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*Un soir de demi-brume à Londres
Un voyou qui ressemblait à
Mon amour vint à ma rencontre
Et le regard qu'il me jeta
Me fit baisser les yeux de honte*

More than a half-century has passed since the manuscript beginning with these lines was fished out of limbo, read and read again, and a dazzled magazine editor called across the room that here, at last, was a first-rate poem. A reader of the sixties might find other terms in which to express his approval, though some of Paul Léautaud's are still serviceable: "I read, read twice, three times, was carried away, dazed, delighted, deeply moved. Such melancholy, such evocative tone, such bohemianism, such rangings of the mind, and that faintly gypsy air and the total absence of that abomination of ordinary verse, *la rime riche* . . ."¹ Whatever the language of criticism, the unchanging fact is that "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé," like others of Apollinaire's poems translated with distinction in this book, still has all its power to stir enthusiasm.

Guillaume Apollinaire, as Wilhelm-Apollinaris de Kostrowitski called himself by 1909, when Léautaud forced a long-postponed decision concerning "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé" at the *Mercur de France*, was already well known to fellow-craftsmen of the little magazines and to avant-garde painters. He was also familiar to artistic gatherings where he was regarded primarily as a character, to publishing houses for which he did

¹ Paul Léautaud, "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé," *Le Flâneur des Deux Rives* (March, 1954), p. 7.

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hackwork of various kinds, as well as to a number of European capitals and gambling resorts whose ambiguous offspring he seemed to be. Born twenty-nine years before in Rome, he was not the son of an eminent prelate, though both "Kostro" and Picasso were fond of intimating as much, but of an Italian army officer who never officially acknowledged his existence, and a Polish lady of many passions, the most enduring of which drove her tirelessly from casino to casino. Wilhelm, the elder of her two sons, had attended religious schools in Monaco and Cannes, and public high school in Nice. He had sought to integrate the scattered strands of unsettling experience by bouts of schoolboy piety, by huge doses of unsystematic reading, by febrile love affairs in Paris, in the Ardennes, in the Rhineland and London, and by much writing of verse. Partly because it was composed in acquired French by a young man who obviously knew the German Romantics well, partly because the author would have had a good deal of sheer verbalizing capacity in any language, that verse had attracted attention. But the French literary mind is capable of granting generous recognition on some levels, while withholding it on others. In the earliest years of the century it was probably impossible to tell whether young Kostrowitski was just another promising literary man with several languages and a gift for pastiche, or—in an age which requires a fresh vision of the world from its artists (as Guillaume Apollinaire was to declare with some insistence)—an authentic poet.

Even as first published in that distant spring of 1909 (when it lacked two stanzas of the Zaparogian Cossacks' horrendous letter and, unlike the more characteristic final version, was punctuated), "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé" has the authority of the more mature Apollinaire, the vibrancy of a modern poet speaking in his own voice. It was another four years before he published his first real collection of poems, *Alcools*, for *Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d'Orphée* (1911), graceful badinage and woodcuts by Dufy notwithstanding, is insubstantial. The poet engaged himself in such activities as critic of literature, critic of

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art, and polemist and theorist for Cubism, all with such zeal that he was sometimes lost sight of in the *animateur*. The First World War and a head wound may have been the only possible catalyzers of a second major collection, *Calligrammes* (1918). Behind the picturesque comings and goings of Apollinaire the man, however, lay sure accomplishment. The critical conscience of a time had recognized a poet.

Before coming to what was new in Apollinaire, it is well to recall what was delicately old, and what was indicative, too, of a verbal power without which experimentation would have been futile. Since Anne Greet included a version of "Nuit rhénane" in her own book of poems, *Spring Eclogue* (1961), one may suppose that this was a growing-point in her development, as in Apollinaire's. The poem is a skillful dislocation, akin to Heine's, of folk song mood and material.² Farther on in this volume "Nuit rhénane" can be read both in final form and in English. Here it is as first published, complete with periods, commas, and date line from the Rhineland where Apollinaire met Annie Playden:

Mon verre est plein d'un vin trembleur comme une flamme.
Écoutez la chanson lente d'un batelier
Qui raconte avoir vu, sous la lune, sept femmes
Tordre leurs cheveux verts et longs jusqu'à leurs pieds.

