

world, an existence overshadowed by the threat of death. As, arguably, is *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie*; Guibert, 'Muzil', Jules and the other HIV-positive characters in the novel face a death which is inevitable, from a cause which appears to have come out of nowhere in the closing years of this century (it might be interesting to examine this era's artistic reaction to AIDS with the earlier *fin de siècle* response to syphilis), and which is moreover compared by Guibert to a feature of our days which has never before been seen — the video game: 'Avant l'apparition du sida, un inventeur de jeux électroniques avait dessiné la progression du sida dans le sang' (p. 13) — the virus is presented as a lethal version of Pacman.

In their different ways, these two works deal with the nature of mortality in the modern world; a pity, then, that a writer such as Guibert should have been unable to detect in this 'navet palpitant' the echoes of a message strangely similar to his own, albeit cloaked in a style at odds with his own rigorously unsentimental voice.

¹ First published by Gallimard, Paris, 1990; all references are to this edition.

² Pp. 182–83.

³ Winner of the Guardian Fiction Prize, and shortlisted for the Booker. Quotations come from the 1985 Grafton paperback edition.

LEVIATHAN — A FORGOTTEN NOUVELLE BY JULIEN GREEN MICHAEL O'DWYER, Maynooth

Julien Green's *nouvelle Léviathan* (1926)¹ tends to merit only a few passing references in critical works on the author. This is regrettable because this early work in a literary output spanning the years 1920 to 1995 (at least!) can be seen to orchestrate in embryonic form many of the themes and preoccupations which have become permanent features of Green's landscape. It may even be considered a microcosm of his work as a whole.

Léviathan is the story of a sea journey from France to America on a ship ironically named *Bonne Espérance*. The destination, Savannah, recalls the birth place of Green's mother who inculcated in him a life long attachment to the *Sud* which emerges in his latest trilogy of novels.² Green explores the relationship between the only passenger on board, simply called 'l'homme', 'le passager' or 'le voyageur', who is silent and burdened with a secret, and the captain whose curiosity *l'homme* arouses. The passenger eventually reveals his secret to the captain, but later retracts it and when the ship arrives in Savannah he is discovered to be dead.

Readers of Green will be familiar with the structure. The dominant feature is that of *l'homme qui vient d'ailleurs*, the outsider whose arrival disturbs the world into which he comes and triggers off the drama which is essential to the work's fabric. The journey form is also significant and typical of Green's work. Green's hero is almost always a *homo viator*, either escaping from or searching for his true self. Like the protagonist of this *nouvelle*, his characters are often in the *intermundia*, a state of exile both geographical and psychological or spiritual.

The relationship between the passenger and the captain follows a recurring pattern in Green's work, that of *rencontre, curiosité, aveu, mort*. This structure characterizes his most important novels and plays.³

The significance of the central biblical image of *Léviathan* must be considered within the context of this structure.⁴ The image is linked to the sea journey which is an 'épreuve' and a 'tourment' (p. 277). It is also synonymous with a state of

'ennui' consuming the core of the characters' being like a disease: '...car il faut qu'ils vivent, qu'ils échappent à la mer, à ce *léviathan*⁵ qui les guette et les accompagne en silence.' (p. 277).

At a later stage the image represents death (cf. p. 279). The notion of an overhanging threat permeates the vocabulary. There is the menacing sky (cf. p. 275), the violent rain and the 'bourrasque' (p. 278), all typical elements of Green's descriptions. The impression is conveyed that characters whose inner being is devoured by solitude and *ennui* are engaged in an unequal struggle with forces which surpass them. This notion is to the forefront in many of Green's works which have a strong sense of destiny and impending disaster.⁶ The theme of *ennui*, linked to the passage of time and death, springs from the characters' inability to tolerate the void at the centre of their being. Denis in *L'Autre sommeil* sums up the situation when he says that his *angoisse* comes from 'la pensée que je serais moi-même jusqu'à la fin'.⁷ We are here at the heart of Green's work.

The relationship between the passenger and captain can be described as a *jeu entre deux solitudes*. They are typical of Green's characters in that they are *des inadaptés sociaux* enclosed in their own solitude. This is true of Adrienne Mesurat,⁸ Jeanne in *Varouna*, Denis in *L'Autre sommeil*,⁹ Joseph Day in *Moïra* and Wilfred in *Chaque homme dans sa nuit*.

The tension of the story centres on the efforts of the captain to elicit the secret from the passenger. We have here the theme of the *aveu* or *aveu manqué*, the experience of which was the starting point of Green's writing¹⁰ and with which all his characters are preoccupied. Imprisoned in their solitude, unable to communicate and reveal themselves, the characters either try to forget their anguish by engaging in a Pascalian *divertissement*, or try to express themselves by means of violent or irrational behaviour. In this nouvelle *l'homme* is trying to escape (from what, we shall see later) and we learn that the captain is trying to get away from towns, cities and dry land — (cf. p. 276). The presence of the passenger is a 'distraction précieuse' (p. 278) for him. Similar elements of geographical displacement or a search for *évasion* through a state of *rêverie*, transformation of identity and personality or escape in death can be noted in many of Green's works.¹¹ In general the attempted *évasion* is unsuccessful: it is a 'traversée inutile'. The passenger seeks a *divertissement* in habit and routine. This notion finds its classic expression in *Adrienne Mesurat*.

