugo's poem is a series of romantic stock-responses to a conventional situation. The tombstone, the falling leaf, the autumnal season are all part of the romantic's stock-in-trade The poet sticks to generalities, uses the old worn-out images and words. Every conceivable technical device is employed to suggest a completely factitious *literary* emotion ;

(27) Corbière is referring to the title of Chap. 2, Book 5 of Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*, «Ceci tuera celas».

but all the romantic stagecraft fails to hide the deadness of the rhythm. (28)

Without glorifying or pitying the sailors, Corbière speaks of their death in a matter-of-fact way :

Et jusqu'au petit mousse,
Le défi dans les yeux, dans les dents un juron,
A l'écume crachant une chique ralée
Buvant, sans hauts-de-coeur, la *grand' tasse salée*
..... Comme ils ont bu leur boujaron !
Pas de fonds de six pieds, ni rats de cimetières
Eux, ils vont aux requins ! L'âme d'un matelot
Au lieu de suinter dans vos pommes de terre
Respire à chaque flot. (29)

Corbière thus contrasts Hugo's weeping willows, the humble stone in the narrow cemetery and the plaintive and monotonous song of the blind man, with his own sailors who go down (even the small cabin boy) to their death with defiance in their eyes and an oath on their lips. Six feet of earth or cemetery rats are not for them : they go to the sharks, and the soul of the sailor breathes freely into the waves rather than ooze into the potatoes. Hugo's description of the sea is lifeless, while Corbière's poem is full of movement, with its rough and shocking style and his sailors' slang. Even the sexual imagery to describe the movement of the sea enhances the elemental background of these *gens de mer*.

* * *

At the close of the last century and the beginning of this, England saw a period in which moral, intellectual and aesthetic values were all uncertain. There was a marked change in the ways of perceiving and structuring experience that had itself become more complex. Thus, new forms of expression had to be found to convey the new consciousness and sensibility of the artist and the complexity of his experience. Hopkins, for example, tried to express his experience through the movement and pattern of his words and rhythm but his work remained almost unknown until the second decade of this century. As romanticism had reached a period of exhaustion, Hulme offered

(28) G.M. Turnell, «Introduction to the Study of Tristan Corbière» in *The Criterion*, Vol. XV, No. 7 (April, 1936), pp. 395—6.

(29) Corbière, «La Fin», pp. 196—98.

classicism as an alternative for there would be no «new efflorescence of verse until we get a new technique, a new convention» (30)

Eliot wanted a return to the qualities that he found in the poetry of the 17th century. He declared that at the time of Donne and the Metaphysicals, the poet's mind was «constantly amalgamating disparate experience» (31) and that the sensibility of the poet at that time could unify experiences that were emotional, intellectual and sensuous — they «possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience.» However, something «happened to the mind of England between the time of Donne and the time of Tennyson and Browning : a dissociation of sensibility set in, aggravated by the influence of Dryden and Milton. Language became more refined or more magnificent and, as each poet performed certain functions magnificently well, the absence of others was concealed. With the sentimental age which began in the 18th century, more dissociation set in, for the poets then revolted against the «ratiocinative, the descriptive ; they thought and felt by fits, unbalanced ; they reflected.» In Shelley and Keats there are traces of a «struggle toward the unification of sensibility. But Keats and Shelley died, and Tennyson and Browning ruminated.» (32)

With its complexity and variety, modern civilization makes the restoration of this unified sensibility a necessity — the poet must once more live and feel with his mind, body and senses : «One must look into the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts.» (33)

In his book on the achievement of Eliot, F.O. Matthiessen says that we are drawn to Donne's «probing, analytic mind» because it was

keenly aware of the actual complexity of his feelings, their rapid alterations and sharp antitheses ; What he strove to devise was a medium of expression that would correspond to the felt intricacy of his existence, that would suggest by sudden contrasts, by harsh dissonances as well as by harmonies, the actual sensation of life as he had himself experienced it. (34)

(30) T.E. Hulme, «Romanticism and Classicism» in T.E. Hulme's *Speculations : Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, edited by Herbert Read (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1950), p. 122.

(31) T.S. Eliot, «The Metaphysical Poets» in *Selected Essays*, pp. 287—88.

(32) *Ibid.*, p. 288.

(33) *Ibid.*, 289—90.

(34) F.O. Matthiessen; *The Achievement of T.S. Eliot* (New York & London : Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 12.

This is a statement that could apply equally well to Corbière.

* * *

Similarities between Eliot's technical devices and those of Donne and Corbière are many. All three poets believed in the close relation of poetry to actual speech. Eliot asserts that

..... there is one law of nature more powerful than any of these varying currents, or influences from abroad or from the past : the law that poetry must not stray too far from the ordinary everyday language which we use and hear. (35)

He then adds that «Every revolution in poetry is apt to be a return to common speech and that, although poetry attempts to convey something beyond what can be conveyed in prose rhythms, it remains, all the same, one person talking to another » (36)

This can be amply illustrated from Donne's verse. First, the opening lines of his poems are highly dramatic, as can be seen in any of his lyrics or Holy Sonnets. He talks to his beloved, to someone interfering with his love, to the sun and to God Himself. We hear his voice in his questions, his exclamations, his commands, his recriminations, his brief colloquial phrases and answers :

I wonder, by my troth, what thou, and I
Did till we lov'd ? were we not wean'd till then ?
But suck'd on country pleasures, childishly ?
«Twas so

— «The Good Morrow» (37)

Again, the repeated command in

Marke but this flea, and marke in this,
How little that which thou deny'st me is ;

— «The Flea»

Or, again, in Holy Sonnet IX,

If poysonous minerals, and if that tree,
Whose fruit threw death on else immortall us,
If lecherous goats, if serpents envious
Cannot be damn'd ; Alas ; why should I be ?

(35) Eliot, «The Music of Poetry», p. 21.

(36) *Ibid.*, p. 23.

(37) All the quotations from Donne have been taken from John Donne, *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, edited by John Hayward (London : The Nonesuch Press, 1939).

There is the mounting tension of the «if» clauses that reaches its climax with the four words at the end of the fourth line where the stress has to be placed by the speaker according to the meaning of the words and not their iambic metre.

The openings of his poems are indeed dramatic but perhaps more important still are the subtle changes of his voice and mood that can be heard within the poems themselves. In Holy Sonnet VII, Donne calls upon the angels to stand at the corners of the earth and blow their trumpets, and upon the souls to «arise, arise / From death» and go to their scattered bodies,

All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,
All whom warre, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despaire, law, chance, hath slaine , and you whose eyes ,
Shall behold God, and never tast deaths woe.

His tone, however, immediately changes in the sestet to a gentle mood of repentance — «But let them sleepe, Lord, and mee mourne a space» — in direct contrast to the commands, repetition and spondees that give the urgency to the octet.

Donne's poems are so close to actual speech that they should be read aloud, especially in those poems (and there is a great number of them) where the conclusion is based on a logical argument that finds its climax in the last line. In the sonnet on death (X), for example, the entire sonnet depends on the personification of death and on the fact that, if, after all, death is only a short sleep that leads us to eternity, then in eternity,

..... death shall be no more ; death, thou shalt die.

The spondee in the fourth foot of this last line stresses the argument that has here reached its ultimate paradoxical conclusion.

Again and again, the words in Donne's last lines are stressed according to the dictates of meaning and not of metre. In «The Good Morrow,»

If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none can die.
or in «The Triple Foole»,

And I, which was two fooles, do so grow three ;
Who are a little wise, the best fooles be.

* * *

It is this quality in Corbière that Laforgue failed to understand — «la moitié de son vers est dans l'intonation, le geste et les grimaces du-

diseur» — although it is one of the most important elements of his verse. In the two groups of poems, «Armor» and «Gens de Mer», which form the Breton section of his verse, Corbière catches the atmosphere of the sea by using the technical terms and slang of the sailors, as we saw in «La Fin». In the following passage from «Matelots», he describes them returning home, broken like pieces of wreckage, disfigured, crippled, a heap of scurvy, sometimes with an eye less, or with yellow fever or a hole in the cheek. They are rich in glory and a pension of three hundred francs, these metal-ends of cartridges, these heroic flotsam, and they would laugh at the idea of being heroes for they are sailors above all.

On en voit revenir pourtant : bris de naufrage,

Ramassis de scorbut et hachis d'abordage

Cassés, défigurés, dépaysés, perclus :

— Un oeil en moins. — Et vous, en avez-vous en plus ?

— La fièvre jaune. — Eh bien, et vous, l'avez-vous rose ?

— Une balafre. — Ah, c'est signé ! C'est quelque chose !

— Et ce trou dans la joue ? — Un ancien coup de pique.

— Cette bosse, — A tribord ? excusez : c'est ma chèque.

— Ils durent comme ça reniflant la tempête

Riches de gloire et de trois cents francs de retraite,

Vieux culots de gargousse, épaves de héros !

— Héros ? — ils riraient bien ! — Non merci : matelots !

In the poems that deal with Paris, Corbière again manages to convey the rhythms of speech. In many of them, he not only uses his own colloquialisms but the slang of the prostitutes and of the streets of Paris. A poem such as «Idylle Coupée» must have been indeed shocking to a great number of its readers. He says that the town is very Parisian when Dawn is walking the streets and all the prostitutes are coming out of the prisons or their rooms. He loves to see them, virgins from sixteen to sixty, faded, bald, calling out to hairdresser and chemist, taking a large number of absinthes and paying the pimp who acts as their lover, a good-for-nothing born to the wine trade.

C'est très parisien dans les rues

Quand l'Aurore fait le trottoir,

De voir sortir toutes les Grues

Du violon, ou de leur boudoir

J'aime les voir, tout plein légères,

Et, comme en façon de prières,

Entrer dire — Bonjour, gros chien —

Au merlan, puis au pharmacien.
J'aime les voir, chauves, déteintes,
Vierges de seize à soixante ans,
Rossignoler pas mal d'absinthes,
Perruches de tout leur printemps :

Et puis *payer le mannezingue,*
Au *Polyte* qui sert d'Arthur,
Bon jeune homme né *brandezingue,*
Dos-bleu sous sa blouse d'azur. (38)

In «Femme» and «Pauvre Garçon», Corbière gives us the «monologue intérieur» of a woman who is looking at the poet asleep. In both poems, the epigraph is ironically «La Bête féroce» :

Cet homme est laid Et moi, ne suis-je donc pas belle,
Et belle encore pour nous deux ! —
En suis-je donc enfin aux rêves de pucelle ?
— Je suis reine : Qu'il soit lèpreux !

De quel droit ce regard, ce mauvais oeil qui touche :
Monsieur poserait le fatal ?

Je suis myope, il est vrai Peut-être qu'il est louche ;
Je l'ai vu si peu — mais si mal. —
— «Femme»

* * *

This characteristic of the verse of Donne and Corbière — the conversational tone, the «one person talking to another» — is also to be found in many of Eliot's early poems where the angle of vision is that of one or another of the characters and very similar to the interior monologue. Thus, we have Prufrock, the young man of the «Portrait of a Lady», Gerontion, Tiresias :

Let us go then, you and I,

I take my hat : how can I make a cowardly amends
For what she has said to me ?

Here I am, an old man in a dry month,

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest —

(38) I must apologise for the inadequacy of the summary of the lines : as Corbière uses actual speech, the imagery, association of ideas, the puns and the irony are all lost in a translation that cannot avoid being stilted.

Passages of direct dialogue are often used, as the Lady herself in the «Portrait» or Mme. Sosostris with her fortuneteller's patter. The scene with the nervous lady followed by the pub scene in «A Game of Chess» are of their kind as colloquial and as vivid as Corbière's «Le Bossu Bitor».

In a life composed so much, so much of odds and ends,
(For indeed I do not love it you knew ? you are not
blind !

How keen you are !)

My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. stay with me.
Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.

or her question without hope,

What shall we do tomorrow ?
«What shall we ever do ?»

The continuous chatter of the woman's voice in the pub gives a faithful rendering of the cadences of her speech, so different from the Lady in the «Portrait» or the nervous lady a few lines above.

«Journey of the Magi» is also a dramatic monologue in which Eliot again captures the intonation and feelings of the speaker. He begins with a description of the journey, narrating it with restraint and without emotion, but in the third stanza he gives the speaker's subjective reaction to what he remembers of the journey. The troubled repetition, the sudden short line, the question and short answer reveal his troubled feelings :

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This : were we led all that way for
Birth or Death ? There was a Birth, certainly,

* * *

The tension between innovation on the one hand and tradition on the other marks the works of Donne, Corbière and Eliot, for none of the poets that we are discussing were revolutionary in their use of verse but had this similarity in common : that the basic changes that they introduced were made without entirely breaking away from traditional forms.

Thus, Donne took the stanza form in his *Songs and Sonnets* and, by changing the number of lines, varying their length and using

complex rhyme schemes, produced stanzas that had not been used before. Out of 46 stanza forms, Legouis declares that 44 of them are found in one poem only. (39) «All the longer and more complex stanzas, it would seem, are of Donne's invention.» (40) In «The Anniversarie», for example, he has stanzas of ten lines in which he alternates tetrameters with pentameters and ends with a hexameter. His thoughts and feelings are supported by his metre, the movement of his enjambement and his rhymes so that we are carried without a break to the end of the stanza.

It is in «The Apparition», however, that one feels he is a true innovator for here he has no stanzas but one complex poem where, again, feelings and thoughts are intricately woven with the structure, metre and rhyme of the poem. This metrical freedom, which can be considered as the forerunner of «free verse», is also found in Herbert's «The Collar», Vaughan's «The Morning Watch» and Marvell's «On a Drop of Dew» and «The Coronet», where technical and structural complexity faithfully reflect the poet's thought.

As for metre, Donne also introduces changes within his lines, very often to reflect his disturbed feelings. Thus, in Sonnet XIV, «Batter my heart, three-person'd God», five of the fourteen lines begin with a trochaic foot, while the spondees in lines 2 and 4 reflect the implied image of God the craftsman, battering and creating man and giving him shape :

Batter my heart, three-person'd God ; for, you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend ;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee, and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.

The 6th, 7th and 8th lines are difficult to scan and, in fact, of the eight lines of the octet, only one is in regular iambic metre. Yet the mood softens in the sestet and the sonnet eventually comes to rest on a final regular metre. This is obviously not accidental for Donne repeats this movement in other sonnets, as he is able to repeat a complex stanza structure in each lyric. Thus his poetry finds its freedom within traditional form.

* * *

The same remarks can be made of Corbière for he worked according to the basic elements of French versification, in which the counted

(39) Pierre Legouis, *Donne the Craftsman : An Essay upon the Structure of the Songs and Sonnets* (New York : Russell & Russell, Inc, (1952), p. 16.

(40) *Ibid.*, p. 23.

syllable, the caesura and the rhyme were of paramount importance, but with all of which he took liberties.

One of the important elements of French classical verse is the alexandrine or hexameter, with its line of twelve syllables, divided equally into two by a caesura, with two stresses in each hemistich, of which the 2nd and the 4th stresses (falling on the 6th and 12th syllables) are stronger than the others. The two lines quoted from Lamartine on an earlier page of this paper, and the two following lines from Corbière's «Le Poète contumace», would illustrate the point :

Lamartine :

- Chantons, puisque mes doigts/sont encore sur la lyre ;
Chantons, puisque la mort,/comme au cygne, m'inspire ;

Corbière :

Se mourant en sommeil, / il se vivait en rêve,
Son rêve était le flot, / qui montait sur la grève.

The last syllable of the line is strengthened by the stress, the pause, as well as by the rhyme, and it follows that any enjambment would entail a weakening of this regular metre, especially if the enjambment is repeated in consecutive lines. In general, these rules were strictly followed although a few changes and liberties had begun to enter French verse at the beginning of the 19th century.

Corbière, however, was often blamed for the irregularity of his verse and for not keeping to the rules of prosody — having caesuras that do not fall in the middle of the line, lines that have no caesuras at all, too many enjambments, slackness over alternating masculine and feminine rhymes — all due, according to Laforgue, to «une incurable indécatesse d'oreille.» (41) Laforgue, however, was his contemporary and such criticism was perhaps typical of the age, whereas Corbière's achievement in verse can be seen today in a completely different light. Bocquet, for example, believes that the poet was often successful in the changes he introduced because he had a sense of rhythm and a musical ear, and adds that, for the date of *Les Amours Jaunes*, the caesuras of his hexameters must have been bold and disconcerting and point to a metrical anarchy that was set up a few years later.

Dans sa désarticulation systématique du vers et les rejets nombreux dont il use le poète est souvent heureux, car il avait le

(41) Laforgue, pp. 121—22.

sens du rythme et l'oreille musicienne, mais l'on songe à la date des *Amours Jaunes*, les césures de ses hexamètres sont audacieuses et déconcertantes et font présumer l'anarchie métrique érigée en système quelques années plus tard. (42)

An analysis of the concluding passage of «Le Bossu Bitor» would show the balance that Corbière maintains between innovation and tradition. The hunchback Bitor, «un pauvre petit diable», has saved his money in a bag and, when the ship lands, he looks for love like the other sailors in one of the dockside brothels. He is mocked at by the other customers who decide to make fun of him by tossing him in a blanket. He is treated so roughly that he dies and is not seen again until a few days later when his body rises to the surface of the slimy, muddy water of the dock.

Plus tard, l'eau soulevait une masse vaseuse
Dans le dock. On trouva des plaques de vareuse
Un cadavre bossu, ballonné, démasqué
Par les crabes. Et ça fut jeté sur le quai,
Tout comme l'autre soir, sur une couverture.
Restant de crabe, encore il servit de pâture
Au rire du public, et les gamins d'enfants
Jouant au bord de l'eau noire sous le beau temps,
Sur sa bosse tapaient comme sur un tambour
Crevé

— Le pauvre corps avait connu l'amour !

The first line is regular but it runs on into the second and stops at the third syllable with the end of the sentence. Thus, the stress is here much stronger than on the 6th syllable where it should be. The third line is again regular but it also has an enjambment that runs on in the same way into the fourth line and stops at the third syllable. Again, the stress here is strong because it not only ends the sentence but because of the surprise effect of the «crabes». The grotesque description is carried on with metrical regularity until the last two lines : here Corbière could well have ended his poem with the picture of the children beating a drum : «Sur sa bosse tapaient comme sur un tambour», but instead, he runs on into the shocking image, «sur un tambour / Crevé » with its final ironic touch, «Le pauvre corps avait connu l'amour.»

In spite of the enjambments and irregular caesuras, there is no total dislocation of metre for the return to the regular alexandrines gives rest to the ear. This technique is natural to English, for ever since Shakespeare's blank verse, English poetry has used a metre that follows the natural rhythms of speech, by varying the metre, using enjambments and intentionally shifting the place of the caesura.

Corbière also used traditional poetic forms — such as the sonnet and the rondel — but with modifications. In the sonnet, for example, he constantly varies the rhyme scheme and, in some cases, even the lengths of the lines ; in the rondels he cuts down the number of lines to twelve, changes the place of the tercet, but keeps to the rule of having only two rhymes. (43)

Some of Corbière's most interesting poems, however, are those that are not written in any regular stanza form — such as «Le Poète contumace» and «Le Bossu Bitor». He uses rhyme and counts the syllables, but the stanza is like a paragraph and conforms to his ideas or feelings, so that a stanza can be anything from two to ten or fourteen lines (as in «Le Poète contumace»).

* * *

Some poets in England and in America in the first decade of this century began to write verse that had no rhyme, metre or patterned form. Many called this *vers libre*, but even in 1917, Eliot refused to consider the existence of any such thing as *vers libre* for «..... it is a battle-cry of freedom, and there is no freedom in art.» (44) Instead, he maintained that

the most interesting verse that has yet been written in our language has been done either by taking a very simple form, like the iambic pentameter, and constantly withdrawing from it, or taking no form at all, and constantly approximating to a very simple one. It is this contrast between fixity and flux, this unperceived evasion of monotony, which is the very life of verse. (45)

Eliot gave Webster as an example of this evasion and recognition of regularity, and concluded that

(43) Marshall Lindsay, «The Versification of Corbière's *Les Amours Jaunes*, PMLA, Vol. 78, Sept., 1963, pp. 358—68.

(44) T.S. Eliot, «Reflections on *Vers Libre*» in *To Criticize the Critic* (New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), p. 184. The article appeared in the *New Statesman*, March 3rd, 1917.

(45) *Ibid.*, p. 185

the ghost of some simple metre should lurk behind the arras in even the «freest» verse ; to advance menacingly as we doze, and withdraw as we rouse. Or, freedom is only truly freedom when it appears against a background of an artificial limitation. (46)

and added,

..... There is no escape from metre ; there is only mastery (47)

Thus, as with Donne and Corbière, the foundations of Eliot's poetry are the traditional rules of verse and «Despite all the smoke screens of propaganda thrown up by Pound, he and Eliot start from traditional metre.» (48)

In «The Preludes», for example, he keeps to a fairly constant iambic tetrameter with a certain amount of rhyme, and a few shorter lines :

And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet

In his early verse, however, Eliot uses all the known variations of metre — doing away with the weak syllable of the first foot (initial catalexis), adding a weak syllable at the end of the line (feminine ending), inverting the first iambic foot into a trochee and using anapaests. In the following passage from «The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock», we find two lines of heptameter,

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the windowpanes,

followed by a hexameter with initial catalexis as well as a feminine ending :

Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,

and a pentameter with an inverted iambic :

Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains

(46) Ibid., p. 187.

(47) Ibid., p. 188.

(48) Harvey Gross, *Sound and Form in Modern Poetry* (Ann Arbor : The University of Michigan Press, 1965), p. 97.

He continues in this manner until he comes to the end of his conceit in the eighth line and reverts to the iambic pentameter :

Curled once about the house, and fell asleep. (49)

Gross points out that in «Gerontion», (50) Eliot uses both the rhythms of prose and iambic pentameter. Thus, the opening lines of the old man are given in strongly rhythmic prose but in the passage where he becomes more intense, Eliot uses Websterian blank verse :

I have lost my passion : why should I need to keep it
Since what is kept must be adulterated ?
I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch :
How should I use them for your closer contact ?

In «Gerontion», Eliot does away with rhyme which he had partly used in the earlier poems. Following his argument on free verse, he points out that

The rejection of rhyme is not a leap at facility ; on the contrary, it imposes a much severer strain upon the language. When the comforting echo of rhyme is removed, success or failure in the choice of words, in the sentence structure, in the order, is at once more apparent.. Rhyme removed, the poet is at once held up to the standards of prose. Rhyme removed, much ethereal music leaps up from the word (51)

Gross has also pointed out (52) another important characteristic of Eliot's verse which again illustrates the evasion and approximation to traditional metre. He declares that the dramatic structure of *The Waste Land* is essential to the understanding of Eliot's prosody, because here Eliot meets the dramatic requirements of the poem by using two metrical modes. The first of these is a conversational idiom, a line of four strong stresses :

I read, much of the night. / and go south in the winter.

Eliot then turns into the second mode, which is again blank verse :

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish ? Son of man,

The movement thus alternates from one metrical mode to the other, enabling Eliot to produce the contrast between fixity and flux and that

(49) «The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock».

(50) Gross, pp. 182 ff.

(51) Eliot, «Reflections on Vers Libre», pp. 188—89.

(52) Gross, pp. 186 ff.

freedom which is only freedom when it works in a context of artistic order or an artificial limitation. Eliot, like Donne and Corbière, was after a kind of writing that would respond «to contemporary modes of thought, feeling and speech.» (53)

III THEMES

What is common to Eliot and Corbière to a great extent, and to Donne to a lesser degree, is the urban background which they all criticise. We find this in Donne's «Satyres» where he mocks at poets and lawyers, empty-headed fops and their mistresses, courtiers and suitors, lawofficers and the Court itself.

My sinne

Indeed is great, but I have beene in
A Purgatorie, such as fear'd hell is
A recreation to, and scarce map of this
I had no suit there, nor new suite to shew.
Yet went to court ;.....

— «Satyre IV»

Donne, however, is urban in the sense that his poetry is the product of a highly civilised society and not that of a nature poet — such as Vaughan, for example — and the city, as such, does not form part of the background of his poetry as it does that of Corbière and Eliot.

Corbière's poems portray a kind of life that has great affinity with Eliot's early poetry and his *Waste Land*. His Paris is «une fourmière», (54) a city where the prostitutes walk in the streets or go to the Bois de Boulogne, of beggars, and of a poet whose very muse is in tone with her surroundings. She, too, is walking the streets, dumb, stupidly looking at the passing wind and not hearing the sound of emptiness around her.

Là, sa pauvre Muse pucelle
Fit le trottoir en *demoiselle*.
Ils disaient : Qu'est-ce qu'elle vend ?

— Rien. — Elle restait là, stupide,
N'entendant pas sonner le vice
Et regardant passer le vent.

— «Paris»

(53) Eliot, «American Literature and Languages in To Criticize the Critic, op. cit., p. 57.

(54) Corbière, «Paris», pp. 22—23.

It is in «Paris Nocturne,» however, that he is most like Eliot. It is not a city but a world, and he first compares it to the sea, calm and flat, whose tide has ebbed with its distant growl. Can you hear the scratching of the crabs ? he asks. It is a dried Styx where Diogenes, the rag-picker, is wandering about at his ease with his lantern in his hand, a place where perverse poets are fishing in the black gutters using their empty heads as tins for bait. It is a field with hideous harpies circling overhead and swooping down on filthy rags. It is death — with love upstairs having its siesta : listen, he says, not even a dream is moving. It is life, a lively spring singing the eternal song, over the head of a sea-god, who is stretching his bare green limbs on the bed of the morgue, with his eyes wide open.

Ce n'est pas une ville, c'est un monde.

— C'est la mer : — calme plat — et la grande marée,
Avec un grondement lointain, s'est retirée.
Le flot va revenir, se roulant dans son bruit —

— Entendez-vous gratter les crabes de la nuit

— C'est le Styx asséché ; Le chiffonnier Diogène,
Sa lanterne à la main, s'en vient errer sans gêne.
Le long du ruisseau noir, les poètes pervers
Pêchent ; leur crâne creux leur sert de boîte à vers.

— C'est le champ : Pour glaner les impures charpies
S'abat le vol tournant des hideuses harpies.
Le lapin de gouttière, à l'affut des rongeurs,
Fuit les fils de Bondy, nocturnes vendangeurs.

— C'est la mort : La police gît — En haut, l'amour
Fait la sieste en têtant la viande d'un bras lourd,
Où le baiser éteint laisse sa plaque rouge

L'heure est seule — Ecoutez : pas un rêve ne bouge.

— C'est la vie : Ecoutez : la source vive chante
L'éternelle chanson, sur la tête gluante
D'un dieu marin tirant ses membres nus et verts
Sur le lit de morgue

Et les yeux grand'ouverts !

It is strange how much alike are the details and symbols used by both poets — the image of the sea, the crabs («a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of the silent seas»), the allusions to the Styx and to Dante's *Inferno*, the useless search for a man, the gutters, and the figure of the sea-god. Eliot's city is the «Fourmillante Cité,»

(55) with its half-deserted streets and one-night cheap hotels, sawdust restaurants, «Arms that lie along à table» in the lamplight, dingy shades in a thousand furnished rooms where you watch the night revealing a thousand sordid images, women in pubs, lovely men leaning out of windows, crowds of people where each man fixes his eyes before his feet, and the poet fishing in a Thames as slimy as Corbière's river.

The atmosphere and characters of the brothel scene in Corbière's «Le Bossu Bitor» have much of the sordidness of Eliot's Sweeney poems. The picture of life that they want to portray is the shocking reality,

* * *

Death was a reality to Donne as well as to Corbière and Eliot and the theme of death was present in much of their verse. Donne's «shroud» is to be seen even in his early love lyrics where he often plays with the idea of death and separation :

But since that I
Must dye at last, 'tis best
To use my selfe in jest
Thus by fain'd deaths to dye ;

— «Song»

In «The Will», he bequeathes his eyes, tongue, constancy, truth, books and all the rest before he sighs his last breath. In «The Funerall», he bids whoever comes to shroud him not to harm «Nor question much / That subtile wreath of haire, which crowns my arm», and in «The Relique»,

When my grave is broke up againe
Some second ghest to entertaine,
(For graves have learn'd that woman-head
To be to more than one a Bed)
And he that digs it, spies
A bracelet of bright haire about the bone,

He treats the theme with the same levity in «The Dampe»,

(55) Eliot admits his indebtedness to Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* and especially to the two lines, «Fourmillante Cité citée pleine de rêves; /Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant. ... » α : What Dante Means to Me in *To Criticize the Critic*, pp. 126—7.

When I am dead, and Doctors know not why;
And my friends curiosities
Will have me cut up to survay each part,
When they shall finde your Picture in my heart

The same levity and seriousness are to be found in Marvell's «To His Coy Mistress» where he tells her that

Thy Beauty shall no more be found ;
Nor, in thy marble Vault, shall sound
My echoing Song ; then Worms shall try
That long-preserv'd Virginity :
And your quaint Honour turn to dust ;
And into ashes all my Lust.
The Grave's a fine and private place,
But none I think do there embrace.

It is in his Holy Sonnets and his Hymns, however, that Donne is entirely absorbed with the seriousness of death and with his preparations for the moment when he is to enter «that Holy roome» where he will face God. As with other religious poets of the 17th century, death held no fear for him since it would bring him to the resurrection :

What shall my West hurt me ? As West and East
In all flat Maps (and I am one) are one,
So death doth touch the resurrection.

— «Hymn to God my God, in my sicknesse»

Even in the light Cavalier verse of that century, the *carpe diem* theme implied an awareness in the poet of the brevity of life and beauty and the closeness of death. «Then dye,» said Waller to the rose, «that shee / The common fate of all things rare / May read in thee,»

* * *

In Corbière, too, death is constantly present and at times he treats it like Donne — in jest. He too makes his will and the things he has left behind («Laisser—courre»), and even writes his «Epitaphe» in which he wittily describes himself with puns, paradoxes and antitheses. (56) He repeats this self-disparaging epitaph in «Décourageux» and

(56) Eliot took the title of his French poem «Mélange Adultère de Tout» from this poem by Corbière. The opening and closing words of East Coker — «In my beginning is my end» and «In my end is my beginning» — may well have come from Corbière's epigraph to the same poem which is a delightful play on words : « ... il y a tant de choses qui finissent par le commencement que le commencement commence à finir par être la fin ... » which taken in its entirety, has an undertone of seriousness and irony.

« Une Mort trop travaillée », but his dry, mocking tone was a screen for the seriousness with which he thought of death. He refers to it in his own typical way — as a woman, who is cold and coquette and afterwards without passion, and with whom one only sleeps when one is rigid :

La mort ah oui, je sais : cette femme est bien froide,
Coquette dans la vie ; après, sans passion.
Pour coucher avec elle il faut être trop roide
Et puis, la mort n'est pas, c'est la négation.

— « Sous un Portrait de Corbière »

In « Un Jeune qui s'en va », he suddenly turns from his gay criticism of other poets to a final lyrical quatrain, when he feels her last kiss getting chapped on his lips and death rocking him to sleep in her arms and undressing him of life :

Sentir sur ma lèvre appauvrie
Ton dernier baiser se gercer,
La mort dans tes bras me bercer
Me déshabiller de la vie !

Eliot considered the « Rondels pour après » as particularly important because their conceits were close to Donne. (57) Their importance, however, is in their treatment of death : the rondels are lullabies for a dead child but the rondel called « Petit mort pour rire » is obviously written for the poet himself. He mocks with a light touch the masquerade of funeral rites, of coffins and sextons and the everlasting flowers of the graveyard, with the result that the poems are a combination of irony and of the utter pathos of life.

Ne fais pas le lourd : cercueils de poètes
Pour les croque-morts sont de simples jeux,
Boîtes à violon qui sonnent le creux

— « Petit mort pour rire »

In Eliot, the death theme is subtly woven into the fabric of *The Waste Land*. But the theme is to be found earlier still, in « Prufrock », when he sees « the eternal Footman » (58) holding his coat and snick-

(57) This is referred to by Greene, pp. 89—90, from Eliot's unpublished Clark Lectures, VIII.

(58) Cf. Donne's line from « The Second Anniversary » : 'Thinke then, my soule, that death is but a Groome'

ering, and in «Whispers of Immortality». Here he speaks of Webster who «saw the skull beneath the skin» and of Donne who «knew the anguish of the marrow / The ague of the skeleton». In «The Burial of the Dead», he says that he will show us «fear in a handful of dust», refers to Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* and the Unreal City where «A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many.» He refers twice to the passage from Marvell's «Coy Mistress» on the nearness of death and each time he turns it into something more grotesque :

But at my back in a cold blast I hear
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.
A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank

The themes of death and death-in-life are also to be found in «The Hollow Men», which is not only a waste land but a land of the dead,

Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other kingdom

This is the dead land
This is cactus land
Here the stone images
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a dead man's hand

* * *

In their desire to give realism even to the point of describing things that are repulsive, Donne, Corbière and Eliot turn to the grotesque. In addition to Donne's «bracelet of bright hair about the bone» and the idea that his grave will entertain another guest, there are a few lines in the elegy, «The Autumnall», where Donne takes us from descriptions of old age to death and death's-heads :

But name not *Winter-facts*, whose skin's slacke ;
Lanke, as an unthrifts purse ; but a soules sacke ;
Whose *Eyes* seeke light within, for all here's shade ;
Whose *mouthes* are holes, rather worne out, than made ;
Whose every tooth to a severall place is gone,
To vexè their soules at *Resurrection* ;

Seeing things in a grotesque way is also characteristic of Corbière. We had an example of this in the last passage of «Le Bossu Bitor»

in which Corbière describes the horror of the decomposed and deformed body of the hunchback rising to the surface of the slimy, muddy water of the dock, while the people laughed at him and the children tapped his hump.

In two Breton poems, «Paysage Mauvais» and «Nature Morte», Corbière gives an eerie description of nature : sands of old bones, accursed marsh-light, stinking grass, toads poisoning the mushrooms, cuckoos, screech-owls with gleaming eyes, barnowls who fall silent at the sound of the wheelbarrow of Death, and crows circling over the house of a dead man.

In «Petit mort pour rire», he tells himself to go (die) quickly, for the grass in the wind will be his hair and from his gaping eyes will spring will-o'-the-wisps, prisoners in poor heads.

This idea is echoed in Eliot's «Whispers of Immortality».

Webster was much possessed by death
And saw the skull beneath the skin;
And breastless creatures under ground
Leaned backward with a lipless grin.

Daffodil bulbs instead of balls
Stared from the sockets of the eyes !

There is another parallel between Corbière's description of the roof of the ruined convent crenelated as the «machoir d'une vieille» («Le poète contumace») and Eliot's more vivid and grotesque description of the second stair in *Ash Wednesday* :

There were no more faces and the stair was dark,
Damp, jagged, like an old man's mouth drivelling, beyond
repair,
Or the toothed gullet of an aged shark.

We have already seen how Eliot changed Marvell's quotation on marble vaults and worms into a description of a rat dragging its slimy belly through the vegetation. Immediately after, as Prince Ferdinand thinks of his father's death, Eliot continues with his picture of

White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.

IV. *STYLISTIC DEVICES*

The use of conceits, paradoxes and antitheses in the poetry of Donne, Corbière and Eliot bears a striking resemblance. Generally speaking, these techniques demand a conscious and rational objectivity on the part of the poet for it is through them he tries to express his most personal and intense feelings. In this way, the emotional element in the verse is subjected to rational analysis, thereby fusing both thought and emotion.

Of all the technical devices used by 17th century poets, the conceit is considered as the most Metaphysical. It was «the metaphor that connected logically subjects not obviously analogous», (59) and hence surprised and shocked its readers. Donne's comparison of the reflection of the lovers in each other's eyes to two hemispheres, or their separation and reunion to the opening and closing of the two feet of a compass, or the reflection of her face in his tears to coins that bear her stamp and therefore worth something by such mintage, are typical Donne conceits. (60) He used the extended conceit as well in which he stretched the comparison as far as it would go. Thus, when he compares his body to a map, his doctors to cosmographers, and his disease to straits, he imagines the cosmographers are searching for the southwest passage, through straits that will take him to the west, to death, for their currents yield return to none. (61) His imagery was taken from all the sciences of his time — geometry, geography, medicine, astronomy, chemistry, as well as philosophy, and out of this «unpoetic» material he produced poetry of great beauty.

Corbière, on the other hand, did not go to science and philosophy for his imagery but to natural human activities and interests. This was perhaps due to his being «conscious of the real importance of nature — nature as it was, not the fictitious, sentimental «Nature» of romanticism His attachment to instinct and the earth and the sea is an expression of belief in human nature. (62) Thus, when he speaks of death as a cold coquette, or of his Muse as sterile — «Oui,

(59) Duncan, p. 12.

(60) «The Good Morrow», «A Valediction : Forbidding Mourning», and «A Valediction : Of Weeping».

(61) «Hymn to God my God, in my sickness».

(62) Turnell, pp. 400—401.

la Muse est stérile ! Elle est fille / D'amour, d'oisiveté, de prostitution
..... » (63) he is using an image that symbolises life and fecundity
for him, or its opposite.

His metaphors are often of great beauty, as in «Le Bossu Bitor»,
where he is describing the evening in the harbour when the ship is
rocking on its cable and sleeping alone, and the low chopping of the
water is whispering a big kiss to the deaf keel of the ship :

Le soleil est noyé. — C'est le soir — dans le port
Le navire est bercé sur ses câbles, s'endort
Seul ; et le clapotis bas de l'eau morte et lourde
Chuchote un gros baiser sous la carène sourde

His ability to use words in all their connotations was of great use
to him in his extended conceit. In «A une demoiselle : Pour piano
et chant», he ironically compares this «accomplished» young lady to
her piano. In a sonnet of great verbal agility, he shows us her inability
to understand pain and suffering through the use of musical terms
and notation :

O femme tranaposée en *Morceau difficile*,
Tes croches sans douleur n'ont pas d'accents humains !
Jamais ! — La *clef-de-Sol* n'est pas la clef de l'âme,
La *clef-de-Fa* n'est pas la syllabe de *Femme*,
Et deux demi-soupirs ce n'est pas soupirer.

Eliot's «Prufrock» abounds in conceits of the Metaphysical kind,
where the comparisons are surprising and taken from «unpoetic»
material. He opens the poem by telling us how «the evening is spread
against the sky / Like a patient etherised upon a table», the streets of
the town are «like a tedious argument / Of insidious intent», and
Prufrock's disillusionment measures out his life with coffee spoons.
He has known the eyes.

..... that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
And when I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways ?

It is in «Prufrock» too that we have Eliot's vivid extended conceit in which he compares the yellow fog that rubs its back and muzzle on the window-panes, licks its tongue, slips by the terrace, leaps into the night, then curls about the house and falls asleep.

The images of these three poets were considered surprising because the material they used was unconventional and uncommon. They tapped sources of comparison that were «unpoetic» but out of them they produced an amalgam that satisfied both the intellect and the senses. Through their concrete images, they were able to express the most complex feelings and emotions.

* * *

Another stylistic device that was characteristic of Donne and the Metaphysical poets was the paradox. It had begun to be popular in England in the late 16th century among both poets and prose-writers. The paradox has been defined as a figure of speech in which a statement is made that is contrary to conceived opinion or one that seems absurd at first but turns out to have a coherent meaning, as, for example, Donne's sonnet in which he tells death that it is he who will die. As it involves two contrasting aspects, or two opposites, it is often joined to antithesis, which is another figure of speech in which ideas are contrasted through parallelisms. Both devices demand agility of mind in both poet and reader. Thus, when Donne says to God in his sonnet (XIV),

Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
Except you enthrall mee, never shall be free.
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.

or when Marvell's Soul argues with the Body that he is

Here blinded with an Eye ; and there
Deaf with the drumming of an Ear

they are both using subtle paradoxes which also contain antitheses. In «Good Friday, 1613», Donne builds his whole poem on a paradox : he is riding westward on that day but his soul is bent towards the east, the rising sun, the resurrection :

Hence is't, that I am carryed towards the West
This day, when my Soules forme bends toward the East.
There I should see a Sunne, by rising set,
And by that setting endlesse day beget ;

In Corbière's verse, paradox and antithesis are constantly used. When speaking of love and his desire to be loved, the poet realises the conflict in his own nature for, at the same time as he begs for love,

he is afraid of being heard : he is a low type, a bohemian, dining on hunger and freedom.

Mon amour à moi n'aime pas qu'on l'aime ;
Mendiant, il a peur d'être écouté
C'est un lazzarone enfin, un bohème,
Déjeunant de jeûne et de liberté.

— «A une camarade»

These devices were usually used by Corbière to direct amusement at himself and his feelings. He is constantly ridiculing his physical ugliness and his skinniness and, at the same time, he is afraid of showing his emotions and afraid even of the emotion itself. This «self-destructive type of introspection, or auto-irony» (64) is to be found in Corbière, Laforgue and Eliot.

In «Epitaphe», which was known to Eliot, (65) he speaks of himself in ironic paradoxes and ends the poem by saying that he died waiting to live and lived expecting to die, and that there lay one who had succeeded too well as a failure :

Il mourut en s'attendant vivre
Et vécut, s'attendant mourrir.
Ci-gît, — coeur sans coeur, mal planté,
Trop reussi, — comme raté.

«Egale une épitaphe égale une préface et réciproquement.» he says in the poem's epigraph.

In «Le Poète contumace», the poet expresses his despairing love through self-irony, mockery and puns, alternating these with passages of great lyrical beauty and tenderness. It was to her that he said goodbye, to her who had wept so hard for him that he had wanted to stay with her and cry over himself. But it was all over, he added, and he was a ghost of bone and he was going to add «of flesh» but remembered how thin he was :

C'est à toi que je fis mes adieux à la vie,
A toi qui me pleuras jusqu'à me faire envie
De rester me pleurer avec toi. Maintenant
C'est joué, je ne suis qu'un gâteaux revenant,

(64) Francis Scarfe «Eliot and Nineteenth-century French Poetry» in Eliot in Perspective, edited by Graham Martin (London : Macmillan & Co., 1970), p. 58.

(65) See p. 26 of this paper.

En os et (j'allais dire en chair). La chose est sûre.
C'est bien moi, je suis là — mais comme une rature.

Furthermore, Corbière saw the irony of life through his paradoxes. «Il voyait trop,» he said of himself in «Décourageux», «Et voir est un aveuglement.» He tells his beloved that if she were not false, she would not be real — «Si tu n'étais fausse, eh serais-tu vraie ?» («Fleur d'art»).

In «Paris Nocturne.» (66) he pictures death with the image of love having its siesta, as a solitary where not even a dream is moving, while life is seen as a singing spring of water and a sea god in the morgue : not only are life and death contrasted but each has something of the other.

Eliot makes use of paradox and antithesis in the same way as Donne and Corbière used them. First, he enhanced and emphasised his ideas by the application of a paradox. In «Gerontion», for example, he speaks of history in terms of paradox and antithesis.

She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving Think
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.

In «Whispers of Immortality», Eliot refers to Webster who «saw the skull beneath the skin», the skeleton and the flesh, and to Donne who knew that «No contact possible to flesh / Allayed the fever of the bone.» He contrasts Webster's «breastless creatures underground» with Grishkin's «promise of pneumatic bliss.»

Duncan has pointed out that

Antithesis and paradox are the underlying patterns that give form to the poetic music of *Four Quartets*. There is a continuous play upon the contrast between movement and stillness, past and present, sickness and health, and particularly beginning and end. (67)

(66) See p. 24 of this paper.

(67) Duncan, pp. 159—63.

In the Good Friday section of «East Coker», Eliot is close to the Metaphysical manner in Marvell and Donne. In «A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body», Marvell's Soul has to endure physical «Diseases, but, whats worse, the Cure.» Thus, Eliot's «Our only health is the disease refers to physical sickness that will lead to death and thus to spiritual health. In the stanza on purification Eliot builds his «multifoliate» symbolism on parædox :

If to be warmed, then I must freeze
And quake in frigid purgatorial fires
Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars.

The self-ironic tone that is typical of Corbière in his intimate poems is also to be found in Eliot's early verse. It first strikes the reader in the character of Prufrock with his «hundred indecisions» and his «hundred visions and revisions». There is time, he says, to wonder and to turn back but, if he does, «they» will see the bald spot in the middle of his hair and will notice how his hair is growing thin. They will notice that his clothes are «rich and modest», but they will also say that his legs and arms are thin. Eyes can fix him in a phrase, like a pin fixing a sprawling worm on the wall. He is no prophet, no Lazarus, no Hamlet — only an attendant lord. He is hesitant, uncertain, anxious.

There is a great deal of irony in Eliot's French poems which date from the time he was interested in French verse. In «Mélange Adultère de Tout», his irony is self-directed, in the manner of Corbière, at his travels and the way he changes character and jobs where ever he may be. In «Le Directeur», he makes fun of the Director and puns, like Corbière on «Les actionnaires / Réactionnaires». In «Lune de Miel», he produces an ironic situation where the glamour of the honeymoon is contrasted with the sordid reality of heat, perspiration, two hundred bedbugs and a husband thinking of tips and expenses. Finally, in «Conversation Galante», he shows us a man and a woman who are totally incompatible in character — she being imperious and indifferent and he sentimental.

* * *

It is difficult to point to part of a poet's work, to isolate it and to say that it has been influenced by this poet or that, without giving this influence a disproportionate importance. This is especially the case with Eliot whose habit of allusions (also to be found in Corbière) sent research students for more than half a century hunting for the sources of his poems. Verbal borrowings are the most elusive, the least important, and the most difficult elements to assess in a poet's

work, for it is not what he borrows but how he makes use of his borrowing that is of value in understanding his work.

Instead, an attempt has been made in this paper to search for those elements in the work of Donne and Corbière that Eliot had considered important and that had helped him in his work as a poet. Certain similarities have thus appeared — the desire in the poets to bring their verse closer to the reality by finding, as Matthiessen points out, «a new medium of expression that would correspond to the felt intricacy» of their existence ; similarities of theme and of their outlook on life ; and similarities in their stylistic devices.

We must not forget, however, that every influence or revival involves a new interpretation and that, as we have seen in Eliot.

Each period seeks out those elements in its cultural past with which it has an affinity and reshapes them in its own image to meet its own needs. (68)

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