Debout, chantez plus haut en dansant une ronde,
Que je n'entende plus le chant du batelier,
Et mettez près de moi toutes les filles blondes
Au regard immobile, aux nattes repliées.

Le Rhin, le Rhin est ivre, où les vignes se mirent.
Tout l'or des nuits tombe, en tremblant, s'y refléter.

² See Pierre Orecchioni, *Le Thème du Rhin dans l'Inspiration de Guillaume Apollinaire* (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1956), esp. Chapter II, "Le Volkslied Rhénan et son influence sur Apollinaire."

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La voix chante toujours, à en râle-mourir,
Ces fées aux cheveux verts qui incantent l'été.

Mon verre s'est brisé comme un éclat de rire.

Honnef, mai 1902³

If the nasalized vowels of the opening lines do not "crackle," as Apollinaire thought they should,⁴ at least they have their effect of lingering out the line, and "flamme" makes them all but flare and flicker. The first line of the second quatrain is sufficiently dancelike, nasals again providing the emphases. With its attenuating subjunctive leading into the negative "plus," the next verse virtually confronts presence with absence. It is easy to imagine an echo reverberating down the valley with the emphatic first syllable of "batelier."

As in many a ballade, witches emerging from water suggest depths of the psyche. And since this is Apollinaire, with his penchant for the magical, they are seven. As with Heine and other Romantic ironists, the ending jars with a "tone of voice" dominant till then. River mists dissolve, undines vanish, and the reader is hauled ashore by the mention of laughter, on whose human connections Bergson had recently insisted. Incidentally, it should be noted that the ending comes off every bit as well in Anne Greet's English:

My glass has shattered like a burst of laughter

Here, as throughout, these translations attest an indispensable quality: a certain reluctance to swing on the ancient iambic seesaw of English, an easiness on the downbeat. It would be hard to say how the translator arrives at

³ Michel Décaudin, *Le Dossier d' "Alcools"* (Geneva: Droz, 1960), p. 178.

⁴ "Laissez pétiller un son nasal et continu" from "Victoire," quoted by LeRoy C. Breunig, "The Chronology of Apollinaire's *Alcools*," *PMLA*, LXVII (December, 1952), 907.

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Up dancers form a ring sing louder
Drown out the boatman's song

French has a living subjunctive to trail away with

Que je n'entende plus le chant du batelier

But anything half as involved in English would have been wrong. Toned-down imperatives and retarding monosyllables let the sound fade in an English way.

The Rhineland poems, which Apollinaire thought of publishing separately before finally incorporating them into *Alcools*, are not all manipulated folk songs. The performing animals shown jogging along the bank in one are more meaningful than those of *Le Bestiaire*, which had been fanciful creatures or mere transposed human beings, objects of wit and irony. Charged with a deeper symbolism, the gypsies' bear, monkey, dog, and donkey in "Mai" add another dimension to the carnival theme as an analogy for the human predicament. They offer glimmers of awareness different from the human, more "open," as Rilke would have said, and D. H. Lawrence would have thought.

There is another kind of poem in *Alcools*, less finished than "Nuit rhénane," and more promising, prophetic of the direction Apollinaire's poetry was to take. Such is "La Dame," where an allegorical image is wrested from experience no longer literary. Such is "La Porte," where a symbol of a modern kind acquires that *lacune*, that marked-out circumambient space an object often has in a Braque painting of the Cubist period. "La Porte" had begun with some conversational fumbling. Most of that was left out, and the completed poem stands cleanly and strongly outlined, a work of art existing in space as well as in time:

La porte de l'hôtel sourit terriblement
Qu'est-ce que cela peut me faire ô ma maman
D'être cet employé pour qui seul rien n'existe
Pi-mus couples allant dans la profonde eau triste

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Anges frais débarqués à Marseille hier matin
J'entends mourir et remourir un chant lointain
Humble comme je suis qui ne suis rien qui vaille

Enfant je t'ai donné ce que j'avais travaille

The hotel door smiles its terrible smile
What can that mean to me my mother
To be that clerk for whom alone nothing exists
Siamese fish coupled in the sad deep Ganges
Fresh angels disembarked at Marseille yesterday morning
I hear a distant song that dies over and over
Humble as I am who am nothing worthwhile

Child I gave you what I had now labor

More than once, over these pages, the American reader will find himself thinking of Hart Crane, who also read Apollinaire, even though Crane said that, being a resident of Cleveland, Ohio, he did not feel obliged to take the modern machinery of Paris quite as seriously as Apollinaire did.⁵ Here, as in Crane's poetry, one will find doors, black swollen gates, bridges, mariages of Faustus and Helen, and all the perils of strong emotion.

⁵ "All this talk from Matty on Apollinaire," he wrote Munson, "about being gay and so distressingly and painfully delighted about the telegraph, the locomotive, the automat, the wireless, the street cars and electric lamp posts, annoys me. There is no reason for *not* using them—but why is it so important to stick them in. I am interested in possibilities. Apollinaire lived in Paris, I live in Cleveland, Ohio. These quotidian conveniences so dear to him are not of especial pleasure to me here. I am not going to pity myself—but, on the other hand, why should I stretch my face continually into a kind of 'glad' expression. Besides,—sadness (you will shrink in horror at this) has a real and lasting appeal to me." Philip Horton, *Hart Crane* (Compass edition, 1957), p. 104.

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Thus, in the above poem, "sad, deep water" and one meaning of *anges* ("angelfish") effectively suggest the viscous, as they were meant to do. They could also have swamped the poem. Distancing is achieved by one of those scraps of curious lore with which Apollinaire's verse is crammed. The pi-mus fish of Chinese legend swim in couples so closely joined that the same pair of eyes serves both creatures. The lines devoted to the pi-mus fish remain exactly central to the poem as it exists in time, when read aloud. Meanwhile in the process of revision, the word *tout* was replaced by *rien*, poetically more sophisticated, etymologically suggesting "something" as well as "nothing." The last line is dropped well below the others typographically: the poet is already concerned with the problems of arrangement in space that he was to pursue further in the ideographic word-pictures of *Calligrammes*. Clipped emphasis in this second poetic voice signifies rejection, as the preceding lines suggest some obscure search for the opposite. The door, a characteristic image, is ordinarily closed, here, as at the beginning of "Le Voyageur," and elsewhere. But the poet's main problem, that of isolating an episode from immediate experience and lending it objectivity, has been solved.⁶

Alcools is a remarkably ambitious book. Like the title itself, the longer and later poems show how much the author wanted to get into it: nothing less than the whole burden of poetic enthusiasm as expressed by Plato in the *Ion*. Apollinaire is inviting his readers to be drunken—on the spiritual air of Nietzschean high places. Better prepared and more resilient than Crane, if somewhat less intensely imaginative, Apollinaire came equally close to voicing the affirmations of a time. The mode is the psychological notation of the Rimbaudian Symbolists:

Actions belles journées sommeils terribles

⁶ See Marie-Jeanne Durry, *Guillaume Apollinaire: Alcools*, Tome I (Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1956).

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Végétation Accouplements musiques éternelles
Mouvements Adorations douleur divine
Mondes qui vous ressemblent et qui nous ressemblent
Je vous ai bus et ne fus pas désaltéré

Mais je connus dès lors quelle saveur a l'univers

Je suis ivre d'avoir bu tout l'univers
Sur le quai d'où je voyais l'onde couler et dormir les bélandres

Deeds fine days uneasy sleep
Vegetation Couplings eternal music
Motion Worship divine sorrow
Worlds that resemble us and ourselves
Though I have drained you I am thirsty still

But I know the savor of the universe

I reel on universe
Along the quai where I saw waves flow and barges rock

Apollinaire cannot be said to have realized some revolutionary or Futurist dream of *penseurs nouveaux* in verse. Such a task lay beyond even his capacities, and it was open to his misgivings. There is something heroically outsize about "Vendémiaire," with its debt to Whitman and the poetic mode that was being called Hegelian at about this time. Parts of the poem are a trifle too praiseful and all-encompassing to be quite convincing, except as a bold rhetorical conclusion to an important book. They suggest a kind of poetry Apollinaire might have written had he been a complete Cubo-Futurist. He was not, and we have the brief masterpieces, rather lower pitched.

A number of these are to be found in *Alcools*. Among the Romantic lyrics are "Cors de Chasse" and "Automne malade."

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"La Tzigane" and "Saltimbanques" renew late nineteenth-century themes in a way endlessly stimulating to twentieth-century readers and writers. "Marizibill" is another of the brief episodic poems finding the symmetries of a dramatic lyric. Its title, a sort of inspired exercise in phonetic spelling, brings the poem closer to the time and place of its conception by the change of a few letters (from "Marie-Sybille"). Here too, growing out of prison desolation, the end of the love affair with Marie Laurencin, and a medieval *chanson de toile*, is "Le Pont Mira-beau."

Equally to the poetic point are longer episodic poems. An early one, "Le Larron," with its Chorus, Thief, Old Man, and Actor, is an incipient parable play. Apollinaire is best remembered, however, for two other lines of development. Episodes are sometimes connected by a conceit, as in "Le Brasier"⁷ or "Les Fiançailles." The poet elaborates on the theme of casting previous selves into the crucible, toward discovery of an authentic self. Or he loafs and invites his soul to reconciliation with fully apprehended objects:

J'observe le repos du dimanche
Et je loue la paresse
Comment comment réduire
L'infiniment petite science
Que m'imposent mes sens

("Les Fiançailles")

I observe the Sunday calm
And praise indolence
How how to reduce
The infinitely little knowledge
That my senses impose upon me

⁷ On the thematic content of the poem see Robert Champigny, "Le Temps chez Apollinaire," *PMLA*, LXVII (March, 1952), esp. pp. 9, 10.

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The less concerted development of this poem permits anticipations of "Zone." We find:

J'ai eu le courage de regarder en arrière
Les cadavres de mes jours
Marquent ma route et je les pleure
Les uns pourrissent dans les églises italiennes
Ou bien dans de petits bois de citronniers
Qui fleurissent et fructifient

I have been brave enough to look back
The corpses of my days
Dot my journey and I mourn them
Some rot in Italian churches
Or in little lemon groves
That flower and bear fruit

Within the segments of "Les Fiançailles," more freely associated than those of "Le Brasier," within the loose grouping of verses and the single line, there is characteristic contrast between fresh imagery and familiar rhythm. There are moments when the alexandrine seems to have been discovered all over again:

Une Madone à l'aube a pris les églantines
Elle viendra demain cueillir les giroflées

Amid such near *bel canto* comes the image like "eyelids":

Au petit bois de citronniers s'énamourèrent
D'amour que nous aimons les dernières venues
Les villages lointains sont comme leurs paupières
Et parmi les citrons leurs cœurs sont suspendus

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In the little lemon grove there fell in love
With love that we love the latest dove comers
Like their eyelids are towns in the distance
And among the lemons their hearts are swaying

This is the Apollinaire who haunted Léon-Paul Fargue:

En face du tunnel où se cache la fée
De l'aube qui demain vendra ses madeleines
Sur un quai somnolent tout mouillé de rosée
Dans le bruit du tambour, dans le bruit de la mer

("La Gare")

Not the least of Apollinaire's functions was that of reminding other poets of the traditional resources of French verse. His poetry has its "Vergers," a little like those of Rilke's French verse, reflecting devotion to past periods and styles. Into those green hereditary precincts he introduced objects sometimes rich and strange, almost invariably curious and interesting. "Pau-pières," above, is compact with the poetic future. It is not the inevitable word within its pattern; but it anticipates the Surrealist reshuffling to come.

"Zone," the rather hurriedly prefixed poetic preface to Apollinaire's book, caused excitement from Prague to San Francisco and can still do so. This is all the more remarkable because it is compounded of several well-known poetic styles, not even excluding a few lines in the manner of Charles Péguy. The second verse signals the paradoxical clash of tone and imagery:

Bergère ô tour Eiffel le troupeau des ponts bèle ce matin

Mallarmé, the conscience of two or three poetic generations, had observed mildly that the Eiffel Tower surpassed his expectations. In the manner of his followers, the *leser* Symbolists, Apollinaire had written, among other poems, "Merlin et la vieille Femme."

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His predecessors would not, in short, have acknowledged the existence of the modern technological clutter. That might be a fit subject for the spiritual offspring of M. Homais, or perhaps for a strident school of painters who had already provoked the discriminating protest of James Joyce. But to take Marinetti and his crew seriously, to turn a World's Fair monument into a symbol helping to shepherd the significant experiences of a lifetime—that was definitely a brave act of Futurist faith.

"Zone" and other late poems grapple determinedly with features of the modern landscape, however remote and magical the world preceding the Great War may now appear. Here the poetic result is achieved by letting objects hang suspended in the blue distance of a pastoral. Baudelaire, whose modern reputation Apollinaire the critic would do much to establish,⁸ had shown the way. But Apollinaire's *églogues de la cité* go much further. And it is chiefly in its paradoxically pastoral tone that "Zone" differs from a work which it resembles and possibly owes to, Blaise Cendrars' "Pâques à New-York."⁹ The modern malaise of the latter poem is without letup. "Zone" is less insistent.

Further on, the flocks return, as "troupeaux d'autobus" this time. And the "I" of the poem surveys a line of previous selves fixed in idealized attitudes. There is the pious infant in blue and white, the figure of idealized friendship, the devout adolescent. There is the young man on the Riviera, under blossoming lemon trees:

Sous les citronniers qui sont en fleur toute l'année
Avec tes amis tu te promènes en barque

Under lemon trees that flower the year long
You take ship with friends

⁸ See Apollinaire, *Introduction à l'œuvre poétique de Baudelaire*, 1917.

⁹ See Durry, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-258.

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His situation in Prague is hardly less idyllic:

Tu te sens tout heureux une rose est sur la table

and he climbs the Hradchen at night to listen to folk songs in the cabarets. In Marseilles he is surrounded by stacks of water-melons, in Coblenz he stays at a larger-than-life hotel, in Rome he is installed under an exotic tree, in Amsterdam he is accompanied by a young woman less beautiful than he imagines her. Such scenes alternate with moments of pathetic immediacy, among them the glimpse of the refugees—a bit uncannily prophetic, as passages in Apollinaire have a way of being—clutching the red coverlet, the homely relic of no value and great consequence.

Forms of the comic familiar to pastoral are here: wit in the likening of Christ to an aviator, humor in the following lines bringing in fabled magicians, sardonic comment behind

Tu te moques de toi et comme le feu de l'Enfer ton rire
pétille¹⁰

and satire in the sketches of the derelicts. Meanwhile

La cétoine qui dort dans le cœur de la rose

offers the irony of death and decay characteristically undercutting the pastoral situation.

The fetishes from Africa and the Pacific islands appearing toward the end of the poem have considerable aesthetic interest, because Apollinaire's enthusiasm for such works helped shape twentieth-century taste. But they have none of the disquieting

¹⁰ Breunig, in "The Laughter of Apollinaire," *Yale French Studies*, No. 31 (1964), would associate this and other passages with the Surrealist conception of "dark humor," and with the absurdist theater.

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power of the religious symbols in Baudelaire's poetry: the superego, to use a term of that Freudian day, is neither looming nor censorious. Like Milton before him, Baudelaire tested the limits of pastoral even as he gave it unusual flexibility. Urgently felt contrast between the everyday and the ideal, the actually perceived and the imagined, are usually absent from this checkered shade. The nostalgic, on the other hand, the stylized pathetic, the wittily and even the grotesquely comic—these are marks of pastoral as they are of "Zone" and long stretches of verse in Apollinaire's lesser collections.

This is not to explain away or even necessarily to touch the profounder characteristics of Apollinaire the man. If the reader has not already done so he is likely, after reading *Alcools*, to go on exploring this poetic mind, one of the richest and most responsive of our century, through several collections of verse and highly organized prose. The "I" of "Zone," the first person colloquizing there with two forms of the second person, must bear some relation to the poet's ego. The "je" of "Zone," however, is curiously abstract, poetically unformed, unlike the "tu" and "vous" cast in their recognizable aesthetic molds. Perhaps the poet most nearly did justice to the depth and complexity of the "je" in brief episodes where he felt under no constraint to establish connections. But that is merely an opinion, and the reader must look for his own Apollinaire, as divided and mysterious as the times he wrote for, beginning with the collection that gives him the amplest perspectives.

Meanwhile it seems fitting to note that *Alcools* or a work resembling it might conceivably have been written in English in the first place. If circumstances had been only a little different, if Wilhelm Apollinaris de Kostrowitski had found Annie Playden less unrelenting, if, in short, she had consented to marry him instead of going off to Texas to escape. . . . Then this record of the fluctuations of the modern mind might have been composed in the language elected by another Pole, Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski. Kostrowitski was pursuing Annie furiously in 1901 and 1902. A Pole not much over twenty, *connaissant*

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plusieurs langages, as he would confess in "La Jolie Rousse," with embarrassing Slavic ease, would have made the transition readily. It is a question whether Annie would ever have made a gentleman of him, but she would pretty certainly have got him to speaking English.

Even as things stand there is real resemblance between an image of London appearing in certain of Conrad's works—which, under slightly different circumstances, might have been written in French—and certain poems and parts of poems by Apollinaire. Almost as aptly as others are called "Rhénanes," these might be entitled, say, "Inscriptions Anglaises." And they have a direct, lived-out immediacy from which Apollinaire's verse always benefits.

It may be objected that a rather gloomy view of London shines through "L'Émigrant de Landor Road" and "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé." But the same might be said of *The Secret Agent* and other examples of Conrad's English realism. For both Apollinaire and Conrad, grimy bricks and blood-drenched fog (*brouillard sanguinolent*) suggest the wild side of *any* city. They evoke even as they screen what Henry James, another expatriate who never really fitted in, sensed as going on beneath the vast smug surface of things. London is required to provide concrete images from which the mysterious, and even the sinister, may develop. This is a little unfair to London, but it is only one side of a penny, the whole coin standing for that fascination with things English that did so much to shape French literary expression during the early years of the century.

The fluid octosyllabics of Apollinaire's first really notable poem, "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé," cover bewildering variety, yet the theme is the well-tried one of striving after the absolute. This finds its statement in imagery having the drained-white hue familiar from Melville and other American writers, as well as the poets whom Apollinaire knew:

*Voie lactée ô sœur lumineuse
Des blancs ruisseaux de Chanaan*

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*Et des corps blancs des amoureuses
Nageurs morts suivrons-nous d'ahan
Ton cours vers d'autres nébuleuses*

*Milky way luminous sister
Of Canaan's white streams
And white flesh of loving women
Shall we dead swimmers follow gasping
Your course toward other nebulae*

This stanza thirteen, repeated as stanza twenty-seven after the Cossacks' song and as stanza forty-nine after the episode of the seven swords, becomes the triple pier of an Apollinairean bridge. Imagery of whiteness is persistent. In stanza thirty-two it appears as

Ma colombe ma blanche rade

My dove my white harbor

Lest we dissociate the Absolute from evil, either in *Moby Dick* or here, there is

Malheur dieu pâle aux yeux d'ivoire

Unhappiness pale god with ivory eyes

of stanza thirty-five. Three stanzas further on:

L'hiver est mort tout enneigé
On a brulé les ruches blanches

Winter is dead all hidden with snow
They have burned the white bee-hives

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and in the following stanza:

Mort d'immortels argyraspides
La neige aux boucliers d'argent

Death of deathless argyraspids
The snow with silver shields

The first of the swords is silver-white:

La première est toute d'argent
Et son nom tremblant c'est Pâline
Sa lame un ciel d'hiver neigeant

The first is all of silver
And its trembling name is Pensive
Its blade is a snowy sky of winter

And perhaps most of all like a thawed-out Mallarmé:

Sur un lac blanc et sous l'haleine
Des vents qui tremblent au printemps
Voguait cygne mourant sirène

Across a white lake breathed on
By winds trembling in springtime
Sailed a swan a dying siren

of stanza fifty-three.

The Romantic and Symbolist theme of quest thus intensely presented is relieved by the three-stanza pastoral interlude beginning "C'est le printemps vient-t'en Pâquette" and by comic passages in the vein of Alfred Jarry, especially the three stanzas of Cossack invective. This theme receives its resolution, anticlimactic in the classical and technical sense, in the final stanzas

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telling of returning to a Paris rattling with streetcars and fiery with those new flowers, "les roses de l'électricité"¹¹ (as they are called in "Les Fiançailles").

"La Chanson du Mal-Aimé" is a far-ranging poem, but nothing contributes more to its vitality than the bold beginning in a murky London. Just as "those grimy brick houses which existed in large quantities before the era of reconstruction dawned upon London" and the meanness of Mr. Verloc's little shop open out toward violent drama to follow in *The Secret Agent*, giving it footing in everyday reality, so do early stanzas of this poem lend density to what might otherwise have been thin and rarefied. To recall only a few lines more beyond the ones placed at the beginning of this Introduction:

*Je suivis ce mauvais garçon
Qui sifflotait mains dans les poches
Nous semblions entre les maisons
Onde ouverte de la mer Rouge
Lui les Hébreux moi Pharaon*

*Que tombent ces vagues de briques
Si tu ne fus pas bien aimée
Je suis le souverain d'Égypte
Sa sœur-épouse son armée
Si tu n'es pas l'amour unique*

*Au tournant d'une rue brûlant
De tous les feux de ses façades
Plaies du brouillard sanguinolent
Où se lamentaient les façades
Une femme lui ressemblant*

¹¹ For the poet's appreciation of modern technology, see Anna Bala-kian, "Apollinaire and the Modern Mind," *Yale French Studies*, Vol. II, No. 2 (1949), 79-90.

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*C'était son regard d'inhumaine
La cicatrice à son cou nu
Sortit saoule d'une taverne
Au moment où je reconnus
La fausseté de l'amour même*

*I followed that lawless boy
Whistling his hands thrust in his pockets
Between the houses
Gaping Red Sea waters
I was Pharaoh he the Hebrews*

*May these brick waves clatter down
If I did not love you well
I am Egypt's sovereign lord
His sister-queen his army
If you are not my only love*

*At a street corner burning
With all the lamps of its windows
Wounds in the blood-filled mist
There where windows lamented
A woman resembling him*

*She had the same inhuman stare
And scar upon her bare neck
Staggered out from a tavern
Just then I perceived
Love's duplicity*

London street urchin, fleeing Israelites, drunken woman reeling from the pub—all these are likened to Annie, as she is identified with *l'amour unique* and, finally, with the unattainable Absolute. The pursuer is at once Pharaoh, his sister-wife, and

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his army. So many analogous figures for hunter and quarry, swiftly and freely associated, bring us well along the way toward the "everything always present," the multidimensional time of modern art. Apollinaire was to discuss this in his own terms as the *simultanéisme* of the Cubo-Futurists, holding the artist responsible for more facets of an object, presented in a single aesthetic perception, than could be grasped in an instant of chronological time.¹²

The closeness of the bond between the Egyptian monarch and his queen recalls the "mon enfant, ma sœur" and similar images of the beloved in the poetry of Baudelaire, as of Poe and the Pre-Raphaelites. The same close bond looks forward toward the mystical reconciliation, the resolved antinomies, of Surrealism. Passage and poem are further strengthened by the hint of the arcane, the element of strangeness called for by several modern poetics having little else in common.

Of fundamental importance, too, is the *coloring* of the passage. In the first place, the pervasive color imagery sets it off sharply from later passages relating to the Absolute, where whiteness is the rule. Secondly, the color red, named or suggested by a red object in many stanzas, stands for human vitality and movement, as in the poetry of Wallace Stevens. Finally, the whole exploration of orders of reality is grounded on vividly noted particularities of a modern city.

Mr. Verloc of *The Secret Agent* walks off toward Chesham Square in the morning sun "against which nothing could be said except that it looked bloodshot." Apollinaire being to a rare degree the poet of both sides of the penny, of two roads traveled at once, of multidimensional time, it is possible to think of him writing in English the celebrated metaphor for the bloodshot morning sun at the end of "Zone." He was also the theorist of the two ways supposedly hardest to navigate: that of "poetry"

¹² On the temporal dimensions of Cubist art, see Roger Shattuck, *Guillaume Apollinaire, Selected Writings* (New York: New Directions, 1950), esp. sections V-VII of the Introduction.

and that of "truth," the imaginary and the real, the invented and the raw residue of fact. "The plastic virtues: purity, unity and truth," he wrote, apropos of the Cubists. The Symbolists before him had paid due heed to the cathartic and unitive values of the creative process. For them, too, purity and unity were plastic virtues. They had, however, and here Paul Valéry was to follow them, minimized the mimetic function of art. Apollinaire is still the poet who has stated most forcefully the twentieth-century view that art is also a search for truth, a lever of discovery, adding like other cognitive acts to the sum of what is known.

The "false windows," as Valéry called them, remain—the lines and masses added or adding themselves, for balance, helping to order experience in the work of art. But they exist only by virtue of their opposition to the real windows, as heresies, we are told, have only the life they borrow from a parent faith. Without real windows the simulated ones do not exist.

Thus we can never forget that Apollinaire was in fact, as well as in poetic fiction, the "ill-loved"¹³—less, it is true, by an English girl who chanced to be in the Rhineland one summer, or by some archetypal figure that failed to stand forward in the rose garden, than, at all the decisive points, by society in the persons of its immediate representatives. Unacknowledged son, following the wanderings of his mother and "uncle"; over-polite tutor in a polite household; bank clerk and author of potboilers on a variety of subjects, acquiring in no other way the literary competence that made him useful to the painters, enabling him to transcend what his friends called the strain of weakness in his character—the wonder is that he did nothing more drastic than

¹³ See Marcel Adéma, *Guillaume Apollinaire, le mal-aimé*, 1952, esp. pp. 69 ff., 141, 142; André Rouveyre, *Apollinaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), esp. pp. 263-268; Francis Steegmuller, *Apollinaire, Poet among the Painters* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, 1963); Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years: The Arts in France* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1958).

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run off from Stavelot without paying the hotel bill or become inconclusively involved in the removal of art objects from the Louvre.

"Zone," that well-rounded work developing between two morning suns, favoring the *recorso* form as the title suggests, also refers through its title to an area beyond the city limits of Paris given over, in Apollinaire's day, to derelicts and their hovels. Apollinaire had good reason to be acquainted with the "zone," the outer margin of society. He was not one of us Dostoevsky readers who can mutter with a pleasant shiver, "There but for the grace of God go I." Born and brought up outside the conventions, he was easily compromised. After his brief imprisonment in La Santé, which shook him seriously, he might readily have drifted beyond the limits of conventional society. Instead, a little like Dostoevsky after the Siberian exile, he took to identifying somewhat uncritically, enthusiastically, with contradictory manifestations and values of the society in which he found himself. We may call this his Futurism. Or we may call it a quest for identity culminating in his war service—as cavalryman, then, by his own wish, as infantryman—his head wound and his death from Spanish influenza. It makes, in any case, for one of the meaningful personal histories in the tangled, dark-brown-spotted web of twentieth-century events. It makes for poetry representing, if not quite the highest pitch of artistic accomplishment, something close to it, and for the triumph of a temperament.

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