The search for an outlet in torture and violent behaviour must also be noted. The curiosity of the captain is an expression of his *angoisse* as is that of Mme Londe in the novel *Léviathan*. His relationship with *l'homme*, like most relationships in Green, is that of *bourreau/victime*. We note that the passenger is trembling and that he strikes the table with his fist on a number of occasions (cf. p. 281). Violence and torture as expressions of repressed feeling are commonplace themes in Green.¹²

Eventually the passenger unburdens his secret. He makes his *aveu*. The captain describes himself as a 'confesseur modèle' (p. 280) and the description of the passenger lowering his head before the captain in an attitude of humility and recollection (cf. p. 280) evokes connotations of a sacramental confession and an expression of guilt. We are not told what the passenger 'confesses', but it is clear that he considers it to be a crime and that the purpose of his journey is to escape from it. The theme of the *aveu* linked to a confession of guilt is an integral part of *Moïra* which ends with Joseph Day intending to 'tout dire' and of *Chaque homme*

dans sa nuit where Wilfred displays a fascination with confessionals. Here however the passenger retracts his *aveu* and claims not to recognize himself in it. We note here the theme of *dédoublement* and the notion that one's crime can take on an independent existence as if coming from another self. This is a common experience for Green's characters. The *dénouement* with its mysterious death is typical of the *dénouement* of most of Green's works.

We have attempted to show that this much ignored *nouvelle* is a microcosm of Green's works in general. It is a world of loneliness, lack of communication, cruelty, inner torment, emptiness and schizophrenia with attempts at escape from self being illusory. The shadow of death is ever present. It is written in Green's concise classical prose rendered poetic by his ability to charge geographical and climatic details with emotional and psychological overtones. Writing such as this has led Green to be described as a 'poète égaré dans la prose'.

¹ This *nouvelle* was first published under the title *La Traversée inutile* in *Le Roseau d'or*, 10, 'Chroniques' 2, 1926, 249–68. Two years later it appeared *en volume* under its present title (with *La Traversée inutile* as subtitle) along with the *nouvelle* *Christine*. The title of the volume was *Christine suivi de Léviathan* (Paris, Éditions des Cahiers Libres, 1928). Green's novel entitled *Léviathan* appeared a year later (Paris, Plon, 1929). References to the *nouvelle* *Léviathan* in this article are to Julien Green, *Œuvres complètes, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade I* (Paris, Gallimard, 1972) and will be quoted hereafter in the text.

² *Les Pays lointains* (Paris, Seuil, 1987), *Les Étoiles du Sud* (Paris, Seuil, 1989), *Dixie* (Paris, Fayard, 1995).

³ *Léviathan, Moïra* (Paris, Plon, 1950), *Sud* (Paris, Plon, 1953), *L'Ennemi* (Paris, Plon, 1954), *Chaque homme dans sa nuit* (Paris, Plon, 1960), *L'Autre* (Paris, Plon, 1971).

⁴ Cf. *Isaiah* 27. 1 and *Job* 40. 20. Green has stated on several occasions that he was always fascinated by both passages as a child.

⁵ Italics in the text. The word was not italicized in the original edition but Green decided to highlight it on the occasion of its publication *en volume*.

⁶ *Minuit* (Paris, Plon, 1936), *Varouna* (Paris, Plon, 1940), *Si j'étais vous* (Paris, Plon, 1947), *Moïra, Le Malfaiteur* (Paris, Plon, 1956), *Demain n'existe pas* (Paris, Seuil, 1985).

⁷ *L'Autre sommeil* in Julien Green, *Œuvres complètes, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade I* (Paris, Gallimard, 1972), p. 863.

⁸ *Adrienne Mesurat* (Paris, Plon, 1927).

⁹ *L'Autre sommeil* (*nouvelle*), (Paris, Plon, 1931).

¹⁰ Cf. *Jeunesse* (Paris, Plon, 1974), pp. 165–69. In these pages of the fourth volume of his autobiography Green describes his failed effort to declare his love to Mark whom he met while in America.

¹¹ *Épaves* (Paris, Plon, 1932), *Le Visionnaire* (Paris, Plon, 1931), *Minuit, Varouna, Si j'étais vous*.

¹² *Mont-Cinère* (Paris, Plon, 1926), *Léviathan, Epaves, Minuit, Si j'étais vous, Moïra, Chaque homme dans sa nuit*.

THE DU CROISY DAUGHTERS JAN CLARKE, Keele

In his letter of 1 August 1671, Robinet reports that Molière's production of *Psyché* featured:

Deux très-agréables Pouponnes,
Deux très-ravissantes Mignonnes,
Au plus, de six & de dix ans,
Et qui, bref, charment tous les Gens,
Par leurs beaux Vers & par leurs graces,
Y sont, de Venus, deux des Graces,
Dont à côté, voici les Noms [. . .]¹

The names given are 'Mlles du Croisy, & Beauval'. William Brooks, in his edition of the letters of Robinet and Laurent, comments: